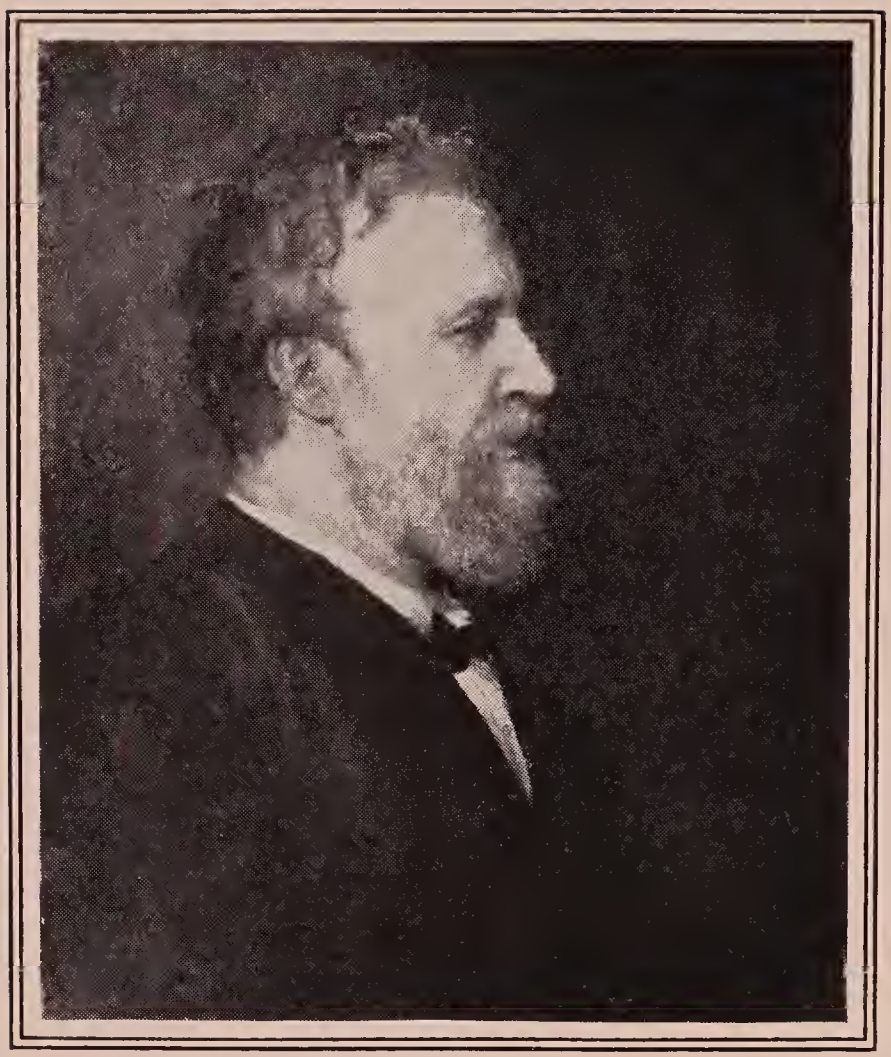
BROWNING'S SHORTER POEMS

FRENCH



Robert Browning

From the Watts po trait. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery

BROWNING'S SHORTER POEMS

SELECTED AND EDITED BY

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PREFACE

The grouping of the poems in this anthology by topics on a gradually ascending scale of difficulty is purely arbitrary. Another editor might with equal logic arrange them according to date of composition, or in some other manner. Most texts present no grouping that is both obvious and helpful to younger readers; and they fail to give the assistance that comes from the mere fact of division into units of convenient size.

With a few exceptions each poem in this book is recommended in the course of study of some state or city school system. No two systems make identical recommendations. The inclusion of all the suggested poems with a few additions makes a collection sufficiently representative for use in junior colleges and normal schools.

An appreciation of Browning is engendered by reading aloud, and reading aloud, and reading aloud some more. At least one poem should be studied carefully and read aloud repeatedly. In doing this the students will discover how all the thoughts and emotions which Browning carefully incorporated in his poetry can be evoked by naturally changing inflections of the voice and pace of speaking.

R. L. F.

CONTENTS

The figures in parentheses after the titles indicate Browning's age at the time of first publication.

ROBERT BROWNING

The Life of a Poet

On September 12, 1846, Robert Browning, thirty-four years old and a poet of very little general reputation, was secretly married in London to Elizabeth Barrett, forty years old, a poet more widely known than her husband, and a semi-invalid. Their friends called it a mad act; it was the most revealing act of Browning's life. As such, it may well be the first fact recorded of him in a brief biographical note.

Miss Barrett belonged to a well-to-do family. An accident in childhood had left her in such poor physical condition that during her mature years she was confined to her room through all the winter months. During the two years of quiet courtship she had almost always reclined on her couch while receiving the calls of her suitor. The advice of a physician that she must be taken to a warm climate for the winter of 1846 was disregarded by her father. Mr. Barrett had become used to having this beloved invalid, one of his several children, in his house; in fact, he had for years exercised a tyrannous kindness over Elizabeth, protecting her from the fresh air, diversion, and moderate exercise which might have improved her health.

Except for one sister, the family was opposed to her marriage. Elizabeth then consented to a secret marriage and returned to her father's house for a week. Browning did not call on her during that time; they did not wish to reveal their marriage, and Browning

could not bring himself to act the lie of asking for "Miss Barrett." At the end of the week they left secretly for the warmer climate of Italy.

She hoped to win her father's forgiveness later. But Mr. Barrett, who grimly monopolized his children, exiled her from his house and refused even to read letters from her. He later exiled two of his other children for the same offense. The man remains an enigma.

A marriage of this kind requires, in a man, courage, decisiveness, and a readiness to accept responsibilities unknown in their weight and length; it requires in the woman courage and trust; it demands of both a deep affection and a high hope. They both hoped that her health would be improved, but they could not be certain of any betterment. They would be thrown on one another's company almost exclusively in a foreign land; would they soon be bored? Browning was a man of unusual physical vitality, used to incessant activity and a round of society with his friends; could he adjust himself to the slower-paced life of giving constant care and consideration to an inactive wife? If the venture proved unsuccessful, and Mrs. Browning were to succumb to the strain of travel and change, the husband would lay himself open to a bitter and lifelong public hostility for having shortened the life of a brilliant, fragile woman.

All these risks they dared; and the event proved the wisdom of the "mad poets." They settled in Florence. Mrs. Browning's health improved to such an extent that she was able to give birth to a healthy son in March, 1849, and to make an excellent recovery from the ordeal herself. In 1851, 1852, and 1855 they passed some months of the summers in London and

sojourned in Paris for some weeks each time on their return toward their home, Casa Guidi, in the heart of Florence. Other summers they went to the Italian mountains, to escape the heat of Florence. They passed two winters in Rome.

At Casa Guidi they lived in a happy semiseclusion, seeing something of a limited circle of English and Italian friends, occasionally receiving travelers who admired their work, and writing independently. Unlike most men, and with the sensitiveness of a poet, Browning made no attempt to dominate his wife's mind or work, because he had a profound respect for the integrity of the mental life of every human being. Mrs. Browning's fame as a poet grew on both sides of the Atlantic faster than did her husband's, to his delight and her irritation. They were sympathetic and unfearing spectators of the rebellion of the Italians against the Austrians who had long controlled that part of Italy. With equally keen interest they watched political changes in France, England, and the United States.

Mrs. Browning's health began to fail in 1859. She died at Casa Guidi in June, 1861. Her fame as an author has since relatively declined, while her husband's has steadily grown. She is best remembered for her *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* a fanciful title given to a group of forty-four sonnets in which she recorded the emotions she experienced during her courtship. Some time after their marriage she permitted her husband to read them. He regarded them as the best sonnets since Shakespeare, and insisted on their publication. The twenty-sixth sonnet is here reprinted; it may tempt some readers to look up the whole series.

I lived with visions for my company,
Instead of men and women, years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor sought to know
A sweeter music than they played to me.
But soon their trailing purple was not free
Of this world's dust,—their lutes did silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind below
Their vanishing eyes. Then *thou* didst come . . . to be,
Beloved, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendours, (better, yet the same,
As river-water hollowed into fonts)
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
My soul with satisfaction of all wants—
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

The incidents of Robert Browning's marriage are recorded above at disproportionate length because they reveal the quality of the man; and in his singularly even-tenored life he was called on to perform few outward acts that would test and reveal him.

He was born at Camberwell, just outside London, on May 7, 1812. His mother, of Scotch and German descent, was a devout woman, a lover of music. His father and grandfather held positions in the Bank of England; the family was in comfortable circumstances. The poet never knew what it was to live in sordid surroundings or to experience want. His father was widely read and had written some verse himself. The two children had a happy home. The boy was fond of pets and had all kinds from a pony to a toad. This early love for all living things followed him all his life. He was taught to ride, box, dance, and fence. He was instructed in music and was taken often to exhibitions of painting and sculpture and sometimes to the theater. He had little formal schooling as we know it. For a short time in boyhood he attended

a school, and he went to lectures at the University of London for two winters. His real education was obtained from the study of the many books in his father's collection. It was a happy, active boyhood, which yet led him to manhood with a well-stored mind.

At twenty he wrote and had anonymously published a book-length poem, *Pauline*. It attracted no attention. He traveled for a time, including a journey to Russia as secretary to the consul general. Two years later, in 1835, appeared *Paracelsus*, another long poem, this time under his name. This won him a few friends, but notable ones, including William Macready, a leading actor of the English stage. For him he wrote *Strafford* (1837), a play which had some little success. During the next ten years he wrote several other plays in verse, but they were not successful on the stage. Browning had a sense of the dramatic, but not a gift for the theater; the two things are quite different.

Between 1842 and 1846 Browning had five plays and many short poems published in a series of eight pamphlets, under the inclusive title of *Bells and Pomegranates*. Elizabeth Barrett was one of the small number of people, on both sides of the ocean, who were enthusiastic about them; the general public ignored them, and neither author nor publisher profited by the venture. Browning had to work and wait the long stretch of years from 1833 to 1855, issuing thirteen books, before his caliber was recognized. *Men and Women*, in two volumes (1855), brought him the recognition of a considerable number of critics. Slowly for fifteen years, then with increasing rapidity, the public followed the lead of his few appreciators.

Following his wife's death, Browning returned to London to see his son, Robert Barrett Browning (called "Pen" or "Penini" in the family), prepared for the university and his career as a painter. His one sister, who had devoted her life to the care of their parents, joined him after the death of his father in 1866, and continued to live with him thereafter.

Browning suffered severely all his life from bronchial colds, and in his later years from a tendency to asthma. Seeking relief, he traveled much, especially in his last twenty years. Spring was likely to find him in London, summer in a fishing village on the French coast, and autumn in northern Italy. (He never revisited Florence, however.) All these years, when he had recovered from the first grief for his wife, he wrote with persistent energy and composed nearly twenty books of verse. After *The Ring and the Book* (in two volumes, 1868–1869), one of the longest and most subtle poems in the English language, the nature of his work changed. Critics generally agree that his later work, while still showing his subtle intelligence, lacks the intensity of feeling of the work of his middle years. Readers today usually ignore nearly all of Browning's work that appeared from 1833 to 1841 and from 1872 to 1889. The work of his middle years brought him increasing fame and multiplied honors during his later life and led to the highest honor England bestows on any poet, burial in Westminster Abbey. He died in the home of his son, in Venice, in 1889.

In his youth he acquired a thorough knowledge of history, Latin, Greek, French, and Italian, and later learned something of Hebrew, German, and Spanish; but he had little formal instruction in mathematics or

the sciences. He never ceased to study in those fields to which he devoted himself. He was never called into political, commercial, or military life, and missed both the risks and the rewards of such activities. His was the outwardly quiet life of the scholar and poet. An eager and precocious childhood merged naturally into an impatient youth, a high-spirited young manhood, a courageous and industrious endurance of obscurity in his middle years, and finally the serene and honored activity of his old age.

He went more and more into society after the relative seclusion of his married years, and came to know most of the great men of his own country and many in other nations. He showed a profound reverence for great abilities and an endless kindness for all sorts and conditions of people who had small claim on him. There was nothing of the freak about him; his dress and manners were accommodated to the conventions of society as his conduct was to its best code of morals. He could not make a speech, but was a brilliant conversationalist. Some one once expressed a liking for him because he "was not like one of those literary fellows." All his life he took pride in being able to meet those who were not writers on their own ground.

It is unpleasant for Americans to remember that for many years (until the passage of the international copyright convention) Browning's poems were reprinted in the United States in pirated editions, without his consent and without his receiving a penny for them. It is pleasant to remember that he was early recognized in this country, James Russell Lowell being one of the first critics to hail him; and these same cheap pirated books brought him a general fame in

America before he obtained the same kind of recognition in his own country.

A few sentences about him, culled from his wife's extensive correspondence, may well close a brief sketch of his life.

". . . Robert, though a poet and dramatist by profession, being descended from the blood of all the Puritans, and educated by the strictest of dissenters, has a sort of horror about the dreadful fact of owing five shillings five days." "Husband, lover, nurse — not one of these has Robert been to me, but all three together." "I always tell Robert that his patriotism grows and deepens in exact proportion as he goes away from England."

IN LIGHTER VEIN

Defects in Language and Structure

Most of Robert Browning's poems are serious. Rarely did he write to provoke laughter; more often he shows urbane wit or a quiet humor that evoke the reader's sympathetic smiles. Besides *The Pied Piper of Hamelin,* he is represented in this selection from his poetry by two other poems in his lighter vein. *Youth and Art* (in Section IV) is an excellent example of his wit; and *Up at a Villa — Down in the City* (in Section VI) is noted for its gentle humor.

Browning had written a play for William Macready, a prominent English actor of that day, and had thus become acquainted with his family. Macready's little son was recovering from an illness; and Browning, wishing to do something to help amuse the boy, wrote *The Pied Piper of Hamelin,* took the manuscript to him, and suggested that he try to draw some pictures to go with the story. Willy did so, and Browning kept the drawings for a long time.

This poem is a retelling of a familiar story from the Middle Ages. The people of the farms and villages during the Middle Ages lived uneventful lives, except in war times. As a relief from their monotonous existence they turned with joy to extravagant tales of fairies, giants, kings, and magicians. One such story, recounted in many forms by different narrators, dealt with some miraculous act of a magician, the attempt to cheat him out of his promised reward, and his revenge. Browning recast the story in

lively verse, suitable for his little friend. The poem has been popular with children for a half century; and a pageant for children has been adapted from it.

Browning was a man of wide knowledge, great vitality of mind and body, and a sharp delight in all the experiences of living. These qualities are shown in both the virtues and the defects of his work. We may here consider how they are revealed in his defects, reminding ourselves, however, that many of his admirers do not regard them as defects at all.

Browning seemed always to write in an exuberant rush, with more material at hand than he knew how to use. The speed and the tumbling wealth of detail in the seventh section of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* illustrate this. When he halted in a story to describe a place or a character, he sometimes made the description too long, with the result that the thread of the story is broken. He exhibited this trait chiefly in his longer poems. The best illustration in this collection is his account of the arts of the gypsies in *The Flight of the Duchess.*

Sometimes Browning appeared to be too hurried or too careless to give his work that smoothness and ease which the reader looks for in poetry. The marks of such passages are his use of complicated, broken or inverted sentence structure, bad rhymes, grotesque or unpleasant comparisons, needless parentheses, and obsolete or uncommon words.

In *The Pied Piper of Hamelin,* lines 119–140, we find a sentence far too long, and broken by two parentheses. The thirteenth stanza of *Pheidippides* is so broken in structure that the meaning is hard to follow. The second and third stanzas of *Rabbi Ben Ezra* are

difficult because long subordinate ideas are put ahead of the principal clause.

Browning constantly sought for unusual rhymes; he delighted in playing with double and triple rhymes; and sometimes, as in the last two lines of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, the results are fantastic and provoking. The classic example of his worst rhyming is found in *The Grammarian's Funeral:* —

> "Fancy the fabric
> . . . . . .
> Ere mortar dab brick."

These rough, clashing rhymes repel many readers.

Many readers regard such comparisons as those found in lines 46–51 of *The Pied Piper* as unpleasant and grotesque, and a blemish on his poetry.

Browning occasionally used obsolete words or invented words; and he frequently employed unusual words. Sometimes these were appropriate to his subject matter; often they were devices to help him out of difficulties in rhyming. Such words as *nuncheon, theorbo, buffle,* and *protoplast* in various poems in this book are examples of this trait. They make some passages hard to understand.

To such criticisms the admirers of Browning reply eagerly, "He is sometimes rough and rugged, like a mountain; and that's a pleasant change from most poets, who are always as smooth as a lawn. When he wished to do so, he could use gracious rhymes; let us be thankful that he also employed new, clanging, ingenious combinations when they were appropriate to his subject. If you don't know his unusual words, look them up in the dictionary and increase your vocabulary! Let us be glad, too, that he wove into

his verse all sorts of grotesque, ugly, odd details, for we find similar things scattered throughout Nature. And he may sometimes be hard to understand, but his work contains ideas that repay our study."

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

A Child's Story

(Written for, and Inscribed to, W. M. the Younger)

Hamelin Town's in Brunswick,°
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

Rats!
They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats,
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
'' 'Tis clear,' cried they, ' our Mayor's a noddy;
And as for our Corporation — shocking

To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
For dolts that can't or won't determine
What's best to rid us of our vermin!
You hope, because you're old and obese,
To find in the furry civic robe ease?
Rouse up, Sirs! Give your brains a racking
To find the remedy we're lacking,
Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing! '
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

An hour they sate in council,
At length the Mayor broke silence:
' For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell;
I wish I were a mile hence!
It's easy to bid one rack one's brain —
I'm sure my poor head aches again
I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap! '
Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
' Bless us,' cried the Mayor, ' what's that? '
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
' Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
Anything like the sound of a rat
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat! '

' Come in! ' — the Mayor cried, looking bigger:
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red;
And he himself was tall and thin,

With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in —
There was no guessing his kith and kin!
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire:
Quoth one: ' It's as my great-grandsire,
Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
Had walked this way from his painted tomb-stone! '

He advanced to the council-table:
And, ' Please your honours,' said he, ' I'm able,
By means of a secret charm to draw
All creatures living beneath the sun,
That creep or swim or fly or run,
After me so as you never saw!
And I chiefly use my charm
On creatures that do people harm,
The mole and toad and newt and viper;
And people call me the Pied Piper.'
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self-same cheque;
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
As if impatient to be playing
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
' Yet,' said he, ' poor piper as I am,
In Tartary I freed the Cham,°
Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats;
I eased in Asia the Nizam °
Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats:
And as for what your brain bewilders,
If I can rid your town of rats
Will you give me a thousand guilders? ' °

'One? fifty thousand!' — was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives —
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser
Wherein all plunged and perished!
— Save one who, stout as Julius Caesar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary:
Which was, 'At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
Into a cider-press's gripe:
And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,

And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks;
And it seemed as if a voice
(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
Is breathed) called out, Oh rats, rejoice!
The world is grown to one vast dry-saltery! °
So, munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!
And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
All ready staved, like a great sun shone
Glorious scarce an inch before me,
Just as methought it said, Come, bore me!
— I found the Weser rolling o'er me.'

