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Riverside Edition

THE POETIC AND DRAMATIC WORKS
OF ROBERT BROWNING

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOLUME VI.



THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLUS
LA SAISIAZ: THE TWO POETS OF
CROISIC: DRAMATIC IDYLS: JOCO-
SERIA: FERISHTAH'S FANCIES
AND PARLEYINGS

BY

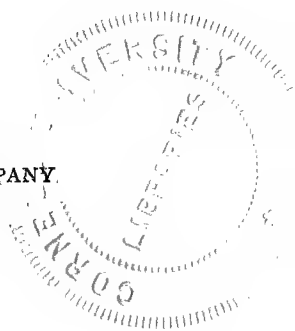
ROBERT BROWNING

WITH THE AUTHOR'S LATEST CORRECTIONS



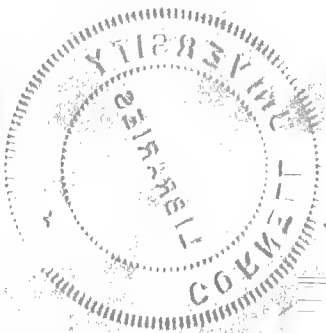
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THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLUS

MAY I be permitted to chat a little, by way of recreation, at the end of a somewhat toilsome and perhaps fruitless adventure?

If, because of the immense fame of the following Tragedy, I wished to acquaint myself with it, and could only do so by the help of a translator, I should require him to be literal at every cost save that of absolute violence to our language. The use of certain allowable constructions which, happening to be out of daily favor, are all the more appropriate to archaic workmanship, is no violence: but I would be tolerant for once — in the case of so immensely famous an original — of even a clumsy attempt to furnish me with the very turn of each phrase in as Greek a fashion as English will bear: while, with respect to amplifications and embellishments, — anything rather than, with the good farmer, experience that most signal of mortifications, “to gape for Æschylus and get Theognis.” I should especially decline — what may appear to brighten up a passage — the employment of a new word for some old one, — *πίονος*, or *μέγας*, or *τέλος*, with its congeners, recurring four times in three lines: for though such substitution may be in itself perfectly justifiable, yet this exercise of ingenuity ought to be within the competence of the unaided English reader if he likes to show himself ingenious. Learning Greek teaches Greek, and nothing else: certainly not common sense, if that have failed to precede the teaching. Further, — if I obtained a mere strict bald version of thing by thing, or at least word pregnant with thing, I should hardly look for an impossible transmission of the reputed magniloquence and sonority of the Greek; and this with the less regret, inasmuch as there is abundant musicality elsewhere, but nowhere else than in his poem the ideas of the poet. And lastly, when presented with these ideas, I should expect the result to prove very hard reading indeed if it were meant to resemble Æschylus, *ξυμβαλεῖν οὐ ῥάδιος*, “not easy to understand,” in the opinion of his stoutest advocate among the ancients; while, I suppose, even modern scholarship sympathizes with that early declaration of the redoubtable Salmasius, when, looking about for an example of the truly obscure for the benefit of those who found

obscurity in the sacred books, he protested that this particular play leaves them all behind in this respect, with their "Hebraisms, Syriasms, Hellenisms, and the whole of such bag and baggage."* For, over and above the purposed ambiguity of the Chorus, the text is sadly corrupt, probably interpolated, and certainly mutilated; and no unlearned person enjoys the scholar's privilege of trying his fancy upon each obstacle whenever he comes to a stoppage, and effectually clearing the way by suppressing what seems to lie in it.

All I can say for the present performance is, that I have done as I would be done by, if need were. Should anybody, without need, honor my translation by a comparison with the original, I beg him to observe that, following no editor exclusively, I keep to the earlier readings so long as sense can be made out of them, but disregard, I hope, little of importance in recent criticism so far as I have fallen in with it. Fortunately, the poorest translation, provided only it be faithful, — though it reproduce all the artistic confusion of tenses, moods, and persons, with which the original teems, — will not only suffice to display what an eloquent friend maintains to be the all-in-all of poetry — "the action of the piece" — but may help to illustrate his assurance that "the Greeks are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the grand style: their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence, because it is so simple and so well subordinated, because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys . . . not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in, stroke on stroke!" † So may all happen!

Just a word more on the subject of my spelling — in a transcript from the Greek and there exclusively — Greek names and places precisely as does the Greek author. I began this practice, with great innocency of intention, some six-and-thirty years ago. Leigh Hunt, I remember, was accustomed to speak of his gratitude, when ignorant of Greek, to those writers (like Goldsmith) who had obliged him by using English characters, so that he might relish, for instance, the smooth quality of such a phrase as "*hapalunetai galené*;" he said also that Shelley was indignant at "*Firenze*" having displaced the Dantesque "*Fiorenza*," and would contemptuously English the intruder

* "*Quis Æschylum possit affirmare Græce nunc scienti magis patere explicabilem quam Evangelia aut Epistolas Apostolicas? Unus ejus Agamemnon obscuritate superat quantum est librorum sacrorum cum suis Hebraismis et Syriasmis et tota Hellenisticæ suppellectili vel farragine. — SALMASIUS de Hellenistica, Epist. Dedic.*

† Poems by Matthew Arnold, Preface.

“Firence.” I supposed I was doing a simple thing enough: but there has been lately much astonishment at *os* and *us*, *ai* and *oi*, representing the same letters in Greek. Of a sudden, however, whether in translation or out of it, everybody seems committing the offence, although the adoption of *u* for *v* still presents such difficulty that it is a wonder how we have hitherto escaped “Eyrripides.” But there existed a sturdy Briton who, Ben Jonson informs us, wrote “The Life of the Emperor Anthony Pie” — whom we now acquiesce in as Antoninus Pius: for “with time and patience the mulberry leaf becomes satin.” Yet there is on all sides much profession of respect for what Keats called “vowelled Greek” — “consonanted,” one would expect; and, in a criticism upon a late admirable translation of something of my own, it was deplored that, in a certain verse corresponding in measure to the fourteenth of the sixth Pythian Ode, “neither Professor Jebb in his Greek, nor Mr. Browning in his English, could emulate that matchlessly musical γόνον ἰδὼν κάλλιστον ἀνδρῶν.” Now, undoubtedly, “Seeing her son the fairest of men” has more sense than sound to boast of: but then, would not an Italian roll us out “Rimirando il figliuolo bellissimo degli uomini?” whereat Pindar, no less than Professor Jebb and Mr. Browning, τριακτῆρος οἴχεται τυχῶν.

It is recorded in the Annals of Art* that there was once upon a time, practising so far north as Stockholm, a painter and picture-cleaner — sire of a less unhappy son — Old Muytens: and the annalist, Baron de Tessé, has not concealed his profound dissatisfaction at Old Muytens’ conceit “to have himself had something to do with the work of whatever master of eminence might pass through his hands.” Whence it was — the Baron goes on to deplore — that much detriment was done to that excellent piece “The Recognition of Achilles,” by Rubens, through the perversity of Old Muytens, “who must needs take on him to beautify every nymph of the twenty by the bestowment of a widened eye and an enlarged mouth.” I, at least, have left eyes and mouths everywhere as I found them, and this conservatism is all that claims praise for — what is, after all, ἀκέλευστος ἄμισθος ἀοιδά. No, neither “uncommanded” nor “unrewarded:” since it was commanded of me by my venerated friend Thomas Carlyle, and rewarded will it indeed become, if I am permitted to dignify it by the prefatory insertion of his dear and noble name.

R. B.

LONDON, October 1, 1877.

* Lettres à un jeune Prince, traduites du Suédois.

AGAMEMNON

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

WARDER.	AGAMEMNON.
CHOROS OF OLD MEN.	ÆGISTHOS.
KLUTAMNESTRA.	KASSANDRA.
TALTHUBIOS, <i>Herald.</i>	

WARDER.

THE gods I ask deliverance from these labors,
Watch of a year's length whereby, slumbering through it
On the Atreidai's roofs on elbow, — dog-like —
I know of nightly star-groups the assemblage,
And those that bring to men winter and summer,
Bright dynasts, as they pride them in the æther
— Stars, when they wither, and the uprisings of them.
And now on ward I wait the torch's token,
The glow of fire, shall bring from Troia message
And word of capture : so prevails audacious
The man's-way-planning hoping heart of woman.
But when I, driven from night-rest, dew-drenched, hold to
This couch of mine — not looked upon by visions,
Since fear instead of sleep still stands beside me,
So as that fast I fix in sleep no eyelids —
And when to sing or chirp a tune I fancy,
For slumber such song-remedy infusing,
I wail then, for this House's fortune groaning,
Not, as of old, after the best ways governed.
Now, lucky be deliverance from these labors,
At good news — the appearing dusky fire !
O hail, thou lamp of night, a day-long lightness
Revealing, and of dances the ordainment !
Halloo, halloo !
To Agamemnon's wife I show, by shouting,
That, from bed starting up at once, i' the household
Joyous acclaim, good-omened to this torch-blaze,
She send aloft, if haply Ilium's city
Be taken, as the beacon boasts announcing.
Ay, and, for me, myself will dance a prelude,

For, that my masters' dice drop right, I'll reckon :
 Since thrice-six has it thrown to me, this signal.
 Well, may it hap that, as he comes, the loved hand
 O' the household's lord I may sustain with this hand !
 As for the rest, I'm mute : on tongue a big ox
 Has trodden. Yet this House, if voice it take should,
 Most plain would speak. So, willing I myself speak
 To those who know : to who know not — I'm blankness.

CHOROS.

The tenth year this, since Priamos' great match,
 King Menelaos, Agamemnon King,
 — The strenuous yoke-pair of the Atreidai's honor
 Two-throned, two-sceptred, whereof Zeus was donor —
 Did from this land the aid, the armament dispatch,
 The thousand-sailored force of Argives clamoring
 "Ares" from out the indignant breast, as fling
 Passion forth vultures which, because of grief
 Away, — as are their young ones, — with the thief,
 Lofty above their brood-nests wheel in ring,
 Row round and round with oar of either wing,
 Lament the hedded chicks, lost labor that was love :
 Which hearing, one above
 — Whether Apollon, Pan or Zeus — that wail,
 Sharp-piercing bird-shriek of the guests who fare
 Housemates with gods in air —
 Such-an-one sends, against who these assail,
 What, late-sent, shall not fail
 Of punishing — Erinus. Here as there,
 The Guardian of the Guest, Zeus, the excelling one,
 Sends against Alexandros either son
 Of Atreus : for that wife, the many-husbanded,
 Appointing many a tug that tries the limb,
 While the knee plays the prop in dust, while, shred
 To morsels, lies the spear-shaft ; in those grim
 Marriage-prolusions when their Fury wed
 Danaoi and Troes, both alike. All's said :
 Things are where things are, and, as fate has willed,
 So shall they be fulfilled.
 Not gently-grieving, not just doling out
 The drops of expiation — no, nor tears distilled —
 Shall he we know of bring the hard about
 To soft — that intense ire
 At those mock rites unsanctified by fire.
 But we pay nought here : through our flesh, age-weighted,
 Left out from who gave aid

In that day, — we remain,
 Staying on staves a strength
 The equal of a child's at length.
 For when young marrow in the breast doth reign,
 That 's the old man's match, — Ares out of place
 In either: but in oldest age's case,
 Foliage a-fading, why, he wends his way
 On three feet, and, no stronger than a child,
 Wanders about gone wild,
 A dream in day.
 But thou, Tundareus' daughter, Klutaimnestra queen,
 What need? What new? What having heard or seen,
 By what announcement's tidings, everywhere
 Settest thou, round about, the sacrifice aflare?
 For, of all gods the city-swaying,
 Those supernal, those infernal,
 Those of the fields', those of the mart's obeying, —
 The altars blaze with gifts;
 And here and there, heaven-high the torch uplifts
 Flame — medicated with persuasions mild,
 With foul admixture unbeguiled —
 Of holy unguent, from the clotted chrim
 Brought from the palace, safe in its abysm.
 Of these things, speaking what may be indeed
 Both possible and lawful to concede,
 Healer do thou become! — of this solicitude
 Which, now, stands plainly forth of evil mood,
 And, then . . . but from oblations, hope, to-day
 Gracious appearing, wards away
 From soul the insatiate care,
 The sorrow at my breast, devouring there!

Empowered am I to sing
 The omens, what their force which, journeying,
 Rejoiced the potentates:
 (For still, from God, inflates
 My breast, song-suasion: age,
 Born to the business, still such war can wage)
 — How the fierce bird against the Teukris land
 Dispatched, with spear and executing hand,
 The Achaian's two-throned empery — o'er Hellas' youth
 Two rulers with one mind:
 The birds' king to these kings of ships, on high,
 — The black sort, and the sort that 's white behind, —
 Appearing by the palace, on the spear-throw side,
 In right sky-regions, visible far and wide, —

Devouring a hare-creature, great with young,
 Balked of more racings they, as she from whom they sprung!
 Ah, Linos, say — ah, Linos, song of wail!
 But may the good prevail!

The prudent army-prophet seeing two
 The Atreidai, two their tempers, knew
 Those feasting on the hare
 The armament-conductors were;
 And thus he spoke, explaining signs in view.
 "In time, this outset takes the town of Priamos:
 But all before its towers, — the people's wealth that was,
 Of flocks and herds, — as sure, shall booty-sharing thence
 Drain to the dregs away, by battle violence.
 Only, have care lest grudge of any god disturb
 With cloud the unsullied shine of that great force, the curb
 Of Troia, struck with damp
 Beforehand in the camp!
 For envyingly is
 The virgin Artemis
 Toward — her father's flying hounds — this House —
 The sacrificers of the piteous
 And cowering beast,
 Brood and all, ere the birth: she hates the eagles' feast.
 Ah, Linos, say — ah, Linos, song of wail!
 But may the good prevail!

"Thus ready is the heauteous one with help
 To those small dewdrop things fierce lions whelp,
 And udder-loving litter of each brute
 That roams the mead; and therefore makes she suit,
 The fair one, for fulfilment to the end
 Of things these signs portend —
 Which partly smile, indeed, but partly scowl —
 The phantasms of the fowl.
 I call Ieïos Paian to avert
 She work the Danaoi hurt
 By any thwarting waftures, long and fast
 Holdings from sail of ships:
 And sacrifice, another than the last,
 She for herself precipitate —
 Something unlawful, feast for no man's lips,
 Builder of quarrels, with the House cognate —
 Having in awe no husband: for remains
 A frightful, backward-darting in the path,
 Wily house-keeping chronicler of wrath,

That has to punish that old children's fate ! ”
 Such things did Kalchas, — with abundant gains
 As well, — vociferate,
 Predictions from the birds, in journeying,
 Above the abode of either king.
 With these, symphonious, sing —
 Ah, Linos, say — ah, Linos, song of wail !
 But may the good prevail !

Zeus, whosoe'er he be, — if that express
 Aught dear to him on whom I call —
 So do I him address.
 I cannot liken out, by all
 Admeasurement of powers,
 Any but Zeus for refuge at such hours,
 If veritably needs I must
 From off my soul its vague care-burden thrust.

Not — whosoever was the great of yore,
 Bursting to bloom with bravery all round —
 Is in our mouths : he was, but is no more.
 And who it was that after came to be,
 Met the thrice-throwing wrestler, — he
 Is also gone to ground.
 But “ Zeus ” — if any, heart and soul, that name —
 Shouting the triumph-praise — proclaim,
 Complete in judgment shall that man be found.
 Zeus, who leads onward mortals to be wise,
 Appoints that suffering masterfully teach.
 In sleep, before the heart of each,
 A woe-remembering travail sheds in dew
 Discretion, — ay, and melts the unwilling too
 By what, perchance, may be a graciousness
 Of gods, enforced no less, —
 As they, commanders of the crew,
 Assume the awful seat.

And then the old leader of the Achaian fleet,
 Disparaging no seer —
 With bated breath to suit misfortune's inrush here
 — (What time it labored, that Achaian host,
 By stay from sailing, — every pulse at length
 Emptied of vital strength, —
 Hard over Kalchis shore-bound, current-croft
 In Aulis station, — while the winds which post
 From Strumon, ill-delayers, famine-fraught,

Tempters of man to sail where harborage is naught,
 Spendthrifts of ships and cables, turning time
 To twice the length, — these carded, by delay,
 To less and less away
 The Argeians' flowery prime :
 And when a remedy more grave and grand
 Than aught before — yea, for the storm and dearth —
 The prophet to the foremost in command
 Shrieked forth, as cause of this
 Adducing Artemis,
 So that the Atreidai striking staves on earth
 Could not withhold the tear) —
 Then did the king, the elder, speak this clear.

“ Heavy the fate, indeed — to disobey !
 Yet heavy if my child I slay,
 The adornment of my household : with the tide
 Of virgin-slaughter, at the altar-side,
 A father's hands defiling : which the way
 Without its evils, say ?
 How shall I turn fleet-fugitive,
 Failing of duty to allies ?
 Since for a wind-abating sacrifice
 And virgin blood, — 't is right they strive,
 Nay, madden with desire.
 Well may it work them — this that they require ! ”

But when he underwent necessity's
 Yoke-trace, — from soul blowing unhallowed change
 Unclean, abominable, — thence — another man —
 The audacious mind of him began
 Its wildest range.
 For this it gives mortals hardihood —
 Some vice-devising miserable mood
 Of madness, and first woe of all the brood.
 The sacrificer of his daughter — strange ! —
 He dared become, to expedite
 Woman-avenging warfare, — anchors weighed
 With such prelusive rite !

Prayings and callings “ Father ” — naught they made
 Of these, and of the virgin-age, —
 Captains heart-set on war to wage !
 His ministrants, vows done, the father bade —
 Kid-like, above the altar, swathed in pall,
 Take her — lift high, and have no fear at all,

Head-downward, and the fair mouth's guard
 And frontage hold, — press hard
 From utterance a curse against the House
 By dint of bit — violence bridling speech.
 And as to ground her saffron-vest she shed,
 She smote the sacrificers all and each
 With arrow sweet and piteous,
 From the eye only sped, —
 Significant of will to use a word,
 Just as in pictures : since, full many a time,
 In her sire's guest-hall, by the well-heaped board
 Had she made music, — lovingly with chime
 Of her chaste voice, that unpolluted thing,
 Honored the third libation, — paian that should bring
 Good fortune to the sire she loved so well.

What followed — those things I nor saw nor tell.
 But Kalchas' arts — whate'er they indicate —
 Miss of fulfilment never : it is fate.
 True, justice makes, in sufferers, a desire
 To know the future woe preponderate.
 But — hear before is need !
 To that, farewell and welcome ! 't is the same, indeed,
 As grief beforehand : clearly, part for part,
 Conformably to Kalchas' art,
 Shall come the event.
 But be they as they may, things subsequent, —
 What is to do, prosperity betide
 E'en as we wish it ! — we, the next allied,
 Sole guarding barrier of the Apian land.

I am come, reverencing power in thee,
 O Klutaimnestra ! For 't is just we bow
 To the ruler's wife, — the male-seat man-bereaved.
 But if thou, having heard good news, — or none, —
 For good news' hope dost sacrifice thus wide,
 I would hear gladly : art thou mute, — no grudge !

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Good-news-announcer, may — as is the by-word —
 Morn become, truly, — news from Night his mother !
 But thou shalt learn joy past all hope of hearing.
 Priamos' city have the Argeioi taken.

CHOROS.

How sayest ? The word, from want of faith, escaped me.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Troia the Achæioi hold : do I speak plainly ?

CHOROS.

Joy overcreeps me, calling forth the tear-drop.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Right ! for, that glad thou art, thine eye convicts thee.

CHOROS.

For — what to thee, of all this, trusty token ?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

What's here ! how else ? unless the god have cheated.

CHOROS.

Haply thou flattering shows of dreams respectest ?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

No fancy would I take of soul sleep-burdened.

CHOROS.

But has there puffed thee up some unwinged omen ?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

As a young maid's my mind thou mockest grossly.

CHOROS.

Well, at what time was — even sacked, the city ?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Of this same mother Night — the dawn, I tell thee.

CHOROS.

And who of messengers could reach this swiftness ?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Hephaistos — sending a bright blaze from Idé.
 Beacon did beacon send, from fire the poster,
 Hitherward : Idé to the rock Hermaian
 Of Lemnos : and a third great torch o' the island
 Zeus' seat received in turn, the Athoan summit.
 And, — so upsoaring as to stride sea over,
 The strong lamp-voyager, and all for joyance —
 Did the gold-glorious splendor, any sun like,

Pass on — the pine-tree — to Makistos' watch-place ;
 Who did not, — tardy, — caught, no wits about him,
 By sleep, — decline his portion of the missive.
 And far the beacon's light, on stream Euripos
 Arriving, made aware Messapios' warders,
 And up they lit in turn, played herald onwards,
 Kindling with flame a heap of gray old heather.
 And, strengthening still, the lamp, decaying nowise,
 Springing o'er Plain Asopos, — fullmoon-fashion
 Effulgent, — toward the crag of Mount Kithairon,
 Roused a new rendering-up of fire the escort —
 And light, far escort, lacked no recognition
 O' the guard — as burning more than burnings told you.
 And over Lake Gorgopis light went leaping,
 And, at Mount Aigioplanktos safe arriving,
 Enforced the law — “to never stint the fire-stuff.”
 And they send, lighting up with ungrudged vigor,
 Of flame a huge beard, ay, the very foreland
 So as to strike above, in burning onward,
 The look-out which commands the Strait Saronic.
 Then did it dart until it reached the outpost
 Mount Arachnaios here, the city's neighbor ;
 And then darts to this roof of the Atreidai
 This light of Idé's fire not unforefathered !
 Such are the rules prescribed the flambeau-bearers :
 He beats that's first and also last in running.
 Such is the proof and token I declare thee,
 My husband having sent me news from Troia.

CHOROS.

The gods, indeed, anon will I pray, woman !
 But now, these words to hear, and sate my wonder
 Thoroughly, I am fain — if twice thou tell them.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Troia do the Achaioi hold, this same day.
 I think a noise — no mixture — reigns i' the city.
 Sour wine and unguent pour thou in one vessel —
 Standers-apart, not lovers, would'st thou style them :
 And so, of captives and of conquerors, partwise
 The voices are to hear, of fortune diverse.
 For those, indeed, upon the bodies prostrate
 Of husbands, brothers, children upon parents
 — The old men, from a throat that's free no longer,
 Shriekingly wail the death-doom of their dearest :
 While these — the after-battle hungry labor,

Which prompts night-faring, marshals them to breakfast
 On the town's store, according to no billet
 Of sharing, but as each drew lot of fortune.
 In the spear-captured Troic habitations
 House they already: from the frosts upæthral
 And dews delivered, will they, luckless creatures,
 Without a watch to keep, slumber all night through.
 And if they fear the gods, the city-guarders,
 And the gods' structures of the conquered country,
 They may not — capturers — soon in turn be captive.
 But see no prior lust befall the army
 To sack things sacred — by gain-cravings vanquished !
 For there needs homeward the return's salvation,
 To round the new limb back o' the double racecourse.
 And guilty to the gods if came the army,
 Awakened up the sorrow of those slaughtered
 Might be — should no outbursting evils happen.
 But may good beat — no turn to see i' the balance !
 For, many benefits I want the gain of.

CHOROS.

Woman, like prudent man thou kindly speakest.
 And I, thus having heard thy trusty tokens,
 The gods to rightly hail forthwith prepare me ;
 For, grace that must be paid has crowned our labors.

O Zeus the king, and friendly Night
 Of these brave boons bestower —
 Thou who didst fling on Troia's every tower
 The o'er-roofing snare, that neither great thing might,
 Nor any of the young ones, overpass
 Captivity's great sweep-net — one and all
 Of Até held in thrall !
 Ay, Zeus I fear — the guest's friend great — who was
 The doer of this, and long since bent
 The bow on Alexandros with intent
 That neither wide o' the white
 Nor o'er the stars the foolish dart should light.
 The stroke of Zeus — they have it, as men say !
 This, at least, from the source track forth we may !
 As he ordained, so has he done.

“ No ” — said someone —

“ The gods think fit to care
 Nowise for mortals, such
 As those by whom the good and fair
 Of things denied their touch

Is trampled !” but he was profane.
 That they do care, has been made plain
 To offspring of the over-bold,
 Outbreathing “ Ares ” greater than is just —
 Houses that spill with more than they can hold,
 More than is best for man. Be man’s what must
 Keep harm off, so that in himself he find
 Sufficiency — the well-endowed of mind !
 For there’s no bulwark in man’s wealth to him
 Who, through a surfeit, kicks — into the dim
 And disappearing — Right’s great altar.

Yes —

It urges him, the sad persuasiveness,
 Até’s insufferable child that schemes
 Treason beforehand : and all cure is vain.
 It is not hidden : out it glares again,
 A light dread-lamping-mischief, just as gleams
 The badness of the bronze ;
 Through rubbing, puttings to the touch,
 Black-clotted is he, judged at once.
 He seeks — the boy — a flying bird to clutch,
 The insufferable brand
 Setting upon the city of his land
 Whereof not any god hears prayer ;
 While him who brought about such evils there,
 That unjust man, the god in grapple throws.
 Such an one, Paris goes
 Within the Atreidai’s house —
 Shamed the guest’s board by robbery of the spouse.

And, leaving to her townsmen throngs a-spread
 With shields, and spear-thrusts of sea-armament,
 And bringing Ilion, in a dowry’s stead,
 Destruction — swiftly through the gates she went,
 Daring the undarable. But many a groan outbroke
 From prophets of the House as thus they spoke.
 “ Woe, woe the House, the House and Rulers, — woe
 The marriage-bed and dints
 A husband’s love imprints !
 There she stands silent ! meets no honor — no
 Shame — sweetest still to see of things gone long ago !
 And, through desire of one across the main,
 A ghost will seem within the house to reign :
 And hateful to the husband is the grace
 Of well-shaped statues : from — in place of eyes,
 Those blanks — all Aphrodité dies.

" But dream-appearing mournful fantasies —
 There they stand, bringing grace that's vain.
 For vain 't is, when brave things one seems to view ;
 The fantasy has floated off, hands through ;
 Gone, that appearance, — nowise left to creep, —
 On wings, the servants in the paths of sleep ! "

Woes, then, in household and on hearth, are such
 As these — and woes surpassing these by much.
 But not these only : everywhere —
 For those who from the land
 Of Hellas issued in a band,
 Sorrow, the heart must bear,
 Sits in the home of each, conspicuous there.
 Many a circumstance, at least,
 Touches the very breast.
 For those
 Whom any sent away, — he knows :
 And in the live man's stead,
 Armor and ashes reach
 The house of each.

For Ares, gold-exchanger for the dead,
 And balance-holder in the fight o' the spear,
 Due-weight from Ilion sends —
 What moves the tear on tear —
 A charred scrap to the friends :
 Filling with well-packed ashes every urn,
 For man — that was — the sole return.
 And they groan — praising much, the while,
 Now this man as experienced in the strife.
 Now that, fallen nobly on a slaughtered pile,
 Because of — not his own — another's wife.
 But things there be, one barks,
 When no man harks :
 A surreptitious grief that's grudge
 Against the Atreidai who first sought the judge.
 But some there, round the rampart, have
 In Ilian earth, each one his grave :
 All fair-formed as at birth,
 It hid them — what they have and hold — the hostile earth.

And big with anger goes the city's word,
 And pays a debt by public curse incurred.
 And ever with me — as about to hear
 A something night-involved — remains my fear :
 Since of the many-slayers — not

Unwatching are the gods.
 The black Erinues, at due periods —
 Whoever gains the lot
 Of fortune with no right —
 Him, by life's strain and stress
 Back-again-beaten from success,
 They strike blind : and among the out-of-sight
 For who has got to be, avails no might.
 The being praised outrageously
 Is grave, for at the eyes of such an one
 Is launched, from Zeus, the thunder-stone.
 Therefore do I decide
 For so much and no more prosperity
 Than of his envy passes unespied.
 Neither a city-sacker would I be,
 Nor life, myself by others captive, see.

A swift report has gone our city through,
 From fire, the good-news messenger : if true,
 Who knows? Or is it not a god-sent lie?
 Who is so childish and deprived of sense
 That, having, at announcements of the flame
 Thus novel, felt his own heart fired thereby,
 He then shall, at a change of evidence,
 Be worsted just the same?
 It is conspicuous in a woman's nature,
 Before its view to take a grace for granted :
 Too trustful, — on her boundary, usurpature
 Is swiftly made ;
 But swiftly, too, decayed,
 The glory perishes by woman vaunted.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Soon shall we know — of these light-bearing torches,
 And beacons and exchanges, fire with fire —
 If they are true, indeed, or if, dream-fashion,
 This gladsome light came and deceived our judgment.
 Yon herald from the shore I see, o'ershadowed
 With boughs of olive : dust, mud's thirsty brother,
 Close neighbors on his garb, thus testify me
 That neither voiceless, nor yet kindling for thee
 Mountain-wood-flame, shall he explain by fire-smoke :
 But either tell out more the joyance, speaking . . .
 Word contrary to which, I aught but love it !
 For may good be — to good that's known — appendage !

CHOROS.

Whoever prays for aught else to this city
— May he himself reap fruit of his mind's error !

HERALD.

Ha, my forefathers' soil of earth Argeian !
Thee, in this year's tenth light, am I returned to —
Of many broken hopes, on one hope chancing ;
For never prayed I, in this earth Argeian
Dying, to share my part in tomb the dearest.
Now, hail thou earth, and hail thou also, sunlight,
And Zeus, the country's lord, and king the Puthian
From bow no longer urging at us arrows !
Enough, beside Skamandros, cam'st thou adverse :
Now, contrary, be savior thou and healer,
O king Apollon ! And gods conquest-granting,
All — I invoke too, and my tutelary
Hermes, dear herald, heralds' veneration, —
And Heroes our forthsenders, — friendly, once more
The army to receive, the war-spear's leavings !
Ha, mansions of my monarchs, roofs beloved,
And awful seats, and deities sun-fronting —
Receive with pomp your monarch, long time absent !
For he comes bringing light in night-time to you,
In common with all these — king Agamemnon.
But kindly greet him — for clear shows your duty —
Who has dug under Troia with the mattock
Of Zeus the Avenger, whereby plains are out-ploughed,
Altars unrecognizable, and god's shrines,
And the whole land's seed thoroughly has perished.
And such a yoke-strap having cast round Troia,
The elder king Atreides, happy man — he
Comes to be honored, worthiest of what mortals
Now are. Nor Paris nor the accomplice-city
Outvaunts their deed as more than they are done-by :
For, in a suit for rape and theft found guilty,
He missed of plunder and, in one destruction,
Fatherland, house and home has mowed to atoms :
Debts the Priamidai have paid twice over.

CHOROS.

Hail, herald from the army of Achaians !

HERALD.

I hail : — to die, will gainsay gods no longer !

CHOROS.

Love of this fatherland did exercise thee ?

HERALD.

So that I weep, at least, with joy, my eyes full.

CHOROS.

What, of this gracious sickness were ye gainers ?

HERALD.

How now ? instructed, I this speech shall master.

CHOROS.

For those who loved you back, with longing stricken.

HERALD.

This land yearned for the yearning army, say'st thou ?

CHOROS.

So as to set me oft, from dark mind, groaning.

HERALD.

Whence came this ill mind — hatred to the army ?

CHOROS.

Of old, I use, for mischief's physic, silence.

HERALD.

And how, the chiefs away, did you fear any ?

CHOROS.

So that now — late thy word — much joy were — dying !

HERALD.

For well have things been worked out : these, — in much time,
 Some of them, one might say, had luck in falling,
 While some were faulty : since who, gods excepted,
 Goes, through the whole time of his life, ungrieving ?
 For labors should I tell of, and bad lodgments,
 Narrow deckways ill-strewn, too, — what the day's woe
 We did not groan at getting for our portion ?
 As for land-things, again, on went more hatred !
 Since beds were ours hard by the foemen's ramparts,
 And, out of heaven and from the earth, the meadow
 Dews kept a-sprinkle, an abiding damage

Of vestures, making hair a wild-beast matting.
 Winter, too, if one told of it — bird-slaying —
 Such as, unbearable, Idaian snow brought —
 Or heat, when waveless, on its noontide couches
 Without a wind, the sea would slumber falling
 — Why must one mourn these? O'er and gone is labor :
 O'er and gone is it, even to those dead ones,
 So that no more again they mind uprising.
 Why must we tell in numbers those deprived ones,
 And the live man be vexed with fate's fresh outbreak?
 Rather, I bid full farewell to misfortunes !
 For us, the left from out the Argeian army,
 The gain beats, nor does sorrow counterbalance.
 So that 't is fitly boasted of, this sunlight,
 By us, o'er sea and land the aery flyers,
 Troia at last taking, the band of Argives
 Hang up such trophies to the gods of Hellas
 Within their domes — new glory to grow ancient ! ”
 Such things men having heard must praise the city
 And army-leaders : and the grace which wrought them —
 Of Zeus, shall honored be. Thou hast my whole word.

CHOROS.

O'ercome by words, their sense I do not gainsay.
 For, aye this breeds youth in the old — “to learn well.”
 But these things most the house and Klutaimnestra
 Concern, 't is likely : while they make me rich, too.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

I shouted long ago, indeed, for joyance,
 When came that first night-messenger of fire
 Proclaiming Ilion's capture and dispersion.
 And someone, girding me, said, “Through fire-bearers
 Persuaded — Troia to be sacked now, thinkest?
 Truly, the woman's way, — high to lift heart up ! ”
 By such words I was made seem wit-bewildered :
 Yet still I sacrificed ; and, — female-song with, —
 A shout one man and other, through the city,
 Set up, congratulating in the gods' seats,
 Soothing the incense-eating flame right fragrant.
 And now, what's more, indeed, why need'st thou tell me?
 I of the king himself shall learn the whole word :
 And, — as may best be, — I my revered husband
 Shall hasten, as he comes back, to receive : for —
 What's to a wife sweeter to see than this light
 (Her husband, by the god saved, back from warfare)

So as to open gates? This tell my husband —
 To come at soonest to his loving city.
 A faithful wife at home may he find, coming!
 Such an one as he left — the dog o' the household —
 Trusty to him, adverse to the ill-minded,
 And, in all else, the same: no signet-impress
 Having done harm to, in that time's duration.
 I know nor pleasure, nor blameworthy converse
 With any other man more than — bronze-dippings!

HERALD.

Such boast as this — brimful of the veracious —
 Is for a high-born dame not bad to send forth!

CHOROS.

Ay, she spoke thus to thee — that hast a knowledge
 From clear interpreters — a speech most seemly!
 But speak thou, herald! Meneleos I ask of:
 If he, returning, back in safety also
 Will come with you — this land's beloved chieftain?

HERALD.

There's no way I might say things false and pleasant
 For friends to reap the fruits of through a long time.

CHOROS.

How then, if, speaking good, things true thou chance on?

HERALD.

For not well-hidden things become they, sundered.
 The man has vanished from the Achaic army,
 He and his ship too. I announce no falsehood.

CHOROS.

Whether forth-putting openly from Ilion,
 Or did storm — wide woe — snatch him from the army?

HERALD.

Like topping bowman, thou hast touched the target,
 And a long sorrow hast succinctly spoken.

CHOROS.

Whether, then, of him, as a live or dead man
 Was the report by other sailors bruted?

HERALD.

Nobody knows so as to tell out clearly
 Excepting Helios who sustains earth's nature.

CHOROS.

How say'st thou then, did storm the naval army
 Attack and end, by the celestials' anger?

HERALD.

It suits not to defile a day auspicious
 With ill-announcing speech: distinct each god's due:
 And when a messenger with gloomy visage
 To a city bears a fall'n host's woes — God ward off! —
 One popular wound that happens to the city,
 And many sacrificed from many households —
 Men, scourged by that two-thonged whip Ares loves so,
 Double spear-headed curse, bloody yoke-couple, —
 Of woes like these, doubtless, whoe'er comes weighted,
 Him does it suit to sing the Erinues' paian.
 But who, of matters saved a glad-news-bringer,
 Comes to a city in good estate rejoicing. . . .
 How shall I mix good things with evil, telling
 Of storm against the Achaioi, urged by gods' wrath?
 For they swore league, being arch-foes before that,
 Fire and the sea: and plighted troth approved they,
 Destroying the unhappy Argeian army.
 At night began the bad-wave-outbreak evils;
 For, ships against each other Threikian breezes
 Shattered: and these, butted at in a fury
 By storm and typhoon, with surge rain-resounding, —
 Off they went, vanished, through a bad herd's whirling.
 And, when returned the brilliant light of Helios,
 We view the Aigaian sea on flower with corpses
 Of men Achaian and with naval ravage.
 But us indeed, and ship, unhurt i' the hull too,
 Either some one out-stole us or out-prayed us —
 Some god — no man it was the tiller touching.
 And Fortune, savior, willing on our ship sat.
 So as it neither had in harbor wave-surge
 Nor ran aground against a shore all rocky.
 And then, the water-Haides having fled from
 In the white day, not trusting to our fortune,
 We chewed the cud in thoughts — this novel sorrow
 O' the army laboring and badly pounded.
 And now — if anyone of them is breathing —

They talk of us as having perished : why not ?
 And we — that they the same fate have, imagine.
 May it be for the best ! Meneleos, then,
 Foremost and specially to come, expect thou !
 If (that is) any ray o' the sun reports him
 Living and seeing too — by Zeus' contrivings,
 Not yet disposed to quite destroy the lineage —
 Some hope is he shall come again to household.
 Having heard such things, know, thou truth art hearing !

CHOROS.

Whò may he have been that named thus wholly with exacti-
 tude —

(Was he someone whom we see not, by forecastings of the fu-
 ture

Guiding tongue in happy mood ?)

— Her with battle for a bridegroom, on all sides contention-
 wooed,

Helena ? Since — mark the suture ! —

Ship's-Hell, Man's-Hell, City's-Hell,

From the delicately-pompous curtains that pavilion well,

Forth, by favor of the gale

Of earth-born Zephyros did she sail.

Many shield-bearers, leaders of the pack,

Sailed too upon their track,

Theirs who had directed oar,

Then visible no more,

To Simois' leaf-luxuriant shore —

For sake of strife all gore !

To Iliion Wrath, fulfilling her intent,

This marriage-care — the rightly named so — sent :

In after-time, for the tables' abuse

And that of the hearth-partaker Zeus,

Bringing to punishment

Those who honored with noisy throat

The honor of the bride, the hymenæal note

Which did the kinsfolk then to singing urge.

But, learning a new hymn for that which was,

The ancient city of Priamos

Groans probably a great and general dirge,

Denominating Paris

“The man that miserably marries :” —

She who, all the while before,

A life, that was a general dirge

For citizens' unhappy slaughter, bore.

And thus a man, by no milk's help,
 Within his household reared a lion's whelp
 That loved the teat
 In life's first festal stage :
 Gentle as yet,
 A true child-lover, and, to men of age,
 A thing whereat pride warms ;
 And oft he had it in his arms
 Like any new-born babe, bright-faced, to hand
 Wagging its tail, at belly's strict command.

But in due time upgrown,
 The custom of progenitors was shown :
 For — thanks for sustenance repaying
 With ravage of sheep slaughtered —
 It made unbidden feast ;
 With blood the house was watered,
 To household came a woe there was no staying :
 Great mischief many-slaying !
 From God it was — some priest
 Of Até, in the house, by nurture thus increased.

At first, then, to the city of Iliion went
 A soul, as I might say, of windless calm —
 Wealth's quiet ornament,
 An eyes'-dart bearing balm,
 Love's spirit-biting flower.
 But — from the true course bending —
 She brought about, of marriage, bitter ending :
 Ill-resident, ill-mate, in power
 Passing to the Priamidai — by sending
 Of Hospitable Zeus —
 Erinus for a bride, — to make brides mourn, her dower.

Spoken long ago
 Was the ancient saying
 Still among mortals staying :
 " Man's great prosperity at height of rise
 Engenders offspring nor unchilded dies ;
 And, from good fortune, to such families,
 Buds forth insatiate woe."
 Whereas, distinct from any,
 Of my own mind I am :
 For 't is the unholy deed begets the many,
 Resembling each its dam.
 Of households that correctly estimate,
 Ever a beauteous child is born of Fate.

But ancient Arrogance delights to generate
 Arrogance, young and strong 'mid mortals' sorrow,
 Or now, or then, when comes the appointed morrow.
 And she bears young Satiety ;
 And, fiend with whom nor fight nor war can be,
 Unholy Daring — twin black Curses
 Within the household, children like their nurses.

But Justice shines in smoke-grimed habitations,
 And honors the well-omened life ;
 While, — gold-besprinkled stations
 Where the hands' filth is rife,
 With backward-turning eyes
 Leaving, — to holy seats she hies,
 Not worshipping the power of wealth
 Stamped with applause by stealth :
 And to its end directs each thing begun.

Approach then, my monarch,* of Troia the sacker, of Atreus the
 son !

How ought I address thee, how ought I revere thee, — nor yet
 overhitting

Nor yet underbending the grace that is fitting ?

Many of mortals hasten to honor the seeming-to-be —

Passing by justice : and, with the ill-faring, to groan as he groans
 all are free.

But no bite of the sorrow their liver has reached to :

They say with the joyful, — one outside on each, too,

As they force to a smile smileless faces.

But whoever is good at distinguishing races

In sheep of his flock — it is not for the eyes

Of a man to escape such a shepherd's surprise,

As they seem, from a well-wishing mind,

In watery friendship to fawn and be kind.

Thou to me, then, indeed, sending an army for Helena's sake,

(I will not conceal it,) wast — oh, by no help of the Muses ! —
 depicted

Not well of thy midriff the rudder directing, — convicted

Of bringing a boldness they did not desire to the men with ex-
 istence at stake.

But now — from no outside of mind, nor unlovingly — gracious
 thou art

To those who have ended the labor, fulfilling their part ;

And in time shalt thou know, by inquiry instructed,

Who of citizens justly, and who not to purpose, the city con-
 ducted.

AGAMEMNON.

First, indeed, Argos, and the gods, the local,
'Tis right addressing — those with me the partners
In this return and right things done the city
Of Priamos : gods who, from no tongue hearing
The rights o' the cause, for Ilion's fate man-slaught'rous
Into the bloody vase, not oscillating,
Put thè vote-pebbles, while, o' the rival vessel,
Hope rose up to the lip-edge : filled it was not.
By smoke the captured city is still conspicuous :
Até's burnt-offerings live : and, dying with them,
The ash sends forth the fulsome blasts of riches.
Of these things, to the gods grace many-mindful
'Tis right I render, since both nets outrageous
We built them round with, and, for sake of woman,
It did the city to dust — the Argeian monster,
The horse's nestling, the shield-bearing people
That made a leap, at setting of the Pleiads,
And, vaulting o'er the tower, the raw-flesh-feeding
Lion licked up his fill of blood tyrannic.
I to the gods indeed prolonged this preface ;
But — as for *thy* thought, I remember hearing —
I say the same, and thou co-pleader hast me.
Since few of men this faculty is born with —
To honor, without grudge, their friend successful.
For moody, on the heart, a poison seated
Its burden doubles to who gained the sickness :
By his own griefs he is himself made heavy,
And out-of-door prosperity seeing groans at.
Knowing, I 'd call (for well have I experienced)
“ Fellowship's mirror,” “ phantom of a shadow,”
Those seeming to be mighty gracious to me :
While just Odusseus — he who sailed not willing —
When joined on, was to me the ready trace-horse.
This of him, whether dead or whether living,
I say. For other city-and-gods' concernment —
Appointing common courts, in full assemblage
We will consult. And as for what holds seemly —
How it may lasting stay well, must be counselled :
While what has need of medicines Paionian
We, either burning or else cutting kindly,
Will make endeavor to turn pain from sickness.
And now into the domes and homes by altar
Going, I to the gods first raise the right-hand —
They who, far sending, back again have brought me.
And Victory, since she followed, fixed remain she !

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Men, citizens, Argeians here, my worships !
 I shall not shame me, consort-loving manners
 To tell before you : for in time there dies off
 The diffidence from people. Not from others
 Learning, I of myself will tell the hard life
 I bore so long as this man was 'neath Iliion.
 First : for a woman, from the male divided.
 To sit at home alone, is monstrous evil —
 Hearing the many rumors back-revenging :
 And for now This to come, now That bring after
 Woe, and still worse woe, bawling in the household !
 And truly, if so many wounds had chanced on
 My husband here, as homeward used to dribble
 Report, he 's pierced more than a net to speak of !
 While, were he dying (as the words abounded)
 A triple-bodied Geruon the Second,
 Plenty above — for loads below I count not —
 Of earth a three-share cloak he 'd boast of taking,
 Once only dying in each several figure !
 Because of such-like rumors back-revenging,
 Many the halters from my neck, above head,
 Others than *I* loosed — loosed from neck by main force !
 From this cause, sure, the boy stands not beside me —
 Possessor of our troth-plights, thine and mine too —
 As ought Orestes : be not thou astonished !
 For, him brings up our well-disposed guest-captive
 Strophios the Phokian — ills that told on both sides
 To me predicting — both of thee 'neath Iliion
 The danger, and if anarchy's mob-uproar
 Should o'erthrow thy council ; since it is born with
 Mortals, — whoe'er has fallen, the more to kick him.
 Such an excuse, I think, no cunning carries !
 As for myself — why, of my wails the rushing
 Fountains are dried up : not in them a drop more !
 And in my late-to-bed eyes have I damage
 Bewailing what concerned thee, those torch-holdings
 Forever unattended to. In dreams — why,
 Beneath the light wing-beats o' the gnat, I woke up
 As he went buzzing — sorrows that concerned thee
 Seeing, that filled more than their fellow-sleep-time.
 Now, all this having suffered, from soul grief-free
 I would style this man here the dog o' the stables,
 The savior forestay of the ship, the high roof's
 Ground-prop, son sole-begotten to his father,

— Ay, land appearing to the sailors past hope,
 Loveliest day to see after a tempest,
 To the wayfaring-one athirst a well-spring,
 — The joy, in short, of 'scaping all that's — fatal!
 I judge him worth addresses such as these are
 — Envy stand off! — for many those old evils
 We underwent. And now, to me — dear headship! —
 Dismount thou from this car, not earthward setting
 The foot of thine, O king, that's Ilion's spoiler!
 Slave-maids, why tarry? — whose the task allotted
 The soil o' the road to strew with carpet-spreadings.
 Immediately be purple-strewn the pathway,
 So that to home unhop'd may lead him — Justice!
 As for the rest, care shall — by no sleep conquered —
 Dispose things — justly (gods to aid!) appointed.

AGAMEMNON.

Offspring of Leda, of my household warder,
 Suitably to my absence hast thou spoken,
 For long the speech thou didst outstretch! But aptly
 To praise — from others ought to go this favor.
 And for the rest, — not me, in woman's fashion,
 Mollify, nor — as mode of barbarous man is —
 To me gape forth a groundward-falling clamor!
 Nor, strewing it with garments, make my passage
 Envied! Gods, sure, with these behoves us honor:
 But, for a mortal on these varied beauties
 To walk — to me, indeed, is nowise fear-free.
 I say — as man, not god, to me do homage!
 Apart from foot-mats both and varied vestures,
 Renown is loud, and — not to lose one's senses,
 God's greatest gift. Behoves we him call happy
 Who has brought life to end in loved wellbeing.
 If all things I might manage thus — brave man, I!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Come now, this say, nor feign a feeling to me!

AGAMEMNON.

With feeling, know indeed, I do not tamper!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Vowedst thou to the gods, in fear, to act thus?

AGAMEMNON.

If any, I well knew resolve I outspoke.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

What think'st thou Priamos had done, thus victor?

AGAMEMNON.

On varied vests — I do think — he had passaged.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Then, do not, struck with awe at human censure. . . .

AGAMEMNON.

Well, popular mob-outcry much avails too!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Ay, but the unenvied is not the much valued.

AGAMEMNON.

Sure, 't is no woman's part to long for battle! .

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Why, to the prosperous, even suits a beating!

AGAMEMNON.

What? thou this beating us in war dost prize too?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Persuade thee! power, for once, grant *me* — and willing!

AGAMEMNON.

But if this seem so to thee — shoes, let someone
Loose under, quick — foot's serviceable carriage!
And me, on these sea-products walking, may no
Grudge from a distance, from the god's eye, strike at!
For great shame were my strewment-spoiling — riches
Spoiling with feet, and silver-purchased textures!
Of these things, thus then. But this female-stranger
Tenderly take inside! Who conquers mildly
God, from afar, benignantly regardeth.
For, willing, no one wears a yoke that's servile:
And she, of many valuables, outpicked
The flower, the army's gift, myself has followed.
So — since to hear thee, I am brought about thus, —
I go into the palace — purples treading.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

There is the sea — and what man shall exhaust it? —
Feeding much purple's worth-its-weight-in-silver

Oye, ever fresh and fresh, our garments' tincture ;
 At home, such wealth, king, we begin — by gods' help —
 With having, and to lack, the household knows not.
 Of many garments had I vowed a treading
 In oracles if fore-enjoined the household)
 Of this dear soul the safe-return-price scheming !
 For, root existing, foliage goes up houses,
 Shadow o'erspreading against Seirios dog-star ;
 And, thou returning to the hearth domestic,
 Warmth, yea, in winter dost thou show returning.
 And when, too, Zeus works, from the green-grape acrid,
 Wine — then, already, cool in houses cometh —
 The perfect man his home perambulating !
 Zeus, Zeus Perfecter, these my prayers perfect thou !
 Thy care be — yea — of things thou may'st make perfect !

CHOROS.

Wherefore to me, this fear —
 Foundedly stationed here
 Fronting my heart, the portent-watcher — flits she ?
 Wherefore should prophet-play
 The uncalled and unpaid lay,
 Nor — having spat forth fear, like bad dreams — sits she
 On the mind's throne beloved — well-suasive Boldness ?
 For time, since, by a throw of all the hands,
 The boat's stern-cables touched the sands,
 Has passed from youth to oldness, —
 When under Ilion rushed the ship-borne bands.

And from my eyes I learn —
 Being myself my witness — their return.
 Yet, all the same, without a lyre, my soul,
 Itself its teacher too, chants from within
 Erinus' dirge, not having now the whole
 Of Hope's dear boldness : nor my inwards sin —
 The heart that's rolled in whirls against the mind
 Justly presageful of a fate behind.
 But I pray — things false, from my hope, may fall
 Into the fate that's not-fulfilled-at-all !

Especially at least, of health that's great
 The term's insatiable : for, its weight
 — A neighbor, with a common wall between —
 Ever will sickness learn ;
 And destiny, her course pursuing straight,
 Has struck man's ship against a reef unseen.

Now, when a portion, rather than the treasure,
 Fear casts from sling, with peril in right measure,
 It has not sunk — the universal freight,
 (With misery freighted over-full,)
 Nor has fear whelmed the hull.
 Then too the gift of Zeus,
 Two-handedly profuse,
 Even from the furrows' yield for yearly use
 Has done away with famine, the disease ;
 But blood of man to earth once falling, — deadly, black, —
 In times ere these, —
 Who may, by singing spells, call back ?
 Zeus had not else stopped one who rightly knew
 The way to bring the dead again.
 But, did not an appointed Fate constrain
 The Fate from gods, to bear no more than due,
 My heart, outstripping what tongue utters,
 Would have all out : which now, in darkness, mutters
 Moodily grieved, nor ever hopes to find
 How she a word in season may unwind
 From out the enkindling mind.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Take thyself in, thou too — I say, Cassandra !
 Since Zeus — not angrily — in household placed thee
 Partaker of hand-sprinklings, with the many
 Slaves stationed, his the Owner's altar close to.
 Descend from out this car, nor be high-minded !
 And truly they do say Alkmene's child once
 Bore being sold, slaves' barley-bread his living.
 If, then, necessity of this lot o'erbalance,
 Much is the favor of old-wealthy masters :
 For those who, never hoping, made fine harvest
 Are harsh to slaves in all things, beyond measure.
 Thou hast — with us — such usage as law warrants.

CHOROS.

To thee it was, she paused plain speech from speaking.
 Being inside the fatal nets — obeying,
 Thou may'st obey : but thou may'st disobey too !

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Why, if she is not, in the swallow's fashion,
 Possessed of voice that's unknown and barbaric,
 I, with speech — speaking in mind's scope — persuade her

CHOROS.

Follow! The best — as things now stand — she speaks of.
Obey thou, leaving this thy car-enthronement!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Well, with this thing at door, for me no leisure
To waste time: as concerns the hearth mid-navelled,
Already stand the sheep for fireside slaying
By those who never hoped to have such favor.
If thou, then, aught of this wilt do, delay not!
But if thou, being witless, tak'st no word in,
Speak thou, instead of voice, with hand as Kars do!

CHOROS.

She seems a plain interpreter in need of,
The stranger! and her way — a beast's new-captured!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Why, she is mad, sure, — hears her own bad senses, —
Who, while she comes, leaving a town new-captured,
Yet knows not how to bear the bit o' the bridle
Before she has out-frothed her bloody fierceness.
Not I — throwing away more words' — will shamed be!

CHOROS.

But I, — for I compassionate, — will chafe not.
Come, 'O unhappy one, this car vacating,
Yielding to this necessity, prove yoke's use!

KASSANDRA.

Otototoi, Gods, Earth —
Apollon, Apollon!

CHOROS.

Why didst thou "ototoi" concerning Loxias?
Since he is none such as to suit a mourner.

KASSANDRA.

Otototoi, Gods, Earth, —
Apollon, Apollon!

CHOROS.

Ill-boding here again the god invokes she
— Nowise empowered in woes to stand by helpful.

KASSANDRA.

Apollon, Apollon,
Guard of the ways, my destroyer!
For thou hast quite, this second time, destroyed me.

CHOROS.

To prophesy she seems of her own evils:
Remains the god-gift to the slave-soul present.

KASSANDRA.

Apollon, Apollon,
Guard of the ways, my destroyer!
Ha, whither hast thou led me? to what roof now?

CHOROS.

To the Atreidai's roof: if this thou know'st not,
I tell it thee, nor this wilt thou call falsehood.

KASSANDRA.

How! how!
God-hated, then! Of many a crime it knew —
Self-slaying evils, halters too:
Man's-shambles, blood-besprinkler of the ground!

CHOROS.

She seems to be good-nosed, the stranger: dog-like,
She snuffs indeed the victims she will find there.

KASSANDRA.

How! how!
By the witnesses here I am certain now!
These children bewailing their slaughters — flesh dressed in
the fire
And devoured by their sire!

CHOROS.

Ay, we have heard of thy soothsaying glory,
Doubtless: but prophets none are we in scent of!

KASSANDRA.

Ah, gods, what ever does she meditate?
What this new anguish great?
Great in the house here she meditates ill
Such as friends cannot bear, cannot cure it: and still
Off stands all Resistance
Afar in the distance!

CHOROS.

Of these I witless am — these prophesyings.
But those I knew : for the whole city bruits them.

KASSANDRA.

Ah, unhappy one, this thou consummatest ?
Thy husband, thy bed's common guest,
In the bath having brightened. . . . How shall I declare
Consummation ? It soon will be there :
For hand after hand she outstretches,
At life as she reaches !

CHOROS.

Nor yet I 've gone with thee ! for — after riddles —
Now, in blind oracles, I feel resourceless.

KASSANDRA.

Eh, eh, papai, papai,
What this, I espy ?
Some net of Haidēs undoubtedly !
Nay, rather, the snare
Is she who has share
In his bed, who takes part in the murder there !
But may a revolt —
Unceasing assault —
On the Race, raise a shout
Sacrificial, about
A victim — by stoning —
For murder atoning !

CHOROS.

What this Erinus which i' the house thou callest
To raise her cry ? Not me thy word enlightens !
To my heart has run
A drop of the crocus-dye :
Which makes for those
On earth by the spear that lie,
A common close
With life's descending sun.
Swift is the curse begun !

KASSANDRA.

How ! how !
See — see quick !
Keep the bull from the cow !

In the vesture she catching him, strikes him now
 With the black-horned trick,
 And he falls in the watery vase!
 Of the craft-killing caldron I tell thee the case!

CHOROS.

I would not boast to be a topping critic
 Of oracles: but to some sort of evil
 I liken these. From oracles, what good speech
 To mortals, beside, is sent?
 It comes of their evils: these arts word-abounding that
 sing the event
 Bring the fear 't is their office to teach.

KASSANDRA.

Ah me, ah me —
 Of me unhappy, evil-destined fortunes!
 For I bewail my proper woe
 As, mine with his, all into one I throw.
 Why hast thou hither me unhappy brought?
 — Unless that I should die with him — for naught!
 What else was sought?

CHOROS.

Thou art some mind-mazed creature, god-possessed:
 And all about thyself dost wail
 A lay — no lay!
 Like some brown nightingale
 Insatiable of noise, who — well away! —
 From her unhappy breast
 Keeps moaning Itus, Itus, and his life
 With evils, flourishing on each side, rife.

KASSANDRA.

Ah me, ah me,
 The fate o' the nightingale, the clear resounder!
 For a body wing-borne have the gods cast round her,
 And sweet existence, from misfortunes free:
 But for myself remains a sundering
 With spear, the two-edged thing!

CHOROS.

Whence hast thou this on-rushing god-involving pain
 And spasms in vain?
 For, things that terrify,
 With changing unintelligible cry

Thou strikest up in tune, yet all the while
 After that Orthian style!
 Whence hast thou limits to the oracular road,
 That evils bode?

KASSANDRA.

Ah me, the nuptials, the nuptials of Paris, the deadly to
 friends!
 Ah me, of Skamandros the draught
 Paternal! There once, to these ends,
 On thy banks was I brought,
 The unhappy! And now, by Kokutos and Acheron's shore
 [shall soon be, it seems, these my oracles singing once more!

CHOROS.

Why this word, plain too much,
 Hast thou uttered? A babe might learn of such!
 [am struck with a bloody bite — here under —
 At the fate woe-wreaking
 Of thee shrill-shrieking:
 To me who hear — a wonder!

KASSANDRA.

Ah me, the toils — the toils of the city
 The wholly destroyed: ah, pity,
 Of the sacrificings my father made
 In the ramparts' aid —
 Much slaughter of grass-fed flocks — that afforded no cure
 That the city should not, as it does now, the burthen endure!
 But I, with the soul on fire,
 Soon to the earth shall cast me and expire!

CHOROS.

To things, on the former consequent,
 Again hast thou given vent:
 And 't is some evil-meaning fiend doth move thee,
 Heavily falling from above thee,
 To melodize thy sorrows — else, in singing,
 Calamitous, death-bringing!
 And of all this the end
 [am without resource to apprehend.

KASSANDRA.

Well then, the oracle from veils no longer
 Shall be outlooking, like a bride new-married:
 But bright it seems, against the sun's uprisings .

