







S25  
1878

To my Wife,

19 Sept. 1887.

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LA SAISIAZ :

THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC.



LA SAISIAZ :  
THE TWO POETS OF  
CROISIC :

BY

ROBERT BROWNING.

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DEDICATED  
TO  
MRS SUTHERLAND ORR



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*LA SAISIAZ*



I.

GOOD, to forgive ;

Best, to forget !

Living, we fret ;

Dying, we live.

Fretless and free,

Soul, clap thy pinion !

Earth have dominion,

Body, o'er thee !

2.

Wander at will,

Day after day,—

Wander away,

Wandering still—

Soul that canst soar !

Body may slumber :

Body shall cumber

Soul-flight no more.

## 3.

Waft of soul's wing !

What lies above ?

Sunshine and Love,

Skyblue and Spring !

Body hides—where ?

Ferns of all feather;

Mosses and heather,

Yours be the care !



*LA SAISIAZ.*

A. E. S.    SEPTEMBER 14, 1877.

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

Dear and True !

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

Petty feat and yet prodigious : every side my glance was  
bent

O'er the grandeur and the beauty lavished through the  
whole ascent.

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

Earth's most exquisite disclosure, heaven's own God in  
evidence !

And no berry in its hiding, no blue space in its out-  
spread,

Pleaded to escape my footstep, challenged my emerging  
head,

(As I climbed or paused from climbing, now o'erbranched  
by shrub and tree,

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

Stationed face to face with—Nature? rather with  
Infinitude)

---No revealment of them all, as singly I my path  
pursued,

But a bitter touched its sweetness, for the thought stung

“ Even so

Both of us had loved and wondered just the same,  
five days ago ! ”

Five short days, sufficient hardly to entice, from out its  
den

Splintered in the slab, this pink perfection of the  
cyclamen ;

Scarce enough to heal and coat with amber gum the  
sloe-tree's gash,

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

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

Shrinks beside it, proves a pin-point : barrier this, with-  
out a bound !

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

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

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

—That's Collonge, henceforth your dwelling! All the  
same, how'er disjoints

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Just so much of twilight journey as may prove to-  
morrow's jaunt

Not the only mode of wayfare—wheeled to reach the  
eagle's haunt ! ”

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

Set our faces to the rose-bloom o'er the summit's front of  
stone

Where Salève obtains, from Jura and the sunken sun she  
hides,

Due return of blushing "Good Night," rosy as a borne-off  
bride's,

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

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

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

All was strange. "Call progress toilsome? that were just  
insulting you!

How the trees must temper noontide! Ah, the thicket's  
sudden break!

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

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

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

Is it late, and wrong to linger? True, to-morrow makes  
amends.

Toilsome progress? child's play, call it—specially when  
one descends!

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

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

Proud completion of achievement!" And we paced it,  
praising still

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

And at very end there met us, coming from Collonge,  
the pair

—All our people of the Chalet—two, enough and none  
to spare.

So, we made for home together, and we reached it as the  
stars

One by one came lamping—chiefly that prepotency of  
Mars—

And your last word was “I owe you this enjoyment!”—  
met with “Nay:

With yourself it rests to have a month of morrows like  
to-day!”

Then the meal, with talk and laughter, and the news of  
that rare nook

Yet untroubled by the tourist, touched on by no travel-  
book,



All the same—though latent—patent, hybrid birth of  
land and sea,

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

Comparable for completeness of both blessings—all  
around

Nature, and, inside her circle, safety from world's sight  
and sound—

Comparable to our Saisiaz. “Hold it fast and guard it  
well!

Go and see and vouch for certain, then come back and  
never tell

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There’s Salève’s own platform facing glory which strikes  
greatness small,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Till the landing on the staircase saw escape the latest  
spark :

“ Sleep you well ! ” “ Sleep but as well, you ! ”—lazy  
love quenched, all was dark.

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

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

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

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

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

Till the overflowing ardours told me time was for  
return.

So, return I did, and gaily. But, for once, from no far  
mound

Waved salute a tall white figure. “Has her sleep been  
so profound?

Foresight, rather, prudent saving strength for day's ex-  
penditure !

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

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

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

Interpose between one's love and Nature's loving, hill  
and dale

Down to where the blue lake's wrinkle marks the river's  
inrush pale

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

Not a steam-boat pants from harbour but one hears  
pulsate amain,

Past the city's congregated peace of homes and pomp of  
spires

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

And that, useful as is Nature to attract the tourist's  
foot,

Quiet slow sure money-making proves the matter's very  
root,—

Need for body,—while the spirit also needs a comfort  
reached

By no help of lake or mountain, but the texts whence  
Calvin preached.

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

All awaits us ranged and ready ; yet she violates the  
bond,

Neither leans nor looks nor listens : why is this ?” A  
turn of eye

Took the whole sole answer, gave the undisputed reason  
“ why ! ”

This dread way you had your summons ! No premoni-  
tory touch,

As you talked and laughed ('t is told me) scarce a minute  
ere the clutch

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

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, paying piteous duty, what seemed you have  
we consigned

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

Most the choice for quiet, yonder : low walls stop the  
vines' approach,

Lovingly Salève protects you ; village-sports will ne'er  
encroach

On the stranger lady's silence, whom friends bore so kind  
and well

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

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

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



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

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

—May be, throb of heart, beneath which,—quicken-  
ing farther than it knew,—

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

Disembosomed, re-embosomed,—must one memory suf-  
fice,

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

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

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

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

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

I have turned upon my weakness : asked “And what,  
forsooth, prevents

That, this latest day allowed me, I fulfil of her intents  
One she had the most at heart—that we should thus  
again survey

From Salève Mont Blanc together ?” Therefore,—dared  
and done to-day

Climbing,—here I stand : but you—where ?

If a spirit of the place  
Broke the silence, bade me question, promised answer,—  
what disgrace

Did I stipulate "Provided answer suit my hopes, not fears!"

Would I shrink to learn my life-time's limit—days, weeks, months or years?

Would I shirk assurance on each point whereat I can but guess—

"Does the soul survive the body? Is there God's self, no or yes?"

If I know my mood, 't were constant—come in whatso'er uncouth

Shape it should, nay, formidable—so the answer were but truth.

Well, and wherefore shall it daunt me, when 't is I myself am tasked,

When, by weakness weakness questioned, weakly answers—weakly asked?

Weakness never needs be falseness : truth is truth in  
each degree

—Thunderpealed by God to Nature, whispered by my  
soul to me.

Nay, the weakness turns to strength and triumphs in a  
truth beyond :

“ Mine is but man’s truest answer—how were it did God  
respond ? ”

I shall no more dare to mimic such response in futile  
speech,

Pass-off human lisp as echo of the sphere-song out of  
reach,

Than,—because it well may happen yonder, where the  
far snows blanch

Mute Mont Blanc, that who stands near them sees and  
hears an avalanche,—

I shall pick a clod and throw,—cry “Such the sight and  
such the sound !

What though I nor see nor hear them? Others do, the  
proofs abound !”

Can I make my eye an eagle’s, sharpen ear to recog-  
nize

Sound o’er league and league of silence? Can I know,  
who but surmise?

If I dared no self-deception when, a week since, I and  
you

Walked and talked along the grass-path, passing lightly  
in review

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

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

If I ventured estimating what was come of parried  
thrust,

Subtle stroke, and, rightly, wrongly, estimating could be  
just

—Just, though life so seemed abundant in the form  
which moved by mine,

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

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

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

Much less have I heart to palter when the matter to  
decide

Now becomes “Was ending ending once and always,  
when you died?”

Did the face, the form I lifted as it lay, reveal the  
loss

Not alone of life but soul? A tribute to yon flowers and  
moss,

What of you remains beside? A memory! Easy to  
attest

“Certainly from out the world that one believes who  
knew her best

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

Had but fortune favored, bidden each shy faculty  
advance;

After all—who knows another? Only as I know, I  
speak.”

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

Then my fellow takes the tale up, not unwilling to  
aver

Duly in his turn "I knew him best of all, as he knew  
her :

Such he was, and such he was not, and such other might  
have been

But that somehow every actor, somewhere in this earthly  
scene,

Fails." And so both memories dwindle, yours and mine  
together linked,

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

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

Possibly attains perfection coveted by me and  
you ;



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

Only to ourselves proposing problems proper to be  
solved

By ourselves alone,—who working ne'er shall know if  
work bear fruit

Others reap and garner, heedless how produced by stalk  
and root,—

We who, darkling, timed the day's birth,—struggling,  
testified to peace,—

Earned, by dint of failure, triumph,—we, creative  
thought, must cease

In created word, thought's echo, due to impulse long since  
sped !

Why repine ? There's ever someone lives although our-  
selves be dead !

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

Fair or foul the lot apportioned life on earth, we bear  
alike.