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
'Go,' cried the Mayor, 'and get long poles!
Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
Consult with carpenters and builders,
And leave in our town not even a trace
Of the rats!' — when suddenly, up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, 'First, if you please, my thousand guilders!'

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue;
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners make rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave,° Hock;
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!
'Beside,' quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,
'Our business was done at the river's brink;
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
And what's dead can't come to life, I think.

So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
From the duty of giving you something for drink,
And a matter of money to put in your poke;
But as for the guilders, what we spoke
Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
Besides, our losses have made us thrifty.
A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty! '

The piper's face fell, and he cried,
' No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
I've promised to visit by dinner time
Bagdat, and accept the prime °
Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor —
With him I proved no bargain-driver,
With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
And folks who put me in a passion
May find me pipe to another fashion.'

' How? ' cried the Mayor, ' d'ye think I'll brook
Being worse treated than a Cook?
Insulted by a lazy ribald
With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
Blow your pipe there till you burst! '

Once more he stept into the street;
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling, that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,

And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step or cry
To the children merrily skipping by —
And could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
However he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
And after him the children pressed;
Great was the joy in every breast.
'He never can cross that mighty top!
He's forced to let the piping drop,
And we shall see our children stop!'
When, lo, as they reached the mountain's side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
Did I say, all? No! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say, —
'It's dull in our town since my playmates left!

I can't forget that I'm bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me.
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew,
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange and new;
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
And honey-bees had lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles' wings:
And just as I became assured
My lame foot would be speedily cured,
The music stopped and I stood still,
And found myself outside the Hill,
Left alone against my will,
To go now limping as before,
And never hear of that country more! '

Alas, alas for Hamelin!
  There came into many a burgher's pate
  A text which says, that Heaven's Gate °
  Opes to the Rich at as easy rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
The Mayor sent East, West, North and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
  Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
  And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
  Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,

'And so long after what happened here
On the Twenty-second of July,
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six: '
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street —
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labour.
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern
They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great Church-Window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away;
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe °
Of alien people that ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbours lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why they don't understand.

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of scores out with all men — especially pipers:
And, whether they pipe us free, from rats or from mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise.

ANIMAL HEROES

As a child, Robert Browning cherished a variety of pets. This affectionate interest in all living things followed him all his life and extended to such unlikely creatures as toads, owls, and snakes. Swift, observant references to birds, animals, and insects are scattered through most of his work. Two poems in which his interest in animals is shown are here given.

How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix has no historical foundation. Browning once took a sea voyage from England to Italy. While out in the Mediterranean, he thought how greatly he would enjoy a gallop on the horse he had left at home. This longing prompted him to this swift and stirring poem.

Browning was one of the vice-presidents of an English society for the prevention of cruelty to animals and was bitterly opposed to the practice of vivisection as an aid to scientific investigation. One of his friends reported to him the facts of an incident of a dog's devotion to a child which had occurred in Paris. The poet used this material in writing *Tray*

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

[16—]

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
'Good speed!' cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
'Speed!' echoed the wall to us galloping through;

Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So Joris broke silence with, 'Yet there is time!'

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

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
And one eye's black intelligence, — ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, 'Stay spur!
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
We'll remember at Aix' — for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And ' Gallop,' gasped Joris, ' for Aix is in sight! '

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

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

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

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 tho' 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, prerogatived
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 eighteen pence,
How brain secretes dog's soul, we'll see!"'

POEMS OF CONTEST, ENDURANCE, AND COURAGE

One man may be called on to perform some act of daring or endurance in the public eye and receive public acclaim for his effort. A second may have to act unobserved and may receive or miss a reward of praise. A third may be forced to show his heroism by defying the opinion of his friends. In any case it is the mental and moral quality back of the act that is important. Browning studied his fellow human beings with a lifelong curiosity, found heroism in many places, and celebrated it eagerly. Curiously enough, he never chose any of the popular English heroes for the central figure of a poem.

The *Cavalier Tunes* are popular for their roystering spirit and resounding rhythms. They represent the spirit of the supporters of Charles I, king of England from 1625–1649, at the time when the Puritan forces of England under Oliver Cromwell were waging the war against the king which ended in his defeat and execution.

Incident of the French Camp has historical foundation except that the hero was a man, not a boy. Napoleon was brilliantly successful in most of his campaigns, partly because of the almost fanatic devotion he inspired in his men. Under the spell of this devotion whole armies or single men would accomplish the apparently impossible.

In *Hervé Riel* Browning revived an almost forgotten exploit in French history which he had heard

during a summer visit to the French coast. The circumstances of its publication give it added interest. France had been badly beaten in the war with Germany in 1870–1871; Paris had been besieged and had surrendered only when the people had been brought to the verge of starvation. Suffering among the poor of Paris was intense. Browning was asked to contribute to a relief fund. His custom at that time was to publish his poems only in book form. He violated his custom in submitting *Hervé Riel* to the *Cornhill Magazine* in London, and contributed the one hundred pounds received for it to the relief fund. Since public feeling between France and England had been none too friendly for a century, the celebration by an Englishman of an ancient act of French daring and the gift of the returns from it formed a doubly gracious act toward the humiliated French people. The poem is swift, high-spirited, and pictorial, and deserves its popularity.

Browning retells in the first eight stanzas of *Pheidippides* the story of the famous Athenian runner as narrated in Herodotus, Book Six, Sections 105 and 106. The various city-states of Greece faced piecemeal destruction by the Persian invasion in 490 B.C. Athens, which had never been overrun by an invader, gathered her strength to fight the Persians. Realizing the value of united resistance, the Athenians determined to ask the help of Sparta. In rugged Greece, where horses were scarce, the most dependable and swift means of communication between cities was by runners trained for that special service. Herodotus says that Pheidippides covered the one hundred and forty miles between the cities in two days, and returned after only a brief rest. This is one of the most

remarkable feats of endurance in history. In the battle of Marathon a few days later, one of the most important battles in history, a small Athenian army defeated a Persian force ten times as large. Herodotus does not tell us who the runner was that ran the twenty-six miles from Marathon to Athens with the tidings of victory; Lucian, a Roman writer of several centuries later, attributes it to Pheidippides. Modern Marathon races perpetuate the memory of this famous feat of endurance.

Browning lived for many years in northern Italy, which had long been under the control of Austria. Most of the Florentines were apathetic under this foreign domination; a slowly increasing number were rebellious; and a few yielded to the lure of Austrian gold and supported her, chiefly by acting as spies on the groups of rebels. Reports from the spies would bring out Austrian troops to capture and imprison the rebels, or drive them into exile in foreign lands. Loneliness, bitterness, and a sense of failure were the portion of these patriots. In *The Italian in England* Browning implies his sympathy for such exiles.

Though not a communicant in any church, Browning was a man of profoundly religious spirit. He regarded this life as a happy and arduous preparation for a fuller life to come, and death as an incident that separates two phases of life. The fear of death is, therefore, the part of the coward. As *Prospice* shows, he looked at death fearlessly, almost defiantly. The love he bore his wife, his confidence in the survival of the individual personality, and his refusal to yield to a common fear are combined to make this one of his best loved poems.

CAVALIER TUNES °

I. Marching Along

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

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're —
(*Chorus*) *Marching along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

Hampden to Hell, and his obsequies' knell.
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here
(*Chorus*) *Marching along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,
(*Chorus*) *March we along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

II. Give a Rouse

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

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found me in wine you drank once?
(*Chorus*) *King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,
King Charles!

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?
(*Chorus*) *King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,
King Charles!

III. Boot and Saddle

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
Rescue my Castle, before the hot day
Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,
(*Chorus*) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
'God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay —
(*Chorus*) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!'*

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array:
Who laughs, 'Good fellows ere this, by my fay,
(*Chorus*) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!'*

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, 'Nay!
I've better counsellors; what counsel they?
(*Chorus*) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!'*

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon: °
A mile or so away
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused 'My plans
That soar, to earth may fall,
Let once my army-leader Lannes °
Waver at yonder wall,'—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

'Well,' cried he, 'Emperor, by God's grace
We've got you Ratisbon!
The Marshal's in the market-place,
And you'll be there anon
To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart's desire,
Perched him!' The Chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

The Chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes:
'You're wounded!' 'Nay,' his soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
'I'm killed, Sire!' And his Chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead.

HERVÉ RIEL

On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,
Did the English fight the French, — woe to France!°
And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter thro' the blue,
Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,
Came crowding ship on ship to St. Malo on the Rance,°
With the English fleet in view.

'Twas the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full chase;
First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Damfreville;
Close on him fled, great and small,
Twenty-two good ships in all;
And they signaled to the place
'Help the winners of a race!
Get us guidance, give us harbor, take us quick — or, quicker still,
Here's the English can and will!'

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on board;
'Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass?' laughed they:
'Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarred and scored,

Shall the *Formidable* here with her twelve and eighty guns
Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow way,
Trust to enter where 'tis ticklish for a craft of twenty tons,
And with flow at full beside?
Now 'tis slackest ebb of tide.
Reach the mooring? Rather say,
While rock stands or water runs,
Not a ship will leave the bay! '

Then was called a council straight.
Brief and bitter the debate:
' Here's the English at our heels; would you have them take in tow
All that's left us of the fleet, linked together stern and bow,
For a prize to Plymouth Sound? °
Better run the ships aground! '
(Ended Damfreville his speech.)
Not a minute more to wait!
' Let the Captains all and each
Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the beach!
France must undergo her fate.

' Give the word! ' But no such word
Was ever spoke or heard;
For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these
— A Captain? A Lieutenant? A mate — first, second, third?
No such man of mark, and meet
With his betters to compete!
But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for the fleet,°
A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

And, ' What mockery or malice have we here? ' cries Hervé Riel:
' Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards, fools, or rogues? °

Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the soundings, tell
On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell
'Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river disembogues?
Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying's for?
Morn and eve, night and day,
Have I piloted your bay,
Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.
Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse than fifty Hogues!
Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe me there's a way!
Only let me lead the line,
Have the biggest ship to steer,
Get this *Formidable* clear,
Make the others follow mine,
And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know well,
Right to Solidor past Grève,
And there lay them safe and sound;
And if one ship misbehave,
— Keel so much as grate the ground,
Why, I've nothing but my life, — here's my head!' cries Hervé Riel.

Not a minute more to wait.
'Steer us in, then, small and great!
Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!' cried its chief.
Captains, give the sailor place!
He is Admiral, in brief.
Still the north-wind, by God's grace!
See the noble fellow's face
As the big ship, with a bound,
Clears the entry like a hound,
Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide sea's profound!

See, safe thro' shoal and rock,
How they follow in a flock,
Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the ground,
Not a spar that comes to grief!
The peril, see, is past,
All are harbored to the last,
And just as Hervé Riel hollas 'Anchor!' — sure as fate
Up the English come, too late!

So, the storm subsides to calm:
They see the green trees wave
On the heights o'erlooking Grève.
Hearts that bled are stanched with balm.
'Just our rapture to enhance,
Let the English rake the bay,
Gnash their teeth and glare askance
As they cannonade away!
'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance!'
How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's countenance!
Out burst all with one accord,
'This is Paradise for Hell!
Let France, let France's King
Thank the man that did the thing!'
What a shout, and all one word,
'Hervé Riel!'
As he stepped in front once more,
Not a symptom of surprise
In the frank blue Breton eyes,
Just the same man as before.

Then said Damfreville, 'My friend,
I must speak out at the end,
Tho' I find the speaking hard.
Praise is deeper than the lips:
You have saved the King his ships,
You must name your own reward.

'Faith our sun was near eclipse!
Demand whate'er you will,
France remains your debtor still.
Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not Damfreville.'

Then a beam of fun outbroke
On the bearded mouth that spoke,
As the honest heart laughed through
Those frank eyes of Breton blue:
'Since I needs must say my say,
Since on board the duty's done,
And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it but a run? —
Since 'tis ask and have, I may —
Since the others go ashore —
Come! A good whole holiday!
Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle Aurore!'
That he asked and that he got, — nothing more.

Name and deed alike are lost:
Not a pillar nor a post
In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;
Not a head in white and black
On a single fishing smack,
In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack
All that France saved from the fight whence England bore the bell.
Go to Paris: rank on rank
Search the heroes flung pell-mell
On the Louvre, face and flank!
You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé Riel.
So, for better and for worse,
Hervé Riel, accept my verse!
In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more
Save the squadron, honor France, love thy wife the Belle Aurore!

PHEIDIPPIDES

χαίρετε νικῶμεν. °

First I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock! °
Gods of my birthplace, dæmons and heroes, honor to all! °
Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, co-equal in praise °
— Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the ægis and spear! °
Also ye of the bow and the buskin, praised be your peer, °
Now, henceforth and forever, — O latest to whom I upraise
Hand and heart and voice! For Athens, leave pasture and flock!
Present to help, potent to save, Pan — patron I call! °

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I return! °
See, 'tis myself here standing alive, no specter 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? 30
Thunder, thou Zeus! Athene, are Spartans a quarry beyond
Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them "Ye must"! '

No bolt launched from Olumpos! Lo, their answer at last! °
'Has Persia come, — does Athens ask aid, — may Sparta befriend?
Nowise precipitate judgment — too weighty the issue at stake!
Count we no time lost time which lags thro' 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.' ° 40

Athens, — except for that sparkle, — thy name, I had moldered to ash!
That sent a blaze thro' 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 honours 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 enwreathe
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? °
Athens to aid? Tho' the dive were thro' Erebos, thus I obey — °

Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise! No bridge
Better!'— when — ha! what was it I came on, of wonders that are?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he — majestical Pan!
Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned his hoof;
All the great God was good in the eyes grave-kindly — the curl
Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal's awe
As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I saw.
'Halt, Pheidippides!'— halt I did, my brain of a whirl:
'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?
Aye, 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 for ever; 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 thro' 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 for ever, — 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.

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

That second time they hunted me
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
And Austria, hounding far and wide
Her blood-hounds through the countryside
Breathed hot and instant on my trace, —
I made six days a hiding-place
Of that dry green old aqueduct
Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked
The fire-flies from the roof above,

Bright creeping through the moss they love.
— How long it seems since Charles was lost!
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
The country in my very sight;
And when that peril ceased at night,
The sky broke out in red dismay
With signal-fires; well, there I lay
Close covered o'er in my recess,
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
Thinking on Metternich our friend,°
And Charles's miserable end,
And much beside, two days; the third,
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
The peasants from the village go
To work among the maize; you know,
With us in Lombardy, they bring
Provisions packed on mules, a string
With little bells that cheer their task,
And casks, and boughs on every cask
To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
These I let pass in jingling line,
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
The peasants from the village, too;
For at the very rear would troop
Their wives and sisters in a group
To help, I knew; when these had passed,
I threw my glove to strike the last,
Taking the chance: she did not start,
Much less cry out, but stooped apart
One instant, rapidly glanced round,
And saw me beckon from the ground:
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;
She picked my glove up while she stripped
A branch off, then rejoined the rest
With that; my glove lay in her breast:
Then I drew breath: they disappeared:
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
Exactly where my glove was thrown.
Meanwhile came many thoughts; on me
Rested the hopes of Italy;
I had devised a certain tale
Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail
Persuade a peasant of its truth;
I meant to call a freak of youth
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
And no temptation to betray.
But when I saw that woman's face,
Its calm simplicity of grace,
Our Italy's own attitude
In which she walked thus far and stood,
Planting each naked foot so firm,
To crush the snake and spare the worm —
At first sight of her eyes, I said,
'I am that man upon whose head
They fix the price, because I hate
The Austrians over us: the State
Will give you gold — oh, gold so much,
If you betray me to their clutch
And be your death, for aught I know,
If once they find you saved their foe.
Now, you must bring me food and drink,
And also paper, pen and ink,
And carry safe what I shall write
To Padua, which you'll reach at night
Before the Duomo shuts; go in,°
And wait till Tenebrae begin; °
Walk to the Third Confessional,
Between the pillar and the wall,
And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
Say it a second time, then cease;
And if the voice inside returns,°
From Christ and Freedom; what concerns
The cause of Peace? — for answer, slip

My letter where you placed your lip;
Then come back happy we have done
Our mother service — I, the son,
As you the daughter of our land! '

Three mornings more, she took her stand
In the same place, with the same eyes:
I was no surer of sun-rise
Than of her coming: we conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard
She had a lover — stout and tall,
She said — then let her eyelids fall,
' He could do much ' — as if some doubt
Entered her heart, — then, passing out,
' She could not speak for others, who
Had other thoughts; herself she knew: '
And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days, the scouts pursued
Another path; at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived
To furnish me: she brought the news.
For the first time I could not choose
But kiss her hand, and lay my own
Upon her head — ' This faith was shown
To Italy, our mother; she
Uses my hand and blesses thee! '
She followed down to the sea-shore;
I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
Concerning — much less wished for — aught
Beside the good of Italy,
For which I live and mean to die!
I never was in love; and since
Charles proved false, nothing could convince
My inmost heart I had a friend.
However, if I pleased to spend

Real wishes on my self — say, three —
I know at least what one should be;
I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood thro' these two hands: and next,
— Nor much for that am I perplexed —
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers: last
— Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast
Do I grow old and out of strength.
If I resolved to seek at length
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared!
My brothers live in Austria's pay
— Disowned me long ago, men say;
And all my early mates who used
To praise me so — perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine —
Are turning wise; while some opine
'Freedom grows License,' some suspect
'Haste breeds Delay,' and recollect
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure!
So, with a sullen 'All's for best,'
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think, then, I should wish to stand
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile; some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt; what harm
If I sat on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes — just
Her children's ages and their names,
And what may be the husband's aims

For each of them. I'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how
It steals the time! To business now!

PROSPICE

Fear death? — to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so — one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the element's rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace, then a joy,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

LOVE POEMS

Browning was a man of warm affections, for his parents and sister, for his wife and son, and for a wide circle of friends. A sharp observer of his fellow men, he knew that love is the most stirring of all the emotions. His poems about love have an intensity, a subtlety, and a variety not surpassed by any other English poet.

