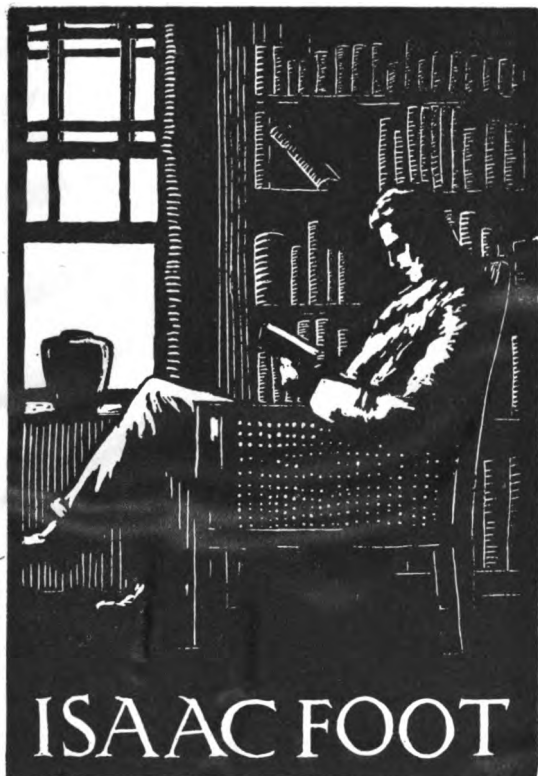


BELLS
AND
POMEGRANATES

SECOND SERIES

19TH CENTURY CLASSICS

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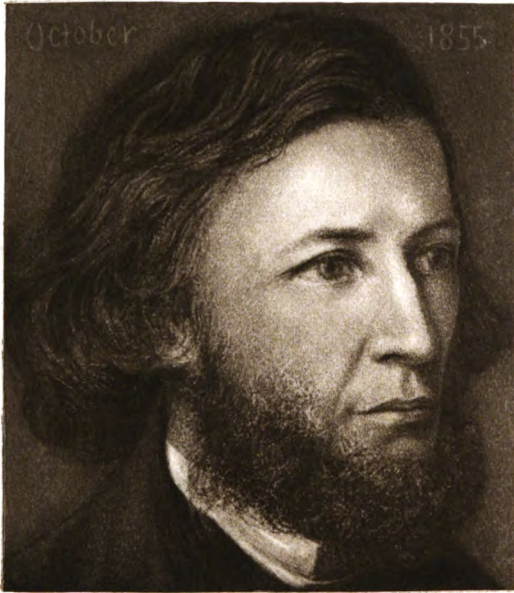


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XIXth Century Classics

EDITED BY CLEMENT K. SHORTER

BELLS AND POMEGRANATES



Walker & Brentall, Ph. Sc.

Robert Browning.

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BELLS AND
POMEGRANATES
BY ROBERT BROWNING
SECOND SERIES

LONDON: WARD, LOCK & COMPANY, L^{TD}.
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1897

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CHRONOLOGY OF ROBERT BROWNING.

Robert Browning born in Southampton Street, Peckham,	7th May	1812
Attended lectures at University College, Gower Street		1829-30
Published "Pauline"		1833
Visited St. Petersburg		1833
First visited Italy		1833
Published "Paracelsus"		1835
„ "Strafford"		1837
„ "Sordello"		1840
„ "Bells and Pomegranates" No. 1 ("Pippa Passes")		1841
Published "Bells and Pomegranates," No. 2 ("King Victor and King Charles")		1842
Published "Bells and Pomegranates," No. 3 ("Dramatic Lyrics")		1842
Published "Bells and Pomegranates," No. 4 ("The Return of the Druses")		1843
Published "Bells and Pomegranates," No. 5 ("A Blot in the 'Scutcheon")		1843
Published "Bells and Pomegranates," No. 6 ("Colombe's Birthday")		1844
Published "Bells and Pomegranates," No. 7 ("Dramatic Romances and Lyrics")		1845
Published "Bells and Pomegranates," No. 8 ("Luria," and "A Soul's Tragedy")		1846
Married Elizabeth Barrett Barrett	12th September	1846
Robert Wiedemann Barrett Browning born	9th March	1849
Published "Christmas Eve and Easter Day"		1850

Chronology of Robert Browning.

Printed privately "Cleon"	1855
" " "The Statue and the Bust"	1855
Published "Men and Women"	1856
Mrs. Browning died at Casa Guidi 29th June	1861
Printed privately "Gold Hair"	1864
Published "Dramatis Personæ"	1864
" " "The Ring and the Book" (vols. i. and ii.)	1868
" " "The Ring and the Book" (vols. iii. and iv.)	1869
" " "Balaustion's Adventure"	1871
" " "Fifine at the Fair"	1872
" " "Red-Cotton Night-Cap Country"	1873
" " "Aristophanes' Apology"	1875
" " "The Inn Album"	1875
" " "Pacchiarotto"	1876
" " "The Agamemnon of Æschylus"	1877
" " "La Saisiaz : The Two Poets of Crosic"	1878
" " "Dramatic Idylls" (First Series)	1879
" " "Dramatic Idylls" (Second Series)	1880
The Browning Society founded	1881
Published "Jocoseria"	1883
" " "Ferishtah's Fancies"	1880
" " "Parleyings with certain People of Importance in their Day"	1887
Published "Asolando" (post dated 1890)	1889
Died at Venice 12th December	1889
Interred in Westminster Abbey 31st December	1889
"Prose Life of Strafford" (mainly by John Forster) Attributed to Browning by Dr. F. J. Furnivall, and republished	1892

LIST OF WORKS DEALING WITH THE LIFE AND WRITING OF ROBERT BROWNING.

(i.) *Biography.*

"Life of Robert Browning." By William Sharp. 8vo.	1890
"Life and Letters of Robert Browning." By Mrs. Sutherland Orr. 8vo.	1891

Browningana.

(ii.) *Bibliography.*

- "A Bibliography of Robert Browning" (1833-1881).
By Dr. F. J. Furnivall. 8vo. 1881
[Forming a portion of Part I. of "The Browning Society's
Papers."]
"A Complete Bibliography of the Writings in Prose and
Verse of Robert Browning." By Thomas J. Wise.
8vo. 1897

(iii.) *Criticism.*

- "Essays on Robert Browning's Poetry." By John T.
Nettleship. 8vo. 1868
"Balaustion's Adventure." By H. Buxton Forman. 8vo. 1872
"Browning's Women." By Mary E. Burt. 8vo. . 1877
"Sordello, a Story from Robert Browning." By Frederick
May Holland. 8vo. 1881
"The Browning Society's Papers" (1881-1896). Thirteen
Parts. 8vo. 1896
"Stories from Browning." By Frederick May Holland.
8vo. 1882
"Robert Browning. The Thoughts of a Poet on Art
and Faith." By Howard S. Pearson. 4to. . . 1885
"A Handbook to the Works of Robert Browning." By
Mrs. Sutherland Orr. 8vo. 1885
[Several times reprinted, with revisions.]
"Miss Alma Murray's 'Constance' in Robert Browning's
'In a Balcony.'" By B. L. Moseley, LL.B. 8vo. . 1885
"Sordello's Story, retold in Prose." By Annie Wall.
8vo. 1886
"An Introduction to the Study of Robert Browning's
Poetry." By Hiram Corson, LL.D. 8vo. . . 1886
"Robert Browning's Poetry: Outline Studies." Published
for the Chicago Browning Society. 8vo. . . 1886
[A limited number of copies were placed on sale in London.]
"Sordello: A History and a Poem." By Caroline H.
Dall. 8vo. 1886
"An Introduction to the Study of Browning." By Arthur
Symons. 8vo. 1886
"Studies in the Poetry of Robert Browning." By James
Fotheringham. 8vo. 1887

Browningana.

- "A Sequence of Sonnets on the Death of Robert Browning." By Algernon Charles Swinburne. 4to. . . . 1890
 "Robert Browning: Chief Poet of the Age." By William G. Kingsland. 8vo. 1890
 "Robert Browning: Chief Poet of the Age. New Edition, with Biographical and other Additions." By William G. Kingsland. 8vo. 1890
 "Sordello. An Outline Analysis of Mr. Browning's Poem." By Jeanie Morrison. 8vo. 1889
 "Robert Browning." By Louise Manning Hodgkins. 8vo. 1889
 "Robert Browning. Essays and Thoughts." By John T. Nettleship. 8vo. 1890
 "Robert Browning Personalia." By Edmund Gosse. 8vo. 1890
 "Robert Browning." By Gerald H. Rendall. 8vo. . . . 1890
 "Browning's Message to his Time." By Edward Berdoe. 8vo. 1890
 "Robert Browning and the Drama." By Walter Fairfax. 8vo. 1891
 "A Primer on Browning." By Mary F. Wilson. 8vo. . . 1891
 "Browning's Criticism of Life." By William F. Revell. 8vo. 1892
 "Of 'Fifine at the Fair,' 'Christmas Eve and Easter Day,' and other of Browning's Poems." By Jeanie Morrison. 8vo. 1892
 "The Browning Cyclopædia." By Edward Berdoe. 8vo. 1892
 "Browning Studies." Edited by Edward Berdoe. 8vo. 1895
 "Browning and the Christian Faith." By Edward Berdoe. 8vo. 1896
 "An Introduction to Robert Browning." By Bancroft Cooke. 8vo. [No Date]

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY;

A PLAY.

Ivy and violet, what do ye here,
With blossom and shoot in the warm spring-weather,
Hiding the arms of Monchenci and Vere?—HANMER.

DEDICATION.

NO ONE LOVES AND HONOURS BARRY CORNWALL MORE THAN ROBERT BROWNING ; WHO, HAVING NOTHING BETTER THAN THIS PLAY TO GIVE HIM IN PROOF OF IT, MUST SAY SO.

March, 1844.

PERSONS.

COLOMBE OF RAVESTEIN, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves.

SABYNE, }
ADOLF, } her Attendants.

GUIBERT, }
GAUCELME, }
MAUFROY, } Courtiers.
CLUGNET, }

VALENCE, Advocate of Cleves.

PRINCE BERTHOLD, Claimant of the Duchy.

MELCHIOR, his Confidant.

PLACE—The Palace at Juliers.

TIME, 16—.

Colombe's Birthday.

ACT I.

Morning. SCENE—*A corridor leading to the Audience-chamber.*

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY *and other* Courtiers,
round GUIBERT, *who is silently reading a paper:*
as he drops it at the end—

Guibert.

THAT this should be her birthday ; and the day
We all invested her, twelve months ago,
As the late Duke's true heiress and our liege ;
And that this also must become the day . . .
Oh, miserable lady !

1st Court. Ay, indeed ?

2nd Court. Well, Guibert ?

3rd Court. But your news, my friend, your news !
The sooner, friend, one learns Prince Berthold's
pleasure,

The better for us all : how writes the Prince ?
Give me—I'll read it for the common good—

Gui. In time, sir—but, till time comes, pardon
me !

Bells and Pomegranates.

Our old Duke just disclosed his child's retreat,
Declared her true succession to his rule,
And died : this birthday was the day last year
We convoyed her from Castle Ravestein—
That sleeps out trustfully its extreme age
On the Meuse' quiet bank, where queen she lived
Over the water-buds,—to Juliers' Court
With joy and bustle : here again we stand—
Sir Gaucelme's buckle's constant to his cap—
To-day's much such another sunny day !