Breathing, to penetrate thee : so as, wave-like,
 To wash against the rays a woe much greater
 Than this. I will no longer teach by riddles.
 And witness, running with me, that of evils
 Done long ago, I nosing track the footstep !
 For, this same roof here — never quits a Choros
 One-voiced, not well-tuned since no " well " it utters :
 And truly having drunk, to get more courage,
 Man's blood — the Komos keeps within the household
 — Hard to be sent outside — of sister Furies :
 They hymn their hymn — within the house close sitting —
 The first beginning curse : in turn spit forth at
 The Brother's bed, to him who spurned it hostile.
 Have I missed aught, or hit I like a bowman ?
 False prophet am I, — knock at doors, a babbler ?
 Henceforward witness, swearing now, I know not
 By other's word the old sins of this household !

• CHOROS.

And how should oath, bond honorably binding,
 Become thy cure ? No less I wonder at thee
 — That thou, beyond sea reared, a strange-tongued city
 Should'st hit in speaking, just as if thou stood'st by !

KASSANDRA.

Prophet Apollon put me in this office.

CHOROS.

What, even though a god, with longing smitten ?

KASSANDRA.

At first, indeed, shame was to me to say this.

CHOROS.

For, more relaxed grows everyone who fares well.

KASSANDRA.

But he was athlete to me — huge grace breathing !

CHOROS.

Well, to the work of children, went ye law's way ?

KASSANDRA.

Having consented, Loxias I played false to.

CHOROS.

Already when the wits inspired possessed of ?

KASSANDRA.

Already townsmen all their woes I foretold.

CHOROS.

How wast thou then unhurt by Loxias' anger?

KASSANDRA.

I no one aught persuaded, when I sinned thus.

CHOROS.

To us, at least, now sooth to say thou seemest.

KASSANDRA.

Halloo, halloo, ah, evils!
 Again, straightforward foresight's fearful labor
 Whirls me, distracting with prelusive last-lays!
 Behold ye those there, in the household seated, —
 Young ones, — of dreams approaching to the figures?
 Children, as if they died by their beloveds —
 Hands they have filled with flesh, the meal domestic —
 Entrails and vitals both, most piteous burthen,
 Plain they are holding! — which their father tasted!
 For this, I say, plans punishment a certain
 Lion ignoble, on the bed that wallows,
 House-guard (ah, me!) to the returning master
 — Mine, since to bear the slavish yoke behoves me!
 The ships' commander, Ilion's desolator,
 Knows not what things the tongue of the lewd she-dog
 Speaking, outspreading, shiny-souled, in fashion
 Of Até hid, will reach to, by ill fortune!
 Such things she dares — the female, the male's slayer!
 She is . . . how calling her the hateful bite-beast
 May I hit the mark? Some amphisbaina — Skulla
 Housing in rocks, of mariners the mischief,
 Revelling Haides' mother, — curse, no truce with,
 Breathing at friends! How piously she shouted,
 The all-courageous, as at turn of battle!
 She seems to joy at the back-bringing safety!
 Of this, too, if I naught persuade, all's one! Why?
 What is to be will come! And soon thou, present,
 "True prophet all too much" wilt pitying style me!

CHOROS.

Thuestes' feast, indeed, on flesh of children,
 I went with, and I shuddered. Fear too holds me
 Listing what's true as life, nowise out-imaged!

KASSANDRA.

I say, thou Agamemnon's fate shalt look on!

CHOROS.

Speak good words, O unhappy! Set mouth sleeping!

KASSANDRA.

But Paian stands in no stead to the speech here.

CHOROS.

Nay, if the thing be near: but never be it!

KASSANDRA.

Thou, indeed, prayest: they to kill are busy!

CHOROS.

Of what man is it ministered, this sorrow?

KASSANDRA.

There again, wide thou look'st of my foretellings.

CHOROS.

For, the fulfiller's scheme I have not gone with.

KASSANDRA.

And yet too well I know the speech Hellenic.

CHOROS.

For Puthian oracles, thy speech, and hard too!

KASSANDRA.

Papai: what fire this! and it comes upon me!
 Ototoi, Lukeion Apollon, ah me — me!
 She, the two-footed lioness that sleeps with
 The wolf, in absence of the generous lion,
 Kills me the unhappy one: and as a poison
 Brewing, to put my price too in the anger,
 She vows, against her mate this weapon whetting
 To pay him back the bringing me, with slaughter.
 Why keep I then these things to make me laughed at,
 Both wands and, round my neck, oracular fillets?
 Thee, at least, ere my own fate will I ruin:
 Go, to perdition falling! Boons exchange we —
 Some other Até in my stead make wealthy!
 See there — himself, Apollon stripping from me

The oracular garment! having looked upon me
 — Even in these adornments, laughed by friends at,
 As good as foes, i' the balance weighed: and vainly —
 For, called crazed stroller, — as I had been gypsy,
 Beggar, unhappy, starved to death, — I bore it.
 And now the Prophet — prophet me undoing,
 Has led away to these so deadly fortunes!
 Instead of my sire's altar, waits the hack-block
 She struck with first warm bloody sacrificing!
 Yet nowise unavenged of gods will death be:
 For there shall come another, our avenger,
 The mother-slaying scion, father's doomsman:
 Fugitive, wanderer, from this land an exile,
 Back shall he come, — for friends, coperstone these curses!
 For there is sworn a great oath from the gods that
 Him shall bring hither his fallen sire's prostration.
 Why make I then, like an indweller, moaning?
 Since at the first I foresaw Ilion's city
 Suffering as it has suffered: and who took it,
 Thus by the judgment of the gods are faring.
 I go, will suffer, will submit to dying!
 But, Haides' gates — these same I call, I speak to,
 And pray that on an opportune blow chancing,
 Without a struggle, — blood the calm death bringing
 In easy outflow, — I this eye may close up!

CHOROS.

O much unhappy, but, again, much learned
 Woman, long hast thou outstretched! But if truly
 Thou knowest thine own fate, how comes that, like to
 A god-led steer, to altar bold thou treadest?

KASSANDRA.

There's no avoidance, — strangers, no! Some time more!

CHOROS.

He last is, anyhow, by time advantaged.

KASSANDRA.

It comes, the day: I shall by flight gain little.

CHOROS.

But know thou patient art from thy brave spirit!

KASSANDRA.

Such things hears no one of the happy-fortuned.

CHOROS.

But gloriously to die — for man is grace, sure!

KASSANDRA.

Ah, sire, for thee and for thy noble children!

CHOROS.

But what thing is it? What fear turns thee backwards?

KASSANDRA.

Alas, alas!

CHOROS.

Why this "alas"? if 't is no spirit's loathing . . .

KASSANDRA.

Slaughter blood-dripping does the household smell of!

CHOROS.

How else? This scent is of hearth-sacrifices.

KASSANDRA.

Such kind of steam as from a tomb is proper!

CHOROS.

No Surian honor to the House thou speak'st of!

KASSANDRA.

But I will go, — even in the household wailing

My fate and Agamemnon's. Life suffice me!

Ah, strangers!

I cry not "ah" — as bird at bush — through terror

Idly! to me, the dead thus much bear witness:

When, for me — woman, there shall die a woman,

And, for a man ill-wived, a man shall perish!

This hospitality I ask as dying.

CHOROS.

O sufferer, thee — thy foretold fate I pity.

KASSANDRA.

Yet once for all, to speak a speech, I fain am:

No dirge, mine for myself! The sun I pray to,

Fronting his last light! — to my own avengers —

That from my hateful slayers they exact too

Pay for the dead slave — easy-managed hand's-work!

CHOROS.

Alas for mortal matters! Happy-fortuned, —
 Why, any shade would turn them: if unhappy,
 By throws the wetting sponge has spoiled the picture!
 And more by much in mortals this I pity.
 The being well-to-do —
 Insatiate a desire of this
 Born with all mortals is,
 Nor any is there who
 Wellbeing forces off, aoints
 From roofs whereat a finger points,
 “No more come in!” exclaiming. This man, too,
 To take the city of Priamos did the celestials give,
 And, honored by the god, he homeward comes;
 But now if, of the former, he shall pay
 The blood back, and, for those who ceased to live,
 Dying, for deaths in turn new punishment he dooms —
 Who, being mortal, would not pray
 With an unmischievous
 Daimon to have been born — who would not, hearing thus?

AGAMEMNON.

Ah me! I am struck — a right-aimed stroke within me!

CHOROS.

Silence! Who is it shouts “stroke” — “right-aimedly” a wounded one?

AGAMEMNON.

Ah me! indeed again, — a second, struck by!

CHOROS.

This work seems to me completed by this “Ah me” of the king’s;
 But we somehow may together share in solid counsellings.

CHOROS I.

I, in the first place, my opinion tell you:
 — To cite the townsmen, by help-cry, to house here.

CHOROS II.

To me, it seems we ought to fall upon them
 At quickest — prove the fact by sword fresh-flowing!

CHOROS III.

And I, of such opinion the partaker,
Vote — to do something : not to wait — the main point !

CHOROS IV.

'Tis plain to see : for they prelude as though of
A tyranny the signs they gave the city.

CHOROS V.

For we waste time ; while they, — this waiting's glory
Treading to ground, — allow the hand no slumber.

CHOROS VI.

I know not — chancing on some plan — to tell it :
'Tis for the doer to plan of the deed also.

CHOROS VII.

And I am such another : since I'm schemeless
How to raise up again by words — a dead man !

CHOROS VIII.

What, and, protracting life, shall we give way thus
To the disgracers of our home, these rulers ?

CHOROS IX.

Why, 't is unbearable : but to die is better :
For death than tyranny is the riper finish !

CHOROS X.

What, by the testifying " Ah me " of him,
Shall we prognosticate the man as perished ?

CHOROS XI.

We must quite know ere speak these things concerning :
For to conjecture and " quite know " are two things.

CHOROS XII.

This same to praise I from all sides abound in —
Clearly to know, Atreides, what he's doing !

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Much having been before to purpose spoken,
The opposite to say I shall not shamed be :
For how should one, to enemies, — in semblance,
Friends, — enmity proposing, — sorrow's net-frame

Enclose, a height superior to outleaping?
 To me, indeed, this struggle of old — not mindless
 Of an old victory — came: with time, I grant you!
 I stand where I have struck, things once accomplished:
 And so have done, — and this deny I shall not, —
 As that his fate was nor to fly nor ward off.
 A wrap-round with no outlet, as for fishes,
 I fence about him — the rich woe of the garment:
 I strike him twice, and in a double “Ah-me!”
 He let his limbs go — *there!* And to him, fallen,
 The third blow add I, giving — of Below-ground
 Zeus, guardian of the dead — the votive favor.
 Thus in the mind of him he rages, falling,
 And blowing forth a brisk blood-spat, strikes me
 With the dark drop of slaughterous dew — rejoicing
 No less than, at the god-given dewy-comfort,
 The sown-stuff in its birth-throes from the calyx.
 Since so these things are, — Argives, my revered here, —
 Ye may rejoice — if ye rejoice: but I — boast!
 If it were fit on corpse to pour libation,
 That would be right — right over and above, too!
 The cup of evils in the house he, having
 Filled with such curses, himself coming drinks of.

CHOROS.

We wonder at thy tongue: since bold-mouthed truly
 Is she who in such speech boasts o'er her husband!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Ye test me as I were a witless woman:
 But I — with heart intrepid — to you knowers
 Say (and thou — if thou wilt or praise or blame me,
 Comes to the same) — this man is Agamemnon,
 My husband, dead, the work of the right hand here,
 Ay, of a just artificer: so things are.

CHOROS.

What evil, O woman, food or drink, earth-bred
 Or sent from the flowing sea,
 Of such having fed
 Didst thou set on thee
 This sacrifice
 And popular cries
 Of a curse on thy head?
 Off thou hast thrown him, off hast cut
 The man from the city: but —

Off from the city thyself shalt be
Cut — to the citizens
A hate immense !

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Now, indeed, thou adjudgest exile to me,
And citizens' hate, and to have popular curses :
Nothing of this against the man here bringing,
Who, no more awe-checked than as 't were a beast's fate, —
With sheep abundant in the well-fleeced graze-flocks, —
Sacrificed *his* child, — dearest fruit of travail
To me, — as song-spell against Threikian blowings.
Not *him* did it behove thee hence to banish
— Pollution's penalty ? But hearing *my* deeds
Justicer rough thou art ! Now, this I tell thee :
To threaten thus — me, one prepared to have thee
(On like conditions, thy hand conquering) o'er me
Rule : but if God the opposite ordain us,
Thou shalt learn — late taught, certes — to be modest.

CHOROS.

Greatly-intending thou art :
Much-mindful, too, hast thou cried
(Since thy mind, with its slaughter-outpouring part,
Is frantic) that over the eyes, a patch
Of blood — with blood to match —
Is plain for a pride !
Yet still, bereft of friends, thy fate
Is — blow with blow to expiate !

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

And this thou hearest — of my oaths, just warrant !
By who fulfilled things for my daughter, Justice,
Até, Erinus, — by whose help I slew him, —
Not mine the fancy — Fear will tread my palace
So long as on my hearth there burns a fire,
Aigisthos as before well-caring for me ;
Since he to me is shield, no small, of boldness.
Here does he lie — outrager of this female,
Dainty of all the Chruseids under Ithion ;
And she — the captive, the soothsayer also
And couchmate of this man, oracle-speaker,
Faithful bedfellow, — ay, the sailors' benches
They wore in common, nor unpunished did so,
Since he is — thus ! While, as for her, — swan-fashion,
Her latest having chanted, — dying wailing

She lies, — to him, a sweetheart : me she brought to
My bed's by-nicety, the whet of dalliance.

CHOROS.

Alas, that some
Fate would come
Upon us in quickness —
Neither much sickness ·
Neither bed-keeping —
And bear unended sleeping,
Now that subdued
Is our keeper, the kindest of mood !
Having borne, for a woman's sake, much strife —
By a woman he withered from life !
Ah me !
Law-breaking Helena who, one,
Hast many, so many souls undone
'Neath Troia ! and now the consummated
Much-memorable curse
Hast thou made flower-forth, red
With the blood no rains disperse,
That which was then in the House —
Strife all-subduing, the woe of a spouse.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Nowise, of death the fate —
Burdened by these things — supplicate !
Nor on Helena turn thy wrath
As the man-destroyer, as " she who hath,
Being but one,
Many and many a soul undone
Of the men, the Danaoi " —
And wrought immense annoy !

CHOROS.

Daimon, who fallest
Upon this household and the double-raced
Tantalidai, a rule, minded like theirs displaced,
Thou rulest me with, now,
Whose heart thou gallest !
And on the body, like a hateful crow,
Stationed, all out of tune, his chant to chant
Doth something vaunt !

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Now, of a truth, hast thou set upright
Thy mouth's opinion, —

Naming the Sprite,
 The triply-gross,
 O'er the race that has dominion :
 For through him it is that Eros
 The carnage-licker
 In the belly is bred : ere ended quite
 Is the elder throe --- new ichor !

CHOROS.

Certainly, great of might
 And heavy of wrath, the Sprite
 Thou tellest of, in the palace
 (Woe, woe !)
 — An evil tale of a fate
 By Até's malice
 Rendered insatiate !
 Oh, oh, —
 King, king, how shall I bewep thee ?
 From friendly soul what ever say ?
 Thou liest where webs of the spider o'ersweep thee ;
 In impious death, life breathing away.
 O me — me !
 This couch, not free !
 By a slavish death subdued thou art,
 From the hand, by the two-edged dart.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Thou boastest this deed to be mine :
 But leave off styling me
 "The Agamemnonian wife !"
 For, showing himself in sign
 Of the spouse of the corpse thou dost see,
 Did the ancient bitter avenging-ghost
 Of Atreus, savage host,
 Pay the man here as price —
 A full-grown for the young one's sacrifice.

CHOROS.

That no cause, indeed, of this killing art thou,
 Who shall be witness-bearer ?
 How shall he bear it — how ?
 But the sire's avenging-ghost might be in the deed a sharer.
 He is forced on and on
 By the kin-born flowing of blood,
 — Black Ares : to where, having gone,
 He shall leave off, flowing done,

At the frozen-child's-flesh food.
 King, king, how shall I beweepe thee !
 From friendly soul what ever say ?
 Thou liest where webs of the spider o'ersweep thee,
 In impious death, life breathing away.
 Oh, me — me !
 This couch not free !
 By a slavish death subdued thou art,
 From the hand, by the two-edged dart.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

No death "unfit for the free"
 Do I think this man's to be :
 For did not himself a slavish curse
 To his household decree ?
 But the scion of him, myself did nurse —
 That much-bewailed Iphigeneia, he
 Having done well by, — and as well, nor worse,
 Been done to, — let him not in Haides loudly
 Bear himself proudly !
 Being by sword-destroying death amerced
 For that sword's punishment himself inflicted first.

CHOROS.

I at a loss am left —
 Of a feasible scheme of mind bereft —
 Where I may turn : for the house is falling :
 I fear the bloody crash of the rain
 That ruins the roof as it bursts amain :
 The warning-drop
 Has come to a stop.
 Destiny doth Justice whet
 For other deed of hurt, on other whetstones yet.
 Woe, earth, earth — would thou hadst taken *me*
 Ere I saw the man I see,
 On the pallet-bed
 Of the silver-sided bath-vase, dead !
 Who is it shall bury him, who
 Sing his dirge ? Can it be true
 That *thou* wilt dare this same to do —
 Having slain thy husband, thine own,
 To make his funeral moan :
 And for the soul of him, in place
 Of his mighty deeds, a graceless grace
 To wickedly institute ? By whom
 Shall the tale of praise o'er the tomb

At the god-like man be sent —
From the truth of his mind as he toils intent ?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

It belongs not to thee to declare
This object of care !
By us did he fall — down there !
Did he die — down there ! and down, no less,
We will bury him there, and not beneath
The wails of the household over his death :
But Iphigeneia, — with kindness, —
His daughter, — as the case requires,
Facing him full, at the rapid-flowing
Passage of Groans shall — both hands throwing
Around him — kiss that kindest of sires !

CHOROS.

This blame comes in the place of blame :
Hard battle it is to judge each claim.
“ He is borne away who bears away :
And the killer has all to pay.”
And this remains while Zeus is remaining,
“ The doer shall suffer in time ” — for, such his ordaining.
Who may cast out of the House its cursed brood ?
The race is to Até glued !

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Thou hast gone into this oracle
With a true result. For me, then, — I will
— To the Daimon of the Pleisthenidai
Making an oath — with all these things comply
Hard as they are to bear. For the rest —
Going from out this House, a guest,
May he wear some other family
To naught, with the deaths of kin by kin !
And — keeping a little part of my goods —
Wholly am I contented in
Having expelled from the royal House
These frenzied moods
The mutually-murderous.

AIGISTHOS.

O light propitious of day justice-bringing !
I may say truly, now, that men's avengers,
The gods from high, of earth behold the sorrows —
Seeing, as I have, i' the spun robes of the Erinues,

AGAMEMNON

This man here lying, — sight to me how pleasant! —
His father's hands' contrivances repaying.
For Atreus, this land's lord, of this man father,
Thuestes, my own father — to speak clearly —
His brother too, — being i' the rule contested, —
Drove forth to exile from both town and household:
And, coming back, to the hearth turned, a suppliant,
Wretched Thuestes found the fate assured him
— Not to die, bloodying his paternal threshold
Just there: but host-wise this man's impious father
Atreus, soul-keenly more than kindly, — seeming
To joyous hold a flesh-day, — to my father
Served up a meal, the flesh of his own children.
The feet indeed and the hands' top divisions
He hid, high up and isolated sitting:
But, their unshowing parts in ignorance taking,
He forthwith eats food — as thou seest — perdition
To the race: and then, 'ware of the deed ill-omened,
He shrieked O! — falls back, vomiting, from the carnage,
And fate on the Pelopidai past bearing
He prays down — putting in his curse together
The kicking down o' the feast — that so might perish
The race of Pleisthenes entire: and thence is
That it is given thee to see this man prostrate.
And I was rightly of this slaughter stitch-man:
Since me, — being third from ten, — with my poor father
He drives out — being then a babe in swathe-bands:
But, grown up, back again has justice brought me:
And of this man I got hold — being without-doors —
Fitting together the whole scheme of ill-will.
So, sweet, in fine, even to die were to me,
Seeing, as I have, this man i' the toils of justice!

CHOROS.

Aigisthos, arrogance in ills I love not.
Dost thou say — willing, thou didst kill the man here,
And, alone, plot this lamentable slaughter?
I say — thy head in justice will escape not
The people's throwing — know that! — stones and curses!

AIGISTHOS.

Thou such things soundest — seated at the lower
Oarage to those who rule at the ship's mid-bench?
Thou shalt know, being old, how heavy is teaching
To one of the like age — bidden be modest!
But chains and old age and the pangs of fasting

Stand out before all else in teaching, — prophets
At souls'-cure ! Dost not, seeing aught, see this too ?
Against goads kick not, lest tript-up thou suffer !

CHOROS.

Woman, thou, — of him coming new from battle
Houseguard — thy husband's bed the while disgracing, —
For the Army-leader didst thou plan this fate too ?

AIGISTHOS.

These words too are of groans the prime-begetters !
Truly a tongue opposed to Orpheus hast thou :
For he led all things by his voice's grace-charm,
But thou, upstirring them by these wild yelpings,
Wilt lead them ! Forced, thou wilt appear the tamer !

CHOROS.

So — thou shalt be my king then of the Argeians —
Who, not when for this man his fate thou plannedst,
Daredst to do this deed — thyself the slayer !

AIGISTHOS.

For, to deceive him was the wife's part, certes :
I was looked after — foe, ay, old-begotten !
But out of this man's wealth will I endeavor
To rule the citizens : and the no-man-minder
— Him will I heavily yoke — by no means trace-horse,
A corned-up colt ! but that bad friend in darkness,
Famine its housemate, shall behold him gentle.

CHOROS.

Why then, this man here, from a coward spirit,
Didst not thou slay thyself ? But, — helped, — a woman,
The country's pest, and that of gods o' the country,
Killed him ! Orestes, where may he see light now ?
That coming hither back, with gracious fortune,
Of both these he may be the all-conquering slayer ?

AIGISTHOS.

But since this to do thou thinkest — and not talk — thou soon
shalt know !
Up then, comrades dear ! the proper thing to do — not distant
this !

CHOROS.

Up then ! hilt in hold, his sword let every one aright dispose !

AGAMEMNON

AIGISTHOS.

Ay, but I myself too, hilt in hold, do not refuse to die!

CHOROS.

Thou wilt die, thou say'st, to who accept it. We the chance demand!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Nowise, O belovedest of men, may we do other ills!
To have reaped away these, even, is a harvest much to me!
Go, both thou and these the old men, to the homes appointed
each,
Ere ye suffer! It behoved one do these things just as we die
And if of these troubles, there should be enough — we must
assent
— By the Daimon's heavy heel unfortunately stricken ones!
So a woman's counsel hath it — if one judge it learning-worthy

AIGISTHOS.

But to think that these at me the idle tongue should thus o'er
bloom,
And throw out such words — the Daimon's power experimenting
on —
And, of modest knowledge missing, — me, the ruler, . . .

CHOROS.

Ne'er may this befall Argeians — wicked man to fawn before

AIGISTHOS.

Anyhow, in after-days, will I, yes, I, be at thee yet!

CHOROS.

Not if hither should the Daimon make Orestes straightway
come!

AIGISTHOS.

O, I know, myself, that fugitives on hopes are pasture-fed!

CHOROS.

Do thy deed, get fat, defiling justice, since the power is thine!

AIGISTHOS.

Know that thou shalt give me satisfaction for this folly's sake

CHOROS.

Boast on, bearing thee audacious, like a cock his females by!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Have not thou respect for these same idle yelpings! I and thou
Will arrange it, ruling o'er this household excellently well.

LA SAISIAZ

DEDICATED TO MRS. SUTHERLAND ORR.

I.

GOOD, to forgive ;
Best, to forget !
Living, we fret ;
Dying, we live.
Fretless and free,
Soul, clap thy pinion !
Earth have dominion,
Body, o'er thee !

II.

Wander at will,
Day after day, —
Wander away,
Wandering still —
Soul that canst soar !
Body may slumber :
Body shall cumber
Soul-flight no more.

III.

Waft of soul's wing !
What lies above ?
Sunshine and Love,
Skyblue and Spring !
Body hides — where ?
Ferns of all feather,
Mosses and heather,
Yours be the care !

LA SAISIAZ.

A. E. S. SEPTEMBER 14, 1877.

DARED and done : at last I stand upon the summit, Dear and True !

Singly dared and done ; the climbing both of us were bound to do.

Petty feat and yet prodigious : every side my glance was bent O'er the grandeur and the beauty lavished through the whole ascent.

Ledge by ledge, out broke new marvels, now minute and now immense :

Earth's most exquisite disclosure, heaven's own God in evidence !
And no berry in its hiding, no blue space in its outspread,
Pleaded to escape my footstep, challenged my emerging head,
(As I climbed or paused from climbing, now o'erbranched by
shrub and tree,

Now built round by rock and boulder, now at just a turn set free,

Stationed face to face with — Nature ? rather with Infinitude,)
— No revelation of them all, as singly I my path pursued,
But a bitter touched its sweetness, for the thought stung “ Even
so

Both of us had loved and wondered just the same, five days ago ! ”
Five short days, sufficient hardly to entice, from out its den
Splintered in the slab, this pink perfection of the cyclamen ;
Scarce enough to heal and coat with amber gum the sloe-tree's
gash,

Bronze the clustered wilding apple, redden ripe the mountain-
ash :

Yet of might to place between us — Oh the barrier ! Yon
Profound

Shrinks beside it, proves a pin-point : barrier this, without a
bound !

Boundless though it be, I reach you : somehow seem to have
you here

— Who are there. Yes, there you dwell now, plain the four
low walls appear ;

Those are vineyards, they enclose from ; and the little spire
which points

— That's Collonge, henceforth your dwelling. All the same,
howe'er disjoints

Past from present, no less certain you are here, not there : have
dared,

Done the feat of mountain-climbing, — five days since, we both
prepared

Daring, doing, arm in arm, if other help should haply fail.

For you asked, as forth we sallied to see sunset from the vale,

“ Why not try for once the mountain, — take a foretaste, snatch
by stealth

Sight and sound, some unconsidered fragment of the hoarded
wealth ?

Six weeks at its base, yet never once have we together won

Sight or sound by honest climbing: let us two have dared and
done

Just so much of twilight journey as may prove to-morrow's jaunt
Not the only mode of wayfare — wheeled to reach the eagle's
haunt ! ”

So, we turned from the low grass-path you were pleased to call
“ your own,”

Set our faces to the rose-bloom o'er the summit's front of stone
Where Salève obtains, from Jura and the sunken sun she hides,
Due return of blushing “ Good Night,” rosy as a borne-off
bride's,

For his masculine “ Good Morrow ” when, with sunrise still in
hold,

Gay he hails her, and, magnific, thrilled her black length burns
to gold.

Up and up we went, how careless — nay, how joyous ! All was
new,

All was strange. “ Call progress toilsome ? that were just in-
sulting you !

How the trees must temper noontide ! Ah, the thicket's sud-
den break !

What will be the morning glory, when at dusk thus gleams the
lake ?

Light by light puts forth Geneva: what a land — and, of the
land,

Can there be a lovelier station than this spot where now we
stand ?

Is it late, and wrong to linger ? True, to-morrow makes amends.
Toilsome progress ? child's play, call it — specially when one
descends !

There, the dread descent is over — hardly our adventure,
though !

Take the vale where late we left it, pace the grass-path, ‘ mine,’
you know !

Proud completion of achievement ! ” And we paced it, prais-
ing still

That soft tread on velvet verdure as it wound through hill and
hill ;

And at very end there met us, coming from Collonge, the pair
— All our people of the Chalet — two, enough and none to spare.

So, we made for home together, and we reached it as the stars
One by one came lamping — chiefly that prepotency of Mars —
And your last word was “I owe you this enjoyment!” — met
with “Nay :

With yourself it rests to have a month of morrows like to-day !”
Then the meal, with talk and laughter, and the news of that
rare nook

Yet untroubled by the tourist, touched on by no travel-book,
All the same — though latent — patent, hybrid birth of land
and sea,

And (our travelled friend assured you) — if such miracle might
be —

Comparable for completeness of both blessings — all around
Nature, and, inside her circle, safety from world’s sight and
sound —

Comparable to our Saisiaz. “Hold it fast and guard it well !
Go and see and vouch for certain, then come back and never
tell

Living soul but us ; and haply, prove our sky from cloud as
clear,

There may we four meet, praise fortune just as now, another
year !”

Thus you charged him on departure : not without the final
charge,

“Mind to-morrow’s early meeting ! We must leave our journey
marge

Ample for the wayside wonders : there’s the stoppage at the
inn

Three-parts up the mountain, where the hardships of the track
begin ;

There’s the convent worth a visit ; but, the triumph crowning
all —

There’s Salève’s own platform facing glory which strikes great-
ness small,

— Blanc, supreme above his earth-brood, needles red and white
and green,

Horns of silver, fangs of crystal set on edge in his demesne.

So, some three weeks since, we saw them : so, to-morrow we
intend

You shall see them likewise ; therefore Good Night till to-mor-
row, friend !”

Last, the nothings that extinguish embers of a vivid day :

“What might be the Marshal’s next move, what Gambetta’s
counter-play ?”

Till the landing on the staircase saw escape the latest spark :
 "Sleep you well!" "Sleep but as well, you!" — lazy love
 quenched, all was dark.

Nothing dark next day at sundawn! Up I rose and forth I
 fared :

Took my plunge within the bath-pool, pacified the watch-dog
 scared,

Saw proceed the transmutation — Jura's black to one gold
 glow,

Trod your level path that let me drink the morning deep and
 slow,

Reached the little quarry — ravage recompensed by shrub and
 fern —

Till the overflowing ardors told me time was for return.

So, return I did, and gayly. But, for once, from no far mound
 Waved salute a tall white figure. "Has her sleep been so pro-
 found?"

Foresight, rather, prudent saving strength for day's expendi-
 ture!

Ay, the chamber-window's open: out and on the terrace,
 sure!"

No, the terrace showed no figure, tall, white, leaning through
 the wreaths,

Tangle-twine of leaf and bloom that intercept the air one
 breathes,

Interpose between one's love and Nature's loving, hill and dale
 Down to where the blue lake's wrinkle marks the river's inrush
 pale

— Mazy Arve: whereon no vessel but goes sliding white and
 plain,

Not a steamboat pants from harbor but one hears pulsate amain,
 Past the city's congregated peace of homes and pomp of spires

— Man's mild protest that there's something more than Nature,
 man requires,

And that, useful as is Nature to attract the tourist's foot,
 Quiet slow sure money-making proves the matter's very root, —

Need for body, — while the spirit also needs a comfort reached
 By no help of lake or mountain, but the texts whence Calvin
 preached.

"Here's the veil withdrawn from landscape: up to Jura and
 beyond,

All awaits us ranged and ready; yet she violates the bond,
 Neither leans nor looks nor listens: why is this?" A turn of
 eye

Took the whole sole answer, gave the undisputed reason "why!"

This dread way you had your summons ! No premonitory touch,
As you talked and laughed ('t is told me) scarce a minute ere
the clutch

Captured you in cold forever. Cold ? nay, warm you were as
life

When I raised you, while the others used, in passionate poor
strife,

All the means that seemed to promise any aid, and all in vain.

Gone you were, and I shall never see that earnest face again

Grow transparent, grow transfigured with the sudden light that
leapt,

At the first word's provocation, from the heart-deeps where it
slept.

Therefore, paying piteous duty, what seemed You have we con-
signed

Peacefully to — what I think were, of all earth-beds, to your
mind

Most the choice for quiet, yonder : low walls stop the vines' ap-
proach,

Lovingly Salève protects you ; village-sports will ne'er encroach
On the stranger lady's silence, whom friends bore so kind and
well

Thither " just for love's sake," — such their own-word was : and
who can tell ?

You supposed that few or none had known and loved you in the
world :

Maybe ! flower that's full-blown tempts the butterfly, not flower
that's furled.

But more learned sense unlocked you, loosed the sheath and let
expand

Bud to bell and outspread flower-shape at the least warm touch
of hand

— Maybe, throb of heart, beneath which — quickening farther
than it knew —

'Treasure oft was disembosomed, scent all strange and unguessed
hue.

Disembosomed, re-embosomed, — must one memory suffice,

Prove I knew an Alpine-rose which all beside named Edelweiss ?

Rare thing, red or white, you rest now : two days slumbered
through ; and since

One day more will see me rid of this same scene whereat I
vince,

Tetchy at all sights and sounds and pettish at each idle charm

Proffered me who pace now singly where we two went arm in
arm, —

I have turned upon my weakness : asked, " And what, forsooth,
 prevents
 That, this latest day allowed me, I fulfil of her intents
 One she had the most at heart — that we should thus again
 survey
 From Salève Mont Blanc together ? " Therefore, — dared and
 done to-day
 Climbing, — here I stand : but you — where ?

If a spirit of the place

Broke the silence, bade me question, promised answer, — what
 disgrace
 Did I stipulate " Provided answer suit my hopes, not fears ! "
 Would I shrink to learn my lifetime's limit — days, weeks,
 months or years ?
 Would I shirk assurance on each point whereat I can but
 guess —
 " Does the soul survive the body ? Is there God's self, no or
 yes ? "
 If I know my mood, 't were constant — come in whatsoe'er
 uncouth
 Shape it should, nay, formidable — so the answer were but
 truth.

Well, and wherefore shall it daunt me, when 't is I myself am
 tasked,
 When, by weakness weakness questioned, weakly answers —
 weakly asked ?
 Weakness never needs be falseness : truth is truth in each
 degree
 — Thunder-pealed by God to Nature, whispered by my soul
 to me.
 Nay, the weakness turns to strength and triumphs in a truth
 beyond :
 " Mine is but man's truest answer — how were it did God re-
 spond ? "
 I shall no more dare to mimic such response in futile speech,
 Pass off human lisp as echo of the sphere-song out of reach,
 Than, — because it well may happen yonder, where the far
 snows blanch
 Mute Mont Blanc, that who stands near them sees and hears an
 avalanche, —
 I shall pick a clod and throw, — cry, " Such the sight and such
 the sound !
 What though I nor see nor hear them ? Others do, the proofs
 abound ! " .

Can I make my eye an eagle's, sharpen ear to recognize
 Sound o'er league and league of silence? Can I know, who but
 surmise?

If I dared no self-deception when, a week since, I and you
 Walked and talked along the grass-path, passing lightly in re-
 view

What seemed hits and what seemed misses in a certain fence-
 play, — strife

Sundry minds of mark engaged in "On the Soul and Future
 Life," —

If I ventured estimating what was come of parried thrust,
 Subtle stroke, and, rightly, wrongly, estimating could be just
 — Just, though life so seemed abundant in the form which
 moved by mine,

I might well have played at feigning, fooling, — laughed "What
 need opine

Pleasure must succeed to pleasure, else past pleasure turns to
 pain,

And this first life claims a second, else I count its good no
 gain?" —

Much less have I heart to palter when the matter to decide
 Now becomes "Was ending ending once and always, when you
 died?"

Did the face, the form I lifted as it lay, reveal the loss
 Not alone of life but soul? A tribute to yon flowers and moss,
 What of you remains beside? A memory! Easy to attest
 "Certainly from out the world that one believes who knew her
 best

Such was good in her, such fair, which fair and good were great
 perchance

Had but fortune favored, bidden each shy faculty advance;
 After all — who knows another? Only as I know, I speak."

So much of you lives within me while I live my year or week.

Then my fellow takes the tale up, not unwilling to aver
 Duly in his turn, "I knew him best of all, as he knew her:
 Such he was, and such he was not, and such other might have
 been

But that somehow every actor, somewhere in this earthly scene,
 Fails." And so both memories dwindle, yours and mine to-
 gether linked,

Till there is but left for comfort, when the last spark proves
 extinct,

This — that somewhere new existence led by men and women
 new

Possibly attains perfection coveted by me and you;

While ourselves, the only witness to what work our life evolved

Only to ourselves proposing problems proper to be solved
 By ourselves alone, — who working ne'er shall know if work
 hear fruit
 Others reap and garner, heedless how produced by stalk and
 root, —
 We who, darkling, timed the day's birth, — struggling, testified
 to peace, —
 Earned, by dint of failure, triumph, — we, creative thought,
 must cease
 In created word, thought's echo, due to impulse long since sped!
 Why repine? There's ever some one lives although ourselves
 be dead!

Well, what signifies repugnance? Truth is truth howe'er it
 strike.

Fair or foul the lot apportioned life on earth, we bear alike.
 Stalwart body idly yoked to stunted spirit, powers, that fain
 Else would soar, condemned to grovel, groundlings through the
 fleshly chain, —

Help that hinders, hindrance proved but help disguised when all
 too late, —

Hindrance is the fact acknowledged, howsoe'er explained as Fate,
 Fortune, Providence: we bear, own life a burden more or less.
 Life thus owned unhappy, is there supplemental happiness
 Possible and probable in life to come? or must we count
 Life a curse and not a blessing, summed-up in its whole amount,
 Help and hindrance, joy and sorrow?

Why should I want courage here?

I will ask and have an answer, — with no favor, with no fear, —
 From myself. How much, how little, do I inwardly believe
 True that controverted doctrine? Is it fact to which I cleave,
 Is it fancy I but cherish, when I take upon my lips
 Phrase the solemn Tuscan fashioned, and declare the soul's
 eclipse

Not the soul's extinction? take his "I believe and I declare —
 Certain am I — from this life I pass into a better, there
 Where that lady lives of whom enamored was my soul" —
 where this

Other lady, my companion dear and true, she also is?

I have questioned and am answered. Question, answer pre-
 suppose

Two points: that the thing itself which questions, answers, — *is*,
 it knows;

As it also knows the thing perceived outside itself, — a force
 Actual ere its own beginning, operative through its course,
 Unaffected by its end, — that this thing likewise needs must be;

Call this — God, then, call that — soul, and both — the only facts for me.

Prove them facts? that they o'erpass my power of proving, proves them such :

Fact it is I know I know not something which is fact as much.

What before caused all the causes, what effect of all effects

Haply follows, — these are fancy. Ask the rush if it suspects

Whence and how the stream which floats it had a rise, and where and how

Falls or flows on still! What answer makes the rush except that now

Certainly it floats and is, and, no less certain than itself,

Is the everyway external stream that now through shoal and shelf

Floats it onward, leaves it — maybe — wrecked at last, or lands on shore

There to root again and grow and flourish stable evermore.

— Maybe! mere surmise not knowledge: much conjecture styled belief,

What the rush conceives the stream means through the voyage blind and brief.

Why, because I doubtless am, shall I as doubtless be? “Because

God seems good and wise.” Yet under this our life's apparent laws

Reigns a wrong which, righted once, would give quite other laws to life.

“He seems potent.” Potent here, then: why are right and wrong at strife?

Has in life the wrong the better? Happily life ends so soon!

Right predominates in life? Then why two lives and double boon?

“Anyhow, we want it: wherefore want?” Because, without the want,

Life, now human, would be brutish: just that hope, however scant,

Makes the actual life worth leading; take the hope therein away,

All we have to do is surely not endure another day.

This life has its hopes for this life, hopes that promise joy: life done —

Out of all the hopes, how many had complete fulfilment? none.

“But the soul is not the body:” and the breath is not the flute;

Both together make the music: either marred and all is mute.

Truce to such old sad contention whence, according as we shape Most of hope or most of fear, we issue in a half-escape:

"We believe" is sighed. I take the cup of comfort proffered
thus,

Taste and try each soft ingredient, sweet infusion, and discuss
What their blending may accomplish for the cure of doubt, till
— slow,

Sorrowful, but how decided! needs must I o'erturn it — so!
Cause before, effect behind me — blanks! The midway point
I am,

Caused, itself — itself efficient: in that narrow space must cram
All experience — out of which there crowds conjecture manifold,
But, as knowledge, this comes only — things may be as I behold,
Or may not be, but, without me and above me, things there are;
I myself am what I know not — ignorance which proves no bar
To the knowledge that I am, and, since I am, can recognize
What to me is pain and pleasure: this is sure, the rest — sur-
mise.

If my fellows are or are not, what may please them and what
pain, —

Mere surmise: my own experience — that is knowledge, once
again!

I have lived, then, done and suffered, loved and hated, learnt
and taught

This — there is no reconciling wisdom with a world distraught,
Goodness with triumphant evil, power with failure in the aim,
If — (to my own sense, remember! though none other feel the
same!) —

If you bar me from assuming earth to be a pupil's place,
And life, time — with all their chances, changes — just proba-
tion-space,

Mine, for me. But those apparent other mortals — theirs, for
them?

Knowledge stands on my experience: all outside its narrow
hem,

Free surmise may sport and welcome! Pleasures, pains affect
mankind

Just as they affect myself? Why, here 's my neighbor color-
blind,

Eyes like mine to all appearance: "green as grass" do I af-
firm?

"Red as grass" he contradicts me; — which employs the proper
term?

Were we two the earth's sole tenants, with no third for referee,
How should I distinguish? Just so, God must judge 'twixt man
and me.

To each mortal peradventure earth becomes a new machine,

Pain and pleasure no more tally in our sense than red and
green ;

Still, without what seems such mortal's pleasure, pain, my life
were lost

— Life, my whole sole chance to prove — although at man's ap-
parent cost —

What is beautiful and what ugly, right to strive for, right to
shun,

Fit to help and fit to hinder, — prove my forces every one,

Good and evil, — learn life's lesson, hate of evil, love of good,

As 't is set me, understand so much as may be understood —

Solve the problem : “ From thine apprehended scheme of things,
deduce

Praise or blame of its contriver, shown a niggard or profuse

In each good or evil issue ! nor miscalculate alike

Counting one the other in the final balance, which to strike,

Soul was born and life allotted : ay, the show of things unfurled

For thy summing-up and judgment, — thine, no other mortal's
world ! ”

What though fancy scarce may grapple with the complex and
immense

— “ His own world for every mortal ? ” Postulate omnipo-
tence !

Limit power, and simple grows the complex : shrunk to atom
size,

That which loomed immense to fancy low before my reason
lies, —

I survey it and pronounce it work like other work : success

Here and there, the workman's glory, — here and there, his
shame no less,

Failure as conspicuous. Taunt not “ Human work ape work
divine ? ”

As the power, expect performance ! God's be God's as mine is
mine !

God whose power made man and made man's wants, and made,
to meet those wants,

Heaven and earth which, through the body, prove the spirit's
ministrants,

Excellently all, — did He lack power or was the will in fault

When He let blue heaven be shrouded o'er by vapors of the vault,

Gay earth drop her garlands shrivelled at the first infecting
breath

Of the serpent pains which herald, swarming in, the dragon
death ?

What, no way but this that man may learn and lay to heart
how rife

Life were with delights would only death allow their taste to
life?

Must the rose sigh "Pluck — I perish!" must the eve weep
"Gaze — I fade!"

— Every sweet warn "'Ware my bitter!" every shine bid
"Wait my shade"?

Can we love but on condition, that the thing we love must die?
Needs there groan a world in anguish just to teach us sym-
pathy —

Multitudinously wretched that we, wretched too, may guess
What a preferable state were universal happiness?

Hardly do I so conceive the outcome of that power which went
To the making of the worm there in yon clod its tenement,
Any more than I distinguish aught of that which, wise and
good,

Framed the leaf, its plain of pasture, dropped the dew, its fine-
less food.

Nay, were fancy fact, were earth and all it holds illusion mere,
Only a machine for teaching love and hate and hope and fear
To myself, the sole existence, single truth 'mid falsehood, — well!
If the harsh throes of the prelude die not off into the swell
Of that perfect piece they sting me to become a-strain for, — if
Roughness of the long rock-clamber lead not to the last of cliff,
First of level country where is sward my pilgrim-foot can
prize, —

Plainlier! if this life's conception new life fail to realize, —
Though earth burst and proved a bubble glassing hues of hell,
one huge

Reflex of the devil's doings — God's work by no subterfuge —
(So death's kindly touch informed me as it broke the glamour,
gave

Soul and body both release from life's long nightmare in the
grave) —

Still, — with no more Nature, no more Man as riddle to be
read,

Only my own joys and sorrows now to reckon real instead, —
I must say — or choke in silence — "Howsoever came my fate,
Sorrow did and joy did nowise — life well weighed — pre-
ponderate."

By necessity ordained thus? I shall bear as best I can;
By a cause all-good, all-wise, all-potent? No, as I am man!
Such were God: and was it goodness that the good within my
range

Or had evil in admixture or grew evil's self by change?
Wisdom — that becoming wise meant making slow and sure
advance

From a knowledge proved in error to acknowledged ignorance?
 Power? 'tis just the main assumption reason most revolts at!
 power

Unavailing for bestowment on its creature of an hour,
 Man, of so much proper action rightly aimed and reaching aim,
 So much passion, — no defect there, no excess, but still the
 same, —

As what constitutes existence, pure perfection bright as brief
 For yon worm, man's fellow-creature, on yon happier world —
 its leaf!

No, as I am man, I mourn the poverty I must impute:
 Goodness, wisdom, power, all bounded, each a human attribute!

But, O world outspread beneath me! only for myself I speak,
 Nowise dare to play the spokesman for my brothers strong and
 weak,

Full and empty, wise and foolish, good and bad, in every age,
 Every clime, I turn my eyes from, as in one or other stage
 Of a torture writhe they, Job-like couched on dung and crazed
 with blains

— Wherefore? whereto? ask the whirlwind what the dread
 voice thence explains!

I shall "vindicate no way of God's to man," nor stand apart,
 "Laugh, be candid," while I watch it traversing the human
 heart!

Traversed heart must tell its story uncommented on: no less
 Mine results in, "Only grant a second life; I acquiesce
 In this present life as failure, count misfortune's worst assaults
 Triumph, not defeat, assured that loss so much the more exalts
 Gain about to be. For at what moment did I so advance
 Near to knowledge as when frustrate of escape from ignorance?
 Did not beauty prove most precious when its opposite obtained
 Rule, and truth seem more than ever potent because falsehood
 reigned?

While for love — Oh how but, losing love, does whoso loves
 succeed

By the death-pang to the birth-throe — learning what is love
 indeed?

Only grant my soul may carry high through death her cup un-
 spilled,

Brimming though it be with knowledge, life's loss drop by drop
 distilled,

I shall boast it mine — the balsam, bless each kindly wretch
 that wrung

From life's tree its inmost virtue, tapped the root whence pleas-
 ure sprung,

Barked the bole, and broke the bough, and bruised the berry
 left all grace
 Ashes in death's stern alembic, loosed elixir in its place!"

Witness, Dear and True, how little I was 'ware of — not your
 worth,
 — That I knew, my heart assures me — but of what a shade on
 earth

Would the passage from my presence of the tall white figure
 throw

O'er the ways we walked together! Somewhat narrow, some-
 what slow,

Used to seem the ways, the walking: narrow ways are well to
 tread

When there's moss beneath the footstep, honeysuckle over-
 head:

Walking slow to beating bosom surest solace soonest gives,
 Liberates the brain o'erloaded — best of all restoratives.

Nay, do I forget the open vast where soon or late converged
 Ways though winding? — world-wide heaven-high sea where
 music slept or surged

As the angel had ascendant, and Beethoven's Titan mace
 Smote the immense to storm, Mozart would by a finger's lifting
 chase?

Yes, I knew — but not with knowledge such as thrills me while
 I view

Yonder precinct which henceforward holds and hides the Dear
 and True.

Grant me (once again) assurance we shall each meet each some
 day,

Walk — but with how bold a footstep! on a way — but what
 a way!

— Worst were best, defeat were triumph, utter loss were utmost
 gain.

Can it be, and must, and will it?

Silence! Out of fact's domain,
 Just surmise prepared to mutter hope, and also fear — dispute
 Fact's inexorable ruling, "Outside fact, surmise be mute!"
 Well!

Ay, well and best, if fact's self I may force the answer
 from!

'T is surmise I stop the mouth of! Not above in yonder dome
 All a rapture with its rose-glow, — not around, where pile and
 peak

Strainingly await the sun's fall, — not beneath, where crickets
 creak,

Birds assemble for their bedtime, soft the tree-top swell sub-
sides,—
No, nor yet within my deepest sentient self the knowledge
hides.

Aspiration, reminiscence, plausibilities of trust
— Now the ready “Man were wronged else,” now the rash
“and God unjust” —

None of these I need. Take thou, my soul, thy solitary stand,
Umpire to the champions Fancy, Reason, as on either hand
Amicable war they wage and play the foe in thy behoof!
Fancy thrust and Reason parry! Thine the prize who stand
aloof!

FANCY.

I concede the thing refused: henceforth no certainty more
plain
Than this mere surmise that after body dies soul lives again.
Two, the only facts acknowledged late, are now increased to
three —
God is, and the soul is, and, as certain, after death shall be.
Put this third to use in life, the time for using fact!

REASON.

I do:

Find it promises advantage, coupled with the other two.
Life to come will be improvement on the life that's now;
destroy
Body's thwartings, there's no longer screen betwixt soul and
soul's joy.
Why should we expect new hindrance, novel tether? In this
first
Life, I see the good of evil, why our world began at worst:
Since time means amelioration, tardily enough displayed,
Yet a mainly onward moving, never wholly retrograde.
We know more though we know little, we grow stronger though
still weak,
Partly see though all too purblind, stammer though we cannot
speak.
There is no such grudge in God as scared the ancient Greek, no
fresh
Substitute of trap for drag-net, once a breakage in the mesh.
Dragons were, and serpents are, and blindworms will be: ne'er
emerged
Any new-created Python for man's plague since earth was
purged.
Failing proof, then, of invented trouble to replace the old,

O'er this life the next presents advantage much and manifold :
 Which advantage — in the absence of a fourth and farther fact
 Now conceivably surmised, of harm to follow from the act —
 I pronounce for man's obtaining at this moment. Why delay?
 Is he happy? happiness will change : anticipate the day!
 Is he sad? there's ready refuge : of all sadness death's prompt
 cure!

Is he both, in mingled measure? cease a burden to endure!
 Pains with sorry compensations, pleasures stunted in the dole,
 Power that sinks and pettiness that soars, all halved and nothing
 whole,

Idle hopes that lure man onward, forced back by as idle fears —
 What a load he stumbles under through his glad sad seventy
 years,

When a touch sets right the turmoil, lifts his spirit where, flesh-
 freed,

Knowledge shall be rightly named so, all that seems be truth
 indeed!

Grant his forces no accession, nay, no faculty's increase,
 Only let what now exists continue, let him prove in peace
 Power whereof the interrupted unperfected play enticed
 Man through darkness, which to lighten any spark of hope
 sufficed, —

What shall then deter his dying out of darkness into light?
 Death itself perchance, brief pain that's pang, condensed and
 infinite?

But at worst, he needs must brave it one day, while, at best, he
 laughs —

Drops a drop within his chalice, sleep not death his science
 quaffs!

Any moment claims more courage, when, by crossing cold and
 gloom,

Manfully man quits discomfort, makes for the provided room
 Where the old friends want their fellow, where the new ac-
 quaintance wait,

Probably for talk assembled, possibly to sup in state!

I affirm and reaffirm it therefore : only make as plain

As that man now lives, that, after dying, man will live again, —

Make as plain the absence, also, of a law to contravene

Voluntary passage from this life to that by change of scene, —

And I bid him — at suspicion of first cloud athwart his sky,

Flower's departure, frost's arrival — never hesitate, but die!

FANCY.

Then I double my concession : grant, along with new life sure,
 This same law found lacking now : ordain that, whether rich or
 poor

Present life is judged in aught man counts advantage — be it
 hope,
 Be it fear that brightens, blackens most or least his horoscope, —
 He, by absolute compulsion such as made him live at all,
 Go on living to the fated end of life whate'er befall.
 What though, as on earth he darkling grovels, man descry the
 sphere,
 Next life's — call it, heaven of freedom, close above and crystal-
 clear?
 He shall find — say, hell to punish who in aught curtails the
 term,
 Fain would act the butterfly before he has played out the worm!
 God, soul, earth, heaven, hell, — five facts now: what is to de-
 siderate?

REASON.

Nothing! Henceforth man's existence bows to the monition
 "Wait!
 Take the joys and bear the sorrows — neither with extreme con-
 cern!
 Living here means nescience simply: 't is next life that helps to
 learn.
 Shut those eyes, next life will open, — stop those ears, next life
 will teach
 Hearing's office, — close those lips, next life will give the power
 of speech!
 Or, if action more amuse thee than the passive attitude,
 Bravely bustle through thy being, busy thee for ill or good,
 Reap this life's success or failure! Soon shall things be unper-
 plexed
 And the right and wrong, now tangled, lie unravelled in the
 next."

FANCY.

Not so fast! Still more concession! not alone do I declare
 Life must needs be borne, — I also will that man become aware
 Life has worth incalculable, every moment that he spends
 So much gain or loss for that next life which on this life de-
 pends.
 Good, done here, be there rewarded, — evil, worked here, there
 amerced!
 Six facts now, and all established, plain to man the last as first.

REASON.

There was good and evil, then, defined to man by this decree?
Was — for at its promulgation both alike have ceased to be.

Prior to this last announcement, "Certainly as God exists,
As He made man's soul, as soul is quenchless by the deathly
mists,

Yet is, all the same, forbidden premature escape from time
To eternity's provided purer air and brighter clime, —
Just so certainly depends it on the use to which man turns
Earth, the good or evil done there, whether after death he earns
Life eternal, — heaven, the phrase be, or eternal death, — say,
hell.

As his deeds, so proves his portion, doing ill or doing well!"
—Prior to this last announcement, earth was man's probation-
place :

Liberty of doing evil gave his doing good a grace ;
Once lay down the law, with Nature's simple "Such effects suc-
ceed

Causes such, and heaven or hell depends upon man's earthly
deed

Just as surely as depends the straight or else the crooked line
On his making point meet point or with or else without in-
cline," —

Thenceforth neither good nor evil does man, doing what he
must.

Lay but down that law as stringent "Wouldst thou live again,
be just!"

As this other "Wouldst thou live now, regularly draw thy
breath!

For, suspend the operation, straight law's breach results in
death" —

And (provided always, man, addressed this mode, be sound and
sane)

Prompt and absolute obedience, never doubt, will law obtain !
Tell not me "Look round us! nothing each side but acknowl-
edged law,

Now styled God's — now, Nature's edict!" Where's obedience
without flaw

Paid to either? What's the adage rife in man's mouth? Why,
"The best

I both see and praise, the worst I follow" — which, despite pro-
fessed

Seeing, praising, all the same he follows, since he disbelieves
In the heart of him that edict which for truth his head receives.
There's evading and persuading and much making law amends
Somehow, there's the nice distinction 'twixt fast foes and faulty
friends,

— Any consequence except inevitable death when "Die,
Whoso breaks our law!" they publish, God and Nature equally.

Law that's kept or broken — subject to man's will and pleasure!
Whence?

How comes law to bear eluding? Not because of impotence:
Certain laws exist already which to hear means to obey;
Therefore not without a purpose these man must, while those
man may

Keep and, for the keeping, haply gain approval and reward.
Break through this last superstructure, all is empty air — no
sward

Firm like my first fact to stand on, "God there is, and soul
there is,"

And soul's earthly life-allotment: wherein, by hypothesis,
Soul is bound to pass probation, prove its powers, and exercise
Sense and thought on fact, and then, from fact educing fit sur-
mise,

Ask itself, and of itself have solely answer, "Does the scope
Earth affords of fact to judge by warrant future fear or hope?"

Thus have we come back full circle: fancy's footsteps one by
one

Go their round conducting reason to the point where they begun,
Left where we were left so lately, Dear and True! When, half
a week

Since, we walked and talked and thus I told you, how suffused
a cheek

You had turned me had I sudden brought the blush into the
smile

By some word like "Idly argued! you know better all the
while!"

Now, from me — Oh not a blush, but, how much more, a joyous
glow,

Laugh triumphant, would it strike did your "Yes, better I do
know"

Break, my warrant for assurance! which assurance may not be
If, supplanting hope, assurance needs must change this life to
me.

So, I hope — no more than hope, but hope — no less than hope,
because

I can fathom, by no plumb-line sunk in life's apparent laws,
How I may in any instance fix where change should meetly fall
Nor involve, by one revisal, abrogation of them all:

— Which again involves as utter change in life thus law-re-
leased,

Whence the good of goodness vanished when the ill of evil
ceased.

Whereas, life and laws apparent reinstated, — all we know,

All we know not, — o'er our heaven again cloud closes, until,
 lo —
 Hope the arrowy, just as constant, comes to pierce its gloom,
 compelled
 By a power and by a purpose which, if no one else beheld,
 I behold in life, so — hope !

Sad summing-up of all to say !

Athanasius contra mundum, why should he hope more than
 they ?

So are men made notwithstanding, such magnetic virtue darts
 From each head their fancy haloes to their unresisting hearts !

Here I stand, methinks a stone's throw from yon village I this
 morn

Traversed for the sake of looking one last look at its forlorn
 Tenement's ignoble fortune : through a crevice, plain its floor
 Piled with provender for cattle, while a dung-heap blocked the
 door.

In that squalid Bossex, under that obscene red roof, arose,
 Like a fiery flying serpent from its egg, a soul — Rousseau's.
 Turn thence ! Is it Diodati joins the glimmer of the lake ?
 There I plucked a leaf, one week since, — ivy, plucked for By-
 ron's sake.

Famed unfortunates ! And yet, because of that phosphoric
 fame

Swathing blackness' self with brightness till putridity looked
 flame,

All the world was witched : and wherefore ? what could lie be-
 neath, allure

Heart of man to let corruption serve man's head as cynosure ?
 Was the magic in the dictum " All that 's good is gone and past ;
 Bad and worse still grows the present, and the worst of all comes
 last :

Which believe — for I believe it " ? So preached one his gospel-
 news ;

While melodious moaned the other, " Dying day with dolphin-
 hues !

Storm, for loveliness and darkness like a woman's eye ! Ye
 mounts

Where I climb to 'scape my fellow, and thou sea wherein he
 counts

Not one inch of vile dominion ! What were your especial worth
 Failed ye to enforce the maxim ' Of all objects found on earth
 Man is meanest, much too honored when compared with — what
 by odds

Beats him — any dog : so, let him go a-howling to his gods !
Which believe — for I believe it !” Such the comfort man re-
ceived

Sadly since perforce he must : for why ? the famous bard be-
lieved !

Fame ! Then, give me fame, a moment ! As I gather at a
glance

Human glory after glory vivifying yon expanse,
Let me grasp them altogether, hold on high and brandish well
Beacon-like above the rapt world ready, whether heaven or hell
Send the dazzling summons earthward, to submit itself the same,
Take on trust the hope or else despair flashed full on face by —
Fame !

Thanks, thou pine-tree of Makistos, wide thy giant torch I wave !
Know ye whence I plucked the pillar, late with sky for archi-
trave ?

This the trunk, the central solid Knowledge, kindled core, began
Tugging earth-deeps, trying heaven-heights, rooted yonder at
Lausanne.