The darting fancies and the trembling delight of love between young people has never been more happily presented than in *The Flower's Name.* Browning could picture accurately, and condemn, the half-love that is tempered by fear or caution, as in *Youth and Art.* He could understand the undemanding devotion of a middle-aged man for a young girl, as in *Evelyn Hope.*

Out of his own undiluted happiness he wrote several poems to or about his wife, two of which, *One Word More* and *My Star* are here given.

Browning wrote few poems so nearly perfect as *Love among the Ruins.* In his travels through Italy he had observed how the ruins of ancient towns could be found in places which in his day supported only a sparse population of farmers and herdsmen. The contrast between the departed glory and a mutual, fearless love in the present gave him a subject to his mind. The more Browning *thought* about a subject, the more involved and difficult he was likely to become; but when he *felt* keenly, his work became simple, direct, and impassioned. In this poem intense

emotion, sharply drawn pictures, and melodious language are fused successfully.

Several other poems in this collection might appropriately be included in this section. *My Last Duchess* shows how pride and jealousy in one man stamped out his small affection. In *Andrea del Sarto* Browning shows how a painter failed as an artist and a man through his love for an unworthy wife. *The Flight of the Duchess* contains the story of the devotion of an old family retainer to the lady of a castle at the close of the Middle Ages.

Browning wrote many love poems. The five here given, together with the three referred to above, reveal the range of his thought and feeling on the subject. He shows how love corrodes if it is given to some one unworthy; how it is debased if it is mingled with fear, jealousy or other ignoble emotions; and how unselfish and fearless affection elevates a man or woman, and brings the finest joy into life.

THE FLOWER'S NAME

Here's the garden she walked across,
  Arm in my arm, such a short while since;
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
  Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!
She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
  As back with that murmur the wicket swung;
For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
  To feed and forget it the leaves among.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
  She went while her robe's edge brushed the box:
And here she paused in her gracious talk
  To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.

Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by!
She loves you noble roses, I know;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie!

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name:
What a name! was it love, or praise?
Speech half-asleep, or song half-awake?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase;
But do not detain me now; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
Stay as you are and be loved for ever!
Bud, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not,
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!
For while thus it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle —
Is not the dear mark still to be seen?

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed it with me?

Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's slightest footfall
— Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces —
Roses, you are not so fair after all!

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop —
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

Now — the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be prest,
Twelve abreast.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
And embeds

Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone —
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

Now, — the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks —
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
Melt away —
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,

All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts, — and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force —
Gold, of course.
Oh, heart! oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest.
Love is best!

EVELYN HOPE

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

Sixteen years old when she died!
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;

It was not her time to love; beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares, —
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

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

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

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

I have lived, I shall say, so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;

Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me:
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
What is the issue? let us see!

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!
My heart seemed full as it could hold —
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile
And the red young mouth and the hair's young gold.
So, hush, — I will give you this leaf to keep —
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.
There, that is our secret! go to sleep;
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

YOUTH AND ART

It once might have been, once only:
We lodged in a street together,
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

Your trade was with sticks and clay,
You thumbed, thrust, patted and polished,
Then laughed 'They will see some day
Smith made, and Gibson demolished.' °

My business was song, song, song;
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered,
'Kate Brown's on the boards ere long,
And Grisi's existence embittered!' °

I earned no more by a warble
Than you by a sketch in plaster;
You wanted a piece of marble,
I needed a music-master.

We studied hard in our styles,
Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,

For air, looked out on the tiles,
For fun, watched each other's windows.

You lounged, like a boy of the South,
Cap and blouse — nay, a bit of beard too;
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth
With fingers the clay adhered to.

And I — soon managed to find
Weak points in the flower-fence facing,
Was forced to put up a blind
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

No harm! It was not my fault
If you never turned your eyes' tail up,
As I shook upon E *in alt*,
Or ran the chromatic scale up:

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
And the boys and girls gave guesses,
And stalls in our street looked rare
With bulrush and watercresses.

Why did not you pinch a flower
In a pellet of clay and fling it?
Why did not I put a power
Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

I did look, sharp as a lynx,
(And yet the memory rankles)
When models arrived, some minx
Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

But I think I gave you as good!
'That foreign fellow, — who can know
How she pays, in a playful mood,
For his tuning her that piano?'

Could you say so, and never say
'Suppose we join hands and fortunes,
And I fetch her from over the way,
Her, piano, and long tunes and short tunes?'

No, no: you would not be rash,
Nor I rasher and something over:
You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

But you meet the Prince at the Board,
I'm queen myself at *Bals-paré*,°
I've married a rich old lord,
And you're dubbed knight and an R.A.°

Each life's unfulfilled, you see;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired, — been happy.

And nobody calls you a dunce,
And people suppose me clever:
This could but have happened once,
And we missed it, lost it for ever.

A FACE

If one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold,
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!
No shade encroaching on the matchless mould
Of those two lips, which should be opening soft
In the pure profile; not as when she laughs,
For that spoils all: but rather as if aloft
Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's
Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.

Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,
How it should waver on the pale gold ground
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts!
I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts °
Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb:
But these are only massed there, I should think,
Waiting to see some wonder momently
Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky
(That's the pale ground you'd see this sweet face by),
All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

MY STAR

All that I know
Of a certain star,
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar) °
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue,
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

ONE WORD MORE

To E. B. B.

London, September, 1855

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

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

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

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

Dante once prepared to paint an angel: °
Whom to please? You whisper ' Beatrice.'
While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment

Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
Let the wretch go festering through Florence) — °
Dante, who loved well because he hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
Dante standing, studying his angel, —
In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
Says he — ' Certain people of importance '
(Such he gave his daily, dreadful line to)
' Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet.'
Says the poet — ' Then I stopped my painting.'

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

You and I will never see that picture.
While he mused on love and Beatrice,
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
In they broke, those ' people of importance: '
We and Bice bear the loss for ever.°

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?
This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not
Once, and only once, and for One only,
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient —
Using nature that's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
None but would forego his proper dowry, —
Does he paint? he fain would write a poem, —
Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once, and only once, and for One only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.°

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement! °
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,°

Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal,
Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked — 'Shall smiting help us?'
When they drank and sneered — 'A stroke is easy!'
When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,
Throwing him for thanks — 'But drought was pleasant.'
Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;
Thus the doing savours of disrelish;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,
Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture.
For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude —
'How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us?'
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel —
'Egypt's flesh-pots — nay, the drought was better.'

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

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,
Were she but the Aethiopian bond-slave,)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water
Meant to save his own life in the desert;
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

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

Make you music that should all-express me;
So it seems: I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
Other heights in other lives, God willing — °
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!

Yet a semblance of resource avails us —
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hairbrush,°
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.°
He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver,
Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once, as I do.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth, — the speech, a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:
I am mine and yours — the rest be all men's,
Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.°
Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence —
Pray you, look on these my men and women,
Take and keep my fifty poems finished;
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!
Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!
Here in London, yonder late in Florence,

Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,°
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs,
Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

What, there's nothing in the moon note-worthy?
Nay — for if that moon could love a mortal,
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy)
All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos)°
She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman —
Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,°
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats — him, even!
Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal —
When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
Opens out anew for worse or better!
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg
Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?
Proves she as the paved-work of a sapphire
Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?
Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu °
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
Stand upon the paved-work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved-work,
When they ate and drank and saw God also!

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know,
Only this is sure — the sight were other,

Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her.°

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you — yourself my moon of poets! °
Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder,
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you.
There, in turn, I stand with them and praise you,
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

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

THE GLORY OF THE VISIBLE WORLD

Browning went through life with a high head and a high heart. Happiness was his normal mood, and all of the pleasant, ordinary events of everyday living contributed to his sense of the joy of life. He could find delight in the sight of a tall tree against the sky, in the smell of flowers in a garden, in the feel of salt water when he went swimming. Just to be alive was to him an exhilarating adventure; and all his senses were quick to catch up all the pleasures the world offered him.

In his poetry of his early and middle years particularly we find the expression of his joy in the glory of the visible world. We find it especially in touches of description in his longer poems; a few of his shorter poems are remembered almost wholly for his happy descriptions.

Pippa Passes is in form a play, though it is not adapted to stage uses. In the introduction, and in Pippa's songs, Browning puts this sense of the joy of life into the mouth of Pippa, a poor girl employed in an Italian silk mill. *Home Thoughts from Abroad,* written during a sea voyage, is one of his few descriptions of English scenery. *"De Gustibus . . ."* contains other illustrations of his deft touch, his love of contrast and his characteristically happy mood. *Over the Seas Our Galleys Went,* the earliest written poem in this collection, is a song without a title embedded in *Paracelsus,* a book-length poem composed when he was twenty-three. The first stanza recreates

for us something of the picturesqueness of the voyages of the early Greek mariners. *Up at a Villa — Down in the City* is that rare thing, a long descriptive poem which does not bore the reader; it is also that even rarer thing, a combination of description with humor.

PIPPA PASSES

(Two Passages from the Introduction, and Three Lyrics)

Day!
Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last;
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay —
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

. . . . . .

Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam — caught
  With a single splash from my ewer!
  You that would mock the best pursuer,
Was my basin over-deep?
One splash of water ruins you asleep,
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
Wheeling and counterwheeling,
Reeling, broken beyond healing —
Now grow together on the ceiling!
That will task your wits!
Whoever quenched fire first, hoped to see
Morsel after morsel flee
As merrily, as giddily . . .
Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,

Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?
New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll!
Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
Of ocean, bud there, — fairies watch unroll
Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse
Thick red flame through that dusk green universe!

I am queen of thee, floweret;
And each fleshy blossom
Preserve I not — (safer
Than leaves that embower it,
Or shells that embosom)
—From weevil and chafer?
Laugh through my pane, then; solicit the bee;
Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee,
Love thy queen, worship me!

ALL SERVICE

All service ranks the same with God:
If now, as formerly He trod
Paradise, His presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work — God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.
Say not 'a small event!' Why 'small?'
Costs it more pain than this, ye call
A 'great event,' should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in, or exceed!

THE YEAR'S AT THE SPRING

The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;

The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His heaven —
All's right with the world!

GIVE HER BUT A LEAST EXCUSE

Give her but a least excuse to love me!
When — where —
How — can this arm establish her above me,
If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
There already, to eternally reprove me?
('Hist' — said Kate the queen;
But 'Oh' — cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
''Tis only a page that carols unseen
Crumbling your hounds their messes!')

Is she wronged? — To the rescue of her honour,
My heart!
Is she poor? — What costs it to be styled a donor?
Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part!
But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!
('Nay, list,' — bade Kate the queen;
And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
''Tis only a page that carols unseen
Fitting your hawks their jesses!')

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

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

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

'DE GUSTIBUS—'

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
(If our loves remain)
In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice —
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
Making love, say, —
The happier they!
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
With the beanflowers' boon,
And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June!

What I love best in all the world,
Is, a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands) —
In a sea-side house to the farther South,

Where the baked cicalas die of drouth,
And one sharp tree — 'tis a cypress — stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day — the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
— She hopes they have not caught the felons.
    Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me —
    (When fortune's malice
    Lost her, Calais)
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, 'Italy.'
Such lovers old are I and she;
So it always was, so shall ever be!

OVER THE SEA OUR GALLEYS WENT

Over the sea our galleys went,
With cleaving prows in order brave,
To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,
A gallant armament:
Each bark built out of a forest-tree,
Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
And nailed all over the gaping sides,
Within and without, with black bull-hides,
Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,

To bear the playful billows' game:
So, each good ship was rude to see,
Rude and bare to the outward view,
  But each upbore a stately tent
Where cedar-pales in scented row
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,
And an awning drooped the mast below,
In fold on fold of the purple fine,
That neither noontide nor star-shine
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,
  Might pierce the regal tenement.
When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
We set the sail and plied the oar;
But when the night-wind blew like breath,
For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the voyagers from afar,
  Lay stretched along, each weary crew
In a circle round its wondrous tent
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,
  And with light and perfume, music too:
So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,
And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast!

Now, one morn, land appeared! — a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky:
'Avoid it,' cried our pilot, 'check
  The shout, restrain the eager eye!'
But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh;
So, we broke the cedar pales away,

Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
And a statue bright was on every deck!
We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbour thus,
With pomp and paean glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone!
All day we built its shrine for each,
A shrine of rock for every one,
Nor paused we till in the westering sun
We sat together on the beach
To sing because our task was done.
When lo! what shouts and merry songs!
What laughter all the distance stirs!
A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders!
'Our isles are just at hand,' they cried,
'Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping;
Our temple-gates are opened wide,
Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping
For these majestic forms'—they cried.
Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
From our deep dream, and knew, too late,
How bare the rock, how desolate,
Which had received our precious freight:
Yet we called out—'Depart!
Our gifts, once given, must here abide.
Our work is done; we have no heart
To mar our work,'—we cried.

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

(As Distinguished by an Italian Person of Quality)

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

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

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

But the city, oh the city — the square with the houses! Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take the eye!
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry!
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by;
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

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

Is it better in May, I ask you? you've summer all at once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns!
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and sell.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in the conch — fifty gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a sort of sash!

All the year long at the villa, nothing's to see though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like Death's lean lifted fore-finger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix in the corn and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons, — I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

Ere opening your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off, than the diligence rattles in: °
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.
By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.°
At the post-office such a scene-picture — the new play, piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were shot.
Above it, behold the archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law of the Duke's! °

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and Cicero,°
'And moreover,' (the sonnet goes rhyming,) 'the skirts of Saint Paul has reached,
Having preached us those six Lent lectures more unctuous than ever he preached.'
Noon strikes, — here sweeps the procession! our Lady borne smiling and smart °
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck in her heart!
Bang, whang, whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest pleasure in life.

But bless you, it's dear — it's dear! fowls, wine, at double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays passing the gate °
It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still — ah, the pity, the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow candles;
One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals:
Bang, whang, whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

MEN UNDER STRESS

Browning's Obscurity

Writing in 1863 about *Sordello*, a poem he had published in 1840, Browning said, "My stress lay on the incidents in the development of a human soul; little else is worth study." He was interested in nature, in history, in philosophy, in science, in almost everything; but these things were just the background in front of which he saw people. He saw people not as freaks, or types, or angels, or devils, but as individuals.

It often happens that, in the crisis of one particular hour of a man's life, the whole man stands revealed for the world to see. Everything that has gone before in that man's life is a preparation for this one hour. Browning was particularly fond of showing us men under the stress of the "great hour" of their lives. He has done so in *Hervé Riel*, *Pheidippides*, and other poems in different sections of this book.

The Lost Leader is "less like Browning" than most of Browning's poems. It is written from the outside, not from the inside. The poet in his own person pronounces judgment on the lost leader; he does not leave it to the reader to form his own opinion. Its choice of words and its simple sentence structure are more like his contemporaries than like Browning himself. Moreover, it has a singing quality, while most of his poems are best communicated by reading aloud. This poem was prompted by Wordsworth's turning from the liberal to the conservative party.

Browning, a convinced and life-long liberal, was disappointed in this action of a man he admired deeply; he did not, of course, intend this poem to be a complete character study of the great poet.

The Patriot and *Instans Tyrannus* are both pictures of men at the crises of their lives. *Instans Tyrannus* is interesting partly from the novel point of view of the speaker.

The first 104 lines of *The Glove* are a retelling of a story in an old French writer. Other poets had retold the story, faithfully following the facts and the conclusions of the original. These simply stimulated Browning's curiosity; particularly he thought that the lady had not been understood. He began to ask himself questions. "What were the impulses that led these people to act in this extraordinary fashion? Was the popular judgment justified? What probably happened afterward?" The last part of the poem is Browning's own invention, answering his own questions. Cleverly and convincingly he forces us to change our first opinion of the lady.

The Glove is also a good illustration of the fault most commonly and most justly charged against Browning; namely, his obscurity.

Browning did not intend to be obscure; he did not think his poetry was obscure. Most of his short poems are clear. But the charge against him is partly true; and it may be worth while to see in just what ways he fails to be clear.

In the first place, Browning was a man of tremendous learning in several fields. He could refer readily to the stories of the Old Testament, to Italian art, to Roman generals, to Athenian political leaders. Readers of his own day generally had less knowledge

of such things than Browning took for granted. Readers today, under our different educational system, are even more handicapped and often do not understand references such as those in the first paragraph of *The Glove*.

Browning early acquired a large vocabulary, and he had a habit of looking at things closely. He often combined these two assets to give us an accurate description of something in such a line as "the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir," in *The Glove*. The reader who knows few words and has never looked at anything closely misses his meaning and blames Browning instead of himself.

His inverted, too-long sentences are often hard to follow to the end. Most poets try to make their work so fluent and simple that it can be understood at one reading; Browning chose to make his statements both complete and exact, often at the sacrifice of simplicity. An excellent example of this is in the sentence beginning at line 105 in *The Glove*. A second or third reading will make such "obscure" passages plain.

A fourth reason for the objection lies in the nature of the material Browning habitually used and in his manner of presenting it. There are a thousand kinds and gradations of courage, envy, remorse, and other emotions. He tried to convey these gradations as exactly as possible; and he expected from his readers an alert effort to catch these moods. The dull and sleepy cannot fathom passages which the quick-witted find clear at once.

Further, he tried to convey these moods by the natural but difficult method of letting his characters speak. A man under the stress of strong emotion does not speak as he does in ordinary conversation.

He utters exclamations; his sentences are disjointed; he interrupts statements and leaves them incomplete; and in it all he reveals himself more truly than in a formal statement. Such speech is naturally difficult to follow. A good example is found in the lady's long speech in *The Glove*.

After all this has been said about Browning's seeming obscurities, it must be added that he often is actually obscure. Devoted admirers of Browning own themselves baffled especially in some longer poems not included in this volume.

Those who are not familiar with Browning ought not to be frightened away from him by a blanket charge of "obscurity," which is largely false, and is most false with respect to his best work. Persistent effort will crack most nuts; most of the difficulties in Browning yield to study. And the study is worth while.

THE LOST LEADER

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
  Just for a riband to stick in his coat — °
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
  Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
  So much was theirs who so little allowed;
How all our copper had gone for his service!
  Rags — were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
  Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
  Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
  Burns, Shelley, were with us — they watch from their
    graves! °

He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

We shall march prospering, — not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us, — not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done, — while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more triumph for devils and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him, — strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the throne!

THE PATRIOT

An Old Story

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

The air broke into a mist with bells,
The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
Had I said, 'Good folk, mere noise repels —
But give me your sun from yonder skies!'
They had answered, 'And afterward, what else?'