Stalwart body idly yoked to stunted spirit, powers, that  
fain

Else would soar, condemned to grovel, groundlings  
through the fleshly chain,—

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

Hindrance is the fact acknowledged, howso'er explained  
as Fate,

Fortune, Providence : we bear, own life a burthen more  
or less.

Life thus owned unhappy, is there supplemental happi-  
ness

Possible and probable in life to come? or must we  
count

Life a curse and not a blessing, summed-up in its whole  
amount,

Help and hindrance, joy and sorrow?

Why should I want courage here?

I will ask and have an answer,—with no favour, with no  
fear,—

From myself. How much, how little, do I inwardly  
believe

True that controverted doctrine? Is it fact to which I  
cleave,

Is it fancy I but cherish, when I take upon my  
lips

Phrase the solemn Tuscan fashioned, and declare the  
soul's eclipse

Not the soul's extinction? take his "I believe and I  
declare—

Certain am I—from this life I pass into a better,  
there

Where that lady lives of whom enamoured was my soul"  
—where this

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

I have questioned and am answered. Question, answer  
presuppose

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

As it also knows the thing perceived outside itself,—a  
force

Actual ere its own beginning, operative through its  
course,

Unaffected by its end,—that this thing likewise needs  
must be ;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Is the everyway external stream that now through shoal  
and shelf

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

There to root again and grow and flourish stable  
evermore.

—May be! mere surmise not knowledge: much con-  
jecture styled belief,

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

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

“ Because

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

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

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

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

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

“ Anyhow, we want it : wherefore want ? ” Because, with-  
out the want,

Life, now human, would be brutish : just that hope, how-  
ever scant,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Truce to such old sad contention whence, according as  
we shape

Most of hope or most of fear, we issue in a half-  
escape :

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

Taste and try each soft ingredient, sweet infusion, and  
discuss



What their blending may accomplish for the cure of  
doubt, till—slow,

Sorrowful, but how decided ! needs must I o'erturn it—  
so !

Cause before, effect behind me—blanks ! The midway  
point I am,

Caused, itself—itself efficient : in that narrow space  
must cram

All experience—out of which there crowds conjecture  
manifold,

But, as knowledge, this comes only—things may be as I  
behold,

Or may not be, but, without me and above me, things  
there are ;

I myself am what I know not—ignorance which proves  
no bar

To the knowledge that I am, and, since I am, can  
recognize

What to me is pain and pleasure : this is sure, the rest—  
surmise.

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

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

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

This—there is no reconciling wisdom with a world dis-  
traught,

Goodness with triumphant evil, power with failure in the  
aim,

If—(to my own sense, remember ! though none other  
feel the same !) —

If you bar me from assuming earth to be a pupil's  
place,

And life, time,—with all their chances, changes,—just  
probation-space,

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

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

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

Just as they affect myself? Why, here's my neighbour  
colour-blind,

Eyes like mine to all appearance : “green as grass” do  
I affirm?

“Red as grass” he contradicts me—which employs the  
proper term?

Were we two the earth's sole tenants, with no third for  
referee,

How should I distinguish? Just so, God must judge  
'twixt man and me.

To each mortal peradventure earth becomes a new  
machine,

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

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

—Life, my whole sole chance to prove—although at man's  
apparent cost—

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

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

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

As 't is set me, understand so much as may be under-  
stood—

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

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

In each good or evil issue ! nor miscalculate  
alike

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

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

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

What though fancy scarce may grapple with the complex  
and immense

—“His own world for every mortal?” Postulate om-  
nipotence!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When he let blue heaven be shrouded o'er by vapours  
of the vault,

Gay earth drop her garlands shrivelled at the first infecting  
breath

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

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

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

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

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

Can we love but on condition, that the thing we love  
must die?

Needs there groan a world in anguish just to teach us  
sympathy—

Multitudinously wretched that we, wretched too, may  
guess

What a preferable state were universal happi-  
ness?

Hardly do I so conceive the outcome of that power  
which went

To the making of the worm there in yon clod its  
tenement,



Any more than I distinguish aught of that which, wise  
and good,

Framed the leaf, its plain of pasture, dropped the dew,  
its fineless food.

Nay, were fancy fact, were earth and all it holds illusion  
mere,

Only a machine for teaching love and hate and hope and  
fear

To myself, the sole existence, single truth mid falsehood,  
—well !

If the harsh throes of the prelude die not off into the  
swell

Of that perfect piece they sting me to become a-strain  
for,—if

Roughness of the long rock-clamber lead not to the last  
of cliff,

First of level country where is sward my pilgrim-foot can  
prize,—

Plainlier ! if this life's conception new life fail to  
realize,—

Though earth burst and proved a bubble glassing hues  
of hell, one huge

Reflex of the devil's doings—God's work by no subter-  
fuge—

(So death's kindly touch informed me as it broke the  
glamour, gave

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

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

Only my own joys and sorrows now to reckon real  
instead,—

I must say—or choke in silence—“Howsoever came my  
fate,

Sorrow did and joy did nowise,—life well weighed,—  
preponderate.”

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

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

From a knowledge proved in error to acknowledged  
ignorance ?

Power? 't is just the main assumption reason most revolts  
at ! power

Unavailing for bestowment on its creature of an hour,

Man, of so much proper action rightly aimed and reach-  
ing aim,

So much passion,—no defect there, no excess, but still the  
same,—

As what constitutes existence, pure perfection bright as  
brief

For yon worm, man's fellow-creature, on yon happier  
world—its leaf !

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

But, O world outspread beneath me ! only for myself I  
speak,

Nowise dare to play the spokesman for my brothers  
strong and weak,

Full and empty, wise and foolish, good and bad, in every  
age,

Every clime, I turn my eyes from, as in one or other  
stage

Of a torture writhe they, Job-like couched on dung and  
crazed with blains

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

I shall “vindicate no way of God’s to man,” nor stand  
apart,

“Laugh, be candid,” while I watch it traversing the human  
heart !

Traversed heart must tell its story uncommented on : no  
less

Mine results in “Only grant a second life, I  
acquiesce

In this present life as failure, count misfortune's worst  
assaults

Triumph, not defeat, assured that loss so much the more  
exalts

Gain about to be. For at what moment did I so  
advance

Near to knowledge as when frustrate of escape from  
ignorance?

Did not beauty prove most precious when its opposite  
obtained

Rule, and truth seem more than ever potent because false-  
hood reigned?

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

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

Only grant my soul may carry high through death her  
cup unspilled,

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

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

From life's tree its inmost virtue, tapped the root whence  
pleasure sprung,

Barked the bole, and broke the bough, and bruised the  
berry, left all grace

Ashes in death's stern alembic, loosed elixir in its place !

Witness, Dear and True, how little I was 'ware of—not  
your worth

—That I knew, my heart assures me—but of what a  
shade on earth

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

O'er the ways we walked together ! Somewhat narrow,  
somewhat slow,

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

When there's moss beneath the footstep, honeysuckle  
overhead :

Walking slow to beating bosom surest solace soonest  
gives,

Liberates the brain o'erloaded—best of all restora-  
tives.

Nay, do I forget the open vast where soon or late con-  
verged

Ways though winding?—world-wide heaven-high sea  
where music slept or surged



As the angel had ascendant, and Beethoven's Titan  
mace

Smote the immense to storm, Mozart would by a finger's  
lifting chase?

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

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

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

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

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

Can it be, and must, and will it?

Silence! Out of fact's domain,

Just surmise prepared to mutter hope, and also fear—  
dispute

Fact's inexorable ruling "Outside fact, surmise be mute!"

Well!

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

'T is surmise I stop the mouth of! Not above in yonder  
dome

All a rapture with its rose-glow,—not around, where pile  
and peak

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

Birds assemble for their bed-time, soft the tree-top swell  
subsides,—

No, nor yet within my deepest sentient self the know-  
ledge hides!

Aspiration, reminiscence, plausibilities of trust

—Now the ready “ Man were wronged else,” now the rash  
“ and God unjust ”—

None of these I need ! Take thou, my soul, thy solitary  
stand,

Umpire to the champions Fancy, Reason, as on either  
hand

Amicable war they wage and play the foe in thy behoof !  
Fancy thrust and Reason parry ! Thine the prize who  
stand aloof !

FANCY.

I concede the thing refused : henceforth no certainty  
more plain

Than this mere surmise that after body dies soul lives  
again.

Two, the only facts acknowledged late, are now increased  
to three—

God is, and the soul is, and, as certain, after death  
shall be.

Put this third to use in life, the time for using fact !

REASON.

I do :

Find it promises advantage, coupled with the other two.  
Life to come will be improvement on the life that's now ;  
destroy

Body's thwartings, there's no longer screen betwixt soul  
and soul's joy.

Why should we expect new hindrance, novel tether ? In  
this first

Life, I see the good of evil, why our world began at  
worst :

Since time means amelioration, tardily enough displayed,

Yet a mainly onward moving, never wholly retrograde.