This which flits and spits, the aspic, — sparkles in and out the
boughs

Now, and now condensed, the python, coiling round and round
allows

Scarce the bole its due effulgence, dulled by flake on flake of
Wit —

Laughter so bejewels Learning, — what but Ferney nourished it ?
Nay, nor fear — since every resin feeds the flame — that I dis-
pense

With yon Bossex terebinth-tree’s all-explosive Eloquence :
No, be sure ! nor, any more than thy resplendency, Jean-Jacques,
Dare I want thine, Diodati ! What though monkeys and
macaques

Gibber “Byron” ? Byron’s ivy rears a branch beyond the crew,
Green forever, no deciduous trash macaques and monkeys chew !
As Rousseau, then, eloquent, as Byron prime in poet’s power, —
Detonations, fulgurations, smiles — the rainbow, tears — the
shower, —

Lo, I lift the corruscating marvel — Fame ! and, famed, declare
— Learned for the nonce as Gibbon, witty as wit’s self Vol-
taire . . .

O the sorriest of conclusions to whatever man of sense
’Mid the millions stands the unit, takes no flare for evidence !
Yet the millions have their portion, live their calm or troublous
day,

Find significance in fireworks : so, by help of mine, they may

Confidently lay to heart and lock in head their life-long — this :
 “ He there with the brand flamboyant, broad o’er night’s forlorn
 abyss,
 Crowned by prose and verse ; and wielding, with Wit’s bauble,
 Learning’s rod ” . . .
 Well? Why, he at least believed in Soul, was very sure of God !

So the poor smile played, that evening : pallid smile long since
 extinct
 Here in London’s mid-November ! Not so loosely thoughts were
 linked,
 Six weeks since as I, descending in the sunset from Salève,
 Found the chain, I seemed to forge there, flawless till it reached
 your grave, —
 Not so filmy was the texture, but I bore it in my breast
 Safe thus far. And since I found a something in me would not
 rest
 Till I, link by link, unravelled any tangle of the chain,
 — Here it lies, for much or little ! I have lived all o’er again
 That last pregnant hour : I saved it, just as I could save a root
 Disinterred for reinterment when the time best helps to shoot.
 Life is stocked with germs of torpid life ; but may I never wake
 Those of mine whose resurrection could not be without earth-
 quake !
 Rest all such, unraised forever ! Be this, sad yet sweet, the sole
 Memory evoked from slumber ! Least part this : then what
 the whole ?

NOVEMBER 9, 1877.



THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC

SUCH a starved bank of moss
Till, that May-morn,
Blue ran the flash across :
Violets were born !

Sky — what a scowl of cloud
Till, near and far,
Ray on ray split the shroud :
Splendid, a star !

World — how it walled about
Life with disgrace
Till God's own smile came out :
That was thy face !

I.

“FAME !” Yes, I said it and you read it. First,
Praise the good log-fire ! Winter howls without.
Crowd closer, let us ! Ha, the secret nursed
Inside yon hollow, crusted roundabout
With copper where the clamp was, — how the burst
Vindicates flame the stealthy feeder ! Spout
Thy splendidest — a minute and no more ?
So soon again all sobered as before ?

II.

Nay, for I need to see your face ! One stroke
Adroitly dealt, and lo, the pomp revealed !
Fire in his pandemonium, heart of oak
Palatial, where he wrought the works concealed
Beneath the solid-seeming roof I broke,
As redly up and out and off they reeled
Like disconcerted imps, those thousand sparks
From fire's slow tunnelling of vaults and arcs !

III.

Up, out, and off, see! Were you never used, —
 You now, in childish days or rather nights, —
 As I was, to watch sparks fly? not amused
 By that old nurse-taught game which gave the sprites
 Each one his title and career, — confused
 Belief 't was all long over with the flights
 From earth to heaven of hero, sage, and bard,
 And bade them once more strive for Fame's award?

IV.

New long bright life! and happy chance befell —
 That I know — when some prematurely lost
 Child of disaster bore away the bell
 From some too-pampered son of fortune, crossed
 Never before my chimney broke the spell!
 Octogenarian Keats gave up the ghost,
 While — never mind Who was it cumbered earth —
 Sank stifled, span-long brightness, in the birth.

V.

Well, try a variation of the game!
 Our log is old ship-timber, broken bulk.
 There 's sea-brine spirits up the brimstone flame,
 That crimson-curly spiral proves the hulk
 Was saturate with — ask the chloride's name
 From somebody who knows! I shall not sulk
 If yonder greenish tonguelet licked from brass
 Its life, I thought was fed on copperas.

VI.

Anyhow, there they flutter! What may be
 The style and prowess of that purple one?
 Who is the hero other eyes shall see
 Than yours and mine? That yellow, deep to dun —
 Conjecture how the sage glows, whom not we
 But those unborn are to get warmth by! Son
 O' the coal, — as Job and Hebrew name a spark, —
 What bard, in thy red soaring, scares the dark?

VII.

Oh and the lesser lights, the dearer still
 That they elude a vulgar eye, give ours
 The glimpse repaying astronomic skill
 Which searched sky deeper, passed those patent powers

Constellate proudly, — swords, scrolls, harps, that fill
 The vulgar eye to surfeit, — found best flowers
 Hid deepest in the dark, — named unplucked grace
 Of soul, ungathered beauty, form or face!

VIII.

Up with thee, mouldering ash men never knew,
 But I know! flash thou forth, and figure bold,
 Calm and columnar as yon flame I view!
 Oh and I bid thee, — to whom fortune doled
 Scantly all other gifts out — bicker blue,
 Beauty for all to see, zinc's uncontrolled
 Flake-brilliance! Not my fault if these were shown,
 Grandeur and beauty both, to me alone.

IX.

No! as the first was boy's play, this proves mere
 Stripling's amusement: manhood's sport be grave!
 Choose rather sparkles quenched in mid career,
 Their boldness and their brightness could not save
 (In some old night of time on some lone drear
 Sea-coast, monopolized by crag or cave)
 — Save from ignoble exit into smoke,
 Silence, oblivion, all death-damps that choke!

X.

Launched by our ship-wood, float we, once adrift,
 In fancy to that land-strip waters wash,
 We both know well! Where uncouth tribes made shift
 Long since to just keep life in, billows dash
 Nigh over folk who shudder at each lift
 Of the old tyrant tempest's whirlwind-lash
 Though they have built the serviceable town
 Tempests but tease now, billows drench, not drown.

XI.

Croisic, the spit of sandy rock which juts
 Spitefully northward, bears nor tree nor shrub
 To tempt the ocean, show what Guérande shuts
 Behind her, past wild Batz whose Saxons grub
 The ground for crystals grown where ocean gluts
 Their promontory's breadth with salt: all stub
 Of rock and stretch of sand, the land's last strife
 To rescue a poor remnant for dear life.

XII.

And what life ! Here was, from the world to choose,
 The Druids' chosen chief of homes : they reared
 — Only their women, — 'mid the slush and ooze
 Of yon low islet, — to their sun, revered
 In strange stone guise, — a temple. May-dawn dews
 Saw the old structure levelled ; when there peered
 May's earliest eve-star, high and wide once more
 Up towered the new pile perfect as before :

XIII.

Seeing that priestesses — and all were such —
 Unbuilt and then rebuilt it every May,
 Each alike helping — well, if not too much !
 For, 'mid their eagerness to outstrip day
 And get work done, if any loosed her clutch
 And let a single stone drop, straight a prey
 Herself fell, torn to pieces, limb from limb,
 By sisters in full chorus glad and grim.

XIV.

And still so much remains of that gray cult,
 That even now, of nights, do women steal
 To the sole Menhir standing, and insult
 The antagonistic church-spire by appeal
 To power discrowned in vain, since each adult
 Believes the gruesome thing she clasps may heal
 Whatever plague no priestly help can cure :
 Kiss but the cold stone, the event is sure !

XV.

Nay, more : on May-morns, that primeval rite
 Of temple-building, with its punishment
 For rash precipitation, lingers, spite
 Of all remonstrance ; vainly are they shent,
 Those girls who form a ring and, dressed in white,
 Dance round it, till some sister's strength be spent :
 Touch but the Menhir, straight the rest turn roughs
 From gentles, fall on her with fisticuffs.

XVI.

Oh and, for their part, boys from door to door
 Sing unintelligible words to tunes
 As obsolete : " scraps of Druidic lore,"
 Sigh scholars, as each pale man importunes

Vainly the mumbling to speak plain once more.

Enough of this old worship, rounds and runes!
They serve my purpose, which is but to show
Croisic to-day and Croisic long ago.

XVII.

What have we sailed to see, then, wafted there
By fancy from the log that ends its days
Of much adventure 'neath skies foul or fair,
On waters rough or smooth, in this good blaze
We two crouch round so closely, bidding care
Keep outside with the snow-storm? Something says
"Fit time for story-telling!" I begin —
Why not at Croisic, port we first put in?

XVIII.

Anywhere serves: for point me out the place
Wherever man has made himself a home,
And there I find the story of our race
In little, just at Croisic as at Rome.
What matters the degree? the kind I trace.
Druids their temple, Christians have their dome:
So with mankind; and Croisic, I'll engage,
With Rome yields sort for sort, in age for age.

XIX.

No doubt, men vastly differ: and we need
Some strange exceptional benevolence
Of nature's sunshine to develop seed
So well, in the less-favored clime, that thence
We may discern how shrub means tree indeed
Though dwarfed till scarcely shrub in evidence.
Man in the ice-house or the hot-house ranks
With beasts or gods: stove-forced, give warmth the thanks!

XX.

While, is there any ice-checked? Such shall learn
I am thankworthy, who propose to slake
His thirst for tasting how it feels to turn
Cedar from hyssop-on-the-wall. I wake
No memories of what is harsh and stern
In ancient Croisic-nature, much less rake
The ashes of her last warmth till out leaps
Live Hervé Riel, the single spark she keeps.

XXI.

Take these two, see, each outbreak, — spirt and spirt
 Of fire from our brave billet's either edge
 Which call maternal Croisic ocean-girt! —
 These two shall thoroughly redeem my pledge.
 One flames fierce gules, its feebler rival — vert,
 Heralds would tell you : heroes, I allege,
 They both were : soldiers, sailors, statesmen, priests,
 Lawyers, physicians — guess what gods or beasts !

XXII.

None of them all, but — poets, if you please !
 “ What, even there, endowed with knack of rhyme,
 Did two among the aborigines
 Of that rough region pass the ungracious time
 Suiting, to rumble-tumble of the sea's,
 The songs forbidden a serener clime ?
 Or had they universal audience — that 's
 To say, the folk of Croisic, ay, and Batz ? ”

XXIII.

Open your ears ! Each poet in his day
 Had such a mighty moment of success
 As pinnaced him straight, in full display,
 For the whole world to worship — nothing less !
 Was not the whole polite world Paris, pray ?
 And did not Paris, for one moment — yes,
 Worship these poet-flames, our red and green,
 One at a time, a century between ?

XXIV.

And yet you never heard their names ! Assist,
 Clio, Historic Muse, while I record
 Great deeds ! Let fact, not fancy, break the mist
 And bid each sun emerge, in turn play lord
 Of day, one moment ! Hear the annalist
 Tell a strange story, true to the least word !
 At Croisic, sixteen hundred years and ten
 Since Christ, forth flamed yon liquid ruby, then.

XXV.

Know him henceforth as René Gentilhomme
 — Appropriate appellation ! noble birth
 And knightly blazon, the device wherefrom
 Was “ Better do than say ” ! In Croisic's dearth

Why prison his career while Christendom
 Lay open to reward acknowledged worth?
 He therefore left it at the proper age
 And got to be the Prince of Condé's page.

XXVI.

Which Prince of Condé, whom men called "The Duke,"
 — Failing the king, his cousin, of an heir,
 (As one might hold would hap, without rebuke,
 Since Anne of Austria, all the world was 'ware,
 Twenty-three years long sterile, scarce could look
 For issue) — failing Louis of so rare
 A godsend, it was natural the Prince
 Should hear men call him "Next King" too, nor wince.

XXVII.

Now, as this reasonable hope, by growth
 Of years, nay, tens of years, looked plump almost
 To bursting, — would the brothers, childless both,
 Louis and Gaston, give but up the ghost —
 Condé, called "Duke" and "Next King," nothing loth
 Awaited his appointment to the post,
 And wiled away the time, as best he might,
 Till Providence should settle things aright.

XXVIII.

So, at a certain pleasure-house, withdrawn
 From cities where a whisper breeds offence,
 He sat him down to watch the streak of dawn
 Testify to first stir of Providence;
 And, since dull country life makes courtiers yawn,
 There wanted not a poet to dispense
 Song's remedy for spleen-fits all and some,
 Which poet was Page René Gentilhomme.

XXIX.

A poet born and bred, his very sire
 A poet also, author of a piece
 Printed and published, "Ladies — their attire":
 Therefore the son, just born at his decease,
 Was bound to keep alive the sacred fire,
 And kept it, yielding moderate increase
 Of songs and sonnets, madrigals, and much
 Rhyming thought poetry and praised as such.

XXX.

Rubbish unutterable (bear in mind !)
 Rubbish not wholly without value, though,
 Being to compliment the Duke designed
 And bring the complimenter credit so, —
 Pleasure with profit happily combined.
 Thus René Gentilhomme rhymed, rhymed till — lo,
 This happened, as he sat in an alcove
 Elaborating rhyme for “love” — *not* “dove.”

XXXI.

He was alone : silence and solitude
 Befit the votary of the Muse. Around,
 Nature — not our new picturesque and rude,
 But trim tree-cinctured stately garden-ground —
 Breathed polish and politeness. All-imbued
 With these, he sat absorbed in one profound
 Excogitation, “ Were it best to hint
 Or boldly boast ‘ She loves me — Araminte ’ ? ”

XXXII.

When suddenly flashed lightning, searing sight
 Almost, so close to eyes ; then, quick on flash,
 Followed the thunder, splitting earth downright
 Where René sat a-rhyming : with huge crash
 Of marble into atoms infinite —
 Marble which, stately, dared the world to dash
 The stone-thing proud, high-pillared, from its place :
 One flash, and dust was all that lay at base.

XXXIII.

So, when the horrible confusion loosed
 Its wrappage round his sensès, and, with breath,
 Seeing and hearing by degrees induced
 Conviction what he felt was life, not death —
 His fluttered faculties came back to roost
 One after one, as fowls do : ay, beneath,
 About his very feet there, lay in dust
 Earthly presumption paid by heaven’s disgust.

XXXIV.

For, what might be the thunder-smitten thing
 But, pillared high and proud, in marble guise,
 A ducal crown — which meant “ Now Duke : Next, King ” ?
 Since such the Prince was, not in his own eyes

Alone, but all the world's. Pebble from sling
 Prostrates a giant ; so can pulverize
 Marble pretension — how much more, make moul't
 A peacock-prince his plume — God's thunderbolt !

XXXV.

That was enough for René, that first fact
 Thus flashed into him. Up he looked : all blue
 And bright the sky above ; earth firm, compact
 Beneath his footing, lay apparent too ;
 Opposite stood the pillar : nothing lacked
 There, but the Duke's crown : see, its fragments strew
 The earth, — about his feet lie atoms fine
 Where he sat nursing late his fourteenth line !

XXXVI.

So, for the moment, all the universe
 Being abolished, all 'twixt God and him, —
 Earth's praise or blame, its blessing or its curse,
 Of one and the same value, — to the brim
 Flooded with truth for better or for worse, —
 He pounces on the writing-paper, prim
 Keeping its place on table : not a dint
 Nor speck had damaged "Ode to Araminte."

XXXVII.

And over the neat crowquill calligraph
 His pen goes blotting, blurring, as an ox
 Tramples a flower-bed in a garden, — laugh
 You may ! — so does not he, whose quick heart knocks
 Audibly at his breast : an epitaph
 On earth's break-up, amid the falling rocks,
 He might be penning in a wild dismay,
 Caught with his work half-done on Judgment Day.

XXXVIII.

And what is it so terribly he pens,
 Ruining "Cupid, Venus, wile and smile,
 Hearts, darts," and all his day's *divinior mens*
 Judged necessary to a perfect style ?
 Little recks René, with a breast to cleanse,
 Of Rhadamanthine law that reigned erewhile :
 Brimful of truth, truth's outburst will convince
 (Style or no style) who bears truth's brunt — the Prince.

XXXIX.

“Condé, called ‘Duke,’ be called just ‘Duke,’ not more,
 To life’s end! ‘Next King’ thou forsooth wilt he?
 Ay, when this bauble, as it decked before
 Thy pillar, shall again, for France to see,
 Take its proud station there! Let France adore
 No longer an illusive mock-sun — thee —
 But keep her homage for Sol’s self, about
 To rise and put pretenders to the rout!

XL.

“What? France so God-abandoned that her root
 Regal, though many a Spring it gave no sign,
 Lacks power to make the bole, now branchless, shoot
 Greenly as ever? Nature, though benign,
 Thwarts ever the ambitious and astute.
 In store for such is punishment condign:
 Sure as thy Duke’s crown to the earth was hurled,
 So sure, next year, a Dauphin glads the world!”

XLI.

Which penned — some forty lines to this effect —
 Our René folds his paper, marches brave
 Back to the mansion, luminous, erect,
 Triumphant, an emancipated slave.
 There stands the Prince. “How now? My Duke’s-crown
 wrecked?
 What may this mean?” The answer René gave
 Was — handing him the verses, with the due
 Incline of body: “Sir, God’s word to you!”

XLII.

The Prince read, paled, was silent; all around,
 The courtier-company, to whom he passed
 The paper, read, in equal silence bound.
 René grew also by degrees aghast
 At his own fit of courage — palely found
 Way of retreat from that pale presence: classed
 Once more among the cony-kind. “Oh, son,
 It is a feeble folk!” saith Solomon.

XLIII.

Vainly he apprehended evil: since,
 When, at the year’s end, even as foretold,

Forth came the Dauphin who discrowned the Prince
 Of that long-craved mere visionary gold,
 'T was no fit time for envy to evince
 Malice, be sure ! The timidest grew bold :
 Of all that courtier-company not one
 But left the semblance for the actual sun.

XLIV.

And all sorts and conditions that stood by
 At René's burning moment, bright escape
 Of soul, bore witness to the prophecy.
 Which witness took the customary shape
 Of verse ; a score of poets in full cry
 Hailed the inspired one. Nantes and Tours agape,
 Soon Paris caught the infection ; gaining strength,
 How could it fail to reach the Court at length ?

XLV.

" O poet ! " smiled King Louis, " and besides,
 O prophet ! Sure, by miracle announced,
 My babe will prove a prodigy. Who chides
 Henceforth the unchilded monarch shall be trounced
 For irreligion : since the fool derides
 Plain miracle by which this prophet pounced
 Exactly on the moment I should lift
 Like Simeon, in my arms, a babe, ' God's gift ! '

XLVI.

" So call the boy ! and call this bard and seer
 By a new title ! him I raise to rank
 Of ' Royal Poet : ' poet without peer !
 Whose fellows only have themselves to thank
 If humbly they must follow in the rear
 My René. He's the master : they must clank
 Their chains of song, confessed his slaves ; for why ?
 They poetize, while he can prophesy ! "

XLVII.

So said, so done ; our René rose august,
 " The Royal Poet ; " straightway put in type
 His poem-prophecy, and (fair and just
 Procedure) added, — now that time was ripe
 For proving friends did well his word to trust, —
 Those attestations, tuned to lyre or pipe,
 Which friends broke out with when he dared foretell
 The Dauphin's birth : friends trusted, and did well.

XLVIII.

Moreover he got painted by Du Pré,
 Engraved by Daret also ; and prefixed
 The portrait to his book : a crown of bay
 Circled his brows, with rose and myrtle mixed ;
 And Latin verses, lovely in their way,
 Described him as "the biforked hill betwixt :
 Since he hath scaled Parnassus at one jump,
 Joining the Delphic quill and Getic trump."

XLIX.

Whereof came . . . What, it lasts, our spirt, thus long
 — The red fire ? That's the reason must excuse
 My letting flicker René's prophet-song
 No longer ; for its pertinacious hues
 Must fade before its fellow joins the throng
 Of sparks departed up the chimney, dues
 To dark oblivion. At the word, it winks,
 Rallies, relapses, dwindles, deathward sinks.

L.

So does our poet. All this burst of fame,
 Fury of favor, Royal Poetship,
 Prophetship, book, verse, picture — thereof came
 — Nothing ! That's why I would not let outstrip
 Red his green rival flamelet : just the same
 Ending in smoke waits both ! In vain we rip
 The past, no further faintest trace remains
 Of René to reward our pious pains.

LI.

Somebody saw a portrait framed and glazed
 At Croisic. "Who may be this glorified
 Mortal unheard-of hitherto ?" amazed
 That person asked the owner by his side,
 Who proved as ignorant. The question raised
 Provoked inquiry ; key by key was tried
 On Croisic's portrait-puzzle, till back flew
 The wards at one key's touch, which key was — Who ?

LII.

The other famous poet ! Wait thy turn,
 Thou green, our red's competitor ! Enough
 Just now to note 't was he that itched to learn
 (A hundred years ago) how fate could puff

- Heaven-high (a hundred years before), then spurn
 To suds so big a hubble in some huff :
 Since green too found red's portrait, — having heard
 Hitherto of red's rare self not one word.

LIII.

And he with zeal addressed him to the task
 Of hunting out, by all and any means,
 — Who might the brilliant bard be, born to bask
 Butterfly-like in shine which kings and queens
 And baby-dauphins shed ? Much need to ask !
 Is fame so fickle that what perks and preens
 The eyed wing, one imperial minute, dips
 Next sudden moment into blind eclipse ?

LIV.

After a vast expenditure of pains,
 Our second poet found the prize he sought :
 Urged in his search by something that restrains
 From undue triumph famed ones who have fought,
 Or simply, poetizing, taxed their brains :
 Something that tells such — dear is triumph bought
 If it means only basking in the midst
 Of fame's brief sunshine, as thou, René, didst.

LV.

For, what did searching find at last but this ?
 Quoth somebody, " I somehow somewhere seem
 To think I heard one old De Chevaye is
 Or was possessed of René's works ! " which gleam
 Of light from out the dark proved not amiss
 To track, by correspondence on the theme ;
 And soon the twilight broadened into day,
 For thus to question answered De Chevaye.

LVI.

- " True it is, I did once possess the works
 You want account of — works — to call them so, —
 Comprised in one small book : the volume lurks
 (Some fifty leaves *in duodecimo*)
 'Neath certain ashes which my soul it irks
 Still to remember, because long ago
 That and my other rare shelf-occupants
 Perished by burning of my house at Nantes.

LVII.

" Yet of that book one strange particular
 Still stays in mind with me " — and thereupon
 Followed the story. " Few the poems are ;
 The book was two-thirds filled up with this one,
 And sundry witnesses from near and far
 That here at least was prophesying done
 By prophet, so as to preclude all doubt,
 Before the thing he prophesied about."

LVIII.

That 's all he knew, and all the poet learned,
 And all that you and I are like to hear
 Of René ; since not only book is burned
 But memory extinguished, — nay, I fear,
 Portrait is gone too : nowhere I discerned
 A trace of it at Croisic. " Must a tear
 Needs fall for that ? " you smile. " How fortune fares
 With such a mediocrity, who cares ? "

LIX.

Well, I care — intimately care to have
 Experience how a human creature felt
 In after-life, who bore the burden grave
 Of certainly believing God had dealt
 For once directly with him : did not rave
 — A maniac, did not find his reason melt
 — An idiot, but went on, in peace or strife,
 The world's way, lived an ordinary life.

LX.

How many problems that one fact would solve !
 An ordinary soul, no more, no less,
 About whose life earth's common sights revolve,
 On whom is brought to bear, by thunder-stress,
 This fact — God tasks him, and will not absolve
 Task's negligent performer ! Can you guess
 How such a soul — the task performed to point —
 Goes back to life nor finds things out of joint ?

LXI.

Does he stand stock-like henceforth ? or proceed
 Dizzily, yet with course straightforward still,
 Down-trampling vulgar hindrance ? — as the reed
 Is crushed beneath its tramp when that blind will

Hatched in some old-world beast's brain bids it speed

Where the sun wants brute-presence to fulfil
 Life's purpose in a new far zone, ere ice
 Enwomb the pasture-tract its fortalice.

LXII.

I think no such direct plain truth consists

With actual sense and thought and what they take
 To be the solid walls of life: mere mists —

How such would, at that truth's first piercing, break
 Into the nullity they are! — slight lists

Wherein the puppet-champions wage, for sake
 Of some mock-mistress, mimic war: laid low
 At trumpet-blast, there 's shown the world, one foe!

LXIII.

No, we must play the pageant out, observe

The tourney-regulations, and regard
 Success — to meet the blunted spear nor swerve,

Failure — to break no bones yet fall on sward;
 Must prove we have — not courage? well then — nerve!

And, at the day's end, boast the crown's award —
 Be warranted as promising to wield
 Weapons, no sham, in a true battlefield.

LXIV.

Meantime, our simulated thunderclaps

Which tell us counterfeited truths — these same
 Are — sound, when music storms the soul, perhaps?

— Sight, beauty, every dart of every aim
 That touches just, then seems, by strange relapse,

To fall effectless from the soul it came
 As if to fix its own, but simply smote
 And startled to vague beauty more remote?

LXV.

So do we gain enough — yet not too much —

Acquaintance with that outer element
 Wherein there 's operation (call it such!)

Quite of another kind than we the pent
 On earth are proper to receive. Our hutch

Lights up at the least chink: let roof be rent —
 How inmates huddle, blinded at first spasm,
 Cognizant of the sun's self through the chasm!

LXVI.

Therefore, who knows if this our René's quick
 Subsidence from as sudden noise and glare
 Into oblivion was impolitic ?

No doubt his soul became at once aware
 That, after prophecy, the rhyming-trick
 Is poor employment: human praises scare
 Rather than soothe ears all a-tingle yet
 With tones few hear and live, but none forget.

LXVII.

There's our first famous poet! Step thou forth
 Second consummate songster! See, the tongue
 Of fire that typifies thee, owns thy worth
 In yellow, purple mixed its green among,
 No pure and simple resin from the North,
 But composite with virtues that belong
 To Southern culture! Love not more than hate
 Helped to a blaze . . . But I anticipate.

LXVIII.

Prepare to witness a combustion rich
 And riotously splendid, far beyond
 Poor René's lambent little streamer which
 Only played candle to a Court grown fond
 By baby-birth: this soared to such a pitch,
 Alternately such colors doffed and donned,
 That when I say it dazzled Paris — please
 Know that it brought Voltaire upon his knees!

LXIX.

Who did it, was a dapper gentleman,
 Paul Desforges Maillard, Croisickese by birth,
 Whose birth that century ended which began
 By similar bestowment on our earth
 Of the aforesaid René. Cease to scan
 The ways of Providence! See Croisic's dearth —
 Not Paris in its plenitude — suffice
 To furnish France with her best poet twice!

LXX.

Till he was thirty years of age, the vein
 Poetic yielded rhyme by drops and spirits:
 In verses of society had lain
 His talent chiefly; but the Muse asserts

Privilege most by treating with disdain
 Epics the bard mouths out, or odes he blurts
 Spasmodically forth. Have people time
 And patience nowadays for thought in rhyme ?

LXXI.

So, his achievements were the quatrain's inch
 Of homage, or at most the sonnet's ell
 Of admiration : welded lines with clinch
 Of ending word and word, to every belle
 In Croisic's bounds ; these, brisk as any finch,
 He twittered till his fame had reached as well
 Guérande as Batz ; but there fame stopped, for — curse
 On fortune — outside lay the universe !

LXXII.

That's Paris. Well, — why not break bounds, and send
 Song onward till it echo at the gates
 Of Paris whither all ambitions tend,
 And end too, seeing that success there sates
 The soul which hungers most for fame ? Why spend
 A minute in deciding, while, by Fate's
 Decree, there happens to be just the prize
 Proposed there, suiting souls that poetize ?

LXXIII.

A prize indeed, the Academy's own self
 Proposes to what bard shall best indite
 A piece describing how, through shoal and shelf,
 The Art of Navigation, steered aright,
 Has, in our last king's reign, — the lucky elf, —
 Reached, one may say, Perfection's haven quite,
 And there cast anchor. At a glance one sees
 The subject's crowd of capabilities !

LXXIV.

Neptune and Amphitrité ! Thetis, who
 Is either Tethys or as good — both tag !
 Triton can shove along a vessel too :
 It's Virgil ! Then the winds that blow or lag, —
 De Maille, Vendôme, Vermandois ! Toulouse blew
 Longest, we reckon : he must puff the flag
 To fullest outflare ; while our lacking nymph
 Be Anne of Austria, Regent o'er the lymph !

LXXV.

Promised, performed! Since *irritabilis gens*
 Holds of the feverish impotence that strives
 To stay an itch by prompt resource to pen's
 Scratching itself on paper; placid lives,
 Leisurely works mark the *divinior mens*:
 Bees brood above the honey in their hives;
 Gnats are the busy bustlers. Splash and scrawl, —
 Completed lay thy piece, swift penman Paul!

LXXVI.

To Paris with the product! This dispatched,
 One had to wait the Forty's slow and sure
 Verdict, as best one might. Our penman scratched
 Away perforce the itch that knows no cure
 But daily paper-friction: more than matched
 His first feat by a second — tribute pure
 And heartfelt to the Forty when their voice
 Should peal with one accord "Be Paul our choice!"

LXXVII.

Scratch, scratch went much laudation of that sane
 And sound Tribunal, delegates august
 Of Phœbus and the Muses' sacred train —
 Whom every poetaster tries to thrust
 From where, high-throned, they dominate the Seine:
 Fruitless endeavor, — fail it shall and must!
 Whereof in witness have not one and all
 The Forty voices pealed "Our choice be Paul"?

LXXVIII.

Thus Paul discounted his applause. Alack
 For human expectation! Scarcely ink
 Was dry when, lo, the perfect piece came back
 Rejected, shamed! Some other poet's clink
 "Thetis and Tethys" had seduced the pack
 Of pedants to declare perfection's pink
 A singularly poor production. "Whew!
 The Forty are stark fools, I always knew!"

LXXIX.

First fury over (for Paul's race — to wit,
 Brain-vibrios — wriggle clear of protoplasm
 Into minute life that's one fury-fit),
 "These fools shall find a bard's enthusiasm

Comports with what should counterbalance it —
 Some knowledge of the world! No doubt, orgasm
 Effects the birth of verse which, born, demands
 Prosaic ministration, swaddling-bands!

LXXX.

“Verse must be cared for at this early stage,
 Handled, nay dandled even. I should play
 Their game indeed if, till it grew of age,
 I meekly let these dotards frown away
 My bantling from the rightful heritage
 Of smiles and kisses! Let the public say
 If it be worthy praises or rebukes,
 My poem, from these Forty old perukes!”

LXXXI.

So, by a friend, who boasts himself in grace
 With no less than the Chevalier La Roque, —
 Eminent in those days for pride of place,
 Seeing he had it in his power to block
 The way or smooth the road to all the race
 Of literators trudging up to knock
 At Fame's exalted temple-door — for why?
 He edited the Paris “Mercury”: —

LXXXII.

By this friend's help the Chevalier receives
 Paul's poem, prefaced by the due appeal
 To Cæsar from the Jews. As duly heaves
 A sigh the Chevalier, about to deal
 With ease so customary — turns the leaves,
 Finds nothing there to borrow, beg, or steal —
 Then brightens up the critic's brow deep-lined.
 “The thing may be so cleverly declined!”

LXXXIII.

Down to desk, out with paper, up with quill,
 Dip and indite! “Sir, gratitude immense
 For this true draught from the Pierian rill!
 Our Academic clodpoles must be dense
 Indeed to stand unirrigated still.
 No less, we critics dare not give offence
 To grandees like the Forty: while we mock,
 We grin and bear. So, here 's your piece! La Roque.”

LXXXIV.

“There now!” cries Paul: “the fellow can’t avoid
 Confessing that my piece deserves the palm;
 And yet he dares not grant me space enjoyed
 By every scribbler he permits embalm
 His crambo in the Journal’s corner! Cloyed
 With stuff like theirs, no wonder if a qualm
 Be caused by verse like mine: though that’s no cause
 For his defrauding me of just applause.

LXXXV.

“Aha, he fears the Forty, this poltroon?
 First let him fear *me*! Change smooth speech to rough!
 I’ll speak my mind out, show the fellow soon
 Who is the foe to dread: insist enough
 On my own merits till, as clear as noon,
 He sees I am no man to take rebuff
 As patiently as scribblers may and must!
 Quick to the onslaught, out sword, cut and thrust!”

LXXXVI.

And thereupon a fierce epistle flings
 Its challenge in the critic’s face. Alack!
 Our bard mistakes his man! The gauntlet rings
 On brazen visor proof against attack.
 Prompt from his editorial throne up springs
 The insulted magnate, and his mace falls, thwack,
 On Paul’s devoted brainpan, — quite away
 From common courtesies of fencing-play!

LXXXVII.

“Sir, will you have the truth? This piece of yours
 Is simply execrable past belief.
 I shrank from saying so; but, since naught cures
 Conceit but truth, truth’s at your service! Brief,
 Just so long as ‘The Mercury’ endures,
 So long are you excluded by its Chief
 From corner, nay, from cranny! Play the cock
 O’ the roost, henceforth, at Croisic!” wrote La Roque.

LXXXVIII.

Paul yellowed, whitened, as his wrath from red
 Waxed incandescent. Now, this man of rhyme
 Was merely foolish, faulty in the head
 Not heart of him: conceit’s a venial crime.

“Oh by no means malicious!” cousins said :

Fussily feeble, — harmless all the time,
Piddling at so-called satire — well-advised,
He held in most awe whom he satirized.

LXXXIX.

Accordingly his kith and kin — removed
From emulation of the poet's gift
By power and will — these rather liked, nay, loved
The man who gave his family a lift
Out of the Croisic level ; “disapproved
Satire so trenchant.” Thus our poet sniffed
Home-incense, though too churlish to unlock
“The Mercury's” box of ointment was La Roque.

XC.

But when Paul's visage grew from red to white,
And from his lips a sort of mumbling fell
Of who was to be kicked, — “And serve him right !”
A soft voice interposed, “Did kicking well
Answer the purpose ! Only — if I might
Suggest as much — a far more potent spell
Lies in another kind of treatment. Oh,
Women are ready at resource, you know !

XCI.

“Talent should minister to genius ! good :
The proper and superior smile returns.
Hear me with patience ! Have you understood
The only method whereby genius earns
Fit guerdon nowadays ? In knightly mood
You entered lists with visor up ; one learns
Too late that, had you mounted Roland's crest,
'Room !' they had roared — La Roque with all the rest !

XCII.

“Why did you first of all transmit your piece
To those same priggish Forty unprepared
Whether to rank you with the swans or geese
By friendly intervention ? If they dared
Count you a cackler, — wonders never cease !
I think it still more wondrous that you bared
Your brow (my earlier image) as if praise
Were gained by simple fighting nowadays !

XCIII.

“Your next step showed a touch of the true means
 Whereby desert is crowned : not force but wile
 Came to the rescue. ‘Get behind the scenes!’
 Your friend advised : he writes, sets forth your style
 And title, to such purpose intervenes
 That you get velvet-compliment three-pile;
 And, though ‘The Mercury’ said ‘nay,’ nor stock
 Nor stone did his refusal prove La Roque.”

XCIV.

“Why must you needs revert to the high hand,
 Imperative procedure — what you call
 ‘Taking on merit your exclusive stand’?
Stand, with a vengeance! Soon you went to wall,
 You and your merit! Only fools command
 When folks are free to disobey them, Paul!
 You’ve learnt your lesson, found out what’s o’clock,
 By this uncivil answer of La Roque.”

XCV.

“Now let me counsel! Lay this piece on shelf
 — Masterpiece though it be! From out your desk
 Hand me some lighter sample, verse the elf
 Cupid inspired you with, no god grotesque
 Presiding o’er the Navy! I myself
 Hand-write what’s legible yet picturesque;
 I’ll copy fair and femininely frock
 Your poem masculine that courts La Roque!”

XCVI.

“Deïdamia he — Achilles thou!
 Ha, ha, these ancient stories come so apt!
 My sex, my youth, my rank I next avow
 In a neat prayer for kind perusal. Sapped
 I see the walls which stand so stoutly now!
 I see the toils about the game entrapped
 By honest cunning! Chains of lady’s-smock,
 Not thorn and thistle, tether fast La Roque!”

XCVII.

Now, who might be the speaker sweet and arch
 That laughed above Paul’s shoulder as it heaved
 With the indignant heart? — bade steal a march
 And not continue charging? Who conceived

This plan which set our Paul, like pea you parch
 On fire-shovel, skipping, of a load relieved,
 From arm-chair moodiness to *escritoire*
 Sacred to Phœbus and the tuneful choir ?

XCVIII.

Who but Paul's sister ! named of course like him
 " Desforges " ; but, mark you, in those days a queer
 Custom obtained, — who knows whence grew the whim ? —
 That people could not read their title clear
 To reverence till their own true names, made dim
 By daily mouthing, pleased to disappear,
 Replaced by brand-new bright ones : Arouet,
 For instance, grew Voltaire ; Desforges — Malcraï.

XCIX.

" Demoiselle Malcraï de la Vigne " — because
 The family possessed at Brederac
 A vineyard, — few grapes, many hips-and-haws, —
 Still a nice Breton name. As breast and back
 Of this vivacious beauty gleamed through gauze,
 So did her sprightly nature nowise lack
 Lustre when draped, the fashionable way,
 In " Malcraï de la Vigne," — more short, " Malcraï."

C.

Out from Paul's *escritoire* behold escape
 The hoarded treasure ! verse falls thick and fast,
 Sonnets and songs of every size and shape.
 The lady ponders on her prize ; at last
 Selects one which — O angel and yet ape ! —
 Her malice thinks is probably surpassed
 In badness by no fellow of the flock,
 Copies it fair, and " Now for my La Roque ! "

CI.

So, to him goes, with the neat manuscript,
 The soft petitionary letter. " Grant
 A fledgeling novice that with wing unclipt
 She soar her little circuit, habitant
 Of an old manor ; buried in which crypt,
 How can the youthful châtelaine but pant
 For disemprisonment by one *ad hoc*
 Appointed ' Mercury's ' Editor, La Roque ? "

CII.

"T was an epistle that might move the Turk!
 More certainly it moved our middle-aged
 Pen-driver drudging at his weary work,
 Raked the old ashes up and disengaged
 The sparks of gallantry which always lurk
 Somehow in literary breasts, assuaged
 In no degree by compliments on style;
 Are Forty wagging beards worth one girl's smile?"

CIII.

In trips the lady's poem, takes its place
 Of honor in the gratified Gazette,
 With due acknowledgment of power and grace;
 Prognostication, too, that higher yet
 The Breton Muse will soar: fresh youth, high race,
 Beauty and wealth have amicably met
 That Demoiselle Malcrais may fill the chair
 Left vacant by the loss of Deshoulières.

CIV.

"There!" cried the lively lady. "Who was right —
 You in the dumps, or I the merry maid
 Who know a trick or two can baffle spite
 Tenfold the force of this old fool's? Afraid
 Of Editor La Roque? But come! next flight
 Shall outsoar — Deshoulières alone? My blade,
 Sappho herself shall you confess outstript!
 Quick, Paul, another dose of manuscript!"

CV.

And so, once well a-foot, advanced the game:
 More and more verses, corresponding gush
 On gush of praise, till everywhere acclaim
 Rose to the pitch of uproar. "Sappho? Tush!
 Sure 'Malcrais on her Parrot' puts to shame
 Deshoulières' pastorals, clay not worth a rush
 Beside this find of treasure, gold in crock,
 Unearthed in Brittany, — nay, ask La Roque!"

CVI.

Such was the Paris tribute. "Yes," you sneer,
 "Ninnies stock Noodledom, but folk more sage
 Resist contagious folly, never fear!"
 Do they? Permit me to detach one page

From the huge Album, which from far and near
 Poetic praises blackened in a rage
 Of rapture! and that page shall be — who stares
 Confounded now, I ask you? — just Voltaire's!

CVII.

Ay, sharpest shrewdest steel that ever stabbed
 To death Imposture through the armor-joints!
 How did it happen that gross Humbug grabbed
 Thy weapons, gouged thine eyes out? Fate appoints
 That pride shall have a fall, or I had blabbed
 Hardly that Humbug, whom thy soul aoints,
 Could thus cross-buttock thee caught unawares,
 And dismalest of tumbles proved — Voltaire's!

CVIII.

See his epistle extant yet, wherewith
 "Henri" in verse and "Charles" in prose he sent
 To do her suit and service! Here's the pith
 Of half a dozen stanzas — stones which went
 To build that simulated monolith —
 Sham love in due degree with homage blent
 As sham — which in the vast of volumes scares
 The traveller still: "That stucco-heap — Voltaire's?"

CIX.

"Oh thou, whose clarion-voice has overflown
 The wilds to startle Paris that's one ear!
 Thou who such strange capacity hast shown
 For joining all that's grand with all that's dear,
 Knowledge with power to please — Deshoulières grown
 Learned as Dacier in thy person! mere
 Weak fruit of idle hours, these crabs of mine
 I dare lay at thy feet, O Muse divine!

CX.

"Charles was my task-work only; Henri trod
 My hero erst, and now, my heroine — she
 Shall be thyself! True — is it true, great God!
 Certainly love henceforward must not be!
 Yet all the crowd of Fine Arts fail — how odd! —
 Tried turn by turn, to fill a void in me!
 There's no replacing love with these, alas!
 Yet all I can I do to prove no ass.

CXI.

"I labor to amuse my freedom ; but
 Should any sweet young creature slavery preach,
 And — borrowing thy vivacious charm, the slut! —
 Make me, in thy engaging words, a speech,
 Soon should I see myself in prison shut
 With all imaginable pleasure." Reach
 The washhand-basin for admirers ! There's
 A stomach-moving tribute — and Voltaire's !

CXII.

Suppose it a fantastic billet-doux,
 Adulatory flourish, not worth frown !
 What say you to the Fathers of Trévoux ?
 These in their Dictionary have her down
 Under the heading " Author " : " Malcrais, too,
 Is ' Author ' of much verse that claims renown."
 While Jean-Baptiste Rousseau . . . but why proceed ?
 Enough of this — something too much, indeed !

CXIII.

At last La Roque, unwilling to be left
 Behindhand in the rivalry, broke bounds
 Of figurative passion ; hilt and heft,
 Plunged his huge downright love through what surrounds
 The literary female bosom ; reft
 Away its veil of coy reserve with " Zounds !
 I love thee, Breton Beauty ! All 's no use !
 Body and soul I love, — the big word 's loose !"

CXIV.

He 's greatest now and to de-struct-i-on
Nearest. Attend the solemn word I quote,
 Oh Paul ! *There 's no pause at per-fec-ti-on.*
 Thus knolls thy knell the Doctor's bronzed throat !
Greatness a period hath, no sta-ti-on !
 Better and truer verse none ever wrote
 (Despite the antique outstretched *a-i-on*)
 Than thou, revered and magisterial Donne !

CXV.

Flat on his face, La Roque, and — pressed to heart
 His dexter hand — Voltaire with bended knee !
 Paul sat and sucked-in triumph ; just apart
 Leaned over him his sister. " Well ? " smirks he,

And "Well?" she answers, smiling — woman's art
 To let a man's own mouth, not hers, decree
 What shall be next move which decides the game :
 Success? She said so. Failure? His the blame.

CXVI.

"Well!" this time forth affirmatively comes
 With smack of lip, and long-drawn sigh through teeth
 Close clenched o'er satisfaction, as the gums
 Were tickled by a sweetmeat teased beneath
 Palate by lubricating tongue : "Well! crumbs
 Of comfort these, undoubtedly! no death
 Likely from famine at Fame's feast! 't is clear
 I may put claim in for my pittance, Dear !

CXVII.

"La Roque, Voltaire, my lovers? Then disguise
 Has served its turn, grows idle; let it drop !
 I shall to Paris, flaunt there in men's eyes
 My proper manly garb and mount a-top
 The pedestal that waits me, take the prize
 Awarded Hercules. He threw a sop
 To Cerberus who let him pass, you know,
 Then, following, licked his heels : exactly so !

CXVIII.

"I like the prospect — their astonishment,
 Confusion : wounded vanity, no doubt,
 Mixed motives ; how I see the brows quick bent !
 'What, sir, yourself, none other, brought about
 This change of estimation? Phœbus sent
 His shafts as from Diana?' Critic pout
 Turns courtier smile : 'Lo, him we took for her!
 Pleasant mistake ! You bear no malice, sir ?'

CXIX.

"Eh, my Diana?" But Diana kept
 Smilingly silent with fixed needle-sharp
 Much-meaning eyes that seemed to intercept
 Paul's very thoughts ere they had time to warp
 From earnest into sport the words they leapt
 To life with — changed as when maltreated harp
 Renders in tinkle what some player-prig
 Means for a grave tune though it proves a jig.

CXX.

“What, Paul, and are my pains thus thrown away,
 My lessons end in loss?” at length fall slow
 The pitying syllables, her lips allay
 The satire of by keeping in full flow,
 Above their coral reef, bright smiles at play:
 “Can it be, Paul thus fails to rightly know
 And altogether estimate applause
 As just so many asinine hee-haws?”

CXXI.

“I thought to show you” . . . “Show me,” Paul inbroke,
 “My poetry is rubbish, and the world
 That rings with my renown a sorry joke!
 What fairer test of worth than that, form furred,
 I entered the arena? Yet you croak
 Just as if Phœbé and not Phœbus hurled
 The dart and struck the Python! What, he crawls
 Humbly in dust before your feet, not Paul’s?”

CXXII.

“Nay, ’t is no laughing matter though absurd
 If there’s an end of honesty on earth!
 La Roque sends letters, lying every word!
 Voltaire makes verse, and of himself makes mirth
 To the remotest age! Rousseau’s the third
 Who, driven to despair amid such dearth
 Of people that want praising, finds no one
 More fit to praise than Paul the simpleton!”

CXXIII.

“Somebody says — if a man writes at all
 It is to show the writer’s kith and kin
 He was unjustly thought a natural;
 And truly, sister, I have yet to win
 Your favorable word, it seems, for Paul
 Whose poetry you count not worth a pin
 Though well enough esteemed by these Voltaires,
 Rousseaus and such-like: let them quack, who cares?”

CXXIV.

“— To Paris with you, Paul! Not one word’s waste
 Further: my scrupulosity was vain!
 Go triumph! Be my foolish fears effaced
 From memory’s record! Go, to come again

With glory crowned, — by sister re-embraced,
 Cured of that strange delusion of her brain
 Which led her to suspect that Paris gloats
 On male limbs mostly when in petticoats !”

CXXV.

So laughed her last word, with the little touch
 Of malice proper to the outraged pride
 Of any artist in a work too much
 Shorn of its merits. “By all means, be tried
 The opposite procedure ! Cast your crutch
 Away, no longer crippled, nor divide
 The credit of your march to the World’s Fair
 With sister Cherry-cheeks who helped you there !”

CXXVI.

Crippled, forsooth ! What courser sprightlier pranced
 Paris-ward than did Paul ? Nay, dreams lent wings :
 He flew, or seemed to fly, by dreams entranced.
 Dreams ? wide-awake realities : no things
 Dreamed merely were the missives that advanced
 The claim of Malcrais to consort with kings
 Crowned by Apollo — not to say with queens
 Cinctured by Venus for Idalian scenes.

CXXVII.

Soon he arrives, forthwith is found before
 The outer gate of glory. Bold tic-toc
 Announces there ’s a giant at the door.
 “Ay, sir, here dwells the Chevalier La Roque.”
 “Lackey ! Malcrais — mind, no word less nor more ! —
 Desires his presence. I’ve unearthed the brock :
 Now, to transfix him !” There stands Paul erect,
 Inched out his uttermost, for more effect.

CXXVIII.

A bustling entrance : “Idol of my flame !
 Can it be that my heart attains at last
 Its longing ? that you stand, the very same
 As in my visions ? . . . Ha ! hey, how ?” aghast
 Stops short the rapture. “Oh, my boy’s to blame !
 You merely are the messenger ! Too fast
 My fancy rushed to a conclusion. Pooh !
 Well, sir, the lady’s substitute is — who ?”

CXXXIX.

Then Paul's smirk grows inordinate. "Shake hands!
 Friendship not love awaits you, master mine,
 Though nor Malcrais nor any mistress stands
 To meet your ardor! So, you don't divine
 Who wrote the verses wherewith ring the land's
 Whole length and breadth? Just he whereof no line
 Had ever leave to blot your Journal — eh?
 Paul Desforges Maillard — otherwise Malcrais!"

CXXX.

And there the two stood, stare confronting smirk,
 Awhile uncertain which should yield the *pas*.
 In vain the Chevalier beat brain for quirk
 To help in this conjuncture; at length, "Bah!
 Boh! Since I've made myself a fool, why shirk
 The punishment of folly? Ha, ha, ha,
 Let me return your handshake!" Comic sock
 For tragic buskin prompt thus changed La Roque

CXXXI.

"I'm nobody — a wren-like journalist;
 You've flown at higher game and winged your bird,
 The golden eagle! That's the grand acquist!
 Voltaire's sly Muse, the tiger-cat, has purred
 Prettily round your feet; but if she missed
 Priority of stroking, soon were stirred
 The dormant spitfire. To Voltaire! away,
 Paul Desforges Maillard, otherwise Malcrais!"

CXXXII.

Whereupon, arm in arm, and head in air,
 The two begin their journey. Need I say,
 La Roque had felt the talon of Voltaire,
 Had a long-standing little debt to pay,
 And pounced, you may depend, on such a rare
 Occasion for its due discharge? So, gay
 And grenadier-like, marching to assault,
 They reach the enemy's abode, there halt.

CXXXIII.

"I'll be announcer!" quoth La Roque: "I know,
 Better than you, perhaps, my Breton bard,
 How to procure an audience! He's not slow
 To smell a rat, this scamp Voltaire! Discard

The petticoats too soon, — you 'll never show
 Your *haut-de-chausses* and all they've made or marred
 In your true person. Here's his servant. Pray,
 Will the great man see Demoiselle Malcrais?"

CXXXIV.

Now, the great man was also, no whit less,
 The man of self-respect, — more great man he!
 And bowed to social usage, dressed the dress,
 And decorated to the fit degree
 His person; 't was enough to bear the stress
 Of battle in the field, without, when free
 From outside foes, inviting friends' attack
 By — sword in hand? No, — ill-made coat on back.

CXXXV.

And, since the announcement of his visitor
 Surprised him at his toilet, — never glass
 Had such solicitation! "Black, now — or
 Brown be the killing wig to wear? Alas,
 Where's the rouge gone, this cheek were better for
 A tender touch of? Melted to a mass,
 All my pomatum! There's at all events
 A devil — for he's got among my scents!"

CXXXVI.

So, "barbered ten times o'er," as Antony
 Paced to his Cleopatra, did at last
 Voltaire proceed to the fair presence: high
 In color, proud in port, as if a blast
 Of trumpet bade the world "Take note! draws nigh
 To Beauty, Power! Behold the Iconoclast,
 The Poet, the Philosopher, the Rod
 Of iron for imposture! Ah my God!"

CXXXVII.

For there stands smirking Paul, and — what lights fierce
 The situation as with sulphur flash —
 There grinning stands La Roque! No *carte-and-tierce*
 Observes the grinning fencer, but, full dash
 From breast to shoulderblade, the thrusts transpierce
 That armor against which so idly clash
 The swords of priests and pedants! Victors there,
 Two smirk and grin who have befooled — Voltaire!

CXXXVIII.

A moment's horror ; then quick turn-about
 On high-heeled shoe, — flurry of ruffles, flounce
 Of wig-ties and of coat-tails, — and so out
 Of door banged wrathfully behind, goes — bounce —
 Voltaire in tragic exit ! vows, no doubt,
 Vengeance upon the couple. Did he trounce
 Either, in point of fact ? His anger's flash
 Subsided if a culprit craved his cash.

CXXXIX.

As for La Roque, he having laughed his laugh
 To heart's content, — the joke defunct at once,
 Dead in the birth, you see, — its epitaph
 Was sober earnest. “ Well, sir, for the nonce,
 You've gained the laurel ; never hope to graff
 A second sprig of triumph there ! Ensconce
 Yourself again at Croisic : let it be
 Enough you mastered both Voltaire and — me !

CXL.

“ Don't linger here in Paris to parade
 Your victory, and have the very boys
 Point at you ! ‘ There's the little mouse which made
 Believe those two big lions that its noise,
 Nibbling away behind the hedge, conveyed
 Intelligence that — portent which destroys
 All courage in the lion's heart, with horn
 That's fable — there lay couched the unicorn !’

CXLI.

“ Beware us, now we've found who fooled us ! Quick
 To cover ! ‘ In proportion to men's fright,
 Expect their fright's revenge !’ quoth politic
 Old Macchiavelli. As for me, — all's right :
 I'm but a journalist. But no pin's prick
 The tooth leaves when Voltaire is roused to bite !
 So, keep your counsel, I advise ! Adieu !
 Good journey ! Ha, ha, ha, Malcrais was — you !”

CXLI.

“ — Yes, I'm Malcrais, and somebody beside,
 You snickering monkey !” thus winds up the tale
 Our hero, safe at home, to that black-eyed
 Cherry-cheeked sister, as she soothes the pale

Mortified poet. "Let their worst be tried,
 I'm their match henceforth — very man and male!
 Don't talk to me of knocking-under! man
 And male must end what petticoats began!

CXLIII.

"How woman-like it is to apprehend
 The world will eat its words! why, words traufixed
 To stone, they stare at you in print, — at end,
 Each writer's style and title! Choose betwixt
 Fool and knave for his name, who should intend
 To perpetrate a baseness so unmixed
 With prospect of advantage! What is writ
 Is writ: they've praised me, there's an end of it!

CXLIV.

"No, Dear, allow me! I shall print these same
 Pieces, with no omitted line, as Paul's.
 Malcrais no longer, let me see folk blame
 What they — praised simply? — placed on pedestals,
 Each piece a statue in the House of Fame!
 Fast will they stand there, though their presence galls
 The envious crew: such show their teeth, perhaps,
 And snarl, but never bite! I know the chaps!"

CXLV.

Oh Paul, oh piteously deluded! Pace
 Thy sad sterility of Croisic flats,
 Watch, from their southern edge, the foamy race
 Of high-tide as it heaves the drowning mats
 Of yellow-berried web-growth from their place,
 The rock-ridge, when, rolling as far as Batz,
 One broadside crashes on it, and the crags,
 That needle under, stream with weedy rags!

CXLVI.

Or, if thou wilt, at inland Bergerac,
 Rude heritage but recognized domain,
 Do as two here are doing: make hearth crack
 With logs until thy chimney roar again
 Jolly with fire-glow! Let its angle lack
 No grace of Cherry-cheeks thy sister, fain
 To do a sister's office and laugh smooth
 Thy corrugated brow — that scowls forsooth!

CXLVII.

Wherefore? Who does not know how these La Roques,
 Voltaires, can say and unsay, praise and blame,
 Prove black white, white black, play at paradox
 And, when they seem to lose it, win the game?
 Care not thou what this badger, and that fox,
 His fellow in rascality, call "fame!"
 Fiddlepin's end! Thou hadst it, — quack, quack, quack!
 Have quietude from geese at Bergerac!

CXLVIII.

Quietude! For, be very sure of this!
 A twelvemonth hence, and men shall know or care
 As much for what to-day they clap or hiss
 As for the fashion of the wigs they wear,
 Then wonder at. There's fame which, bale or bliss, —
 Got by no gracious word of great Voltaire
 Or not-so-great La Roque, — is taken back
 By neither, any more than Bergerac!

CXLIX.

Too true! or rather, true as ought to be!
 No more of Paul the man, Malcrais the maid,
 Thenceforth forever! One or two, I see,
 Stuck by their poet: who the longest stayed
 Was Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, and even he
 Seemingly saddened as perforce he paid
 A rhyming tribute: "After death, survive —
 He hoped he should: and died while yet alive!"

CL.

No, he hoped nothing of the kind, or held
 His peace and died in silent good old age.
 Him it was, curiosity impelled
 To seek if there were extant still some page
 Of his great predecessor, rat who belled
 The cat once, and would never deign engage
 In after-combat with mere mice, — saved from
 More sonnetearing, — René Gentilhomme.

CLI.

Paul's story furnished forth that famous play
 Of Piron's "Métromanie": there you'll find
 He's Francaleu, while Demoiselle Malcrais
 Is Demoiselle No-end-of-names-behind!

As for Voltaire, he's Damis. Good and gay
 The plot and dialogue, and all's designed
 To spite Voltaire: at "Something" such the laugh
 Of simply "Nothing!" (see his epitaph.)

CLII.

But truth, truth, that's the gold! and all the good
 I find in fancy is, it serves to set
 Gold's inmost glint free, gold which comes up rude
 And rayless from the mine. All fume and fret
 Of artistry beyond this point pursued
 Brings out another sort of burnish: yet
 Always the ingot has its very own
 Value, a sparkle struck from truth alone.

CLIII.

Now, take this sparkle and the other spirt
 Of fitful flame, — twin births of our gray brand
 That's sinking fast to ashes! I assert,
 As sparkles want but fuel to expand
 Into a conflagration no mere squirt
 Will quench too quickly, so might Croisic strand,
 Had Fortune pleased posterity to chowse.
 Boast of her brace of beacons luminous.

CLIV.

Did earlier Agamemnons lack their bard?
 But later bards lacked Agamemnon too!
 How often frustrate they of fame's award
 Just because Fortune, as she listed, blew
 Some slight bark's sails to bellying, mauled and marred
 And forced to put about the First-rate! True,
 Such tacks but for a time: still — small-craft ride
 At anchor, rot while Beddoes breasts the tide!

CLV.

Dear, shall I tell you? There's a simple test
 Would serve, when people take on them to weigh
 The worth of poets. "Who was better, best,
 This, that, the other bard?" (bards none gainsay
 As good, observe! no matter for the rest.)
 "What quality preponderating may
 Turn the scale as it trembles?" End the strife
 By asking "Which one led a happy life?"

CLVI.

If one did, over his antagonist
 That yelled or shrieked or sobbed or wept or wailed
 Or simply had the dumps, — dispute who list, —
 I count him victor. Where his fellow failed,
 Mastered by his own means of might, — acquist
 Of necessary sorrows, — he prevailed,
 A strong since joyful man who stood distinct
 Above slave-sorrows to his chariot linked.

CLVII.

Was not his lot to feel more? What meant "feel"
 Unless to suffer! Not, to see more? Sight —
 What helped it but to watch the drunken reel
 Of vice and folly round him, left and right,
 One dance of rogues and idiots! Not, to deal
 More with things lovely? What provoked the spite
 Of filth incarnate, like the poet's need
 Of other nutriment than strife and greed!

CLVIII.

Who knows most, doubts most; entertaining hope,
 Means recognizing fear; the keener sense
 Of all comprised within our actual scope
 Recoils from aught beyond earth's dim and dense.
 Who, grown familiar with the sky, will grope
 Henceforward among groundlings? That's offence
 Just as indubitably: stars abound
 O'erhead, but then — what flowers make glad the ground!

CLIX.