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
To give it my loving friends to keep!

Nought man could do, have I left undone:
And you see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

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

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind;
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

Thus I entered, and thus I go!
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
'Paid by the World, — what dost thou owe
Me?' God might question: now instead,
'Tis God shall repay! I am safer so.

INSTANS TYRANNUS

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

I struck him, he grovelled of course —
For, what was his force?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate:
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
As his lot might be worse.

'Were the object less mean, would he stand
At the swing of my hand!

For obscurity helps him and blots
The hole where he squats.'
So I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain! gold and jewels I threw,
Still he couched there perdue.°
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,
Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilth:
Still he kept to his filth!

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, did I press —
Just a son or a mother to seize!
No such booty as these!
Were it simply a friend to pursue
'Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself.
No! I could not but smile through my chafe:
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
— Through minuteness, to wit.

Then a humour more great took its place
At the thought of his face,
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
The trouble uncouth
'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
To put out of its pain —
And, ' no! ' I admonished myself,
' Is one mocked by an elf,
Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
The gravamen's in that! °
How the lion, who crouches to suit
His back to my foot,
Would admire that I stand in debate! °

But the Small turns the Great
If it vexes you, — that is the thing!
Toad or rat vex the King?
Though I waste half my realm to unearth
Toad or rat, 'tis well worth! '

So, I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole, with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake;
Over-head, did my thunder combine
With my under-ground mine:
Till I looked from my labour content
To enjoy the event.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
Did I say ' without friend? '
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe °
With the sun's self for visible boss,°
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest!
Do you see? just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
— So, *I* was afraid!

THE GLOVE

(Peter Ronsard *loquitur*.)

' Heigho,' yawned one day King Francis,
' Distance all value enhances!
When a man's busy, why, leisure
Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:
'Faith, and at leisure once is he?
Straightway he wants to be busy.

Here we've got peace; and aghast I'm
Caught thinking war the true pastime!
Is there a reason in metre?
Give us your speech, master Peter! '
I who, if mortal dare say so,
Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,°
' Sire,' I replied, ' joys prove cloudlets.
Men are the merest Ixions ' — °
Here the King whistled aloud, ' Let's
. . . Heigho. . . . go look at our lions! '
Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company, Francis was leading,
Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.
And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost
With the dame he professed to adore most —
Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,
And shelved to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
As glossy and black as a scarab,
And bade him make sport and at once stir
Up and out of his den the old monster.
They opened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled;
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter;

Then earth in a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion!
Such a brute! Were I friend Clement Marot °
(Whose experience of nature's but narrow,
And whose faculties move in no small mist
When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu! °
One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
As over the barrier which bounded
His platform, and us who surrounded
The barrier, they reached and they rested
On space that might stand him in best stead:
For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
And if, in this minute of wonder,
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
The lion at last was delivered?
Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead!
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain
To waylay the date-gathering negress:
So guarded he entrance or egress.
'How he stands!' quoth the King: 'we may well swear,
(No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere,
And so can afford the confession,)
We exercise wholesome discretion
In keeping aloof from his threshold;
Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,
Their first would too pleasantly purloin

The visitor's brisket or surloin:
But who's he would prove so foolhardy?
Not the best man of Marignan, pardie! '

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
Fell close to the lion, and rested:
The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
For months past; he sat there pursuing
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.°

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier!
De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
Walked straight to the glove, — while the lion
Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on
The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,
And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir, —
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
Leaped back where the lady was seated,
And full in the face of its owner
Flung the glove.

'Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?
So should I! ' — cried the King — ' 'twas mere vanity,
Not love, set that task to humanity! '
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.°
Not so, I; for I caught an expression
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment, —
As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful, —
As if she had tried in a crucible,
To what 'speeches like gold' were reducible,

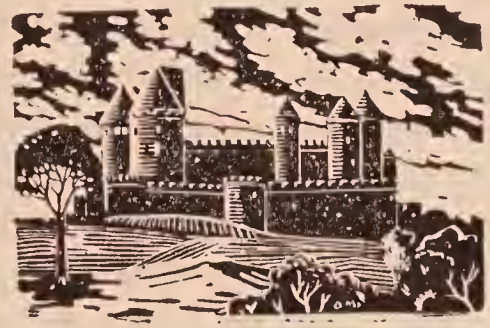
And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;
To know what she had *not* to trust to,
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;
Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?
If she wished not the rash deed's recallment?
'For I' — so I spoke — 'am a Poet:
Human nature — behooves that I know it!'

She told me, 'Too long had I heard
Of the deed proved alone by the word:
For my love — what De Lorge would not dare!
With my scorn — what De Lorge could compare!
And the endless descriptions of death
He would brave when my lip formed a breath,
I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
Doubt his word — and moreover, perforce,
For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
Must offer my love in return.
When I looked on your lion, it brought
All the dangers at once to my thought,
Encountered by all sorts of men,
Before he was lodged in his den, —
From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
With no King and no Court to applaud,
By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,
Yet to capture the creature made shift,
That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
— To the page who last leaped o'er the fence
Of the pit, on no greater pretence
Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
So, wiser I judged it to make
One trial what "death for my sake"

Really meant, while the power was yet mine,
Than to wait until time should define
Such a phrase not so simply as I,
Who took it to mean just " to die."
The blow a glove gives is but weak:
Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?
But when the heart suffers a blow,
Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?'

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway;
No doubt that a noble should more weigh
His life than befits a plebeian;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean — °
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
— He'd have scarce thought you did him the worse turn
If you whispered ' Friend, what you'd get, first earn! '
And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they married,
To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared augur.
For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;
And in short stood so plain a head taller
That he wooed and won . . . how do you call her?
The Beauty, that rose in the sequel
To the King's love, who loved her a week well.
And 'twas noticed he never would honour
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
With the easy commission of stretching
His legs in the service, and fetching
His wife, from her chamber, those straying
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
While the King took the closet to chat in, —
But of course this adventure came pat in.

And never the King told the story,
How bringing a glove brought such glory,
But the wife smiled — 'His nerves are grown firmer:
Mine he brings now and utters no murmur!'
Venienti occurrite morbo! °
With which moral I drop my theorbo.



LIFE'S INCOMPLETENESS

Browning's Optimism

It was natural for Robert Browning to look at his fellow human beings with admiration for every kind of virtue, wherever he found it, and with more than a little toleration for their mistakes and faults. Browning, the man, had small patience for deceit, cowardice, or vulgarity; Browning, the poet and seer, made endless efforts to understand human faults, and to place fools and villains in as favorable a light as possible. More important than this, however, is the fact that he tried to show us the true nature of the excellence in good men and women.

In his work as a whole he seems to tell us this. "We are all finite beings, limited in a thousand ways. It is inevitable that we should have faults, and should fail in various ways. It is equally certain that we all have virtues. The great pity is that we don't live up to the virtues, knowledge, and strength we have! There is always something better for us, if we but knew it and would strive for it. Musicians, poets, and philosophers certainly catch momentary glimpses of the excellence to which human beings might attain if they would only try; doubtless other men have these moments of vision, too. What should we do about it? In a world where everything is incomplete, we should constantly strive toward those things which we perceive by flashes in our best hours. When we reach one goal, that will doubtless reveal another

hilltop. After death we shall go on with the tasks we have not completed here."

Rabbi Ben Ezra is the best-known statement of Browning's belief in man as "a God though in the germ." He puts this utterance into the mouth of Abraham Ben Meir Ben Ezra, a twelfth-century Jewish rabbi of Toledo, Spain, famed for learning in many directions, with whose writings Browning was familiar

George Joseph Vogler (1749–1816), a German musician and composer, was famous in his day as an organist and the inventor of an organ. Browning, a lover of music and himself an amateur musician, could understand the ecstasy of the organist in the act of composing. In *Abt Vogler* he tells us that in a few fleeting moments of a lifetime the organist feels that he is creating something above the known laws of art and that at such a time the musician feels that he is in direct communion with God. These moments pass, and the composer drops back to everyday life with its troubles, discords, and monotony. But the memory of these moments is a guarantee that a man can rise to high levels of existence. He can entertain the hope that these rare moments are not lost and that the future life may all be on the level of the inspired moments now.

RABBI BEN EZRA

Grow old along with me! °
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith ' A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid! '

Not that, amassing flowers,°
Youth sighed ' Which rose make ours,
Which lily leave and then as best recall? '
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned ' Nor Jove, nor Mars;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all! '

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast? °

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God °
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff °
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence, — a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks, —

Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh hath soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test —
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once 'How good to live and learn?'

Not once beat 'Praise be Thine!
I see the whole design,
I, who saw Power, see now Love perfect too:
Perfect I call Thy plan:
Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, remake, complete, — I trust what Thou shalt do!' °

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest:
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute, — gain most, as we did best!

Let us not always say
'Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!'
As the bird wings and sings,

Let us cry 'All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!' °

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for ay removed
From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new:
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Be the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
A whisper from the west
Shoots — 'Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth: here dies another day.'

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
'This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain:
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past.'

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made;
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age; wait death nor be afraid! °

Enough now, if the Right °
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,°
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,°
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They, this thing, and I, that: whom shall my soul believe?

Not on the vulgar mass
Called ' work ' must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;

O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thum
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,°
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay, —
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
'Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!'

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall; °
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops; Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips aglow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I, — to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily, — mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

So, take and use Thy work!
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

ABT VOGLER

(After he has been Extemporizing upon the Musical Instrument of his Invention)

Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon willed °
Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,

Man, brute, reptile, fly, — alien of end and of aim,
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep removed, —
Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name,°
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved! °

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise!
Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now combine,
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise!
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well,
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion he was,
Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest:
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
When a great illumination surprises a festal night —
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire) °
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was in sight.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match man's birth,

Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the sky:
Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering star;
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale nor pine,
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near nor far.

Nay more; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and glow,
Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the Protoplast,°
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should blow,
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at last;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the body and gone,
But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth their new:
What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall be anon;
And what is, — shall I say, matched both? for I was made perfect too.

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my soul,
All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly forth,
All through music and me! For think, had I painted the whole,

Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-worth:
Had I written the same, made verse — still, effect proceeds from cause,
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled: —

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are!
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is nought;
It is everywhere in the world — loud, soft, and all is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought;
And, there! Ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the head!

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared;
Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go.
Never to be again! But many more of the kind
As good, nay, better perchance: is this your comfort to me?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God: ay, what was shall be.

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same?

Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that He heard it once: we shall hear it by and by.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fullness of the days? Have we withered or agonized?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be prized?
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.
Give me the keys, I feel for the common chord again,

Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor, — yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying a while the heights I rolled from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.

POEMS OF THE RENAISSANCE

The Dramatic Monologue

Browning is happiest as a poet of the Renaissance (roughly, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), when the energies of western Europe were aroused to a series of brilliant activities which have determined the form of all later history. More than any other writer, Browning has given to English readers the color, the variety, and the stormy energy of that period. A brief historical background for the poems of this section may be useful.

During the first three centuries of the Christian era, the Roman Empire dominated northern Africa, Asia Minor, and all of Europe west and south of the Rhine and Danube Rivers. Life, property, trade, and travel were safe. Under the one powerful central government people of a hundred racial stocks lived out their lives in peace; and the Christian religion, after two centuries of persecution, gradually permeated the whole area.

Hordes of pagans, coming through from Russia and Asia in the fifth century, toppled over this empire and all this scheme of safe, pleasant life. They overturned the empire, set up a number of different governments of their own, seized the land, intermarried with the people they conquered, and adopted much of their culture and religion. This violent business lasted about a thousand years, the period we call the Middle Ages, and laid the foundation for the existing nations of western Europe.

What are now England, France, Italy, Germany, and Spain were then many small units of kingdoms, dukedoms, and free cities, as many as thirty separate governments in what is now one country. Each king and duke inherited his realm and title, and kept them if he was strong enough. The dukes fought endless private wars with one another, to settle grudges and to increase their own power by the addition of territory and the pillage of private property. The kings called on the nobles to supply troops for their wars; the nobles maintained bands of professional soldiers and levied on the population of their territory for more soldiers. So the kings struggled with the nobles, and the nobles fought with one another for wealth and power; and the common people paid taxes, fought in wars which were none of their concern, and suffered.

Thus arose a situation in which warfare, government, and such virile sports as hunting and jousting were the sole interest in life of an arrogant aristocracy. But common people — farmers, artisans, and merchants — desire safety and peace above everything. So in return for a promised protection against invasion and pillage, the common people gave up much of their independence to the nobility, who not only ruled all the people but also owned all the land. A town would agree to supply the duke with a certain number of soldiers; a farmer would promise to fight when called on, or for a certain number of days per year. Society thus became sharply stratified. Common people, having little hope for improvement in the condition of themselves or their children, did not work at anything with purposeful energy; and sons generally followed the vocations of their fathers. An overbearing nobility held farmer, artisan, and merchant in vast con-

tempt; and each aristocracy felt that it had less in common with its own subjects than it had with the aristocracies of other countries.

In such an atmosphere of fear and suspicion there was little travel except among the nobility, the professional soldiers, and a few merchants. Every locality depended for the necessities of life on its own products. International trade was small and was limited chiefly to such products as silk, dyes, spices, and similar articles for the use of the nobility and the wealthy merchants.

For centuries the only tempering influence in this welter of disorder was the Church. There was but one Church, which demanded and received the spiritual allegiance of all men. The outward sign of that allegiance remains to us in the great cathedrals erected in almost all cities from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. The influence of the Church was thus not limited to the development of spiritual faith; it also fostered architecture and other arts, it stimulated civic pride, it was the chief center of education and almsgiving. These things tend indirectly to peace. Besides this, the Church steadily tried to lessen the horrors of war by restricting the number of days in the year when it would countenance warfare.

When an aristocracy by inheritance is devoted to war and sports as the chief business of life, it holds art, science, and learning as well as agriculture and commerce in contempt. In these ten centuries, outside the Church, intellectual life was stagnant. Very few people could read or write; those few learned at the small schools maintained at a few monasteries and convents. A few musicians and poets added something to the elaborate social life of the aristoc-

racy. Mystery plays, given annually in many cathedrals, instructed the populace in Biblical lore and incidentally kept alive some feeling for the dramatic arts. A few devoted scholars in the monasteries preserved something of the learning of the ancients. The merchant class gained slowly in wealth and civic prominence.

After eight centuries of this sort of existence, western Europe was shaken out of its stagnant brawling into energetic, purposeful activity by the growing power of Mohammedanism. The followers of the Prophet cut off the overland trade routes through Asia Minor by which silks and spices reached Europe from India; therefore, merchants and princes alike fostered voyages of exploration to find new routes to Asia. These resulted in the discovery of America, the exploration of the coast of Africa, and the finding of a route around Africa to India.

Moreover, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Church had fostered a series of crusades against the Mohammedans, with the avowed purpose of wresting Jerusalem from the unbelievers. Princes and kings, whose religion was far better than their morality, said, "It would be a noble thing to redeem the Holy Land." And they added, under their breath, "Maybe we can regain some of those lost trade routes! And these Mohammedans are increasing in power; they may invade western Europe again, as they did once in the eighth century. It would be just as much sport to unite and fight them as to fight each other."

So again and again great armies and navies sailed across the Mediterranean for the Holy Land. The Europeans found the Turks to be valiant and chival-

rous fighters, who generally defeated them. They found also that the Turks possessed luxuries, arts, sciences, and amenities in manners that put them to shame. They returned home generally poorer in money, but richer in knowledge, in curiosity, in a jaunty self-confidence in dealing with all the affairs of life; and this change affected nobleman and commoner alike.

The Turk was not content to fight on the defensive. The Turkish army attacked and conquered Constantinople in 1453, thus obtaining their first foothold in eastern Europe; and the scholars of Constantinople fled with their manuscripts of all the ancient Latin and Greek writers to western Europe, especially Italy. This makes a convenient, though somewhat inaccurate, date for the beginning of the Renaissance, the revival of learning.

In other words, during the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries many influences were preparing the way for that complete destruction in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the framework of feudal life as it had been lived for generations. As the kings and more powerful nobles consolidated their positions, men gave their allegiance to larger political units; they felt at harmony with more men and at odds with fewer. During the Crusades western Europeans learned much both from their enemies and their allies. Under the stimulus of this new knowledge men of all kinds set out to obtain for themselves more and better foodstuffs, houses, clothes, and ornaments. Navigators brought back both true and amusingly false stories about the places they visited; and they gradually proved the truth of that insane assumption of a few dreamers that the world is round, not flat.

Guns and gunpowder, first used in the fourteenth century, in the hands of common soldiers erased the ancient advantage of the armored nobleman on horseback. Men applied themselves to the arts and sciences with the same whole-hearted zeal they had once given to their little local wars. Scholars labored with burning curiosity over the manuscripts brought from Constantinople. The printing press, invented in the fifteenth century, quickly gave to thousands of readers the Bible and Latin and Greek literatures. Towns grew; manufacturing developed in the towns; new trade routes sprang into being; gold stolen from the new world facilitated commerce; artizans strengthened their guilds and their pride in craftsmanship; merchants acquired wealth through the increased business; a growing middle class became a check on the nobility.

All this is another way of saying that the Renaissance set the human personality free. Timidly at first, then more boldly, common men began to dispute the old authority of nobleman, priest, general, and teacher. Movement, gaiety, hope, and the strenuous life returned to the world. All kinds and conditions of men took their fortunes in their hands and set out blithely for whatever goal appealed to them, and many of them were restrained by few moral considerations. Men said, "I will assert myself; I will take and keep what I want!"

The Renaissance began in Italy, where it had its finest flowering. It spread slowly to other countries; and it affected first the cities. Old customs and conditions obtained in remote places for decades after the life of the cities was transformed.

Browning was interested in the Renaissance, espe-

cially as it was manifested in Italy, because self-knowledge and a high-spirited assertion of personality were its dominant characteristics. The Duke in *My Last Duchess* is a lover of art and a master of the amenities of social life, but perfectly ruthless in ordering his household. His scholar in *The Grammarian's Funeral* gives himself in a passionate devotion to learning to his last breath. The painter in *Andrea del Sarto* can love an unworthy woman, steal for her, paint religious pictures to earn money for her, reach something just short of greatness in his art, and justly appraise his superiors. *The Flight of the Duchess* takes place in some forgotten corner of Europe where old customs linger after the whole face of life elsewhere has been transformed by changing influences; the old huntsman fulfills his duty and clings to his humble, inherited position with a surly pride, while all the other characters rush headlong for whatever pleases them.

Browning originated one form of expression in verse, the "dramatic monologue," and used it with great success. The best example to study is *My Last Duchess*.