Gau. Come, Guibert—this outgoes a jest, I think !
You're hardly such a novice as to need
The lesson you pretend.

Gui. What lesson, sir ?
That everybody, if he'd thrive at court,
Should, first and last of all, look to himself ?
Why, no : and therefore, with your good example,
(—Ho, Master Adolf !)—to myself I'll look.

Enter ADOLF.

Gui. The Prince's letter ; why, of all men else,
Comes it to me ?

Adolf. By virtue of your place,
Sir Guibert ! 'Twas the Prince's express charge,
His envoy told us, that the missive there
Should only reach our lady by the hand
Of whosoever held your place.

Gui. Enough ! [*Exit ADOLF.*]
Then, gentles, who'll accept a certain poor
Indifferently honourable place,
My friends, I make no doubt, have gnashed their teeth

Colombe's Birthday.

At leisure minutes these half-dozen years,
To find me never in the mood to quit ?
—Who asks may have it, with my blessing, and—
This to present our lady. Who'll accept ?
You,—you,—you ? There it lies and may, for me !

Mau. [*A youth, picking up the paper, reads aloud.*]

“ Prince Berthold, proved by titles following
“ Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this day
“ To claim his own, with licence from the Pope,
“ The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and France ” . .

Gau. Sufficient “ titles following,” I judge !
Don't read another ! Well,—“ to claim his own ? ”

Mau. “ And take possession of the Duchy held
“ Since twelve months, to the true heir's prejudice,
“ By ” . . . Colombe, Juliers' Mistress, so she thinks,
And Ravestein's mere lady, as we find !

Who wants the place and paper ? Guibert's right !
I hope to climb a little in the world,—

I'd push my fortunes,—but, no more than he,
Could tell her on this happy day of days,
That, save the nosegay in her hand, perhaps,
There's nothing left to call her own ! Sir Clugnet,
You famish for promotion ; what say you ?

Clug. [*An old man.*] To give this letter were a sort,
I take it,

Of service : services ask recompense :
What kind of corner may be Ravestein ?

Gui. The castle ?—Oh, you'd share her fortunes ?
Good !

Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,
With no such bad remainder of a roof.

Clug. Oh,—but the Town ?

Bells and Pomegranates.

Gui. Five houses, fifteen huts,
A church whereto was once a spire, 'tis judged,
And half a dyke, except in time of thaw.

Clug. Still, there 's some revenue?

Gui. Else Heaven forefend !
You hang a beacon out, should fogs increase ;
So when the Autumn floats of pine-wood steer
Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks to you,
The grateful raftsmen flings a guilder in ;
—That 's if he means to pass your way next time.

Clug. If not ?

Gui. Hang guilders, then—he blesses you !

Clug. What man do you suppose me ? Keep your
paper !

And let me say it shows no handsome spirit
To dally with misfortune : keep your place !

Gau. Some one must tell her.

Gui. Some one may : you may !

Gau. Sir Guibert, 'tis no trifle turns me sick
Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine,
But this goes near it. Where 's there news at all ?
Who'll have the face, for instance, to affirm
He never heard, c'en while we crowned the girl,
That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law ;
And one, confessed her father's cousin's child,
And, she away, indisputable heir,
Against our choice protesting and the Duke's,
Claimed Juliers ?—nor, as he preferred his claim,
That first this, then another, potentate,
Inclined to its allowance ?—I, or you,
Or any one except the lady's self ?
Oh, it had been the direst cruelty

Colombe's Birthday.

To break the business to her! Things might
change—

At all events, we'd see next masque at end,
Next mummerly over first: and so the edge
Was taken off sharp tidings as they came,
Till here 's the Prince upon us, and there 's she
—Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,
With just the faintest notion possible
That some such claimant earns a livelihood
About the world by feigning grievances
Few pay the story of but grudge its price,
And fewer listen to a second time.
Your method proves a failure; now try mine—
And, since this must be carried . . .

Gui. [*Snatching the paper from him.*] By your
leave!

Your zeal transports you! 'Twill not serve the
Prince

So much as you expect, this course you'd take;
If she leaves quietly her palace,—well:
But if she died upon its threshold,—no:
He'd have the trouble of removing her!
Come, gentles, we're all—what the devil knows:
You, Gaucelme, won't lose character, beside—
You broke your father's heart superiorly
To gather his succession—never blush!
You're from my province, and, be comforted,
They tell of it with wonder to this day—
You can afford to let your talent sleep!
There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his child,
With whom the right lay! Let the Prince be Duke!
There, she 's no Duchess, she 's no anything

Bells and Pomegranates.

More than a young maid with the bluest eyes—
And now, sirs, we'll not break this young maid's heart
So coolly as he could and would! No haste!
His talent's full-blown, ours but in the bud—
We'll not advance to his perfection yet—
Will we, Sir Maufroy? See, I've ruined Maufroy
For ever as a courtier!

Gau. Here's a coil—
And, count us, will you? Count its residue,
This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd!
A birthday, too—a gratulation-day!
I'm dumb: bid *that* keep silence!

Mau. and others. Eh, Sir Guibert?
He's right: that does say something: that's bare
truth.

Ten—twelve, I make: a perilous dropping-off!

Gui. Pooh—is it audience-hour? The vestibule
Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort
That want our privilege of entry here.

Gau. Adolf! [*Re-enter ADOLF.*] Who's outside?

Gui. Oh, your looks suffice
Nobody waiting?

Mau. [*Looking through the door-folds.*] Scarce our
number!

Gui. 'Sdeath!
Nothing to beg for, to complain about?
It can't be! Ill news spreads, but not so fast
As thus to frighten all the world!

Gau. The world
Lives out of doors, sir—not with you and me
By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs,
Wherever warmth's perpetual. Outside's free

Colombe's Birthday.

To every wind from every compass-point,
And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.
The Prince comes and the People go ; 'tis instinct :
The snow-goose settles down, the swallows flee—
Don't you feel somewhat chilly ?

Gui.

That's their craft ?

And last year's crowders-round and criers-forth,
That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads,
Lit up the bonfires, sang the loyal songs—
Well, 'tis my comfort you could never call me
The People's Friend ! The People keep their word—
I keep my place : don't doubt I'll entertain
The People when the Prince comes, and the People
Are talked of !—Then, their speeches—no one
tongue

Found respite, not a pen had holiday
—For they wrote, too, as well as spoke, these knaves !
Now see : we tax and tithe them, pill and poll,
They wince and fret enough, but pay they must
—We manage that,—so pay with a good grace
They might as well, it costs so little more.
But when we've done with taxes, meet folk next
Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,
In public—there they have us if they will,
We're at their mercy after that, you see—
For one tax not ten devils could extort,
Over and above necessity, a grace,
This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit—
Their vine-leaf-wrappage of our tribute-penny,
And crowning attestation, all works well.
Yet this precisely do they thrust on us,—
These cappings quick, and crook-and-cringings low,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,
With grin that shuts the eyes and opes the mouth—
So tender they their love ; and tender made,
Go home to curse you, the first doit you ask ;
As if they had not given ample warrant
To who should clap a collar on their neck,
Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank,
And take them for the brute they boast themselves !
—Stay—there 's a bustle at the outer door—
And somebody entreating . . . that 's my name !
Adolf,—I heard my name !

Adolf. 'Twas probably
The Suitor.

Gui. Oh, there is one ?

Adolf. With a suit
He'd fain enforce in person.

Gui. The good heart
—And the great fool ! Just ope the mid-door's fold—
Is that a lappet of his cloak, I see ?

Adolf. If it bear plenteous signs of travel . . . ay,
The very cloak my comrade tore !

Gui. Why tore ?

Adolf. He seeks the Duchess' presence in that
trim :

Since daybreak was he posted hereabouts
Lest he should miss the moment.

Gui. Where 's he now ?

Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly, not more.
They have ado enough to thrust him back.

Gui. Ay—but my name I caught ?

Adolf. Oh, sir—he said
—What said he ?—You had known him formerly,

Colombe's Birthday.

And, he believed, would help him did you guess
He waited now—you promised him as much—
The old plea!—'Faith, he's back,—renews the charge
[*Speaking at the door.*] So long as the man parleys,
peace outside!

Nor be too ready with your halberts, there!

Gau. My horse bespattered, as he blocked the path,
A thin sour man not unlike somebody.

Adolf. He holds a paper in his breast, whereon
He glances when his cheeks flush and his brow
At each repulse—

Gau. I noticed he'd a brow.

Adolf. So glancing, he grows calmer, leans awhile
Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,
And presently turns round, quiet again,
With some new pretext for admittance.—Back!
[*To GUIBERT.*] Sir, he has seen you! Now cross
halberts! Ha—

Pascal is prostrate—there lies Fabian too—
No passage! Whither would the madman press?
Close the doors quick on me!

Gui. Too late—he's here.

Enter, hastily and with discomposd dress, VALENCE.

Val. Sir Guibert, will you help me?—Me, that come
Charged by your townsmen, all who starve at Cleves,
To represent their heights and depths of woe
Before our Duchess and obtain relief!
Such errands barricade such doors, it seems:
But not a common hindrance drives me back
On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit

Bells and Pomegranates.

With hope for the first time, which sent me forth!
Cleves, speak for me! Cleves' men and women,
speak—

Who followed me—your strongest—many a mile
That I might go the fresher from their ranks,
—Who sit—your weakest—by the city-gates,
To take me fuller of what news I bring
As I return—for I must needs return!
—Can I? 'Twere hard, no listener for their wrongs,
To turn them back upon the old despair—
Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus—
So I do—any way you please—implore!
If you . . . but how should you remember Cleves?
Yet they of Cleves remember you so well!
—Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,
Your words and deeds caught up at second hand,—
Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts,
Of the very levity and recklessness
Which only prove yourself forget their wrongs.
Cleves the grand town whose men and women starve,
Is Cleves forgotten?—Then remember me!
You promised me that you would help me once
For other purpose: will you keep your word?

Gui. And who may you be, friend?

Val. Valence of Cleves.

Gui. Valence of . . . not the Advocate of Cleves
I owed my whole estate to, three years back?
Ay, well may you keep silence! Why, my lords,
You've heard, I'm sure, how, Pentecost three years,
I was so nearly ousted of my land
By some knaves' pretext,—(eh? when you refused me
Your ugly daughter, Clugnet,)—and you've heard

Colombe's Birthday.

How I recovered it by miracle
—(When I refused her)! Here's the very friend,
—Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank!
Nay, Valence, this procedure's vile in you—
I'm no more grateful than a courtier should,
But politic am I—I bear a brain,
Can cast about a little, might require
Your services a second time! I tried
To tempt you with advancement here to court
—“No”—well, for curiosity at least
To view our life here—“no”—our Duchess, then,—
—A pretty woman's worth some pains to see,
Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown
Completes the forehead pale and tresses pure. . .

Val. Our city trusted me its miseries,
And I am come.

Gui. So much for taste! But “come,”—
So may you be, for anything I know,
To beg the Pope's cross or Sir Clugnet's daughter,
And with an equal chance you get all three!
If it was ever worth your while to come,
Was not the proper way worth finding too?