We know more though we know little, we grow stronger though still weak,

Partly see though all too purblind, stammer though we cannot speak.

There is no such grudge in God as scared the ancient Greek, no fresh

Substitute of trap for dragnet, once a breakage in the mesh.

Dragons were, and serpents are, and blindworms will be :  
ne'er emerged

Any new-created Python for man's plague since earth was purged.

Failing proof, then, of invented trouble to replace the  
old,

O'er this life the next presents advantage much and  
manifold :

Which advantage—in the absence of a fourth and farther  
fact

Now conceivably surmised, of harm to follow from the  
act—

I pronounce for man's obtaining at this moment. Why  
delay?

Is he happy? happiness will change : anticipate the  
day !

Is he sad? there's ready refuge : of all sadness death's  
prompt cure !

Is he both, in mingled measure? cease a burthen to  
endure !

Pains with sorry compensations, pleasures stinted in the  
dole,

Power that sinks and pettiness that soars, all halved and  
nothing whole,

Idle hopes that lure man onward, forced back by as idle  
fears—

What a load he stumbles under through his glad sad  
seventy years,

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

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

Grant his forces no accession, nay, no faculty's increase,  
Only let what now exists continue, let him prove in  
peace

Power whereof the interrupted unperfected play enticed

Man through darkness, which to lighten any spark of  
hope sufficed,—

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

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

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

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

Manfully man quits discomfort, makes for the provided  
room

Where the old friends want their fellow, where the new  
acquaintance wait,

Probably for talk assembled, possibly to sup in state!



I affirm and re-affirm it therefore : only make as plain  
As that man now lives, that after dying man will live  
again,—

Make as plain the absence, also, of a law to contravene  
Voluntary passage from this life to that by change of  
scene,—

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

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

FANCY.

Then I double my concession : grant, along with new  
life sure,

This same law found lacking now : ordain that, whether  
rich or poor

Present life is judged in aught man counts advantage—

be it hope,

Be it fear that brightens, blackens most or least his

horoscope,—

He, by absolute compulsion such as made him live

at all,

Go on living to the fated end of life whate'er be-

fall.

What though, as on earth he darkling grovels, man descry

the sphere,

Next life's—call it, heaven of freedom, close above and

crystal-clear?

He shall find—say, hell to punish who in aught curtails

the term,

Fain would act the butterfly before he has played out the

worm!

God, soul, earth, heaven, hell,—five facts now : what is  
to desiderate ?

REASON.

Nothing ! Henceforth man's existence bows to the  
monition " Wait !

Take the joys and bear the sorrows—neither with extreme  
concern !

Living here means nescience simply : 't is next life that  
helps to learn.

Shut those eyes, next life will open,—stop those ears,  
next life will teach

Hearing's office,—close those lips, next life will give the  
power of speech !

Or, if action more amuse thee than the passive at-  
titude,

Bravely bustle through thy being, busy thee for ill or good,  
Reap this life's success or failure ! Soon shall things be  
unperplexed

And the right and wrong, now tangled, lie unravelled in  
the next."

## FANCY.

Not so fast ! Still more concession ! not alone do I  
declare

Life must needs be borne,—I also will that man become  
aware

Life has worth incalculable, every moment that he  
spends

So much gain or loss for that next life which on this life  
depends.

Good, done here, be there rewarded,—evil, worked here,  
there amerced !

Six facts now, and all established, plain to man the last  
as first.

## REASON.

There was good and evil, then, defined to man by this  
decree ?

*Was*—for at its promulgation both alike have ceased  
to be.

Prior to this last announcement “Certainly as God  
exists,

As he made man’s soul, as soul is quenchless by the  
deathly mists,

Yet is, all the same, forbidden premature escape from  
time

To eternity’s provided purer air and brighter clime,—

Just so certainly depends it on the use to which man  
turns

Earth, the good or evil done there, whether after death  
he earns

Life eternal,—heaven, the phrase be, or eternal death,—  
say, hell.

As his deeds, so proves his portion, doing ill or doing  
well !”

—Prior to this last announcement, earth was man’s  
probation-place :

Liberty of doing evil gave his doing good a  
grace ;

Once lay down the law, with Nature’s simple “Such  
effects succeed

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

Just as surely as depends the straight or else the crooked  
line

On his making point meet point or with or else without  
incline,"—

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

Lay but down that law as stringent "Would'st thou live  
again, be just!"

As this other "Would'st thou live now, regularly draw  
thy breath!

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

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

Prompt and absolute obedience, never doubt, will law  
obtain!

Tell not me "Look round us! nothing each side but  
acknowledged law,

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

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

I both see and praise, the worst I follow"—which, despite  
professed

Seeing, praising, all the same he follows, since he dis-  
believes

In the heart of him that edict which for truth his head  
receives.

There's evading and persuading and much making law  
amends

Somehow, there's the nice distinction 'twixt fast foes and  
faulty friends,



—Any consequence except inevitable death when

“ Die,

Whoso breaks our law ! ” they publish, God and Nature  
equally.

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

How comes law to bear eluding ? Not because of im-  
potence :

Certain laws exist already which to hear means to  
obey ;

Therefore not without a purpose these man must, while  
those man may

Keep and, for the keeping, haply gain approval and  
reward.

Break through this last superstructure, all is empty air—  
no sward

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

And soul's earthly life-allotment: wherein, by hypothesis,  
Soul is bound to pass probation, prove its powers, and  
exercise

Sense and thought on fact, and then, from fact educing  
fit surmise,

Ask itself, and of itself have solely answer, "Does the  
scope

Earth affords of fact to judge by warrant future fear or  
hope?"

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

Go their round conducting reason to the point where  
they begun,

Left where we were left so lately, Dear and True !

When, half a week

Since, we walked and talked and thus I told you, how

suffused a cheek

You had turned me had I sudden brought the blush into

the smile

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

the while ! "

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

a joyous glow,

Laugh triumphant, would it strike did your " Yes, better

I do know "

Break, my warrant for assurance ! which assurance may

not be

If, supplanting hope, assurance needs must change this

life to me.

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

I can fathom, by no plumb-line sunk in life's apparent  
laws,

How I may in any instance fix where change should  
meetly fall

Nor involve, by one revisal, abrogation of them  
all

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

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

Whereas, life and laws apparent re-instated,—all we  
know,

All we know not,—o'er our heaven again cloud closes,  
until, lo—

Hope the arrowy, just as constant, comes to pierce its  
gloom, compelled

By a power and by a purpose which, if no one else beheld,  
I behold in life, so—hope !

Sad summing-up of all to say !

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

So are men made notwithstanding, such magnetic virtue  
darts

From each head their fancy haloes to their unresisting  
hearts !

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

Traversed for the sake of looking one last look at its  
forlorn

Tenement's ignoble fortune : through a crevice, plain its  
floor

Piled with provender for cattle, while a dung-heap blocked  
the door.

In that squalid Bossex, under that obscene red roof,  
arose,

Like a fiery flying serpent from its egg, a soul—  
Rousseau's.

Turn thence ! Is it Diodati joins the glimmer of the  
lake?

There I plucked a leaf, one week since,—ivy, plucked  
for Byron's sake.

Famed unfortunates ! And yet, because of that phos-  
phoric fame

Swathing blackness' self with brightness till putridity  
looked flame,

All the world was witched : and wherefore ? what could  
lie beneath, allure

Heart of man to let corruption serve man's head as cyno-  
sure ?

Was the magic in the dictum " All that's good is gone  
and past ;

Bad and worse still grows the present, and the worst of  
all comes last :

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

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

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

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

Not one inch of vile dominion ! What were your especial  
worth

Failed ye to enforce the maxim ' Of all objects found on  
earth

Man is meanest, much too honored when compared  
with—what by odds

Beats him—any dog : so, let him go a-howling to his  
gods !'

Which believe—for I believe it !" such the comfort man  
received

Sadly since perforce he must : for why? the famous bard  
believed !

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

Human glory after glory vivifying yon expanse,



Let me grasp them altogether, hold on high and brandish  
well

Beacon-like above the rapt world ready, whether heaven  
or hell

Send the dazzling summons downward, to submit itself  
the same,

Take on trust the hope or else despair flashed full on  
face by—Fame !

Thanks, thou pine-tree of Makistos, wide thy giant torch  
I wave !

Know ye whence I plucked the pillar, late with sky for  
architrave ?

This the trunk, the central solid Knowledge, kindled core,  
began

Tugging earth-deeps, trying heaven-heights, rooted yonder  
at Lausanne.

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

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

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

Laughter so bejewels Learning,—what but Ferney  
nourished it?

Nay, nor fear—since every resin feeds the flame—that I  
dispense

With yon Bossex terebinth-tree's all-explosive Elo-  
quence :

No, be sure ! nor, any more than thy resplendency, Jean-  
Jacques,

Dare I want thine, Diodati ! What though monkeys and  
macaques

Gibber "Byron?" Byron's ivy rears a branch beyond  
the crew,

Green for ever, no deciduous trash macaques and mon-  
keys chew!