So, force is sorrow, and each sorrow, force:
 What then? since Swiftness gives the charioteer
 The palm, his hope be in the vivid horse
 Whose neck God clothed with thunder, not the steer
 Sluggish and safe! Yoke Hatred, Crime, Remorse,
 Despair: but ever 'mid the whirling fear,
 Let, through the tumult, break the poet's face
 Radiant, assured his wild slaves win the race!

CLX.

Therefore I say . . . no, shall not say, but think,
 And save my breath for better purpose. White
 From gray our log has burned to: just one blink
 That quivers, loth to leave it, as a sprite

The outworn body. Ere your eyelids' wink
 Punish who sealed so deep into the night
 Your mouth up, for two poets dead so long, —
 Here pleads a live pretender : right your wrong !

I.

WHAT a pretty tale you told me
 Once upon a time
 — Said you found it somewhere (scold me !)
 Was it prose or was it rhyme,
 Greek or Latin? Greek, you said,
 While your shoulder propped my head.

II.

Anyhow there 's no forgetting
 This much if no more,
 That a poet (pray, no petting !)
 Yes, a bard, sir, famed of yore,
 Went where suchlike used to go,
 Singing for a prize, you know.

III.

Well, he had to sing, nor merely
 Sing but play the lyre ;
 Playing was important clearly
 Quite as singing : I desire,
 Sir, you keep the fact in mind
 For a purpose that 's behind.

IV.

There stood he, while deep attention
 Held the judges round,
 — Judges able, I should mention,
 To detect the slightest sound
 Sung or played amiss : such ears
 Had old judges, it appears !

V.

None the less he sang out boldly,
 Played in time and tune,
 Till the judges, weighing coldly
 Each note's worth, seemed, late or soon,
 Sure to smile " In vain one tries
 Picking faults out : take the prize ! "

VI.

When, a mischief! Were they seven
 Strings the lyre possessed?
 Oh, and afterwards eleven,
 Thank you! Well, sir, — who had guessed
 Such ill luck in store? — it happed
 One of those same seven strings snapped.

VII.

All was lost, then! No! a cricket
 (What "cicada"? Pooh!)
 — Some mad thing that left its thicket
 For mere love of music — flew
 With its little heart on fire,
 Lighted on the crippled lyre.

VIII.

So that when (Ah joy!) our singer
 For his truant string
 Feels with disconcerted finger,
 What does cricket else but fling
 Fiery heart forth, sound the note
 Wanted by the throbbing throat?

IX.

Ay and, ever to the ending,
 Cricket chirps at need,
 Executes the hand's intending,
 Promptly, perfectly, — indeed
 Saves the singer from defeat
 With her chirrup low and sweet.

X.

Till, at ending, all the judges
 Cry with one assent
 "Take the prize — a prize who grudges
 Such a voice and instrument?
 Why, we took your lyre for harp,
 So it shrilled us forth F sharp!"

XI.

Did the conqueror spurn the creature,
 Once its service done?
 That's no such uncommon feature
 In the case when Music's son

Finds his Lotte's power too spent
For aiding soul-development.

XII.

No! This other, on returning
Homeward, prize in hand,
Satisfied his bosom's yearning :
(Sir, I hope you understand !)
— Said "Some record there must be
Of this cricket's help to me!"

XIII.

So, he made himself a statue :
Marble stood, life-size ;
On the lyre, he pointed at you,
Perched his partner in the prize ;
Never more apart you found
Her, he throned, from him, she crowned.

XIV.

That's the tale: its application?
Somebody I know
Hopes one day for reputation
Through his poetry that's — Oh,
All so learned and so wise
And deserving of a prize !

XV.

If he gains one, will some ticket,
When his statue's built,
Tell the gazer " 'T was a cricket
Helped my crippled lyre, whose lilt
Sweet and low, when strength usurped
Softness' place i' the scale, she chirped ?

XVI.

" For as victory was nighest,
While I sang and played, —
With my lyre at lowest, highest,
Right alike, — one string that made
' Love' sound soft was snapt in twain,
Never to be heard again, —

XVII.

" Had not a kind cricket fluttered,
Perched upon the place

Vacant left, and duly uttered
‘ Love, Love, Love,’ whene’er the bass
Asked the treble to atone
For its somewhat sombre drone.”

XVIII.

But you don’t know music ! Wherefore
Keep on casting pearls
To a — poet ? All I care for
Is — to tell him that a girl’s
“ Love ” comes aptly in when gruff
Grows his singing. (There, enough !)

JANUARY 15, 1878.

DRAMATIC IDYLS

FIRST SERIES

[1879]

MARTIN RELPH.

*My grandfather says he remembers he saw, when a youngster
long ago,
On a bright May day, a strange old man, with a beard as
white as snow,
Stand on the hill outside our town like a monument of woe,
And, striking his bare bald head the while, sob out the reason
— so!*

If I last as long as Methuselah I shall never forgive myself :
But — God forgive me, that I pray, unhappy Martin Relph,
As coward, coward I call him — him, yes, him! Away from
me!

Get you behind the man I am now, you man that I used to be!

What can have sewed my mouth up, set me a-stare, all eyes, no
tongue?

People have urged, “ You visit a scare too hard on a lad so
young!

You were taken aback, poor boy,” they urge, “ no time to regain
your wits :

Besides it had maybe cost you life.” Ay, there is the cap
which fits!

So, cap me, the coward, — thus! No fear! A cuff on the
brow does good :

The feel of it hinders a worm inside which bores at the brain
for food.

See now, there certainly seems excuse: for a moment, I trust,
dear friends,

The fault was but folly, no fault of mine, or if mine, I have
made amends!

For, every day that is first of May, on the hill-top, here stand I,
 Martin Relph, and I strike my brow, and publish the reason
 why,

When there gathers a crowd to mock the fool. No fool, friends,
 since the bite

Of a worm inside is worse to bear : pray God I have balked
 him quiteⁱ

I'll tell you. Certainly much excuse ! It came of the way they
 cooped

Us peasantry up in a ring just here, close huddling because
 tight-hooped

By the red-coats round us villagers all : they meant we should
 see the sight

And take the example, — see, not speak, for speech was the
 Captain's right.

“ You clowns on the slope, beware ! ” cried he : “ This woman
 about to die

Gives by her fate fair warning to such acquaintance as play the
 spy.

Henceforth who meddle with matters of state above them per-
 haps will learn

That peasants should stick to their plough-tail, leave to the King
 the King's concern.

“ Here 's a quarrel that sets the land on fire, between King
 George and his foes :

What call has a man of your kind — much less, a woman — to
 interpose ?

Yet you needs must be meddling, folk like you, not foes — so
 much the worse !

The many and loyal should keep themselves unmixed with the
 few perverse.

“ Is the counsel hard to follow ? I gave it you plainly a month
 ago,

And where was the good ? The rebels have learned just all
 that they need to know.

Not a month since in we quietly marched : a week, and they
 had the news,

From a list complete of our rank and file to a note of our caps
 and shoes.

“ All about all we did and all we were doing and like to do !
 Only, I catch a letter by luck, and capture who wrote it, too.

Some of you men look black enough, but the milk-white face
demure
Betokens the finger foul with ink : 't is a woman who writes, be
sure !

“ Is it ‘ Dearie, how much I miss your mouth ! ’ — good natural
stuff, she pens ?
Some sprinkle of that, for a blind, of course : with talk about
cocks and hens,
How ‘ robin has built on the apple-tree, and our creeper which
came to grief
Through the frost, we feared, is twining afresh round casement
in famous leaf.’

“ But all for a blind ! She soon glides frank into ‘ Horrid the
place is grown
With Officers here and Privates there, no nook we may call our
own :
And Farmer Giles has a tribe to house, and lodging will be
to seek
For the second Company sure to come (’t is whispered) on Mon-
day week.’

“ And so to the end of the chapter ! There ! The murder, you
see, was out :
Easy to guess how the change of mind in the rebels was brought
about !
Safe in the trap would they now lie snug, had treachery made
no sign :
But treachery meets a just reward, no matter if fools malign !

“ That traitors had played us false, was proved — sent news
which fell so pat :
And the murder was out — this letter of love, the sender of this
sent that !
’T is an ugly job, though, all the same — a hateful, to have
to deal
With a case of the kind, when a woman’s in fault : we soldiers
need nerves of steel !

“ So, I gave her a chance, dispatched post-haste a message to
Vincent Parkes
Whom she wrote to ; easy to find he was, since one of the King’s
own clerks,

Ay, kept by the King's own gold in the town close by where the
rebels camp :

A sort of a lawyer, just the man to betray our sort — the
scamp !

“ ‘If her writing is simple and honest and only the lover-like
stuff it looks,

And if you yourself are a loyalist, nor down in the rebels'
books,

Come quick,' said I, 'and in person prove you are each of you
clear of crime,

Or martial law must take its course : this day next week 's the
time ! ' ”

“ Next week is now : does he come ? Not he ! Clean gone, our
clerk, in a trice !

He has left his sweetheart here in the lurch : no need of a warn-
ing twice !

His own neck free, but his partner's fast in the noose still, here
she stands

To pay for her fault. 'T is an ugly job : but soldiers obey com-
mands.

“ And hearken wherefore I make a speech ! Should any ac-
quaintance share

The folly that led to the fault that is now to be punished, let
fools beware !

Look black, if you please, but keep hands white : and, above all
else, keep wives —

Or sweethearts or what they may be — from ink ! Not a word
now, on your lives ! ”

Black ? but the Pit's own pitch was white to the Captain's face
— the brute

With the bloated cheeks and the bulgy nose and the blood-shot
eyes to suit !

He was muddled with wine, they say : more like, he was out of
his wits with fear ;

He had but a handful of men, that 's true, — a riot might cost
him dear.

And all that time stood Rosamund Page, with pinioned arms
and face

Bandaged about, on the turf marked out for the party's firing-
place.

I hope she was wholly with God: I hope 't was His angel
 stretched a hand
 To steady her so, like the shape of stone you see in our church-
 aisle stand.

I hope there was no vain fancy pierced the bandage to vex her
 eyes,
 No face within which she missed without, no questions and no
 replies —
 “Why did you leave me to die?” — “Because” . . . Oh,
 fiends, too soon you grin
 At merely a moment of hell, like that — such heaven as hell
 ended in!

Let mine end too! He gave the word, up went the guns in a
 line.
 Those heaped on the hill were blind as dumb, — for, of all
 eyes, only mine
 Looked over the heads of the foremost rank. Some fell on their
 knees in prayer,
 Some sank to the earth, but all shut eyes, with a sole exception
 there.

That was myself, who had stolen up last, had sidled behind the
 group:
 I am highest of all on the hill-top, there stand fixed while the
 others stoop!
 From head to foot in a serpent's twine am I tightened: *I touch*
ground?
 No more than a gibbet's rigid corpse which the fetters rust
 around!

Can I speak, can I breathe, can I burst — aught else but see,
 see, only see?
 And see I do — for there comes in sight — a man, it sure must
 be! —
 Who staggeringly, stumblingly rises, falls, rises, at random
 flings his weight
 On and on, anyhow onward — a man that's mad he arrives too
 late!

Else why does he wave a something white high-flourished above
 his head?
 Why does not he call, cry, — curse the fool! — why throw up
 his arms instead?

O take this fist in your own face, fool! Why does not yourself
 shout "Stay!
 Here's a man comes rushing, might and main, with something
 he's mad to say"?

And a minute, only a moment, to have hell-fire boil up in your
 brain,
 And ere you can judge things right, choose heaven, — time's
 over, repentance vain!
 They level: a volley, a smoke and the clearing of smoke: I see
 no more
 Of the man smoke hid, nor his frantic arms, nor the something
 white he bore.

But stretched on the field, some half-mile off, is an object.
 Surely dumb,
 Deaf, blind were we struck, that nobody heard, not one of us
 saw him come!
 Has he fainted through fright? One may well believe! What
 is it he holds so fast?
 Turn him over, examine the face! Heyday! What, Vincent
 Parkes at last?

Dead! dead as she, by the selfsame shot: one bullet has ended
 both,
 Her in the body and him in the soul. They laugh at our
 plighted troth.
 "Till death us do part?" Till death us do join past parting —
 that sounds like
 Betrothal indeed! O Vincent Parkes, what need has my fist to
 strike?

I helped you: thus were you dead and wed: one bound, and
 your soul reached hers!
 There is clenched in your hand the thing, signed, sealed, the
 paper which plain avers
 She is innocent, innocent, plain as print, with the King's Arms
 broad engraved:
 No one can hear, but if anyone high on the hill can see, she's
 saved!

And torn his garb and bloody his lips with heart-break — plain
 it grew
 How the week's delay had been brought about: each guess at
 the end proved true.
 It was hard to get at the folk in power: such waste of time!
 and then

Such pleading and praying, with, all the while, his lamb in the lions' den!

And at length when he wrung their pardon out, no end to the stupid forms —

The license and leave: I make no doubt — what wonder if passion warms

The pulse in a man if you play with his heart? — he was something hasty in speech;

Anyhow, none would quicken the work: he had to beseech, beseech!

And the thing once signed, sealed, safe in his grasp, — what followed but fresh delays?

For the floods were out, he was forced to take such a round-about of ways!

And 't was "Halt there!" at every turn of the road, since he had to cross the thick

Of the red-coats: what did they care for him and his "Quick, for God's sake, quick!"

Horse? but he had one: had it how long? till the first knave smirked "You brag

Yourself a friend of the King's? then lend to a King's friend here your nag!"

Money to buy another? Why, piece by piece they plundered him still,

With their "Wait you must, — no help: if aught can help you, a guinea will!"

And a borough there was — I forget the name — whose Mayor must have the bench

Of Justices ranged to clear a doubt: for "Vincent," thinks he, sounds French!

It well may have driven him daft, God knows! all man can certainly know

Is — rushing and falling and rising, at last he arrived in a horror — so!

When a word, cry, gasp, would have rescued both! Ay, bite me! The worm begins

At his work once more. Had cowardice proved — that only — my sin of sins!

Friends, look you here! Suppose . . . suppose . . . But mad I am, needs must be!

Judas the Damned would never have dared such a sin as I dream! For, see!

Suppose I had sneakingly loved her myself, my wretched self,
 and dreamed
 In the heart of me "She were better dead than happy and
 his!" — while gleamed
 A light from hell as I spied the pair in a perfectest embrace,
 He the savior and she the saved, — bliss born of the very
 murder-place!

No! Say I was scared, friends! Call me fool and coward,
 but nothing worse!
 Jeer at the fool and gibe at the coward! 'T was ever the
 coward's curse
 That fear breeds fancies in such: such take their shadow for
 substance still,
 — A fiend at their back. I liked poor Parkes, — loved Vincent,
 if you will!

And her — why, I said "Good morrow" to her, "Good even,"
 and nothing more:
 The neighborly way! She was just to me as fifty had been
 before.
 So, coward it is and coward shall be! There's a friend, now!
 Thanks! A drink
 Of water I wanted: and now I can walk, get home by myself,
 I think.

PHEIDIPPIDES.

χαίρετε, νικῶμεν.

FIRST I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock!
 Gods of my birthplace, demons and heroes, honor to all!
 Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, co-equal in praise
 — Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the ægis and spear!
 Also, ye of the bow and the buskin, praised be your peer,
 Now, henceforth and forever, — O latest to whom I upraise
 Hand and heart and voice! For Athens, leave pasture and
 flock!
 Present to help, potent to save, Pan — patron I call!

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I return!
 See, 't is myself here standing alive, no spectre that speaks!
 Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me, Athens and
 you,

“Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for aid!
 Persia has come, we are here, where is She?” Your command
 I obeyed,
 Ran and raced: like stubble, some field which a fire runs
 through,
 Was the space between city and city: two days, two nights did
 I burn
 Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.

Into their midst I broke: breath served but for “Persia has
 come!

Persia bids Athens proffer slaves’-tribute, water and earth;
 Razed to the ground is Eretria — but Athens, shall Athens sink,
 Drop into dust and die — the flower of Hellas utterly die,
 Die, with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the stupid, the
 stander-by?

Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you stretch o’er
 destruction’s brink?

How, — when? No care for my limbs! — there’s lightning in
 all and some —

Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it birth!”

O my Athens — Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond?
 Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,
 Malice, — each eye of her gave me its glitter of gratified hate!
 Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for excuses. I
 stood

Quivering, — the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an inch from
 dry wood:

“Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they debate?
 Thunder, thou Zeus! Athene, are Spartans a quarry beyond
 Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them ‘Ye
 must’!”

No bolt launched from Olumpos! Lo, their answer at last!
 “Has Persia come, — does Athens ask aid, — may Sparta be-
 friend?

Nowise precipitate judgment — too weighty the issue at stake!
 Count we no time lost time which lags through respect to the
 gods!

Ponder that precept of old, ‘No warfare, whatever the odds
 In your favor, so long as the moon, half-orbed, is unable to
 take

Full-circle her state in the sky!’ Already she rounds to it
 fast:

Athens must wait, patient as we — who judgment suspend.”

Athens, — except for that sparkle, — thy name, I had mouldered to ash!

That sent a blaze through my blood; off, off and away was I back,

— Not one word to waste, one look to lose on the false and the vile!

Yet “O gods of my land!” I cried, as each hillock and plain, Wood and stream, I knew, I named, rushing past them again, “Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honors we paid you erewhile?”

Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome libation! Too rash Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack!

“Oak and olive and bay, — I bid you cease to enwreath Brows made bold by your leaf! Fade at the Persian’s foot, You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn a slave! Rather I hail thee, Parnes, — trust to thy wild waste tract! Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain! What matter if slacked My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to cave No deity deigns to drape with verdure? at least I can breathe, Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the mute!”

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes’ ridge; Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a bar Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the way. Right! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure across: “Where I could enter, there I depart by! Night in the fosse? Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise! No bridge Better!” — when — ha! what was it I came on, of wonders that are?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he — majestic Pan! Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned his hoof: All the great god was good in the eyes grave-kindly — the curl Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal’s awe, As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I saw.

“Halt, Pheidippides!” — halt I did, my brain of a whirl: “Hither to me! Why pale in my presence?” he gracious began:

“How is it, — Athens, only in Hellas, holds me aloof?”

“Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no feast! Wherefore? Than I what godship to Athens more helpful of old?”

Ay, and still, and forever her friend! Test Pan, trust me! Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have faith

In the temples and tombs! Go, say to Athens, 'The Goat-God
saith:
When Persia — so much as strews not the soil — is cast in the
sea,
Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your most and
least,
Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the free and
the bold!'

"Say Pan saith: 'Let this, foreshowing the place, be the
pledge!'"

(Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear
— Fennel — I grasped it a-tremble with dew — whatever it bode)
"While, as for thee" . . . But enough! He was gone. If
I ran hitherto —

Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer, but flew.
Parnes to Athens — earth no more, the air was my road:
Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the razor's
edge!

Pan for Athens, Pan for me! I too have a guerdon rare!

Then spoke Miltiades. "And thee, best runner of Greece,
Whose limbs did duty indeed, — what gift is promised thyself?
Tell it us straightway, — Athens the mother demands of her
son!"

Rosily blushed the youth: he paused: but, lifting at length
His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered the rest of
his strength

Into the utterance — "Pan spoke thus: 'For what thou hast
done

Count on a worthy reward! Henceforth be allowed thee
release

From the racer's toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in pelf!'

"I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to my
mind!

Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel may
grow, —

Pound — Pan helping us — Persia to dust, and, under the deep,
Whelm her away forever; and then, — no Athens to save, —

Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the brave, —

Hie to my house and home: and, when my children shall creep

Close to my knees, — recount how the God was awful yet kind,

Promised their sire reward to the full — rewarding him — so!"

Unforeseeing one! Yes, he fought on the Marathon day :
 So, when Persia was dust, all cried " To Akropolis !
 Run, Pheidippides, one race more ! the meed is thy due !
 ' Athens is saved, thank Pan, ' go shout ! " He flung down his
 shield,
 Ran like fire once more : and the space 'twixt the Fennel-field
 And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs through,
 Till in he broke : " Rejoice, we conquer ! " Like wine through
 clay,
 Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died — the bliss !

So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of salute
 Is still " Rejoice ! " — his word which brought rejoicing indeed.
 So is Pheidippides happy forever, — the noble strong man
 Who could race like a god, bear the face of a god, whom a
 god loved so well ;
 He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was suffered
 to tell
 Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he began,
 So to end gloriously — once to shout, thereafter be mute :
 " Athens is saved ! " — Pheidippides dies in the shout for his
 meed.

HALBERT AND HOB.

HERE is a thing that happened. Like wild beasts whelped, for
 den,
 In a wild part of North England, there lived once two wild men
 Inhabiting one homestead, neither a hovel nor hut,
 Time out of mind their birthright : father and son, these —
 but —
 Such a son, such a father ! Most wildness by degrees
 Softens away : yet, last of their line, the wildest and worst were
 these.

Criminals, then ? Why, no : they did not murder and rob ;
 But, give them a word, they returned a blow — old Halbert as
 young Hob :
 Harsh and fierce of word, rough and savage of deed,
 Hated or feared the more — who knows ? — the genuine wild-
 beast breed.

Thus were they found by the few sparse folk of the country-
 side ;
 But how fared each with other ? E'en beasts couch, hide by
 hide,

In a growling, grudging agreement : so, father and son aye
 curled
 The closelier up in their den because the last of their kind in
 the world.

Still, beast irks beast on occasion. One Christmas night of
 snow,
 Came father and son to words — such words ! more cruel be-
 cause the blow
 To crown each word was wanting, while taunt matched gibe,
 and curse
 Competed with oath in wager, like pastime in hell, — nay,
 worse :
 For pastime turned to earnest, as up there sprang at last
 The son at the throat of the father, seized him and held him
 fast.

“ Out of this house you go ! ” (there followed a hideous oath) —
 “ This oven where now we bake, too hot to hold us both !
 If there 's snow outside, there 's coolness : out with you, bide
 a spell
 In the drift and save the sexton the charge of a parish shell ! ”

Now, the old trunk was tough, was solid as stump of oak
 Untouched at the core by a thousand years : much less had its
 seventy broke
 One whipcord nerve in the muscly mass from neck to shoulder-
 blade
 Of the mountainous man, whereon his child's rash hand like a
 feather weighed.
 Nevertheless at once did the mammoth shut his eyes,
 Drop chin to breast, drop hands to sides, stand stiffened — arms
 and thighs
 All of a piece — struck mute, much as a sentry stands,
 Patient to take the enemy's fire : his captain so commands.

Whereat the son's wrath flew to fury at such sheer scorn
 Of his puny strength by the giant eld thus acting the babe new-
 born :
 And “ Neither will this turn serve ! ” yelled he. “ Out with
 you ! Trundle, log !
 If you cannot tramp and trudge like a man, try all-fours like a
 dog ! ”

Still the old man stood mute. So, logwise, — down to floor
 Pulled from his fireside place, dragged on from hearth to
 door, —

Was he pushed, a very log, staircase along, until
A certain turn in the steps was reached, a yard from the house-
door-sill.

Then the father opened eyes — each spark of their rage ex-
tinct, —

Temples, late black, dead-blanced, — right-hand with left-hand
linked, —

He faced his son submissive; when slow the accents came,
They were strangely mild though his son's rash hand on his neck
lay all the same.

“Hob, on just such a night of a Christmas long ago,
For such a cause, with such a gesture, did I drag — so —
My father down thus far: but, softening here, I heard
A voice in my heart, and stopped: you wait for an outer word.

“For your own sake, not mine, soften you too! Untrod
Leave this last step we reach, nor brave the finger of God!
I dared not pass its lifting: I did well. I nor blame
Nor praise you. I stopped here: and, Hob, do you the same!”

Straightway the son relaxed his hold of the father's throat.
They mounted, side by side, to the room again: no note
Took either of each, no sign made each to either: last
As first, in absolute silence, their Christmas-night they passed.

At dawn, the father sate on, dead, in the selfsame place,
With an outburst blackening still the old bad fighting-face:
But the son crouched all a-tremble like any lamb new-yeaned.

When he went to the burial, someone's staff he borrowed, — tot-
tered and leaned.

But his lips were loose, not locked, — kept muttering, mumbling.
“There!

At his cursing and swearing!” the youngsters cried: but the
elders thought “In prayer.”

A boy threw stones: he picked them up and stored them in his
vest.

So tottered, muttered, mumbled he, till he died, perhaps found
rest.

“Is there a reason in nature for these hard hearts?” O Lear,
That a reason out of nature must turn them soft, seems clear!

IVÀN IVÀNOVITCH.

“THEY tell me, your carpenters,” quoth I to my friend the Russ,
 “Make a simple hatchet serve as a tool-box serves with us.
 Arm but each man with his axe, 't is a hammer and saw and
 plane
 And chisel, and — what know I else? We should imitate in vain
 The mastery wherewithal, by a flourish of just the adze,
 He cleaves, clamps, dovetails in, — no need of our nails and
 brads, —
 The manageable pine: 't is said he could shave himself
 With the axe, — so all adroit, now a giant and now an elf,
 Does he work and play at once!”

Quoth my friend the Russ to me,
 “Ay, that and more beside on occasion! It scarce may be
 You never heard tell a tale told children, time out of mind,
 By father and mother and nurse, for a moral that's behind,
 Which children quickly seize. If the incident happened at all,
 We place it in Peter's time when hearts were great not small,
 Germanized, Frenchified. I wager 't is old to you
 As the story of Adam and Eve, and possibly quite as true.”

In the deep of our land, 't is said, a village from out the woods
 Emerged on the great main-road 'twixt two great solitudes.
 Through forestry right and left, black verst and verst of pine,
 From village to village runs the road's long wide bare line.
 Clearance and clearance break the else-unconquered growth
 Of pine and all that breeds and broods there, leaving loth
 Man's inch of masterdom, — spot of life, spirt of fire, —
 To star the dark and dread, lest right and rule expire
 Throughout the monstrous wild a-hungered to resume
 Its ancient sway, suck back the world into its womb:
 Defrauded by man's craft which clove from North to South
 This highway broad and straight e'en from the Neva's mouth
 To Moscow's gates of gold. So, spot of life and spirt
 Of fire aforesaid, burn, each village death-begirt
 By wall and wall of pine — unprobed undreamed abyss.

Early one winter morn, in such a village as this,
 Snow-whitened everywhere except the middle road
 Ice-roughed by track of sledge, there worked by his abode
 Ivàn Ivànovitch, the carpenter, employed
 On a huge shipmast trunk; his axe now trimmed and toyed

With branch and twig, and now some chop athwart the hole
 Changed hole to billets, bared at once the sap and soul.
 About him, watched the work his neighbors sheepskin-clad ;
 Each bearded mouth puffed steam, each gray eye twinkled glad
 To see the sturdy arm which, never stopping play,
 Proved strong man's blood still boils, freeze winter as he may.

Sudden, a burst of bells. Out of the road, on edge
 Of the hamlet — horse's hoofs galloping. "How, a sledge?
 What's here?" cried all as — in, up to the open space,
 Workyard and market-ground, folk's common meeting-place, —
 Stumbled on, till he fell, in one last bound for life,
 A horse: and, at his heels, a sledge held — "Dmitri's wife!
 Back without Dmitri too! and children — where are they?
 Only a frozen corpse!"

They drew it forth: then — "Nay,
 Not dead, though like to die! Gone hence a month ago:
 Home again, this rough jaunt — alone through night and snow —
 What can the cause be? Hark — Droug, old horse, how he
 groans:

His day's done! Chafe away, keep chafing, for she moans:
 She's coming to! Give here: see, motherkin, your friends!
 Cheer up, all safe at home! Warm inside makes amends
 For outside cold, — sup quick! Don't look as we were bears!
 What is it startles you? What strange adventure stares
 Up at us in your face? You know friends — which is which?
 I'm Vassili, he's Sergeï, Ivàn Ivànovitch" . . .

At the word, the woman's eyes, slow-wandering till they neared
 The blue eyes o'er the bush of honey-colored beard,
 Took in full light and sense and — torn to rags, some dream
 Which hid the naked truth — O loud and long the scream
 She gave, as if all power of voice within her throat
 Poured itself wild away to waste in one dread note!
 Then followed gasps and sobs, and then the steady flow
 Of kindly tears: the brain was saved, a man might know.
 Down fell her face upon the good friend's propping knee;
 His broad hands smoothed her head, as fain to brush it free
 From fancies, swarms that stung like bees unhived. He
 soothed —

"Loukèria, Louscha!" — still he, fondling, smoothed and
 smoothed.

At last her lips formed speech.

"Ivàn, dear — you indeed!
 You, just the same dear you! While I . . . O intercede,

Sweet Mother, with thy Son Almighty — let his might
 Bring yesterday once more, undo all done last night!
 But this time yesterday, Ivàn, I sat like you,
 A child on either knee, and, dearer than the two,
 A babe inside my arms, close to my heart — that's lost
 In morsels o'er the snow! Father, Son, Holy Ghost,
 Cannot you bring again my blessed yesterday?"

When no more tears would flow, she told her tale: this way.
 "Maybe, a month ago, — was it not? — news came here,
 They wanted, deeper down, good workmen fit to rear
 A church and roof it in. 'We'll go,' my husband said:
 'None understands like me to melt and mould their lead.'
 So, friends here helped us off — Ivàn, dear, you the first!
 How gay we jingled forth, all five — (my heart will burst) —
 While Dmitri shook the reins, urged Droug upon his track!

"Well, soon the month ran out, we just were coming back,
 When yesterday — behold, the village was on fire!
 Fire ran from house to house. What help, as, nigh and nigher,
 The flames came furious? 'Haste,' cried Dmitri, 'men must do
 The little good man may: to sledge and in with you,
 You and our three! We check the fire by laying flat
 Each building in its path, — I needs must stay for that, —
 But you . . . no time for talk! Wrap round you every rug,
 Cover the couple close, — you'll have the babe to hug.
 No care to guide old Droug, he knows his way, by guess,
 Once start him on the road: but chirrup, none the less!
 The snow lies glib as glass and hard as steel, and soon
 You'll have rise, fine and full, a marvel of a moon.
 Hold straight up, all the same, this lighted twist of pitch!
 Once home and with our friend Ivàn Ivànovitch,
 All's safe: I have my pay in pouch, all's right with me,
 So I but find as safe you and our precious three!
 Off, Droug!' — because the flames had reached us, and the men
 Shouted 'But lend a hand, Dmitri — as good as ten!'

"So, in we bundled — I, and those God gave me once;
 Old Droug, that's stiff at first, seemed youthful for the nonce:
 He understood the case, galloping straight ahead.
 Out came the moon: my twist soon dwindled, feebly red
 In that unnatural day — yes, daylight, bred between.
 Moonlight and snow-light, lamped those grotto-depths which
 screen
 Such devils from God's eye. Ah, pines, how straight you grow,
 Nor bend one pitying branch, true breed of brutal snow!

Some undergrowth had served to keep the devils blind
While we escaped outside their border!

“ Was that — wind ?

Anyhow, Droug starts, stops, back go his ears, he snuffs,
Snorts, — never such a snort ! then plunges, knows the sough 's
Only the wind : yet, no — our breath goes up too straight !
Still the low sound, — less low, loud, louder, at a rate
There 's no mistaking more ! Shall I lean out — look — learn
The truth whatever it be ? Pad, pad ! At last, I turn —

“ 'T is the regular pad of the wolves in pursuit of the life in the
sledge !

An army they are : close-packed they press like the thrust of a
wedge :

They increase as they hunt : for I see, through the pine-trunks
ranged each side,

Slip forth new fiend and fiend, make wider and still more wide
The four-footed steady advance. The foremost — none may
pass :

They are elders and lead the line, eye and eye — green-glowing
brass !

But a long way distant still. Droug, save us ! He does his best :
Yet they gain on us, gain, till they reach, — one reaches . . .
How utter the rest ?

O that Satan-faced first of the band ! How he lolls out the
length of his tongue,

How he laughs and lets gleam his white teeth ! He is on me,
his paws pry among

The wraps and the rugs ! O my pair, my twin-pigeons, lie still
and seem dead !

Stepàn, he shall never have you for a meal, — here 's your
mother instead !

No, he will not be counselled — must cry, poor Stiòpka, so
foolish ! though first

Of my boy-brood, he was not the best : nay, neighbors have
called him the worst :

He was puny, an undersized slip, — a darling to me, all the
same !

But little there was to be praised in the boy, and a plenty to
blame.

I loved him with heart and soul, yes — but, deal him a blow for
a fault,

He would sulk for whole days. ‘ Foolish boy ! lie still or the
villain will vault,

Will snatch you from over my head !’ No use ! he cries,
screams, — who can hold

Fast a boy in a frenzy of fear! It follows — as I foretold!
The Satan-face snatched and snapped: I tugged, I tore — and
then

His brother too needs must shriek! If one must go, 't is men
The Tsar needs, so we hear, not ailing boys! Perhaps
My hands relaxed their grasp, got tangled in the wraps:
God, he was gone! I looked: there tumbled the cursed crew,
Each fighting for a share: too busy to pursue!
That's so far gain at least: Droug, gallop another verst
Or two, or three — God sends we beat them, arrive the first!
A mother who boasts two boys was ever accounted rich:
Some have not a boy: some have, but lose him, — God knows
which

Is worse: how pitiful to see your weakling pine
And pale and pass away! Strong brats, this pair of mine!

“O misery! for while I settle to what near seems
Content, I am 'ware again of the tramp, and again there
gleams —

Point and point — the line, eyes, levelled green brassy fire!
So soon is resumed your chase? Will nothing appease, naught
tire

The furies? And yet I think — I am certain the race is slack,
And the numbers are nothing like. . . Not a quarter of the pack!
Feasters and those full-fed are staying behind . . . Ah why?
We'll sorrow for that too soon! Now, — gallop, reach home,
and die,

Nor ever again leave house, to trust our life in the trap
For life — we call a sledge! Teriöschä, in my lap!
Yes, I'll lie down upon you, tight-tie you with the strings
Here — of my heart! No fear, this time, your mother flings . . .
Flings? I flung? Never! But think! — a woman, after all,
Contending with a wolf! Save you I must and shall,
Terentii!

“How now? What, you still head the race,
Your eyes and tongue and teeth crave fresh food, Satan-face?
There and there! Plain I struck green fire out! Flash again?
All a poor fist can do to damage eyes proves vain!
My fist — why not crunch that? He is wanton for . . . O God,
Why give this wolf his taste? Common wolves scrape and prod
The earth till out they scratch some corpse — mere putrid flesh!
Why must this glutton leave the faded, choose the fresh?
Terentii — God, feel! — his neck keeps fast thy bag
Of holy things, saints' bones, this Satan-face will drag
Forth, and devour along with him, our Pope declared
The relics were to save from danger'.

“ Spurned, not spared !

'T was through my arms, crossed arms, he — nuzzling now with
snout,

Now ripping, tooth and claw — plucked, pulled Terentii out,
A prize indeed ! I saw — how could I else but see ? —
My precious one — I hit to hold back — pulled from me !
Up came the others, fell to dancing — did the imps ! —
Skipped as they scampered round. There 's one is gray, and
limps :

Who knows but old bad Mårpha — she always owed me spite
And envied me my births — skulks out of doors at night
And turns into a wolf, and joins the sisterhood,
And laps the youthful life, then slinks from out the wood,
Squats down at door by dawn, spins there demure as erst
— No strength, old crone, — not she ! — to crawl forth half a
verst !

“ Well, I escaped with one : 'twixt one and none there lies
The space 'twixt heaven and hell. And see, a rose-light dyes
The endmost snow : 't is dawn, 't is day, 't is safe at home !
We have outwitted you ! Ay, monsters, snarl and foam,
Fight each the other fiend, disputing for a share, —
Forgetful, in your greed, our finest off we bear,
Tough Droug and I, — my babe, my boy that shall be man,
My man that shall be more, do all a hunter can
To trace and follow and find and catch and crucify
Wolves, wolfkins, all your crew ! A thousand deaths shall die
The whimperingest cub that ever squeezed the teat !
'Take that !' we 'll stab you with, — 'the tenderness we met
When, wretches, you danced round, — not this, thank God —
not this !
Hellhounds, we balk you !'

“ But — Ah, God above ! — Bliss, bliss —
Not the band, no ! And yet — yes, for Droug knows him !
One —

This only of them all has said 'She saves a son !'
His fellows disbelieve such luck : but he believes,
He lets them pick the bones, laugh at him in their sleeves :
He 's off and after us, — one speck, one spot, one ball
Grows bigger, bound on bound, — one wolf as good as all !
O but I know the trick ! Have at the snaky tongue !
That 's the right way with wolves ! Go, tell your mates I wrung
The panting morsel out, left you to howl your worst !
Now for it — now ! Ah me ! I know him — thrice-accurst
Satan-face, — him to the end my foe !

“ All fight's in vain :

This time the green brass points pierce to my very brain.
I fall — fall as I ought — quite on the babe I guard :
I overspread with flesh the whole of him. Too hard
To die this way, torn piecemeal? Move hence? Not I — one
inch !

Gnaw through me, through and through : flat thus I lie nor
finch !

O God, the feel of the fang furrowing my shoulder ! — see !
It grinds — it grates the bone. O Kirill under me,
Could I do more? Besides he knew wolf's way to win :
I clung, closed round like wax : yet in he wedged and in,
Past my neck, past my breasts, my heart, until . . . how feels
The onion-bulb your knife parts, pushing through its peels,
Till out you scoop its clove wherein lie stalk and leaf
And bloom and seed unborn?

“ That slew me : yes, in brief,

I died then, dead I lay doubtlessly till Droug stopped
Here, I suppose. I come to life, I find me propped
Thus, — how or when or why — I know not. Tell me, friends,
All was a dream : laugh quick and say the nightmare ends !
Soon I shall find my house : 't is over there : in proof,
Save for that chimney heaped with snow, you 'd see the roof
Which holds my three — my two — my one — not one ?

“ Life's mixed

With misery, yet we live — must live. The Satan fixed
His face on mine so fast, I took its print as pitch
Takes what it cools beneath. Ivàn Ivànovitch,
'T is you unharden me, you thaw, disperse the thing !
Only keep looking kind, the horror will not cling.
Your face smooths fast away each print of Satan. Tears
— What good they do ! Life's sweet, and all its after-years,
Ivàn Ivànovitch, I owe you ! Yours am I !
May God reward you, dear ! ”

Down she sank. Solemnly

Ivàn rose, raised his axe, — for fitly, as she knelt,
Her head lay : well-apart, each side, her arms hung, — dealt
Lightning-swift thunder-strong one blow — no need of more !
Headless she knelt on still : that pine was sound at core
(Neighbors were used to say) — cast-iron-kernelled — which
Taxed for a second stroke Ivàn Ivànovitch.

The man was scant of words as strokes. “ It had to be :
I could no other : God it was, bade ‘ Act for me ! ’ ”

Then stooping, peering round — what is it now he lacks?
 A proper strip of bark wherewith to wipe his axe.
 Which done, he turns, goes in, closes the door behind.
 The others mute remain, watching the blood-snake wind
 Into a hiding-place among the splinter-heaps.

At length, still mute, all move: one lifts — from where it steeps
 Redder each ruddy rag of pine — the head: two more
 Take up the dripping body: then, mute still as before,
 Move in a sort of march, march on till marching ends
 Opposite to the church; where halting, — who suspends,
 By its long hair, the thing, deposits in its place
 The piteous head: once more the body shows no trace
 Of harm done: there lies whole the Louscha, maid and wife
 And mother, loved until this latest of her life.
 Then all sit on the bank of snow which bounds a space
 Kept free before the porch for judgment: just the place!

Presently all the souls, man, woman, child, which make
 The village up, are found assembling for the sake
 Of what is to be done. The very Jews are there:
 A Gypsy-troop, though bound with horses for the Fair,
 Squats with the rest. Each heart with its conception seethes
 And simmers, but no tongue speaks: one may say, — none
 breathes.

Anon from out the church totters the Pope — the priest —
 Hardly alive, so old, a hundred years at least.
 With him, the Commune's head, a hoary senior too,
 Stàrosta, that's his style, — like Equity Judge with you, —
 Natural Jurisconsult: then, fenced about with furs,
 Pomeschik, — Lord of the Land, who wields — and none
 demurs —
 A power of life and death. They stoop, survey the corpse.

Then, straightened on his staff, the Stàrosta — the thorpe's
 Sagaciousest old man — hears what you just have heard,
 From Droug's first inrush, all, up to Ivàn's last word —
 "God bade me act for him: I dared not disobey!"

Silence — the Pomeschik broke with "A wild wrong way
 Of righting wrong — if wrong there were, such wrath to rouse!
 Why was not law observed? What article allows
 Whoso may please to play the judge, and, judgment dealt,
 Play executioner, as promptly as we pelt
 To death, without appeal, the vermin whose sole fault

Has been — it dared to leave the darkness of its vault,
 Intrude upon our day! Too sudden and too rash!
 What was this woman's crime? Suppose the church should
 crash

Down where I stand, your lord: bound are my serfs to dare
 Their utmost that I 'scape: yet, if the crashing scare
 My children — as you are, — if sons fly, one and all,
 Leave father to his fate, — poor cowards though I call
 The runaways, I pause before I claim their life
 Because they prized it more than mine. I would each wife
 Died for her husband's sake, each son to save his sire:
 'T is glory, I applaud — scarce duty, I require.
 Ivàn Ivànovitch has done a deed that 's named
 Murder by law and me: who doubts, may speak unblamed!"

All turned to the old Pope. "Ay, children, I am old —
 How old, myself have got to know no longer. Rolled
 Quite round, my orb of life, from infancy to age,
 Seems passing back again to youth. A certain stage
 At least I reach, or dream I reach, where I discern
 'Truer truths, laws behold more lawlike than we learn
 When first we set our foot to tread the course I trod
 With man to guide my steps: who leads me now is God.
 'Your young men shall see visions:' and in my youth I saw
 And paid obedience to man's visionary law:
 'Your old men shall dream dreams:' and, in my age, a hand
 Conducts me through the cloud round law to where I stand
 Firm on its base, — know cause, who, before, knew effect.

"The world lies under me: and nowhere I detect
 So great a gift as this — God's own — of human life.
 'Shall the dead praise thee?' No! 'The whole live world is rife,
 God, with thy glory,' rather! Life then, God's best of gifts,
 For what shall man exchange? For life — when so he shifts
 The weight and turns the scale, lets life for life restore
 God's balance, sacrifice the less to gain the more,
 Substitute — for low life, another's or his own —
 Life large and liker God's who gave it: thus alone
 May life extinguish life that life may trulier be!
 How low this law descends on earth, is not for me
 To trace: complexed becomes the simple, intricate
 The plain, when I pursue law's winding. 'T is the straight
 Outflow of law I know and name: to law, the fount
 Fresh from God's footstool, friends, follow while I remount.

"A mother bears a child: perfection is complete
 So far in such a birth. Enabled to repeat

The miracle of life, — herself was born so just
 A type of womankind, that God sees fit to trust
 Her with the holy task of giving life in turn.
 Crowned by this crowning pride, how say you, should she spurn
 Regality — discrowned, unchilded, by her choice
 Of barrenness exchanged for fruit which made rejoice
 Creation, though life's self were lost in giving birth
 To life more fresh and fit to glorify God's earth?
 How say you, should the hand God trusted with life's torch
 Kindled to light the world — aware of sparks that scorch,
 Let fall the same? Forsooth, her flesh a fire-flake stings:
 The mother drops the child! Among what monstrous things
 Shall she be classed? Because of motherhood, each male
 Yields to his partner place, sinks proudly in the scale:
 His strength owned weakness, wit — folly, and courage — fear,
 Beside the female proved male's mistress — only here.
 The fox-dam, hunger-pined, will slay the felon sire
 Who dares assault her whelp: the beaver, stretched on fire,
 Will die without a groan: no pang avails to wrest
 Her young from where they hide — her sanctuary breast.
 What's here then? Answer me, thou dead one, as, I trow,
 Standing at God's own bar, he bids thee answer now!
 Thrice crowned wast thou — each crown of pride, a child — thy
 charge!

Where are they? Lost? Enough: no need that thou enlarge
 On how or why the loss: life left to utter 'lost'
 Condemns itself beyond appeal. The soldier's post
 Guards from the foe's attack the camp he sentinels:
 That he no traitor proved, this and this only tells —
 Over the corpse of him trod foe to foe's success.
 Yet — one by one thy crowns torn from thee — thou no less
 To scare the world, shame God, — livedst! I hold He saw
 The unexampled sin, ordained the novel law,
 Whereof first instrument was first intelligence
 Found loyal here. I hold that, failing human sense,
 The very earth had oped, sky fallen, to efface
 Humanity's new wrong, motherhood's first disgrace.
 Earth oped not, neither fell the sky, for prompt was found
 A man and man enough, head-sober and heart-sound,
 Ready to hear God's voice, resolute to obey.
 Ivàn Ivànovitch, I hold, has done, this day,
 No otherwise than did, in ages long ago,
 Moses when he made known the purport of that flow
 Of fire athwart the law's twain-tables! I proclaim
 Ivàn Ivànovitch God's servant!"

At which name

Uprose that creepy whisper from out the crowd, is wont,

To swell and surge and sink when fellow-men confront
 A punishment that falls on fellow flesh and blood,
 Appallingly beheld — shudderingly understood,
 No less, to be the right, the just, the merciful.
 “God’s servant!” hissed the crowd.

When that Amen grew dull
 And died away and left acquittal plain adjudged,
 “Amen!” last sighed the lord. “There’s none shall say I
 grudged

Escape from punishment in such a novel case.
 Deferring to old age and holy life, — be grace
 Granted! say I. No less, scruples might shake a sense
 Firmer than I boast mine. Law’s law, and evidence
 Of breach therein lies plain, — blood-red-bright, — all may see!
 Yet all absolve the deed: absolved the deed must be!

“And next — as mercy rules the hour — methinks ’t were well
 You signify forthwith its sentence, and dispel
 The doubts and fears, I judge, which busy now the head
 Law puts a halter round — a halo — you, instead!
 Ivàn Ivànovitch — what think you he expects
 Will follow from his feat? Go, tell him — law protects
 Murder, for once: no need he longer keep behind
 The Sacred Pictures — where skulks Innocence enshrined,
 Or I missay! Go, some! You others, haste and hide
 The dismal object there: get done, whate’er betide!”

So, while the youngers raised the corpse, the elders trooped
 Silently to the house: where halting, someone stooped,
 Listened beside the door; all there was silent too.
 Then they held counsel; then pushed door and, passing through,
 Stood in the murderer’s presence.

Ivàn Ivànovitch

Knelt, building on the floor that Kremlin rare and rich
 He deftly cut and carved on lazy winter nights.
 Some five young faces watched, breathlessly, as, to rights,
 Piece upon piece, he reared the fabric nigh complete.
 Stèscha, Ivàn’s old mother, sat spinning by the heat
 Of the oven where his wife Kàtia stood baking bread.
 Ivàn’s self, as he turned his honey-colored head,
 Was just in act to drop, ’twixt fir-cones, — each a dome, —
 The scooped-out yellow gourd presumably the home
 Of Kolokol the Big: the bell, therein to hitch,
 — An acorn-cup — was ready: Ivàn Ivànovitch
 Turned with it in his mouth.

They told him he was free
 As air to walk abroad. “How otherwise?” asked he.

TRAY.

SING me a hero ! Quench my thirst
Of soul, ye bards !

Quoth Bard the first :

“ Sir Olaf, the good knight, did don
His helm and eke his habergeon ” . . .
Sir Olaf and his bard —— !

“ That sin-scathed brow ” (quoth Bard the second),
“ That eye wide ope as though Fate beckoned
My hero to some steep, beneath
Which precipice smiled tempting death ” . . .
You too without your host have reckoned !

“ A beggar-child ” (let’s hear this third !)
“ Sat on a quay’s edge : like a bird
Sang to herself at careless play,
And fell into the stream. ‘ Dismay !
Help, you the standers-by ! ’ None stirred.

“ Bystanders reason, think of wives
And children ere they risk their lives.
Over the balustrade has bounced
A mere instinctive dog, and pounced
Plumb on the prize. ‘ How well he dives !

“ “ Up he comes with the child, see, tight
In mouth, alive too, clutched from quite
A depth of ten feet — twelve, I bet !
Good dog ! What, off again ? There’s yet
Another child to save ? All right !

“ “ How strange we saw no other fall !
It’s instinct in the animal.
Good dog ! But he’s a long while under :
If he got drowned I should not wonder —
Strong current, that against the wall !

“ “ Here he comes, holds in mouth this time
— What may the thing be ? Well, that’s prime !
Now, did you ever ? Reason reigns
In man alone, since all Tray’s pains
Have fished — the child’s doll from the slime ! ’

“And so, amid the laughter gay,
Trotted my hero off, — old Tray, —
Till somebody, prerogativéd
With reason, reasoned : ‘ Why he dived,
His brain would show us, I should say.

“‘ John, go and catch — or, if needs be,
Purchase — that animal for me !
By vivisection, at expense
Of half-an-hour and eighteenpence,
How brain secretes dog’s soul, we ’ll see ! ’”

NED BRATTS.

’T WAS Bedford Special Assize, one daft Midsummer’s Day :
A broiling blasting June, — was never its like, men say.
Corn stood sheaf-ripe already, and trees looked yellow as that ;
Ponds drained sheaf-dry, the cattle lay foaming around each flat.
Inside town, dogs went mad, and folk kept bibbing beer,
While the parsons prayed for rain. ’T was horrible, yes — but
queer :

Queer — for the sun laughed gay, yet nobody moved a hand
To work one stroke at his trade : as given to understand
That all was come to a stop, work and such worldly ways,
And the world’s old self about to end in a merry blaze.
Midsummer’s Day moreover was the first of Bedford Fair ;
With Bedford Town’s tag-rag and bobtail a-bowsing there.

But the Court House, Quality crammed : through doors ope,
windows wide,

High on the Bench you saw sit Lordships side by side.
There frowned Chief Justice Jukes, fumed learned Brother Small,
And fretted their fellow Judge : like threshers, one and all,
Of a reek with laying down the law in a furnace. Why ?
Because their lungs breathed flame — the regular crowd for-
bye —

From gentry pouring in — quite a nosegay, to be sure !
How else could they pass the time, six mortal hours endure
Till night should extinguish day, when matters might haply
mend ?

Meanwhile no bad resource was — watching begin and end
Some trial for life and death, in a brisk five minutes’ space,
And betting which knave would ’scape, which hang, from his
sort of face.

So, their Lordships toiled and moiled, and a deal of work was done

(I warrant) to justify the mirth of the crazy sun,
As this and t'other lout, struck dumb at the sudden show
Of red robes and white wigs, boggled nor answered "Boh!"
When asked why he, Tom Styles, should not — because Jack
Nokes

Had stolen the horse — be hanged: for Judges must have their jokes,

And louts must make allowance — let's say, for some blue fly
Which punctured a dewy scalp where the frizzles stuck awry —
Else Tom had fleered scot-free, so nearly over and done
Was the main of the job. Full-measure, the gentles enjoyed
their fun,

As a twenty-five were tried, rank puritans caught at prayer
In a cow-house and laid by the heels, — have at 'em, devil may
care! —

And ten were prescribed the whip, and ten a brand on the cheek,
And five a slit of the nose — just leaving enough to tweak.

Well, things at jolly high-tide, amusement steeped in fire,
While noon smote fierce the roof's red tiles to heart's desire,
The Court a-simmer with smoke, one ferment of oozy flesh,
One spirituous humming musk mount-mounting until its mesh
Entoiled all heads in a fluster, and Serjeant Postlethwayte
— Dashing the wig oblique as he mopped his oily pate —
Cried "Silence, or I grow grease! No loophole lets in air?
Jurymen, — Guilty, Death! Gainsay me if you dare!"
— Things at this pitch, I say, — what hubbub without the doors?
What laughs, shrieks, hoots and yells, what rudest of uproars?

Bounce through the barrier throng a bulk comes rolling vast!
Thumps, kicks, — no manner of use! — spite of them rolls at
last

Into the midst a ball, which, bursting, brings to view
Publican Black Ned Bratts and Tabby his big wife too:
Both in a muck-sweat, both . . . were never such eyes uplift
At the sight of yawning hell, such nostrils — snouts that sniffed
Sulphur, such mouths agape ready to swallow flame!
Horried, hideous, frank fiend-faces! yet, all the same,
Mixed with a certain . . . eh? how shall I dare style — mirth
The desperate grin of the guess that, could they break from
earth,

Heaven was above, and hell might rage in impotence
Below the saved, the saved!

“ Confound you ! (no offence !)
 Out of our way, — push, wife ! Yonder their Worships be ! ”
 Ned Bratts has reached the bar, and “ Hey, my Lords, ” roars he,
 “ A Jury of life and death, Judges the prime of the land,
 Constables, javelineers, — all met, if I understand,
 To decide so knotty a point as whether ’t was Jack or Joan
 Robbed the henroost, pinched the pig, hit the King’s Arms with
 a stone,

Dropped the baby down the well, left the tithesman in the lurch,
 Or, three whole Sundays running, not once attended church !
 What a pother — do these deserve the parish-stocks or whip,
 More or less brow to brand, much or little nose to snip, —
 When, in our Public, plain stand we — that’s we stand here,
 I and my Tab, brass-bold, brick-built of beef and beer,
 — Do not we, slut ? Step forth and show your beauty, jade !
 Wife of my bosom — that’s the word now ! What a trade
 We drove ! None said us nay : nobody loved his life
 So little as wag a tongue against us, — did they, wife ?
 Yet they knew us all the while, in their hearts, for what we are
 — Worst couple, rogue and quean, unhangd — search near and
 far !

Eh, Tab ? The peddler, now — o’er his noggin — who warned
 a mate

To cut and run, nor risk his pack where its loss of weight
 Was the least to dread, — aha, how we two laughed a-good
 As, stealing round the midden, he came on where I stood
 With billet poised and raised, — you, ready with the rope, —
 Ah, but that’s past, that’s sin repented of, we hope !
 Men knew us for that same, yet safe and sound stood we !
 The lily-livered knaves knew too (I’ve balked a d——)
 Our keeping the ‘ Pied Bull ’ was just a mere pretence :
 Too slow the pounds make food, drink, lodging, from out the
 pence !

There’s not a stoppage to travel has chanced, this ten long year,
 No break into hall or grange, no lifting of nag or steer,
 Not a single roguery, from the clipping of a purse
 To the cutting of a throat, but paid us toll. Od’s curse !
 When Gypsy Smouch made bold to cheat us of our due,
 — Eh, Tab ? the Squire’s strong-box we helped the rascal to —
 I think he pulled a face, next Sessions’ swinging-time !
 He danced the jig that needs no floor, — and, here’s the prime,
 ’T was Scroggs that houghed the mare ! Ay, those were busy
 days !

“ Well, there we flourished brave, like scripture-trees called bays,
 Faring high, drinking hard, in money up to head

— Not to say, boots and shoes, when . . . Zounds, I nearly said —

Lord, to unlearn one's language ! How shall we labor, wife ?
Have you, fast hold, the Book ? Grasp, grip it, for your life !
See, sirs, here 's life, salvation ! Here 's — hold but out my
breath —

When did I speak so long without once swearing ? 'Sdeath,
No, nor unhelped by ale since man and boy ! And yet
All yesterday I had to keep my whistle wet
While reading Tab this Book : book ? don't say ' book ' — they 're
plays,

Songs, ballads, and the like : here 's no such strawy blaze,
But sky wide ope, sun, moon, and seven stars out full-flare !
Tab, help and tell ! I 'm hoarse. A mug ! or — no, a prayer !
Dip for one out of the Book ! Who wrote it in the Jail
— He plied his pen unhelped by beer, sirs, I 'll be bail !

“ I 've got my second wind. In trundles she — that 's Tab.
' Why, Gammer, what 's come now, that — bobbing like a crab
On Yule-tide bowl — your head 's a-work and both your eyes
Break loose ? Afeard, you fool ? As if the dead can rise !
Say — Bagman Dick was found last May with fuddling-cap
Stuffed in his mouth : to choke 's a natural mishap !'
' Gaffer, be — blessed,' cries she, ' and Bagman Dick as well !
I, you, and he are damned : this Public is our hell :
We live in fire : live coals don't feel ! — once quenched, they
learn —

Cinders do, to what dust they moulder while they burn !'

“ ‘ If you don't speak straight out,' says I — belike I swore —
' A knobstick, well you know the taste of, shall, once more,
Teach you to talk, my maid !' She ups with such a face,
Heart sunk inside me. ' Well, pad on, my prate-pace !'

“ ‘ I 've been about those laces we need for . . . never mind !
If henceforth they tie hands, 't is mine they 'll have to bind.
You know who makes them best — the Tinker in our cage,
Pulled-up for gosselling, twelve years ago : no age
To try another trade, — yet, so he scorned to take
Money he did not earn, he taught himself the make
Of laces, tagged and tough — Dick Bagman found them so !
Good customers were we ! Well, last week, you must know,
His girl, — the blind young chit, who hawks about his wares, —
She takes it in her head to come no more — such airs
These hussies have ! Yet, since we need a stoutish lace, —
“ I 'll to the jail-bird father, abuse her to his face ! ”
So, first I filled a jug to give me heart, and then,

Primed to the proper pitch, I posted to their den —
Patmore, they style their prison! I tip the turnkey, catch
 My heart up, fix my face, and fearless lift the latch —
 Both arms akimbo, in bounce with a good round oath
 Ready for rapping out: no “Lawks” nor “By my troth!”

“ ‘There sat my man, the father. He looked up: what one feels
 When heart that leapt to mouth drops down again to heels!
 He raised his hand . . . Hast seen, when drinking out the night,
 And in, the day, earth grow another something quite
 Under the sun’s first stare? I stood a very stone. .

“ “Woman!” (a fiery tear he put in every tone),
 “How should my child frequent your house where lust is sport,
 Violence — trade? Too true! I trust no vague report.
 Her angel’s hand, which stops the sight of sin, leaves clear
 The other gate of sense, lets outrage through the ear.
 What has she heard! — which, heard shall never be again.
 Better lack food than feast, a Dives in the — wain
 Or reign or train — of Charles!” (His language was not ours:
 ’T is my belief, God spoke: no tinker has such powers.)
 “Bread, only bread they bring — my laces: if we broke
 Your lump of leavened sin, the loaf’s first crumb would choke!”

“ ‘Down on my marrow-bones! Then all at once rose he:
 His brown hair burst a-spread, his eyes were suns to see:
 Up went his hands: “Through flesh, I reach, I read thy soul!
 So may some stricken tree look blasted, bough and hole,
 Champed by the fire-tooth, charred without, and yet, thrice-bound
 With drieriment about, within may life be found,
 A prisoned power to branch and blossom as before,
 Could but the gardener cleave the cloister, reach the core,
 Loosen the vital sap: yet where shall help be found?
 Who says ‘How save it?’ — nor ‘Why cumberers it the ground?’
 Woman, that tree art thou! All sloughed about with scurf,
 Thy stag-horns fright the sky, thy snake-roots sting the turf!
 Drunkenness, wantonness, theft, murder gnash and gnarl
 Thine outward, ease thy soul with coating like the marle
 Satan stamps flat upon each head beneath his hoof!
 And how deliver such? The strong men keep aloof,
 Lover and friend stand far, the mocking ones pass by,
 Tophet gapes wide for prey: lost soul, despair and die!
 What then? ‘Look unto me and be ye saved!’ saith God:
 ‘I strike the rock, outstreats the life-stream at my rod! *

* They did not eat
 His flesh, nor suck those oils which thence ontstreat.