Val. Straight to the palace-portal, Sir, I came—

Gui. —And said?—

Val. —That I had brought the miseries
Of a whole city to relieve.

Gui. —Which saying
Won your admittance? You saw me, indeed,
And here, no doubt, you stand: as certainly,
My intervention, I shall not dispute,
Procures you audience; but, if so I do—
That paper's closely written—by Saint Paul,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies,
Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B, and C—
Perhaps you'd enter, make a reverence,
And launch these "miserics" from first to last ?

Val. How should they let me pause or turn aside ?

Gau. [*To VALENCE.*] My worthy Sir, one question :
you've come straight

From Cleves, you tell us—heard you any talk
At Cleves about our lady ?

Val. Much.

Gau. And what ?

Val. Her wish was to redress all wrongs she knew.

Gau. That you believed ?

Val. You see me, sir !

Gau. —Nor stopped

Upon the road from Cleves to Juliers here,
For any—rumours you might find afloat ?

Val. I had my townsmen's wrongs to busy me.

Gau. This is the Lady's birthday do you know ?
—Her day of pleasure ?

Val. —That the Great, I know,
For Pleasure born, should still be on the watch
To exclude Pleasure when a Duty offers :
Even as, for Duty born, the Lowly too
May ever snatch a Pleasure if in reach :
Both will have plenty of their birthright, sir !

Gau. [*Aside to GUIBERT.*] Sir Guibert, here's your
man ! No scruples now—

You'll never find his like ! Time presses hard.
I've seen your drift and Adolf's too, this while,
But you can't keep the hour of audience back
Much longer, and at noon the Prince arrives.

Colombe's Birthday.

[*Pointing to VALENCE.*] Entrust *him* with it—fool no chance away!

Gui. —Him?

Gau. —With the missive! What's the man to her?

Gui. No bad thought!—Yet, 'tis yours—who ever played

The tempting serpent—else, 'twere no bad thought!

I should—and do—mistrust it for your sake,

Or else . . .

Enter an Official who communicates with ADOLF.

Adolf. The Duchess will receive the Court!

Gui. Give us a moment, Adolf! Valence, friend,

I'll help you: we of the service, you're to mark,

Have special entry, while the herd . . . the folks

Outside, get access through our help alone

—Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose

So ever will be—your natural lot is, therefore,

To wait your turn and opportunity,

And probably miss both. Now, I engage

To set you, here and in a minute's space,

Before the lady with full leave to plead

Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C,

To heart's content.

Val.

I grieve that I must ask,

From this yourself admit the custom here,

What will the price of such a favour be?

Gui. Just so! You're not without a courtier's tact!

Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,

Do such as we without a recompense.

Bells and Pomegranates.

Val. Yours is?—

Gui. A trifle : here 's a document
'Tis some one's duty to present her Grace—
I say, not mine—these say, not theirs—such points
Have weight at court. Will you relieve us all
And take it?—Just say, “I am bidden lay
“This paper at the Duchess' feet.”

Val. No more?

I thank you, sir!

Adolf. Her Grace receives the Court!

Gui. [*Aside.*] Now, *sursum corda*, quoth the mass-
priest! Do—

Whoever's my kind saint, do let alone
These pushings to and fro, and pullings back ;
Peaceably let me hang o' the devil's arm
The downward path, if you can't pluck me off
Completely! Let me live quite his or yours!

[*The Courtiers begin to range themselves, and
move towards the door.*]

After me, Valence! So our famous Cleves
Lacks bread? Yet don't we gallants buy their lace?
And dear enough—it beggars me, I know,
To keep my very gloves fringed properly!
This, Valence, is our Great State Hall you cross :
Yon grey urn's veritable marcasite,
The Pope's gift; and those salvers testify
The Emperor. Presently you'll set your foot
. . . But you don't speak, friend Valence!

Val. I shall speak.

Gau. [*Aside to GUIBERT.*] Guibert—it were no such
ungraceful thing
If you and I, at first, seemed horror-struck

Colombe's Birthday.

With the bad news? Look here, what you shall do!
Suppose you first clap hand to sword and cry
"Yield strangers our allegiance? First I'll perish
"Beside your Grace!"—And so give me the cue
To . . .

Gui. Clap your hand to note-book and jot down
That to regale the Prince with? I conceive!
[*To VALENCE.*] Do, Valence, speak, or I shall half
suspect

You're plotting to supplant us, me the first,
I' the Lady's favour: is't the grand harangue
You mean to make that thus engrosses you?
—Which of her virtues you'll apostrophise?
Or is 't the fashion you aspire to start
Of that close-curved, not unbecoming hair?
—Or what else ponder you?

Val.

My townsmen's wrongs.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

Bells and Pomegranates.

ACT II.

Noon. SCENE—*The Presence-chamber.*

The DUCHESS and SABYNE.

The D. Announce that I am ready for the Court !

Sab. 'Tis scarcely audience-hour, I think—your Grace
May best consult your own relief, no doubt,
And shun the crowd ; but if there 's few arrived . . .

The D. Let those not yet arrived, then, keep away !
'Twas me this day, last year at Ravestein,
You hurried. It has been full time, beside,
This half-hour. Do you hesitate ?

Sab. Forgive me !

The D. Stay, Sabyne ; let me hasten to make sure
Of one true thanker : here with you begins
My audience, claim you first its privilege !
It is my birth's event they celebrate—
You need not wish me more such happy days,
But—ask some favour ! Have you none to ask ?
Has Adolf none, then ? this was far from least
Of much I waited for impatiently,
Assure yourself ! So natural it seemed,
Your gift, beside this bunch of river-bells,
Should be the power and leave to do you good ;
You ask my leave to-day to marry Adolf ?
The rest is my concern.

Sab. Your Grace is ever
My Lady of dear Ravestein,—but, for Adolf

Colombe's Birthday.

The D. "But"? You have not, sure, changed in
your regard
And purpose towards him?

Sab. *We change!*

The D. Well then? Well?

Sab. How could we two be happy, and, most like,
Leave Juliers, when . . . when . . . but 'tis audience-
time!

The D. "When, if you left me, I were left indeed"—
Would you subjoin that?—Bid the Court approach!
—Why should we play thus with each other, Sabyne?
Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss,
If friends detain me, and get blame for it,
There is a cause? Of last year's fervid throng
Scarce one half comes now.

Sab. [*Aside.*] One half? No, alas!

The D. So can the mere suspicion of a cloud
Over my fortunes strike each loyal heart.
They've heard of this Prince Berthold; and, forsooth,
Each foolish arrogant pretence he makes
More foolish and more arrogant may grow,
They please to apprehend! I thank their love!
Admit them!

Sab. [*Aside.*] How much has she really learned?

The D. Surely, whoever's absent, Tristan waits?
—Or at least Romuald, whom my father raised
From nothing—come, he's faithful to me, come!
(Sabyne, I should but be the prouder—yes,
And fitter to comport myself aright)
Not Romuald? Xavier—what said he to that?
For Xavier hates a parasite, I know! [*Exit Sabyne.*]

The D. Well, sunshine's everywhere, and summer too;

Bells and Pomegranates.

Next year 'tis the old place again, perhaps—
The water-breeze again, the birds again
. . . It cannot be ! It is too late to be !
What part had I, or choice in all of it ?
Hither they brought me ; I had not to think
Nor care, concern myself with doing good
Or ill, my task was just—to live,—to live,
And, answering ends there was no need explain,
To render Juliers happy—so they said.
All could not have been falsehood ! Some was
love,
And wonder and obedience—I did all
They look'd for ! Why then cease to do it now ?
Yet this is to be calmly set aside,
And—ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I know,
Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .
It cannot nor it shall not be ! His right ?
Well then, he has the right, I have it not,
—But who bade all of you surround my life
And close its growth up with your Ducal crown
Which, pluck'd off rudely, leaves me perishing ?
I could have been like one of you,—loved, hoped,
Feared, lived and died like one of you—but you
Would take that life away and give me this,
And I will keep this ! I will face you—Come !

Enter the Courtiers and VALENCE.

The Courtiers. Many such happy mornings to your
Grace !

The D. [*Aside, as they pay their devoirs.*] The same
words—the some faces,—the same love !

Colombe's Birthday.

I have been over-fearful. These are few—
But these, at least, stand firmly—these are mine !
As many come as may, and if no more,
'Tis that these few suffice—they do suffice !
What succour may not next year bring me ! Plainly
I feared too soon ! [*To the Courtiers.*] I thank you,
sirs : all thanks !

Val. [*Aside, as the DUCHESS passes from one group to another, conversing.*]

'Tis she—the vision this day last year brought,
When for a golden moment at our Cleves
She tarried in her progress hither. Cleves
Chose me to speak its welcome, and I spoke
—Not that she could have noted the recluse
—Ungainly, old before his time—who gazed—
. . . Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and that gaze
Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her own !
She was above it—but so would not sink
My gaze to earth ! The People caught it, hers—
Thenceforward, mine ; but thus entirely mine,
Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul
Ere she retired and left me—them ?—She turns—
There's all her wondrous face at once ! The ground
Reels and . . .

[*Suddenly occupying himself with his paper.*]

These wrongs of theirs I have to plead !

The D. [*To the Courtiers.*] Nay, compliment enough!
and kindness' self

Should pause before it wish me more such years.
'Twas fortunate that thus ere youth escaped
I tasted life's pure pleasure—one such, pure,
Is worth a thousand, mixed—and youth's for pleasure :

Bells and Pomegranates.

Mine is received ; let my age pay for it.

Gau. So, pay and pleasure paid for, thinks your
Grace,

Should never go together ?

Gui. How, Sir Gaucelme ?

Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly
At the snatched breathing-intervals of work ?
As good you saved it till the dull day's-end
When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone !

The D. True : you enable me to risk my Future,
By giving me a Past beyond recall.

A girl, one happy leisure year I lived :

Let me endeavour to be Duchess now !

And so,—what news, Sir Guibert, spoke you of ?

[*As they advance a little, and GUIBERT
speaks—*

—That gentleman ?

Val. [*Aside.*] I feel her eyes on me.

Gui. [*To VALENCE.*] The Duchess, sir, inclines to
hear your suit !

Advance ! He is from Cleves.

Val. [*Coming forward. Aside.*] Their wrongs—their
wrongs !

The D. And you, sir, are from Cleves ? How fresh
in mind

The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves !

She entertained us bravely, but the best

Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by

With insuppressive joy on every face !

What says my ancient, famous, happy Cleves ?

Val. Take the truth, lady—you are made for truth !
So think my friends : nor less do they deserve

Colombe's Birthday.

The having you to take it, you shall think,
When you know all—nay, when you only know
How, on that day you recollect at Cleves,
When the poor acquiescing multitude
Who thrust themselves with all their woes apart
Into unnoticed corners, that the few
Their means sufficed to muster trappings for,
Might fill the foreground, occupy your sight
With joyous faces fit to bear away
And boast of as a sample of all Cleves
—How, when to daylight these crept out once more,
Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags
Whence the scant coin, which had not half bought
bread,

That morn he shook forth, counted piece by piece,
And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent
To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path
—How, when the golden flood of music and bliss
Ebbed, as their moon retreated, and again
Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare
—Then I, their friend, had only to suggest
“Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp”—
And as one man they cried “He speaks the truth—
“Show her the horror—take from our own mouths
“Our wrongs and show them, she will see them too!”
This they cried, lady! I have brought the wrongs.