As Rousseau, then, eloquent, as Byron prime in poet's  
power,—

Detonations, fulgurations, smiles—the rainbow, tears—  
the shower,—

Lo, I lift the corruscating marvel—Fame! and, famed,  
declare

—Learned for the nonce as Gibbon, witty as wit's self  
Voltaire . . .

O the sorriest of conclusions to whatever man of  
sense

Mid the millions stands the unit, takes no flare for  
evidence!

Yet the millions have their portion, live their calm or  
troubulous day,

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

Confidently lay to heart and lock in head their life long—  
this :

“ He there with the brand flamboyant, broad o’er night’s  
forlorn abyss,

Crowned by prose and verse ; and wielding, with Wit’s  
bauble, Learning’s rod . . .

Well? Why, he at least believed in Soul, was very sure  
of God !

---

So the poor smile played, that evening : pallid smile long  
since extinct

Here in London's mid-November ! Not so loosely  
thoughts were linked,

Six weeks since as I, descending in the sunset from  
Salève,

Found the chain, I seemed to forge there, flawless till it  
reached your grave,—

Not so filmy was the texture, but I bore it in my breast  
Safe thus far. And since I found a something in me  
would not rest

Till I, link by link, unravelled any tangle of the chain,  
—Here it lies, for much or little ! I have lived all o'er  
again

That last pregnant hour : I saved it, just as I could save  
a root

Disinterred for re-interment when the time best helps to  
shoot.

Life is stocked with germs of torpid life ; but may I never  
wake

Those of mine whose resurrection could not be without  
earthquake !

Rest all such, unraised forever ! Be this, sad yet sweet,  
the sole

Memory evoked from slumber ! Least part this : then  
what the whole ?

*November 9, 1877.*

*THE*  
*TWO POETS OF CROISIC*





1.

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

2.

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

3.

World—how it walled about

Life with disgrace

Till God's own smile came out :

That was thy face !

*THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC.*

I.

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

## 2.

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

## 3.

Up, out, and off, see ! Were you never used,—  
You now, in childish days or rather nights,—  
As I was, to watch sparks fly ? not amused  
By that old nurse-taught game which gave the sprites  
Each one his title and career,—confused

Belief 't was all long over with the flights  
From earth to heaven of hero, sage and bard,  
And bade them once more strive for Fame's award?

4.

New long bright life ! and happy chance befell—

That I know—when some prematurely lost  
Child of disaster bore away the bell

From some too-pampered son of fortune, crossed  
Never before my chimney broke the spell !

Octogenarian Keats gave up the ghost,  
While—never mind Who was it cumbered earth—  
Sank stifled, span-long brightness, in the birth.

5.

Well, try a variation of the game !

Our log is old ship-timber, broken bulk.

There's sea-brine spirits up the brimstone flame,  
That crimson-curly spiral proves the hulk  
Was saturate with—ask the chloride's name  
From somebody who knows ! I shall not sulk  
If yonder greenish tonguelet licked from brass  
Its life, I thought was fed on copperas.

## 6.

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

7.

Oh and the lesser lights, the dearer still

That they elude a vulgar eye, give ours

The glimpse repaying astronomic skill

Which searched sky deeper, passed those patent powers

Constellate proudly,—swords, scrolls, harps, that fill

The vulgar eye to surfeit,—found best flowers

Hid deepest in the dark,—named unplucked grace

Of soul, ungathered beauty, form or face !

8.

Up with thee, mouldering ash men never knew,

But I know ! flash thou forth, and figure bold,

Calm and columnar as yon flame I view !

Oh and I bid thee,—to whom fortune doled

Scantly all other gifts out—bicker blue,

Beauty for all to see, zinc's uncontrolled  
Flake-brilliance ! Not my fault if these were shown,  
Grandeur and beauty both, to me alone.

## 9.

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

## 10.

Launched by our ship-wood, float we, once adrift,  
In fancy to that land-strip waters wash,



We both know well ! Where uncouth tribes made shift  
Long since to keep the life in billows dash  
Right over ; still they shudder at each lift  
Of the old tyrant tempest's whirlwind-lash  
Though they have built the serviceable town  
Tempests but tease now, billows drench, not drown.

## 11.

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

## 12.

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

## 13.

Seeing that priestesses—and all were such—  
Unbuilt and then rebuilt it every May,  
Each alike helping—well, if not too much !  
For, mid their eagerness to outstrip day  
And get work done, if any loosed her clutch

And let a single stone drop, straight a prey  
Herself fell, torn to pieces, limb from limb,  
By sisters in full chorus glad and grim.

14.

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

15.

Nay more : on May-morns, that primeval rite  
Of temple-building, with its punishment

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

## 16.

Oh and, for their part, boys from door to door  
Sing unintelligible words to tunes  
As obsolete : " scraps of Druidic lore,"  
Sigh scholars, as each pale man importunes  
Vainly the mumbling to speak plain once more.  
Enough of this old worship, rounds and runes !  
They serve my purpose, which is just to show  
Croisic to-day and Croisic long ago.

17.

What have we sailed to see, then, wafted there

By fancy from the log that ends its days

Of much adventure 'neath skies foul or fair,

On waters rough or smooth, in this good blaze

We two crouch round so closely, bidding care

Keep outside with the snow-storm? Something says

“Fit time for story-telling!” I begin—

Why not at Croisic, port we first put in?

18.

Anywhere serves : for point me out the place

Wherever man has made himself a home,

And there I find the story of our race

In little, just at Croisic as at Rome.

What matters the degree? the kind I trace.

Druids their temple, Christians have their dome :  
 So with mankind ; and Croisic, I'll engage,  
 With Rome yields sort for sort, in age for age.

## 19.

No doubt, men vastly differ : and we need

Some strange exceptional benevolence

Of nature's sunshine to develop seed

So well, in the less-favoured clime, that thence

We may discern how shrub means tree indeed

Though dwarfed till scarcely shrub in evidence.

Man in the ice-house and the hot-house ranks

With beasts or gods : stove-forced, give warmth the  
 thanks !

## 20.

While, is there any ice-checked? Such shall learn

I am thankworthy, who propose to slake

His thirst for tasting how it feels to turn  
Cedar from hyssop-on-the-wall. I wake  
No memories of what is harsh and stern  
In ancient Croisic-nature, much less rake  
The ashes of her last warmth till out leaps  
Live Hervé Riel, the single spark she keeps.

21.

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

## 22.

None of them all, but—poets, if you please !

“ What, even there, endowed with knack of rhyme,  
Did two among the aborigines

Of that rough region pass the ungracious time  
Suiting, to rumble-tumble of the sea’s,

The songs forbidden a serener clime ?

Or had they universal audience—that’s

To say, the folk of Croisic, ay and Batz ? ”

## 23.

Open your ears ! Each poet in his day

Had such a mighty moment of success

As pinnacled him straight, in full display,

For the whole world to worship—nothing less !

Was not the whole polite world Paris, pray ?



And did not Paris, for one moment—yes,  
Worship these poet-flames, our red and green,  
One at a time, a century between?

24.

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

25.

Know him henceforth as René Gentilhomme  
—Appropriate appellation! noble birth

And knightly blazon, the device wherefrom  
Was "Better do than say"! In Croisic's dearth  
Why prison his career while Christendom  
Lay open to reward acknowledged worth?  
He therefore left it at the proper age  
And got to be the Prince of Condé's page.

## 26.

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

## 27.

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

## 28.

So, at a certain pleasure-house, withdrawn  
From cities where a whisper breeds offence,  
He sat him down to watch the streak of dawn  
Testify to first stir of providence ;  
And, since dull country life makes courtiers yawn,

There wanted not a poet to dispense  
 Song's remedy for spleen-fits all and some,  
 Which poet was Page René Gentilhomme.

29.

A poet born and bred, his very sire

A poet also, author of a piece  
 Printed and published, "Ladies—their attire" :

Therefore the son, just born at his decease,  
 Was bound to keep alive the sacred fire,  
 And kept it, yielding moderate increase  
 Of songs and sonnets, madrigals, and much  
 Rhyming thought poetry and praised as such.

30.

Rubbish unutterable (bear in mind !)

Rubbish not wholly without value, though,

Being to compliment the Duke designed

And bring the complimenter credit so,—

Pleasure with profit happily combined.

Thus René Gentilhomme rhymed, rhymed till—lo,

This happened, as he sat in an alcove

Elaborating rhyme for “love”—*not* “dove.”

31.

He was alone : silence and solitude

Befit the votary of the Muse. Around,

Nature—not our new picturesque and rude,

But trim tree-cinctured stately garden-ground—

Breathed polish and politeness. All-imbued

With these, he sat absorbed in one profound

Excogitation “Were it best to hint

Or boldly boast ‘She loves me,—Araminte?’”