DONNE’S *Progress of the Soul*, line 344.

Be your sins scarlet, wool shall they seem like, — although
As crimson red, yet turn white as the driven snow ! ”

“ ‘ There, there, there ! All I seem to somehow understand
Is — that, if I reached home, ’t was through the guiding hand
Of his blind girl which led and led me through the streets
And out of town and up to door again. What greets
First thing my eye, as limbs recover from their swoon ?
A book — this Book she gave at parting. “ Father’s boon —
The Book he wrote : it reads as if he spoke himself :
He cannot preach in bonds, so, — take it down from shelf
When you want counsel, — think you hear his very voice !

“ ‘ Wicked dear Husband, first despair and then rejoice !
Dear wicked Husband, waste no tick of moment more,
Be saved like me, bald trunk ! There’s greenness yet at core,
Sap under slough ! Read, read ! ’

“ Let me take breath, my lords !
I’d like to know, are these — hers, mine, or Bunyan’s words ?
I’m ’wildered — scarce with drink, — nowise with drink alone !
You’ll say, with heat : but heat’s no stuff to split a stone
Like this black boulder — this flint heart of mine : the Book —
That dealt the crashing blow ! Sirs, here’s the fist that shook
His beard till Wrestler Jem howled like a just-lugged bear !
You had brained me with a feather : at once I grew aware
Christmas was meant for me. A burden at your back,
Good Master Christmas ? Nay, — yours was that Joseph’s sack,
— Or whose it was, — which held the cup, — compared with
mine !

Robbery loads my loins, perjury cracks my chine,
Adultery . . . nay, Tab, you pitched me as I flung !
One word, I’ll up with fist . . . No, sweet spouse, hold your
tongue !

“ I’m hasting to the end. The Book, sirs — take and read !
You have my history in a nutshell, — ay, indeed !
It must off, my burden ! See, — slack straps and into pit,
Roll, reach the bottom, rest, rot there — a plague on it !
For a mountain’s sure to fall and bury Bedford Town,
‘ Destruction ’ — that’s the name, and fire shall burn it down !
O ’scape the wrath in time ! Time’s now, if not too late.
How can I pilgrimage up to the wicket-gate ?
Next comes Despond the slough : not that I fear to pull
Through mud, and dry my clothes at brave House Beautiful —
But it’s late in the day, I reckon : had I left years ago

Town, wife, and children dear . . . Well, Christmas did, you know! —

Soon I had met in the valley and tried my cudgel's strength
On the enemy horned and winged, a-straddle across its length!
Have at his horns, thwack — thwack: they snap, see! Hoof
and hoof —

Bang, break the fetlock-bones! For love's sake, keep aloof
Angels! I'm man and match, — this cudgel for my flail, —
To thresh him, hoofs and horns, bat's wing and serpent's tail!
A chance gone by! But then, what else does Hopeful ding
Into the deafest ear except — hope, hope's the thing?
Too late i' the day for me to thrud the windings: but
There's still a way to win the race by death's short cut!
Did Master Faithful need climb the Delightful Mounts?
No, straight to Vanity Fair, — a fair, by all accounts,
Such as is held outside, — lords, ladies, grand and gay, —
Says he in the face of them, just what you hear me say.
And the Judges brought him in guilty, and brought him out
To die in the market-place — St. Peter's Green's about
The same thing: there they flogged, flayed, buffeted, lanced
with knives,
Pricked him with swords, — I'll swear, he'd full a cat's nine
lives, —

So to his end at last came Faithful, — ha, ha, he!
Who holds the highest card? for there stands hid, you see,
Behind the rabble-rout, a chariot, pair and all:
He's in, he's off, he's up, through clouds, at trumpet-call,
Carried the nearest way to Heaven-gate! Odds my life —
Has nobody a sword to spare? not even a knife?
Then hang me, draw and quarter! Tab — do the same by her!
O Master Worldly-Wiseman . . . that's Master Interpreter,
Take the will, not the deed! Our gibbet's handy, close:
Forestall Last Judgment-Day! Be kindly, not morose!
There wants no earthly judge-and-jurying: here we stand —
Sentence our guilty selves: so, hang us out of hand!
Make haste for pity's sake! A single moment's loss
Means — Satan's lord once more: his whisper shoots across
All singing in my heart, all praying in my brain,
'It comes of heat and beer!' — hark how he guffaws plain!
'To-morrow you'll wake bright, and, in a safe skin, hug
Your sound selves, Tab and you, over a foaming jug!
You've had such qualms before, time out of mind!' He's right!
Did not we kick and cuff and curse away, that night
When home we blindly reeled, and left poor humpback Joe
I' the lurch to pay for what . . . somebody did, you know!
Both of us maundered then, 'Lame humpback, — never more

Will he come limping, drain his tankard at our door!
 He'll swing, while — somebody' . . . Says Tab, 'No, for
 I'll peach!'

'I'm for you, Tab,' cries I, 'there's rope enough for each!'

So blubbered we, and bussed, and went to bed upon
 The grace of Tab's good thought: by morning, all was gone!
 We laughed — 'What's life to him, a cripple of no account?'
 Oh, waves increase around — I feel them mount and mount!
 Hang us! To-morrow brings Tom Bearward with his bears:
 One new black-muzzled brute beats Sackerson, he swears:
 (Sackerson, for my money!) And, baiting o'er, the Brawl
 They lead on Turner's Patch, — lads, lasses, up tails all, —
 I'm i' the thick o' the throng! That means the Iron Cage,
 — Means the Lost Man inside! Where's hope for such as
 wage
 War against light? Light's left, light's here, I hold light still,
 So does Tab — make but haste to hang us both! You will?"

I promise, when he stopped you might have heard a mouse
 Squeak, such a death-like hush sealed up the old Mote House.
 But when the mass of man sank meek upon his knees,
 While Tab, alongside, wheezed a hoarse "Do hang us, please!"
 Why, then the waters rose, no eye but ran with tears,
 Hearts heaved, heads thumped, until, paying all past arrears
 Of pity and sorrow, at last a regular scream outbroke
 Of triumph, joy, and praise.

My Lord Chief Justice spoke,
 First mopping brow and cheek, where still, for one that budged,
 Another bead broke fresh: "What Judge, that ever judged
 Since first the world began, judged such a case as this?
 Why, Master Bratts, long since, folks smelt you out, I wis!
 I had my doubts, i' faith, each time you played the fox
 Convicting geese of crime in yonder witness-box —
 Yea, much did I misdoubt, the thief that stole her eggs
 Was hardly goosey's self at Reynard's game, i' feggs!
 Yet thus much was to praise — you spoke to point, direct —
 Swore you heard, saw the theft: no jury could suspect —
 Dared to suspect, — I'll say, — a spot in white so clear:
 Goosey was throttled, true: but thereof godly fear
 Came of example set, much as our laws intend;
 And, though a fox confessed, you proved the Judge's friend.
 What if I had my doubts? Suppose I gave them breath,
 Brought you to bar: what work to do, ere 'Guilty, Death'
 Had paid our pains! What heaps of witnesses to drag
 From holes and corners, paid from out the County's bag!

Trial three dog-days long! *Amicus Curie* — that's
 Your title, no dispute — truth-telling Master Bratts!
 Thank you, too, Mistress Tab! Why doubt one word you say?
 Hanging you both deserve, hanged both shall be this day!
 The tinker needs must be a proper man. I've heard
 He lies in Jail long since: if Quality's good word
 Warrants me letting loose, — some householder, I mean —
 Freeholder, better still, — I don't say but — between
 Now and next Sessions . . . Well! Consider of his case,
 I promise to, at least: we owe him so much grace.
 Not that — no, God forbid! — I lean to think, as you,
 The grace that such repent is any jail-bird's due:
 I rather see the fruit of twelve years' pious reign —
Astræa Redux, Charles restored his rights again!
 — Of which, another time! I somehow feel a peace
 Stealing across the world. May deeds like this increase!
 So, Master Sheriff, stay that sentence I pronounced
 On those two dozen odd: deserving to be trounced
 Soundly, and yet . . . well, well, at all events dispatch
 This pair of — shall I say, sinner-saints? — ere we catch
 Their jail-distemper too. Stop tears, or I'll indite
 All weeping Bedfordshire for turning Bunyanite!"

So, forms were galloped through. If Justice, on the spur,
 Proved somewhat expeditious, would Quality demur?
 And happily hanged were they, — why lengthen out my tale? —
 Where Bunyan's Statue stands facing where stood his Jail.



DRAMATIC IDYLS

SECOND SERIES

[1880]

“ You are sick, that ’s sure,” — they say:
“ Sick of what ? ” — they disagree.
“ T is the brain,” — thinks Doctor A ;
“ T is the heart,” — holds Doctor B ;
“ The liver — my life I ’d lay ! ”
“ The lungs ! ” “ The lights ! ”

Ah me !

So ignorant of man’s whole
Of bodily organs plain to see —
So sage and certain, frank and free,
About what ’s under lock and key —
Man’s soul !

ECHETLOS.

HERE is a story, shall stir you ! Stand up, Greeks dead and
gone,
Who breasted, beat Barbarians, stemmed Persia rolling on,
Did the deed and saved the world; for the day was Marathon !

No man but did his manliest, kept rank and fought away
In his tribe and file : up, back, out, down — was the spear-arm
play :
Like a wind-whipt branchy wood, all spear-arms a-swing that
day !

But one man kept no rank, and his sole arm plied no spear,
As a flashing came and went, and a form i’ the van, the rear,
Brightened the battle up, for he blazed now there, now here.

Nor helmed nor shielded, he ! but, a goat-skin all his wear,
 Like a tiller of the soil, with a clown's limbs broad and bare,
 Went he ploughing on and on : he pushed with a ploughman's
 share.

Did the weak mid-line give way, as tunnies on whom the shark
 Precipitates his bulk ? Did the right-wing halt when, stark
 On his heap of slain lay stretched Kallimachos Polemarch ?

Did the steady phalanx falter ? To the rescue, at the need,
 The clown was ploughing Persia, clearing Greek earth of weed,
 As he routed through the Sakian and rooted up the Mede.

But the deed done, battle won, — nowhere to be descried
 On the meadow, by the stream, at the marsh, — look far and
 wide
 From the foot of the mountain, no, to the last blood-plashed
 sea-side, —

Not anywhere on view blazed the large limbs thonged and
 brown,
 Shearing and clearing still with the share before which — down
 To the dust went Persia's pomp, as he ploughed for Greece,
 that clown !

How spake the Oracle ? “ Care for no name at all !
 Say but just this : ‘ We praise one helpful whom we call
 The Holder of the Ploughshare.’ The great deed ne'er grows
 small.”

Not the great name ! Sing — woe for the great name Miltiadés
 And its end at Paros isle ! Woe for Themistokles
 — Satrap in Sardis court ! Name not the clown like these !

CLIVE.

I AND Clive were friends — and why not ? Friends ! I think
 you laugh, my lad.
 Clive it was gave England India, while your father gives —
 egad,
 England nothing but the graceless boy who lures him on to
 speak —
 “ Well, Sir, you and Clive were comrades — ” with a tongue
 thrust in your cheek !

Very true: in my eyes, your eyes, all the world's eyes, Clive
 was man,
 I was, am, and ever shall be — mouse, nay, mouse of all its
 clan
 Sorriest sample, if you take the kitchen's estimate for fame;
 While the man Clive — he fought Plassy, spoiled the clever for-
 eign game,
 Conquered and annexed and Englished!

Never mind! As o'er my punch
 (You away) I sit of evenings, — silence, save for biscuit crunch.
 Black, unbroken, — thought grows busy, thrids each pathway of
 old years,
 Notes this forthright, that meander, till the long-past life ap-
 pears
 Like an outspread map of country plodded through, each mile
 and rood,
 Once, and well remembered still, — I'm startled in my solitude
 Ever and anon by — what's the sudden mocking light that
 breaks
 On me as I slap the table till no rummer-glass but shakes
 While I ask — aloud, I do believe, God help me! — “Was it
 thus?
 Can it be that so I faltered, stopped when just one step for us —”
 (Us, — you were not born, I grant, but surely some day born
 would be)
 “ — One bold step had gained a province ” (figurative talk, you
 see)
 “ Got no end of wealth and honor, — yet I stood stock-still no
 less? ”
 — “ For I was not Clive, ” you comment: but it needs no Clive
 to guess
 Wealth were handy, honor ticklish, did no writing on the wall
 Warn me “ Trespasser, 'ware man-traps! ” Him who braves
 that notice — call
 Hero! none of such heroics suit myself who read plain words,
 Doff my hat, and leap no barrier. Scripture says, the land's
 the Lord's:
 Louts then — what avail the thousand, noisy in a smock-frocked
 ring,
 All-agog to have me trespass, clear the fence, be Clive their king?
 Higher warrant must you show me ere I set one foot before
 'T' other in that dark direction, though I stand foreverinore
 Poor as Job and meek as Moses. Evermore? No! By and
 by
 Job grows rich and Moses valiant, Clive turns out less wise than I.

Don't object "Why call him friend, then?" Power is power,
my boy, and still

Marks a man, — God's gift magnific, exercised for good or ill.
You've your boot now on my hearth-rug, tread what was a
tiger's skin:

Rarely such a royal monster as I lodged the bullet in!

True, he murdered half a village, so his own death came to pass;
Still, for size and beauty, cunning, courage — ah, the brute he
was!

Why, that Clive, — that youth, that greenhorn, that quill-driving
clerk, in fine, —

He sustained a siege in Arcot . . . But the world knows!
Pass the wine.

Where did I break off at? How bring Clive in? Oh, you
mentioned "fear"!

Just so: and, said I, that minds me of a story you shall hear.

We were friends then, Clive and I: so, when the clouds, about
the orb

Late supreme, encroaching slowly, surely, threatened to absorb
Ray by ray its noontide brilliance, — friendship might, with
steadier eye

Drawing near, bear what had burned else, now no blaze all
majesty.

Too much bee's-wing floats my figure? Well, suppose a castle's
new:

None presume to climb its ramparts, none find foothold sure for
shoe

'Twixt those squares and squares of granite plating the imper-
vious pile

As his scale-mail's warty iron cuirasses a crocodile.

Reels that castle thunder-smitten, storm-dismantled? From
without

Scrambling up by crack and crevice, every cockney prates about
Towers — the heap he kicks now! turrets — just the measure of
his cane!

Will that do? Observe moreover — (same similitude again) —
Such a castle seldom crumbles by sheer stress of cannonade:

'T is when foes are foiled and fighting's finished that vile rains
invade,

Grass o'ergrrows, o'ergrrows till night-birds congregating find no
holes

Fit to build in like the topmost sockets made for banner-poles.
So Clive crumbled slow in London, crashed at last.

A week before,
Dining with him, — after trying churchyard-chat of days of
yore, —

Both of us stopped, tired as tombstones, head-piece foot-piece,
when they lean

Each to other, drowsed in fog-smoke, o'er a coffined Past
between.

As I saw his head sink heavy, guessed the soul's extinguishment
By the glazing eyeball, noticed how the furtive fingers went
Where a drug-box skulked behind the honest liquor, — “ One
more throw

Try for Clive ! ” thought I : “ Let 's venture some good rattling
question ! ” So —

“ Come Clive, tell us ” — out I blurted — “ what to tell in turn,
years hence,

When my boy — suppose I have one — asks me on what evi-
dence

I maintain my friend of Plassy proved a warrior every whit
Worth your Alexanders, Cæsars, Marlboroughs and — what
said Pitt ? —

Frederick the Fierce himself ! Clive told me once ” — I want
to say —

“ Which feat out of all those famous doings bore the bell away
— In his own calm estimation, mark you, not the mob's rough
guess —

Which stood foremost as evincing what Clive called courageous-
ness !

Come ! what moment of the minute, what speck-centre in the
wide

Circle of the action saw your mortal fairly deified ?

(Let alone that filthy sleep-stuff, swallow bold this wholesome
Port !)

If a friend has leave to question, — when were you most brave,
in short ? ”

Up he arched his brows o' the instant — formidably Clive again.

“ When was I most brave ? I 'd answer, were the instance
half as plain

As another instance that 's a brain-lodged crystal — curse it ! —
here

Freezing when my memory touches — ugh ! — the time I felt
most fear.

Ugh ! I cannot say for certain if I showed fear — anyhow,
Fear I felt, and, very likely, shuddered, since I shiver now.”

“ Fear ! ” smiled I. “ Well, that 's the rarer : that 's a speci-
men to seek,

Ticket up in one's museum, *Mind-Freaks, Lord Clive's Fear, Unique!*"

Down his brows dropped. On the table painfully he pored as
though

Tracing, in the stains and streaks there, thoughts encrusted long
ago.

When he spoke 't was like a lawyer reading word by word some
will,

Some blind jungle of a statement, — beating on and on until
Out there leaps fierce life to fight with.

"This fell in my factor-days.

Desk-drudge, slaving at St. David's, one must game, or drink,
or craze.

I chose gaming: and, — because your high-flown gamesters
hardly take

Umbrage at a factor's elbow if the factor pays his stake, —
I was winked at in a circle where the company was choice,
Captain This and Major That, men high of color, loud of voice,
Yet indulgent, condescending to the modest juvenile
Who not merely risked but lost his hard-earned guineas with a
smile.

"Down I sat to cards, one evening, — had for my antagonist
Somebody whose name 's a secret — you'll know why — so, if
you list,

Call him Cock o' the Walk, my scarlet son of Mars from head
to heel!

Play commenced: and, whether Cocky fancied that a clerk must
feel

Quite sufficient honor came of bending over one green baize,
I the scribe with him the warrior, guessed no penman dared to
raise

Shadow of objection should the honor stay but playing end
More or less abruptly, — whether disinclined he grew to spend
Practice strictly scientific on a booby born to stare
At — not ask of — lace-and-ruffles if the hand they hide plays
fair, —

Anyhow, I marked a movement when he bade me 'Cut!'

"I rose.

'Such the new manœuvre, Captain? I'm a novice: knowledge
grows.

What, you force a card, you cheat, Sir?'

"Never did a thunder-clap

Cause emotion, startle Thyrsis locked with Chloe in his lap,
As my word and gesture (down I flung my cards to join the
pack.)

Fired the man of arms, whose visage, simply red before, turned black.

When he found his voice, he stammered 'That expression once again!'

"Well, you forced a card and cheated!'

"Possibly a factor's brain,
 Busied with his all-important balance of accounts, may deem
 Weighing words superfluous trouble: *cheat* to clerkly ears may
 seem

Just the joke for friends to venture: but we are not friends, you
 see!

When a gentleman is joked with, — if he's good at repartee,
 He rejoins, as do I — Sirrah, on your knees, withdraw in full!
 Beg my pardon, or be sure a kindly bullet through your skull
 Lets in light and teaches manners to what brain it finds! Choose
 quick —

Have your life snuffed out or, kneeling, pray me trim yon can-
 dle-wick!'

"Well, you cheated!'

"Then outbroke a howl from all the friends around.
 To his feet sprang each in fury, fists were clenched and teeth
 were ground.

'End it! no time like the present! Captain, yours were our
 disgrace!

No delay, begin and finish! Stand back, leave the pair a
 space!

Let civilians be instructed: henceforth simply ply the pen,
 Fly the sword! This clerk's no swordsman? Suit him with a
 pistol, then!

Even odds! A dozen paces 'twixt the most and least expert
 Make a dwarf a giant's equal: nay, the dwarf, if he's alert,
 Likelier hits the broader target!'

"Up we stood accordingly.
 As they handed me the weapon, such was my soul's thirst to
 try

Then and there conclusions with this bully, tread on and stamp
 out

Every spark of his existence, that, — crept close to, curled about
 By that toying tempting teasing fool-forefinger's middle joint, —
 Don't you guess? — the trigger yielded. Gone my chance! and
 at the point

Of such prime success moreover: scarce an inch above his head
 Went my ball to hit the wainscot. He was living, I was dead.

“Up he marched in flaming triumph — ’t was his right, mind!
 — up, within
 Just an arm’s length. ‘Now, my clerkling,’ chuckled Cocky
 with a grin
 As the levelled piece quite touched me, ‘Now, Sir Counting-
 House, repeat
 That expression which I told you proved bad manners! Did
 I cheat?’

“‘Cheat you did, you knew you cheated, and, this moment,
 know as well.
 As for me, my homely breeding bids you — fire and go to Hell!’

“Twice the muzzle touched my forehead. Heavy barrel, flur-
 ried wrist,
 Either spoils a steady lifting. Thrice: then, ‘Laugh at Hell
 who list,
 I can’t! God’s no fable either. Did this boy’s eye wink
 once? No!
 There’s no standing him and Hell and God all three against
 me, — so,
 I did cheat!’

“And down he threw the pistol, out rushed — by the door
 Possibly, but, as for knowledge if by chimney, roof or floor,
 He effected disappearance — I’ll engage no glance was sent
 That way by a single starer, such a blank astonishment
 Swallowed up their senses: as for speaking — mute they stood
 as mice.

“Mute not long, though! Such reaction, such a hubbub in a
 trice!

‘Rogue and rascal! Who’d have thought it? What’s to be
 expected next,
 When His Majesty’s Commission serves a sharper as pretext
 For . . . But where’s the need of wasting time now? Naught
 requires delay:

Punishment the Service cries for: let disgrace be wiped away
 Publicly, in good broad daylight! Resignation? No, indeed!
 Drum and fife must play the Rogue’s-March, rank and file be
 free to speed

Tardy marching: on the rogue’s part by appliance in the rear
 — Kicks administered shall right this wronged civilian, — never
 fear,

Mister Clive, for — though a clerk — you bore yourself — sup-
 pose we say —

Just as would beseem a soldier!’

“ ‘Gentlemen, attention — pray!
First, one word!’

“ I passed each speaker severally in review.
When I had precise their number, names and styles, and fully
knew
Over whom my supervision thenceforth must extend, — why,
then —

“ ‘Some five minutes since, my life lay — as you all saw, gen-
tlemen —

At the mercy of your friend there. Not a single voice was
raised

In arrest of judgment, not one tongue — before my powder
blazed —

Ventured “ Can it be the youngster blundered, really seemed to
mark

Some irregular proceeding? We conjecture in the dark,
Guess at random, — still, for sake of fair play — what if for a
freak,

In a fit of absence, — such things have been! — if our friend
proved weak

— What’s the phrase? — corrected fortune! Look into the
case, at least!”

Who dared interpose between the altar’s victim and the priest?
Yet he spared me! You eleven! Whosoever, all or each,
To the disadvantage of the man who spared me, utters
speech

— To his face, behind his back, — that speaker has to do with
me:

Me who promise, if positions change and mine the chance should
be,

Not to imitate your friend and waive advantage!’

“ Twenty-five
Years ago this matter happened: and ’t is certain,” added Clive,
“ Never, to my knowledge, did Sir Cocky have a single breath
Breathed against him: lips were closed throughout his life, or
since his death,

For if he be dead or living I can tell no more than you.

All I know is — Cocky had one chance more; how he used it,
— grew

Out of such unlucky habits, or relapsed, and back again

Brought the late-ejected devil with a score more in his train, —

That’s for you to judge. Reprieval I procured, at any rate.

Ugh — the memory of that minute’s fear makes gooseflesh rise!
Why prate

Longer? You’ve my story, there’s your instance: fear I did,
you see!”

“ Well ” — I hardly kept from laughing — “ if I see it, thanks
must be

Wholly to your Lordship’s candor. Not that — in a common
case —

When a bully caught at cheating thrusts a pistol in one’s face,
I should under-rate, believe me, such a trial to the nerve !

’T is no joke, at one-and-twenty, for a youth to stand nor swerve.

Fear I naturally look for — unless, of all men alive,

I am forced to make exception when I come to Robert Clive.

Since at Arcot, Plassy, elsewhere, he and death — the whole
world knows —

Came to somewhat closer quarters.”

Quarters ? Had we come to blows,
Clive and I, you had not wondered — up he sprang so, out he
rapped

Such a round of oaths — no matter ! I ’ll endeavor to adapt

To our modern usage words he — well, ’t was friendly license —
flung

At me like so many fire-balls, fast as he could wag his tongue.

“ You — a soldier ? You — at Plassy ? Yours the faculty to
nick

Instantaneously occasion when your foe, if lightning-quick,

— At his mercy, at his malice, — has you, through some stupid
inch

Undefended in your bulwark ? Thus laid open, — not to flinch

— That needs courage, you ’ll concede me. Then, look here !

Suppose the man,

Checking his advance, his weapon still extended, not a span

Distant from my temple, — curse him ! — quietly had bade me,

‘ There !

Keep your life, calumniator ! — worthless life I freely spare :

Mine you freely would have taken — murdered me and my
good fame

Both at once — and all the better ! Go, and thank your own
bad aim

Which permits me to forgive you ! ’ What if, with such words
as these,

He had cast away his weapon ? How should I have borne me,
please ?

Nay, I ’ll spare you pains and tell you. This, and only this, re-
mained —

Pick his weapon up and use it on myself. I so had gained

Sleep the earlier, leaving England probably to pay on still

Rent and taxes for half India, tenant at the Frenchman’s will.”

“Such the turn” said I “the matter takes with you? Then I
abate

— No, by not one jot nor tittle, — of your act my estimate.

Fear — I wish I could detect there: courage fronts me, plain
enough —

Call it desperation, madness — never mind! for here’s in rough
Why, had mine been such a trial, fear had overcome disgrace.

True, disgrace were hard to bear: but such a rush against God’s
face

— None of that for me, Lord Plassy, since I go to church at times,
Say the creed my mother taught me! Many years in foreign
climes

Rub some marks away — not all, though! We poor sinners
reach life’s brink,

Overlook what rolls beneath it, recklessly enough, but think

There’s advantage in what’s left us — ground to stand on, time
to call

‘Lord, have mercy!’ ere we topple over — do not leap, that’s
all!”

Oh, he made no answer, re-absorbed into his cloud. I caught
Something like “Yes — courage: only fools will call it fear.”

If aught

Comfort you, my great unhappy hero Clive, in that I heard,

Next week, how your own hand dealt you doom, and uttered
just the word

“Fearfully courageous!” — this, be sure, and nothing else I
groaned.

I’m no Clive, nor parson either: Clive’s worst deed — we’ll
hope condoned.

MULÉYKEH.

If a stranger passed the tent of Hóseyn, he cried “A churl’s!”

Or haply “God help the man who has neither salt nor bread!”

— “Nay,” would a friend exclaim, “he needs nor pity nor
scorn

More than who spends small thought on the shore-sand, picking
pearls,

— Holds but in light esteem the seed-sort, bears instead

On his breast a moon-like prize, some orb which of night makes
morn.

“What if no flocks and herds enrich the son of Sinán?

They went when his tribe was mulct, ten thousand camels the
due,

Blood-value paid perforce for a murder done of old.
 'God gave them, let them go! But never since time began,
 Muléykeh, peerless mare, owned master the match of you,
 And you are my prize, my Pearl: I laugh at men's land and
 gold!'

"So in the pride of his soul laughs Hóseyñ — and right, I say.
 Do the ten steeds run a race of glory? Outstripping all,
 Ever Muléykeh stands first steed at the victor's staff.
 Who started, the owner's hope, gets shamed and named, that
 day.

'Silence,' or, last but one, is 'The Cuffed,' as we use to call
 Whom the paddock's lord thrusts forth. Right, Hóseyñ, I say,
 to laugh!"

"Boasts he Muléykeh the Pearl?" the stranger replies: "Be
 sure

On him I waste nor scorn nor pity, but lavish both
 On Duhl the son of Sheybán, who withers away in heart
 For envy of Hóseyñ's luck. Such sickness admits no cure.
 A certain poet has sung, and sealed the same with an oath,
 'For the vulgar — flocks and herds! The Pearl is a prize
 apart.'"

Lo, Duhl the son of Sheybán comes riding to Hóseyñ's tent,
 And he casts his saddle down, and enters and "Peace!"
 bids he.

"You are poor, I know the cause: my plenty shall mend the
 wrong.

'T is said of your Pearl — the price of a hundred camels spent
 In her purchase were scarce ill paid: such prudence is far from
 me

Who proffer a thousand. Speak! Long parley may last too
 long."

Said Hóseyñ, "You feed young beasts a many, of famous breed,
 Slit-eared, unblemished, fat, true offspring of Múzennem:
 There stumbles no weak-eyed she in the line as it climbs the hill.
 But I love Muléykeh's face: her forefront whitens indeed
 Like a yellowish wave's cream-crest. Your camels — go gaze
 on them!

Her fetlock is foam-splashed too. Myself am the richer still."

A year goes by: lo, back to the tent again rides Duhl.

"You are open-hearted, ay — moist-handed, a very prince.

Why should I speak of sale? Be the mare your simple gift!

My son is pined to death for her beauty: my wife pronpts 'Fool,

Beg for his sake the Pearl! Be God the rewarder, since
God pays debts seven for one: who squanders on Him shows
thrift.' ”

Said Hóseyñ, “ God gives each man one life, like a lamp, then
gives
That lamp due measure of oil: lamp lighted — hold high, wave
wide
Its comfort for others to share! once quench it, what help is left?
The oil of your lamp is your son: I shine while Muléykeh lives.
Would I beg your son to cheer my dark if Muléykeh died?
It is life against life: what good avails to the life-bereft? ”

Another year, and — hist! What craft is it Duhl designs?
He alights not at the door of the tent as he did last time,
But, creeping behind, he gropes his stealthy way by the trench
Half-round till he finds the flap in the folding, for night combines
With the robber — and such is he: Duhl, covetous up to crime,
Must wring from Hóseyñ's grasp the Pearl, by whatever the
wrench.

“ He was hunger-bitten, I heard: I tempted with half my store,
And a gibe was all my thanks. Is he generous like Spring dew?
Account the fault to me who chattered with such an one!
He has killed, to feast chance comers, the creature he rode:
nay, more —
For a couple of singing-girls his robe has he torn in two:
I will beg! Yet I nowise gained by the tale of my wife and son.

“ I swear by the Holy House, my head will I never wash
Till I filch his Pearl away. Fair dealing I tried, then guile,
And now I resort to force. He said we must live or die:
Let him die, then, — let me live! Be bold — but not too rash!
I have found me a peeping-place: breast, bury your breathing
while
I explore for myself! Now, breathe! He deceived me not,
the spy!

“ As he said — there lies in peace Hóseyñ — how happy! Beside
Stands tethered the Pearl: thrice winds her headstall about his
wrist:

’T is therefore he sleeps so sound — the moon through the roof
reveals.

And, loose on his left, stands too that other, known far and wide,
Buhéyseh, her sister born: fleet is she yet ever missed
The winning tail's fire-flash a-stream past the thunderous heels.

“ No less she stands saddled and bridled, this second, in case
some thief

Should enter and seize and fly with the first, as I mean to do.

What then? The Pearl is the Pearl: once mount her we both
escape.”

Through the skirt-fold in glides Duhl, — so a serpent disturbs
no leaf

In a bush as he parts the twigs entwining a nest: clean through,
He is noiselessly at his work: as he planned, he performs the
rape.

He has set the tent-door wide, has buckled the girth, has clipped
The headstall away from the wrist he leaves thrice bound as
before,

He springs on the Pearl, is launched on the desert like bolt from
bow.

Up starts our plundered man: from his breast though the heart
be ripped,

Yet his mind has the mastery: behold, in a minute more,
He is out and off and away on Buhéyseh, whose worth we know!

And Hóseyñ — his blood turns flame, he has learned long since
to ride,

And Buhéyseh does her part, — they gain — they are gaining
fast

On the fugitive pair, and Duhl has Ed-Dárraj to cross and quit,
And to reach the ridge El-Sabán, — no safety till that be spied!
And Buhéyseh is, bound by bound, but a horse-length off at last,
For the Pearl has missed the tap of the heel, the touch of the bit.

She shortens her stride, she chafes at her rider the strange and
queer:

Buhéyseh is mad with hope — beat sister she shall and must,
Though Duhl, of the hand and heel so clumsy, she has to thank.
She is near now, nose by tail — they are neck by croup — joy!
fear!

What folly makes Hóseyñ shout “ Dog Duhl, Damned son of
the Dust,

Touch the right ear and press with your foot my Pearl’s left
flank!”

And Duhl was wise at the word, and Muléykeh as prompt per-
ceived

Who was urging redoubled pace, and to hear him was to obey,
And a leap indeed gave she, and vanished forevermore.

And Hóseyñ looked one long last look as who, all bereaved,

Looks, fain to follow the dead so far as the living may :
Then he turned Buhéyseh's neck slow homeward, weeping sore.

And, lo, in the sunrise, still sat Hóseyn upon the ground
Weeping : and neighbors came, the tribesmen of Bénu-Asád
In the vale of green Er-Rass, and they questioned him of his
grief ;
And he told from first to last how, serpent-like, Duhl had wound
His way to the nest, and how Duhl rode like an ape, so bad !
And how Buhéyseh did wonders, yet Pearl remained with the
thief.

And they jeered him, one and all : " Poor Hóseyn is crazed past
hope !
How else had he wrought himself his ruin, in fortune's spite ?
To have simply held the tongue were a task for a boy or girl,
And here were Muléykeh again, the eyed like an antelope,
The child of his heart by day, the wife of his breast by night ! " —
" And the beaten in speed ! " wept Hóseyn. " You never have
loved my Pearl."

PIETRO OF ABANO.

Petrus Aponensis — there was a magician !
When that strange adventure happened, which I mean to tell
my hearers,
Nearly had he tried all trades — beside physician,
Architect, astronomer, astrologer, — or worse :
How else, as the old books warrant, was he able,
All at once, through all the world, to prove the promptest of ap-
pearers
Where was prince to cure, tower to build as high as Babel,
Star to name or sky-sign read, — yet pouce, for pains, a curse ?
— Curse : for when a vagrant, — foot-sore, travel-tattered,
Now a young man, now an old man, Turk or Arab, Jew or
Gypsy, —
Proffered folk in passing — O for pay, what mattered ? —
" I'll be doctor, I'll play builder, star I'll name — sign read ! " —
Soon as prince was cured, tower built, and fate predicted,
" Who may you be ? " came the question ; when he answered
" *Petrus ipse,*"
" Just as we divined ! " cried folk — " A wretch convicted
Long ago of dealing with the devil — you indeed ! "

So, they cursed him roundly, all his labor's payment,
 Motioned him — the convalescent prince would — to vacate the
 presence :

Babylonians plucked his beard and tore his raiment,
 Drove him from that tower he built : while, had he peered at
 stars,

Town howled "Stone the quack who styles our Dog-star —
 Sirius !"

Country yelled "Aroint the churl who prophesies we take no
 pleasance

Under vine and fig-tree, since the year's delirious,
 Bears no crop of any kind, — all through the planet Mars !"

Straightway would the whilom youngster grow a grisard,
 Or, as case might hap, the hoary eld drop off and show a stripling.
 Town and country groaned — indebted to a wizard !

"Curse — nay, kick and cuff him — fit requital of his pains !
 Gratitude in word or deed were wasted truly !

Rather make the Church amends by crying out on, cramping,
 crippling

One who, on pretence of serving man, serves duly
 Man's arch foe : not ours, be sure, but Satan's — his the gains !"

Peter grinned and bore it, such disgraceful usage :
 Somehow, cuffs and kicks and curses seem ordained his like to
 suffer :

Prophet's pay with Christians, now as in the Jews' age,
 Still is — stoning : so, he meekly took his wage and went,
 — Safe again was found ensconced in those old quarters,
 Padua's blackest blindest by-street, — none the worse, nay, some-
 what tougher :

"Calculating," quoth he, "soon I join the martyrs,
 Since, who magnify my lore on burning me are bent." *

Therefore, on a certain evening, to his alley
 Peter slunk, all bruised and broken, sore in body, sick in spirit,

* "Studiando le mie cifre col compasso,
 Rilevo che sarò presto sotterra,
 Perchè del mio saper si fa gran chiasso,
 E gl'ignoranti m'hanno mosso guerra."

Said to have been found in a well at Ahano in the last century. They
 were extemporaneously Englished thus : not as Father Prout chose to pre-
 fer them :

Studying my ciphers with the compass,
 I reckon — I soon shall be below-ground ;
 Because, of my lore folk make great rumpus,
 And war on myself makes each dull rogue round.

Just escaped from Cairo where he launched a galley
 Needing neither sails nor oars nor help of wind or tide,
 — Needing but the fume of fire to set a-flying
 Wheels like mad which whirled you quick — North, South,
 where'er you pleased require it, —
 That is — would have done so had not priests come prying,
 Broke his engine up and bastinadoed him beside.*

- As he reached his lodging, stopped there unmolested,
 (Neighbors feared him, urchins fled him, few were bold enough
 to follow)

While his fumbling fingers tried the lock and tested
 Once again the queer key's virtue, oped the sullen door, —
 Someone plucked his sleeve, cried, "Master, pray your pardon!
 Grant a word to me who patient wait you in your archway's
 hollow!

Hard on you men's hearts are: be not your heart hard on
 Me who kiss your garment's hem, O Lord of magic lore!

"Mage — say I, who no less, scorning tittle-tattle,
 To the vulgar give no credence when they prate of Peter's
 magic,

Deem his art brews tempest, hurts the crops and cattle,
 Hinders fowls from laying eggs and worms from spinning silk,
 Rides upon a he-goat, mounts at need a broomstick:
 While the price he pays for this (so turns to comic what was
 tragic)

Is — he may not drink — dreads like the Day of Doom's tick —
 One poor drop of sustenance ordained mere men — that's milk!

"Tell such tales to Padua! Think me no such dullard!
 Not from these benighted parts did I derive my breath and
 being!

I am from a land whose cloudless skies are colored
 Livelier, suns orb largelier, airs seem incense, — while, on earth —
 What, instead of grass, our fingers and our thumbs cull,
 Proves true inly! sounds and sights there help the body's hear-
 ing, seeing,

Till the soul grows godlike: brief, — you front no numskull
 Shaming by ineptitude the Greece that gave him birth!

"Mark within my eye its iris mystic-lettered —
 That's my name! and note my ear — its swan-shaped cavity, .
 my emblem!

Mine's the swan-like nature born to fly unfettered
 Over land and sea in search of knowledge — food for song.

Art denied the vulgar! Geese grow fat on barley,
 Swans require ethereal provend, undesirous to resemble 'em —
 Soar to seek Apollo — favored with a parley
 Such as, Master, you grant me — who will not hold you long.

“ Leave to learn to sing — for that your swan petitions :
 Master, who possess the secret, say not nay to such a suitor !
 All I ask is — bless mine, purest of ambitions !
 Grant me leave to make my kind wise, free, and happy ! How ? •
 Just by making me — as you are mine — their model !
 Geese have goose-thoughts : make a swan their teacher first, then
 coadjutor, —
 Let him introduce swan-notions to each noddle, —
 Geese will soon grow swans, and men become what I am now !

“ That 's the only magic — had but fools discernment,
 Could they probe and pass into the solid through the soft and
 seeming !
 Teach me such true magic — now, and no adjournment !
 Teach your art of making fools subserve the man of mind !
 Magic is the power we men of mind should practise,
 Draw fools to become our drudges — docile henceforth, never
 dreaming —
 While they do our hests for fancied gain — the fact is
 What they toil and moil to get proves falsehood : truth 's be-
 hind !

“ See now ! you conceive some fabric — say, a mansion
 Meet for monarch's pride and pleasure : this is truth — a
 thought has fired you,
 Made you fain to give some cramped concept expansion,
 Put your faculty to proof, fulfil your nature's task.
 First you fascinate the monarch's self : he fancies
 He it was devised the scheme you execute as he inspired you :
 He in turn sets slaving insignificances
 Toiling, moiling till your structure stands there — all you ask !

“ Soon the monarch 's known for what he was — a ninny :
 Soon the rabble-rout leave labor, take their work-day wage and
 vanish :
 Soon the late puffed bladder, pricked, shows lank and skinny —
 ‘ Who was its inflator ? ’ ask we, ‘ whose the giant lungs ? ’
Petri en pulmones ! What though men prove ingrates ?
 Let them — so they stop at crucifixion — buffet, ban and banish !
 Peter's power's apparent : human praise — its din grates
 Harsh as blame on ear unused to aught save angels' tongues.

“ Ay, there have been always, since our world existed,
Mages who possessed the secret — needed but to stand still, fix
eye

On the foolish mortal : straight was he enlisted
Soldier, scholar, servant, slave — no matter for the style !
Only through illusion ; ever what seemed profit —
Love or lucre — justified obedience to the *Iipse dixi* :
Work done — palace reared from pavement up to soffit —
Was it strange if builders smelt out cheating all the while ?

“ Let them pelt and pound, bruise, bray you in a mortar !
What’s the odds to you who seek reward of quite another na-
ture ?

You’ve enrolled your name where sages of your sort are,
— Michael of Constantinople, Hans of Halberstadt !
Nay and were you nameless, still you’ve your conviction
You it was and only you — what signifies the nomenclature ? —
Ruled the world in fact, though how you ruled be fiction
Fit for fools : true wisdom’s magic you — if e’er man — had ’t !

“ But perhaps you ask me, ‘ Since each ignoramus
While he profits by such magic persecutes the benefactor,
What should I expect but — once I render famous
You as Michael, Hans, and Peter — just one ingrate more ?
If the vulgar prove thus, whatsoe’er the pelf be,
Pouched through my beneficence — and doom me dungeoned,
chained, or racked, or
Fairly burned outright — how grateful will yourself be
When, his secret gained, you match your — master just before ?’

“ That’s where I await you ! Please, revert a little !
What do folks report about you if not this — which, though
chimeric,
Still, as figurative, suits you to a tittle —
That, — although the elements obey your nod and wink,
Fades or flowers the herb you chance to smile or sigh at,
While your frown bids earth quake palled by obscuration atmos-
pheric, —
Brief, although through nature naught resists your *fiat*,
There’s yet one poor substance mocks you — milk you may not
drink !

“ Figurative language ! Take my explanation !
Fame with fear, and hate with homage, these your art procures
in plenty.
All’s but daily dry bread : what makes moist the ration ?

Love, the milk that sweetens man his meal — alas, you lack :
 I am he who, since he fears you not, can love you.
 Love is born of heart not mind, *de corde natus haud de mente* ;
 Touch my heart and love 's yours, sure as shines above you
 Sun by day and star by night though earth should go to wrack !

“ Stage by stage you lift me — kiss by kiss I hallow
 Whose but your dear hand my helper, punctual as at each new
 impulse

I approach my aim ? Shell chipped, the eaglet callow
 Needs a parent's pinion-push to quit the eyrie's edge :
 But once fairly launched forth, denizen of ether,
 While each effort sunward bids the blood more freely through
 each limb pulse,
 Sure the parent feels, as gay they soar together,
 Fully are all pains repaid when love redeems its pledge ! ”

Then did Peter's tristful visage lighten somewhat,
 Vent a watery smile as though inveterate mistrust were thawing.
 “ Well, who knows ? ” he slow broke silence. “ Mortals — come
 what

Come there may — are still the dupes of hope there 's luck in
 store.

Many scholars seek me, promise mounts and marvels :
 Here stand I to witness how they step 'twixt me and clapper-
 clawing !

Dry bread, — that I 've gained me : truly I should starve else :
 But of milk, no drop was mine ! Well, shuffle cards once
 more ! ”

At the word of promise thus implied, our stranger —
 What can he but cast his arms, in rapture of embrace, round
 Peter ?

“ Hold ! I choke ! ” the mage grunts. “ Shall I in the manger
 Any longer play the dog ? Approach, my calf, and feed !
Bene . . . won't you wait for grace ? ” But sudden incense
 Wool-white, serpent-solid, curled up — perfume growing sweet
 and sweeter

Till it reached the young man's nose and seemed to win sense
 Soul and all from out his brain through nostril : yes, indeed !

Presently the young man rubbed his eyes. “ Where am I ?
 Too much bother over books ! Some reverie has proved amus-
 ing.

What did Peter prate of ? 'Faith, my brow is clammy !
 How my head throbs, how my heart thumps ! Can it be I
 swooned ?

Oh, I spoke my speech out — cribbed from Plato's tractate,
 Dosed him with 'the Fair and Good,' swore — Dog of Egypt —
 I was choosing
 Plato's way to serve men! What 's the hour? Exact eight!
 Home now, and to-morrow never mind how Plato mooned!

"Peter has the secret! Fair and Good are products
 (So he said) of Foul and Evil: one must bring to pass the other.
 Just as poisons grow drugs, steal through sundry odd ducts
 Doctors name, and ultimately issue safe and changed.
 You'd abolish poisons, treat disease with dainties
 Such as suit the sound and sane? With all such kickshaws
 vain you pother!
 Arsenic's the stuff puts force into the faint eyes,
 Opium sets the brain to rights — by cark and care deranged.

"What, he's safe within door? — would escape — no ques-
 tion —
 Thanks, since thanks and more I owe, and mean to pay in time
 befitting.
 What most presses now is — after night's digestion,
 Peter, of thy precepts! — promptest practice of the same.
 Let me see! The wise man, first of all, scorns riches:
 But to scorn them must obtain them: none believes in his per-
 mitting
 Gold to lie ungathered: who picks up, then pitches
 Gold away — philosophizes: none disputes his claim.

"So with worldly honors: 't is by abdicating,
 Incontestably he proves he could have kept the crown dis-
 carded.
 Sulla cuts a figure, leaving off dictating:
 Simpletons laud private life? 'The grapes are sour,' laugh we.
 So, again — but why continue? All's tumultuous
 Here: my head's a-whirl with knowledge. Speedily shall be
 rewarded
 He who taught me! Greeks prove ingrates? So insult you us?
 When your teaching bears its first-fruits, Peter — wait and see!"

As the word, the deed proved; ere a brief year's passage,
 Fop — that fool he made the jokes on — now he made the jokes
 for, *gratis*:
 Hunks — that hoarder, long left lonely in his crass age —
 Found now one appreciative deferential friend:
 Powder-paint-and-patch, Hag Jezebel — recovered,
 Strange to say, the power to please, got courtship till she cried
Jam satis!

Fop he-flattered, Hunks be-friended, Hag be-lovered —
 Nobody o'erlooked, save God — he soon attained his end.

As he lounged at ease one morning in his villa,
 (Hag's the dowry) estimated (Hunks' bequest) his coin in coffer,
 Mused on how a fool's good word (Fop's word) could fill a
 Social circle with his praise, promote him man of mark, —
 All at once — “An old friend fain would see your Highness!”
 There stood Peter, skeleton and scarecrow, plain writ *Phi-lo-so-*
pher

In the woe-worn face — for yellowness and dryness,
 Parchment — with a pair of eyes — one hope their feeble spark.

“Did I counsel rightly? Have you, in accordance,
 Prospered greatly, dear my pupil? Sure, at just the stage I
 find you,

When your hand may draw me forth from the mad war-dance
 Savages are leading round your master — down, not dead.

Padua wants to burn me: balk them, let me linger

Life out — rueful though its remnant — hid in some safe hole
 behind you!

Prostrate here I lie: quick, help with but a finger

Lest I house in safety's self — a tombstone o'er my head!

“Lodging, bite and sup, with — now and then — a copper
 — Alms for any poorer still, if such there be, — is all my asking.

Take me for your hedesman, — nay, if you think proper,

Menial merely, — such my perfect passion for repose!

Yes, from out your plenty Peter craves a pittance

— Leave to thaw his frozen hands before the fire whereat you're
 basking!

Double though your debt were, grant this boon — remittance

He proclaims of obligation: 't is himself that owes!”

“Venerated Master — can it be, such treatment

Learning meets with, magic fails to guard you from, by all ap-
 pearance?

Strange! for, as you entered, — what the famous feat meant,

I was full of, — why you reared that fabric, Padua's boast.

Nowise for man's pride, man's pleasure, did you slyly

Raise it, hut man's seat of rule whereby the world should soon
 have clearance

(Happy world) from such a rout as now so vilely

Handles you — and hampers me, for which I grieve the most.

“Since if it got wind you now were my familiar,

How could I protect you — nay, defend myself against the rabble?”

Wait until the mob, now masters, willy-nilly are
 Servants as they should be : then has gratitude full play !
 Surely this experience shows how unbefitting
 'T is that minds like mine should rot in ease and plenty. Geese
 may gabble,
 Gorge, and keep the ground : but swans are soon for quitting
 Earthly fare — as fain would I, your swan, if taught the way.

“Teach me, then, to rule men, have them at my pleasure !
 Solely for their good, of course, — impart a secret worth re-
 warding,
 Since the proper life's-prize ! Tantalus's treasure
 Aught beside proves, vanishes, and leaves no trace at all.
 Wait awhile, nor press for payment prematurely !
 Over-haste defrauds you. Thanks ! since, — even while I speak,
 — discarding
 Sloth and vain delights, I learn how — swiftly, surely —
 Magic sways the sceptre, wears the crown and wields the ball !

“Gone again — what, is he ? 'Faith, hé 's soon disposed of !
 Peter's precepts work already, put within my lump their leaven !
 Ay, we needs must don glove would we pluck the rose — doff
 Silken garment would we climb the tree and take its fruit.
 Why sharp thorn, rough rind ? To keep unviolated
 Either prize ! We garland us, we mount from earth to feast in
 heaven,
 Just because exist what once we estimated
 Hindrances which, better taught, as helps we now compute.

“Foolishly I turned disgusted from my fellows !
 Pits of ignorance — to fill, and heaps of prejudice — to level —
 Multitudes in motley, whites and blacks and yellows —
 What a hopeless task it seemed to discipline the host !
 Now I see my error. Vices act like virtues
 — Not alone because they guard — sharp thorns — the rose we
 first dishevel,
 Not because they scrape, scratch — rough rind — through the
 dirt-shoes
 Bare feet cling to bole with, while the half-mooned boot we
 boast.

“No, my aim is nobler, more disinterested !
 Man shall keep what seemed to thwart him, since it proves his
 true assistance,
 Leads to ascertaining which head is the best head,
 Would he crown his body, rule its members — lawless else.
 Ignorant the horse stares, by deficient vision

Takes a man to be a monster, lets him mount, then, twice the
distance

Horse could trot unriden, gallops — dream Elysian ! —
Dreaming that his dwarfish guide 's a giant, — jockeys tell 's."

Brief, so worked the spell, he promptly had a riddance :
Heart and brain no longer felt the pricks which passed for
conscience-scruples :

Free henceforth his feet, — *Per Bacco*, how they did dance
Merrily through lets and checks that stopped the way before !
Politics the prize now, — such adroit adviser,
Opportune suggester, with the tact that triples and quadruples
Merit in each measure, — never did the Kaiser
Boast as subject such a statesman, friend, and something more !

As he, up and down, one noonday, paced his closet
— Council o'er, each spark (his hint) blown flame, by colleagues'
breath applauded,

Strokes of statecraft hailed with "*Salomo si nôsset !*"
(His the nostrum) — every throw for luck come double-six, —
As he, pacing, hugged himself in satisfaction,
Thump — the door went. "What, the Kaiser? By none else
were I defrauded

Thus of well-earned solace. Since 't is fate's exaction, —
Enter, Liege my Lord! Ha, Peter, you here? *Teneor vix !*"

"Ah, Sir, none the less, contain you, nor wax irate!
You so lofty, I so lowly, — vast the space which yawns between
us!

Still, methinks, you — more than ever — at a high rate
Needs must prize poor Peter's secret since it lifts you thus.
Grant me now the boon whereat before you bogged!

Ten long years your march has moved — one triumph —
(though *e*'s short) — *hactēnus*,

While I down and down disastrously have joggled
Till I pitch against Death's door, the true *Nec Ultra Plus*.

"Years ago — some ten 't is — since I sought for shelter,
Craved in your whole house a closet, out of all your means a
comfort.

Now you soar above these : as is gold to spelter
So is power — you urged with reason — paramount to wealth.
Power you boast in plenty : let it grant me refuge !
House-room now is out of question : find for me some stronghold
— some fort —

Privacy wherein, immured, shall this blind deaf huge
Monster of a mob let stay the soul I 'd save by stealth !

“ Ay, for all too much with magic have I tampered !
 — Lost the world, and gained, I fear, a certain place I'm to
 describe loth !

Still, if prayer and fasting tame the pride long pampered,
 Mercy may be mine : amendment never comes too late.
 How can I amend beset by cursers, kickers ?

Pluck this brand from out the burning ! Once away, I take my
 Bible-oath,
 Never more — so long as life's weak lamp-flame flickers —
 No, not once I 'll tease you, but in silence bear my fate ! ”

“ Gently, good my Genius, Oracle unerring !
 Strange now ! can you guess on what — as in you peeped — it
 was I pondered ?

You and I are both of one mind in preferring
 Power to wealth, but — here 's the point — what sort of power,
 I ask ?

Ruling men is vulgar, easy, and ignoble :
 Rid yourself of conscience, quick you have at beck and call the
 fond herd.

But who wields the crozier, down may fling the crow-bill :
 That 's the power I covet now ; soul's sway o'er souls — my task ! •

“ ‘ Well but, ' you object, ' you have it, who by glamour
 Dress up lies to look like truths, mask folly in the garb of
 reason :

Your soul acts on theirs, sure, when the people clamor,
 Hold their peace, now fight now fondle, — earwigged through
 the brains. ’

Possibly ! but still the operation 's mundane,
 Grosser than a taste demands which — craving manna — kecks
 at peason —

Power o'er men by wants material : why should one deign
 Rule by sordid hopes and fears — a grunt for all one's pains ?

“ No, if men must praise me, let them praise to purpose !
 Would we move the world, not earth but heaven must be our
 fulcrum — *pou sto !*

Thus I seek to move it : Master, why intéropse —
 Balk my climbing close on what 's the ladder's topmost round ?
 Statecraft 't is I step from : when by priestcraft hoisted
 Up to where my foot may touch the highest rung which fate
 allows toe,

Then indeed ask favor : On you shall be foisted
 No excuse : I 'll pay my debt, each penny of the pound !

"Ho, my knaves without there! Lead this worthy downstairs!
No farewell, good Paul — nay, Peter — what's your name re-
membered rightly?

Come, he's humble: out another would have flounced — airs
Suitors often give themselves when our sort bow them forth.
Did I touch his rags? He surely kept his distance:
Yet, there somehow passed to me from him — where'er the
virtue might lie —
Something that inspires my soul — Oh, by assistance
Doubtlessly of Peter! — still, he's worth just what he's worth!

"'Tis my own soul soars now: soaring — how? By crawling!
I'll to Rome, before Rome's feet the temporal-supreme lay
prostrate!

'Hands' (I'll say) 'proficient once in pulling, hauling
This and that way men as I was minded — feet now clasp!'
Ay, the Kaiser's self has wrung them in his fervor!
Now — they only sue to slave for Rome, nor at one doit the
cost rate.

Rome's adopted child — no bone, no muscle, nerve or
Sinew of me but I'll strain, though out my life I gasp!"

As he stood one evening proudly — (he had traversed
Rome on horseback — peerless pageant! — claimed the Lateran
as new Pope) —

Thinking "All's attained now! Pontiff! Who could have erst
Dreamed of my advance so far when, some ten years ago,
I embraced devotion, grew from priest to bishop,
Gained the Purple, bribed the Conclave, got the Two-thirds, saw
my coop ope,
Came out — what Rome hails me! O were there a wish-shop,
Not one wish more would I purchase — lord of all below!

"Ha — who dares intrude now — puts aside the arras?
What, old Peter, here again, at such a time, in such a presence?
Satan sends this plague back merely to embarrass
Me who enter on my office — little needing you!
'Faith, I'm touched myself by age, but you look Tithon!
Were it vain to seek of you the sole prize left — rejuvenescence?
Well, since flesh is grass which Time must lay his scythe on,
Say your say and so depart and make no more ado!"

Peter faltered — coughing first by way of prologue —
"Holiness, your help comes late: a death at ninety little matters.
Padua, build poor Peter's pyre now, on log roll log,
Burn away — I've lived my day! Yet here's the sting in
death —

I've an author's pride : I want my Book's survival :
See, I've hid it in my breast to warm me 'mid the rags and tatters !

Save it — tell next age your Master had no rival !

Scholar's debt discharged in full, be 'Thanks' my latest breath !”

“Faugh, the frowsy bundle — scribblings harum-scarum
Scattered o'er a dozen sheepskins! What's the name of this
farrago ?

Ha — ‘*Conciliator Differentiarum*’ —

Man and book may burn together, cause the world no loss !

Stop — what else ? A tractate — eh, ‘*De Speciebus*

Ceremonialis Ma-gi-cæ?’ I dream sure! Hence, away, go,

Wizard, — quick avoid me! Vain you clasp my knee, buss

Hand that bears the Fisher's ring or foot that boasts the Cross !

“Help! The old magician clings like an octopus !

Ah, you rise now — fuming, fretting, frowning, if I read your
features !

Frown, who cares? We're Pope — once Pope, you can't un-
pope us !

Good — you muster up a smile : that's better! Still so brisk ?

All at once grown youthful? But the case is plain! Ass —

Here I dally with the fiend, yet know the Word — compels all
creatures

Earthly, heavenly, hellish. *Apage, Sathanas*

Dicam verbum Salomonis—” “*—dicite!*” When — whisk! —

What was changed ? The stranger gave his eyes a rubbing :

There smiled Peter's face turned back a moment at him o'er the
shoulder,

As the black-door shut, bang! “So he 'scapes a drubbing!”

(Quoth a boy who, unespied, had stopped to hear the talk.)

“That's the way to thank these wizards when they bid men

Benedicite! What ails you? You, a man, and yet no bolder?

Foreign Sir, you look but foolish!” “*Idmen, idmen!*”

Groaned the Greek. “O Peter, cheese at last I know from
chalk!”

Peter lived his life out, menaced yet no martyr,

Knew himself the mighty man he was — such knowledge all his
guerdon,

Left the world a big book — people but in part err

When they style a true *Scientiæ Com-pen-di-um* :

“*Admirationem incutit*” they sourly

Smile, as fast they shut the folio which myself was somehow
spurred on

Once to ope : but love — life's milk which daily, hourly,
Blockheads lap — O Peter, still thy taste of love 's to come !

Greek, was your ambition likewise doomed to failure ?

True, I find no record you wore purple, walked with axe and
fasces,

Played some antipope's part : still, friend, don't turn tail, you 're
Certain, with but these two gifts, to gain earth's prize in time !

Cleverness uncurbed by conscience — if you ransacked
Peter's book you 'd find no potent spell like these to rule the
masses ;

Nor should want example, had I not to transact

Other business. Go your ways, you 'll thrive ! So ends my
rhyme.

When these parts Tiberius — not yet Cæsar — travelled,
Passing Padua, he consulted Padua's Oracle of Geryon
(God three-headed, thrice wise) just to get unravelled
Certain tangles of his future. "Fling at Abano
Golden dice," it answered : "dropt within the fount there,
Note what sum the pips present !" And still we see each die,
the very one,

Turn up, through the crystal, — read the whole account there
Where 't is told by Suetonius, — each its highest throw.