The D. Wrong? Cleves has wrongs—which now
and thus I know?

I thank you—in that paper?—Give it me!

Val. (There, Cleves!) In this! (What did I
promise, Cleves?)

Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are reduced

Bells and Pomegranates.

Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon—I forget
I buy the privilege of this approach,
And promptly would discharge my debt. I lay
This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet !

[*Presenting GUIBERT'S paper.*

Gui. Stay—for the present . . .

The D. Stay, sir ? I take aught

That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride
Than this your Ducal circlet. Thank you, sir !

[*The DUCHESS reads hastily ; then, turning
to the Courtiers—*

What have I done to you ? Your deed or mine
Was it, this crowning me ? I gave myself
No more a title to your homage, no,
Than church-flowers born this season gave the words
In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.
For such a flower you plucked me—well, you erred—
Well, 'twas a weed—remove the eye-sore quick !
But should you not remember it has lain
Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined,
Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things ?
—That if 't be faded 'tis with prayer's sole breath—
That the one day it boasted was God's day ?
But I do thank you—had you used respect
Here might I dwindle to the last white leaf
Till losing the poor relic which even yet
May yield some wandering insect life and food :
So, fling me forth and—all is best for all !

[*After a pause.*] Prince Berthold, who art Juliers' Duke,
it seems—

The Pope's choice and the Emperor's, and the King's—
Be mine, too ! Take this people ! Tell not me

Colombe's Birthday.

Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,
—But take them, from a heart that yearns to give !
Find out their love,—I could not ; find their fear,—
I would not ; find their like,—I never will
Among the flowers. [Taking off her coronet.

Colombe of Ravestein

Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here !

Val. [Advancing to GUIBERT.] Sir Guibert,—knight,
they call you—this of mine

Is the first step I ever set at court.

You dared make me your instrument, I find ;

For that, so sure as you and I are men,

We reckon to the utmost presently :

But as you are a courtier and I none,

Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,

Have too far outraged, by my ignorance

Of courtier-ways, this lady to proceed

A second step and risk addressing her

—I am degraded—you let me address !

Out of her presence all is plain enough

What I shall do—but in her presence, too,

Surely there 's something proper to be done !

[To the others.] You, gentles, tell me if I guess aright—

May I not strike this man to earth ?

The Courtiers. [As GUIBERT springs forward, with-
holding him.] Let go !

—The Clothiers' spokesman, Guibert ? Grace a
churl ?

The D. [To VALENCE.]—Oh, be acquainted with your
party, sir !

He 's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts ;

A lion crests him for a cognisance ;

Bells and Pomegranates.

“Scorning to waver”—that’s his ’scutcheon’s word ;
His office with the new Duke—probably
The same in honour as with me ; or more,
By so much as this gallant turn deserves ;
He’s now, I dare say, of a thousand times
The rank and influence that remain with her
Whose part you take ! So, lest for taking it
You suffer . . .

Val. I may strike him then to earth ?

Gui. [*Falling on his knee.*] Great and dear lady,
pardon me ! Hear once !

Believe me and be merciful—be just !
I could not bring myself to give that paper
Without a keener pang than I dared meet
—And so felt Clugnet here, and Maufroy here
—No one dared meet it. Protestation’s cheap,—
But, if to die for you did any good,
[*To GAUCELME.*] Would not I die, sir ? Say your
worst of me !

But it does no good, that’s the mournful truth :
And since the hint of a resistance, even,
Would just precipitate, on you the first,
A speedier ruin—I shall not deny,
Saving myself indubitable pain,
I thought to get you pleasure, who might say ?
In that your only subject we could find
To carry the sad notice, was the man
Precisely ignorant of its contents ;
A nameless, mere provincial advocate ;
One whom ’twas like you never saw before,
Never would see again. All has gone wrong ;
But I meant right, God knows, and you, I trust !

Colombe's Birthday.

The D. A nameless advocate, this gentleman?—
—(I pardon you, Sir Guibert !)

Gui. [*Rising, to VALENCE.*] —Sir, and you?—

Val. Rejoice that you are lightened of a load.

Now, you have only me to reckon with !

The D. One I have never seen, much less obliged !—

Val. Dare I speak, lady ?

The D. Dare you ! Heard you not
I rule no longer ?

Val. Lady, if your rule

Were based alone on such a ground as these

[*Pointing to the Courtiers.*]

Could furnish you,—abjure it ! They have hidden

A source of true dominion from your sight.

The D. You hear them—no such source is left . . .

Val. Hear Cleves !

Whose haggard craftsmen rose this day to starve,

Are starving now, and will lie down at night

Sure of a like to-morrow—but as sure

Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,

Since end things must, end howsoe'er things may.

What makes, instead of rising, all as one,

And teaching fingers (so expert to wield

Their tool) the broadsword's play or carbine's trick,

—What makes that there 's an easier help, they
think,

And you, whose name so few of them can spell,

Whose face scarce one for every hundred saw,

That you have simply to receive their wrongs,

And wrongs will vanish—so, still trades are plied,

And swords lie rusting, and myself stand here ?

Will you derive your rule from such a ground,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say,
Of this—and this—and this?

The D. [After a pause.] You come from Cleves—
How many are at Cleves of such a mind?

Val. [From his paper.] “We, all the manufacturers
of Cleves”—

The D. Or stay, sir—lest I seem too covetous—
Are you my subject? such as you describe
Am I to you—though to no other man?

Val. [From his paper.] —“Valence, ordained your
Advocate at Cleves”—

The D. [Replacing the coronet.] Then I remain Cleves’
Duchess! Take you note,
While Cleves but yields one subject of this stamp,
I stand her Lady till she waves me off!
For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold;
Laugh at each menace; and, his power defying,
Return his missive with its due contempt!

[Casting it away.]

Gui. [Picking it up.] —Which to the Prince I will
deliver, Lady,

(Note it down, Gaucelme)—with your message too!

The D. I think the office is a subject’s, sir!
—Either . . . how style you him?—my special guarder
The Marshal’s—for who knows but violence
May follow the delivery!—Or, perhaps,
My Chancellor’s—for law may be to urge
On its receipt!—Or, even my Chamberlain’s—
For I may violate established form!

[To VALENCE.] Sir,—for the half-hour till this service
ends,

Will you become all these to me?

Colombe's Birthday.

Val. [*Falling on his knee.*] My Liege!

The D. Give me!

[*The Courtiers present their badges of office.*

[*Putting them by.*] Whatever was their virtue once,
There needs new consecration! [*Raising VALENCE.*]

Are you mine?

—I will be Duchess yet!

[*Exit.*

The Courtiers.

Our Duchess yet!

A glorious lady! Worthy love and dread!

I'll stand by her,—and I, whate'er betide!

Gui. [*To VALENCE.*] Well done, well done, sir! I
care not who knows

You have done nobly and I envy you—

Tho' I am but unfairly used, I think:

For when one gets a place like this I hold,

One gets too the remark that its mere wages,

The pay and the preferment, make our prize—

Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,

We're laughed at—much would zeal and faith subsist

Without these also! Yet, let these be stopped,

Our zeal and faith, we hear on every side,

Are not released—having been pledged away

I wonder with what zeal and faith in turn?

'Twas money purchased me my place! No, no—

I'm right, sir—but your wrong is better still,

If I had time and skill to argue it.

Therefore, I say, I'll serve you, how you please—

If you like,—fight you, as you seem to wish—

(The kinder of me that, in sober truth,

I never dreamed I did you any harm)—

Gau. —Or, kinder still, you'll introduce no doubt,
His merits to the Prince who's just at hand,

Bells and Pomegranates.

And let no hint drop he's made Chancellor
And Chamberlain, and Heaven knows what beside !

Clug. [To VALENCE.] You stare, young sir, and
threaten ! Let me say,
That at your age, when first I came to court,
I was not much above a gentleman ;
While now . . .

Val. —You are Head-Lackey ? With your office
I have not yet been graced, Sir !

Other Courtiers. Let him talk !
Fidelity—disinterestedness—
Excuse so much ! Men claimed my worship ever
Who, staunch and steadfastly . . .

Enter ADOLF.

Adolf. The Prince arrives !

Courtiers. Ha ? How ?

Adolf. He leaves his guard a stage behind
At Aix, and enters almost by himself.

1st Court. The Prince ! This foolish business puts
all out !

2nd Court. Let Gaucelme speak first !

3rd Court. Better I began
About the state of Juliers—should one say
All's prosperous and inviting him ?

4th Court. —Or rather
All's prostrate and imploring him !

5th Court. That's best !
Where's the Cleves' paper, by the way ?

4th Court. [To VALENCE.] Sir—sir—

Colombe's Birthday.

If you'll but give that paper—trust it me,
I'll warrant . . .

5th Court. Softly, sir—the Marshal's duty!

Clug. Has not the Chamberlain a hearing first
By virtue of his patent?

Gau. Patents?—Duties?

All that, my masters, must begin again!
One word composes the whole controversy—
We're simply now—the Prince's!

The others. Ay—the Prince's!

Enter SABYNE.

Sab. Adolf! Bid . . . Oh, no time for ceremony!
Where's whom our lady calls her only subject?
She needs him! Who is here the Duchess's?

Val. [*Starting from his rêverie.*] Most gratefully I
follow to her feet! [*Exit.*

Bells and Pomegranates.

ACT III.

Afternoon. SCENE—*The Vestibule.*

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD *and* MELCHIOR.

Berth. A thriving little burgh this Juliers looks.
[*Half-apart.*] Keep Juliers, and as good you kept
Cologne :

Better try Aix, though !—

Mel. Please 't your Highness speak ?

Berth. [*As before.*] Aix, Cologne, Frankfort,—Milan ;
—Rome !—

Mel. —The Grave.

—More weary seems your Highness, I remark,
Than sundry conquerors whose path I've watched
Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.
I could well wish you, for your proper sake,
Had met some shade of opposition here
—Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock,
Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.
You must not look for next achievement's palm
So easy : this will hurt your conquering !

Berth. My next ? Ay—as you say, my next and next !
Well, I am tired, that's truth, and moody too,
This quiet entrance-morning ; listen why !
Our little burgh, now, Juliers—'tis indeed
One link, however insignificant,
Of the great chain by which I reach my hope—
—A link I must secure ; but otherwise

Colombe's Birthday.

You'd wonder I esteemed it worth my grasp.
Just see what life is with its shifts and turns !
It happens now—this very nook—to be
A place that once . . . but a short while since, neither—
When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on
Of foreign courts, and bore my claims about,
Discarded by one kinsman, and the other
A poor priest merely,—then, I say, this place
Shone my ambition's object ; to be Duke—
Seemed then what to be Emperor seems now.
My rights were far from being judged apparent
In those days as of late, I promise you—
And 'twas my day-dream, Lady Colombe here
Might e'en compound the matter, pity me,
Be struck, say, with my chivalry and grace
(I was a boy!)—bestow her hand at length,
And make me Duke in her right if not mine.
Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers now !
Hearken : if ever I be Emperor,
Will you remind me this, I feel and say ?