## 32.

When suddenly flashed lightning, searing sight  
Almost, so close his eyes ; then, quick on flash,  
Followed the thunder, splitting earth downright  
Where René sat a-rhyming : with huge crash  
Of marble into atoms infinite—

Marble which, stately, dared the world to dash  
The stone-thing proud, high-pillared, from its place :  
One flash, and dust was all that lay at base.

## 33.

So, when the horrible confusion loosed  
Its wrappage round his senses, and, with breath,  
Seeing and hearing by degrees induced  
Conviction what he felt was life, not death—

His fluttered faculties came back to roost

One after one, as fowls do : ay, beneath,

About his very feet there, lay in dust

Earthly presumption paid by heaven's disgust.

34.

For, what might be the thunder-smitten thing

But, pillared high and proud, in marble guise,

A ducal crown—which meant “Now Duke : Next,

King?”

Since such the Prince was, not in his own eyes

Alone, but all the world's. Pebble from sling

Prostrates a giant ; so can pulverize

Marble pretension—how much more, make moult

His plume, a peacock-prince—God's thunderbolt !

## 35.

That was enough for René, that first fact

Thus flashed into him. Up he looked : all blue

And bright the sky above ; earth firm, compact

Beneath his footing, lay apparent too ;

Opposite stood the pillar : nothing lacked

There, but the Duke's crown : see, its fragments strew

The earth,—about his feet lie atoms fine

Where he sat nursing late his fourteenth line !

## 36.

So, for the moment, all the universe

Being abolished, all 'twixt God and him,—

Earth's praise or blame, its blessing or its curse,

Of one and the same value,—to the brim



Flooded with truth for better or for worse,—

He pounces on the writing-paper, prim

Keeping its place on table : not a dint

Nor speck had damaged “ Ode to Araminte.”

## 37.

And over the neat crowquill calligraph

His pen goes blotting, blurring, as an ox

Tramples a flower-bed in a garden,—laugh

You may !—so does not he, whose quick heart knocks  
Audibly at his breast : an epitaph

On earth's break-up, amid the falling rocks,

He might be penning in a wild dismay,

Caught with his work half-done on Judgment Day.

## 38.

And what is it so terribly he pens,  
 Ruining "Cupid, Venus, wile and smile,  
 Hearts, darts," and all his day's *divinior mens*  
 Judged necessary to a perfect style?  
 Little reck's René, with a breast to cleanse,  
 Of Rhadamanthine law that reigned erewhile :  
 Brimful of truth, truth's outburst will convince  
 (Style or nò style) who bears truth's brunt—the Prince.

## 39.

"Condé, called 'Duke,' be called just 'Duke,' not more,  
 To life's end ! 'Next King' thou forsooth wilt be ?  
 Ay, when this bauble, as it decked before

Thy pillar, shall again, for France to see,  
Take its proud station there ! Let France adore  
No longer an illusive mock-sun—thee—  
But keep her homage for Sol's self, about  
To rise and put pretenders to the rout !

40.

“ What? France so God-abandoned that her root  
Regal, though many a Spring it gave no sign,  
Lacks power to make the bole, now branchless, shoot  
Greenly as ever? Nature, though benign,  
Confuses the ambitious and astute.

In store for such is punishment condign :  
Sure as thy Duke's crown to the earth was hurled,  
So sure, next year, a Dauphin glads the world ! ”

## 41.

Which penned—some forty lines to this effect—

Our René folds his paper, marches brave

Back to the mansion, luminous, erect,

Triumphant, an emancipated slave.

There stands the Prince. “How now? My Duke’s-  
crown wrecked?”

What may this mean?” The answer René gave

Was—handing him the verses, with the due

Incline of body: “Sir, God’s word to you!”

## 42.

The Prince read, paled, was silent; all around,

The courtier-company, to whom he passed

The paper, read, in equal silence bound.

By degrees René also grew aghast  
At his own fit of courage—palely found  
Way of retreat from that pale presence : classed  
Once more among the cony-kind. “ Oh, son,  
It is a feeble folk ! ” saith Solomon.

## 43.

Vainly he apprehended evil : since,  
When, at the year's end, even as foretold,  
Forth came the Dauphin who discrowned the Prince  
Of that long-craved mere visionary gold,  
'T was no fit time for envy to evince  
Malice, be sure ! The timidest grew bold :  
Of all that courtier-company not one  
But left the semblance for the actual sun.

## 44.

And all sorts and conditions that stood by

At René's burning moment, bright escape

Of soul, bore witness to the prophecy.

Which witness took the customary shape

Of verse ; a score of poets in full cry

Hailed the inspired one. Nantes and Tours agape,

Soon Paris caught the infection ; gaining strength,

How could it fail to reach the Court at length ?

## 45.

“O poet !” smiled King Louis “and besides,

O prophet ! Sure, by miracle announced,

My babe will prove a prodigy. Who chides

Henceforth the unchilded monarch shall be trounced  
For irreligion : since the fool derides  
Plain miracle by which this prophet pounced  
Exactly on the moment I should lift  
Like Simeon, in my arms, a babe, ' God's gift ! '

## 46.

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

## 47.

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

## 48.

Moreover he got painted by Du Pré,  
Engraved by Daret also ; and prefixed  
The portrait to his book : a crown of bay



Circled his brows, with rose and myrtle mixed ;  
And Latin verses, lovely in their way,  
Described him as “the biforked hill betwixt :  
Since he hath scaled Parnassus at one jump,  
Joining the Delphic quill and Getic trump.”

## 49.

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

## 50.

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

## 51.

Somebody saw a portrait framed and glazed  
At Croisic. “Who may be this glorified  
Mortal unheard-of hitherto?” amazed

That person asked the owner by his side,  
Who proved as ignorant. The question raised  
Provoked enquiry ; key by key was tried  
On Croisic's portrait-puzzle, till back flew  
The wards at one key's touch, which key was—Who

## 52.

The other famous poet ! Wait thy turn,  
Thou green, our red's competitor ! Enough  
Just now to note 't was he that itched to learn  
(A hundred years ago) how fate could puff  
Heaven-high (a hundred years before) then spurn  
To suds so big a bubble in some huff :  
Since green too found red's portrait,—having heard  
Hitherto of red's rare self not one word.

## 53.

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

## 54.

After a vast expenditure of pains,  
Our second poet found the prize he sought :  
Urged in his search by something that restrains

From undue triumph famed ones who have fought,  
Or simply, poetizing, taxed their brains :

Something that tells such—dear is triumph bought  
If it means only basking in the midst  
Of fame's brief sunshine, as thou, René, didst !

## 55.

For, what did searching find at last but this?

Quoth somebody " I somehow somewhere seem  
To think I heard one old De Chevaye is

Or was possessed of René's works ! " which gleam  
Of light from out the dark proved not amiss

To track, by correspondence on the theme ;  
And soon the twilight broadened into day,  
For thus to question answered De Chevaye.

## 56.

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

## 57.

“ Yet of that book one strange particular  
    Still stays in mind with me ”—and thereupon  
Followed the story. “ Few the poems are ;

The book was two-thirds filled up with this one,  
And sundry witnesses from near and far  
That here at least was prophesying done  
By prophet, so as to preclude all doubt,  
Before the thing he prophesied about."

## 58.

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

## 59.

Well, I care—intimately care to have

Experience how a human creature felt

In after-life, who bore the burden grave

Of certainly believing God had dealt

For once directly with him : did not rave

—A maniac, did not find his reason melt

—An idiot, but went on, in peace or strife,

The world's way, lived an ordinary life.

## 60.

How many problems that one fact would solve !

An ordinary soul, no more, no less,

About whose life earth's common sights revolve,



On whom is brought to bear, by thunder-stress,  
This fact—God tasks him, and will not absolve  
Task's negligent performer! Can you guess  
How such a soul,—the task performed to point,—  
Goes back to life nor finds things out of joint?

## 61.

Does he stand stock-like henceforth? or proceed  
Dizzily, yet with course straight-forward still,  
Down-trampling vulgar hindrance?—as the reed  
Is crushed beneath its tramp when that blind will  
Hatched in some old-world beast's brain bids it speed  
Where the sun wants brute-presence to fulfil  
Life's purpose in a new far zone, ere ice  
Enwomb the pasture-tract its fortalice.

## 62.

I think no such direct plain truth consists

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

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

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

## 63.

No, we must play the pageant out, observe

The tourney-regulations, and regard

Success—to meet the blunted spear nor swerve,

Failure—to break no bones yet fall on sward ;  
Must prove we have—not courage? well then,—nerve !  
And, at the day's end, boast the crown's award—  
Be warranted as promising to wield  
Weapons, no sham, in a true battle-field.