In writing a dramatic monologue, an author tells a story through the mouth of some imagined character — let us call him *X* — who is speaking to *Y*. He must invent a situation and characters of such a nature that *Y*'s questions and comments would be few and unimportant; for nothing that *Y* says is recorded. The reader gets the effect of listening to part of one side of a telephone conversation. In hearing what *X* says, we get a true picture of several characters and a story involving *X* and various other people.

The technical difficulties in writing a dramatic

monologue are enormous. In the first place, the author must meet all the usual problems of versifying. Then, so far as is practicable in poetic form, he must make his poem appear to be the natural, spoken utterance of some imagined character. Since this speaker may be a nobleman, a scholar, a painter, a huntsman, or what not, the poet must put himself completely in another man's place — and this is no small feat of imagination. Further, the speaker must reveal some things about himself and the other characters directly and intentionally, and other important facts unintentionally. Still further, the poet must get along without some of the advantages of the dramatist or novelist. The dramatist is aided in telling his story by the stage setting and the costumes of the actors; the novelist may stop to describe such things. But in a dramatic monologue any information of this kind necessary for the understanding of the story must be included naturally and casually in what is spoken. Finally, the monologue must be a literary unit, but it must appear to be a fragment of one side of a conversation.

These dramatic monologues are so condensed, so full and so varied in their richness of content that repeated readings are necessary to a complete understanding of them.

MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive; I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands °
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said

'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps
Over my Lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat;' such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart . . . how shall I say? . . . too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace — all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men, — good; but thanked
Somehow . . . I know not how . . . as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech — (which I have not) — to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say 'Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark' — and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
— E'en then would be some stooping, and I choose

Never to stoop. Oh, Sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands; °
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your Master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed; °
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, Sir! Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me.°

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

(*Time* — Shortly after the revival of learning in Europe)

Let us begin and carry up this corpse,
Singing together.
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes, °
Each in its tether
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
Cared-for till cock-crow:
Look out if yonder be not day again
Rimming the rock-row!
That's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,
Rarer, intenser,
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
Chafes in the censer!
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;
Seek we sepulture
On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
Crowded with culture!
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
Clouds overcome it;

No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's °
Circling its summit!
Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:
Wait ye the warning?
Our low life was the level's and the night's;
He's for the morning!
Step to a tune, square chests, erect the head,
'Ware the beholders!
This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,
Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
Safe from the weather!
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
Singing together,
He was a man born with thy face and throat,
Lyric Apollo! °
Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note
Winter would follow?
Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!
Cramped and diminished,
Moaned he, 'New measures, other feet anon!
My dance is finished?'
No, that's the world's way! (keep the mountain-side, °
Make for the city,)
He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
Over men's pity;
Left play for work, and grappled with the world °
Bent on escaping:
'What's in the scroll,' quoth he, 'thou keepest furled?
Show me their shaping,°
Theirs, who most studied man, the bard and sage, —
Give!' — So he gowned him,
Straight got by heart that book to its last page:
Learned, we found him!
Yea, but we found him bald too — eyes like lead,
Accents uncertain:

'Time to taste life,' another would have said,
'Up with the curtain!'—
This man said rather, 'Actual life comes next?
Patience a moment!
Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
Still, there's the comment.
Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,
Painful or easy:
Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
Ay, nor feel queasy!'
Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
When he had learned it,
When he had gathered all books had to give!
Sooner, he spurned it.
Image the whole, then execute the parts—
Fancy the fabric
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached: there's the market-place
Gaping before us.)
Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
(Hearten our chorus)
That before living he'd learn how to live—
No end to learning:
Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
Use for our earning.
Others mistrust and say—'But time escapes!
Live now or never!'
He said, 'What's time? leave Now for dogs and apes!
Man has Forever.'
Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:
Calculus racked him:
Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead:
Tussis attacked him.
'Now, Master, take a little rest!'—not he!
(Caution redoubled!

Step two a-breast, the way winds narrowly)
Not a bit troubled,
Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
Fierce as a dragon
He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst) °
Sucked at the flagon.
Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
Heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,
Bad is our bargain!
Was it not great? did not he throw on God,
(He loves the burthen) —
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen? °
Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant?
He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment!
He ventured neck or nothing — Heaven's success
Found, or earth's failure:
'Wilt thou trust death or not?' He answered 'Yes!
Hence with life's pale lure!'
That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here — should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This, throws himself on God, and unperplext
Seeking shall find Him.
So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife,
Ground he at grammar;
Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife:
While he could stammer

He settled *Hoti's* business — let it be! — °
Properly based *Oun* —
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.
Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.
Hail to your purlieus,
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews!
Here's the top-peak! the multitude below
Live, for they can, there.
This man decided not to Live but Know —
Bury this man there?
Here — here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
Lightnings are loosened,
Stars come and go! let joy break with the storm,
Peace let the dew send!
Lofty designs must close in like effects:
Loftily lying,
Leave him — still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying.

ANDREA DEL SARTO

(Called 'The Faultless Painter'

But do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
Oh, I'll content him, — but to-morrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if — forgive now — should you let me sit

Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,°
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow how you shall be glad for this! °
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, either; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require —
It saves a model. So! keep looking so —
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!
— How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet —
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,°
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks — no one's: very dear, no less!
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made.
There's what we painters call our harmony!
A common greyness silvers everything, —
All in a twilight, you and I alike
— You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know), — but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life He makes us lead!

So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel He laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber for example — turn your head —
All that's behind us! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak;
And that cartoon, the second from the door °
— It is the thing, Love! so such things should be —
Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep —
Do easily, too — when I say perfectly
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.°
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it,
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past —
I do what many dream of all their lives
— Dream? strive to do, and agonise to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive — you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat, —
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter) so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia! I am judged.°
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.

The sudden blood of these men! at a word —
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,°
His hue mistaken — what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered — what of that?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,°
Or what's a Heaven for? All is silver-grey
Placid and perfect with my art — the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain —
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
'Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!' No doubt.
Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.°
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art — for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put — and there again —
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
He means right — that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it.
But all the play, the insight and the stretch —
Out of me! out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.°
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think —
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you — oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird

The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare —
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
'God and the glory! never care for gain.
The Present by the Future, what is that? °
Live for fame, side by side with Angelo —
Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three!'
I might have done it for you. So it seems —
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self; °
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not — °
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will's somewhat — somewhat, too, the power —
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.°
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look, —
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts, —

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

(What he? why, who but Michael Angelo? °
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost, —
Is, whether you're — not grateful — but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, Love, — come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you — you, and not with me? Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more — the Virgin's face,
Not your's this time! I want you at my side
To hear them — that is, Michael Angelo —
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,

Finish the portrait out of hand — there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.°
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! What does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis! — it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures — let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In Heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance — °
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me °
To cover — the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So — still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia, — as I choose.

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

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

I

You're my friend:
I was the man the Duke spoke to;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too;
So, here's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend!

II

Ours is a great wild country:
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop;
For when you've passed the corn-field country,
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,
And sheep-range leads to cattle tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain, where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,
That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branched through and through with many a vein
Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt;
Look right, look left, look straight before, —
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till, at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
— And the whole is our Duke's country!

III

I was born the day this present Duke was —
(And O, says the song, ere I was old!)
In the castle where the other Duke was —
(When I was happy and young, not old!)
I in the Kennel, he in the Bower: °
We are of like age to an hour.
My father was Huntsman in that day;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay,°
Three times, four times out of five,
With his huntspear he'd contrive
To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?
And that's why the old Duke would rather
He lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call;
That's why my father stood in the hall
When the old Duke brought his infant out
To show the people, and while they passed
The wondrous bantling round about,
Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,
Just a month after the babe was born.
'And,' quoth the Kaiser's courier, 'since
The Duke has got an Heir, our Prince
Needs the Duke's self at his side: '
The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners,
Of all achievements after all manners,
And 'ay,' said the Duke with a surly pride.
The more was his comfort when he died

At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, and his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,
What he called stink, and they, perfume:
— They should have set him on red Berold,
Mad with pride, like fire to manage!
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine! °
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin! °
(Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game!
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame!)
Had they broached a cask of white beer from Berlin!
— Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar, for instance, green as May sorrel,
And ropy with sweet, — we shall not quarrel.

IV

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows who:
And now was the time to revisit her tribe.°
So, abroad and afar they went, the two,
And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty Hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother again.

V

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape;
Full of his travels, struck at himself.
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways?
— Not he! For in Paris they told the elf
That our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it;
'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-out: °
And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength;
— They should have set him on red Berold,
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire!

VI

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard:
And out of a convent, at the word,°
Came the Lady, in time of spring.
— Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling! °
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of urox or buffle

In winter-time when you need to muffle.
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,
And so we saw the Lady arrive:
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger!
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made in a piece of Nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees:
In truth, she was not hard to please!
Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,
Straight at the castle, that's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls:
As for us, styled the 'serfs and thralls,'
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it;
And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired —
If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and grey bird on the field was the plover.
When suddenly appeared the Duke:
And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed
On to my hand, — as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
And welcomed her with his grandest smile;
And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward;
And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The Lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown grey —
For such things must begin some one day! °

VII

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

VIII

She was active, stirring, all fire —
Could not rest, could not tire —
To a stone she might have given life!
(I myself loved once, in my day)
— For a Shepherd's, Miner's, Huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say)
Never in all the world such an one!
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the Hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
Of rule (but for after-sadness that came)
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
With which the young Duke and the old Dame
Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame:
They bore it all in complacent guise,
As though an artificer, after contriving

A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion to strike him!
So found the Duke, and his mother like him:
The Lady hardly got a rebuff —
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX

So, the little Lady grew silent and thin,
  Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin;
  And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
And said in his heart, ' 'Tis done to spite me,
But I shall find in my power to right me! '
Don't swear, friend — the Old One, many a year,°
Is in Hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall hear.

X

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning,
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice,
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
And another and another, and faster and faster,
Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled: °
Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,
He should do the Middle Age no treason
In resolving on a hunting-party.
Always provided, old books showed the way of it!
What meant old poets by their strictures?
And when old poets had said their say of it,
How taught old painters in their pictures?
We must revert to the proper channels,

Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
And gather up Woodcraft's authentic traditions:
Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated,
— To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,
Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting your stirrup —
We of the household took thought and debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest-work in;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk ' ohs '
And ' ahs ' while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-hose;
What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers, and Verderers,°
Might hope for real hunters at length, and not murderers,
And oh, the Duke's tailor — he had a hot time on't!

XI

Now you must know, that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,
The Duke put this question, ' The Duke's part provided,
Had not the Duchess some share in the business? '
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function;
Since ancient authors gave this tenet,
' When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
Let the dame of the Castle prick forth on her jennet,
And with water to wash the hands of her liege
In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,
Let her preside at the disemboweling.' °

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

Adorer of Jacynth, of course, was your servant;
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
How could I keep at any vast distance?
And so, as I say, on the Lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was decorous and lawful;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,
As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct.
Oh, but the Lady heard the whole truth at once!
What meant she? — Who was she? — Her duty and station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation —
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry,
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,°
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on!
Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;
And after her, — making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase — oh, such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column!

XII

However, at sunrise our company mustered;
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel;
For the court-yard's four walls were filled with fog
You might cut as an axe chops a log —
Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,

Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,
And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen.
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that from the valley under;
And, looking through the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gipsies on their march,
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

XIII

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside;
North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there.
But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,
And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned;
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
For the earth — not a use to which they don't turn it,
The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honey-comb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it —
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle;
Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards;
Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve inwards,
Horseshoes they'll hammer which turn on a swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.
Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle,
That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle;
But the sand — they pinch and pound it like otters;
Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers and potters!

Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
As if in pure water you dropped and let die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry;
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle
Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters:
Such are the works they put their hand to,
And the uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.
And these made the troop, which our Duke saw sally
Towards his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
Come out with the morning to greet our riders.
And up they wound till they reached the ditch,
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch,
That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
By her gait, directly, and her stoop,
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
To let that same witch tell us our fortune,
The oldest Gipsy then above ground;
And, so sure as the autumn season came round,
She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
And every time, as she swore, for the last time.
And presently she was seen to sidle
Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
So that the horse of a sudden reared up
As under its nose the old witch peered up
With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes
Of no use now but to gather brine,
And began a kind of level whine
Such as they used to sing to their viols
When their ditties they go grinding
Up and down with nobody minding:
And, then as of old, at the end of the humming

Her usual presents were forthcoming
— A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,
(Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)
Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-end, —
And so she awaited her annual stipend.
But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe
A word in reply; and in vain she felt
With twitching fingers at her belt
For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe, —
Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
Or possibly with an after-intention,
She was come, she said, to pay her duty
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
No sooner had she named his Lady,
Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
And its smirk returned with a novel meaning —
For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning;
If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow;
And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent wellnigh double?
So, glancing at her wolfskin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural fur-suit)
He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his gesture,
The life of the Lady so flower-like and delicate
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned
From out of the throng, and while I drew near
He told the crone, as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
With circumspection and mystery,
The main of the Lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude;
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,

And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,
As though she engaged with hearty goodwill
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the Lady a thorough frightening.
And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps °
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,
He bade me take the Gipsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To while away a weary hour
For the Lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curveter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what's to be told you
Had all along been of this crone's devising,°
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising:
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement:
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's:
And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
Come out as after the rain he paces,

Two unmistakable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places.
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry;
I told the command and produced my companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the Lady spoken:
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

XV

And now, what took place at the very first of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it,
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin you
'Twixt the eyes where the life holds garrison,
— Jacynth forgive me the comparison!
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree.
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
By — was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber? — and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
In a rosy sleep along the floor

With her head against the door;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Was a queen — the Gipsy woman late,
With head and face downbent
On the Lady's head and face intent:
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The Lady sat between her knees
And o'er them the Lady's clasped hands met,
And on those hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of the crone
Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil
— Very like, by her hands slow fanning,
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
They moved to measure, or bell clappers.
I said, is it blessing, is it banning,
Do they applaud you or burlesque you —
Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?
But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,
At once I was stopped by the Lady's expression:
For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
— Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving,
— Life, that filling her, passed redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white throat curving,
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped short, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
As she listened and she listened:
When all at once a hand detained me,

And the selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world,
And word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gipsy said: —

'And so at last we find my tribe,
And so I set thee in the midst,
And to one and all of them describe
What thou saidst and what thou didst,
Our long and terrible journey through,
And all thou art ready to say and do
In the trials that remain:
I trace them the vein and the other vein
That meet on thy brow and part again,
Making our rapid mystic mark;
And I bid my people prove and probe
Each eye's profound and glorious globe
Till they detect the kindred spark
In those depths so dear and dark,
Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
Circling over the midnight sea.
And on that round young cheek of thine
I make them recognise the tinge,
As when of the costly scarlet wine
They drip so much as will impinge
And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
Over a silver plate whose sheen
Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
For so I prove thee, to one and all,

Fit, when my people ope their breast,
To see the sign, and hear the call,
And take the vow, and stand the test
Which adds one more child to the rest —
When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
And the world is left outside.
For there is probation to decree,
And many and long must the trials be
Thou shalt victoriously endure,
If that brow is true and those eyes are sure;
Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb, —
Let once the vindicating ray
Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
And steel and fire have done their part
And the prize falls on its finder's heart;
So, trial after trial past,
Wilt thou fall at the very last
Breathless, half in trance
With the thrill of the great deliverance,
Into our arms for evermore;
And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
About thee, what we knew before,
How love is the only good in the world.
Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
Or brain devise, or hand approve!
Stand up, look below,
It is our life at thy feet we throw
To step with into light and joy;
Not a power of life but we'll employ
To satisfy thy nature's want;
Art thou the tree that props the plant,
Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree —
Canst thou help us, must we help thee?
If any two creatures grew into one,
They would do more than the world has done;
Though each apart were never so weak,

Yet vainly through the world should ye seek
For the knowledge and the might
Which in such union grew their right:
So, to approach, at least, that end,
And blend, — as much as may be, blend
Thee with us or us with thee, —
As climbing-plant or propping-tree,
Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?
Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown,
Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
Die on thy boughs and disappear
While not a leaf of thine is sere?
Or is the other fate in store,
And art thou fitted to adore,
To give thy wondrous self away,
And take a stronger nature's sway?
I foresee and I could foretell
Thy future portion, sure and well —
But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,
And let them say what thou shalt do!
Only, be sure thy daily life,
In its peace, or in its strife,
Never shall be unobserved;
We pursue thy whole career,
And hope for it, or doubt, or fear, —
Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
We are beside thee, in all thy ways,
With our blame, with our praise,
Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
Glad, angry — but indifferent, no!
Whether it is thy lot to go,
For the good of us all, where the haters meet
In the crowded city's horrible street;
Or thou step alone through the morass
Where never sound yet was
Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,

For the air is still, and the water still,
When the blue breast of the dipping coot
Dives under, and all is mute.
So at the last shall come old age,
Decrepit as befits that stage;
How else wouldst thou retire apart
With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
And gather all to the very least
Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
Let fall through eagerness to find
The crowning dainties yet behind?
Ponder on the entire Past
Laid together thus at last,
When the twilight helps to fuse
The first fresh, with the faded hues,
And the outline of the whole,
As round eve's shades their framework roll,
Grandly fronts for once thy soul.
And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
Of yet another morning breaks,
And like the hand which ends a dream,
Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
Then — '
Ay, then, indeed, something would happen!
But what? For here her voice changed like a bird's;
There grew more of the music and less of the words;
Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable
With those clever clerkly fingers,
All that I've forgotten as well as what lingers
In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
To give you even this poor version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
— More fault of those who had the hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!

But to return from this excursion, —
Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,°
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap —
And the charm vanished!
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my Lady,
With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring made I,
Down from the casement, round to the portal.
Another minute and I had entered, —
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess — I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding,
— I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve his wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what its friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers.
I preceded her; the crone
Followed silent and alone;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
We descended, I preceding;

Crossed the court with nobody heeding;
All the world was at the chase,
The court-yard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The Lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad for her service
To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,
But unable to pay proper duty where owing it
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it:
For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused me, —
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
— Something to the effect that I was in readiness
Whenever God should please she needed me, —
Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom, — mark, her bosom —
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me . . . ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood, — that a true heart so may gain

Such a reward, — I should have gone home again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!
It was a little plait of hair
Such as friends in a convent make
To wear, each for the other's sake, —
This, see, which at my breast I wear,°
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
And then, — and then, — to cut short, — this is idle,
These are feelings it is not good to foster, —
I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
And the palfrey bounded, — and so we lost her.