Mel. All this consoles a bookish man like me !
—And so will weariness cling to you ! Wrong—
Wrong ! Had you sought the Lady's court yourself,—
Flattered this, threatened that, and bribed the other,—
Pleaded, by writ and word and deed, your cause,—
Conquered yourself a footing inch by inch,—
And, after long years' struggle, pounced at last
On her for prize,—the right life had been lived,
And justice done to divers faculties
Safe in that brow : yourself were visible
As you stood victor,—you, whom now—(your pardon !)
Narrowly am I forced to search and see—

Bells and Pomegranates.

So by your uncle are you hid, this Pope,
Your cousin, the other King! You are a Mind,—
They, Body: too much of mere legs-and-arms
Obstructs the mind so! Match these with their
like—

But, mind with mind!

Berth. And where's your mind to match?
They show me legs-and-arms to cope withal!
I'd subjugate this city—where's its mind?

[*The Courtiers enter slowly.*

Mel. Got out of sight when you came troops and all!
And in its stead, here greets you flesh-and-blood—
A smug œconomy of both, this first!

[*As CLUGNET bows obsequiously.*

Well done, gout, all considered!—I may go?

Berth. Help me receive them!

Mel. Oh, they just will say

What yesterday at Aix their fellows said,
At Treves, the day before!—Sir Prince, my friend,
Why do you let your life slip thus?—Mean time,
I have my little Juliers to achieve—
The understanding this tough Platonist
Your holy uncle disinterred, Amelius—
Lend me a company of horse and foot
To help me through his tractate—gain my Duchy!

Berth. And Empire, after that is gained, will be—?

Mel. To help me through your uncle's comment,
Prince!

[*Exit.*

Berth. Ah? Well! He o'er-refines—the scholar's
fault!

How do I let my life slip? Say, this life
I lead now, differs from the common life

Bells and Pomegranates.

But could you not have said it months ago?
I'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon, true—
'Tis flung me—I stoop down, and from the ground
Pick it, with all you placid standers-by—
And now I have it, gems and mire at once,
Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you say!

Gui. (By Paul, the Advocate our doughty friend
Cuts the best figure!)

Gau. If our ignorance
May have offended, sure our loyalty . . .

Berth. Loyalty? Yours?—Oh—of yourselves you
speak!

—I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope!
And since I have been forced repeat my claims
As if they never had been made before,
As I began, so probably I end.
The formal answer to the grave demand—
What says the lady?

Courtiers. [*One to another.*] 1. Marshal! 2. Orator!

Gui. A variation of our mistress' way!
Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet!—that he waits!

1st Court. Your place!

2nd Court. Just now it was your own!

Gui. The devil's!

Berth. [*To GUIBERT.*] Come forward, friend—you
with the paper there!

Is Juliers the first city I've obtained?
By this time I may boast proficiency
In each decorum of the circumstance!
Give it me as she gave it—the petition
(Demand, you style it)—what's required, in brief?
What title's reservation, appanage's

Colombe's Birthday.

Allowance?—I heard all at Treves, last week!

Gau. [To GUIBERT.] "Give it him as she gave it!"

Gui. And why not?

[To BERTHOLD.] The lady crushed your summons thus together,

And bade me, with the very greatest scorn

So fair a frame could hold, inform you . . .

Courtiers. Stop—

Idiot!—

Gui. —Inform you she denied your claim,

Defied yourself! (I tread upon his heel,

The blustering Advocate!)

Berth. By Heaven and earth!

Dare you jest, sir?

Gui. Did he at Treves last week?

Berth. [Starting up.] Why then, I look much bolder than I knew,

And you prove better actors than I thought—

Since, as I live, I took you as you entered

For just so many dearest friends of mine,

Fled from the sinking to the rising power

—The sneaking'st crew, in short, I e'er despised!

Whereas, I am alone here for the moment!

With every soldier left behind at Aix!

Silence? That means the worst—I thought as much!

What follows next then?

Courtiers. Gracious Prince—he raves!

Gui. He asked the truth and why not have the truth?

Berth. Am I a prisoner? Speak, will somebody?
—But why stand paltering with imbeciles?

Let me see her, or . . .

Bells and Pomegranates.

Gui. Her without her leave,
Shall no one see—she's Duchess yet!

Courtiers. [*Footsteps without, as they are disputing.*]

Good chance!

She's here—the Lady Colombe's self!

Berth. 'Tis well!

[*Aside.*] Array a handful thus against my world?

Not ill done, truly! Were not this a mind

To match one's mind with? Colombe!—Let us wait!

I failed so, under that gray convent wall!

She comes!

Gui. The Duchess! Strangers, range yourselves!

[*As the DUCHESS enters in conversation with
VALENCE, BERTHOLD and the Courtiers
fall back a little.*]

The D. Presagefully it beats, presagefully,
My heart—the right is Berthold's and not mine!

Val. Grant that he has the right, dare I mistrust
Your power to acquiesce so patiently
As you believe, in such a dream-like change
Of fortune—change abrupt, profound, complete?

The D. Ah, the first bitterness is over now!
Bitter I may have felt it to confront
The truth, and ascertain those natures' value
I had so counted on—that was a pang—
But I did bear it, and the worst is over:
Let the Prince take them!

Val. —And take Juliers too?
—Your People without crosses, wands, and chains—
Only with hearts?

The D. There I feel guilty, sir!
I cannot give up what I never had:

Colombe's Birthday.

For these I ruled, not them—these stood between.
Shall I confess, sir? I have heard by stealth
Of Berthold from the first—more news and more—
Closer and closer swam the thunder-cloud,
But I was safely housed with these, I knew!
At times when to the casement I would turn
At a bird's passage or a flower-trail's play,
I caught the storm's red glimpses on its edge—
Yet I was sure some one of those about me
Would interpose—I followed the bird's flight,
Or plucked the flower—some one would interpose!

Val. Not one thought on the People—and Cleves
there!

The D. So, sadly conscious my real sway was
missed,

Its shadow goes without so much regret:
Else could I not again thus calmly bid you,
Answer Prince Berthold!

Val. Then you acquiesce?

The D. Remember over whom it was I ruled!

Gui. [*Stepping forward.*] Prince Berthold, yonder,
craves an audience, Lady!

The D. [*To VALENCE.*] I only have to turn, and I
shall face

Prince Berthold! Oh, my very heart is sick!
It is the daughter of a line of Dukes,
This scornful insolent adventurer
Will bid depart from my dead father's halls!
I shall not answer him—dispute with him—
But, as he bids, depart! Prevent it, sir!
Sir—but a day's sole respite! Urge for me
—What I shall call to mind I should have urged

Bells and Pomegranates.

When time's gone by—'twill all be mine you urge!
A day—an hour—that I myself may lay
My rule down! 'Tis too sudden—must not be!
The world's to hear of it! Once done—for ever!
How will it read, sir? How be sung about?
Prevent it!

Berth. [*Approaching.*] Your frank indignation,
Lady,

Cannot escape me! Overbold I seem—
But somewhat should be pardoned my surprise.
And if, for their and your sakes, I rejoice
Your virtues could inspire a trusty few
To make such gallant stand in your behalf,
I cannot but be sorry, for my own,
Since I no longer am permitted speak
No less of courtesy than relationship
If you forgot once I remember now!
But, unrepelled, attack must never pass.
Suffer, through you, your subjects I demand,
Who controverts my claim to Juliers?

The D. —Me,

You say you do not speak to—

Berth. Of your subjects

I ask then: whom do you accredit? Where
Stand those should answer?

Val. [*Advancing.*] The Lady is alone!

Berth. Alone, and thus? So weak and yet so
bold?

Val. I said she was alone—

Berth. —And weak, I said.

Val. When is man strong until he feels alone?

It was some lonely strength at first, be sure,

Colombe's Birthday.

Created organs, such as those you seek,
By which to give its varied purpose shape—
And, naming the selected ministrants,
Took sword, and shield, and sceptre,—each, a man !
That strength performed its work and passed its way :
You see our Lady : there, the old shapes stand !
—A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chancellor—
Be helped their way, into their death put life
And find advantage,—so you counsel us !
But let strength feel alone, seek help itself,—
And, as the inland-hatched sea-creature hunts
The sea's breast out,—as, littered 'mid the waves
The desert-brute makes for the desert's joy,
—So, I am first her instinct fastens on ;
And prompt I say so clear as heart can speak,
The People will not have you ; nor shall have !
It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves
And fight you to the last, though that does much,—
And men and children,—ay, and women too,
Fighting for home, are rather to be feared
Than mercenaries fighting for their pay—
But, say you beat us, since such things have been,
And, where this Juliers laughed, you set your foot
Upon a steaming bloody splash—what then ?
Stand you the more our Lord as there you stand ?
Lord it o'er troops whose force you concentrate,
A pillared flame whereto all ardours tend—
Lord it 'mongst priests whose schemes you amplify,
A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows brood—
But never, in this gentle spot of earth,
Can you become our Colombe, our play-queen,
Whom we, to furnish lilies for her hair,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Would pour our veins forth to enrich the soil !
—Our conqueror? Yes!—Our despot? Yes!—Our
Duke?

Know yourself, know us!

Berth. [*Who has been in thought.*] Know your lady,
also!

[*Very deferentially.*]—To whom I needs must exculpate
myself

From having made a rash demand at least.

Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be

The chief adviser, I submit my claims, [*Giving papers.*

But, this step taken, take no further step,

Until the Duchess shall pronounce their worth.

Here be our meeting-place, at night its time—

Till when I humbly take the Lady's leave!

[*Exit.* *As the DUCHESS turns to VALENCE
the Courtiers interchange glances and
come forward a little.*

1st Court. So, this was their device!

2nd Court. No bad device!

3rd Court. They love each other, Guibert's friend
and she!

4th Court. Plainly!

5th Court. Pray, Guibert, what is next to do?

Gui. [*Advancing.*] I lay my office at the Duchess'
foot!

Others. And I—and I—and I!

The D. I took them, sirs!

Gui. [*To VALENCE.*] And now, sir, simple knight
again am I—

Guibert of the great ancient house, as yet

That never bore affront: whate'er your birth,—

Colombe's Birthday.

As things stand now, I recognise yourself
(If you'll accept experience of some date)
As like to be the leading man o' the time,
And so as much above me now, as I
Seemed above you this morning. Then, I offered
To fight you : will you be as generous
And now fight me ?

Val. Ask when my life is mine !

Gui. ('Tis Hers now !)

Clug. [*Advancing to VALENCE.*] You, sir, have insulted me

Grossly,—will grant me, too, the selfsame favour
You've granted him, just now, I make no question ?

Val. I promise you as him, sir !

Clug. Do you so ?

Handsomely said ! I hold you to it, sir !

You'll get me reinstated in my office

As you will Guibert !

The D. I would be alone !

[*They begin to retire slowly : as VALENCE is about to follow—*

Alone, sir—only with my heart,—you stay !

Gui. Would this hall's floor were a mine's roof !—
I'll back

And in her very face . . .

Gau. Apply the match

That fires the train,—and where will you be, pray ?

Gui. With him !

Gau. Stand, rather, safe outside with me !

The mine's charged—shall I furnish you the match

And place you properly ?—To the ante-chamber !

Gui. Can you ?

Bells and Pomegranates.