## 64.

Meantime, our simulated thunderclaps  
Which tell us counterfeited truths—these same  
Are—sound, when music storms the soul, perhaps?  
—Sight, beauty, every dart of every aim  
That touches just, then seems, by strange relapse,  
To fall effectless from the soul it came  
As if to fix its own, but simply smote  
And startled to vague beauty more remote?

## 65.

So do we gain enough—yet not too much—  
    Acquaintance with that outer element  
Wherein there's operation (call it such !)  
    Quite of another kind than we the pent  
On earth are proper to receive. Our hutch  
    Lights up at the least chink : let roof be rent—  
How inmates huddle, blinded at first spasm,  
Cognizant of the sun's self through the chasm !

## 66.

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

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

## 67.

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

## 68.

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

## 69.

Who did it, was a dapper gentleman,  
Paul Desforges Maillard, Croisickese by birth,  
Whose birth that century ended which began

By similar bestowment on our earth  
Of the aforesaid René. Cease to scan  
The ways of Providence! See Croisic's dearth—  
Not Paris in its plenitude—suffice  
To furnish France with her best poet twice!

7c.

Till he was thirty years of age, the vein  
Poetic yielded rhyme by drops and spirits :  
In verses of society had lain  
His talent chiefly ; but the Muse asserts  
Privilege most by treating with disdain  
Epics the bard mouths out, or odes he blurts  
Spasmodically forth. Have people time  
And patience now-a-days for thought in rhyme?

## 71.

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

## 72.

That's Paris. Well,—why not break bounds, and send  
Song onward till it echo at the gates  
Of Paris whither all ambitions tend,



And end too, seeing that success there sates  
The soul which hungers most for fame? Why spend  
A minute in deciding, while, by Fate's  
Decree, there happens to be just the prize  
Proposed there, suiting souls that poetize?

## 73.

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

## 74.

Neptune and Amphitrité ! Thetis, who

Is either Tethys or as good—both tag !

Triton can shove along a vessel too :

It 's Virgil ! Then the winds that blow or lag,—

De Maille, Vendôme, Vermandois ! Toulouse blew

Longest, we reckon : he must puff the flag

To fullest outflare ; while our lacking nymph

Be Anne of Austria, Regent o'er the lymph !

## 75.

Promised, performed ! Since *irritabilis gens*

Holds of the feverish impotence that strives

To stay an itch by prompt resource to pen's

Scratching itself on paper ; placid lives,  
 Leisurely works mark the *divinior mers* :  
 Bees brood above the honey in their hives ;  
 Gnats are the busy bustlers. Splash and scrawl,—  
 Completed lay thy piece, swift penman Paul !

## 76.

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

## 77.

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

## 78.

Thus Paul discounted his applause. Alack  
For human expectation ! Scarcely ink  
Was dry when, lo, the perfect piece came back

Rejected, shamed ! Some other poet's clink  
"Thetis and Tethys" had seduced the pack  
Of pedants to declare perfection's pink  
A singularly poor production. "Whew !  
The Forty are stark fools, I always knew !"

79.

First fury over (for Paul's race—to-wit,  
Brain-vibrios—wriggle clear of protoplasm  
Into minute life that's one fury-fit),  
"These fools shall find a bard's enthusiasm  
Comports with what should counterbalance it—  
Some knowledge of the world ! No doubt, orgasm  
Effects the birth of verse which, born, demands  
Prosaic ministration, swaddling-bands !

80.

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

81.

So, by a friend, who boasts himself in grace  
With no less than the Chevalier La Roque,—  
Eminent in those days for pride of place,

Seeing he had it in his power to block  
The way or smooth the road to all the race  
Of literators trudging up to knock  
At Fame's exalted temple-door—for why?  
He edited the Paris "Mercury :"—

## 82.

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

## 83.

Down to desk, out with paper, up with quill,

Dip and indite ! “ Sir, gratitude immense

For this true draught from the Pierian rill !

Our Academic clodpoles must be dense

Indeed to stand unirrigated still.

No less, we critics dare not give offence

To grandees like the Forty : while we mock,

We grin and bear. So, here’s your piece ! La Roque.”

## 84.

“ There now ! ” cries Paul : “ the fellow can’t avoid

Confessing that my piece deserves the palm ;

And yet he dares not grant me space enjoyed



By every scribbler he permits embalm  
His crambo in the Journal's corner ! Cloyed  
With stuff like theirs, no wonder if a qualm  
Be caused by verse like mine : though that's no cause  
For his defrauding me of just applause.

## 85.

“Aha, he fears the Forty, this poltroon ?

First let him fear *me* ! Change smooth speech to  
rough !

I'll speak my mind out, show the fellow soon

Who is the foe to dread : insist enough

On my own merits till, as clear as noon,

He sees I am no man to take rebuff

As patiently as scribblers may and must !

Quick to the onslaught, out sword, cut and thrust !”

## 86.

And thereupon a fierce epistle flings

Its challenge in the critic's face. Alack !

Our bard mistakes his man ! The gauntlet rings

On brazen visor proof against attack.

Prompt from his editorial throne up springs

The insulted magnate, and his mace falls, thwack,

On Paul's devoted brainpan,—quite away

From common courtesies of fencing-play !

## 87.

“ Sir, will you have the truth ? This piece of yours

Is simply execrable past belief.

I shrank from saying so ; but, since nought cures

Conceit but truth, truth's at your service ! Brief,  
Just so long as 'The Mercury' endures,  
So long are you excluded by its Chief  
From corner, nay, from cranny ! Play the cock  
O' the roost, henceforth, at Croisic !" wrote La Roque.

## 88.

Paul yellowed, whitened, as his wrath from red  
Waxed incandescent. Now, this man of rhyme  
Was merely foolish, faulty in the head  
Not heart of him : conceit 's a venial crime.  
" Oh by no means malicious !" cousins said :  
Fussily feeble,—harmless all the time,  
Piddling at so-called satire—well-advised  
He held in most awe whom he satirized.

89.

Accordingly his kith and kin—removed

From emulation of the poet's gift

By power and will—these rather liked, nay, loved

The man who gave his family a lift

Out of the Croisic level ; disapproved

Satire so trenchant,—still our poet sniffed

Home-incense,—though too churlish to unlock

“ The Mercury's ” box of ointment proved La Roque.

90.

But when Paul's visage grew from red to white,

And from his lips a sort of mumbling fell

Of who was to be kicked,—“ And serve him right ! ”

A soft voice interposed "did kicking well  
Answer the purpose ! Only—if I might  
Suggest as much—a far more potent spell  
Lies in another kind of treatment. Oh,  
Women are ready at resource, you know !

## 91.

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

92.

“ Why did you first of all transmit your piece  
To those same priggish Forty unprepared  
Whether to rank you with the swans or geese  
By friendly intervention? If they dared  
Count you a cackler,—wonders never cease!

I think it still more wondrous that you bared  
Your brow (my earlier image) as if praise  
Were gained by simple fighting now-a-days!

93.

“ Your next step showed a touch of the true means  
Whereby desert is crowned : not force but wile  
Came to the rescue. ‘ Get behind the scenes !’

Your friend advised : he writes, sets forth your style  
And title, to such purpose intervenes

That you get velvet-compliment three-pile ;  
And, though 'The Mercury' said 'nay,' nor stock  
Nor stone did his refusal prove La Roque.

## 94.

"Why must you needs revert to the high hand,  
Imperative procedure—what you call  
'Taking on merit your exclusive stand?'

*Stand*, with a vengeance ! Soon you went to wall,  
You and your merit ! Only fools command  
When folks are free to disobey them, Paul !  
You 've learnt your lesson, found out what 's o'clock,  
By this uncivil answer of La Roque.

## 95.

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

## 96.

“Deïdamia he—Achilles thou !  
Ha, ha, these ancient stories come so apt !  
My sex, my youth, my rank I next avow



In a neat prayer for kind perusal. Sapped  
I see the walls which stand so stoutly now !  
I see the toils about the game entrapped  
By honest cunning ! Chains of lady's-smock,  
Not thorn and thistle, tether fast La Roque !”

97.

Now, who might be the speaker sweet and arch  
That laughed above Paul's shoulder as it heaved  
With the indignant heart?—bade steal a march  
And not continue charging? Who conceived  
This plan which set our Paul, like pea you parch  
On fire-shovel, skipping, of a load relieved,  
From arm-chair moodiness to escritoire  
Sacred to Phœbus and the tuneful choir?

## 98.

Who but Paul's sister ! named of course like him

“Desforges” ; but, mark you, in those days a queer  
Custom obtained,—who knows whence grew the whim?—

That people could not read their title clear

To reverence till their own true names, made dim

By daily mouthing, pleased to disappear,

Replaced by brand-new bright ones : Arouet,

For instance, grew Voltaire, Desforges—Malcrais.