XVI

When the liquor's out, why clink the cannikin?
I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,
And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib
Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,
When she heard, what she called, the flight of the feloness
— But it seems such child's play,
What they said and did with the Lady away!
And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
Always made me — and no doubt makes you — sick.
Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
As that sweet form disappeared through the postern,
She that kept it in constant good humour,
It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do more.
But the world thought otherwise and went on,
And my head's one that its spite was spent on:
Thirty years are fled since that morning,
And with them all my head's adorning.
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,
The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:

But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,
So, they made no search and small inquiry —
And when fresh Gipsies have paid us a visit, I've
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,
And the old one was in the young one's stead,
And took, in her place, the household's head,
And a blessed time the household had of it!
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
I could favour you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse:
In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.°

XVII

You're my friend —
What a thing friendship is, world without end!
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up
As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
And poured out, all lovelily, sparklingly, sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids —
Friendship may match with that monarch of fluids;
Each supples a dry brain, fills you its ins-and-outs,
Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand
doubts
Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease.

I have seen my little Lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before;
I always wanted to make a clean breast of it:
And now it is made — why, my heart's-blood, that went
trickle,
Trickle, but anon, in such muddy dribblets,
Is pumped up brisk now, through the main ventricle,
And genially floats me about the giblets.
I'll tell you what I intend to do:
I must see this fellow his sad life through —
He is our Duke, after all,
And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.
My father was born here, and I inherit
His fame, a chain he bound his son with:
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there's no mine to blow up and get done with,
So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.
For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
Some day or other, his head in a morion,
And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up,°
Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.
And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,
And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a blue crust,
Then, I shall scrape together my earnings;
For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth reposes,
And our children all went the way of the roses:
It's a long lane that knows no turnings.
One needs but little tackle to travel in;
So, just one stout cloak shall I indue:
And for a staff, what beats the javelin
With which his boars my father pinned you?
And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinfull,
I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly!
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.

What's a man's age? He must hurry more, that's all;
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold:
When we mind labour, then only, we're too old —
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,
(Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the Gipsies,
And find my Lady, or hear the last news of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.
And when my Cotnar begins to operate
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
I shall drop in with — as if by accident —
'You never knew then, how it all ended,
What fortunes good or bad attended
The little Lady your Queen befriended?'
— And when that's told me, what's remaining?
This world's too hard for my explaining.
The same wise judge of matters equine
Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak wine,
He also must be such a Lady's scorner!
Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:
Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw.
— So, I shall find out some snug corner
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
Turn myself round and bid the world good night;
And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing
Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
To a world where will be no further throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them. Amen!

NOTES AND QUESTIONS

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN (*Page 4*)

1. Hamelin, a town in western Germany.

89. Cham, or Khan, the title of the ruler of Tartary, in Asia

91. Nizam, title of the ruler of one of the states in India.

95. Guilder, a Dutch coin worth about thirty-eight cents.

105. Try dropping some salt in a candle flame, as an experiment in physics. This is a typical example of Browning's power of observation.

138. Drysaltery, a storehouse for dry and salted meats, pickles, etc. **Nuncheon,** a morsel between meals.

158, 160. Claret, etc. Names of wines.

177. Bagdat, Bagdad, one of the chief cities of western Asia. **Caliph,** title of the head of the Moslem state and defender of the Moslem religion.

258. See *Matthew*, XIX, 24.

290. Transylvania, a part of Hungary, and hundreds of miles from Hamelin.

Questions and Discussion

1. Do you regard the parenthesis at lines 46–51 as picturesque and appropriate? 2. Or unnecessary but harmless? 3. Or unpleasant in content, and a needless interruption? 4. Compare it with lines 80–87.

5. Do you have an impulse to read lines 111–118 aloud, with swiftness and gaiety? Why? 6. What does that suggest to you as to the art of the poet?

7. For what qualities is this poem popular with children? 8. Why, in this poem alone, does Browning state its moral at the close?

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX (*Page 13*)

14. Lokeren, Boom, etc., towns at intervals of a few miles along the route. Their exact positions are of no importance to the enjoyment of the poem.

Questions and Discussion

1. How does Browning give the effect of speed and of effort? 2. Is there any particular fitness of rhythm to the thing described? 3. Pick out lines that show Browning's power of sharp observation. 4. Who is the hero of the poem? 5. Where is the climax?

TRAY (*Page 15*)

3. Sir Olaf, a conventional name for the heroes of the long romances of mediæval times.

6. Sin-scathed. Exaggerated terms such as this were common in the works of Byron, and more common in his imitators.

Questions and Discussion

1. What connection have the first two paragraphs with the story? 2. Do they mislead the reader? 3. Would the poem be harmed if they were omitted? 4. Can even a great writer violate elementary principles without loss? 5. In lines 20–35, Browning conveys the reactions of the bystanders through direct quotation. What are those reactions? 6. Is the phrasing appropriate? Is it easy to phrase such thoughts within the limits of rhyme and rhythm? 7. Do scientists practice vivisection for the purposes Browning suggests?

CAVALIER TUNES (*Page 21*)

These three poems were among the few for which Browning used an English background.

The years 1642–1660 were a period of great civil strife in England. A Puritan faction led the opposition in Parliament against the taxes and other measures which King Charles I tried to force through. The king was a charming, indiscreet man; his followers among the nobility, called the "Cavaliers," were a jolly, reckless group, devoted to the king as a man and to the monarchical form of government which he represented. The Cavaliers referred to their opponents contemptuously as "Roundheads." Pym, Hampden, Cromwell (nicknamed "Noll") were leaders of the Puritans; Hazelrig, Fiennes, and Harry, the son of Sir Henry Vane, were of the same party. The Rupert mentioned was a nephew and supporter of the king. When it became evident that political strife was going to be turned into civil war, King Charles raised his standard at Nottingham, where his followers rallied round him

Questions and Discussion

1. What inferences concerning the Cavaliers generally and the singers of these verses in particular can you draw from these poems? 2. Do the rhythms fit the singers and the occasion? 3. In this respect contrast them with the first lines of *Love among the Ruins* and *Andrea del Sarto*.

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP (*Page 23*)

1. Ratisbon, a city in Bavaria, captured by Napoleon in 1809. The German name is *Regensburg*.

11. Lannes, a French nobleman, commanding one of Napoleon's armies.

Questions and Discussion

1. Does this poem contain any unnecessary material? 2. Does it lack anything for complete understanding? 3. Where and how does Browning shift our interest from one of the chief figures to the other; and does it then remain fixed to the end?

HERVÉ RIEL (*Page 24*)

As his reward for saving the remnant of the French fleet from capture by the English after the battle of the Hogue, Hervé Riel is said to have demanded a holiday for life. Commentators have usually noted this as the one discrepancy between the poem and historical fact. There may be other unimportant differences, since the historians do not agree in all details in their accounts of the battle. Such discrepancies have no bearing on the worth of the poem.

A French frigate of ninety-two guns of that period would have been a vessel of some two thousand tons. Comparing this with the "craft of twenty tons" mentioned in line 20 will give some suggestion of the knowledge and skill displayed by the pilot.

It is interesting to note that one of the French vessels which was damaged at the Hogue escaped to one of the French ports and sank there; and guns and other relics from her were brought up by divers in 1928. French naval guns of that time were ordinarily made of cast iron and fired balls weighing from nine to eighteen pounds.

2. In 1688 King James II was forced to flee from England. France took up the quarrel of the deposed king. The French fleet met the combined fleets of England and Holland in 1692, as related in this poem. The allied fleets won, and England established a permanent naval supremacy in European waters.

5. St. Malo, a small city at the mouth of the Rance River, on the northwest coast of France.

30. Plymouth, a naval port on the south coast of England.

43. Pressed. Living conditions in all navies were then so bad that volunteers were insufficient to man them. Therefore naval officers impressed men, chiefly from sea-coast towns, to fill their complements.

46. Malouins, people of St. Malo.

Questions and Discussion

1. Does the meter of the poem accord with the nature of the action? 2. Does the fifth stanza move with the same speed as the rest? Why? 3. For what qualities do we admire the hero? 4. What would have been the attitude of his shipmates toward his choice of

a reward? 5. What would have been the attitude of the shipmates of the historical Hervé Riel to the choice he actually made? 6. How do you suppose the historical pilot passed the rest of his life? 7. What would have been the effect on his character of a lifelong vacation? 8. Suppose you are a middle-aged fisherman living in Croisic forty years later; the real Hervé Riel is a familiar figure in the town; a stranger asks you about him. Tell the story of the battle and the pilot's part in it in your own way, emphasizing the effect of the exploit and the reward on the man's later life and his character.

PHEIDIPPIDES (*Page 29*)

The translation of the subtitle is, "Rejoice, we are victorious."

1. It will be helpful, before reading the poem, to get the situation and the picture in mind. The runner Pheidippides is just entering Athens after a run of 280 miles in a few days time. He is doubtless near exhaustion; and he shares the hopes and fears of the people of his city. His first thought is of Athens and of the gods worshipped by the Athenians; then of his message for the rulers of the city.

2. Dæmons, spirits.

3. Read the whole paragraph; then determine to whom *thee* refers.

4. Zeus (the Roman Jupiter, or Jove) was regarded as the father of gods and men; the chief deity of the Greeks. **Ægis,** a shield. The shield and spear were the emblems of Athena (Roman Minerva), goddess of warfare and wisdom.

5. Buskin, a high shoe, laced under the knee. The bow and buskin were the emblems of Apollo, god of the sun, and his sister, Diana, goddess of the moon.

8. Pan, the god of nature, was pictured as having the body and head of a man and the legs of a goat. The word *pan* survives in English in such words as *Pan-American* and *panic.*

9. Archons, rulers. **Tettix,** the grasshopper, an emblem worn by the senators. The Athenians believed that the grasshoppers spring from the earth, and claimed the same origin for their race.

12. Sparta was noted among the Greek city-states for her military organization.

18. The offering of earth and water was an acknowledgment of defeat and submission. Why was it appropriate?

19. Eretria, a city about thirty miles north of Athens, had been captured by the slowly advancing Persian army. All the city-states of Greece were small, and many of them were jealous of each other.

20. Hellas, the Greek word for Greece.

21. Herodotus gives a more judicious phrasing of this message.

33. Olumpos, or Olympus, a mountain in northern Greece, regarded by the early Greeks as the dwelling of all the gods.

37–40. Historians record this as the answer of the Spartans to

Pheidippides. As to its significance, they disagree. Some regard it as an excuse behind which the Spartans could hide and watch the Athenians suffer defeat; others think it an indication of the reverence to the gods customary among the Spartans.

47. In their religious ceremonies, animals adorned with fillets of leaves were sacrificed; and cups of rich wine were poured on the ground.

52–84. Parnes, a mountain in Attica, not on the direct course between Sparta and Athens. Herodotus says the incident took place on Mount Parthenium. It is not known why Browning changed the scene.

61. Fosse, ditch.

62. Erebos, the place of darkness and the dead.

80. Greaves were armor for the legs.

89. Miltiades commanded the Athenian army which fought the Persians a few days later.

105. Marathon (meaning *field of fennel*), a small plain on the coast northeast of Athens where the Persian army was encamped.

106. Akropolis, the citadel of Athens.

Questions and Discussion

1. Why does Browning represent Pheidippides as halting to pay tribute to the gods before delivering his urgent message to the rulers of the city? 2. Did the many gods of the Greeks seem as real to them as the one God worshipped by later peoples? 3. Do you see any appealing or ennobling elements in the religion of the Greeks?

4. In lines 17 to 25, Pheidippides repeats the message as he delivered it to the Spartans. Was it tactful and persuasive? 5. Do you see in it any suggestion of the reason why the Greek city-states failed to coöperate? 6. In line 107 what is meant by "the meed is thy due"? 7. In line 112, why does Browning put the words "the bliss" in that position? 8. What is the meaning of the whole sentence? 9. In line 116, what is the significance of "bear the face of a god"?

10. Who are the two speakers of the poem, and is the unity of effect lost by having two speakers? 11. Miltiades was a great general, Pheidippides just a message bearer; why should Browning choose the latter as his hero? 12. In what respects may Pheidippides be considered a symbol of the Athenians? 13. Is his fate one to be envied?

14. Note the words "yet never decline," in line 118; remember that Pheidippides was a professional athlete; consider the probable effect on him of the supreme exertion of his run to Sparta; then think what his later years might have been if he had lived. 15. What reward does Pheidippides believe that Pan meant for him, and do you think that was the runner's idea, or was it Browning's?

16. Pheidippides' report to the archons would naturally be an ex-

cited, rugged speech, in broken rather than perfectly fluent sentences, does Browning convey that effect?

17. Note the unusual rhyme scheme of the poem.

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND (*Page 34*)

This poem was first published in 1845. Browning had visited Italy in 1838 and 1844; he loved the land and its people, and established his home in Florence in 1846. A liberal in his political beliefs, he was sympathetic toward the aspirations of the Italians for freedom from the dominance of Austria. He may have been acquainted with some of the Italians who had taken refuge in London.

8. Charles. This might have reference to Carlo Alberto, a prince of the House of Savoy, who at one time favored rebellion but later deserted the cause. The same man is mentioned in lines 11, 20, 116, 125.

19. Metternich (1773–1859), for years the prime minister of Austria, the most adroit and powerful diplomat in Europe, a defender of the authority of all kings and a foe of the aspirations of the common people for self-government.

75. Duomo, cathedral.

76. Tenebrae, a service in the Roman Catholic Church, the matins sung on three days of Holy Week.

81. The rebels had some friends in the Church. The carrying of secret messages was one of their ways of helping the rebels.

Questions and Discussion

1. In what respects are the first sentence and the first paragraph skillful pieces of writing, judging them as you would a magazine story or a newspaper article? 2. What do you learn here about the customs of country life in Italy in 1845? 3. Was it pleasant, picturesque, economically efficient? 4. Is there anything in the poem by which the speaker, the time, or the place could be exactly identified? 5. What does Browning gain or lose by this vagueness? 6. Compare the temperament of this exile with some notable rebels of other lands, for example with George Washington or Jefferson Davis. 7. Compare the unnamed woman with a farm girl in some contemporary magazine story and with the women in Tennyson's "Dora," and note whether Tennyson or Browning regards women more nearly as contemporary writers do.

PROSPICE (*Page 39*)

Near the end of his life Browning said, "Without death, which is our crape-like, churchyard word for change, for growth, there could

be no prolongation of what we call life. For myself, I deny death as an end to anything." *Prospice* means "look forward." This poem was written shortly after the death of Mrs. Browning.

Questions and Discussion

1. Is thought or emotion uppermost in the poem? 2. For what qualities has it become one of his best-loved poems? 3. What comment can you make on the art displayed in the choice of thought and words in the first few lines? 4. Compare it in this respect with *Instans Tyrannus* and *The Flight of the Duchess.*

THE FLOWER'S NAME (*Page 41*)

This poem first appeared in *Hood's Magazine* in 1844. Browning was then thirty-two years old, in the full tide of his powers, writing a great deal on a wide variety of themes. Does this poem appear to have been written at one quick, easy stroke, or does it seem labored? Does it seem careless, or unfinished? Look up the words *fanciful* and *imaginative* and see which, if either, would apply to this poem.

Questions and Discussion

1. Does Browning seem here to write from the inside of the speaker's mind, or from the outside as a curious spectator might? 2. Compare it with *Love Among the Ruins* in this respect.

3. Why do we have an inverted word order in line 8? Such inversions, for the same reason, were common among all poets at that time. 4. Compare Browning with Robert Frost, Edna St. Vincent Millay, or any of the better poets of today in this respect.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS (*Page 43*)

Questions and Discussion

1. Is the thought of this poem plainly or obscurely expressed? 2. Is the language more or less musical than in most of Browning's work? 3. Is the music of this poem appropriate to the scene, to the supposed time of day, to the changing emotion? 4. Note the effect of the rhyme scheme and the use of lines of two different lengths. 5. Compare it with *The Grammarian's Funeral* in this respect. 6. Which poem "sounds more like Browning"? 7. Note the balance within each paragraph. 8. Does the poem work up to a climax? 9. More than one climax? Locate it, or them.

10. Does this poem sound like the natural, tumultuous outpouring of a young man in love? 11. Did Browning intend it to?

12. Browning sometimes implies, and sometimes bluntly states, his opinion as to what is excellent and admirable in life Which is his

method here? 13. Compare it with *Incident of the French Camp* and *Instans Tyrannus*.

EVELYN HOPE (*Page 45*)

Questions and Discussion

The need to give and receive love is one of the deepest necessities to both men and women. Yet many miss it and content themselves so far as they may with substitutes. An affectionate devotion to some one much older or younger is one common makeshift, here nobly and subtly pictured. 1. What are some of the other substitutes that disappointed people turn to? 2. Why is love, even unfulfilled love, so often a stimulus to great achievements? 3. What is Browning's view as to the nature of our future life?

YOUTH AND ART (*Page 47*)

This poem is an example of one sort of thing which Browning could do supremely well; that is, a poem in two tones. On the surface here, all is lightness, gayety, and wit; but beneath this flashing play of thought there is a deeper and different emotion which is fully revealed only in the last two stanzas.

8. John Gibson (1790–1866), a well known English sculptor.

12. Grisi, one of the most famous singers of the middle of the nineteenth century.

58. bals-parés, balls in fancy dress.

60. R. A., member of the Royal Academy.

Questions and Discussion

1. This poem first appeared in 1864. Critics today are generally inclined to scoff at the women in the poems of Browning's contemporaries, saying that they are like women in stained-glass windows; lovely, inspiring, and almost impossibly good, but incapable of hard, sharp thinking. Could such an accusation be brought against the woman who speaks in this poem? 2. Are her mental processes different from those of women living today? 3. Do you get from this any suggestion as to why Browning's work during his first twenty-five years of writing enjoyed little popularity?

4. By implication, Browning in this poem severely denounces one common human fault. Just what is it?

A FACE (*Page 49*)

This poem is one of many in which Browning shows a sure touch and knowledge in using the materials of another art. Some of the

great painters of the Italian Renaissance loaded their pictures with beauty. The central figures of a picture (the Madonna and child being a favorite subject) would be shown against backgrounds of gold, or of bright draperies, or of exquisite landscapes; and often angels would be shown in the skies. All the rich background, however, was meant to emphasize the central figures.

14. Corregio (1494?–1534) is noted for the light and color and gentle joyousness of his pictures.

Questions and Discussion

1. What stands out in this poem, the girl or the background? 2. Do you feel that Browning was portraying pretty girls as a class, or an individual? 3. Note that he has here looked at a small subject briefly, much as a camera view is taken. 4. Is his picture blurred, or flat? 5. Are the background and the central figure both clear? 6. Study the phraseology, especially the verbs, to see how life and vivacity are given to the sketch.