Gau. Try me!—Your friend's in fortune!

Gui. Quick—

To the ante-chamber!—He is pale with bliss!

Gau. No wonder! Mark her eyes!

Gui. To the ante-chamber! [*Exeunt* Courtiers.]

The D. Sir, could you know all you have done for me
You were content! You spoke and I am saved!

Val. Be not too sanguine, Lady! Ere now, even,
That transient flush of generosity
Fades off, perchance! The man and mood are
gone—

Inalterably his requirement stays,
And cold hard words have we to deal with now.

In that large eye there was a latent pride

To self-denial not incompetent,

But very like to hold itself dispensed

From such a grace—however, let us hope!

He is a noble spirit in noble form!

I wish he less had bent that brow to smile

As with the fancy how he could subject

Himself upon occasion to—himself!

From rudeness, violence, you rest secure;

But do not think your Duchy rescued yet!

The D. You,—who have opened a new world
to me,

Will never take the faded language up

Of that I leave? My Duchy—keeping it

Or losing it—is that my sole world now?

Val. Ill have I spoken if you thence despise

Juliers; although the lowest, on true grounds,

Be worth more than the highest rule, on false:

Aspire to that, on the true grounds!

Colombe's Birthday.

The D.

Nay, hear—

False, I will never—rash, I would not be !
This is indeed my Birthday—soul and body,
Its hours have done on me the work of years.
You hold the Requisition : ponder it !
If I have right—my duty's plain : if He—
Say so—nor ever change a tone of voice !
At night the Prince you meet—meet me at eve,
Till when, farewell ! This discomposes you ?
Believe in your own nature, and its force
Of renovating mine. I take my stand
Only as under me the earth is firm—
So, prove the first step stable, all will be !
That first, I choose— [Laying her hand on his.
—the next to take, choose you ! [Exit.

Val. [After a pause.] What drew down this on me !

On me—dead once—

She thus bids live,—since all I hitherto
Thought dead in me, youth's arduours and emprise,
Burst into life before her, as she bids
Who needs them !—Whither will this reach, where
end ?

Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet she's above—
So very far above me ! All's too plain—
I served her when the others sank away,
And she rewards me as such souls reward—
—Reward, that's little, that is nought to her,
Though all to me . . . I cannot so disclaim
Heaven's gift nor call it other than it is !
She loves me !

[Looking at the Prince's papers.] —Which love, these
forbid, perchance !

Bells and Pomegranates.

Can I decide against myself—pronounce
She is the Duchess and no mate for me?
—Cleves, help me ! Teach me,—every haggard face,—
To sorrow and endure ! I will do right
Whatever be the issue—help me, Cleves ! [*Exit.*]

Colombe's Birthday.

ACT IV.

Evening. SCENE—*An Ante-chamber.*

Enter the Courtiers.

Mau. Now then, that we may speak—how spring
this mine ?

Gau. Is Guibert ready for its match ? He cools !
Not so friend Valence with the Duchess there !
“ Stay, Valence—are not you my better self ? ”
And her cheek mantled—

Gui. Well, she loves him, sir—
And more,—since you will have it I grow cool,—
She's right : he's worth it.

Gau. For his deeds to-day ?
Say so !

Gui. What should I say beside ?

Gau. Not this—
For friendship's sake leave this for me to say—
That we're the dupes of an egregious cheat !
This plain, unpractised suitor, who found way
To the Duchess thro' the merest die's turn-up—
A year ago had seen her and been seen,
Loved and been loved—

Gui. Impossible !

Gau. —Nor say,
How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover,
Was this which—taking not his stand on facts
Boldly, for that had been endurable,
But, worming in his way by craft, he chose

Bells and Pomegranates.

Resort to, rather,—and which you and we,
Sheep-like, assist him in the playing off !
The fruit is, she prefers him to ourselves,
Not on the simple ground of preference,
First seeing, liking more, and so an end—
But as we all had started equally,
And at the close of a fair race he proved
The only valiant, sage, and loyal man.
And she, too, with the pretty fits and starts,—
And careless, winning, candid ignorance
Of what the Prince might challenge or forego—
She had a hero in reserve ! What risk
Ran she ? This deferential easy Prince
That brings his claims for her to ratify
—He's just her puppet for the nonce ! You'll see,—
Valence pronounces, as is equitable,
Against him : off goes the confederate :
As equitably, Valence takes her hand !

The Chancellor. You run too fast—her hand no
subject takes !

Do not our Archives hold her father's Will ?
Against such accident that will provides,
And gives next heir, Prince Berthold, the reversion
Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding so.

Gau. He is next heir ?

The Chan. Incontrovertibly !

Gau. Guibert, your match, now, to the train !

Gui. Enough !

I'm with you—selfishness is best again !
I thought of turning honest—what a dream !
Let's wake now !

Gau. Selfish, friend, you never were—

Colombe's Birthday.

'Twas but a series of revenges taken
Upon unselfishness that prospered ill.

But now that you're grown wiser, what's our course?

Gui. —Wait, I suppose, till Valence weds our
Lady,

And then apprise the Prince—

Gau. —Ere then, retired?

Tell the Prince now, sir! Ay, this very night—

Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,

Tell what has been, declare what's like to be,

And really makes him all he feigned himself;

Then trust his gratitude for the surprise!

Gui. Good! I am sure she'll not disown her love,
Throw Valence up—I wonder you see that!

Gau. The shame of it—the suddenness and shame!

With Valence there, to keep her to her word,

And Berthold's own reproaches or disgust—

We'll try it!—Not that we can venture much!

Her confidence we've lost for ever—his

Must be to gain!

Gui. To-night, then, venture we!

Yet—may a lost love never be renewed?

Gau. Never in noble natures: with the base ones,—

Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smarting-while,

And something grows and grows and gets to be

A mimic of the joint, and just so like

As keeps in mind it never, never will

Replace its predecessor! Crabs do that:

But lop the Lion's foot and—

Gui. To the Prince!

Gau. [*Aside.*] And come what will to the lion's foot,
I pay you

Bells and Pomegranates.

My cat's-paw, as I long have yearned to pay !
[*Aloud.*] Footsteps . . . Himself ! 'Tis Valence breaks
on us !
Waits her to boast their scheme succeeds !—We'll
hence—
And perfect ours ! To the Archives, and the Hall !
Clug. [To GAUCELME as they retire.] You have not
smiled so since your father died !
[*Exeunt* Courtiers.]

Enter VALENCE with papers.

Val. So must it be ! I have examined these
With scarce a palpitating heart—so calm,
Keeping her image almost wholly off,
Setting upon myself determined watch,
Repelling to the uttermost his claims,
And the result is . . . all men would pronounce
And not I, only, the result to be—
Berthold is Heir ; she has no shade of right
To the distinction which divided us,
But, suffered rule first by these Kings and Popes
To serve some devil's-purpose,—now 'tis gain'd,
To serve some devil's-purpose must withdraw !
—Valence, this rapture . . . selfish can it be ?
Eject it from your heart, her home !—It stays !
Ah, the brave world that opens to us both !
. . . Do my poor townsmen so esteem it ? Cleves,—
I need not your pale faces ! This, reward
For service done to them ? Too horrible !
I never served them—'twas myself I served !
Nay—served not—rather saved from punishment

Colombe's Birthday.

Which, had I failed you then, would plague me
now!

My life continues yours, and your life, mine—
But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step—
Cleves,—if no prayer I breathe for it—if she,

[*Footsteps without.*]

Colombe, that comes now, freely gives herself—
Will Cleves require, that, turning thus to her,
I . . .

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD.

—Pardon, sir—I had not looked for you
Till night, i' the Hall; nor have as yet declared
My judgment to the Lady!

Berth. So I hoped.

Val. And yet I scarce know wherefore that prevents
Disclosing it to you—disclosing even
What she determines—

Berth. That I need not ask.

Val. You need not: I have proved the Lady's
mind—

And, justice being to do, dare act for her.

Berth. Doubtless she has a very noble mind!

Val. Oh, never fear but she'll in each conjuncture
Bear herself bravely; she no whit depends
On circumstance; as she adorns a throne
She had adorned . .

Berth. . . A hovel—in what book
Have I read that of every queen that lived?
A throne? You have not been instructed, sure,
To forestall my request?

Val. 'Tis granted, sir—

Bells and Pomegranates.

My heart instructs me—I have scrutinized
Your claims . . .

Berth. Ah—claims, you mean, I first preferred !
Before our late appointment, sir, I come,
To pray you let those claims at present rest—
In favour of a new and stronger one.

Val. You shall not need a stronger : on the part
Of the lady, all you offer I accept,
Since one clear right suffices : yours is clear :
Propose !

Berth. I offer her my hand.

Val. Your hand ?

Berth. A Duke's yourself say, and at no far time,
Something here whispers me—the Emperor's.
The Lady's mind is noble ; which induced
This seizure of occasion ere my claims
Were—settled, let us amicably say !

Val. Your hand !

Berth. (He will fall down and kiss it next !)
Sir—this astonishment's too flattering—
Nor must you hold your mistress' worth so cheap !
Enhance it rather,—urge that blood is blood—
The daughter of the Burgraves, Landgraves, Mark-
graves,
Remains their daughter—I shall scarce gainsay !
Elsewhere or here the Lady needs must rule—
Like the Imperial crown's great chrysoprase,
They tell me—somewhat out of keeping there,
And yet no jewel for a meaner cap !

Val. You wed the Duchess ?

Berth. Cry you mercy, friend !
The match will influence many fortunes here ?

Colombe's Birthday.

A natural enough solicitude !
Be certain no bad chance it proves for you !
However high you take your present stand,
There 's prospect of a higher still remove—
For Juliers will not be my resting-place,
And when I have to choose a substitute
You need not give your mates a character !
And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant
The grew smooth Chamberlain—he'd hesitate
A doubt his lady could demean herself
So low as to accept me. Courage, sir !
I like your method better—feeling's play
Is franker much, and flatters me beside.

Val. I am to say, you love her ?

Berth.

Say that too !

Love has no great concernment, thinks the world,
With a Duke's marriage—How go precedents
In Juliers' story—how use Juliers' Dukes ?
(Yon must be Luitpold,—ay, a stalwart sire !)
—Say, I have been arrested suddenly
In my ambition's course . . . say, rocky course,
By this sweet flower—I fain would gather it
And then proceed—so say and speedily
—(Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's brazen self !)
Enough, sir : you possess my mind, I think.
To this claim, be it in the Hall at night
Your Lady's answer comes ; till when, farewell !

[*Exit.*

Val. [*After a pause.*] The Heavens and earth stay
as they were—my heart
Beats as it beat—the truth remains the truth !
What falls away, if not my faith in her ?

Bells and Pomegranates.

Was it my faith, that she could estimate
Love's value,—and, such faith still guiding me,
Dare I to test her now,—or had I faith
Solely because no power of test was mine?

Enter the DUCHESS.

The D. My fate, sir! Ah, you turn away—all's over!
But you are sorry for me—be not so!
What I might have become, and never was,
Regret with me; what I have merely been,
Rejoice I am no longer; what I now
Begin, a simple woman now, to be,
Hope that I am,—for, now my rights are void,
This heavy roof seems easy to exchange
For the blue sky outside—my lot henceforth!