## 99.

“ Demoiselle Malcrais de la Vigne ”—because

The family possessed at Brederac

A vineyard,—few grapes, many hips and haws,—

Still a nice Breton name. As breast and back  
Of this vivacious beauty gleamed through gauze,  
So did her sprightly nature nowise lack  
Lustre when draped, the fashionable way,  
In "Malcrais de la Vigne"—more short, "Malcrais."

## 100.

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

## 101.

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

## 102.

'T was an epistle that might move the Turk !  
More certainly it moved our middle-aged  
Pen-driver drudging at his weary work,

Raked the old ashes up and disengaged  
The sparks of gallantry which always lurk  
Somehow in literary breasts, assuaged  
In no degree by compliments on style ;  
Are Forty wagging beards worth one girl's smile ?

## 103.

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

## 104.

“There !” cried the lively lady “Who was right—

You in the dumps, or I the merry maid

Who know a trick or two can baffle spite

Tenfold the force of this old fool’s? Afraid

Of Editor La Roque? But come ! next flight

Shall outsoar—Deshoulières alone? My blade,

Sappho herself shall you confess outstript !

Quick, Paul, another dose of manuscript !”

## 105.

And so, once well a-foot, advanced the game :

More and more verses, corresponding gush

On gush of praise, till everywhere acclaim

Rose to the pitch of uproar. "Sappho? Tush!  
Sure 'Malcrais on her Parrot' puts to shame  
Deshoulières' pastorals, clay not worth a rush  
Beside this find of treasure, gold in crock,  
Unearthed in Brittany,—nay, ask La Roque!"

## 106.

Such was the Paris tribute. "Yes," you sneer,  
"Ninnies stock Noodledom, but folks more sage  
Resist contagious folly, never fear!"  
Do they? Permit me to detach one page  
From the huge Album which from far and near  
Poetic praises blackened in a rage  
Of rapture! and that page shall be—who stares  
Confounded now, I ask you?—just Voltaire's!

107.

Ay, sharpest shrewdest steel that ever stabbed

To death Imposture through the armour-joints !

How did it happen that gross Humbug grabbed

Thy weapons, gouged thine eyes out? Fate appoints  
That pride shall have a fall, or I had blabbed

Hardly that Humbug, whom thy soul aoints,  
Could thus cross-buttock thee caught unawares,  
And dismalest of tumbles proved—Voltaire's !

108.

See his epistle extant yet, wherewith

“ Henri ” in verse and “ Charles ” in prose he sent  
To do her suit and service ! Here's the pith



Of half a dozen stanzas—stones which went  
To build that simulated monolith—

Sham love in due degree with homage blent  
As sham—which in the vast of volumes scares  
The traveller still : “ That stucco-heap—Voltaire’s ? ”

## 109.

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

## I IO.

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

## I II.

“ I labour to amuse my freedom ; but  
Should any sweet young creature slavery preach,  
And—borrowing thy vivacious charm, the slut !—

Make me, in thy engaging words, a speech,  
Soon should I see myself in prison shut

With all imaginable pleasure." Reach  
The washhand-basin for admirers ! There's  
A stomach-moving tribute—and Voltaire's !

112.

Suppose it a fantastic billet-doux,

Adulatory flourish, not worth frown !

What say you to the Fathers of Trévoux ?

These in their Dictionary have her down

Under the heading " Author " : " Malcrais, too,

Is ' Author ' of much verse that claims renown."

While Jean-Baptiste Rousseau . . . but why proceed ?

Enough of this—something too much, indeed !

## 113.

At last La Roque, unwilling to be left

Behindhand in the rivalry, broke bounds

Of figurative passion ; hilt and heft,

Plunged his huge downright love through what  
surrounds

The literary female bosom ; reft

Away its veil of coy reserve with "Zounds !

I love thee, Breton Beauty ! All 's no use !

Body and soul I love,—the big word 's loose !".

## 114.

*He 's greatest now and to de-struc-ti-on*

*Nearest.* Attend the solemn word I quote,

Oh Paul ! *There 's no pause at per-fec-ti-on.*

Thy knell thus knolls the Doctor's bronzed throat !

*Greatness a period hath, no sta-ti-on !*

Better and truer verse none ever wrote

(Despite the antique outstretched *a-i-on*)

Than thou, revered and magisterial Donne !

115.

Flat on his face, La Roque, and;—pressed to heart

His dexter hand,—Voltaire with bended knee !

Paul sat and sucked-in triumph ; just apart

Leaned over him his sister. “ Well ? ” smirks he,

And “ Well ? ” she answers, smiling—woman’s art

To let a man’s own mouth, not hers, *décreer*

What shall be next move which decides the game :

Success ? She said so. Failure ? His the blame.

## 116.

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

## 117.

“ La Roque, Voltaire, my lovers ? Then disguise  
Has served its turn, grows idle ; let it drop !  
I shall to Paris, flaunt there in men’s eyes

My proper manly garb and mount a-top  
The pedestal that waits me, take the prize  
Awarded Hercules ! He threw a sop  
To Cerberus who let him pass, you know,  
Then, following, licked his heels : exactly so !

118.

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

M 2

## 119.

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

## 120.

“ What, Paul, and are my pains thus thrown away,  
My lessons perfect loss ? ” at length fall slow  
The pitying syllables, her lips allay



The satire of by keeping in full flow,  
Above their coral reef, bright smiles at play :  
“ Can it be, Paul thus fails to rightly know  
And altogether estimate applause  
As just so many asinine he-haws ?

121.

“ I thought to show you ” . . . “ Show me,” Paul in-  
broke

“ My poetry is rubbish, and the world  
That rings with my renown a sorry joke !

What fairer test of worth than that, form furled,  
I entered the arena ? Yet you croak

Just as if Phœbé and not Phœbus hurled  
The dart and struck the Python ! What, he crawls  
Humbly in dust before your feet, not Paul's ?

## 122.

“Nay, ’t is no laughing matter though absurd

If there’s an end of honesty on earth !

La Roque sends letters, lying every word !

Voltaire makes verse, and of himself makes mirth

To the remotest age ! Rousseau’s the third

Who, driven to despair amid such dearth

Of people that want praising, finds no one

More fit to praise than Paul the simpleton !

## 123.

“Somebody says—if a man writes at all

It is to show the writer’s kith and kin

He was unjustly thought a natural ;

And truly, sister, I have yet to win  
Your favourable word, it seems, for Paul  
Whose poetry you count not worth a pin  
Though well enough esteemed by these Voltaires,  
Rousseaus and suchlike : let them quack, who cares ? ”

## 124.

“ —To Paris with you, Paul ! Not one word’s waste  
Further : my scrupulosity was vain !  
Go triumph ! Be my foolish fears effaced  
From memory’s record ! Go, to come again  
With glory crowned,—by sister re-embraced,  
Cured of that strange delusion of her brain  
Which led her to suspect that Paris gloats  
On male limbs mostly when in petticoats ! ”

## 125.

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

## 126.

Crippled, forsooth! what courser sprightlier pranced  
Paris-ward than did Paul? Nay, dreams lent wings:  
He flew, or seemed to fly, by dreams entranced.

Dreams? wide-awake realities : no things  
Dreamed merely were the missives that advanced  
The claim of Malcrais to consort with kings  
Crowned by Apollo—not to say with queens  
Cinctured by Venus for Idalian scenes.

## 127.

Soon he arrives, forthwith is found before  
The outer gate of glory. Bold tic-toc  
Announces there's a giant at the door.

“Ay, sir, here dwells the Chevalier La Roque.”  
“Lackey! Malcrais,—mind, no word less nor more!—  
Desires his presence. I've unearthed the brock :  
Now, to transfix him!” There stands Paul erect,  
Inched out his uttermost, for more effect.

128.

A bustling entrance : “ Idol of my flame !

Can it be that my heart attains at last  
Its longing? that you stand, the very same

As in my visions? . . . Ha ! hey, how ? ” aghast  
Stops short the rapture. “ Oh, my boy’s to blame !

You merely are the messenger ! Too fast  
My fancy rushed to a conclusion. Pooh !  
Well, sir, the lady’s substitute is—who ? ”

129.

Then Paul’s smirk grows inordinate. “ Shake hands !

Friendship not love awaits you, master mine,  
Though nor Malcrais nor any mistress stands

To meet your ardour ! So, you don't divine  
 Who wrote the verses wherewith ring the land's  
 Whole length and breadth ? Just he whereof no line  
 Had ever leave to blot your Journal—eh ?  
 Paul Desforges Maillard—otherwise Malcrais ! ’

## 130.

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

## 131.

“ I’m nobody—a wren-like journalist ;

You’ve flown at higher game and winged your bird,  
The golden eagle ! That’s the grand acquist !

Voltaire’s sly Muse, the tiger-cat, has purred  
Prettily round your feet ; but if she missed

Priority of stroking, soon were stirred  
The dormant spit-fire. To Voltaire ! away,  
Paul Desforges Maillard, otherwise Malcrais ! ”

## 132.

Whereupon, arm in arm, and head in air,

The two begin their journey. Need I say,  
La Roque had felt the talon of Voltaire,



Had a long-standing little debt to pay,  
And pounced, you may depend, on such a rare  
Occasion for its due discharge? So, gay  
And grenadier-like, marching to assault,  
They reach the enemy's abode, there halt.