MY STAR (*Page 50*)

4. Get your physics teacher to show you how Iceland spar polarizes light.

Questions and Discussion

Compare this poem with *A Face* for the art of direct and indirect description. Read it in connection with *One Word More* to find how Browning reveals his own happiness with his wife.

ONE WORD MORE (*Page 50*)

It is important to remember the circumstances under which this poem was written, and especially Browning's frame of mind at the time.

During eighteen years (1832–1850) he had composed thirteen books of verse and plays in verse; his father had paid for the printing of nearly all of them and had had no return from them; a few critics sneered at them, while most critics ignored them. Only his immediate family and a small number of outside readers gave him the encouragement to keep at work in the face of this neglect and ridicule. He worked steadily from 1850 to 1855, composing fifty poems, nearly every one of which was the speech of some imagined character. (See, for example, *Evelyn Hope* and *Instans Tyrannus*.) His art was maturing; his powers were growing. We may justly imagine that he could sense the improvement in his work.

In other respects his personal life during those five years was a

happy one. He rejoiced in the affection of his wife, in the development of his small son, in a circle of friends about them in Florence, in their occasional pleasant journeys to other places, in his wife's rapidly growing reputation as a poet; he amused himself at many things, including his music and modeling.

In 1855 his fifty poems were ready to be published, under the title *Men and Women*. Mrs. Browning also had a new book ready for the publishers. They went to London together to see their books through the press. There he composed *One Word More* to complete his work and dedicate the whole to his wife.

Their love for each other, after nine years of marriage, was intense and heart-filling. Browning longed for some new, different, and perfect way of showing his affection, to his wife and to her alone. We may imagine that he had hoped to do this through his music or modeling or in some other way, but without success. He knew that Raphael and Dante had tried to express their love for a woman through an unfamiliar art medium, with an equal lack of success. Here he was, pressed for time, with the work of five years ready for the printer, and no different, perfect way of dedication available! What could he do? Only one thing, another poem, but a different kind of poem. He wrote *One Word More* impulsively, in a different verse pattern, in the first person instead of his usual third person. He printed the poem for his wife to hear and for the world to overhear. In comparing this with the acts of Raphael and Dante cited in the poem, he is not guilty of such an incongruity as at first appears.

5. Raphael (1483–1520), one of the great painters of the Renaissance in Italy. He did some fifty Madonnas, several of which are referred to in paragraph three. A few sonnets written by him have been preserved; it is not certain that he wrote so many as a hundred. The woman for whom he wrote them is also not known; there is a legend that she was the daughter of a Roman baker.

27. Guido Reni (1575–1642), an Italian painter. It is believed that he had a collection of Raphael's drawings; it is not known that he possessed any poems by Raphael.

32. Dante (1265–1321), the greatest poet of Italy. His love for Beatrice is celebrated in his *Vita Nuova*. "Beatrice" should be given the Italian pronunciation, in four syllables. (Bā-ȧ-tre′chĕ).

41. Dante's great work was his epic, *The Divine Comedy*, a picture of the future life. In it he consigned his personal enemies to what he believed to be their appropriate places, in Purgatory or the Inferno.

57. Bice, diminutive for Beatrice (Bee′chĕ).

72. Browning avowedly speaks for all artists. Is his idea equally true of other people?

73. The artist, feeling himself peculiarly endowed by Heaven, must put his works forth before a public, a part of which is dull or jealous. These will misunderstand or minimize his work.

74. Lines 74–108 refer to incidents in the life of Moses related in *Exodus*, II, III, XVI, XXXIV, and in *Numbers*, XX.

99. Exactly what does this line mean? May it be referred to any man living in the public eye?

115. Do you find a similar idea in *Rabbi Ben Ezra?* In *The Grammarian's Funeral?*

121. Fresco, a painting, generally of large size, on the wall of a building.

125. Missal-marge. The margins of old prayer books were often decorated with tiny paintings.

136. Karshook, Lippo, etc., some of those who speak in his book, *Men and Women.*

150. Samminiato, the popular pronunciation of San Miniato, one of the Florentine churches.

160. Mythos, the Greek word from which "myth" is derived. In one of the Greek stories, Diana, goddess of the moon, falls in love with the mortal Endymion.

163. Zoroaster, Persian sage and astronomer, and founder of one of the first organized religions. **Galileo,** an Italian astronomer. **Homer** wrote a *Hymn to Diana.* **Keats** retold the story of Endymion.

174. See *Exodus*, XXIV.

186. Is this true of all men and women?

188. Browning repeatedly stated that he regarded his wife's abilities as far higher than his own. This is, therefore, not an empty public compliment.

Questions and Discussion

The central thoughts of the poem are in lines 58–72 and 180–186. These should be studied till they are thoroughly understood.

1. What four things does Browning compare with the writing of this poem? 2. Does he represent the comparisons as being complete and exact? 3. Note, in lines 117–128, the closer comparison with the painter or musician working in an unfamiliar medium; try to imagine just how Browning felt in the act of composition here.

4. What is the meaning of each of the adjectives in line 62 in their application to a medium of art?

5. What inferences can you draw from this poem concerning Browning and his wife, and their life together?

PIPPA PASSES (*Page 58*)

Pippa Passes, written when Browning was twenty-nine, contains some of his most joyous poetry. In form it is a play, though it is not suited to stage production. The central figure is Pippa, a poor girl employed in the silk mills of Asolo. She has but one holiday a year. The first two passages are from the long, happy monologue with

which she greets the sunrise of her holiday. Then she goes out, resolved on being happy all day. The next four scenes depict four groups of people at some crisis in their lives who overhear Pippa singing outside their windows. Pippa is unconscious of her hearers and of her influence on them. In each case her song acts as the key to the solution of their difficulties. Three of the songs are here given. The second is Browning's most widely known lyric.

18. Jess. Falconry, the taking of wild birds by hawks trained for that purpose, was one of the chief sports of the mediæval period. The *jess* was a short strap, fitted to the legs of the hawk, by which the bird was held on the falconer's wrist till the prey was sighted.

Questions and Discussion

1. Note how the introductory passage gains pictorial power through the use of specific rather than general words.
2. One critic speaks of these lyrics as "full of unconsidered magic." Exactly what did he mean, and is it a just comment on them?

HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD (*Page 60*)

Questions and Discussion

Even the weariest professional critic of poetry is occasionally pricked out of his boredom by some such masterful work as the twenty lines of this poem. 1. Compare it with "*De Gustibus . . . .*" as to the things observed and the preferences expressed. 2. Look up the word *ecstasy* carefully, and see if it can be applied to this poem. If a man has the capacity for experiencing ecstasy, he has one of the prime requisites of the artist; but he is not an artist till he can communicate his feeling. 3. Take some poems from any current newspaper or magazine and try to determine whether the authors are lacking in either respect; then compare them with this poem.

4. For the varieties of effect which may be produced in English poetry by the choice of language and meters, compare this poem with the first stanza of *Love Among the Ruins*, *Cavalier Tunes*, and the seventh section of *The Pied Piper*.

"DE GUSTIBUS. . . ." (*Page 61*)

The title is part of a Latin proverb meaning "There can be no disputing about tastes." First published in 1855, this poem was written in Italy at a time of rebellion.

Questions and Discussion

1. See lines 35–38; and compare with the poem *The Italian in England*.

2. The city of Venice put up a memorial tablet on the house where Browning died. Lines 43–44 were chosen from all his works for inscription on it. Why were they appropriate?

3. Notice the contrasts between the scenes described. Which is the more strongly colored? The more spacious? What is the effect on each scene of its being placed beside the other? Contrast the human element in the two scenes.

4. The use of compound words is one of Browning's mannerisms. In this poem are they apt? Do they call attention to themselves? Would you call them a defect in his style?

OVER THE SEA OUR GALLEYS WENT (*Page 62*)

Questions and Discussion

1. What does the movement of the verse in the first paragraph suggest? 2. What do you learn concerning the religion, the spirit or temper, the customs, and the ships, of the early Greek mariners? 3. What truth does Browning try to convey?

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY (*Page 64*)

This study in contrasts is a piece of adroit humor. Browning, himself a life-long city dweller, makes his speaker present a picture of Italian country life, which he detests, as attractive as the round of little activities in the town, which he adores. How serious the poor fellow is! Most of us can sympathize with him because we experience similar difficulties.

4. Bacchus, the god of wine. His name was used by the Romans and Italians as a mild expletive.

39. Diligence, stage coach.

42. One of the chief amusements of the people of the towns and villages of Italy was afforded by the traveling puppet shows. *Pulchinello* is the Italian counterpart of the Punch in English puppet shows.

46. Before republican government was established, laws were made by the kings and dukes, often with little regard to public sentiment.

48. Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, three famous early Italian authors. **St. Jerome** translated the Bible into Latin. **Cicero,** the most famous Italian orator. **St. Paul,** the most effective missionary of the early days of the Christian church. Do we look for extravagant praise in tributes of this kind? Why?

51. Italian churches generally had figures of the Virgin Mary mounted on platforms to be carried on the shoulders of men in the frequent religious processions which constituted one of the picturesque features of city life. Sometimes the figures were pierced with seven

swords to represent the seven sorrows of the Virgin. The figures were sometimes inartistic and inappropriate. What purpose did these figures and processions serve?

56. Italian cities raised part of their revenues by taxing food products as they entered the gates.

Questions and Discussion

1. If a town like the one here described were in existence today, would you enjoy a vacation in it? 2. Would you like to pass a year there? Why? 3. Do we laugh with the speaker of the poem, or at him? 4. How much do we know of him from the preferences he expresses? 5. Review the facts concerning Italian life in the middle of the nineteenth century which you have gathered from this poem and *The Italian in England.*

6. Do we get in line 13 any suggestion as to why city people like to go to the country for vacations? 7. Do the rigid lines of city streets and houses follow any model in nature? 8. What do we learn of the speaker from his preference for these rigid, confining lines?

THE LOST LEADER (*Page 71*)

2. Membership in various honorary orders could be bestowed by the party in power, and was indicated by a riband to be worn on the coat. In several European countries this is a common method of rewarding distinguished public service or silencing opposition.

14. What do you know of the four authors here mentioned to warrant their inclusion in a list of Liberals?

Questions and Discussion

1. Just what does Browning have in mind in lines 25–28? 2. What is the usual fate of the man who changes political parties? 3. Does Browning welcome the thought of contest between the two great schools of political thought? 4. Is he troubled by any doubts as to the soundness of the position of his own party?

THE PATRIOT (*Page 72*)

Questions and Discussion

1. Does this man face execution with a clear conscience? 2. Who are the "loving friends"? 3. Does Browning mean to imply that The Patriot had abused his power for the benefit of his personal friends? 4. What is the usual fate of the political leader who tries to lead too fast and too well? 5. Browning repeatedly advances the idea that the future life is a condition under which men may complete their unfinished work. Is that idea advanced here? 6. Compare with *Andrea del Sarto* lines 140–144.

INSTANS TYRANNUS (*Page 73*)

18. Perdue, concealed.
44. Gravamen, difficulty or weight.
47. Admire, the word is derived from the Latin. Find its original meaning, the one used here.
64. Targe, shield.
65. Boss, a raised ornament on shields, swords, etc

Questions and Discussion

1. Why is a story of this kind usually told from the point of view of the person oppressed? 2. What does Browning accomplish in his first paragraph? 3. Note how, in lines 5–34, the tyrant states exactly what means of oppression he adopted, but in lines 53–60 his greatest effort is vaguely suggested. What is the reason for this difference? 4. Does Browning indicate any specific time or place as the setting for this story; and why? 5. Is there anything attractive about the character of the tyrant, and does he make any direct effort to obtain our liking? 6. Do you think that anything like the imagined incident here recounted may ever have happened?

THE GLOVE (*Page 75*)

The Glove illustrates Browning's interest in the Renaissance, his love for playing with curious double rhymes, and his interest in the hidden motive behind the unusual act.

Francis I, king of France from 1515 to 1547, was an able man, an energetic soldier, and a patron of art and letters (See *Andrea del Sarto*); his court was spectacular, pleasure-loving, and licentious. Peter Ronsard (1524–1585), through whose mouth Browning elects to tell the story, was the most famous French poet of the day.

The poem is founded on an anecdote in an old French writer, as follows: — "One day King Francis amused himself by watching a fight between his lions. One of the ladies of the court dropped her glove into the pit among the beasts. Then she turned to De Lorge, her suitor, and said, 'You say you love me, and you are ready to risk your life for me. If you want me to believe you, get my glove for me.' De Lorge went down into the pit, retrieved the glove, returned, and threw it into the lady's face. In spite of all her coquetry she could never induce him to look at her again."

12. Naso, Publius Ovidius Naso, the Latin poet Ovid, whose works were greatly esteemed during the Renaissance.
14. Ixion, in mythology a king of Thessaly who offended the gods and was condemned to Tartarus, the abode of the damned. There he was bound to a wheel which perpetually revolved. Ronsard wishes

to say that all men are unstable. The king has been bored before by the poet's efforts to be clever and to show his knowledge of the classics, and acts accordingly.

45. Clement Marot, a French poet and rival of Ronsard, who had made metrical translations of some of the *Psalms*. What evidence of that rivalry do we find here?

50. The lion of the tribe of Judah. See *Genesis*, XLIX, 9 and *Revelation*, v, 5.

90. Remember that, in the royal courts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance an elaborate code of manners was in vogue. Women expected to be wooed in an extravagant manner. Physical courage in men was most highly regarded. Women favored those men who had shown their courage in certain conventional directions, particularly in warfare and tournaments. This lady was exacting of her suitor a test of courage, but one outside the conventions of society.

104. Would this be an interesting poem if it were ended here? Where is the climax? Note in what ways Browning varies his story from the original.

162. Nemean. In Greek mythology, one of the twelve labors of Hercules was the killing of a terrible lion in Nemea.

189. Venienti occurrite morbo, run to meet approaching death. Another proverb of similar meaning is, "The coward dies twice." What do they mean? What is the application to this story?

Questions and Discussion

1. What inferences can you draw concerning the court of a sixteenth-century French king from the fact that he kept a den of lions? 2. There are differences in lions, as in human beings. Just what is the degree of menace in the animal as described by Browning, lines 45–72? 3. In lines 73–82, does the king pronounce the same estimate that Browning has given just above? 4. Are we prepared for the way the lion acts when De Lorge goes down for the glove? 5. What further information concerning the lion in captivity do we get from lines 143–146, and does it fit with the king's impression of the beast or with Browning's first description? 6. If the lady knew these facts about the acts of the pages, might De Lorge have known them also? 7. What light is thrown on the character and courage of De Lorge by the events recorded in lines 171–188?

8. Observe the opinion concerning noble and commoner which Browning puts into the mouth of Ronsard at lines 161–162. 9. Do you think it represents his own opinion? 10. Do you think it represents the prevailing opinion of noblemen?

11. When the glove was thrown into the penfold, De Lorge could have chosen any one of four courses of action. What were they? 12. What would each have revealed concerning his character? 13. What would have been the effect of each on his reputation?

14. In throwing the glove, what various risks did the lady take?

15. Do you think she realized the full scope of her act? 16. Browning attempts to induce us to reverse our first opinion of the lady; does he succeed?

17. Using only the facts in the *original anecdote*, discuss the question, "Was De Lorge justified in his insult to the lady?"

RABBI BEN EZRA (*Page 83*)

Many readers regard this as Browning's best poem. He uses the rabbi as a mouthpiece for his own thoughts on old age and on various theories of conduct.

1. This is to say, "Imagine you are as old as I am. Now, let us look about us."

7. Connect the words "Not that —" here and in lines 10 and 13 with "Do I remonstrate," in line 15.

24. The most frequently quoted example of the harsh line which Browning sometimes prefers to suave phrasing. Where does the passage begin of which this line is the climax?

29. Hold of, partake of the nature of.

60. Phrase for yourself the idea in lines 31–60. Browning repeats it in other poems.

72. Browning was never one to cry down the pleasures brought to us by our physical senses.

114. Rephrase the parallelism which began at line 91.

115. To what time does *now* refer?

117. Be named, be understood or be distinguished.

124, 125. A relative pronoun is to be supplied in each line.

151–192. In very early times mankind devised a method of making pottery by molding clay on a revolving wheel, then baking the vessel to the hardness of brick. Designs of many kinds, from "laughing loves" to "skull things" were worked into pottery at an early date. Since the potter was able to see his work taking form under his hands, the poets of several nations seized on the process for a comparison with creation; man being the clay, and the Creator or the sum of the forces of experience making man comely or ugly. See *Isaiah*, LXIV, and *Jeremiah*, XVIII, in the Bible. The theme also occurs in early Persian poetry, the most notable being in stanzas 83–90 of Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam*, where several pots are represented as talking to each other. The eighty-fifth stanza reads: —

> Then said a second — 'Ne'er a peevish Boy
> 'Would break the bowl from which he drank in joy;
> 'And He that with his hand the Vessel made
> 'Will surely not in after wrath destroy.'

158. Compare *Abt Vogler*, stanza nine.

Questions and Discussion

1. Do men look forward to old age and death with fear? 2. According to Browning, should they do so? 3. What is one function in life of pain and hardship? 4. Should a man's aspirations and unsuccessful efforts be taken into account in judging him? 5. What is the relation between this life and the life to come? 6. Does this poem hold any comfort for the lazy and indifferent? 7. What is Browning's attitude to the "rose-mesh" of this flesh? 8. Compare line 24 with the first stanza of *Over the Sea Our Galleys Went*, and with *Home Thoughts from Abroad;* then determine whether its roughness can be attributed to the author's carelessness, to blunted sensibilities, or to his clear intention.

9. Point out repetitions of idea in the poem. 10. What is the purpose of such repetitions?

ABT VOGLER (*Page 89*)

The thought of the musician in this poem may be summarized as follows: Solomon could summon spirits of the air and the earth to build him a palace in an instant. I also call a building into existence through the sounds from my organ, each note playing its part; but my palace is built slowly and vanishes at once. When I reach the highest glory in the act of composing, it seems as though heaven yearns down and enters my music to glorify it. Wholly new beings and the wonderful dead come into my newly created palace, and I am made perfect in their perfection. Painters and poets also experience something of this glory, with this difference, that their creations are made according to law and remain for men to study. I, in a flying instant, transcend law and combine three sounds to make not a fourth sound but a star. The finger of God is in this, and before the miracle all men should bow in awe. Such an instant of creative beauty passes quickly and leaves me in doubt for a moment, but I have a confident hope that other moments of the kind will come to me. Therefore I turn to the praise of God, who abides without change, feeling sure that He does not permit the loss of any good thing in the universe. In this life of sorrow, disorder, and doubt, others may reason about the problems of existence; but we musicians know, for God sometimes speaks to us directly. So I gradually come down from the heights of my best moments to the common level of daily life.