Scarce the sportive fancy-dice I fling show "Venus :"

Still — for love of that dear land which I so oft in dreams re-
visit —

I have — oh, not sung ! but lilted (as — between us —
Grows my lazy custom) this its legend. What the lilt ?



DOCTOR ———

A RABBI told me : On the day allowed
Satan for carping at God's rule, he came,
Fresh from our earth, to brave the angel-crowd.

“ What is the fault now ? ” “ This I find to blame :
Many and various are the tongues below,
Yet all agree in one speech, all proclaim

“ ‘ Hell has no might to match what earth can show :
Death is the strongest-born of Hell, and yet
Stronger than Death is a Bad Wife, we know.’ ”

“ Is it a wonder if I fume and fret —
Robbed of my rights, since Death am I, and mine
The style of Strongest ? Men pay Nature's debt

“ Because they must at my demand ; decline
To pay it henceforth surely men will please,
Provided husbands with bad wives combine

“ To baffle Death. Judge between me and these ! ”
“ Thyself shalt judge. Descend to earth in shape
Of mortal, marry, drain from froth to lees

“ The bitter draught, then see if thou escape
Concluding, with men sorrowful and sage,
A Bad Wife's strength Death's self in vain would ape ! ”

How Satan entered on his pilgrimage,
Conformed himself to earthly ordinance,
Wived and played husband well from youth to age

Intrepidly — I leave untold, advance
Through many a married year until I reach
A day when — of his father's countenance

The very image, like him too in speech
As well as thought and deed, — the union's fruit
Attained maturity. “ I needs must teach

“ My son a trade : but trade, such son to suit,
Needs seeking after. He a man of war ?
Too cowardly ! A lawyer wins repute —

- “Having to toil and moil, though — both which are
Beyond this sluggard. There’s Divinity :
No, that’s my own bread-winner — that be far
- “From my poor offspring! Physic? Ha, we’ll try
If this be practicable. Where’s my wit?
Asleep? — since, now I come to think . . . Ay, ay!
- “Hither, my son! Exactly have I hit
On a profession for thee. *Medicus* —
Behold, thou art appointed! Yea, I spit
- “Upon thine eyes, bestow a virtue thus
That henceforth not this human form I wear
Shalt thou perceive alone, but — one of us
- “By privilege — thy fleshly sight shall bear
Me in my spirit-person as I walk
The world and take my prey appointed there.
- “Doctor once dubbed — what ignorance shall balk
Thy march triumphant? Diagnose the gout
As colic, and prescribe it cheese for chalk —
- “No matter! All’s one: cure shall come about
And win thee wealth — fees paid with such a roar
Of thanks and praise alike from lord and lout
- “As never stunned man’s ears on earth before.
‘How may this be?’ Why, that’s my sceptic! Soon
Truth will corrupt thee, soon thou doubt’st no more!
- “Why is it I bestow on thee the boon
Of recognizing me the while I go
Invisibly among men, morning, noon,
- “And night, from house to house, and — quick or slow —
Take my appointed prey? They summon thee
For help, suppose: obey the summons! so!
- “Enter, look round! Where’s Death? Know — I am he,
Satan who work all evil: I who bring
Pain to the patient in whate’er degree.
- “I, then, am there: first glance thine eye shall fling
Will find me — whether distant or at hand,
As I am free to do my spiriting

“ At such mere first glance thou shalt understand
Wherefore I reach no higher up the room
Than door or window, when my form is scanned.

“ Howe’er friends’ faces please to gather gloom,
Bent o’er the sick, — howe’er himself desponds, —
In such case Death is not the sufferer’s doom.

“ Contrariwise, do friends rejoice my bonds
Are broken, does the captive in his turn
Crow ‘ Life shall conquer ’? Nip these foolish fronds

“ Of hope a-sprout, if haply thou discern
Me at the head — my victim’s head, be sure!
Forth now! This taught thee, little else to learn!”

And forth he went. Folk heard him ask demure,
“ How do you style this ailment? (There he peeps,
My father, through the arras!) Sirs, the cure

“ Is plain as A B C! Experience steeps
Blossoms of pennyroyal half an hour
In sherris. *Sumat!* — Lo, how sound he sleeps —

“ The subject you presumed was past the power
Of Galen to relieve!” Or else, “ How ’s this?
Why call for help so tardily? Clouds lour

“ Portentously indeed, Sirs! (Naught’s amiss:
He’s at the bed-foot merely.) Still, the storm
May pass averted — not by quacks, I wis,

“ Like you, my masters! You, forsooth, perform
A miracle? Stand, sciolists, aside!
Blood, ne’er so cold, at ignorance grows warm!”

Which boasting by result was justified,
Big as might words be: whether drugged or left
Drugless, the patient always lived, not died.

Great the heir’s gratitude, so nigh bereft
Of all he prized in this world: sweet the smile
Of disconcerted rivals: “ Cure? — say, theft

“ From Nature in despite of Art — so style
This off-hand kill-or-cure work! You did much,
I had done more: folk cannot wait awhile!”

But did the case change? was it — “Scarcely such
The symptoms as to warrant our recourse
To your skill, Doctor! Yet since just a touch

“Of pulse, a taste of breath, has all the force
With you of long investigation claimed
By others, — tracks an ailment to its source

“Intuitively, — may we ask unblamed
What from this pimple you prognosticate?”

“Death!” was the answer, as he saw and named

The coucher by the sick man’s head. “Too late
You send for my assistance. I am bold
Only by Nature’s leave, and bow to Fate!

“Besides, you have my rivals: lavish gold!
How comfortably quick shall life depart
Cosseted by attentions manifold!

“One day, one hour ago, perchance my art
Had done some service. Since you have yourselves
Chosen — before the horse — to put the cart,

“Why, Sirs, the sooner that the sexton delves
Your patient’s grave the better! How you stare
— Shallow, for all the deep books on your shelves!

“Fare you well, fumblers!” Do I need declare
What name and fame, what riches recompensed
The Doctor’s practice? Never anywhere

Such an adept as daily evidenced
Each new vaticination! Oh, not he
Like dolts who dallied with their scruples, fenced

With subterfuge, nor gave out frank and free
Something decisive! If he said “I save
The patient,” saved he was: if “Death will be

“His portion,” you might count him dead. Thus brave,
Behold our worthy, sans competitor
Throughout the country, on the architrave

Of Glory’s temple golden-lettered for
Machaon *redivivus*! So, it fell
That, of a sudden, when the Emperor

Was smit by sore disease, I need not tell
 If any other Doctor's aid was sought
 To come and forthwith make the sick Prince well.

“He will reward thee as a monarch ought.
 Not much imports the malady; but then,
 He clings to life and cries like one distraught

“For thee — who, from a simple citizen,
 May'st look to rise in rank, — nay, haply wear
 A medal with his portrait, — always when

“Recovery is quite accomplished. There!
 Pass to the presence!” Hardly has he crossed
 The chamber's threshold when he halts, aware

Of who stands sentry by the head. All's lost.
 “Sire, naught avails my art: you near the goal,
 And end the race by giving up the ghost.”

“How?” cried the monarch: “Names upon your roll
 Of half my subjects rescued by your skill —
 Old and young, rich and poor — crowd cheek by jowl

“And yet no room for mine? Be saved I will!
 Why else am I earth's foremost potentate?
 Add me to these and take as fee your fill

“Of gold — that point admits of no debate
 Between us: save me, as you can and must, —
 Gold, till your gown's pouch cracks beneath the weight!”

This touched the Doctor. “Truly a home-thrust,
 Parent, you will not parry! Have I dared
 Entreat that you forego the meal of dust

“— Man that is snake's meat — when I saw prepared
 Your daily portion? Never! Just this once,
 Go from his head, then, — let his life be spared!”

Whisper met whisper in the gruff response:
 “Fool, I must have my prey: no inch I budge
 From where thou see'st me thus myself ensconce.”

“Ah,” moaned the sufferer, “by thy look I judge
 Wealth fails to tempt thee: what if honors prove
 More efficacious? Naught to him I grudge

• “Who saves me. Only keep my head above
The cloud that’s creeping round it — I’ll divide
My empire with thee! No? What’s left but — love?”

“Does love allure thee? Well then, take as bride
My only daughter, fair beyond belief!
Save me — to-morrow shall the knot be tied!”

“Father, you hear him! Respite ne’er so brief
Is all I beg: go now and come again
Next day, for aught I care: respect the grief

“Mine will be if thy first-born sues in vain!”

“Fool, I must have my prey!” was all he got
In answer. But a fancy crossed his brain.

“I have it! Sire, methinks a meteor shot
Just now across the heavens and neutralized
Jove’s salutary influence: ’neath the blot

“Plumb are you placed now: well that I surmised
The cause of failure! Knaves, reverse the bed!”

“Stay!” groaned the monarch, “I shall be capsized —

“Jolt — jolt — my heels uplift where late my head
Was lying — sure I’m turned right round at last!
What do you say now, Doctor?” Naught he said,

For why? With one brisk leap the Antic passed
From couch-foot back to pillow, — as before,
Lord of the situation. Long aghast

The Doctor gazed, then “Yet one trial more
Is left me” inwardly he uttered. “Shame
Upon thy flinty heart! Do I implore

“This trifling favor in the idle name
Of mercy to the moribund? I plead
The cause of all thou dost affect: my aim

• “Befits my author! Why would I succeed?
Simply that by success I may promote
The growth of thy pet virtues — pride and greed.

“But keep thy favors! — curse thee! I devote
Henceforth my service to the other side.
No time to lose: the rattle’s in his throat.

“So, — not to leave one last resource untried, —
Run to my house with all haste, somebody!
Bring me that knobstick thence, so often plied

“With profit by the astrologer — shall I
Disdain its help, the mystic Jacob’s-Staff?
Sire, do but have the courage not to die

“Till this arrive! Let none of you dare laugh!
Though rugged its exterior, I have seen
That implement work wonders, send the chaff

“Quick and thick flying from the wheat — I mean,
By metaphor, a human sheaf it threshed
Flail-like. Go fetch it! Or — a word between

“Just you and me, friend! — go bid, unabashed,
My mother, whom you’ll find there, bring the stick
Herself — herself, mind!” Out the lackey dashed

Zealous upon the errand. Craft and trick
Are meat and drink to Satan: and he grinned
— How else? — at an excuse so politic

For failure: scarce would Jacob’s-Staff rescind
Fate’s firm decree! And ever as he neared
The agonizing one, his breath like wind

Froze to the marrow, while his eyeflash seared
Sense in the brain up: closelier and more close
Pressing his prey, when at the door appeared

— Who but his Wife the Bad? Whereof one dose,
One grain, one mite of the medicament,
Sufficed him. Up he sprang. One word, too gross

To soil my lips with, — and through ceiling went
Somehow the Husband. “That a storm’s dispersed
We know for certain by the sulphury scent!

“Hail to the Doctor! Who but one so versed
In all Dame Nature’s secrets had prescribed
The staff thus opportunely? Style him first

“And foremost of physicians!” “I’ve imbibed
Elixir surely,” smiled the prince, — “have gained
New lease of life. Dear Doctor, how you bribed

“Death to forego me, boots not : you ’ve obtained
My daughter and her dowry. Death, I ’ve heard,
Was still on earth the strongest power that reigned,

“Except a Bad Wife !” Whereunto demurred
Nowise the Doctor, so refused the fee
— No dowry, no bad wife !

“ You think absurd
This tale ? ” — the Rabbi added : “ True, our Talmud
Boasts sundry such : yet — have our elders erred
In thinking there ’s some water there, not all mud ? ”
I tell it, as the Rabbi told it me.

PAN AND LUNA.

Si credere dignum est. — Georgic. III. 390.

O WORTHY of belief I hold it was,
Virgil, your legend in those strange three lines !
No question, that adventure came to pass
One black night in Arcadia : yes, the pines,
Mountains and valleys mingling made one mass
Of black with void black heaven : the earth’s confines,
The sky’s embrace, — below, above, around,
All hardened into black without a bound.

Fill up a swart stone chalice to the brim
With fresh-squeezed yet fast-thickening poppy-juice :
See how the sluggish jelly, late a-swim,
Turns marble to the touch of who would loose
The solid smooth, grown jet from rim to rim,
By turning round the bowl ! So night can fuse
Earth with her all-comprising sky. No less,
Light, the least spark, shows air and emptiness.

And thus it proved when — diving into space,
Stript of all vapor, from each web of mist
Utterly film-free — entered on her race
The naked Moon, full-orbed antagonist
Of night and dark, night’s dowry : peak to base,
Upstarted mountains, and each valley, kissed
To sudden life, lay silver-bright : in air
Flew she revealed, Maid-Moon with limbs all bare.

Still as she fled, each depth — where refuge seemed —
 Opening a lone pale chamber, left distinct
 Those limbs: 'mid still-retreating blue, she teemed
 Herself with whiteness, — virginal, uncinct
 By any halo save what finely gleamed
 To outline not disguise her: heaven was linked
 In one accord with earth to quaff the joy,
 Drain beauty to the dregs without alloy.

Whereof she grew aware. What help? When, lo,
 A succorable cloud with sleep lay dense:
 Some pinetree-top had caught it sailing slow,
 And tethered for a prize: in evidence
 Captive lay fleece on fleece of piled-up snow
 Drowsily patient: flake-heaped how or whence,
 The structure of that succorable cloud,
 What matter? Shamed she plunged into its shroud.

Orbed — so the woman-figure poets call
 Because of rounds on rounds — that apple-shaped
 Head which its hair binds close into a ball
 Each side the curving ears — that pure undraped
 Pout of the sister paps — that . . . Once for all,
 Say — her consummate circle thus escaped
 With its innumerable circlets, sank absorbed,
 Safe in the cloud — O naked Moon full-orbed!

But what means this? The downy swathes combine,
 Conglobe, the smothery coy-caressing stuff
 Curdles about her! Vain each twist and twine
 Those lithe limbs try, encroached on by a fluff
 Fitting as close as fits the dented spine
 Its flexile ivory outside-flesh: enough!
 The plummy drifts contract, condense, constringe,
 Till she is swallowed by the feathery springe.

As when a pearl slips lost in the thin foam
 Churned on a sea-shore, and, o'er-frothed, conceits
 Herself safe-housed in Amphitrite's dome, —
 If, through the bladdery wave-worked yeast, she meets
 What most she loathes and leaps from, — elf from gnome
 No gladlier, — finds that safest of retreats
 Bubble about a treacherous hand wide ope
 To grasp her — (divers who pick pearls so grope) —

So lay this Maid-Moon clasped around and caught
 By rough red Pan, the god of all that tract:

He it was schemed the snare thus subtly wrought
 With simulated earth-breath, — wool-tufts packed
 Into a billowy wrappage. Sheep far-sought
 For spotless shearings yield such: take the fact
 As learned Virgil gives it, — how the breed
 Whitens itself forever: yes, indeed!

If one forefather ram, though pure as chalk
 From tinge on fleece, should still display a tongue
 Black 'neath the beast's moist palate, prompt men balk
 The propagating plague: he gets no young:
 They rather slay him, — sell his hide to calk
 Ships with, first steeped in pitch, — nor hands are wrung
 In sorrow for his fate: protected thus,
 The purity we love is gained for us.

So did Girl-Moon, by just her attribute
 Of unmatched modesty betrayed, lie trapped,
 Bruised to the breast of Pan, half god half brute,
 Raked by his bristly boar-sward while he lapped
 — Never say, kissed her! that were to pollute
 Love's language — which moreover proves unapt
 To tell how she recoiled — as who finds thorns
 Where she sought flowers — when, feeling, she touched —
 horns!

Then — does the legend say? — first moon-eclipse
 Happened, first swooning-fit which puzzled sore
 The early sages? Is that why she dips
 Into the dark, a minute and no more,
 Only so long as serves her while she rips
 The cloud's womb through and, faultless as before,
 Pursues her way? No lesson for a maid
 Left she, a maid herself thus trapped, betrayed?

Ha, Virgil? Tell the rest, you! “To the deep
 Of his domain the wildwood, Pan forthwith
 Called her, and so she followed” — in her sleep,
 Surely? — “by no means spurning him.” The myth
 Explain who may! Let all else go, I keep
 — As of a ruin just a monolith —
 Thus much, one verse of five words, each a boon:
 Arcadia, night, a cloud, Pan, and the moon.

“TOUCH him ne'er so lightly, into song he broke :
Soil so quick-receptive, — not one feather-seed,
Not one flower-dust fell but straight its fall awoke
Vitalizing virtue : song would song succeed
Sudden as spontaneous — prove a poet-soul !”

Indeed ?

Rock 's the song-soil rather, surface hard and bare :
Sun and dew their mildness, storm and frost their rage
Vainly both expend, — few flowers awaken there :
Quiet in its cleft broods — what the after-age
Knows and names a pine, a nation's heritage.

JOCOSERIA

[1883]

WANTING IS — WHAT ?

WANTING is — what ?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant,
— Where is the blot ?
Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
— Framework which waits for a picture to frame :
What of the leafage, what of the flower ?
Roses embowering with naught they embower !
Come then, complete incomplection, O comer,
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer !
Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love !

DONALD.

“ WILL you hear my story also,
— Huge Sport, brave adventure in plenty ? ”
The boys were a band from Oxford,
The oldest of whom was twenty.

The bothy we held carouse in
Was bright with fire and candle ;
Tale followed tale like a merry-go-round
Whereof Sport turned the handle.

In our eyes and noses — turf-smoke :
In our ears a tune from the trivet,
Whence “ Boiling, boiling,” the kettle sang,
“ And ready for fresh Glenlivet.”

So, feat capped feat, with a vengeance :
 Truths, though, — the lads were loyal :
 “ Grouse, five-score brace to the bag !
 Deer, ten hours' stalk of the Royal ! ”

Of boasting, not one bit, boys !
 Only there seemed to settle
 Somehow above your curly heads,
 — Plain through the singing kettle,

Palpable through the cloud,
 As each new-puffed Havana
 Rewarded the teller's well-told tale, —
 This vaunt “ To Sport — Hosanna ! ”

“ Hunt, fish, shoot,
 Would a man fulfil life's duty !
 Not to the bodily frame alone
 Does Sport give strength and beauty,

“ But character gains in — courage ?
 Ay, Sir, and much beside it !
 You don't sport, more 's the pity :
 You soon would find, if you tried it,

“ Good sportsman means good fellow,
 Sound-hearted he, to the centre ;
 Your mealy-mouthed mild milksops
 — There 's where the rot can enter ! ”

“ There 's where the dirt will breed,
 The shabbiness Sport would banish !
 Oh no, Sir, no ! In your honored case
 All such objections vanish.

“ 'T is known how hard you studied :
 A Double-First — what, the jigger !
 Give me but half your Latin and Greek,
 I 'll never again touch trigger ! ”

“ Still, tastes are tastes, allow me !
 Allow, too, where there 's keenness
 For Sport, there 's little likelihood
 Of a man's displaying meanness ! ”

So, put on my mettle, I interposed.
 “ Will you hear my story ? ” quoth I.

“Never mind how long since it happed,
I sat, as we sit, in a bothy ;

“With as merry a band of mates, too,
Undergrads all on a level :
(One 's a Bishop, one 's gone to the Bench,
And one 's gone — well, to the Devil.)

“When, lo, a scratching and tapping !
In hobbled a ghastly visitor.
Listen to just what he told us himself
— No need of our playing inquisitor !”

Do you happen to know in Ross-shire
Mount Ben . . . but the name scarce matters :
Of the naked fact I am sure enough,
Though I clothe it in rags and tatters.

You may recognize Ben by description ;
Behind him — a moor's immenseness :
Up goes the middle mount of a range,
Fringed with its firs in denseness.

Rimming the edge, its fir-fringe, mind !
For an edge there is, though narrow ;
From end to end of the range, a stripe
Of path runs straight as an arrow.

And the mountaineer who takes that path
Saves himself miles of journey
He has to plod if he crosses the moor
Through heather, peat, and burnie.

But a mountaineer he needs must be,
For, look you, right in the middle
Projects bluff Ben — with an end in *ich* —
Why planted there, is a riddle :

Since all Ben's brothers little and big
Keep rank, set shoulder to shoulder,
And only this burliest out must bulge
Till it seems — to the beholder

From down in the gully, — as if Ben's breast,
To a sudden spike diminished,

Would signify to the boldest foot
 "All further passage finished!"

Yet the mountaineer who sidles on
 And on to the very bending,
 Discovers, if heart and brain be proof,
 No necessary ending.

Foot up, foot down, to the turn abrupt
 Having trod, he, there arriving,
 Finds — what he took for a point was breadth,
 A mercy of Nature's contriving.

So, he rounds what, when 't is reached, proves straight,
 From one side gains the other:
 The wee path widens — resume the march,
 And he foils you, Ben my brother!

But Donald — (that name, I hope, will do) —
 I wrong him if I call "foiling"
 The tramp of the callant, whistling the while
 As blithe as our kettle's boiling.

He had dared the danger from boyhood up,
 And now, — when perchance was waiting
 A lass at the brig below, — 'twixt mount
 And moor would he stand debating?

Moreover this Donald was twenty-five,
 A glory of bone and muscle:
 Did a fiend dispute the right of way,
 Donald would try a tussle.

Lightsomely marched he out of the broad
 On to the narrow and narrow;
 A step more, rounding the angular rock,
 Reached the front straight as an arrow.

He stepped it, safe on the ledge he stood,
 When — whom found he full-facing?
 What fellow in courage and wariness too,
 Had scouted ignoble pacing,

And left low safety to timid mates,
 And made for the dread dear danger,
 And gained the height where — who could guess
 He would meet with a rival ranger?

'T was a gold-red stag that stood and stared,
 Gigantic and magnific,
 By the wonder — ay, and the peril — struck
 Intelligent and pacific :

For a red deer is no fallow deer
 Grown cowardly through park-feeding ;
 He batters you like a thunderbolt
 If you brave his haunts unheeding.

I doubt he could hardly perform *volte-face*
 Had valor advised discretion :
 You may walk on a rope, but to turn on a rope
 No Blondin makes profession.

Yet Donald must turn, would pride permit,
 Though pride ill brooks retiring :
 Each eyed each — mute man, motionless beast —
 Less fearing than admiring.

These are the moments when quite new sense,
 To meet some need as novel,
 Springs up in the brain : it inspired resource :
 — “ Nor advance nor retreat but — grovel ! ”

And slowly, surely, never a whit
 Relaxing the steady tension
 Of eye-stare which binds man to beast, —
 By an inch and inch declension,

Sank Donald sidewise down and down :
 Till flat, breast upwards, lying
 At his six-foot length, no corpse more still,
 — “ If he cross me ! The trick 's worth trying.”

Minutes were an eternity ;
 But a new sense was created
 In the stag's brain too ; he resolves ! Slow, sure,
 With eye-stare unabated,

Feelingly he extends a foot
 Which tastes the way ere it touches
 Earth's solid and just escapes man's soft,
 Nor hold of the same unclutches

Till its fellow foot, light as a feather whisk,
 Lands itself no less finely :

So a mother removes a fly from the face
Of her babe asleep supinely.

And now 'tis the haunch and hind-foot's turn
— That's hard : can the beast quite raise it?
Yes, traversing half the prostrate length,
His hoof-tip does not graze it.

Just one more lift! But Donald, you see,
Was sportsman first, man after :
A fancy lightened his caution through,
— He wellnigh broke into laughter :

“It were nothing short of a miracle!
Unrivalled, unexampled —
All sporting feats with this feat matched
Were down and dead and trampled !”

The last of the legs as tenderly
Follows the rest : or never
Or now is the time! His knife in reach,
And his right-hand loose — how clever!

For this can stab up the stomach's soft,
While the left-hand grasps the pastern.
A rise on the elbow, and — now 's the time
Or never : this turn 's the last turn!

I shall dare to place myself by God
Who scanned — for He does — each feature
Of the face thrown up in appeal to Him
By the agonizing creature.

Nay, I hear plain words : “Thy gift brings this!”
Up he sprang, back he staggered,
Over he fell, and with him our friend
— At following game no laggard.

Yet he was not dead when they picked next day
From the gully's depth the wreck of him ;
His fall had been stayed by the stag beneath
Who cushioned and saved the neck of him.

But the rest of his body — why, doctors said,
Whatever could break was broken ;
Legs, arms, ribs, all of him looked like a toast
In a tumbler of port-wine soaken.

“That your life is left you, thank the stag !”
 Said they when — the slow cure ended —
 They opened the hospital-door, and thence
 — Strapped, spliced, main fractures mended,

And minor damage left wisely alone, —
 Like an old shoe clouted and cobbled,
 Out — what went in a Goliath wellnigh, —
 Some half of a David hobbled.

“ You must ask an alms from house to house :
 Sell the stag’s head for a bracket,
 With its grand twelve tines — I ’d buy it myself —
 And use the skin for a jacket !”

He was wiser, made both head and hide
 His win-penny : hands and knees on,
 Would manage to crawl — poor crab — by the roads
 In the misty stalking-season.

And if he discovered a bothy like this,
 Why, harvest was sure : folk listened.
 He told his tale to the lovers of Sport :
 Lips twitched, cheeks glowed, eyes glistened.

And when he had come to the close, and spread
 His spoils for the gazers’ wonder,
 With “ Gentlemen, here ’s the skull of the stag
 I was over, thank God, not under !” —

The company broke out in applause ;
 “ By Jingo, a lucky cripple !
 Have a munch of grouse and a hunk of bread,
 And a tug, besides, at our tippie !”

And “ There ’s my pay for your pluck !” cried This,
 “ And mine for your jolly story !”
 Cried That, while T’ other — but he was drunk —
 Hiccapped “ A trump, a Tory !”

I hope I gave twice as much as the rest ;
 For, as Homer would say, “ within grate
 Though teeth kept tongue,” my whole soul growled,
 “ Rightly rewarded, — Ingrate !”

SOLOMON AND BALKIS.

SOLOMON King of the Jews and the Queen of Sheba, Balkis,
Talk on the ivory throne, and we well may conjecture their talk
is
Solely of things sublime : why else has she sought Mount Zion,
Climbed the six golden steps, and sat betwixt lion and lion ?

She proves him with hard questions : before she has reached the
middle
He smiling supplies the end, straight solves them riddle by
riddle ;
Until, dead-beaten at last, there is left no spirit in her,
And thus would she close the game whereof she was first begin-
ner :

“ O wisest thou of the wise, world’s marvel and wellnigh monster,
One crabbed question more to construe or *vulgo* conster !
Who are those, of all mankind, a monarch of perfect wisdom
Should open to, when they knock at *spheteron do* — that’s, his
dome ? ”

The King makes tart reply : “ Whom else but the wise his equals
Should he welcome with heart and voice ? — since, king though
he be, such weak walls
Of circumstance — power and pomp — divide souls each from
other
That whoso proves kingly in craft I needs must acknowledge
my brother.

“ Come poet, come painter, come sculptor, come builder — what-
e’er his condition,
Is he prime in his art ? We are peers ! My insight has pierced
the partition
And hails — for the poem, the picture, the statue, the building
— my fellow !
Gold’s gold though dim in the dust : court-polish soon turns it
yellow.

“ But tell me in turn, O thou to thy weakling sex superior,
That for knowledge hast travelled so far yet seemest no whit the
wearer, —
Who are those, of all mankind, a queen like thyself, consummate
In wisdom, should call to her side with an affable ‘ Up hither,
come, mate ’ ? ”

"The Good are my mates — how else? Why doubt it?" the Queen upbridled:

"Sure even above the Wise, — or in travel my eyes have idled, —

I see the Good stand plain: be they rich, poor, shrewd, or simple,

If Good they only are. . . . Permit me to drop my wimple!"

And, in that bashful jerk of her body, she — peace, thou scoffer! —

Jostled the King's right-hand stretched courteously help to proffer,

And so disclosed a portent: all unaware the Prince eyed
The Ring which bore the Name — turned outside now from inside!

The truth-compelling Name! — and at once, "I greet the Wise — oh,

Certainly welcome such to my court — with this proviso:

The building must be my temple, my person stand forth the statue,

The picture my portrait prove, and the poem my praise — you cat, you!"

But Solomon nonplussed? Nay! "Be truthful in turn!" so bade he:

"See the Name, obey its hest!" And at once subjoins the lady, — "Provided the Good are the young, men strong and tall and proper,

Such servants I straightway enlist, — which means" . . . But the blushes stop her.

"Ah, Soul," the Monarch sighed, "that would'st soar yet ever crawlst,

How comes it thou canst discern the greatest yet choose the smallest,

Unless because heaven is far, where wings find fit expansion,

While creeping on all-fours suits, suffices the earthly mansion?

"Aspire to the Best! But which? There are Bests and Bests so many,

With a *habitat* each for each, earth's Best as much Best as any!

On Lebanon roots the cedar — soil lofty, yet stony and sandy —

While hyssop, of worth in its way, on the wall grows low but handy.

“ Above may the Soul spread wing, spurn body and sense beneath her ;
 Below she must condescend to plodding unbuoyed by ether.
 In heaven I yearn for knowledge, account all else inanity ;
 On earth I confess an itch for the praise of fools — that’s
 Vanity.

“ It is naught, it will go, it can never presume above to trouble
 me ;
 But here, — why, it toys and tickles and teases, howe’er I re-
 double me
 In a doggedest of endeavors to play the indifferent. Therefore,
 Suppose we resume discourse? Thou hast travelled thus far :
 but wherefore ?

“ Solely for Solomon’s sake, to see whom earth styles Sagest ? ”
 Through her blushes laughed the Queen. “ For the sake of a
 Sage? The gay jest!
 On high, be communion with Mind — there, Body concerns not
 Balkis :
 Down here, — do I make too bold? Sage Solomon, — one fool’s
 small kiss ! ”

CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI.

AH, but how each loved each, Marquis !
 Here’s the gallery they trod
 Both together, he her god,
 She his idol, — lend your rod,
 Chamberlain ! — ay, there they are — “ *Quis*
Separabit? ” — plain those two
 Touching words come into view,
 Apposite for me and you :

Since they witness to incessant
 Love like ours : King Francis, he —
 Diane the adored one, she —
 Prototypes of you and me.
 Everywhere is carved her Crescent
 With his Salamander-sign —
 Flame-fed creature : flame benign
 To itself or, if malign,

Only to the meddling curious,
 — So, be warned, Sir! Where’s my head ?

How it wanders ! What I said
 Merely meant — the creature, fed
 Thus on flame, was scarce injurious
 Save to fools who woke its ire,
 Thinking fit to play with fire.
 'T is the Crescent you admire ?

Then, be Diane ! I'll be Francis.
 Crescents change, — true ! — wax and wane,
 Woman-like : male hearts retain
 Heat nor, once warm, cool again.
 So, we figure — such our chance is —
 I as man and you as . . . What ?
 Take offence ? My Love forgot
 He plays woman, I do not ?

I — the woman ? See my habit,
 Ask my people ! Anyhow,
 Be we what we may, one vow
 Binds us, male or female. Now, —
 Stand, Sir ! Read ! “ *Quis separabit ?* ”
 Half a mile of pictured way
 Past these palace-walls to-day
 Traversed, this I came to say.

You must needs begin to love me ;
 First I hated, then, at best,
 — Have it so ! — I acquiesced ;
 Pure compassion did the rest.
 From below thus raised above me,
 Would you, step by step, descend,
 Pity me, become my friend,
 Like me, like less, loathe at end ?

That's the ladder's round you rose by !
 That — my own foot kicked away,
 Having raised you : let it stay,
 Serve you for retreating ? Nay.
 Close to me you climbed : as close by,
 Keep your station, though the peak
 Reached proves somewhat bare and bleak !
 Woman's strong if man is weak.

Keep here, loving me forever !
 Love's look, gesture, speech, I claim :
 Act love, lie love, all the same —

Play as earnest were our game !
 Lonely I stood long : 't was clever
 When you climbed, before men's eyes,
 Spurned the earth and scaled the skies,
 Gained my peak and grasped your prize.

Here you stood, then, to men's wonder ;
 Here you tire of standing ? Kneel !
 Cure what giddiness you feel,
 This way ! Do your senses reel ?
 Not unlikely ! What rolls under ?
 Yawning death in yon abyss
 Where the waters whirl and hiss
 Round more frightful peaks than this.

Should my buffet dash you thither . . .
 But be sage ! No watery grave
 Needs await you : seeming brave
 Kneel on safe, dear timid slave !
 You surmised, when you climbed hither,
 Just as easy were retreat
 Should you tire, conceive unmeet
 Longer patience at my feet ?

Me as standing, you as stooping, —
 Who arranged for each the pose ?
 Lest men think us friends turned foes,
 Keep the attitude you chose !
 Men are used to this same grouping —
 I and you like statues seen.
 You and I, no third between,
 Kneel and stand ! That makes the scene.

Mar it — and one buffet . . . Pardon !
 Needless warmth — wise words in waste !
 'T was prostration that replaced
 Kneeling, then ? A proof of taste.
 Crouch, not kneel, while I mount guard on
 Prostrate love — become no waif,
 No stray to waves that chafe
 Disappointed — love so safe !

Waves that chafe ? The idlest fancy !
 Peaks that scare ? I think we know
 Walls enclose our sculpture : so
 Grouped, we pose in Fontainebleau.

Up now! Wherefore hesitancy?
 Arm in arm and cheek by cheek,
 Laugh with me at waves and peak!
 Silent still? Why, pictures speak.

See, where Juno strikes Ixion,
 Primatice speaks plainly! Pooh —
 Rather, Florentine Le Roux!
 I've lost head for who is who —

So it swims and wanders! Fie on
 What still proves me female! Here,
 By the staircase! — for we near
 That dark "Gallery of the Deer."

Look me in the eyes once! Steady!
 Are you faithful now as erst
 On that eve when we two first
 Vowed at Avon, blessed and cursed
 Faith and falsehood? Pale already?
 Forward! Must my hand compel
 Entrance — this way? Exit — well,
 Somehow, somewhere. Who can tell?

What if to the selfsame place in
 Rustic Avon, at the door
 Of the village church once more,
 Where a tombstone paves the floor
 By that holy-water basin
 You appealed to — "As, below,
 This stone hides its corpse, e'en so
 I your secrets hide"? What ho!

Friends, my four! You, Priest, confess him!
 I have judged the culprit there:
 Execute my sentence! Care
 For no mail such cowards wear!
 Done, Priest? Then, absolve and bless him!
 Now — you three, stab thick and fast,
 Deep and deeper! Dead at last?
 Thanks, friends — Father, thanks! Aghast?

What one word of his confession
 Would you tell me, though I lured
 With that royal crown abjured
 Just because its bars immured

Love too much? Love burst compression,
 Fled free, finally confessed
 All its secrets to that breast
 Whence . . . let Avon tell the rest!

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND FUSELL

O BUT is it not hard, Dear?

Mine are the nerves to quake at a mouse :
 If a spider drops I shrink with fear :
 I should die outright in a haunted house ;
 While for you — did the danger dared bring help —
 From a lion's den I could steal his whelp,
 With a serpent round me, stand stock-still,
 Go sleep in a churchyard, — so would will
 Give me the power to dare and do
 Valiantly — just for you !

Much amiss in the head, Dear,

I toil at a language, tax my brain
 Attempting to draw — the scratches here !
 I play, play, practise, and all in vain :
 But for you — if my triumph brought you pride,
 I would grapple with Greek Plays till I died,
 Paint a portrait of you — who can tell?
 Work my fingers off for your " Pretty well :"
 Language and painting and music too,
 Easily done — for you !

Strong and fierce in the heart, Dear,

With — more than a will — what seems a power
 To pounce on my prey, love outbroke here
 In flame devouring and to devour.
 Such love has labored its best and worst
 To win me a lover ; yet, last as first,
 I have not quickened his pulse one beat,
 Fixed a moment's fancy, bitter or sweet :
 Yet the strong fierce heart's love 's labor's due,
 Utterly lost, was — you !

ADAM, LILITH, AND EVE.

ONE day, it thundered and lightened.
 Two women, fairly frightened,
 Sank to their knees, transformed, transfixed,
 At the feet of the man who sat betwixt ;
 And " Mercy ! " cried each — " if I tell the truth
 Of a passage in my youth ! "

Said This : " Do you mind the morning
 I met your love with scorning ?
 As the worst of the venom left my lips,
 I thought, ' If, despite this lie, he strips
 The mask from my soul with a kiss — I crawl
 His slave, — soul, body, and all ! ' "

Said That : " We stood to be married ;
 The priest, or someone, tarried ;
 ' If Paradise-door prove locked ? ' smiled you.
 I thought, as I nodded, smiling too,
 ' Did one, that 's away, arrive — nor late
 Nor soon should unlock Hell's gate ! ' "

It ceased to lighten and thunder.
 Up started both in wonder,
 Looked round and saw that the sky was clear,
 Then laughed " Confess you believed us, Dear ! "
 " I saw through the joke ! " the man replied.
 They re-seated themselves beside.

IXION.

HIGH in the dome, suspended, of Hell, sad triumph, behold us !
 Here the revenge of a God, there the amends of a Man.
 Whirling forever in torment, flesh once mortal, immortal
 Made — for a purpose of hate — able to die and revive.
 Pays to the uttermost pang, then, newly for payment replenished,
 Doles out — old yet young — agonies ever afresh ;
 Whence the result above me : torment is bridged by a rainbow, —
 Tears, sweat, blood, — each spasm, ghastly once, glorified now.
 Wrung, by the rush of the wheel ordained my place of reposing,
 Off in a sparklike spray, — flesh become vapor through pain, —
 Flies the bestowment of Zeus, soul's vaunted bodily vesture,
 Made that his feats observed gain the approval of Man, —

Flesh that he fashioned with sense of the earth and the sky and
the ocean,

Framed should pierce to the star, fitted to pore on the plant, —
All, for a purpose of hate, re-framed, re-fashioned, refitted,

Till, consummate at length, — lo, the employment of sense!
Pain's mere minister now to the soul, once pledged to her
pleasure —

Soul, if untrammelled by flesh, unapprehensive of pain!
Body, professed soul's slave, which serving beguiled and betrayed
her,

Made things false seem true, cheated through eye and through
ear,

Lured thus heart and brain to believe in the lying reported, —

Spurn but the trait'rous slave, uttermost atom, away,

What should obstruct soul's rush on the real, the only apparent?

Say I have erred, — how else? Was I Ixion or Zeus?

Foiled by my senses I dreamed; I doubtless awaken in wonder:

This proves shine, that — shade? Good was the evil that
seemed?

Shall I, with sight thus gained, by torture be taught I was blind
once?

Sisuphos, teaches thy stone — Tantalos, teaches thy thirst
Aught which unaided sense, purged pure, less plainly demon-
strates?

No, for the past was dream: now that the dreamers awake,
Sisuphos scouts low fraud, and to Tantalos treason is folly.

Ask of myself, whose form melts on the murderous wheel,

What is the sin which throe and throe prove sin to the sinner!

Say the false charge was true, — thus do I expiate, say,

Arrogant thought, word, deed, — mere man who conceited me
godlike,

Sat beside Zeus, my friend — knelt before Heré, my love!

What were the need but of pitying power to touch and disperse
it,

Film-work — eye's and ear's — all the distraction of sense?

How should the soul not see, not hear, — perceive and as plainly

Render, in thought, word, deed, back again truth — not a
- lie?

“Ay, but the pain is to punish thee!” Zeus, once more for a
pastime,

Play the familiar, the frank! Speak and have speech in
return!

I was of Thessaly king, there ruled and a people obeyed me:

Mine to establish the law, theirs to obey it or die:

Wherefore? Because of the good to the people, because of the
honor

Thence accruing to me, king, the king's law was supreme.
 What of the weakling, the ignorant criminal? Not who,
 excuseless,

Breaking my law braved death, knowing his deed and its
 due —

Nay, but the feeble and foolish, the poor transgressor, of purpose
 No whit more than a tree, born to erectness of bole,
 Palm or plane or pine, we laud if lofty, columnar —

Loathe if athwart, askew, — leave to the axe and the flame!
 Where is the vision may penetrate earth and beholding acknowl-
 edge

Just one pebble at root ruined the straightness of stem?
 Whose fine vigilance follows the sapling, accounts for the failure,
 — Here blew wind, so it bent: there the snow lodged, so it
 broke?

Also the tooth of the beast, bird's bill, mere bite of the insect
 Gnawed, gnarled, warped their worst: passive it lay to
 offence.

King — I was man, no more: what I recognized faulty I pun-
 ished,

Laying it prone: be sure, more than a man had I proved,
 Watch and ward o'er the sapling at birthtime had saved it, nor
 simply

Owined the distortion's excuse, — hindered it wholly: nay,
 more —

Even a man, as I sat in my place to do judgment, and pallid
 Criminals passing to doom shuddered away at my foot,
 Could I have probed through the face to the heart, read plain a
 repentance,

Crime confessed fools' play, virtue ascribed to the wise,
 Had I not stayed the consignment to doom, not dealt the re-
 newed ones

Life to retrace the past, light to retrieve the misdeed?
 Thus had I done, and thus to have done much more it behoves
 thee,

Zeus who madest man — flawless or faulty, thy work!
 What if the charge were true, as thou moutheest, — Ixion the
 cherished

Minion of Zeus grew vain, vied with the godships and fell,
 Forfeit through arrogance? Stranger! I clothed, with the grace
 of our human,

Inhumanity — gods, natures I likened to ours.
 Man among men I had borne me till gods forsooth must regard
 me

— Nay, must approve, applaud, claim as a comrade at last.
 Summoned to enter their circle, I sat — their equal, how other?

Love should be absolute love, faith is in fulness or naught.
 "I am thy friend, be mine!" smiled Zeus: "If Heré attract thee,"
 Blushed the imperial cheek, "then — as thy heart may suggest!"
 Faith in me sprang to the faith, my love hailed love as its fellow,
 "Zeus, we are friends — how fast! Heré, my heart for thy heart!"
 Then broke smile into fury of frown, and the thunder of "Hence, fool!"
 Then through the kiss laughed scorn "Limbs or a cloud was to clasp?"
 Then from Olumpos to Erebos, then from the rapture to torment,
 Then from the fellow of gods — misery's mate, to the man!
 — Man henceforth and forever, who lent from the glow of his nature
 Warmth to the cold, with light colored the black and the blank.
 So did a man conceive of your passion, you passion-protesters!
 So did he trust, so love — being the truth of your lie!
 You to aspire to be Man! Man made you who vainly would ape him:
 You are the hollowness, he — filling you, falsifies void.
 Even as — witness the emblem, Hell's sad triumph suspended,
 Born of my tears, sweat, blood — bursting to vapor above —
 Arching my torment, an iris ghostlike startles the darkness,
 Cold white — jewelry quenched — justifies, glorifies pain.
 Strive, my kind, though strife endure through endless obstruction,
 Stage after stage, each rise marred by as certain a fall!
 Baffled forever — yet never so baffled but, e'en in the baffling,
 When Man's strength proves weak, checked in the body or soul,
 Whatsoever the medium, flesh or essence, — Ixion's
 Made for a purpose of hate, — clothing the entity Thou,
 — Medium whence that entity strives for the Not-Thou beyond it,
 Fire elemental, free, frame unencumbered, the All, —
 Never so baffled but — when, on the verge of an alien existence,
 Heartened to press, by pangs burst to the infinite Pure,
 Nothing is reached but the ancient weakness still that arrests strength,
 Circumambient still, still the poor human array,
 Pride and revenge and hate and cruelty — all it has burst through,
 Thought to escape, — fresh formed, found in the fashion it fled,

Never so baffled but — when Man pays the price of endeavor,
 Thunderstruck, downthrust, Tartaros-doomed to the wheel, —
 Then, ay, then, from the tears and sweat and blood of his torment,
 E'en from the triumph of Hell, up let him look and rejoice!
 What is the influence, high o'er Hell, that turns to a rapture
 Pain — and despair's murk mists blends in a rainbow of
 hope?
 What is beyond the obstruction, stage by stage though it baffle?
 Back must I fall, confess "Ever the weakness I fled" ?
 No, for beyond, far, far is a Purity all-unobstructed!
 Zeus was Zeus — not Man: wrecked by his weakness, I whirl.
 Out of the wreck I rise — past Zeus to the Potency o'er him!
 I — to have hailed him my friend! I — to have clasped her
 — my love!
 Pallid birth of my pain, — where light, where light is, aspiring
 Thither I rise, whilst thou — Zeus, keep the godship and sink!

- JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH.

"THIS now, this other story makes amends
 And justifies our Mishna," quoth the Jew
 Aforesaid. "Tell it, learnedest of friends!"

—————

A certain morn broke beautiful and blue
 O'er Schiphaz city, bringing joy and mirth,
 — So had ye deemed; while the reverse was true,

Since one small house there gave a sorrow birth
 In such black sort that, to each faithful eye,
 Midnight, not morning settled on the earth.

ow else, when it grew certain thou wouldst die,
 ur much-enlightened master, Israel's prop,
 Eximious Jochanan Ben Sabbathai?

Old, yea, but, undiminished of a drop,
 The vital essence pulsed through heart and brain;
 Time left unsickled yet the plenteous crop

On poll and chin and cheek, whereof a skein
 Handmaids might weave — hairs silk-soft, silver-white,
 Such as the wool-plant's; none the less in vain

Had Physic striven her best against the spite
Of fell disease : the Rabbi must succumb ; -
And, round the couch whereon in piteous plight

He lay a-dying, scholars, — awe-struck, dumb
Throughout the night-watch, — roused themselves and spoke
One to the other : “ Ere death’s touch benumb

“ His active sense, — while yet ‘neath Reason’s yoke
Obedient toils his tongue, — befits we claim
The fruit of long experience, bid this oak ·

“ Shed us an acorn which may, all the same,
Grow to a temple-pillar, — dear that day ! —
When Israel’s scattered seed finds place and name

“ Among the envious nations. Lamp us, pray,
Thou the Enlightener ! Partest hence in peace ?
Hailest without regret — much less, dismay —

“ The hour of thine approximate release
From fleshly bondage soul hath found obstruct ?
Calmly envisagest the sure increase

“ Of knowledge ? Eden’s tree must hold unplucked
Some apple, sure, has never tried thy tooth,
Juicy with sapience thou hast sought, not sucked ?

“ Say, does age acquiesce in vanished youth ?
Still towers thy purity above — as erst —
Our pleasant follies ? Be thy last word — truth ! ”

The Rabbi groaned ; then, grimly, “ Last as first
The truth speak I — in boyhood who began
Striving to live an angel, and, amerced

“ For such presumption, die now hardly man.
What have I proved of life ? To live, indeed,
That much I learned : but here lies Jochanan

“ More luckless than stood David when, to speed
His fighting with the Philistine, they brought
Saul’s harness forth : whereat, ‘ Alack, I need

“ Armor to arm me, but have never fought
With sword and spear, nor tried to manage shield,
Proving arms’ use, as well-trained warrior ought.

- “ Only a sling and pebbles can I wield !
 So he : while I, contrariwise, ‘ No trick
 Of weapon helpful on the battlefield
- “ Comes unfamiliar to my theoretic :
 But, bid me put in practice what I know,
 Give me a sword — it stings like Moses’ stick,
- “ ‘ A serpent I let drop apace.’ E’en so,
 I, — able to comport me at each stage
 Of human life as never here below
- “ Man played his part, — since mine the heritage
 Of wisdom carried to that perfect pitch,
 Ye rightly praise, — I, therefore, who, thus sage,
- “ Could sure act man triumphantly, enrich
 Life’s annals with example how I played
 Lover, Bard, Soldier, Statist, — (all of which
- “ Parts in presentment failing, cries invade
 The world’s ear — ‘ Ah, the Past, the pearl-gift thrown
 To hogs, time’s opportunity we made
- “ ‘ So light of, only recognized when flown !
 Had we been wise ! ’) — in fine, I — wise enough, —
 What profit brings me wisdom never shown
- “ Just when its showing would from each rebuff
 Shelter weak virtue, threaten back to bounds
 Encroaching vice, tread smooth each track too rough
- “ For youth’s unsteady footstep, climb the rounds
 Of life’s long ladder, one by slippery one,
 Yet make no stumble ? Me hard fate confounds
- “ With that same crowd of wailers I outrun
 By promising to teach another cry
 Of more hilarious mood than theirs, the sun
- “ I look my last at is insulted by.
 What cry, — ye ask ? Give ear on every side !
 Witness yon Lover ! ‘ How entrapped am I !
- “ ‘ Methought, because a virgin’s rose-lip vied
 With ripe Khubbezleh’s, needs must beauty mate
 With meekness and discretion in a bride :

“ ‘Bride she became to me who wail — too late —
Unwise I loved! ’ That’s one cry. ‘Mind’s my gift:
 I might have loaded me with lore, full weight

“ ‘Pressed down and running over at each rift
 O’ the brain-bag where the famished clung and fed.
 I filled it with what rubbish! — would not sift

“ ‘The wheat from chaff, sound grain from musty — shed
 Poison abroad as oft as nutriment —
 And sighing say but as my fellows said,

“ ‘*Unwise I learned!* ’ That’s two. ‘In dwarf’s-play spent
 Was giant’s prowess: warrior all unversed
 In war’s right waging, I struck brand, was lent

“ ‘For steel’s fit service, on mere stone — and cursed
 Alike the shocked limb and the shivered steel,
 Seeing too late the blade’s true use which erst

“ ‘How was I blind to! My cry swells the peal —
Unwise I fought! ’ That’s three. But wherefore waste
 Breath on the wailings longer? Why reveal

“ ‘A root of bitterness whereof the taste
 Is noisome to Humanity at large?
 First we get Power, but Power absurdly placed

“ ‘In Folly’s keeping, who resigns her charge
 To Wisdom when all Power grows nothing worth:
 Bones marrowless are mocked with helm and targe

“ ‘When, like your Master’s, soon below the earth
 With worms shall warfare only be. Farewell,
 Children! I die a failure since my birth!’ ”

“ ‘Not so!’ ” arose a protest as, pell-mell,
 They pattered from his chamber to the street,
 Bent on a last resource. Our Targums tell

That such resource there is. Put case, there meet
 The Nine Points of Perfection — rarest chance —
 Within some saintly teacher whom the fleet

Years, in their blind implacable advance,
 O’ertake before fit teaching born of these
 Have magnified his scholars’ countenance,—

If haply folk compassionating please
To render up — according to his store,
Each one — a portion of the life he sees

Hardly worth saving when 't is set before
Earth's benefit should the Saint, Hakkadosh,
Favored thereby, attain to full fourscore —

If such contribute (Scoffer, spare thy "Bosh!")
A year, a month, a day, an hour — to eke
Life out, — in him away the gift shall wash

That much of ill-spent time recorded, streak
The twilight of the so-assisted sage
With a new sunrise : truth, though strange to speak !

Quick to the doorway, then, where youth and age,
All Israel, thronging, waited for the last
News of the loved one. " 'T is the final stage :

" Art's utmost done, the Rabbi's feet tread fast
The way of all flesh ! " So announced that apt
Olive-branch Tsaddik : " Yet, O Brethren, cast

" No eye to earthward ! Look where heaven has clapped
Morning's extinguisher — yon ray-shot robe
Of sun-threads — on the constellation mapped

" And mentioned by our Elders, — yea, from Job
Down to Satam, — as figuring forth — what ?
Perpend a mystery ! Ye call it *Dob*,

" 'The Bear' : I trow, a wiser name than that
Were *Aish* — 'The Bier' : a corpse those four stars hold,
Which — are not those Three Daughters weeping at, .

" *Banoth* ? I judge so : list while I unfold
The reason. As in twice twelve hours this Bier
Goes and returns, about the east-cone rolled,

" So may a setting luminary here
Be rescued from extinction, rolled anew
Upon its track of labor, strong and clear,

" About the Pole — that Salem, every Jew
Helps to build up when thus he saves some Saint
Ordained its architect. 'Ye grasp the clue

- “ To all ye seek? The Rabbi’s lamp-flame faint
Sinks: would ye raise it? Lend then life from yours,
Spare each his oil-drop! Do I need acquaint
- “ The Chosen how self-sacrifice ensures
Tenfold requital? — urge ye emulate
The fame of those Old Just Ones death procures
- “ Such praise for, that ’t is now men’s sole debate
Which of the Ten, who volunteered at Rome
To die for glory to our Race, was great
- “ Beyond his fellows? Was it thou — the comb
Of iron carded, flesh from bone, away,
While thy lips sputtered through their bloody foam
- “ Without a stoppage (O brave Akiba!)
‘Hear, Israel, our Lord God is One’? Or thou,
Jischab? — who smiledst, burning, since there lay,
- “ Burning along with thee, our Law! I trow,
Such martyrdom might tax flesh to afford:
While that for which I make petition now,
- “ To what amounts it? Youngster, wilt thou hoard
Each minute of long years thou look’st to spend
In dalliance with thy spouse? Hast thou so soared,
- “ Singer of songs, all out of sight of friend
And teacher, warbling like a woodland bird,
There’s left no Selah, ’twixt two psalms, to lend
- “ Our late-so-tuneful quirist? Thou, averred
The fighter born to plant our lion-flag
Once more on Zion’s mount, — doth, all-unheard,
- “ My pleading fail to move thee? Toss some rag
Shall stanch our wound, some minute never missed
From swordsman’s lustihood like thine! Wilt lag
- “ In liberal bestowment, show close fist
When open palm we look for, — thou, wide-known
For statecraft? whom, ’t is said, an if thou list,
- “ The Shah himself would seat beside his throne,
So valued were advice from thee ” . . . But here
He stopped short: such a hubbub! Not alone

From those addressed, but far as well as near
 The crowd broke into clamor: "Mine, mine, mine —
 Lop from my life the excrescence, never fear!

"At me thou lookedst, markedst me! Assign
 To me that privilege of granting life —
 Mine, mine!" Then he: "Be patient! I combine

"The needful portions only, wage no strife
 With Nature's law nor seek to lengthen out
 The Rabbi's day unduly. 'T is the knife

"I stop, — would cut its thread too short. About
 As much as helps life last the proper term,
 The appointed Fourscore, — that I crave, and scout

"A too-prolonged existence. Let the worm
 Change at fit season to the butterfly!
 And here a story strikes me, to confirm

"This judgment. Of our worthies, none ranks high
 As Perida who kept the famous school:
 None rivalled him in patience: none! For why?

"In lecturing it was his constant rule,
 Whatever he expounded, to repeat
 — Ay, and keep on repeating, lest some fool

"Should fail to understand him fully — (feat
 Unparalleled, Uzzean!) — do ye mark? —
 Five hundred times! So might he entrance beat

"For knowledge into howsoever dark
 And dense the brain-pan. Yet it happed, at close
 Of one especial lecture, not one spark

"Of light was found to have illumed the rows
 Of pupils round their pedagogue. 'What, still
 Impenetrable to me? Then — here goes!'

"And for a second time he sets the rill
 Of knowledge running, and five hundred times
 More re-repeats the matter — and gains *nil*.

"Out broke a voice from heaven: 'Thy patience climbs
 Even thus high. Choose! Wilt thou, rather, quick
 Ascend to bliss — or, since thy zeal sublimes

“ Such drudgery, will thy back still bear its crick,
Bent o'er thy class, — thy voice drone spite of drouth, —
Five hundred years more at thy desk wilt stick ? ”

“ To heaven with me ! ” was in the good man's mouth,
When all his scholars — cruel-kind were they ! —
Stopped utterance, from East, West, North and South,

“ Rending the welkin with their shout of ‘ Nay —
No heaven as yet for our instructor ! Grant
Five hundred years on earth for Perida ! ’

“ And so long did he keep instructing ! Want
Our Master no such misery ! I but take
Three months of life marital. Ministrant

“ Be thou of so much, Poet ! Bold I make,
Swordsman, with thy frank offer ! — and conclude,
Statist, with thine ! One year, — ye will not shake

“ My purpose to accept no more. So rude ?
The very boys and girls, forsooth, must press
And proffer their addition ? Thanks ! The mood

“ Is laudable, but I reject, no less,
One month, week, day of life more. Leave my gown,
Ye overbold ones ! Your life's gift, you guess,

“ Were good as any ? Rudesby, get thee down !
Set my feet free, or fear my staff ! Farewell,
Seniors and saviors, sharers of renown

“ With Jochanan henceforward ! ” Straightway fell
Sleep on the sufferer ; who awoke in health,
Hale everyway, so potent was the spell.

O the rare Spring-time ! Who is he by stealth
Approaches Jochanan ? — embowered that sits
Under his vine and figtree 'mid the wealth

Of garden-sights and sounds, since intermits
Never the turtle's coo, nor stays nor stints
The rose her smell. In homage that befits

The musing Master, Tsaddik, see, imprints
 A kiss on the extended foot, low bends
 Forehead to earth, then, all-obsequious, hints

- “What if it should be time? A period ends —
 That of the Lover's gift — his quarter-year
 Of lustihood: 't is just thou make amends,
- “Return that loan with usury: so, here
 Come I, of thy Disciples delegate,
 Claiming our lesson from thee. Make appear
- “Thy profit from experience! Plainly state
 How men should Love!” Thus he: and to him thus
 The Rabbi: “Love, ye call it? — rather, Hate!
- “What wouldst thou? Is it needful I discuss
 Wherefore new sweet wine, poured in bottles caked
 With old strong wine's deposit, offers us
- “Spoilt liquor we recoil from, thirst-unslaked?
 Like earth-smoke from a crevice, out there wound —
 Langours and yearnings: not a sense but ached
- “Weighed on by fancied form and feature, sound
 Of silver word and sight of sunny smile:
 No beckoning of a flower-branch, no profound
- “Purple of noon-oppression, no light wile
 'O' the West wind, but transformed itself till — brief —
 Before me stood the phantasy ye style
- “Youth's love, the joy that shall not come to grief,
 Born to endure, eternal, unimpaired
 By custom the accloyer, time the thief.
- “Had Age's hard cold knowledge only spared
 That ignorance of Youth! But now the dream,
 Fresh as from Paradise, alighting fared
- “As fares the pigeon, finding what may seem
 Her nest's safe hollow holds a snake inside
 Coiled to enclasp her. See, Eve stands supreme
- “In youth and beauty! Take her for thy bride!
 What Youth deemed crystal, Age finds out was dew
 Morn set a-sparkle, but which noon quick dried

“ While Youth bent gazing at its red and blue
 Supposed perennial, — never dreamed the sun
 Which kindled the display would quench it too.

“ Graces of shape and color — everyone
 With its appointed period of decay
 When ripe to purpose! ‘ Still, these dead and done,

“ ‘ Survives the woman-nature — the soft sway
 Of undefinable omnipotence
 O’er our strong male-stuff, we of Adam’s clay.’

“ Ay, if my physics taught not why and whence
 The attraction! Am I like the simple steer
 Who, from his pasture lured inside the fence,

“ Where yoke and goad await him, holds that mere
 Kindliness prompts extension of the hand
 Hollowed for barley, which drew near and near

“ His nose — in proof that, of the horned band,
 The farmer best affected him? Beside,
 Steer, since his calthood, got to understand

“ Farmers a many in the world so wide
 Were ready with a handful just as choice
 Or choicer — maize and cummin, treats untried.