## 133.

'I'll be announcer!' quoth La Roque: "I know,  
Better than you, perhaps, my Breton bard,  
How to procure an audience! He's not slow  
To smell a rat, this scamp Voltaire! Discard  
The petticoats too soon,—you'll never show  
Your *haut-de-chausses* and all they've made or marred  
In your true person. Here's his servant. Pray,  
Will the great man see Demoiselle Malcrais?"

## 134.

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

## 135.

And, since the announcement of his visitor  
Surprised him at his toilet,—never glass  
Had such solicitation ! “ Black, now—or

Brown be the killing wig to wear? Alas,  
Where's the rouge gone, this cheek were better for  
A tender touch of? Melted to a mass,  
All my pomatum! There's at all events  
A devil—for he's got among my scents!"

## 136.

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

## 137.

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

## 138.

A moment's horror ; then quick turn-about  
On high-heeled shoe,—flurry of ruffles, flounce  
Of wig-ties and of coat-tails,—and so out

Of door banged wrathfully behind, goes—bounce—  
Voltaire in tragic exit ! vows, no doubt,  
Vengeance upon the couple. Did he trounce  
Either, in point of fact ? His anger's flash  
Subsided if a culprit craved his cash,

## 139.

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

140.

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

141.

“ Beware us, now we've found who fooled us ! Quick  
To cover ! ‘ In proportion to men's fright,  
Expect their fright's revenge ! ’ quoth politic

Old Macchiavelli. As for me,—all's right :

I'm but a journalist. But no pin's prick

The tooth leaves when Voltaire is roused to bite !

So, keep your counsel, I advise ! Adieu !

Good journey ! Ha, ha, ha, Malcrais was—you !”

142.

“—Yes, I'm Malcrais, and somebody beside,

You snickering monkey !” thus winds up the tale

Our hero, safe at home, to that black-eyed

Cherry-cheeked sister, as she soothes the pale

Mortified poet. “ Let their worst be tried,

I'm their match henceforth—very man and male !

Don't talk to me of knocking-under ! man

And male must end what petticoats began !

143

“ How woman-like it is to apprehend

The world will eat its words ! why, words transfixed  
To stone, they stare at you in print,—at end,

Each writer’s style and title ! Choose betwixt  
Fool and knave for his name, who should intend

To perpetrate a baseness so unmixed  
With prospect of advantage ! What is writ  
Is writ : they’ve praised me, there’s an end of it !

144.

“ No, Dear, allow me ! I shall print these same

Pieces, with no omitted line, as Paul’s.

Malcrais no longer, let me see folks blame



What they—praised simply?—placed on pedestals,  
Each piece a statue in the House of Fame!

Fast will they stand there, though their presence galls  
The envious crew: such show their teeth, perhaps,  
And snarl, but never bite! I know the chaps!"

## 145.

Oh Paul, oh piteously deluded! Pace

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

146.

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

147.

Wherefore? Who does not know how these La Roques  
Voltaires, can say and unsay, praise and blame,  
Prove black white, white black, play at paradox

And, when they seem to lose it, win the game?

Care not thou what this badger, and that fox,

His fellow in rascality, call "fame!"

Fiddlepin's end! Thou hadst it,—quack, quack,  
quack!

Have quietude from geese at Bergerac!

148.

Quietude! For, be very sure of this!

A twelvemonth hence, and men shall know or care

As much for what to-day they clap or hiss

As for the fashion of the wigs they wear,

Then wonder at. There's fame which, bale or bliss,—

Got by no gracious word of great Voltaire

Or not-so-great La Roque,—is taken back

By neither, any more than Bergerac!

## 149.

Too true ! or rather, true as ought to be !

No more of Paul the man, Malcrais the maid,  
Thenceforth for ever ! One or two, I see,

Stuck by their poet : who the longest stayed  
Was Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, and even he

Seemingly saddened as perforce he paid  
A rhyming tribute “ After death, survive—  
He hoped he should : and died while yet alive ! ”

## 150.

No, he hoped nothing of the kind, or held

His peace and died in silent good old age.  
Him it was, curiosity impelled

To seek if there were extant still some page  
Of his great predecessor, rat who belled  
The cat once, and would never deign engage  
In after-combat with mere mice,—saved from  
More sonnetteering,—René Gentilhomme.

151.

Paul's story furnished forth that famous play  
Of Piron's " Métromanie " : there you'll find  
He's Francaleu, while Demoiselle Malcrais  
Is Demoiselle No-end-of-names-behind !  
As for Voltaire, he's Damis. Good and gay  
The plot and dialogue, and all's designed  
To spite Voltaire : at " Something " such` the laugh  
Of simply " Nothing !" (see his epitaph.)

## 152.

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

## 153.

Now, take this sparkle and the other spirt  
Of fitful flame,—twin births of our grey brand  
That's sinking fast to ashes ! I assert,

As sparkles want but fuel to expand  
Into a conflagration no mere squirt  
Will quench too quickly, so might Croisic strand,  
Had Fortune pleased posterity to chowse,  
Boast of her brace of beacons luminous.

## 154.

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

## 155.

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

## 156.

If one did, over his antagonist  
That yelled or shrieked or sobbed or wept or wailed  
Or simply had the dumps,—dispute who list,—



I count him victor. Where his fellow failed,  
Mastered by his own means of might,—acquist  
Of necessary sorrows,—he prevailed,  
A strong since joyful man who stood distinct  
Above slave-sorrows to his chariot linked.

## 157.

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

## 158.

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

## 159.

So, force is sorrow, and each sorrow, force :  
What then ? since Swiftmess gives the charioteer  
The palm, his hope be in the vivid horse

Whose neck God clothed with thunder, not the steer  
Sluggish and safe ! Yoke Hatred, Crime, Remorse,  
Despair : but ever mid the whirling fear,  
Let, through the tumult, break the poet's face  
Radiant, assured his wild slaves win the race !

## 160.

Therefore I say . . . no, shall not say, but think,  
And save my breath for better purpose. White  
From grey our log has burned to : just one blink  
That quivers, loth to leave it, as a sprite  
The outworn body. Ere your eyelids' wink  
Punish who sealed so deep into the night  
Your mouth up, for two poets dead so long,—  
Here pleads a live pretender : right your wrong !



I.

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

2.

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

## 3.

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

## 4.

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

5.

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

6.

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

## 7.

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

## 8.

So that when (Ah joy !) our singer  
    For his truant string  
Feels with disconcerted finger,  
    What does cricket else but fling  
Fiery heart forth, sound the note  
Wanted by the throbbing throat ?



9.

Ay and, ever to the ending,  
    Cricket chirps at need,  
Executes the hand's intending,  
    Promptly, perfectly,—indeed  
Saves the singer from defeat  
With her chirrup low and sweet.

10.

Till, at ending, all the judges  
    Cry with one assent  
“Take the prize—a prize who grudges  
    Such a voice and instrument?  
Why, we took your lyre for harp,  
So it shrilled us forth F sharp !”

## 11.

Did the conqueror spurn the creature,  
Once its service done?  
That 's no such uncommon feature  
In the case when Music's son  
Finds his Lotte's power too spent  
For aiding soul-development.

## 12.

No ! This other, on returning  
Homeward, prize in hand,  
Satisfied his bosom's yearning :  
(Sir, I hope you understand !)  
—Said “Some record there must be  
Of this cricket's help to me !”

13.

So, he made himself a statue :

Marble stood, life-size ;

On the lyre, he pointed at you,

Perched his partner in the prize ;

Never more apart you found

Her, he throned, from him, she crowned.

14.

That 's the tale : its application ?

Somebody I know

Hopes one day for reputation

Through his poetry that 's—Oh,

All so learned and so wise

And deserving of a prize !

## 15.

If he gains one, will some ticket,  
When his statue 's built,  
Tell the gazer "'T was a cricket  
Helped my crippled lyre, whose lilt  
Sweet and low, when strength usurped  
Softness' place i' the scale, she chirped?

## 16.

" For as victory was nighest,  
While I sang and played,—  
With my lyre at lowest, highest,  
Right alike,—one string that made  
' Love ' sound soft was snapt in twain,  
Never to be heard again,—

17.

“ Had not a kind cricket fluttered,  
Perched upon the place  
Vacant left, and duly uttered  
‘ Love, Love, Love,’ whene’er the bass  
Asked the treble to atone  
For its somewhat sombre drone.”

18.

But you don’t know music ! Wherefore  
Keep on casting pearls  
To a—poet? All I care for  
Is—to tell him that a girl’s  
“ Love ” comes aptly in when gruff  
Grows his singing. (There, enough !)

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