Val. And what a lot is Berthold's!

The D. How of him?

Val. He stands, a man, now; stately, strong and
wise—

One great aim, like a guiding-star, before—
Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness to follow,
As, not its substance, but its shine he tracks,
Nor dreams of more than, just evolving these
To fulness, will suffice him to life's end.
After this star, out of a night he springs;
A beggar's cradle for the throne of thrones
He quits, so, mounting, feels each step he mounts,
Nor, as from each to each exultingly
He passes, overleaps one grade of joy.
This, for his own good:—with the world, each gift
Of God and man,—Reality, Tradition,

Colombe's Birthday.

Fancy and Fact—so well environ him,
That as a mystic panoply they serve—
Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind,
And work his purpose out with half the world,
While he, their master, dexterously slipt
From such encumbrance, is meantime employed
In his own prowess with the other half.
So shall he go on, every day's success
Adding, to what is He, a solid strength—
An airy might to what encircles him,
Till at the last, so life's routine shall grow,
That as the Emperor only breathes and moves,
His shadow shall be watched, his step or stalk
Become a comfort or a portent ; how
He trails his ermine take significance,—
Till even his power shall cease his power to be,
And most his weakness men shall fear, nor vanquish
Their typified invincibility.
So shall he go on, so at last shall end,
The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
The fiery centre of an earthy world !

The D. Some such a fortune I had dreamed should
rise

Out of my own—that is, above my power
Seemed other, greater potencies to stretch—

Val. For you?

The D. It was not I moved there, I think :
But one I could,—though constantly beside,
And aye approaching,—still keep distant from,
And so adore. A man 'twas moved there !

Val.

Who?

The D. I felt the spirit, never saw the face !

Bells and Pomegranates.

Val. See it! 'Tis Berthold's! He enables you
To realize your vision.

The D. Berthold?

Val. Duke—

Emperor to be: he proffers you his hand.

The D. Generous and princely!

Val. He is all of this.

The D. Thanks, Berthold, for my father's sake—
no hand

Degrades me!

Val. You accept the proffered hand?

The D. That he should love me!

Val. "Loved" I did not say!

Had that been—so might love incline the Prince
To the world's good, the world that's at his foot,
I do not know this moment I should dare
Give counsel you refuse the world—and Cleves—
The sacrifice he asks!

The D. Not love me, sir?

Val. He scarce affirmed it.

The D. May not deeds say more?

Val. What does he? . . . Yes—yes—very much he
does!

All the shame saved he thinks, and sorrow saved—
Immitigable sorrow, so he thinks,—
Sorrow that's deeper than we dream, perchance!

The D. Is not this love?

Val. So very much he does!

For look, you can descend now gracefully—
All doubts are banished that the world might have,
Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-time,
May call up of your heart's sincereness now:

Colombe's Birthday.

To such, reply, "My rule I could have kept—
"Increased it to the utmost of my dreams—
"Yet abjured all!" This, Berthold does for you :
It is munificently much !

The D. Still "much" !

But why is it not love, sir? Answer me !

Val. Because not one of Berthold's words and
looks

Had gone with love's presentment of a flower
To the beloved : because bold confidence,
Open superiority, free pride
Love owns not, and were all that Berthold owned :
Because where reason, even, finds no flaw,
Unerringly a lover's instinct may.

The D. You reason, then, and doubt?

Val. I love, and know.

The D. You love?—How strange ! I never cast a
thought

On that ! Just see our selfishness—you seemed
So much my own . . . I had no ground—and yet,
I never dreamed another might divide
My power with you, much less exceed it !

Val. Lady,

I am yours wholly !

The D. Oh, no, no, not mine !

'Tis not the same now, never more can be !

—Your first love, doubtless ! Well, what's gone from
me ?

What have I lost in you ?

Val. My heart replies—

No loss there ! . . . So of Berthold's proposition,—
Its obvious magnitude is well to weigh !

Bells and Pomegranates.

The D. She's . . . yes, she must be very fair for you!

Val. I am a simple Advocate of Cleves.

The D. You! With the heart and brain that so helped me

I fancied both exclusively my own,

Yet find are subject to a stronger sway!

She must be . . . tell me, is she very fair?

Val. Most fair, beyond conception or belief!

The D. Black eyes?—no matter! Colombe—the world leads

Its life without you, whom your friends professed

The single woman—see how true they were!

One lived this while, who never saw your face,

Nor heard your voice—unless . . . Is she from Cleves?

Val. Cleves knows her well!

The D. Ah—just a fancy, now!
When you poured forth the wrongs of Cleves,—I said,

—Thought, that is, afterward . . .

Val. You thought of me?

The D. Of what else? Only such a cause, I thought,

For such effect—see what true love can do!

Cleves is his love! I almost fear to ask

. . . Nor will not! This is idling—to our work!

Admit before the Prince, without reserve,

My claims misgrounded; then may follow better

. . . When you poured out Cleves' wrongs im-
petuously,

Was she in your mind?

Colombe's Birthday.

Val. All done was done for her
—To humble me!

The D. She will be proud at least!

Val. She?

The D. When you tell her!

Val. That will never be!

The D. How—are there sweeter things you hope
to tell?

No, sir! You counselled me,—I counsel you
In the one point I—any woman can!
Your worth, the first thing; let her own come next—
Say what you did through her, and she through you—
The praises of her beauty afterward!
Will you?

Val. I dare not!

The D. Dare not?

Val. She I love

Suspects not such a love in me.

The D. You jest!

Val. The lady is above me and away!

Not only the brave form, and the bright mind,
And the great heart, combine to press me low—
But all the world calls rank divides us.

The D. Rank?

Now grant me patience! Here's a man declares
Oracularly in another's case—
Sees the true value and the false, for them—
Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do see!
You called my court's love worthless—so it turned:
I threw away as dross my heap of wealth,
And here you stickle for a piece or two!
First—has she seen you?

Bells and Pomegranates.

Val. Yes !

The D. She loves you, then.

Val. One flash of hope burst—then succeeded
night—

And all's at darkest now. Impossible !

The D. We'll try : you are—somehow—my subject
yet ?

Val. As ever—to the death !

The D. Obey me, then !

Val. I must !

The D. Approach her and . . . No ! First of all
Get more assurance ; my instructress, say,
Was great, descended from a line of kings,
And even fair—(wait why I say this folly)—
She said, of all men, none for eloquence,
Courage, and, what cast even these to shade,
The heart they sprung from,—none deserved like
him

Who saved her at her need—if she said this,
What should not one I love, say ?

Val. Heaven—this hope—
Oh, lady, you are filling me with fire !

The D. Say this !—nor think I bid you cast aside
One touch of all that awe and reverence !

Nay—make her proud for once to heart's content
That all this wealth of heart and soul's her own !

Think you are all of this,—and, thinking it,
. . . (Obey !)

Val. I cannot choose !

The D. Then, kneel to her !

[*VALENCE sinks on his knee.*]

I dream !

Colombe's Birthday.

Val. Have mercy! Yours, unto the death,—
I have obeyed. Despise, and let me die.

The D. Alas, sir, is it to be ever thus?
Even with you as with the world? I know
This morning's service was no vulgar deed
Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,
Explains all done and infinitely more,
So takes the shelter of a meaner cause,
Whence rising, its effects may amply show.
Your service named its true source,—loyalty!
The rest's unsaid again. The Duchess bids you,
Rise, sir! The Prince's words were in debate.

Val. [*Rising.*] Rise! Truth, as ever, Lady, comes
from you!

I should rise—I that spoke for Cleves, can speak
For Man—yet tremble now, that stood firm then!
I laughed . . . for 'twas past tears . . . that Cleves should
starve

With all hearts beating loud the infamy,
And no tongue daring trust as much to air—
Yet here, where all hearts speak, shall I be mute?
Oh lady, for your own sake look on me!
On all I am, and have, and do—heart, brain,
Body and soul,—this Valence and his gifts—
I was proud once—I saw you—and they sank,
So that each magnified a thousand times
Were nothing to you—but such nothingness
What would a crown gild, or a sceptre prop,
A treasure speed, a laurel-wreath enhance?
What is my own desert? But should your love
Have . . . there's no language helps here . . . singled
me,—

Bells and Pomegranates.

Then . . . Oh, that wild word "then"! . . . be just to love,
In generosity its attribute!
Love, as you pleased love! All is cleared—a stage
For trial of the question kept so long
For you—Is Love or Vanity the best?
You, solve it for the world's sake—you, say first
What all will shout one day—you, vindicate
Our earth and be its angel! All is said.
Lady, I offer nothing—I am yours,
But for the cause' sake, look on me and him
And speak!

The D. I have received the Prince's message :
Say, I prepare my answer!

Val. Take me, Cleves! [*Exit.*

The D. Mournful—that nothing's what it calls
itself!

Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty—mere love!
And, love in question, what may Berthold's be?
I did ill to mistrust the world so soon—
Already was this Berthold at my side!
The valley-level has its hawks, no doubt:
May not the rock-top have its eagles, too?
Yet Valence . . . let me see his rival then! [*Exit.*

Colombe's Birthday.

ACT V.

Night. SCENE—*The Hall.*

Enter BERTHOLD *and* MELCHIOR.

Mel. And here you wait the matter's issue?

Berth.

Here.

Mel. I don't regret I shut Amelius, then !
But tell me, on this grand disclosure,—how
Behaved our spokesman with the forehead ?

Berth.

Oh,—he

Turned out no better than the foreheadless—
Was dazzled not so very soon—that's all !
For my part, this is scarce the hasty, showy,
Chivalrous measure you give me credit of !
—Let her commence unfriended innocent,
And carry wrongs about from court to court ?
No truly ! The least shake of Fortune's sand,
—My uncle chokes in his next coughing-fit,
King Philip takes a fancy to blue eyes,—
And wondrously her claims would brighten up !
Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient law,
O'er-looked provisoes, past o'er premises,
Follow in plenty—No—'tis the safer step.
Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine.

Mel. Which is to say, you, losing heart already,
Elude the adventure.

Berth.

Not so—or, if so—

Why not confess at once that I advise
None of our kingly craft and guild just now

Bells and Pomegranates.

To lay, one moment, down their privilege
With the notion they can any time at pleasure
Retake it—that may turn out hazardous !
We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end
O' the night, with our great masque : those favoured
few

Who keep the chamber's top, and honour's chance
Of the early evening, may retain their place
And figure as they list till out of breath.
But it is growing late ; and I observe
A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the doorway
Not only bar new-comers entering now,
But caution those who left, for any cause,
And would return, that morning draws too near ;
The ball must die off, shut itself up. We—
I think, may dance lights out and sunshine in
And sleep off headache on our frippery—
But friend the other, who cunningly stole out,
And thinks re-enter with a fresh costume,
Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.
I stick to privilege, on second thoughts !

Mel. Yes—you evade the adventure !—And, beside,
Give yourself out for colder than you are.
—King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes ?
Don't they come in somewhat of the motive
With you too ?

Berth. Yes—no : I am past that now !
Gone 'tis—I cannot shut my eyes to fact.
Of course I might by forethought and contrivance
Reason myself into a rapture. Gone !
And something better 's come instead, no doubt.

Mel. So be it ! Yet, proceed my way, the same,

Colombe's Birthday.