“ Shall I wed wife, and all my days rejoice
 I gained the peacock? ‘ Las me, round I look,
 And lo — ‘ With me thou wouldst have blamed no voice

“ ‘ Like hers that daily deafens like a rook :
 I am the phoenix!’ — ‘ I, the lark, the dove,
 — The owl,’ for aught knows he who blindly took

“ Peacock for partner, while the vale, the grove,
 The plain held bird-mates in abundance. There!
 Youth, try fresh capture! Age has found out Love

“ Long ago. War seems better worth man’s care.
 But leave me! Disappointment finds a balm
 Haply in slumber.” “ This first step o’ the stair

“ To knowledge fails me, but the victor’s palm
 Lies on the next to tempt him overleap
 A stumbling-block. Experience, gather calm,

- “Thou excellence of Judah, cured by sleep
Which ushers in the Warrior, to replace
The Lover! At due season I shall reap
- “Fruit of my planting’ ” So, with lengthened face,
Departed Tsaddik: and three moons more waxed
And waned, and not until the summer-space
- Waned likewise, any second visit taxed
The Rabbi’s patience. But at three months’ end,
Behold, supine beneath a rock, relaxed
- The sage lay musing till the noon should spend
Its ardor. Up comes Tsaddik, who but he,
With “Master, may I warn thee, nor offend,
- “That time comes round again? We look to see
Sprout from the old branch — not the youngling twig —
But fruit of sycamine: deliver me,
- “To share among my fellows, some plump fig,
Juicy as seedy! That same man of war,
Who, with a scantling of his store, made big
- “Thy starveling nature, caused thee, safe from scar,
To share his gains by long acquaintanceship
With bump and bruise and all the knocks that are
- “Of battle dowry, — he bids loose thy lip,
Explain the good of battle! Since thou know’st,
Let us know likewise! Fast the moments slip,
- “More need that we improve them!” — “Ay, we boast,
We warriors in our youth, that with the sword
Man goes the swiftliest to the uttermost —
- “Takes the straight way through lands yet unexplored
To absolute Right and Good, — may so obtain
God’s glory and man’s weal too long ignored,
- “Too late attained by preachments all in vain, —
The passive process. Knots get tangled worse
By toying with: does cut cord close again?
- “Moreover there is blessing in the curse
Peace-praisers call war. What so sure evolves
All the capacities of soul, proves nurse

- “ Of that self-sacrifice in men which solves
The riddle — *Wherein differs Man from beast?*
Foxes boast cleverness and courage wolves :
- “ Nowhere but in mankind is found the least
Touch of an impulse ‘ To our fellows — good
I’ the highest ! — not diminished but increased
- “ ‘ By the condition plainly understood
— Such good shall be attained at price of hurt
I’ the highest to ourselves !’ Fine sparks, that brood
- “ Confusedly in Man, ’t is war bids spurt
Forth into flame : as fares the meteor-mass,
Whereof no particle but holds inert
- “ Some seed of light and heat, however crass
The enclosure, yet avails not to discharge
Its radiant birth before there come to pass
- “ Some push external, — strong to set at large
Those dormant fire-seeds, whirl them in a trice
Through heaven, and light up earth from marge to marge :
- “ Since force by motion makes — what erst was ice —
Crash into fervency and so expire,
Because some Djinn has hit on a device
- “ For proving the full prettiness of fire !
Ay, thus we prattle — young : but old — why, first,
Where ’s that same Right and Good — (the wise inquire) —
- “ So absolute, it warrants the outburst
Of blood, tears, all war’s woful consequence,
That comes of the fine flaring ? Which plague cursed
- “ The more your benefited Man — offence,
Or what suppressed the offender ? Say it did —
Show us the evil cured by violence,
- “ Submission cures not also ! Lift the lid
From the maturing crucible, we find
Its slow sure coaxing-out of virtue, hid
- “ In that same meteor-mass, hath uncombined
Those particles and, yielding for result
Gold, not mere flame, by so much leaves behind

- “The heroic product. E'en the simple cult
Of Edom's children wisely bids them turn
Cheek to the smiter with '*Sic Jesus vult.*'
- “Say there 's a tyrant by whose death we earn
Freedom, and justify a war to wage :
Good ! — were we only able to discern
- “Exactly how to reach and catch and cage
Him only and no innocent beside !
Whereas the folk whereon war wreaks its rage
- “ — How shared they his ill-doing ? Far and wide
The victims of our warfare strew the plain,
Ten thousand dead, whereof not one but died
- “In faith that vassals owed their suzerain
Life : therefore each paid tribute — honest soul —
To that same Right and Good ourselves are fain
- “To call exclusively our end. From bole
(Since ye accept in me a sycamine)
Pluck, eat, digest a fable — yea, the sole
- “Fig I afford you ! ‘Dost thou dwarf my vine ?’
(So did a certain husbandman address
The tree which faced his field.) ‘Receive condign
- “Punishment, prompt removal by the stress
Of axe I forthwith lay unto thy root !’
Long did he hack and hew, the root no less
- “As long defied him, for its tough strings shoot
As deep down as the boughs above aspire :
All that he did was — shake to the tree's foot
- “Leafage and fruitage, things we most require
For shadow and refreshment : which good deed
Thoroughly done, behold the axe-haft tires
- “His hand, and he desisting leaves unfreed
The vine he hacked and hewed for. Comes a frost,
One natural night's-work, and there 's little need
- “Of hacking, hewing : lo, the tree 's a ghost !
Perished it starves, black death from topmost bough
To farthest-reaching fibre ! Shall I boast

“ My rough work — warfare — helped more ? Loving, now —
That, by comparison, seems wiser, since
The loving fool was able to avow

“ He could effect his purpose, just evince
Love’s willingness, — once ’ware of what she lacked,
His loved one, — to go work for that, nor wince

“ At self-expenditure : he neither hacked
Nor hewed, but when the lady of his field
Required defence because the sun attacked,

“ He, failing to obtain a fitter shield,
Would interpose his body, and so blaze,
Blest in the burning. Ah, were mine to wield

“ The intellectual weapon — poet-lays, —
How preferably had I sung one song
Which . . . but my sadness sinks me : go your ways !

“ I sleep out disappointment.” “ Come along,
Never lose heart ! There’s still as much again
Of our bestowment left to right the wrong

“ Done by its earlier moiety — explain
Wherefore, who may ! The Poet’s mood comes next.
Was he not wishful the poetic vein

“ Should pulse within him ? Jochanan, thou reck’st
Little of what a generous flood shall soon
Float thy clogged spirit free and unperplexed

“ Above dry dubitation ! Song’s the boon
Shall make amends for my untoward mistake
That Joshua-like thou couldst bid sun and moon —

“ Fighter and Lover, — which for most men make
All they descry in heaven, — stand both stock-still
And lend assistance. Poet shalt thou wake ! ”

Autumn brings Tsaddik. “ Ay, there speeds the rill .
Loaded with leaves : a scowling sky, beside :
The wind makes olive-trees up yonder hill

“ Whiten and shudder — symptoms far and wide
Of gleaming-time’s approach ; and glean good store
May I presume to trust we shall, thou tried

“ And ripe experimenter ! Three months more
Have ministered to growth of Song : that graft
Into thy sterile stock has found at core

“ Moisture, I warrant, hitherto unquaffed
By boughs, however florid, wanting sap
Of prose-experience which provides the draught

“ Which song-sprouts, wanting, wither : vain we tap
A youngling stem all green and immature ;
Experience must secrete the stuff, our hap

“ Will he to quench Man's thirst with, glad and sure
That fancy wells up through corrective fact :
Missing which test of truth, though flowers allure

“ The goodman's eye with promise, soon the pact
Is broken, and 't is flowers — mere words — he finds
When things — that's fruit — he looked for. Well, once cracked

“ The nut, how glad my tooth the kernel grinds !
Song may henceforth boast substance ! Therefore, hail
Proser and poet, perfect in both kinds !

“ Thou from whose eye hath dropped the envious scale
Which hides the truth of things and substitutes
Deceptive show, unaided optics fail

“ To transpierce, — hast entrusted to the lute's
Soft but sure guardianship some unrevealed
Secret shall lift mankind above the brutes

“ As only knowledge can ? ” “ A fount unsealed ”
(Sighed Jochanan) “ should seek the heaven in leaps
To die in dew-gems — not find death, congealed

“ By contact with the cavern's nether deeps,
Earth's secretest foundation where, enswathed
In dark and fear, primeval mystery sleeps —

“ Petrific fount wherein my fancies bathed
And straight turned ice. My dreams of good and fair
In soaring upwards had dissolved, unscathed

“ By any influence of the kindly air,
Singing, as each took flight, 'The Future — that's
Our destination, mists turn rainbows there,

- “ ‘ Which sink to fog, confounded in the flats
O’ the Present! Day’s the song-time for the lark,
Night for her music boasts but owls and bats.
- “ ‘ And what’s the Past but night — the deep and dark
Ice-spring I speak of, corpse-thick with its drowned
Dead fancies which no sooner touched the mark
- “ ‘ They aimed at — fact — than all at once they found
Their film-wings freeze, henceforth unfit to reach
And roll in ether, revel — robed and crowned
- “ ‘ As truths confirmed by falsehood all and each —
Sovereign and absolute and ultimate!
Up with them, skyward, Youth, ere Age impeach
- “ ‘ Thy least of promises to reinstate
Adam in Eden!’ Sing on, ever sing,
Chirp till thou burst! — the fool cicada’s fate,
- “ ‘ Who holds that after Summer next comes Spring,
Than Summer’s self sun-warmed, spice-scented more.
Fighting was better! There, no fancy-fling
- “ ‘ Pitches you past the point was reached of yore
By Samsons, Abners, Joabs, Judases,
The mighty men of valor who, before
- “ ‘ Our little day, did wonders none profess
To doubt were fable and not fact, so trust
By fancy-flights to emulate much less.
- “ ‘ Were I a Statesman, now! Why, that were just
To pinnacle my soul, mankind above,
A-top the universe: no vulgar lust
- “ ‘ To gratify — fame, greed, at this remove
Looked down upon so far — or overlooked
So largely, rather — that mine eye should rove
- “ ‘ World-wide and rummage earth, the many-nooked,
Yet find no unit of the human flock
Caught straying but straight comes back hooked and crooked
- “ ‘ By the strong shepherd who, from out his stock
Of aids proceeds to treat each ailing fleece,
Here stimulate to growth, curtail and dock

- “ There, baldness or excrescence, — that, with grease,
This, with up-grubbing of the bristly patch
Born of the tick-bite. How supreme a peace
- “ Steals o’er the Statist, — while, in wit, a match
For shrewd Ahithophel, in wisdom . . . well,
His name escapes me — somebody, at watch
- “ And ward, the fellow of Ahithophel
In guidance of the Chosen ! ” — at which word
Eyes closed and fast asleep the Rabbi fell.
- “ Cold weather ! ” shivered Tsaddik. “ Yet the hoard
Of the sagacious ant shows garnered grain,
Ever abundant most when fields afford
- “ Least pasture, and alike disgrace the plain
Tall tree and lowly shrub. ’T is so with us
Mortals: our age stores wealth ye seek in vain
- “ While busy youth culls just what we discuss
At leisure in the last days: and the last
Truly are these for Jochanan, whom thus
- “ I make one more appeal to! Thine amassed
Experience, now or never, let escape
Some portion of! For I perceive aghast
- “ The end approaches, while they jeer and jape,
These sons of Shimei: ‘ Justify your boast !
What have ye gained from Death by twelve months’ rape ?
- “ Statesman, what cure hast thou for — least and most —
Popular grievances? What nostrum, say,
Will make the Rich and Poor, expertly dosed,
- “ Forget disparity, bid each go gay,
That, with his bauble, — with his burden, this ?
Propose an alkahest shall melt away
- “ Men’s lacquer, show by prompt analysis
Which is the metal, which the make-believe,
So that no longer brass shall find, gold miss
- “ Coinage and currency? Make haste, retrieve
The precious moments, Master ! ” Whereunto
There snarls an “ Ever laughing in thy sleeve,

“Pert Tsaddik? Youth indeed sees plain a clue
To guide man where life’s wood is intricate:
How shall he fail to thrud its thickest through

“When every oak-trunk takes the eye? Elate
He goes from bole to brushwood, plunging finds —
Smothered in briars — that the small’s the great!

“All men are men: I would all minds were minds!
Whereas ’t is just the many’s mindless mass
That most needs helping: laborers and hinds

“We legislate for — not the cultured class
Which law-makes for itself nor needs the whip
And bridle, — proper help for mule and ass,

“Did the brutes know! In vain our statesmanship
Strives at contenting the rough multitude:
Still the ox cries ‘’T is me thou shouldst equip

“‘With equine trappings!’ or, in humbler mood,
‘Cribful of corn for me! and, as for work —
Adequate rumination o’er my food!’

“Better remain a Poet! Needs it irk
Such an one if light, kindled in his sphere,
Fail to transfuse the Mizraim cold and murk

“Round about Goshen? Though light disappear,
Shut inside, — temporary ignorance
Got outside of, lo, light emerging clear

“Shows each astonished starrer the expanse
Of heaven made bright with knowledge! That’s the way,
The only way — I see it at a glance —

“To legislate for earth! As poet . . . Stay!
What is . . . I would that . . . were it . . . I had been . . .
O sudden change, as if my arid clay

“Burst into bloom!” . . . “A change indeed, I ween,
And change the last!” sighed Tsaddik as he kissed
The closing eyelids. “Just as those serene

“Princes of Night apprised me! Our acquist
Of life is spent, since corners only four
Hath Aisch, and each in turn was made desist

- “ In passage round the Pole (O Mishna’s lore —
Little it profits here !) by strenuous tug
Of friends who eked out thus to full fourscore
- “ The Rabbi’s years. I see each shoulder shrug !
What have we gained ? Away the Bier may roll !
To-morrow, when the Master’s grave is dug,
- “ In with his body I may pitch the scroll
I hoped to glorify with, text and gloss,
My Science of Man’s Life : one blank’s the whole !
- “ Love, war, song, statesmanship — no gain, all loss,
The stars’ bestowment ! We on our return
To-morrow merely find — not gold but dross,
- “ The body not the soul. Come, friends, we learn
At least thus much by our experiment —
That — that . . . well, find what, whom it may concern ! ”
- But next day through the city rumors went
Of a new persecution ; so, they fled
All Israel, each man, — this time, — from his tent,
- Tsaddik among the foremost. When, the dread
Subsiding, Israel ventured back again
Some three months after, to the cave they sped
- Where lay the Sage, — a reverential train !
Tsaddik first enters. “ What is this I view ?
The Rabbi still alive ? No stars remain
- “ Of Aisch to stop within their courses. True,
I mind me, certain gamesome boys must urge
Their offerings on me : can it be — one threw
- “ Life at him and it stuck ? There needs the scourge
To teach that urchin manners ! Prithee, grant
Forgiveness if we pretermit thy dirge
- “ Just to explain no friend was ministrant,
This time, of life to thee ! Some jackanapes,
I gather, has presumed to foist his scant
- “ Scurvy unripe existence — wilding grapes
Grass-green and sorrel-sour — on that grand wine,
Mighty as mellow, which, so fancy shapes

“ May fitly image forth this life of thine
Fed on the last low fattening lees — condensed
Elixir, no milk-mildness of the vine !

“ Rightly with Tsaddik wert thou now incensed
Had he been witting of the mischief wrought
When, for elixir, verjuice he dispensed ! ”

And slowly woke, — like Shushan’s flower besought
By over-curious handling to unloose
The curtained secrecy wherein she thought

Her captive bee, ’mid store of sweets to choose,
Would loll, in gold pavilioned lie unteased,
Sucking on, sated never, — whose, O whose

Might seem that countenance, uplift, all eased
Of old distraction and bewilderment,
Absurdly happy ? “ How ye have appeased

“ The strife within me, bred this whole content,
This utter acquiescence in my past,
Present and future life, — by whom was lent

“ The power to work this miracle at last, —
Exceeds my guess. Though — *ignorance confirmed*
By knowledge sounds like paradox, I cast

“ Vainly about to tell you — fitlier termed —
Of calm struck by encountering opposites,
Each nullifying either ! Henceforth wormed

“ From out my heart is every snake that bites
The dove that else would brood there : doubt, which kills
With hiss of ‘ What if sorrows end delights ? ’

“ Fear which stings ease with ‘ Work the Master wills ! ’
Experience which coils round and strangles quick
Each hope with ‘ Ask the Past if hoping skills

“ To work accomplishment, or proves a trick
Wiling thee to endeavor ! Strive, fool, stop
Nowise, so live, so die — that’s law ! why kick

“ Against the pricks ? ’ All out-wormed ! Slumber, drop
Thy films once more and veil the bliss within !
Experience strangle hope ? Hope waves a-top

- “ Her wings triumphant! Come what will, I win,
Whoever loses! Every dream's assured
Of soberest fulfilment. Where's a sin
- “ Except in doubting that the light, which lured
The unwary into darkness, meant no wrong
Had I but marched on bold, nor paused immured
- “ By mists I should have pressed through, passed along
My way henceforth rejoicing? Not the boy's
Passionate impulse he conceits so strong,
- “ Which, at first touch, truth, bubble-like, destroys, —
Not the man's slow conviction 'Vanity
Of vanities — alike my griefs and joys!'
- “ Ice! — thawed (look up) each bird, each insect by —
(Look round) by all the plants that break in bloom,
(Look down) by every dead friend's memory
- “ That smiles 'Am I the dust within my tomb?'
Not either, but both these — amalgam rare —
Mix in a product, not from Nature's womb,
- “ But stuff which He the Operant — who shall dare
Describe His operation? — strikes alive
And thaumaturgic. I nor know nor care
- “ How from this tohu-bohu — hopes which dive,
And fears which soar — faith, ruined through and through
By doubt, and doubt, faith treads to dust — revive
- “ In some surprising sort, — as see, they do! —
Not merely foes no longer but fast friends.
What does it mean unless — O strange and new
- “ Discovery! — this life proves a wine-press — blends
Evil and good, both fruits of Paradise,
Into a novel drink which — who intends
- “ To quaff, must hear a brain for ecstasies
Attempered, not this all-inadequate
Organ which, quivering within me, dies
- “ — Nay, lives! — what, how, — too soon, or else too late —
I was — I am ” . . . (“ He babbbleth!” Tsaddik mused.)
- “ O Thou Almighty, who canst reinstate

- “ Truths in their primal clarity, confused
 By man’s perception, which is man’s and made
 To suit his service, — how, once disabused
- “ Of reason which sees light half shine half shade,
 Because of flesh, the medium that adjusts
 Purity to his visuals, both an aid
- “ And hindrance, — how to eyes earth’s air encrusts,
 When purged and perfect to receive truth’s beam
 Pouring itself on the new sense it trusts
- “ With all its plenitude of power, — how seem
 The intricacies now, of shade and shine,
 Oppugnant natures — Right and Wrong, we deem
- “ Irreconcilable? O eyes of mine,
 Freed now of imperfection, ye avail
 To see the whole sight, nor may uncombine
- “ Henceforth what, erst divided, caused you quail —
 So huge the chasm between the false and true,
 The dream and the reality! All hail,
- “ Day of my soul’s deliverance — day the new,
 The never-ending! What though every shape
 Whereon I wreaked my yearning to pursue
- “ Even to success each semblance of escape
 From my own bounded self to some all-fair
 All-wise external fancy, proved a rape
- “ Like that old giant’s, feigned of fools — on air,
 Not solid flesh? How otherwise? To love —
 That lesson was to learn not here — but there —
- “ On earth, not here! ’Tis there we learn, — there prove
 Our parts upon the stuff we needs must spoil,
 Striving at mastery, there bend above
- “ The spoiled clay potsherds, many a year of toil
 Attests the potter tried his hand upon,
 Till sudden he arose, wiped free from soil
- “ His hand, cried ‘ So much for attempt — anon
 Performance! Taught to mould the living vase;
 What matter the cracked pitchers dead and gone?’

“ Could I impart and could thy mind embrace
The secret, Tsaddik ! ” “ Secret none to me ! ”
Quoth Tsaddik, as the glory on the face

Of Jochanan was quenched. “ The truth I see
Of what that excellence of Judah wrote,
Doughty Halaphta. This a case must be

“ Wherein, though the last breath have passed the throat,
So that ‘ The man is dead ’ we may pronounce,
Yet is the Ruach — (thus do we denote

“ The imparted Spirit) — in no haste to bounce
From its entrusted Body, — some three days
Lingers ere it relinquish to the pounce

“ Of hawk-clawed Death his victim. Further says
Halaphta, ‘ Instances have been, and yet
Again may be, when saints, whose earthly ways

“ Tend to perfection, very nearly get
To heaven while still on earth : and, as a fine
Interval shows where waters pure have met

“ ‘ Waves brackish, in a mixture, sweet with brine,
That ’s neither sea nor river but a taste
Of both — so meet the earthly and divine

“ And each is either. ’ Thus I hold him graced —
Dying on earth, half inside and half out,
Wholly in heaven, who knows ? My mind embraced

“ Thy secret, Jochanan, how dare I doubt ?
Follow thy Ruach, let earth, all it can,
Keep of the leavings ! ” Thus was brought about

The sepulture of Rabbi Jochanan :
Thou hast him, — sinner-saint, live-dead, boy-man, —
Schipfaz, on Bendimir, in Farzistan !

NOTE. — This story can have no better authority than that of the treatise, existing dispersedly in fragments of Rabbinical writing, *משך של רבים בדיב*, from which I might have helped myself more liberally. Thus, instead of the simple reference to “ Moses’ stick,”

— but what if I make amends by attempting three illustrations, when some thirty might be composed on the same subject, equally justifying that pithy proverb ממשה עד משה לא קם כמשה

I.

MOSES the Meek was thirty cubits high,
 The staff he strode with — thirty cubits long ;
 And when he leapt, so muscular and strong
 Was Moses that his leaping neared the sky
 By thirty cubits more : we learn thereby
 He reached full ninety cubits — am I wrong ? —
 When, in a fight slurred o'er by sacred song,
 With staff outstretched he took a leap to try
 The just dimensions of the giant Og.
 And yet he barely touched — this marvel lacked
 Posterity to crown earth's catalogue
 Of marvels — barely touched — to be exact —
 The giant's ankle-bone, remained a frog
 That fain would match an ox in stature : fact !

II.

And this same fact has met with unbelief !
 How saith a certain traveller ? “ Young, I chanced
 To come upon an object — if thou canst,
 Guess me its name and nature ! ’T was, in brief,
 White, hard, round, hollow, of such length, in chief,
 — And this is what especially enhanced
 My wonder — that it seemed, as I advanced,
 Never to end. Bind up within thy sheaf
 Of marvels, this — Posterity ! I walked
 From end to end, — four hours walked I, who go
 A goodly pace, — and found — I have not balked
 Thine expectation, Stranger ? Ay or No ? —
 ’T was but Og's thighbone, all the while, I stalked
 Alongside of : respect to Moses, though !

III.

Og's thighbone — if ye deem its measure strange,
 Myself can witness to much length of shank
 Even in birds. Upon a water's bank
 Once halting, I was minded to exchange
 Noon heat for cool. Quoth I, “ On many a grange
 I have seen storks perch — legs both long and lank :
 Yon stork's must touch the bottom of this tank,
 Since on its top doth wet no plume derange
 Of the smooth breast. I'll bathe there ! ” “ Do not so ! ”
 Warned me a voice from heaven. “ A man let drop

His axe into that shallow rivulet —
 As thou accountest — seventy years ago :
 It fell and fell and still without a stop
 Keeps falling, nor has reached the bottom yet.”

NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE.

NEVER the time and the place
 And the loved one all together !
 This path — how soft to pace !
 This May — what magic weather !
 Where is the loved one's face ?
 In a dream that loved one's face meets mine,
 But the house is narrow, the place is bleak
 Where, outside, rain and wind combine
 With a furtive ear, if I strive to speak,
 With a hostile eye at my flushing cheek,
 With a malice that marks each word, each sign !
 O enemy sly and serpentine,
 Uncoil thee from the waking man !
 Do I hold the Past
 Thus firm and fast
 Yet doubt if the Future hold I can ?
 This path so soft to pace shall lead
 Through the magic of May to herself indeed !
 Or narrow if needs the house must be,
 Outside are the storms and strangers: we —
 Oh, close, safe, warm sleep I and she,
 — I and she !

PAMBO.

SUPPOSE that we part (work done, comes play)
 With a grave tale told in crambo
 — As our hearty sires were wont to say —
 Whereof the hero is Pambo ?

Do you happen to know who Pambo was ?
 Nor I — but this much have heard of him :
 He entered one day a college-class,
 And asked — was it so absurd of him ? —

“ May Pambo learn wisdom ere practise it ?

In wisdom I fain would ground me :
 Since wisdom is centred in Holy Writ,
 Some psalm to the purpose expound me ! ”

“ That psalm,” the Professor smiled, “ shall be
 Untroubled by doubt which dirtieth
 Pellucid streams when an ass like thee
 Would drink there — the Nine-and-thirtieth.

“ Verse First : *I said I will look to my ways
 That I with my tongue offend not.*
 How now ? Why stare ? Art struck in amaze ?
 Stop, stay ! The smooth line hath an end knot !

“ He ’s gone ! — disgusted my text should prove
 Too easy to need explaining ?
 Had he waited, the blockhead might find I move
 To matter that pays remaining ! ”

Long years went by, when — “ Ha, who ’s this ?
 Do I come on the restive scholar
 I had driven to Wisdom’s goal, I wis,
 But that he slipped the collar ?

“ What ? Arms crossed, brow bent, thought-immersed ?
 A student indeed ! Why scruple
 To own that the lesson proposed him first
 Scarce suited so apt a pupil ?

“ Come back ! From the beggarly elements
 To a more recondite issue
 We pass till we reach, at all events,
 Some point that may puzzle . . . Why ‘ pish ’ you ? ”

From the ground looked piteous up the head :
 “ Daily and nightly, Master,
 Your pupil plods through that text you read,
 Yet gets on never the faster.

“ At the selfsame stand, — now old, then young !
I will look to my ways — were doing
 As easy as saying ! — *that I with my tongue
 Offend not* — and ’scape pooh-poohing

“ From sage and simple, doctor and dunce ?
Ah, nowise ! Still doubts so muddy
The stream I would drink at once, — but once !
That — thus I resume my study ! ”

Brother, brother, I share the blame,
Arcades sumus ambo !
Darkling, I keep my sunrise-aim,
Lack not the critic's flambeau,
And *look to my ways*, yet, much the same,
Offend with my tongue — like Pambo !



FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

His genius was jocular, but, when disposed, he could be very serious. — Article "Shakespear," Jeremy Collier's *Historical etc. Dictionary*, 2d edition, 1701.

You, Sir, I entertain you for one of my Hundred; only, I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say they are Persian: but let them be changed. — *King Lear*, Act III. Sc. 6.

PROLOGUE.

PRAY, Reader, have you eaten ortolans
Ever in Italy?
Recall how cooks there cook them: for my plan's
To — Lyre with Spit ally.
They pluck the birds, — some dozen luscious lumps,
Or more or fewer, —
Then roast them, heads by heads and rumps by rumps,
Stuck on a skewer.
But first, — and here 's the point I fain would press, —
Don't think I 'm tattling! —
They interpose, to curb its lusciousness,
— What, 'twixt each fatling?
First comes plain bread, crisp, brown, a toasted square:
Then, a strong sage-leaf:
(So we find books with flowers dried here and there
Lest leaf engage leaf.)
First, food — then, piquancy — and last of all
Follows the thirdling:
Through wholesome hard, sharp soft, your tooth must bite
Ere reach the birdling.
Now, were there only crust to crunch, you 'd wince:
Unpalatable!
Sage-leaf is bitter-pungent — so 's a quince:
Eat each who 's able!
But through all three bite boldly — lo, the gust!
Flavor — no fixture —

Flies permeating flesh and leaf and crust
 In fine admixture.
 So with your meal, my poem : masticate
 Sense, sight, and song there !
 Digest these, and I praise your peptics' state,
 Nothing found wrong there.
 Whence springs my illustration who can tell ?
 — The more surprising
 That here eggs, milk, cheese, fruit suffice so well
 For gormandizing.
 A fancy-freak by contrast born of thee,
 Delightful Gressoney !
 Who laughest " Take what is, trust what may be ! "
 That 's Life's true lesson, — eh ?

MAISON DELAPIERRE,
 Gressoney St. Jean, Val d'Aosta,
 September 12, '83.

I. THE EAGLE.

DERVISH — (though yet un-dervished, call him so
 No less beforehand : while he drudged our way,
 Other his worldly name was : when he wrote
 Those versicles we Persians praise him for,
 — True fairy-work — Ferishtah grew his style) —
 Dervish Ferishtah walked the woods one eve,
 And noted on a bough a raven's nest
 Whereof each youngling gaped with callow beak
 Widened by want ; for why ? beneath the tree
 Dead lay the mother-bird. " A piteous chance !
 How shall they 'scape destruction ? " sighed the sage
 — Or sage about to be, though simple still.
 Responsive to which doubt, sudden there swooped
 An eagle downward, and behold he bore
 (Great-hearted) in his talons flesh wherewith
 He stayed their craving, then resought the sky.
 " Ah, foolish, faithless me ! " the observer smiled,
 " Who toil and moil to eke out life, when, lo,
 Providence cares for every hungry mouth ! "
 To profit by which lesson, home went he,
 And certain days sat musing, — neither meat
 Nor drink would purchase by his handiwork.
 Then — for his head swam and his limbs grew faint —
 Sleep overtook the unwise one, whom in dream

God thus admonished : " Hast thou marked my deed ?
 Which part assigned by providence dost judge
 Was meant for man's example ? Should he play
 The helpless weakling, or the helpful strength
 That captures prey and saves the perishing ?
 Sluggard, arise : work, eat, then feed who lack ! "

Waking, " I have arisen, work I will,
 Eat, and so following. Which lacks food the more,
 Body or soul in me ? I starve in soul :
 So may mankind : and since men congregate
 In towns, not woods, — to Ispahan forthwith ! "

Round us the wild creatures, overhead the trees,
 Underfoot the moss-tracks, — life and love with these !
 I to wear a fawn-skin, thou to dress in flowers :
 All the long lone summer-day, that greenwood life of ours !

Rich-pavilioned, rather, — still the world without, —
 Inside — gold-roofed silk-walled silence round about !
 Queen it thou on purple, — I, at watch and ward
 Couched beneath the columns, gaze, thy slave, love's guard !

So, for us no world ? Let throngs press thee to me !
 Up and down amid men, heart by heart fare we !
 Welcome squalid vesture, harsh voice, hateful face !
 God is soul, souls I and thou : with souls should souls have place

II. THE MELON-SELLER.

GOING his rounds one day in Ispahan, —
 Halfway on Dervishhood, not wholly there, —
 Ferishtah, as he crossed a certain bridge,
 Came startled on a well-remembered face.
 " Can it be ? What, turned melon-seller — thou ?
 Clad in such sordid garb, thy seat yon step
 Where dogs brush by thee and express contempt ?
 Methinks, thy head-gear is some scooped-out gourd !
 Nay, sunk to slicing up, for readier sale,
 One fruit whereof the whole scarce feeds a swine ?
 Wast thou the Shah's Prime Minister, men saw
 Ride on his right-hand while a trumpet blew
 And Persia hailed the Favorite ? Yea, twelve years

Are past, I judge, since that transcendency,
 And thou didst peculate and art abased ;
 No less, twelve years since, thou didst hold in hand
 Persia, could'st halve and quarter, mince its pulp
 As pleased thee, and distribute — melon-like —
 Portions to whoso played the parasite,
 Or suck — thyself — each juicy morsel. How
 Enormous thy abjection, — hell from heaven,
 Made tenfold hell by contrast ! Whisper me !
 Dost thou curse God for granting twelve years' bliss
 Only to prove this day 's the direr lot ? ”

Whereon the beggar raised a brow, once more
 Luminous and imperial, from the rags.
 “ Fool, does thy folly think my foolishness
 Dwells rather on the fact that God appoints
 A day of woe to the unworthy one,
 Than that the unworthy one, by God's award,
 Tasted joy twelve years long ? Or buy a slice,
 Or go to school ! ”

To school Ferishtah went ;
 And, schooling ended, passed from Ispahan
 To Nishapur, that Elburz looks above
 — Where they dig turquoise : there kept school himself,
 The melon-seller's speech, his stock in trade.
 Some say a certain Jew adduced the word
 Out of their book, it sounds so much the same.

אֲתֵּי הַטּוֹב נִהְבֵּל מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים
 : וְאֲתֵּי הַרָע לֹא נִקְבֵּל :
 “ Shall we receive good at the hand of God
 And evil not receive ? ” But great wits jump.

Wish no word unspoken, want no look away !
 What if words were but mistake, and looks — too sudden, say !
 Be unjust for once, Love ! Bear it — well I may !

Do me justice always ? Bid my heart — their shrine —
 Render back its store of gifts, old looks and words of thine
 — Oh, so all unjust — the less deserved, the more divine ?

III. SHAH ABBAS.

ANYHOW, once full Dervish, youngsters came
 To gather up his own words, 'neath a rock
 Or else a palm, by pleasant Nishapur.

Said someone, as Ferishtah paused abrupt,
 Reading a certain passage from the roll
 Wherein is treated of Lord Ali's life :
 " Master, explain this incongruity !
 When I dared question ' It is beautiful,
 But is it true ? ' — thy answer was ' In truth
 Lives beauty.' I persisting — ' Beauty — yes,
 In thy mind and in my mind, every mind
 That apprehends : but outside — so to speak —
 Did beauty live in deed as well as word,
 Was this life lived, was this death died — not dreamed ?'
 ' Many attested it for fact,' saidst thou.
 ' Many !' but mark, Sir ! Half as long ago
 As such things were, — supposing that they were, —
 Reigned great Shah Abbas : he too lived and died
 — How say they ? Why, so strong of arm, of foot
 So swift, he stayed a lion in his leap
 On a stag's haunch, — with one hand grasped the stag,
 With one struck down the lion : yet, no less,
 Himself, that same day, feasting after sport,
 Perceived a spider drop into his wine,
 Let fall the flagon, died of simple fear.
 So all say, — so dost thou say ?"

“ Wherefore not ? ”

Ferishtah smiled : “ though strange, the story stands
 Clear-chronicled : none tells it otherwise :
 The fact's eye-witness bore the cup, beside.”

“ And dost thou credit one cup-bearer's tale,
 False, very like, and futile certainly,
 Yet hesitate to trust what many tongues
 Combine to testify was beautiful
 In deed as well as word ? No fool's report
 Of lion, stag and spider, but immense
 With meaning for mankind, — thy race, thyself ? ”

Whereto the Dervish : “ First amend, my son,
 Thy faulty nomenclature, call belief
 Belief indeed, nor grace with such a name
 The easy acquiescence of mankind
 In matters nowise worth dispute, since life
 Lasts merely the allotted moment. Lo —
 That lion-stag-and-spider tale leaves fixed
 The fact for us that somewhen Abbas reigned,
 Died, somehow slain, — a useful registry, —
 Which therefore we — ' believe ' ? Stand forward, thou,
 My Yakub, son of Yusuf, son of Zal !

I advertise thee that our liege, the Shah
 Happily regnant, hath become assured,
 By opportune discovery, that thy sires,
 Son by the father upwards, track their line
 To — whom but that same bearer of the cup
 Whose inadvertency was chargeable
 With what therefrom ensued, disgust and death
 To Abbas Shah, the over-nice of soul?
 Whence he appoints thee, — such his clemency, —
 Not death, thy due, but just a double tax
 To pay, on thy particular bed of reeds
 Which flower into the brush that makes a broom
 Fit to sweep ceilings clear of vermin. Sure,
 Thou dost believe the story nor dispute
 That punishment should signalize its truth?
 Down therefore with some twelve dinars! Why start,
 — The stag's way with the lion hard on haunch?
 'Believe the story?' — how thy words throng fast! —
 'Who saw this, heard this, said this, wrote down this
 That and the other circumstance to prove
 So great a prodigy surprised the world?
 Needs must thou prove me fable can be fact
 Or ere thou coax one piece from out my pouch!'"

"There we agree, Sir: neither of us knows,
 Neither accepts that tale on evidence
 Worthy to warrant the large word — belief.
 Now I get near thee! Why didst pause abrupt,
 Disabled by emotion at a tale
 Might match — be frank! — for credibility
 The figment of the spider and the cup?
 — To wit, thy roll's concerning Ali's life,
 Unevidenced — thine own word! Little boots
 Our sympathy with fiction! When I read
 The annals and consider of Tahmasp.
 And that sweet sun-surpassing star his love,
 I weep like a cut vine-twig, though aware
 Zurah's sad fate is fiction, since the snake
 He saw devour her, — how could such exist,
 Having nine heads? No snake boasts more than three!
 I weep, then laugh — both actions right alike.
 But thou, Ferishtah, sapiency confessed,
 When at the Day of Judgment God shall ask
 'Didst thou believe?' — what wilt thou plead? Thy tears?
 (Nay, they fell fast and stain the parchment still.)
 What if thy tears meant love? Love lacking ground

— Belief, — avails thee as it would avail
 My own pretence to favor since, forsooth,
 I loved the lady — I, who needs must laugh
 To hear a snake boasts nine heads : they have three ! ”

“ Thanks for the well-timed help that ’s born, behold,
 Out of thy words, my son, — belief and love !
 Hast heard of Ishak son of Absal ? Ay,
 The very same we heard of, ten years since,
 Slain in the wars : he comes back safe and sound, —
 Though twenty soldiers saw him die at Yezdt, —
 Just as a single mule-and-baggage boy
 Declared ’t was like he some day would, — for why ?
 The twenty soldiers lied, he saw him stout,
 Cured of all wounds at once by smear of salve,
 A Mubid’s manufacture : such the tale.

Now, when his pair of sons were thus apprised
 Effect was twofold on them. ‘ Hail ! ’ crowed This :
 ‘ Dearer the news than dayspring after night !

The cure-reporting youngster warrants me
 Our father shall make glad our eyes once more,
 For whom, had outpoured life of mine sufficed
 To bring him back, free broached were every vein ! ’

‘ Avaunt, delusive tale-concocter, news
 Cruel as meteor simulating dawn ! ’

Whimpered the other : ‘ Who believes this boy,
 Must disbelieve his twenty seniors : no,
 Return our father shall not ! Might my death
 Purchase his life, how promptly would the dole
 Be paid as due ! ’ Well, ten years pass, — aha,
 Ishak is marching homeward, — doubts, not he,
 Are dead and done with ! So, our townsfolk straight
 Must take on them to counsel. ‘ Go thou gay,
 Welcome thy father, thou of ready faith !
 Hide thee, contrariwise, thou faithless one,
 Expect paternal frowning, blame and blows ! ’
 So do our townsfolk counsel : dost demur ? ”

“ Ferishtah like those simpletons — at loss
 In what is plain as pikestaff ? Pish ! Suppose
 The trustful son had sighed ‘ So much the worse !
 Returning means — retaking heritage
 Enjoyed these ten years, who should say me nay ? ’
 How would such trust reward him ? Trustlessness
 — O’ the other hand — were what procured most praise
 To him who judged return impossible,

Yet hated heritage procured thereby.
 A fool were Ishak if he failed to prize
 Mere head's work less than heart's work: no fool he!"

"Is God less wise? Resume the roll!" They did.

You groped your way across my room i' the drear dark dead of
 night;
 At each fresh step a stumble was: but, once your lamp alight,
 Easy and plain you walked again: so soon all wrong grew right!

What lay on floor to trip your foot? Each object, late awry,
 Looked fitly placed, nor proved offence to footing free — for why?
 The lamp showed all, discordant late, grown simple symmetry.

Be love your light and trust your guide, with these explore my
 heart!
 No obstacle to trip you then, strike hands and souls apart!
 Since rooms and hearts are furnished so, — light shows you, — needs
 love start?

IV. THE FAMILY.

A CERTAIN neighbor lying sick to death,
 Ferishtah grieved beneath a palm-tree, whence
 He rose at peace: whereat objected one
 "Gudarz our friend gasps in extremity.
 Sure, thou art ignorant how close at hand
 Death presses, or the cloud, which fouled so late
 Thy face, had deepened down not lightened off."

"I judge there will be respite, for I prayed."

"Sir, let me understand, of charity!
 Yestereve, what was thine admonishment?
 'All-wise, all-good, all-mighty — God is such!'
 How then should man, the all-unworthy, dare
 Propose to set aside a thing ordained?
 To pray means — substitute man's will for God's:
 Two best wills cannot be: by consequence,
 What is man bound to but — assent, say I?
 Rather to rapture of thanksgiving; since
 That which seems worst to man to God is best,

So, because God ordains it, best to man.
 Yet man — the foolish, weak, and wicked — prays !
 Urges ' My best were better, didst Thou know ' ! ”

“ List to a tale. A worthy householder
 Of Shiraz had three sons, beside a spouse
 Whom, cutting gourds, a serpent bit, whereon
 The offended limb swelled black from foot to fork.
 The husband called in aid a leech renowned
 World-wide, confessed the lord of surgery,
 And bade him dictate — who forthwith declared
 ‘ Sole remedy is amputation.’ Straight
 The husband sighed ‘ Thou knowest : be it so ! ’
 His three sons heard their mother sentenced : ‘ Pause ! ’
 Outbroke the elder : ‘ Be precipitate
 Nowise, I pray thee ! Take some gentler way,
 Thou sage of much resource ! I will not doubt
 But science still may save foot, leg, and thigh ! ’
 The next in age snapped petulant : ‘ Too rash !
 No reason for this maiming ! What, Sir Leech,
 Our parent limps henceforward while we leap ?
 Shame on thee ! Save the limb thou must and shalt ! ’
 ‘ Shame on yourselves, ye bold ones ! ’ followed up
 The brisk third brother, youngest, pertest too :
 ‘ The leech knows all things, we are ignorant ;
 What he proposes, gratefully accept !
 For me, had I some unguent bound to heal
 Hurts in a twinkling, hardly would I dare
 Essay its virtue and so cross the sage
 By cure his skill pronounces folly. Quick !
 No waiting longer ! There the patient lies :
 Out then with implements and operate ! ’ ”

“ Ah, the young devil ! ”

“ Why, his reason chimed
 Right with the Hakim’s.”

“ Hakim’s, ay — but chit’s ?
 How ? what the skilled eye saw and judged of weight
 To overbear a heavy consequence,
 That — shall a sciolist affect to see ?
 All he saw — that is, all such oaf should see,
 Was just the mother’s suffering.”

“ In my tale,
 Be God the Hakim : in the husband’s case,

Call ready acquiescence — aptitude
 Angelic, understanding swift and sure :
 Call the first son — a wise humanity,
 Slow to conceive but duteous to adopt :
 See in the second son — humanity,
 Wrong-headed yet right-hearted, rash but kind.
 Last comes the cackler of the brood, our chit
 Who, aping wisdom all beyond his years,
 Thinks to discard humanity itself :
 Fares like the beast which should affect to fly
 Because a bird with wings may spurn the ground,
 So, missing heaven and losing earth — drops how
 But hell-ward ? No, be man and nothing more —
 Man who, as man conceiving, hopes and fears,
 And craves and deprecates, and loves, and loathes,
 And bids God help him, till death touch his eyes
 And show God granted most, denying all.”

Man I am and man would be, Love — merest man and nothing more.
 Bid me seem no other ! Eagles boast of pinions — let them soar !
 I may put forth angel's plumage, once unmanned, but not before.

Now on earth, to stand suffices, — nay, if kneeling serves, to kneel :
 Here you front me, here I find the all of heaven that earth can feel :
 Sense looks straight, — not over, under, — perfect sees beyond appeal.

Good you are and wise, full circle : what to me were more outside ?
 Wiser wisdom, better goodness ? Ah, such want the angel's wide
 Sense to take and hold and keep them ! Mine at least has never
 tried.

V. THE SUN.

“AND what might that bold man's announcement be ” —
 Ferishtah questioned — “ which so moved thine ire
 That thou didst curse, nay, cuff and kick — in short,
 Confute the announcer ? Wipe those drops away
 Which start afresh upon thy face at mere
 Mention of such enormity : now, speak ! ”

“ He scrupled not to say — (thou warrantest,
 O patient Sir, that I unblamed repeat

Abominable words which blister tongue ?
 God once assumed on earth a human shape :
 (Lo, I have spitten !) Dared I ask the grace,
 Fain would I hear, of thy subtily,
 From out what hole in man's corrupted heart
 Creeps such a maggot : fancies verminous
 Breed in the clots there, but a monster born
 Of pride and folly like this pest — thyself
 Only canst trace to egg-shell it hath chipped."

The sun rode high. " During our ignorance " —
 Began Ferishtah — " folk esteemed as God
 Yon orb : for argument, suppose him so, —
 Be it the symbol, not the symbolized,
 I and thou safelier take upon our lips.
 Accordingly, yon orb that we adore
 — What is he? Author of all light and life :
 Such one must needs be somewhere : this is he.
 Like what? If I may trust my human eyes,
 A ball composed of spirit-fire, whence springs
 — What, from this ball, my arms could circle round ?
 All I enjoy on earth. By consequence,
 Inspiring me with — what? Why, love and praise.
 I eat a palatable fig — there 's love
 In little : who first planted what I pluck,
 Obtains my little praise, too : more of both
 Keeps due proportion with more cause for each :
 So, more and ever more, till most of all
 Completes experience, and the orb, descried
 Ultimate giver of all good, perforce
 Gathers unto himself all love, all praise,
 Is worshipped — which means loved and praised at height.
 Back to the first good : 't was the gardener gave
 Occasion to my palate's pleasure : grace,
 Plain on his part, demanded thanks on mine.
 Go up above this giver, — step by step,
 Gain a conception of what — (how and why,
 Matters not now) — occasioned him to give,
 Appointed him the gardener of the ground, —
 I mount by just progression slow and sure
 To some prime giver — here assumed yon orb —
 Who takes my worship. Whom have I in mind,
 Thus worshipping, unless a man, my like
 Howe'er above me? Man, I say — how else,
 I being man who worship? Here 's my hand
 Lifts first a mustard-seed, then weight on weight

Greater and ever greater, till at last
 It lifts a melon, I suppose, then stops —
 Hand-strength expended wholly : so, my love
 First lauds the gardener for the fig his gift,
 Then, looking higher, loves and lauds still more,
 Who hires the ground, who owns the ground, Sheikh, Shah,
 On and away, away and ever on,
 Till, at the last, it loves and lauds the orb
 Ultimate cause of all to laud and love.
 Where is the break, the change of quality
 In hand's power, soul's impulsion ? Gift was grace,
 The greatest as the smallest. Had I stopped
 Anywhere in the scale, stayed love and praise
 As so far only fit to follow gift,
 Saying, ' I thanked the gardener for his fig,
 But now that, lo, the Shah has filled my purse
 With tomans which avail to purchase me
 A figtree forest, shall I pay the same
 With love and praise, the gardener's proper fee ?'
 Justly would whoso bears a brain object,
 ' Giving is giving, gift claims gift's return,
 Do thou thine own part, therefore : let the Shah
 Ask more from who has more to pay.' Perchance
 He gave thee from his treasure less by much
 Than the soil's servant : let that be ! My part
 Is plain — to meet and match the gift and gift
 With love and love, with praise and praise, till both
 Cry ' All of us is thine, we can no more !'
 So shall I do man's utmost — man to man :
 For as our liege the Shah's sublime estate
 Merely enhaloes, leaves him man the same,
 So must I count that orb I call a fire
 (Keep to the language of our ignorance)
 Something that 's fire and more beside : mere fire
 — Is it a force which, giving, knows it gives,
 And wherefore, so may look for love and praise
 From me, fire's like so far, however less
 In all beside ? Prime cause this fire shall be,
 Uncaused, all-causing : hence begin the gifts,
 Thither must go my love and praise — to what ?
 Fire ? Symbol fitly serves the symbolized
 Herein, — that this same object of my thanks,
 While to my mind nowise conceivable
 Except as mind no less than fire, refutes
 Next moment mind's conception : fire is fire —
 While what I needs must thank, must needs include

Purpose with power, — humanity like mine,
 Imagined, for the dear necessity,
 One moment in an object which the next
 Confesses unimaginable. Power!
 — What need of will, then? naught opposes power:
 Why, purpose? any change must be for worse:
 And what occasion for beneficence
 When all that is, so is and so must be?
 Best being best now, change were for the worse.
 Accordingly discard these qualities
 Proper to imperfection, take for type
 Mere fire, eject the man, retain the orb, —
 The perfect and, so, inconceivable, —
 And what remains to love and praise? A stone
 Fair-colored proves a solace to my eye,
 Rolled by my tongue brings moisture curing drought,
 And struck by steel emits a useful spark:
 Shall I return it thanks, the insentient thing?
 No, — man once, man forever — man in soul
 As man in body: just as this can use
 Its proper senses only, see and hear,
 Taste, like or loathe according to its law
 And not another creature's, — even so
 Man's soul is moved by what, if it in turn
 Must move, is kindred soul: receiving good
 — Man's way — must make man's due acknowledgment,
 No other, even while he reasons out
 Plainly enough that, were the man unmanned,
 Made angel of, angelic every way,
 The love and praise that rightly seek and find
 Their man-like object now, — instructed more,
 Would go forth idly, air to emptiness.
 Our human flower, sun-ripened, proffers scent
 Though reason prove the sun lacks nose to feed
 On what himself made grateful: flower and man,
 Let each assume that scent and love alike
 Being once born, must needs have use! Man's part
 Is plain — to send love forth, — astray, perhaps:
 No matter, he has done his part."

“Wherefrom

What is to follow — if I take thy sense —
 But that the sun — the inconceivable
 Confessed by man — comprises, all the same,
 Man's every-day conception of himself —
 No less remaining unconceived!"

“Agreed!”

" Yet thou, insisting on the right of man
 To feel as man, not otherwise, — man, bound
 By man's conditions neither less nor more,
 Obligated to estimate as fair or foul,
 Right, wrong, good, evil, what man's faculty
 Adjudges such, — how canst thou, — plainly bound
 To take man's truth for truth and only truth, —
 Dare to accept, in just one case, as truth
 Falsehood confessed? Flesh simulating fire —
 Our fellow-man whom we his fellows know
 For dust — instinct with fire unknowable!
 Where 's thy man-needed truth — its proof, nay print
 Of faintest passage on the tablets traced
 By man, termed knowledge? 'Tis conceded thee,
 We lack such fancied union — fire with flesh:
 But even so, to lack is not to gain
 Our lack's suppliance: where 's the trace of such
 Recorded? "

" What if such a tracing were?
 If some strange story stood, — whate'er its worth, —
 That the immensely yearned-for, once befell,
 — The sun was flesh once? — (keep the figure!) "

" How?

An union inconceivable was fact? "

" Son, if the stranger have convinced himself
 Fancy is fact — the sun, besides a fire,
 Holds earthly substance somehow fire pervades
 And yet consumes not, — earth, he understands,
 With essence he remains a stranger to, —
 Fittier thou saidst ' I stand appalled before
 Conception unattainable by me
 Who need it most ' — than this — ' What? boast he holds
 Conviction where I see conviction's need,
 Alas, — and nothing else? then what remains
 But that I straightway curse, cuff, kick the fool! ' "

Fire is in the flint: true, once a spark escapes,
 Fire forgets the kinship, soars till fancy shapes
 Some befitting cradle where the babe had birth —
 Wholly heaven's the product, unallied to earth.
 Splendors recognized as perfect in the star! —
 In our flint their home was, housed as now they are.

VI. MIHRAB SHAH.

QUOTH an inquirer, " Praise the Merciful !
 My thumb which yesterday a scorpion nipped —
 (It swelled and blackened) — lo, is sound again !
 By application of a virtuous root
 The burning has abated : that is well.
 But now methinks I have a mind to ask, —
 Since this discomfort came of culling herbs
 Nor meaning harm, — why needs a scorpion be ?
 Yea, there began, from when my thumb last throbb'd,
 Advance in question-framing, till I asked
 Wherefore should any evil hap to man —
 From ache of flesh to agony of soul —
 Since God's All-mercy mates All-potency ?
 Nay, why permits He evil to Himself —
 Man's sin, accounted such ? Suppose a world
 Purged of all pain, with fit inhabitant —
 Man pure of evil in thought, word, and deed —
 Were it not well ? Then, wherefore otherwise ?
 Too good result ? But He is wholly good !
 Hard to effect ? Ay, were He impotent !
 Teach me, Ferishtah ! "

Said the Dervish : " Friend,
 My chance, escaped to-day, was worse than thine :
 I, as I woke this morning, raised my head,
 Which never tumbled but stuck fast on neck.
 Was not I glad and thankful ! "

" How could head
 Tumble from neck, unchopped — inform me first !
 Unless we take Firdausi's tale for truth,
 Who ever heard the like ? "

" The like might hap
 By natural law : I let my staff fall thus —
 It goes to ground, I know not why. Suppose,
 Whene'er my hold was loosed, it skyward sprang
 As certainly, and all experience proved
 That, just as staves when unsupported sink,
 So, unconfined, they soar ? "

" Let such be law —
 Why, a new chapter of sad accidents

Were added to humanity's mischance,
 No doubt at all, and as a man's false step
 Now lays him prone on earth, contrariwise,
 Removal from his shoulder of a weight
 Might start him upwards to perdition. Ay!
 But, since such law exists in just thy brain,
 I shall not hesitate to doff my cap
 For fear my head take flight."

"Nor feel relief
 Finding it firm on shoulder. Tell me, now!
 What were the bond 'twixt man and man, dost judge,
 Pain once abolished? Come, be true! Our Shah —
 How stands he in thy favor? Why that shrug?
 Is not he lord and ruler?"

"Easily!

His mother bore him, first of those four wives
 Provided by his father, such his luck:
 Since when his business simply was to breathe
 And take each day's new bounty. There he stands —
 Where else had I stood, were his birth-star mine?
 No, to respect men's power, I needs must see
 Men's bare hands seek, find, grasp and wield the sword
 Nobody else can brandish! Bless his heart,
 'T is said, he scarcely counts his fingers right!"

"Well, then — his princely doles! from every feast
 Off go the feasted with the dish they ate
 And cup they drank from, — nay, a change besides
 Of garments" . . .

"Sir, put case, for service done, —
 Or best, for love's sake, — such and such a slave
 Sold his allowance of sour lentil-soup
 To therewith purchase me a pipe-stick, — nay,
 If he, by but one hour, cut short his sleep
 To clout my shoe, — that were a sacrifice!"

"All praise his gracious bearing."

"All praise mine —
 Or would praise did they never make approach
 Except on all-fours, crawling till I bade,
 'Now that with eyelids thou hast touched the earth,
 Come close and have no fear, poor nothingness!'

What wonder that the lady-rose I woo
 And palisade about from every wind,
 Holds herself handsomely? The wilding, now,
 Ruffled outside at pleasure of the blast,
 That still lifts up with something of a smile
 Its poor attempt at bloom" . . .

"A blameless life,
 Where wrong might revel with impunity —
 Remember that!"

"The falcon on his fist —
 Reclaimed and trained and belled and beautified
 Till she believes herself the Simorgh's match —
 She only deigns destroy the antelope,
 Stoops at no carrion-crow: thou marvellest?"

"So be it, then! He wakes no love in thee
 For any one of divers attributes
 Commonly deemed love-worthy. All the same,
 I would he were not wasting, slow but sure,
 With that internal ulcer" . . .

"Say'st thou so?
 How should I guess? Alack, poor soul! But stay —
 Sure in the reach of art some remedy
 Must lie to hand: or if it lurk, — that leech
 Of fame in Tebriz, why not seek his aid?
 Could'st not thou, Dervish, counsel in the case?"

"My counsel might be — what imports a pang
 The more or less, which puts an end to one
 Odious in spite of every attribute
 Commonly deemed love-worthy?"

"Attributes?
 Faugh! — nay, Ferishtah, — 't is an ulcer, think!
 Attributes, quotha? Here's poor flesh and blood,
 Like thine and mine and every man's, a prey
 To hell-fire! Hast thou lost thy wits for once?"

"Friend, here they are to find and profit by!
 Put pain from out the world, what room were left
 For thanks to God, for love to Man? Why thanks, —
 Except for some escape, whate'er the style,
 From pain that might be, name it as thou may'st?"

Why love, — when all thy kind, save me, suppose,
 Thy father, and thy son, and . . . well, thy dog,
 To eke the decent number out — we few
 Who happen — like a handful of chance stars
 From the unnumbered host — to shine o'erhead
 And lend thee light, — our twinkle all thy store, —
 We only take thy love! Mankind, forsooth?
 Who sympathizes with their general joy
 Foolish as undeserved? But pain — see God's
 Wisdom at work! — man's heart is made to judge
 Pain deserved nowhere by the common flesh
 Our birthright, — bad and good deserve alike
 No pain, to human apprehension! Lust,
 Greed, cruelty, injustice crave (we hold)
 Due punishment from somebody, no doubt:
 But ulcer in the midriff! that brings flesh
 Triumphant from the bar whereto arraigned
 Soul quakes with reason. In the eye of God
 Pain may have purpose and be justified:
 Man's sense avails to only see, in pain,
 A hateful chance no man but would avert,
 Or, failing, needs must pity. Thanks to God
 And love to man, — from man take these away,
 And what is man worth? Therefore, Mihrab Shah,
 Tax me my bread and salt twice over, claim
 Laila my daughter for thy sport, — go on!
 Slay my son's self, maintain thy poetry
 Beats mine, — thou meritest a dozen deaths!
 But — ulcer in the stomach, — ah, poor soul,
 Try a fig-plaster: may it ease thy pangs!"

So, the head aches and the limbs are faint!
 Flesh is a burden — even to you!
 Can I force a smile with a fancy quaint?
 Why are my ailments none or few?

In the soul of me sits sluggishness:
 Body so strong and will so weak:
 The slave stands fit for the labor — yes,
 But the master's mandate is still to seek.

You, now — what if the outside clay
 Helped, not hindered the inside flame?
 My dim to-morrow — your plain to-day,
 Yours the achievement, mine the aim?

So were it rightly, so shall it be !
 Only, while earth we pace together
 For the purpose apportioned you and me,
 Closer we tread for a common tether.

You shall sigh, " Wait for his sluggish soul !
 Shame he should lag, not lamed as I ! "
 May not I smile, " Ungained her goal :
 Body may reach her — by and by " ?

VII. A CAMEL-DRIVER.

" How of his fate, the Pilgrims' soldier-guide
 Condemned " (Ferishtah' questioned), " for he slew
 The merchant whom he convoyed with his bales
 — A special treachery ? "

" Sir, the proofs were plain :
 Justice was satisfied : between two boards
 The rogue was sawn asunder, rightly served. "

" With all wise men's approval — mine at least. "

" Himself, indeed, confessed as much. ' I die
 Justly ' (groaned he) ' through over-greediness
 Which tempted me to rob : but grieve the most
 That he who quickened sin at slumber, — ay,
 Prompted and pestered me till thought grew deed, —
 The same is fled to Syria and is safe,
 Laughing at me thus left to pay for both.
 My comfort is that God reserves for him
 Hell's hottest ' " . . .