It will help the student to analyze this poem if he will consider it in the following units: Stanza 1; 2 and 3; 4 and 5; 6 and 7; 8; 9–11; 12.

3. The historical Solomon was a wise and powerful Jewish king. Legends grew up about him among the Arabs and Jews, attributing to him the powers of a magician to call spirits from the sky and the earth to do his bidding.

7. What is the subject of *should rush?*

8. Note the alliteration.

23. The towering dome of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome is one of the most impressive sights in Italy.

34. Protoplast, the original material from which all things are created.

Questions and Discussion

1. Is the comparison between music and a building both vivid and accurate? 2. In what respect does it fail to apply? 3. Does Browning recognize this? 4. What is the particular function of the bass notes in a musical composition? 5. Note how, in lines 29–32, Browning tries to convey the effect of sounds by things seen; why? 6. What important difference between music and the arts of painting and poetry is stated in stanza 6? 7. Does any other artist besides the musician feel himself at such a disadvantage? 8. In lines 47–50, Browning seems to imply that the other arts are obedient to laws but that music sometimes rises above law; do you think that Browning himself believed that, or is he representing the impulsive thought of a musician?

9. Browning believed that there must be a future life in which men may complete their unfinished work. In which lines of this poem is the idea expressed? See if you can find it in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* also.

MY LAST DUCHESS (*Page 102*)

The Dukes of Ferrara during the Renaissance were notable patrons of art.

This is probably the finest dramatic monologue in English. It is full of varied emotions and pictures; it sketches two characters completely; it hints at the coming fate of a third; it contains within itself the information, naturally introduced, by which we may reconstruct the scene and the movements of the speaker and his companion; and it does all this in fifty-six lines.

3. Fra Pandolf, an imaginary artist.

46. Questioned years later about these "commands," Browning said, "I meant that he gave commands to have her put to death." Then, as though by an afterthought, he added, "Or he might have had her shut up in a convent." Remember that murder, especially by poison, was a good deal of a fine art at the time.

51. Dowry, a gift of money or property to the bridegroom from the parents of the bride, in accordance with their means. The amount was ordinarily settled by agreement during the negotiations for the marriage.

56. Claus of Innsbruck, another imaginary artist.

Questions and Discussion

1. Try to picture the time, the place, the occasion, and the movements of the speaker and the listener; and note just where and how Browning provides you with the necessary information. 2. How complete is the Duke's self-command? If it breaks at all, where does it break and for how long? 3. In lines 52–53, is the Duke telling the truth? 4. Would the Duke be a formidable opponent at anything; and why? 5. How much do we learn about the duchess? 6. For what reasons does she have our sympathy? 7. Why does the Duke keep and value her picture? 8. Imagine that you were the listener, constructing for yourself a complete character with due regard to time, place, nation, social position, etc. Give your report to the Count as an oral theme; or give the Count's report and advice to his daughter, after he has listened to the envoy.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL (*Page 104*)

The word *grammarian* as used in this title does not have its present narrow sense. It meant a scholar who was working to restore an almost dead language and to make available to all men the learning that had been written in it.

3. Croft, field; **thorpe,** village. Both words are from Teutonic, not Latin, tongues. Partly from this, Brooke surmises that Browning had Germany in mind as the scene of the poem.

19. In mediæval times castles and towns were commonly built on hilltops for easier defense.

34. Apollo, god of music and song.

41. Here, and in other parentheses, the speaker addresses his fellow bearers.

45. "The world bent on escaping" doubtless refers to the world of ancient knowledge in the form of manuscripts, brought from Constantinople by the fleeing scholars in 1453. This was before the invention of printing; a book could be duplicated only by hand copying. Since only one or a few copies of some works were rescued, they were in danger of complete destruction in accidents.

48. Their shaping, how they conceived the world to be.

64. Queasy, nauseated.

84. Browning here states in three words one of his essential beliefs. Do you agree?

86. Calculus (stone), a lump forming in the body.

88. Tussis, a consumptive cough.

95. Hydroptic, thirsty.

104. Do you find a similar thought in *Rabbi Ben Ezra?*

129–132. *Hoti,* the Greek particle meaning "that"; *Oun,* another Greek particle; *de,* unaccented, meant "towards," and accented

meant "but." Remember that to the Renaissance students Greek was practically a lost language which they had to recover. Would it be necessary for them to learn all the various meanings of simple words? Would it be difficult to do so?

Questions and Discussion

1. Are there men today working in the sciences and the arts who have the same sort of temperament as this grammarian? 2. What rewards do they generally win? 3. Are we indebted to them to any great extent? 4. Are we indebted to such Renaissance scholars as this grammarian? 5. The Renaissance in Italy was marked by a boiling exuberance of living, with little regard to moral considerations; in Germany it was characterized by greater moral sternness. From the general temper of this poem, in which country would you place it? Why?

6. See if all the following questions can be answered from what is told in the first stanza: Who is speaking? To whom is he speaking? Who is to be the central figure of the poem? Is he worth our attention? What is the occasion? What is the time of day? What is the scene? Does Browning attract our attention to the fact that he is giving us this information? Is it desirable to give the reader the answers to these questions near the beginning of anything — poem, play, short story, report of a baseball game?

7. Does line 69 suggest the principle upon which cathedrals are built? 8. The policies of a government? 9. A successful career? 10. Do little men "venture neck or nothing" (see line 109), and what are the results of such a policy? 11. What is the significance of "stepped over men's pity," line 44? 12. Do men often pass from a gay, obscure youth to productive, solitary labor in maturity? 13. What is "the world's way?"

14. Imagine that a dull but curious peasant had seen the funeral procession and had made some inquiry about the scholar and his pupils. Take some hints about the mind and the point of view of the peasant from lines 113–124. Give an oral theme in which he describes the whole affair to his wife. Try to make the peasant reveal his mind as completely and unconsciously as the Duke does in *My Last Duche*

ANDREA DEL SARTO (*Page 108*)

Painting in the Middle Ages was done chiefly for churches and monasteries; it dealt with religious subjects, such as the lives of the saints; its purpose was not to create beauty or to mirror the beauty of the world but to inspire religious thoughts; and its technique in line and color was defective. Then came a great change. Many painters developed an improved technique. Not churches alone, but

princes and wealthy merchants wanted art in their homes, thus permitting painters a wider choice in subjects. The financial and social rewards to painters were increased. Under these combined influences there arose in Italy a group of artists who worked with unhampered energy and originality. Two of the greatest were Rafael Santi (1483–1520) and Michelangelo (or Michael Angelo) Buonarroti (1475–1564).

There were at the same time other artists of great technical abilities but less originality and power; such a man was Andrea del Sarto (1487–1531). Such men could see the minor errors of the geniuses above them. Desiring to contribute something to their art, these men could find only one thing within the scope of their powers — the development of a technique more perfect than that of the masters. Under the spur of so small an ambition their work became easy, flawless — and lifeless.

For the facts of this poem Browning has turned to the biography of Andrea del Sarto by Giorgio Vasari, Andrea's friend and pupil. Vasari tells us that Lucrezia del Fede, Andrea's wife, was stupid, grasping, and faithless; but she was beautiful. Both as a man and as an artist Andrea loved that beauty; it is an evidence of his weakness that he allowed himself to be wrecked by his wretched wife. It would be hard to find a more compact, complete, and subtle study of the destructive play of character on character than this poem.

Browning was by nature most interested in people who were forceful, active, positive. It is another evidence of the sweep of his imagination that he could here put himself in the place of a defeated, hopeless man. The movement and the sound of the poem are made by his art to reflect the life of the painter.

15. Fiesole (pronounced Fe-ā′so-lĕ), a village on the hill about three miles from Florence.

20. What acts and words probably occurred between lines 19 and 20?

29–33. In this compact passage Andrea passes through several emotions; what are they? It may help if you will imagine a dash between *my* and *everybody's*. How much of Andrea's emotion does Lucrezia catch?

57. Cartoon, the preliminary design for a fresco; not a caricature.

66. Andrea del Sarto once left his home to paint in France, at the court of King Francis I (the same king who appears in Browning's poem, *The Glove*). He was there greatly honored and well paid. His wife wrote him to come home, doubtless because she wished his money. He obtained leave of absence and was entrusted with a sum of money for the purchase in Italy of certain works of art which he was to take back to the king. Urged by his wife, he declined to return to France, but kept the money and built a house with it. In after years he thought of his sojourn in France as the best part of

his life. He was naturally embarrassed when French artists and nobles visited the studios of Florence and talked about his faithlessness.

78. In this line he passes from just self-praise to just self-condemnation. What do you think of a mind capable of that?

93. Morello, the name of a hill near Florence. We may imagine he has turned to point to a landscape on his wall.

97-98. One of the great lines in Browning, a thought he repeated in many poems. Exactly what does he mean?

105. The Urbinate, Rafael, who was born in Urbino.

119-120. Between these lines we must infer some sort of response from Lucrezia. How does Browning make that clear?

129. See *The Grammarian's Funeral,* 109–124.

134. Is this true, or only partly true? See lines 108, 161, 191–193.

137-141. Is this true?

145-161. See note on line 66.

199-206. What light do these lines throw on Lucrezia?

241. Scudo, an Italian silver coin, worth about one dollar.

260-264. Do you find a similar thought in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* or *The Grammarian's Funeral?*

263. Leonard, Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), artist and scientist, one of the most variously gifted men the world has seen.

Questions and Discussion

1. Florence and Fiesole are now, as then, places of unusual charm and beauty. Try to find some pictures of them.

2. Reconstruct the scene outside and inside the room from the hints Browning gives.

3. Not from the notes but from Browning's lines reconstruct the character of Lucrezia and of Andrea. 4. Show how Lucrezia preys on Andrea and the full scope of that influence on Andrea. 5. Is Andrea what he is because of the circumstances of his time, the weakness of his character, the limitations of his mind, or the influence of his wife?

6. What is Browning's thought about the relative excellence in art of technical perfection without inspiration, and inspiration without technical perfection? 7. Do you agree with him? 8. What is Andrea's notion of the relative worth of his work and that of Rafael? 9. With that of the men who "agonise to do and fail in doing"? 10. Andrea makes some comments on the responses of artists to criticism; do you think they are just? 11. Does his own response reveal anything of him? 12. In lines 33–40, does the "common grayness" refer to the proposed picture, to their lives, or to both, the one suggesting the other?

13. What do you think of the excuses Andrea offers in lines 245–256?

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS (*Page 116*)

Probably no other single poem of Browning's is a better representative of the scope of his mind, of his convictions about human rights, and of the force and variety of his powers. Written when he was thirty-three, *The Flight of the Duchess* has the headlong high spirits of youth together with the firmness of maturity. It upholds the right of the individual to be happy, to be active, to be taken into account, and to be free from arbitrary restraint.

There is a school of thought which holds that human impulses and instincts are likely to be vicious and destructive; that these instincts must be distrusted and disciplined into conventional, "reasonable" conduct. Browning would have none of this. He believed that, among ordinarily decent people, such impulses are most often in the direction of free, happy, purposeful living and that they may be as justly trusted as the dictates of a conventional society.

These two schools of thought have always been opposed. Both have been triumphant in different places and at various periods. The extreme of one is found in a despotic Puritanism; the extreme of the other is found in anarchy and licentiousness. The average man seeks happiness through some sort of compromise between the two opposed codes of conduct. Some readers today will go as far as Browning does, in this and other poems, in supporting instincts and impulses as a safe guide to conduct; others believe he has gone much too far. The spirit of the Renaissance favored this freedom; and gypsy life has always done so. Browning has, therefore, chosen an appropriate background for his story.

This poem is also an excellent example of Browning's art as a poet and story-teller; and it reveals one of his faults.

The Flight of the Duchess contains a wealth of observation of customs, costumes, sports, arts, and crafts during the Renaissance. The movement of the story, now fast and now slow, is in keeping with the imagined narrator. There is both intensity of feeling (as at the close of Section XV) and humor (as in Section X); and it is no small feat to use both naturally in the compass of one poem. The rhythms are varied, harmonizing with the changing feeling, and do not tire the reader. Some readers find the rhymes to be ingenious and appropriate in their clashing variety; others are irritated by them. Several varied characters are sketched, in an apparently casual manner. The happy, courageous Duchess is one of his best characters, more real to us than the conventional creatures in his contemporaries. Her resentment at being ignored and her vigor and courage in smashing conventions to find freedom and happiness make her seem modern.

The chief fault of the poem is that some passages are too clogged with descriptive detail.

36. The Huntsman is speaking of a difference in inherited social and economic position. Is he bitter about it?

40. Boar hunting, a dangerous sport, was a test of courage and a training in horsemanship. Why was it an admired sport in mediæval times?

77. Be sure you know the meaning of the word *irony;* see if you find irony in lines 58–77.

78. Merlin and (in **80**) **falcon-lanner,** kinds of hawks used in falconry.

93. Here are the first strokes in picturing the old Duchess. Do they prejudice us against her? Are they intended to do so? Note how her obscure gypsy descent is suggested. The dislike of gypsies is a deep-seated, unreasoning feeling among settled folk like the Huntsman; note how he suggests that feeling without expressing it bluntly.

117. Lines 113–118 are an illustration of Browning's ability to draw the distinction between first-rate men and tenth-rate men.

125. Convent, a school for the children of the nobility, maintained at a convent.

127. A dramatic monologue must give the effect of something actually spoken, and made up as the speaker goes along. How does this line contribute to that effect?

167. This sixth section is a favorite among Browning lovers. Why?

214. The purpose of this line is to remind us that there is a listener and that we are merely overhearing. Does it accomplish its purpose?

222. Lines 220–223 illustrate over-elaboration of description. See if you find other such passages later.

249. Venerers, prickers, verderers. Gamekeepers, mounted hunters, forest officers. The forests and the game were the exclusive property of the dukes, who often took elaborate precautions to protect their rights and punish poachers.

267. Our primitive ancestors depended largely on game for food. The mighty hunter boasted of his prowess, just as many successful business men today take pleasure in displaying their wealth. The tribe and the family (especially the wife) of the primitive hunter praised him to encourage him. When mankind later depended more on agriculture and less on hunting for its food, the chase remained a test of a man's strength and courage; and the family approval of his ability to provide food became increasingly a social ceremony, such as the one implied here. Gentle, protected women naturally found their part in the ceremony a repulsive task. Men for the most part continue to this day to be as unimaginative as the Duke, and to expect the ecstatic approval of their wives when they shoot and bring home a single bird or rabbit.

297. Note how, in Section V, the huntsman has bluntly stated his opinion of his master; later he has added the details to prove his point. This bluntness and this order are in harmony with the Huntsman's character. How well do we know the Duke by this time?

322. Fifty-part canon, a musical air, repeated incessantly by fifty different instruments which begin to play at different times. "Three Blind Mice" is sometimes sung as a four-part canon.

454. Imp, to repair or strengthen the wing of a hawk by adding feathers. **Hernshaw,** heron.

468. Note how the idea here has been prepared for in line 423. Is this skillful story telling?

703. If lines 698–703 had been omitted, what would have been lost or gained?

781. In judging the Huntsman's service to the Duchess, remember that the Duke had absolute power over his retainers and, if displeased with one of them, could have the offender terribly punished. Note the Huntsman's attitude toward extraordinary service and compare it with the rewards in *Hervé Riel* and *Pheidippides*.

832. Browning took pleasure in writing an occasional show piece like lines 823–832. He enjoyed handling internal rhymes, double rhymes, and even triple rhymes. He was a master of dextrous, unexpected, clashing rhymes.

865. Morion, hauberk, helmet and body armor.

Questions and Discussion

1. Consult some pictures of mediæval castles; look up information on the costumes and customs of the Middle Ages and Renaissance; then try to form an idea of how people lived. Include in your picture the king, the nobility, the priest, the scholar and artist (see lines 229–234), the artisan, the huntsman and the forest officer, the farmer, the soldier, the gypsy. Get particularly an idea of the relation between the nobility and their serfs. Out of the whole population, which groups found life free, happy and satisfying; which groups found it monotonous and oppressive?

2. Remember that, in the Middle Ages, the serfs and retainers had to look up to their masters, the dukes; many serfs were not rebellious because they could not imagine any other organization of society. Moreover, in times of peace, the personal retainers of the nobles had a lazy, care-free life. The events of this poem are represented as taking place in a wild northern nook (Sections II and V) where old customs and conditions still prevailed, though in France and Italy the greater freedom of the Renaissance was in full tide. In the Middle Ages many serfs would take less pride in themselves than in their masters, if the masters were at all worthy of devotion. Note the difference in the attitude of the Huntsman toward the old Duke and the young Duke.

3. Lines 100–112 suggest some of the changes which have taken place during the Huntsman's long life. What other passages give us hints of those social changes? 4. In lines 853–862, 146, and elsewhere, do we find in the Huntsman a rebellion against social condi-

tions, or simply a discontent with his personal lot? The Huntsman tells us few things that he said or did, but many things that he liked or disliked. 5. How complete is the picture of the Huntsman as drawn by this method?

6. What picture can you form of the old Duke, taking in his character, his preferences and ideals, and his fate?

7. In the same manner, draw as completely as possible a character sketch of the old Duchess.

8. Contrast the young Duke with the Duke in *My Last Duchess*. In how far is the character of the young Duke due to his exclusive training by his mother?

9. Compare the young Duchess with the heroine of *My Last Duchess*. Find the lines that tell you exactly the quality of the unhappiness in her marriage. 10. Would a woman of another type be happy under the same conditions?

11. Note how the minor character Jacynth becomes important to the story at line 516. 12. She has been introduced to us in lines 302–305 and 484–490. Is the introduction sufficient? 13. Would it have been good story telling to have waited till line 516 to introduce her?

14. Review the whole poem briefly to observe Browning's art as a story-teller, without regard to other considerations. See what he accomplishes in each section, under the headings of plot, character sketching, and atmosphere; and note also the pace of each section. Section X retards the story; what is its value? 15. What is the purpose of the long description of the life of the gypsies in Section XIII? 16. Where and how does Browning create suspense?

17. Where do you find humor? Irony? Intensity of feeling?

18. What incidental information have you gathered from this poem concerning the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, gypsies, etc.?

19. Debate the question: "Resolved: That the Duchess was justified in her flight."