" Idle words. "

" Enlighten me !

Wherefore so idle ? Punishment by man
 Has thy assent, — the word is on thy lips.
 By parity of reason, punishment
 By God should likelier win thy thanks and praise. "

" Man acts as man must : God, as God beseems.
 A camel-driver, when his beast will bite,
 Thumps her athwart the muzzle : why ? "

" How else
 Instruct the creature — mouths should munch not bite ? "

“ True, he is man, knows but man’s trick to teach.
Suppose some plain word, told her first of all,
Had hindered any biting ? ”

“ Find him such,
And fit the beast with understanding first !
No understanding animals like Rakhsh
Nowadays, Master ! Till they breed on earth,
For teaching — blows must serve.”

“ Who deals the blow —
What if by some rare method, — magic, say, —
He saw into the biter’s very soul,
And knew the fault was so repented of
It could not happen twice ? ”

“ That’s something : still,
I hear, methinks, the driver say, ‘ No less
Take thy fault’s due ! Those long-necked sisters, see,
Lean all a-stretch to know if biting meets
Punishment or enjoys impunity.
For their sakes — thwack ! ’ ”

“ The journey home at end,
The solitary beast safe-stabled now,
In comes the driver to avenge a wrong
Suffered from six months since, — apparently
With patience, nay, approval : when the jaws
Met i’ the small o’ the arm. ‘ Ha, Ladykin,
Still at thy frolics, girl of gold ? ’ laughed he :
‘ Eat flesh ? Rye-grass content thee rather with,
Whereof accept a bundle ! ’ Now, — what change !
Laughter by no means ! Now ’t is, ‘ Fiend, thy frisk
Was fit to find thee provender, didst judge ?
Behold this red-hot twy-prong, thus I stick
To hiss i’ the soft of thee ! ’ ”

“ Behold ? behold
A crazy noddle, rather ! Sure the brute
Might wellnigh have plain speech coaxed out of tongue,
And grow as voluble as Rakhsh himself
At such mad outrage. ‘ Could I take thy mind,
Guess thy desire ? If biting was offence,
Wherefore the rye-grass bundle, why each day’s
Patting and petting, but to intimate
My playsomeness had pleased thee ? Thou endowed
With reason, truly ! ’ ”

“ Reason aims to raise
Some makeshift scaffold-vantage midway, whence
Man dares, for life’s brief moment, peer below :
But ape omniscience ? Nay ! The ladder lent

To climb by, step and step, until we reach
 The little foothold-rise allowed mankind
 To mount on and thence guess the sun's survey —
 Shall this avail to show us world-wide truth
 Stretched for the sun's descreying? Reason bids,
 'Teach, Man, thy beast his duty first of all
 Or last of all, with blows if blows must be, —
 How else accomplish teaching?' Reason adds,
 'Before man's First, and after man's poor Last,
 God operated and will operate.'
 — Process of which man merely knows this much, —
 That nowise it resembles man's at all,
 Teaching or punishing."

"It follows, then,
 That any malefactor I would smite
 With God's allowance, God himself will spare
 Presumably. No scapegrace? Then, rejoice
 Thou snatch-grace safe in Syria!"

* "Friend, such view
 Is but man's wonderful and wide mistake.
 Man lumps his kind i' the mass: God singles thence
 Unit by unit. Thou and God exist —
 So think! — for certain: think the mass — mankind —
 Disparts, disperses, leaves thyself alone!
 Ask thy lone soul what laws are plain to thee, —
 Thee and no other, — stand or fall by them!
 That is the part for thee: regard all else
 For what it may be — Time's illusion. This
 Be sure of — ignorance that sins, is safe.
 No punishment like knowledge! Instance, now!
 My father's choicest treasure was a book
 Wherein he, day by day and year by year,
 Recorded gains of wisdom for my sake
 When I should grow to manhood. While a child,
 Coming upon the casket where it lay
 Unguarded, — what did I but toss the thing
 Into a fire to make more flame therewith,
 Meaning no harm? So acts man three-years old!
 I grieve now at my loss by witlessness,
 But guilt was none to punish. Man mature —
 Each word of his I lightly held, each look
 I turned from — wish that wished in vain — nay, will
 That willed and yet went all to waste — 't is these
 Rankle like fire. Forgiveness? rather grant
 Forgetfulness! The past is past and lost.
 However near I stand in his regard,

So much the nearer had I stood by steps
Offered the feet which rashly spurned their help.
That I call Hell; why further punishment?"

When I vexed you and you chid me,
And I owned my fault and turned
My cheek the way you bid me,
And confessed the blow well earned, —

My comfort all the while was
— Fault was faulty — near, not quite !
Do you wonder why the smile was ?
O'erpunished wrong grew right.

But faults you ne'er suspected,
Nay, praised, no faults at all, —
Those would you had detected —
Crushed eggs whence snakes could crawl !

VIII. TWO CAMELS.

QUOTH one : " Sir, solve a scruple ! No true sage
I hear of, but instructs his scholar thus :
' Would'st thou be wise ? Then mortify thyself !
Balk of its craving every bestial sense !
Say, " If I relish melons — so do swine !
Horse, ass, and mule consume their provender
Nor leave a pea-pod : fasting feeds the soul."'
Thus they admonish : while thyself, I note,
Eatest thy ration with an appetite,
Nor fallest foul of whoso licks his lips
And sighs — ' Well-saffroned was that barley-soup !'
Can wisdom coexist with — gorge-and-swill,
I say not, — simply sensual preference
For this or that fantastic meat and drink ?
Moreover, wind blows sharper than its wont
This morning, and thou hast already donned
Thy sheepskin over-garment : sure the sage
Is busied with conceits that soar above
A petty change of season and its chance
Of causing ordinary flesh to sneeze ?
I always thought, Sir" . . .

" Son," Ferishtah said,
" Truth ought to seem as never thought before.
How if I give it birth in parable ?

A neighbor owns two camels, beasts of price
 And promise, destined each to go, next week,
 Swiftly and surely with his merchandise
 From Nishapur to Sebzevar, no truce
 To tramp, but travel, spite of sands and drought,
 In days so many, lest they miss the Fair.
 Each falls to meditation o'er his crib
 Piled high with provender before the start.
 Quoth this : ' My soul is set on winning praise
 From goodman lord and master, — hump to hoof,
 I dedicate me to his service. How ?
 Grass, purslane, lupines, and I know not what,
 Crammed in my manger ? Ha, I see — I see !
 No, master, spare thy money ! I shall trudge
 The distance and yet cost thee not a doit
 Beyond my supper on this mouldy bran.'
 ' Be magnified, O master, for the meal
 So opportunely liberal ! ' quoth that.
 ' What use of strength in me but to surmount
 Sands and simooms, and bend beneath thy bales
 No knee until I reach the glad bazaar ?
 Thus I do justice to thy fare : no sprig
 Of toothsome chervil must I leave unchewed !
 Too bitterly should I reproach myself
 Did I sink down in sight of Sebzevar,
 Remembering how the merest mouthful more
 Had heartened me to manage yet a mile !'
 And so it proved : the too-abstemious brute
 Midway broke down, his pack rejoiced the thieves,
 His carcass fed the vultures : not so he
 The wisely thankful, who, good market-drudge,
 Let down his lading in the market-place,
 No damage to a single pack. Which beast,
 Think ye, had praise and patting and a brand
 Of good-and-faithful-servant fixed on flank ?
 So, with thy squeamish scruple. What imports
 Fasting or feasting ? Do thy day's work, dare
 Refuse no help thereto, since help refused
 Is hindrance sought and found. Win but the race —
 Who shall object ' He tossed three wine-cups off,
 And, just at starting, Lilith kissed his lips ' ?

" More soberly, — consider this, my Son !
 Put case I never have myself enjoyed,
 Known by experience what enjoyment means,
 How shall I — share enjoyment ? — no, indeed ! —

Supply it to my fellows, — ignorant,
 As so I should be of the thing they crave,
 How it affects them, works for good or ill.
 Style my enjoyment self-indulgence — sin —
 Why should I labor to infect my kind
 With sin's occasion, bid them too enjoy,
 Who else might neither catch nor give again
 Joy's plague, but live in righteous misery?
 Just as I cannot, till myself convinced,
 Impart conviction, so, to deal forth joy
 Adroitly, needs must I know joy myself.
 Renounce joy for my fellows' sake? That's joy
 Beyond joy; but renounced for mine, not theirs?
 Why, the physician called to help the sick,
 Cries 'Let me, first of all, discard my health!'
 No, Son: the richness hearted in such joy
 Is in the knowing what are gifts we give,
 Not in a vain endeavor not to know!
 Therefore, desire joy and thank God for it!
 The Adversary said, — a Jew reports, —
 : **החפם ירא איוב אלהים :**
 In Persian phrase, 'Does Job fear God for naught?'
 Job's creatureship is not abjured, thou fool!
 He nowise isolates himself and plays
 The independent equal, owns no more
 Than himself gave himself, so why thank God?
 A proper speech were this **מאלהים**
 'Equals we are, Job, labor for thyself,
 Nor bid me help thee: bear, as best flesh may,
 Pains I inflict not nor avail to cure:
 Beg of me nothing thou thyself may'st win
 By work, or waive with magnanimity,
 Since we are peers acknowledged, — scarcely peers,
 Had I implanted any want of thine
 Only my power could meet and gratify.'
 No: rather hear, at man's indifference —
 'Wherefore did I contrive for thee that ear
 Hungry for music, and direct thine eye
 To where I hold a seven-stringed instrument,
 Unless I meant thee to beseech me play?' "

Once I saw a chemist take a pinch of powder
 — Simple dust it seemed — and half-unstop a phial:
 — Out dropped harmless dew. "Mixed nothings make" (quoth he)
 "Something!" So they did: a thunderclap, but louder —
 Lightning-flash, but fiercer — put spectators' nerves to trial:
 Sure enough, we learned what was, imagined what might be.

Had I no experience how a lip's mere tremble,
 Look's half hesitation, cheek's just change of color,
 These effect a heartquake, — how should I conceive
 What a heaven there may be? Let it but resemble
 Earth myself have known! No bliss that's finer, fuller,
 Only — bliss that lasts, they say, and fain would I believe.

IX. CHERRIES.

“WHAT, I disturb thee at thy morning-meal :
 Cherries so ripe already? Eat apace!
 I recollect thy lesson yesterday.
 Yet — thanks, Sir, for thy leave to interrupt” . . .

“Friend, I have finished my repast, thank God!”

“There now, thy thanks for breaking fast on fruit! —
 Thanks being praise, or tantamount thereto.
 Prithee consider, have not things degree,
 Lofty and low? Are things not great and small,
 Thence claiming praise and wonder more or less?
 Shall we confuse them, with thy warrant too,
 Whose doctrine otherwise begins and ends
 With just this precept, ‘Never faith enough
 In man as weakness, God as potency’?
 When I would pay soul's tribute to that same,
 Why not look up in wonder, bid the stars
 Attest my praise of the All-mighty One?
 What are man's puny members and as mean
 Requirements weighed with Star-King Mushtari?
 There is the marvel!”

“Not to man — that's me.

List to what happened late, in fact or dream.
 A certain stranger, bound from far away,
 Still the Shah's subject, found himself before
 Ispahan palace-gate. As duty bade,
 He enters in the courts, will, if he may,
 See so much glory as befits a slave
 Who only comes, of mind to testify
 How great and good is shown our lord the Shah.
 In he walks, round he casts his eye about,
 Looks up and down, admires to heart's content,
 Ascends the gallery, tries door and door,
 None says his reverence nay: peeps in at each,
 Wonders at all the unimagined use,

Gold here and jewels there, — so vast, that hall —
 So perfect yon pavilion! — lamps above
 Bidding look up from luxuries below, —
 Evermore wonder topping wonder, — last —
 Sudden he comes upon a cosy nook,
 A nest-like little chamber, with his name,
 His own, yea, his and no mistake at all,
 Plain o'er the entry, — what, and he descries
 Just those arrangements inside, — oh, the care! —
 Suited to soul and body both, — so snug
 The cushion — nay, the pipe-stand furnished so!
 Whereat he cries aloud, — what think'st thou, Friend?
 'That these my slippers should be just my choice,
 Even to the color that I most affect,
 Is nothing: ah, that lamp, the central sun,
 What must it light within its minaret
 I scarce dare guess the good of! Who lives there?
 That let me wonder at, — no slipper toys
 Meant for the foot, forsooth, which kicks them — thus!
 Never enough faith in omnipotence, —
 Never too much, by parity, of faith
 In impuissance, man's — which turns to strength
 When once acknowledged weakness every way.
 How? Hear the teaching of another tale.

“Two men once owed the Shah a mighty sum,
 Beggars they both were: this one crossed his arms
 And bowed his head, — ‘whereof,’ sighed he, ‘each hair
 Proved it a jewel, how the host's amount
 Were idly strewn for payment at thy feet!’
 ‘Lord, here they lie, my havings poor and scant!
 All of the berries on my currant-bush,
 What roots of garlic have escaped the mice,
 And some five pippins from the seedling tree, —
 Would they were half-a-dozen! Anyhow,
 Accept my all, poor beggar that I am!’
 ‘Received in full of all demands!’ smiled back
 The apportioner of every lot of ground
 From inch to acre. Littleness of love
 Befits the littleness of loving thing.
 What if he boasted ‘Seeing I am great,
 Great must my corresponding tribute be’?
 Mushtari, — well, suppose him seven times seven
 The sun's superior, proved so by some sage:
 Am I that sage? To me his twinkle blue
 Is all I know of him and thank him for,

And therefore I have put the same in verse —
 ‘Like yon blue twinkle, twink’s thine eye, my Love!’
 Neither shalt thou be troubled overmuch
 Because thy offering — littleness itself —
 Is lessened by admixture sad and strange
 Of mere man’s-motives, — praise with fear, and love
 With looking after that same love’s reward.
 Alas, Friend, what was free from this alloy, —
 Some smatch thereof, — in best and purest love
 Proffered thy earthly father? Dust thou art,
 Dust shalt be to the end. Thy father took
 The dust, and kindly called the handful — gold,
 Nor cared to count what sparkled here and there,
 Sagely unanalytic. Thank, praise, love
 (Sum up thus) for the lowest favors first,
 The commonest of comforts! aught beside
 Very omnipotence had overlooked
 Such needs, arranging for thy little life.
 Nor waste thy power of love in wonderment
 At what thou wiselier lettest shine unsoiled
 By breath of word. That this last cherry soothes
 A roughness of my palate, that I know:
 His Maker knows why Mushtari was made.”

Verse-making was least of my virtues: I viewed with despair
 Wealth that never yet was but might be — all that verse-making
 were
 If the life would but lengthen to wish, let the mind be laid bare.
 So I said “To do little is bad, to do nothing is worse” —
 And made verse.

Love-making, — how simple a matter! No depths to explore,
 No heights in a life to ascend! No disheartening Before,
 No affrighting Hereafter, — love now will be love evermore.
 So I felt “To keep silence were folly:” — all language above,
 I made love.

X. PLOT-CULTURE.

“AY, but, Ferishtah,” — a disciple smirked, —
 “That verse of thine ‘How twink’s thine eye, my Love,
 Blue as yon star-beam!’ much arrides myself
 Who haply may obtain a kiss therewith
 This eve from Laila where the palms abound —

My youth, my warrant — so the palms be close !
 Suppose when thou art earnest in discourse
 Concerning high and holy things, — abrupt
 I out with — ‘ Laila’s lip, how honey-sweet ! ’ —
 What say’st thou, were it scandalous or no ?
 I feel thy shoe sent flying at my mouth
 For daring — prodigy of impudence —
 Publish what, secret, were permissible.
 Well, — one slide further in the imagined slough, —
 Knee-deep therein, (respect thy reverence !) —
 Suppose me well aware thy very self
 Stooped prying through the palm-screen, while I dared
 Solace me with caressings all the same ?
 Unutterable, nay — unthinkable,
 Undreamable a deed of shame ! Alack,
 How will it fare should’st thou impress on me
 That certainly an Eye is over all
 And each, to mark the minute’s deed, word, thought,
 As worthy of reward or punishment ?
 Shall I permit my sense an Eye-viewed shame,
 Broad daylight perpetration, — so to speak, —
 I had not dared to breathe within the Ear,
 With black night’s help about me ? Yet I stand
 A man, no monster, made of flesh not cloud :
 Why made so, if my making prove offence
 To Maker’s eye and ear ? ”

“ Thou would’st not stand

Distinctly Man,” — Ferishtah made reply,
 “ Not the mere creature, — did no limit-line
 Round thee about, apportion thee thy place
 Clean-cut from out and off the illimitable, —
 Minuteness severed from immensity.
 All of thee for the Maker, — for thyself,
 Workings inside the circle that evolve
 Thine all, — the product of thy cultured plot.
 So much of grain the ground’s lord bids thee yield :
 Bring sacks to granary in Autumn ! spare
 Daily intelligence of this manure,
 That compost, how they tend to feed the soil :
 There thou art master sole and absolute
 — Only, remember doomsday ! Twit’st thou me
 Because I turn away my outraged nose
 Should’st thou obtrude thereon a shovelful
 Of fertilizing kisses ? Since thy sire
 Wills and obtains thy marriage with the maid,
 Enough ! Be reticent, I counsel thee,

Nor venture to acquaint him, point by point,
 What he procures thee. Is he so obtuse?
 Keep thy instruction to thyself! My ass —
 Only from him expect acknowledgment,
 The while he champs my gift, a thistle-bunch,
 How much he loves the largess : of his love
 I only tolerate so much as tells
 By wrinkling nose and inarticulate grunt,
 The meal, that heartens him to do my work,
 Tickles his palate as I meant it should."

Not with my Soul, Love ! — bid no Soul like mine
 Lap thee around nor leave the poor Sense room !
 Soul, — travel-worn, toil-weary, — would confine
 Along with Soul, Soul's gains from glow and gloom,
 Captures from soarings high and divings deep.
 Spoil-laden Soul, how should such memories sleep ?
 Take Sense, too — let me love entire and whole —
 Not with my Soul !

Eyes shall meet eyes and find no eyes between,
 Lips feed on lips, no other lips to fear !
 No past, no future — so thine arms but screen
 The present from surprise ! not there, 't is here —
 Not then, 't is now : — back, memories that intrude !
 Make, Love, the universe our solitude,
 And, over all the rest, oblivion roll —
 Sense quenching Soul !

XI. A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR.

- " KNOWLEDGE deposed, then ! " — groaned whom that most
 grieved
 As foolishlest of all the company.
 " What, knowledge, man's distinctive attribute,
 He doffs that crown to emulate an ass
 Because the unknowing long-ears loves at least
 Husked lupines, and belike the feeder's self
 — Whose purpose in the dole what ass divines ? "
- " Friend," quoth Ferishtah, " all I seem to know
 Is — I know nothing save that love I can
 Boundlessly, endlessly. My curls were crowned
 In youth with knowledge, — off, alas, crown slipped
 Next moment, pushed by better knowledge still

Which nowise proved more constant : gain, to-day,
 Was toppling loss to-morrow, lay at last
 — Knowledge, the golden ? — lacquered ignorance !
 As gain — mistrust it ! Not as means to gain :
 Lacquer we learn by : cast in fining-pot,
 We learn, when what seemed ore assayed proves dross, —
 Surelier true gold's worth, guess how purity
 I' the lode were precious could one light on ore
 Clarified up to test of crucible.

The prize is in the process : knowledge means
 Ever-renewed assurance by defeat

That victory is somehow still to reach,
 But love is victory, the prize itself :

Love — trust to ! Be rewarded for the trust
 In trust's mere act. In love success is sure,

Attainment — no delusion, whatsoe'er
 The prize be : apprehended as a prize,

A prize it is. Thy child as surely grasps
 An orange as he fails to grasp the sun

Assumed his capture. What if soon he finds
 The foolish fruit unworthy grasping ? Joy

In shape and color, — that was joy as true —
 Worthy in its degree of love — as grasp

Of sun were, which had singed his hand beside.
 What if he said the orange held no juice

Since it was not that sun he hoped to suck ?
 This constitutes the curse that spoils our life

And sets man maundering of his misery,
 That there's no meanest atom he obtains

Of what he counts for knowledge but he cries
 ' Hold here, — I have the whole thing, — know, this time,

Nor need search farther ! ' Whereas, strew his path
 With pleasures, and he scorns them while he stoops :

' This fitly call'st thou pleasure, pick up this
 And praise it, truly ? I reserve my thanks

For something more substantial.' Fool not thus
 In practising with life and its delights !

Enjoy the present gift, nor wait to know
 The unknowable. Enough to say ' I feel

Love's sure effect, and, being loved, must love
 The love its cause behind, — I can and do ! '

Nor turn to try thy brain-power on the fact,
 (Apart from as it strikes thee, here and now —

Its how and why, i' the future and elsewhere)
 Except to — yet once more, and ever again,
 Confirm thee in thy utter ignorance :

Assured that, whatsoe'er the quality
 Of love's cause, save that love was caused thereby,
 This — nigh upon revelation as it seemed
 A minute since — defies thy longing looks,
 Withdrawn into the unknowable once more.
 Wholly distrust thy knowledge, then, and trust
 As wholly love allied to ignorance !
 There lies thy truth and safety. Love is praise,
 And praise is love ! Refine the same, contrive
 An intellectual tribute — ignorance
 Appreciating ere approbative
 Of knowledge that is infinite ? With us,
 The small, who thank the knowledge of our kind
 Greater than we, the wiser ignorance
 Restricts its apprehension, sees and knows
 No more than brain accepts in faith of sight,
 Takes first what comes first, only sure so far.
 By Sebzevar a certain pillar stands
 So aptly that its gnomon tells the hour ;
 What if the townsmen said ' Before we thank
 Who placed it, for his serviceable craft,
 And go to dinner since its shade tells noon,
 Needs must we have the craftsman's purpose clear
 On half a hundred more recondite points
 Than a mere summons to a vulgar meal !'
 Better they say ' How opportune the help !
 Be loved and praised, thou kindly-hearted sage
 Whom Hudhud taught, — the gracious spirit-bird, —
 How to construct the pillar, teach the time !'
 So let us say — not ' Since we know, we love,'
 But rather ' Since we love, we know enough.'
 Perhaps the pillar by a spell controlled
 Mushtari in his courses ? Added grace
 Surely I count it that the sage devised,
 Beside celestial service, ministry
 To all the land, by one sharp shade at noon
 Falling as folk foresee. Once more, then, Friend —
 (What ever in those careless ears of thine
 Withal I needs must round thee) — knowledge doubt
 Even wherein it seems demonstrable !
 Love, — in the claim for love, that 's gratitude
 For apprehended pleasure, nowise doubt !
 Pay its due tribute, — sure that pleasure is,
 While knowledge may be, at the most. See, now !
 Eating my breakfast, I thanked God. — ' For love
 Shown in the cherries' flavor ? Consecrate

So petty an example?' There's the fault!
 We circumscribe omnipotence. Search sand
 To unearth water: if first handful scooped
 Yields thee a draught, what need of digging down
 Full fifty fathoms deep to find a spring
 Whereof the pulse might deluge half the land?
 Drain the sufficient drop, and praise what checks
 The drought that glues thy tongue, — what more would help
 A brimful cistern? Ask the cistern's boon
 When thou would'st solace camels: in thy case,
 Relish the drop and love the lovable!"

"And what may be unlovable?"

"Why, hate!

If out of sand comes sand and naught but sand,
 Affect not to be quaffing at mirage,
 Nor nickname pain as pleasure. That, belike,
 Constitutes just the trial of thy wit
 And worthiness to gain promotion, — hence,
 Proves the true purpose of thine actual life.
 Thy soul's environment of things perceived,
 Things visible and things invisible,
 Fact, fancy — all was purposed to evolve
 This and this only — was thy wit of worth
 To recognize the drop's use, love the same,
 And loyally declare against mirage
 Though all the world asseverated dust
 Was good to drink? Say, 'what made moist my lip,
 That I acknowledged moisture: ' thou art saved!
 For why? The creature and creator stand
 Rightly related so. Consider well!
 Were knowledge all thy faculty, then God
 Must be ignored: love gains him by first leap.
 Frankly accept the creatureship: ask good
 To love for: press bold to the tether's end
 Allotted to this life's intelligence!
 'So we offend?' Will it offend thyself
 If — impuissance praying potency —
 Thy child beseech that thou command the sun
 Rise bright to-morrow — thou, he thinks supreme
 In power and goodness, why should'st thou refuse?
 Afterward, when the child matures, perchance
 The fault were greater if, with wit full-grown,
 The stripling dared to ask for a dinar,
 Than that the boy cried ' Pluck Sitara down

And give her me to play with! 'T is for him
 To have no bounds to his belief in thee:
 For thee it also is to let her shine
 Lustrous and lonely, so best serving him!"

Ask not one least word of praise!
 Words declare your eyes are bright?
 What then meant that summer day's
 Silence spent in one long gaze?
 Was my silence wrong or right?

Words of praise were all to seek!
 Face of you and form of you,
 Did they find the praise so weak
 When my lips just touched your cheek —
 Touch which let my soul come through?

XII. A BEAN-STRIPE: ALSO APPLE-EATING.

"Look, I strew beans" . . .

(Ferishtah, we premise,
 Strove this way with a scholar's cavilment
 Who put the peevish question: "Sir, be frank!
 A good thing or a bad thing — Life is which?
 Shine and shade, happiness and misery
 Battle it out there: which force beats, I ask?
 If I pick beans from out a bushelful —
 This one, this other, — then demand of thee
 What color names each justly in the main, —
 'Black' I expect, and 'White' ensues reply:
 No hesitation for what speak, spot, splash
 Of either color's opposite, intrudes
 To modify thy judgment. Well, for beans
 Substitute days, — show, ranged in order, Life —
 Then, tell me its true color! Time is short,
 Life's days compose a span, — as brief be speech!
 Black I pronounce for, like the Indian Sage, —
 Black — present, past, and future, interspersed
 With blanks, no doubt, which simple folk style Good
 Because not Evil: no, indeed? Forsooth,
 Black's shade on White is White too! What's the worst
 Of Evil but that, past, it overshades
 The else-exempted present? — memory,

We call the plague! 'Nay, but our memory fades
 And leaves the past unsullied!' Does it so?
 Why, straight the purpose of such breathing-space,
 Such respite from past ill, grows plain enough!
 What follows on remembrance of the past?
 Fear of the future! Life, from birth to death,
 Means — either looking back on harm escaped,
 Or looking forward to that harm's return
 With tenfold power of harming. Black, not White,
 Never the whole consummate quietude
 Life should be, troubled by no fear! — nor hope —
 I'll say, since lamplight dies in noontide, hope
 Loses itself in certainty. Such lot
 Man's might have been: I leave the consequence
 To bolder critics of the Primal Cause;
 Such am not I: but, man — as man I speak:
 Black is the bean-throw: evil is the Life!")

“Look, I strew beans,” — resumed Ferishtah, — “beans
 Blackish and whitish; what they figure forth
 Shall be man's sum of moments, bad and good,
 That make up Life, — each moment when he feels
 Pleasure or pain, his poorest fact of sense,
 Consciousness anyhow: there's stand the first;
 Whence next advance shall be from points to line,
 Singulars to a series, parts to whole,
 And moments to the Life. How look they now,
 Viewed in the large, those little joys and griefs
 Ranged duly all a-row at last, like beans
 — These which I strew? This bean was white, this — black,
 Set by itself, — but see if, good and bad
 Each following either in companionship,
 Black have not grown less black and white less white,
 Till blackish seems but dun, and whitish — gray,
 And the whole line turns — well, or black to thee
 Or white belike to me — no matter which:
 The main result is — both are modified
 According to our eye's scope, power of range
 Before and after. Black dost call this bean?
 What, with a whiteness in its wake, which — see —
 Suffuses half its neighbor? — and, in turn,
 Lowers its pearliness late absolute,
 Frowned upon by the jet which follows hard —
 Else wholly white my bean were. Choose a joy!
 Bettered it was by sorrow gone before,
 And sobered somewhat by the shadowy sense

Of sorrow which came after or might come.
 Joy, sorrow, — by precedence, subsequence —
 Either on each, make fusion, mix in Life
 That's both and neither wholly : gray or dun ?
 Dun thou decidest ? gray prevails, say I :
 Wherefore ? Because my view is wide enough,
 Reaches from first to last nor winks at all :
 Motion achieves it : stop short — fast we stick, —
 Probably at the bean that's blackest.

Since —
 Son, trust me, — this I know and only this —
 I am in motion, and all things beside
 That circle round my passage through their midst, —
 Motionless, these are, as regarding me :
 — Which means, myself I solely recognize.
 They too may recognize themselves, not me,
 For aught I know or care : but plain they serve
 This, if no other purpose — stuff to try
 And test my power upon of raying light
 And lending hue to all things as I go
 Moonlike through vapor. Mark the flying orb !
 Think'st thou the halo, painted still afresh
 At each new cloud-fleece pierced and passaged through,
 This was and is and will be evermore
 Colored in permanence ? The glory swims
 Girdling the glory-giver, swallowed straight
 By night's abysmal gloom, unglorified
 Behind as erst before the advancer : gloom ?
 Faced by the onward-faring, see, succeeds
 From the abandoned heaven a next surprise,
 And where's the gloom now ? — silver-smitten straight,
 One glow and variegation ! So with me,
 Who move and make — myself — the black, the white,
 The good, the bad, of life's environment.
 Stand still ! black stays black : start again ! there's white
 Asserts supremacy : the motion's all
 That colors me my moment : seen as joy ? —
 I have escaped from sorrow, or that was
 Or might have been : as sorrow ? — thence shall be
 Escape as certain : white preceded black,
 Black shall give way to white as duly, — so,
 Deepest in black means white most imminent.
 Stand still, — have no before, no after ! — life
 Proves death, existence grows impossible
 To man like me. 'What else is blessed sleep
 But death, then ?' Why, a rapture of release

From toil, — that 's sleep's approach : as certainly,
 The end of sleep means, toil is triumphed o'er :
 These round the blank unconsciousness between
 Brightness and brightness, either pushed to blaze
 Just through that blank's interposition. Hence
 The use of things external: man — that's I —
 Practise thereon my power of casting light,
 And calling substance, — when the light I cast
 Breaks into color, — by its proper name
 — A truth and yet a falsity: black, white,
 Names each bean taken from what lay so close
 And threw such tint: pain might mean pain indeed
 Seen in the passage past it, — pleasure prove
 No mere delusion while I paused to look, —
 Though what an idle fancy was that fear
 Which overhung and hindered pleasure's hue !
 While how, again, pain's shade enhanced the shine
 Of pleasure, else no pleasure ! Such effects
 Came of such causes. Passage at an end, —
 Past, present, future pains and pleasures fused
 So that one glance may gather blacks and whites
 Into a lifetime, — like my bean-streak there,
 Why, white they whirl into, not black — for me !”

“ Ay, but for me ? The indubitable blacks,
 Immeasurable miseries, here, there
 And everywhere i' the world — world outside thine
 Paled off so opportunely, — body's plague,
 Torment of soul, — where 's found thy fellowship
 With wide humanity all round about
 Reeling beneath its burden ? What 's despair ?
 Behold that man, that woman, child — nay, brute !
 Will any speck of white unblacken life
 Splashed, splotched, dyed hell-deep now from end to end
 For him or her or it — who knows ? Not I !”

“ Nor I, Son ! ‘ It ' shall stand for bird, beast, fish,
 Reptile, and insect even : take the last !
 There 's the palm-aphis, minute miracle
 As wondrous every whit as thou or I :
 Well, and his world 's the palm-frond, there he 's born,
 Lives, breeds, and dies in that circumference,
 An inch of green for cradle, pasture-ground,
 Purlieu and grave : the palm's use, ask of him !
 ‘ To furnish these,’ replies his wit : ask thine —
 Who see the heaven above, the earth below,

Creation everywhere, — these, each and all
 Claim certain recognition from the tree
 For special service rendered branch and bole,
 Top-tuft and tap-root: — for thyself, thus seen,
 Palms furnish dates to eat, and leaves to shade,
 — Maybe, thatch huts with, — have another use
 Than strikes the aphid. So with me, my Son!
 I know my own appointed patch i' the world,
 What pleasures me or pains there: all outside —
 How he, she, it, and even thou, Son, live,
 Are pleased or pained, is past conjecture, once
 I pry beneath the semblance, — all that's fit,
 To practise with, — reach where the fact may lie
 Fathom-deep lower. There's the first and last
 Of my philosophy. Blacks blur thy white?
 Not mine! The aphid feeds, nor finds his leaf
 Untenable, because a lance-thrust, nay,
 Lightning strikes sere a moss-patch close beside,
 Where certain other aphids live and love.
 Restriction to his single inch of white,
 That's law for him, the aphid: but for me,
 The man, the larger-souled, beside my stretch
 Of blacks and whites, I see a world of woe
 All round about me: one such burst of black
 Intolerable o'er the life I count
 White in the main, and, yea — white's faintest trace
 Were clean abolished once and evermore.
 Thus fare my fellows, swallowed up in gloom
 So far as I discern: how far is that?
 God's care be God's! 'Tis mine — to boast no joy
 Unsobered by such sorrows of my kind
 As sully with their shade my life that shines."

"Reflected possibilities of pain,
 Forsooth, just chasten pleasure! Pain itself, —
 Fact and not fancy, does not this affect
 The general color?"

"Here and there a touch
 Taught me, betimes, the artifice of things —
 That all about, external to myself,
 Was meant to be suspected, — not revealed
 Demonstrably a cheat, — but half seen through,
 Lest white should rule unchecked along the line
 Therefore white may not triumph. All the same,
 Of absolute and irretrievable

And all-subduing black, — black's soul of black
 Beyond white's power to disintensify, —
 Of that I saw no sample : such may wreck
 My life and ruin my philosophy
 To-morrow, doubtless : hence the constant shade
 Cast on life's shine, — the tremor that intrudes
 When firmest seems my faith in white. Dost ask
 ' Who is Ferishtah, hitherto exempt
 From black experience ? Why, if God be just,
 Were sundry fellow-mortals singled out
 To undergo experience for his sake,
 Just that the gift of pain, bestowed on them,
 In him might temper to the due degree
 Joy's else-excessive largess ? ' Why, indeed !
 Back are we brought thus to the starting-point —
 Man's impotency, God's omnipotence,
 These stop my answer. Aphis that I am,
 How leave my inch-allotment, pass at will
 Into my fellow's liberty of range,
 Enter into his sense of black and white,
 As either, seen by me from outside, seems
 Predominatingly the color ? Life,
 Lived by my fellow, shall I pass into
 And myself live there ? No — no more than pass
 From Persia, where in sun since birth I bask
 Daily, to some ungracious land afar,
 Told of by travellers, where the might of snow
 Smothers up day, and fluids lose themselves
 Frozen to marble. How I bear the sun,
 Beat though he may unduly, that I know :
 How blood once curdled ever creeps again,
 Baffles conjecture : yet since people live
 Somehow, resist a clime would conquer me,
 Somehow provided for their sake must dawn
 Compensative resource. ' No sun, no grapes, —
 Then, no subsistence ! ' — were it wisely said ?
 Or this well-reasoned — ' Do I dare feel warmth
 And please my palate here with Persia's vine,
 Though, over-mounts, — to trust the traveller, —
 Snow, feather-thick, is falling while I feast ?
 What if the cruel winter force his way
 Here also ? ' Son, the wise reply were this :
 When cold from over-mounts spikes through and through
 Blood, bone and marrow of Ferishtah, — then,
 Time to look out for shelter — time, at least,
 To wring the hands and cry ' No shelter serves ! '

Shelter, of some sort, no experienced chill
Warrants that I despair to find."

" No less,
Doctors have differed here ; thou say'st thy say ;
Another man's experience masters thine,
Flat controverted by the sourly-Sage,
The Indian witness who, with faculty
Fine as Ferishtah's, found no white at all
Chequer the world's predominating black,
No good oust evil from supremacy,
So that Life's best was that it led to death.
How of his testimony ? "

" Son, suppose
My camel told me : ' Threescore days and ten
I traversed hill and dale yet never found
Food to stop hunger, drink to stay my drought ;
Yet, here I stand alive, which take in proof
That to survive was found impossible ! ' .
' Nay, rather take thou, non-surviving beast,'
(Reply were prompt,) ' on flank this thwack of staff
Nowise affecting flesh that 's dead and dry !
Thou wincest ? Take correction twice, amend
Next time thy nomenclature ! Call white — white ! ' .
The sourly-Sage, for whom life's best was death,
Lived out his seventy years, looked hale, laughed loud,
Liked — above all — his dinner, — lied, in short."

" Lied is a rough phrase : say he fell from truth
In climbing towards it ! — sure less faulty so
Than had he sat him down and stayed content
With thy safe orthodoxy, ' White, all white,
White everywhere for certain I should see
Did I but understand how white is black,
As clearer sense than mine would.' Clearer sense, —
Whose may that be ? Mere human eyes I boast,
And such distinguish colors in the main,
However any tongue, that 's human too,
Please to report the matter. Dost thou blame
A soul that strives but to see plain, speak true,
Truth at all hazards ? Oh, this false for real,
This emptiness which feigns solidity, —
Ever some gray that 's white and dun that 's black, —
When shall we rest upon the thing itself
Not on its semblance ? — Soul — too weak, forsooth,

To cope with fact — wants fiction everywhere!
 Mine tires of falsehood: truth at any cost!"

"Take one and try conclusions — this, suppose!
 God is all-good, all-wise, all-powerful: truth?
 Take it and rest there. What is man? Not God:
 None of these absolutes therefore, — yet himself,
 A creature with a creature's qualities.
 Make them agree, these two conceptions! Each
 Abolishes the other. Is man weak,
 Foolish and bad? He must be Ahriman,
 Co-equal with an Ormuzd, Bad with Good,
 Or else a thing made at the Prime Sole Will,
 Doing a maker's pleasure — with results
 Which — call, the wide world over, 'what must be' —
 But, from man's point of view, and only point
 Possible to his powers, call — evidence
 Of goodness, wisdom, strength? we mock ourselves
 In all that's best of us, — man's blind but sure
 Craving for these in very deed not word,
 Reality and not illusion. Well, —
 Since these nowhere exist — nor there where cause
 Must have effect, nor here where craving means
 Craving unfollowed by fit consequence
 And full supply, aye sought for, never found —
 These — what are they but man's own rule of right?
 A scheme of goodness recognized by man,
 Although by man unrealizable, —
 Not God's with whom to will were to perform:
 Nowise performed here, therefore never willed.
 What follows but that God, who could the best,
 Has willed the worst, — while man, with power to match
 Will with performance, were deservedly
 Hailed the supreme — provided . . . here's the touch
 That breaks the bubble . . . this concept of man's
 Were man's own work, his birth of heart and brain,
 His native grace, no alien gift at all.
 The bubble breaks here. Will of man create?
 No more than this my hand which strewed the beans
 Produced them also from its finger-tips.
 Back goes creation to its source, source prime
 And ultimate, the single and the sole."

"How reconcile discordancy, — unite
 Notion and notion — God that only can
 Yet does not, — man that would indeed

But just as surely cannot, — both in one?
 What help occurs to thy intelligence?"

" Ah, the beans, — or, — example better yet, —
 A carpet-web I saw once leave the loom
 And lie at gorgeous length in Ispahan!
 The weaver plied his work with lengths of silk
 Dyed each to match some jewel as it might,
 And wove them, this by that. 'How comes it, friend,' —
 (Quoth I) — 'that while, apart, this fiery hue,
 That watery dimness, either shocks the eye,
 So blinding bright, or else offends again,
 By dulness, — yet the two, set each by each,
 Somehow produce a color born of both,
 A medium profitable to the sight?'

'Such medium is the end whereat I aim,' —
 Answered my craftsman: 'there's no single tinct
 Would satisfy the eye's desire to taste
 The secret of the diamond: join extremes
 Results a serviceable medium-ghost,
 The diamond's simulation. Even so
 I needs must blend the quality of man
 With quality of God, and so assist
 Mere human sight to understand my Life,
 What is, what should be, — understand thereby
 Wherefore I hate the first and love the last, —
 Understand why things so present themselves
 To me, placed here to prove I understand.
 Thus, from beginning runs the chain to end,
 And binds me plain enough. By consequence,
 I bade thee tolerate, — not kick and cuff
 The man who held that natures did in fact
 Blend so, since so thyself must have them blend
 In fancy, if it take a flight so far."

"A power, confessed past knowledge, nay, past thought,
 — Thus thought thus known!"

"To know of, think about —

Is all man's sum of faculty effects
 When exercised on earth's least atom, Son!
 What was, what is, what may such atom be?
 No answer! Still, what seems it to man's sense?
 An atom with some certain properties
 Known about, thought of as occasion needs,
 — Man's — but occasions of the universe?

Unthinkable, unknowable to man.
 Yet, since to think and know fire through and through
 Exceeds man, is the warmth of fire unknown,
 Its uses — are they so unthinkable?
 Pass from such obvious power to powers unseen,
 Undreamed of save in their sure consequence :
 Take that, we spoke of late, which draws to ground
 The staff my hand lets fall : it draws, at least —
 Thus much man thinks and knows, if nothing more.

“ Ay, but man puts no mind into such power !
 He neither thanks it, when an apple drops,
 Nor prays it spare his pate while underneath.
 Does he thank Summer though it plumped the rind ?
 Why thank the other force — whate'er its name —
 Which gave him teeth to bite and tongue to taste
 And throat to let the pulp pass ? Force and force,
 No end of forces ! Have they mind like man ? ”

“ Suppose thou visit our lord Shalim-Shah,
 Bringing thy tribute as appointed. ‘ Here
 Come I to pay my due ! ’ Whereat one slave
 Obsequious spreads a carpet for thy foot,
 His fellow offers sweetmeats, while a third
 Prepares a pipe : what thanks or praise have they ?
 Such as befit prompt service. Gratitude
 Goes past them to the Shah whose gracious nod
 Set all the sweet civility at work ;
 But for his ordinance, I much suspect,
 My scholar had been left to cool his heels
 Uncarpeted, or warm them — likelier still —
 With bastinado for intrusion. Slaves
 Needs must obey their master : ‘ force and force,
 No end of forces, ’ act as bids some force
 Supreme o'er all and each : where find that one ?
 How recognize him ? Simply as thou didst
 The Shah — by reasoning ‘ Since I feel a debt,
 Behoves me pay the same to one aware
 I have my duty, he his privilege. ’
 Didst thou expect the slave who charged thy pipe
 Would serve as well to take thy tribute-bag
 And save thee further trouble ? ”

“ Be it so !

The sense within me that I owe a debt
 Assures me — somewhere must be somebody

Ready to take his due. All comes to this —
 Where due is, there acceptance follows: find
 Him who accepts the due! and why look far?
 Behold thy kindred compass thee about!
 Ere thou wast born and after thou shalt die,
 Heroic man stands forth as Shahan-Shah.
 Rustem and Gew, Gudarz and all the rest,
 How come they short of lordship that's to seek?
 Dead worthies! but men live undoubtedly
 Gifted as Sindokht, sage Sulayman's match,
 Valiant like Kawah: ay, and while earth lasts
 Such heroes shall abound there — all for thee
 Who profitest by all the present, past,
 And future operation of thy race.
 Why, then, o'erburdened with a debt of thanks,
 Look wistful for some hand from out the clouds
 To take it, when, all round, a multitude
 Would ease thee in a trice?"

"Such tendered thanks
 Would tumble back to who craved riddance, Son!
 — Who but my sorry self? See! stars are out —
 Stars which, unconscious of thy gaze beneath,
 Go glorifying, and glorify thee too
 — Those Seven Thrones, Zurah's beauty, weird Parwin!
 Whether shall love and praise to stars be paid
 Or — say — some Mubid who, for good to thee
 Blind at thy birth, by magic all his own
 Opened thine eyes, and gave the sightless sight,
 Let the stars' glory enter? Say his charm
 Worked while thyself lay sleeping: as he went
 Thou wakedst: 'What a novel sense have I!
 Whom shall I love and praise?' 'The stars, each orb
 Thou standest rapt beneath,' proposes one:
 'Do not they live their life, and please themselves,
 And so please thee? What more is requisite?'
 Make thou this answer: 'If indeed no mage
 Opened my eyes and worked a miracle,
 Then let the stars thank me who apprehend
 That such an one is white, such other blue!
 But for my apprehension both were blank.
 Cannot I close my eyes and bid my brain
 Make whites and blues, conceive without stars' help,
 New qualities of color? were my sight
 Lost or misleading, would yon red — I judge
 A ruby's benefaction — stand for aught

But green from vulgar glass? Myself appraise
 Lustre and lustre ; should I overlook
 Fomalhaut and declare some fen-fire king,
 Who shall correct me, lend me eyes he trusts
 No more than I trust mine? My mage for me!
 I never saw him : if he never was,
 I am the arbitrator! ' No, my Son!
 Let us sink down to thy similitude :
 I eat my apple, relish what is ripe —
 The sunny side, admire its rarity
 Since half the tribe is wrinkled, and the rest
 Hide commonly a maggot in the core, —
 And down Zerdusht goes with due smack of lips :
 But — thank an apple? He who made my mouth
 To masticate, my palate to approve,
 My maw to further the concoction — Him
 I thank, — but for whose work, the orchard's wealth
 Might prove so many gall-nuts — stocks or stones
 For aught that I should think, or know, or care."

"Why from the world," Ferishtah smiled "should thanks
 Go to this work of mine? If worthy praise,
 Praised let it be and welcome : as verse ranks,
 So rate my verse : if good therein outweighs
 Aught faulty judged, judge justly ! Justice says :
 Be just to fact, or blaming or approving :
 But — generous? No, nor loving !

"Loving ! what claim to love has work of mine ?
 Concede my life were emptied of its gains
 To furnish forth and fill work's strict confine,
 Who works so for the world's sake — he complains
 With cause when hate, not love, rewards his pains
 I looked beyond the world for truth and beauty :
 Sought, found, and did my duty."

EPILOGUE.

OH, Love — no, Love! All the noise below, Love,
 Groanings all and moanings — none of Life I lose!
 All of Life's a cry just of weariness and woe, Love —
 "Hear at least, thou happy one!" How can I, Love, but
 choose?

Only, when I do hear, sudden circle round me
 — Much as when the moon's might frees a space from cloud —
 Iridescent splendors: gloom — would else confound me —
 Barrièred off and banished far — bright-edged the blackest
 shroud!

Thronging through the cloud-rift, whose are they, the faces
 Faint revealed yet sure divined, the famous ones of old?
 "What" — they smile — "our names, our deeds so soon erases
 Time upon his tablet where Life's glory lies enrolled?"

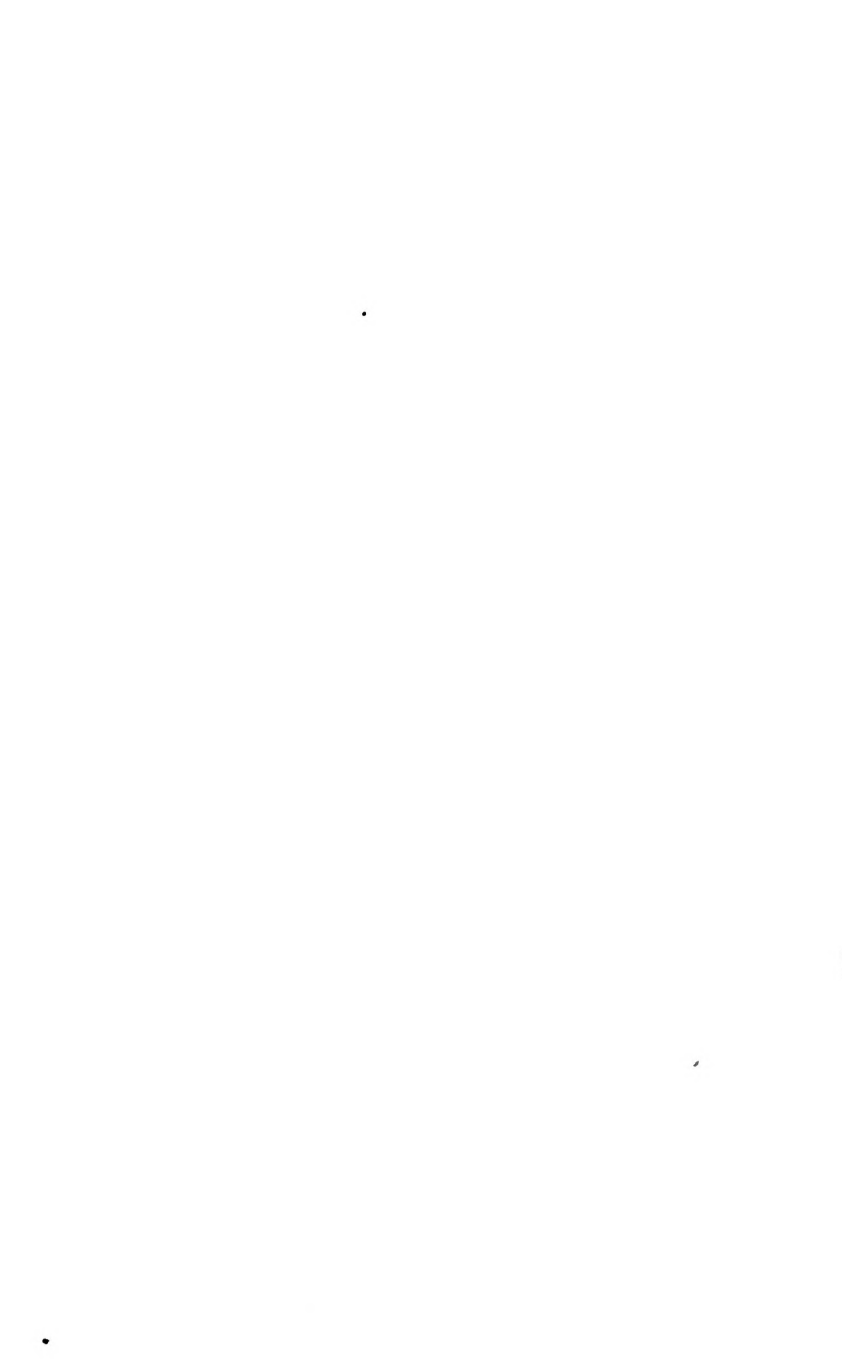
"Was it for mere fool's-play, make-believe and mumming,
 So we battled it like men, not boylike sulked or whined?
 Each of us heard clang God's 'Come!' and each was coming:
 Soldiers all, to forward-face, not sneaks to lag behind!"

"How of the field's fortune? That concerned our Leader!
 Led, we struck our stroke nor cared for doings left and right:
 Each as on his sole head, failer or succeeder,
 Lay the blame or lit the praise: no care for cowards: fight!"

Then the cloud-rift broadens, spanning earth that's under,
 Wide our world displays its worth, man's strife and strife's
 success:
 All the good and beauty, wonder crowning wonder,
 Till my heart and soul applaud perfection, nothing less.

Only, at heart's utmost joy and triumph, terror
 Sudden turns the blood to ice: a chill wind disencharms
 All the late enchantment! What if all be error —
 If the halo irised round my head were, Love, thine arms?

Palazzo Giustinian-Recanati, Venice:
 December 1, 1883.



PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE

APOLLO AND THE FATES

A PROLOGUE

[Hymn. 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-purfl'd, 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,
Lead life the due length : is all smoothness and glee,
All tangle and grief ? Take the lot, my decree !

ATROPOS.

— Which I make an end of : the smooth as the tangled
My shears cut asunder : each snap shrieks " One more
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 thread!
 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?”

Nay, swart spinsters! So I surprise you
 Making and marring the fortunes of Man?
 Huddling — no marvel, your enemy eyes you —
 Head by head bat-like, blots under the ban
 Of 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 our mystery seems
 Mewed from day's malice: wake earth from her dreams!

APOLLO.

Crones, '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
Mere 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 cld 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!

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 !
 I 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.

If Bacchus by wine's aid avail so to fluster
 Your sense, that life's fact grows from adverse and thwart
 To 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
 No 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.
 Eyes, 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 brim
 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.

Join hands! Yours and yours too! A dance or a dirge?

CHORUS.

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

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

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

Age? 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.*]

Ha, loose hands!

CLOTHO.

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.

'T 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.

Ye 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.*]

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 folk 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 brings 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?
 'Tis 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 passes 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? Fittier men
 Would take on tongue mere facts — few, 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!

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
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

* A learned and ingenious writer. “ Fu Gesuita e Storico della Compagnia ; 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.

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 yea
 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. 'T is 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 the 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 : hoy 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,
 Evermore lost, 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, saintship 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 praiseworthyly 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.”

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
 Undeaded 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 knowledge, doctors vaunt)
 Just this — why only once the fire-flame was :
 No matter if the marvel came to pass
 The way folk 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.

WITH GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON

I.

AN, 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 unstified stand
 Ourselves at vantage to put forth a hand,
 Assist the prostrate public. 'T is 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 a 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 leut
 Ability except to come in use?
 Who loves his kind must by all means induce
 That kind to let his 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 folk 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 patriots, 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 stoniest 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,
 Deportment, 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 *as 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 subintelligential 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, — tricky 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 ' ? Folk 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.

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. Agnolo —
 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 through 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 Balducci 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. Now, less 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-peevish 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 folk 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,
 — Limn 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 hottom 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 night
 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 ail-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 ministrate 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! Fittier 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 !

WITH GERARD DE LAIRESSE

I.

AN, 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 Lairese,
 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.

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 Lairese !
 How were it could I mingle false with true,

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

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 Laïresse,
 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, point 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 Laïresse!
 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?

VII.

Plain retrogression, this!
 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 which 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 mayst 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 brier 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! 'Tis a ghost.
 So drops away the beauty! There he stands
 Voiceless, scarce strives with deprecating hands. . . .

XIII.

Enough! Stop further fooling, De Lairese!
 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
 Ascend 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!

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 step 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 bandsman 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 ' Radamisto ' — 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 har'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,
 Pursued 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 trumpets, 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 !"

Stafford 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 !"

Lustily.

The musical score is written for piano and consists of five systems. Each system contains a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff, connected by a brace on the left. The time signature is 3/4. The tempo/mood is indicated as *Lustily.* The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and slurs. The piece ends with a double bar line and a final cadence in the bass staff.

FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

AN EPILOGUE.

(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.

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

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 ?
Folk 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 toping? Full oft, I suspect,
 Ye, counting your fingers, call thumbkin their first,
 And reckon a goat every guilder disbursed.

What marvel if wags, while the skinker fast brimmed
 Their glass with rare tipples' enticement, should gloat
 — Befooled 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 umbrageous,
 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! Peace, 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.

Right text, ringing rhyme, and ripe Latin for me! — "*erecta sint spe:*"

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 through
 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 spec't
 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 gravings turns Printing? Stamp one word — not one
 But fifty such, phoenix-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 im-per-ti-te!" 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 witless: around 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 opuscule
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.



FRAGMENTS

NOT HERETOFORE INCLUDED IN ANY COLLECTIVE EDITION

BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM.

(Printed in *The Keepsake*. 1856.)

I.

“ WOULD a man 'scape the rod ? ”
Rabbi Ben Karshook saith,
“ See that he turn to God
The day before his death.”

“ Ay, could a man inquire
When it shall come ! ” I say.
The Rabbi's eye shoots fire —
“ Then let him turn to-day ! ”

II.

Quoth a young Sadducee :
“ Reader of many rolls,
Is it so certain we
Have, as they tell us, souls ? ”

“ Son, there is no reply ! ”
The Rabbi bit his beard :
“ Certain, a soul have I —
We may have none,” he sneered.

Thus Karshook, the Hiram's-Hammer,
The Right-hand Temple-column,
Taught babes in grace their grammar,
And struck the simple, solemn.

ROME, April 27, 1854.

OH LOVE! LOVE.

[Translation of a lyric in the *Hyppolytus* of Euripides, and printed by J. P. Mahaffy in his *Euripides*, 1879.]

I.

OH Love! Love, thou that from the eyes diffusest
 Yearning, and on the soul sweet grace inducest —
 Souls against whom thy hostile march is made —
 Never to me be manifest in ire,
 Nor, out of time and tune, my peace invade!
 Since neither from the fire —
 No, nor from the stars — is launched a bolt more mighty
 Than that of Aphrodité
 Hurl'd from the hands of Love, the boy with Zeus for sire.

II.

Idly, how idly, by the Alpheian river
 And in the Pythian shrines of Phœbus, quiver
 Blood-offerings from the bull, which Hellas heaps:
 While Love we worship not — the Lord of men!
 Worship not him, the very key who keeps
 Of Aphrodité, when
 She closes up her dearest chamber-portals:
 — Love, when he comes to mortals,
 Wide-wasting, through those deeps of woes beyond the deep!

HELEN'S TOWER.

[Written at the request of the Earl of Dufferin and Clandeboye, who had built a tower to the memory of his mother, Helen, Countess of Giffard, on a rock on his estate at Clandeboye, Ireland, and printed in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of December 28, 1883.]

WHO hears of Helen's Tower, may dream perchance
 How the Greek Beauty from the Scæan Gate
 Gazed on old friends unanimous in hate,
 Death-doom'd because of her fair countenance.

Hearts would leap otherwise, at thy advance,
 Lady, to whom this Tower is consecrate!
 Like hers, thy face once made all eyes elate,
 Yet, unlike hers, was bless'd by every glance.

The Tower of Hate is outworn, far and strange :
 A transitory shame of long ago,
 It dies into the sand from which it sprang ;
 But thine, Love's rock-built Tower, shalt fear no change :
 God's self laid stable earth's foundation so,
 When all the morning-stars together sang.
April 26, 1870.

THE FOUNDER OF THE FEAST.

[Inscribed in an Album presented to Mr. Arthur Chappell, of the St. James Hall Saturday and Monday popular concerts.]

“ ENTER my palace,” if a prince should say —
 “ Feast with the Painters! See, in bounteous row,
 They range from Titian up to Angelo ! ”
 Could we be silent at the rich survey ?
 A host so kindly, in as great a way
 Invites to banquet, substitutes, for show
 Sound that's diviner still, and bids us know
 Bach like Beethoven ; are we thankless, pray ?

Thanks, then, to Arthur Chappell, — thanks to him
 Whose every guest henceforth not idly vaunts
 “ Sense has received the utmost Nature grants,
 My cup was filled with rapture to the brim,
 When, night by night, — ah, memory, how it haunts ! —
 Music was poured by perfect ministrants,
 By Halle, Schumann, Piatti, Joachim.
April 5, 1884.

WHY I AM A LIBERAL.

[Contributed to a volume of same title, edited by Andrew Reid, and published by Cassell and Co., 1885.]

“ WHY ? ” Because all I haply can and do,
 All that I am now, all I hope to be, —
 Whence comes it save from fortune setting free
 Body and soul the purpose to pursue,
 God traced for both ? If fetters, not a few,
 Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,

These shall I bid men — each in his degree
Also God-guided — bear, and gayly too?

But little do or can the best of us :

That little is achieved through Liberty.

Who, then, dares hold, emancipated thus —

His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,

Who live, love, labor freely, nor discuss

A brother's right to freedom. That is "Why."

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