Though to your end ; so shall you prosper best.
The lady,—to be won for selfish ends,—
Will be won easier my unselfish . . call it,
Romantic way.

Berth. Won easier ?

Mel. Will not she ?

Berth. There I profess humility without bound !
Ill cannot speed—not I—the Emperor !

Mel. And I should think the Emperor best waived,
From your description of her mood and way !
You could look, if it pleased you, into hearts ;
But are too indolent and fond of watching
Your own—you know that, for you study it !

Berth. Had you but seen the orator her friend
Abashed to earth at aspect of the change !
. . Oh, I read hearts ! And for my own behoof,
I court her with my true worth—see the event !
I learned my final lesson on that head
When years ago,—my first and last essay !
Before my uncle could obtain the ear
Of his superior, help me from the dirt—
Priscilla left me for a Brabant Duke
Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb—
I am past illusion on that score.

Mel. Here comes
The lady—

Berth. —And there you go ! But do not ! Give
me

Another chance to please you. Hear me plead !

Mel. You'll keep, then, to the gallant, to the man ?

Bells and Pomegranates.

*Enter the DUCHESS—followed by ADOLF and SABYNE,
and, after an interval, by the Courtiers.*

Berth. Good auspice to our meeting!

The D. May it prove!
—And you, sir, will be Emperor one day?

Berth. (Ay—that's the point.) I may be Emperor.

The D. 'Tis not for my sake only I am proud
Of this you offer: I am prouder far
That from the highest state should duly spring
The highest, since most generous, of deeds.

Berth. (Generous—still that!) You underrate your-
self.

You are, what I, to be complete, must have—
Find now, and may not find, another time.
While I career on all the world for stage,
There needs at home my representative—

The D. —Such, rather, would some warrior-
woman be—
One dowered with lands and gold, or rich in friends—
One like yourself!

Berth. Lady, I am myself,
And have all these: I want what's not myself,
Nor has all these. Why give one hand two swords?
Here's one already: be a friend's next gift
A silk glove, if you will—I have a sword!

The D. You love me, then?

Berth. Your lineage I revere—
Honour your virtue, in your truth believe,
Do homage to intelligence, and bow
Before a peerless beauty.

Colombe's Birthday.

The D. But, for love—

Berth. A further love I do not understand.
Our best course is to say these hideous truths,
And see them, once said, grow endurable.
Like waters shuddering from their central bed,
Black with the midnight bowels of the earth,
That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's throe,
A portent and a terror—soon subside,
Freshen apace, take gold and rainbow hues,
Under the sun and in the air,—at last
Grow common to the earth as hills or trees—
Accepted by all things they came to scare.

The D. You cannot love, then ?

Berth. —Charlemagne, perhaps !
Are you not over-curious in love-lore ?

The D. I have become so, very recently.
It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem,
Respect, and all your candour promises,
By putting on a calculating mood—
Asking the terms of my becoming yours ?

Berth. Let me not do myself injustice, neither !
Because I will not condescend to fictions
That promise what my soul can ne'er acquit,
It does not follow that my guarded phrase
May not include far more of what you seek,
Than wide professions of less scrupulous men.
You will be Empress, once for all—with me
The Pope disputes supremacy—you stand
And none gainsays, the Earth's first woman !

The D. That—
Or simple Lady of Ravestein again ?

Berth. The matter's not in my arbitrement !

Bells and Pomegranates.

Now I have made my claims—which I regret—
Cede one, cede all !

The D. This claim then, you enforce ?

Berth. The world looks on.

The D. And when must I decide ?

Berth. "When," Lady? Have I said thus much
at first

For nothing? Poured out, with such pains, at once
What I might else have suffered to ooze forth
Droplet by droplet in a life-time long,
For aught less than as prompt an answer, too?
All 's fairly told now—who can teach you more?

The D. I do not see him !

Berth. I shall ne'er deceive !

This offer had been made more leisurely
Would time allow the better setting off
Advantage, and disparagement as well—
But as it is, the sum of both must serve.
I am already weary of this place—
My thoughts are next stage on to Rome. Now, either
Hail to the Empress—farewell to the Lady!

[*The Courtiers, who have been drawing nearer
and nearer, interpose.*

Courtiers. . . . "Farewell," Prince? when we break
in at our risk . . .

Clug. (Almost upon Court-licence trespassing)

Courtiers. To point out how your claims are valid
yet !

You know not, by the Duke her Father's will,
The lady, if she weds beneath her rank,
Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's favour—
So 'tis expressly stipulate. And if

Colombe's Birthday.

It can be shown 'tis her intent to wed
A subject, then yourself. . .

Berth. What insolence? . . .

Gui. Sir, there's one Valence—the pale fiery man
You saw and heard this morning—thought, no doubt,
Was of considerable standing here—

I put it to your penetration, Prince,
If aught save love, the truest love for her,
Had made him serve the lady as he did!
He's simply a poor advocate of Cleves
—Creeps here with difficulty, finds a place
With danger, gets in by a miracle,
And for the first time meets the Lady's face—
So runs the story—is that credible?

For, first—no sooner in, than he's apprised
Fortunes have changed; you are all-powerful here,
The Lady as powerless—he stands fast by her!

The D. [*Aside.*] (And do such deeds spring up from
Love alone?)

Gui. But here occurs the question, does the Lady
Love him again? I say, How else can she?
Can she forget how he stood singly forth
In her defence, dared outrage all of us,
Insult yourself—for what save love's reward?

The D. (And is Love then the sole reward of Love?)

Gui. But, love him as she may and must . . . you
ask

Means she to wed him? "Yes," both natures answer!
Both, in their pride, point out the sole result—
Nought less would he accept nor she propose!
For each conjuncture was she great enough—
—Will be, for this!

Colombe's Birthday.

In mind and heart, of happier form and face ;
Others must have their birthright ! I have gifts,
To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight !
Against a hundred other qualities,
I lay the prize I offer. I am nothing—
Wed you the Empire ?

The D. And my heart away ?

Berth. When have I made pretension to your heart ?
I give none. I shall keep your honour safe—
With mine I trust you as the sculptor trusts
Yon marble woman with the marble rose,
Loose on her hand, she never will let fall,
In graceful, slight, silent security.
You will be proud of my world-wide career,
And I content in you the fair and good.
What were the use of planting a few seeds
The thankless climate never would mature—
Affections all repelled by circumstance ?
Enough : to these no credit I attach,—
To what you own, find nothing to object.
Write simply on my Requisition's face
What shall content my friends—that you admit,
As Colombe of Ravestein, the claims therein,
Or never need admit them, as my wife—
And either way, all's ended.

The D. Let all end !

Berth. The Requisition !

Courtiers. —Valence holds, of course !

Berth. Desire his presence ! [*Exit ADOLF.*

Courtiers. [*To each other.*] Out it all comes yet !
He'll have his word against the bargain still !
He's not the man to tamely acquiesce !

Bells and Pomegranates.

One passionate appeal—upbraiding even,
Might turn the tide again! Despair not yet!

[*They retire a little.*]

Berth. [*To MELCHIOR.*] The Empire has its old
success, my friend!

Mel. You've had your way . . . before the spokesman
comes,

Let me, but this once, work a problem out,
And ever more be dumb! The Empire wins?
To better purpose I have read my books!

Enter VALENCE.

Mel. [*To the Courtiers.*] Apart, my masters!

[*To VALENCE.*] Sir, one word with you!

I am a poor dependent of the Prince's—
Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence:
You are no higher, I find—in other words,
We two, as probably the wisest here,
Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools:
So, I shall speak, divesting the plain fact
Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for them—
Do you reply so, and what trouble's saved!
The Prince, then—an embroiled strange heap of
news

This moment reaches him—if true or false,
All dignity forbids he should enquire
In person, or by worthier deputy;
Yet somehow must enquire, lest slander come:
And so 'tis I am pitched on. You have heard
His offer to your Lady?

Val.

Yes!

Colombe's Birthday.

Mel. Conceive
Her joy thereat?—

Val. I cannot!

Mel. No one can!
All draws to a conclusion, therefore.

Val. [*Aside.*] So!
No after-judgment—no first thought revised—
Her first and last decision!—me, she leaves—
Takes him—a simple heart is flung aside,
The ermine o'er a heartless breast embraced!
Oh Heaven, this mockery has been played too oft!
Once, to surprise the angels—twice, that fiends
Might record, hug themselves they chose not so—
Thrice, many thousand times, to teach the world
All men should pause, misdoubt their strength, since men
Could have the chance yet fail so signally,
—But ever—ever—this farewell to heaven,
Welcome to earth—this taking death for life—
This spurning love and kneeling to the world—
Oh Heaven, it is too often and too old!

Mel. Well, on this point—what but an absurd
rumour

Arises—these, its source—its subject, you!
Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,
The lady's hand your service claims, they say!
Of course, nor Prince nor Lady can respond—
Yet something must be said—for, were it true
You made such claim, the Prince would . . .

Val. Well, sir, would?

Mel. Not only probably withdraw his suit,
But, very like, the lady might be forced
Accept your own.—Oh, there are reasons why,

Bells and Pomegranates.

But you'll excuse at present all save this,—
I think so. What we want is your own witness,
For, or against—her good, or yours : decide !

Val. [*Aside.*] Be it her good if she accounts it so !
[*After a contest.*] For what am I but hers, to choose as
she ?

Who knows how far, beside, the light from her
May reach, and dwell with, what she looks upon ?

Mel. [*To the Prince.*] Now to him, you !

Berth. [*To VALENCE.*] My friend acquaints you, sir,
The noise runs . . .

Val. . . . Prince, how fortunate are you,
Wedding her as you will, in spite of it,
To show belief in love ! Let her but love you,
All else you disregard ! What else can be ?
You know how love is incompatible
With falsehood—purifies, assimilates
All other passions to itself.

Mel. Ay, sir :
But softly ! Where in the object we select,
Such love is, perchance, wanting ?

Val. Then, indeed,
What is it you can take ?

Mel. Nay—ask the world !
Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,
An influence o'er the world !

Val. When man perceives . . .
—Ah, I can only speak as for myself !

The D. Speak for yourself !

Val. May I ?—no, I have spoken,
And time's gone by !—Had I seen such an one—
As I loved her—weighing thoroughly that word—

Colombe's Birthday.

So should my task be to evolve her love—
If for myself— ! if for another—well !

Berth. Heroic truly ! And your sole reward,—
The secret pride in yielding up your own ?

Val. Who thought upon reward ? And yet how much
Comes after—Oh what amplest recompense !
Is the knowledge of her, nought ? the memory, nought ?
—Lady, should such an one have looked on you,
Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world,
And say, love can go unrequited here !
You will have blessed him to his whole life's end—
Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,
All goodness cherished where you dwelt—and dwell.
What would he have ? He has you—you, the form,
And you, the mind, where self-love made such room
For love of you, he would not serve you now
The vulgar way,—repulse your enemies,
Win you new realms, or best, in saving you
Die blissfully—that 's past so long ago !
He wishes you no need, thought, care of him—
Your good, by any means, himself unseen,
Away, forgotten,—he gives that life's task up,
As it were . . . but this charge which I return—

[*Offers the Requisition, which she takes.*

Wishing your good !

The D. [*Having subscribed it.*] And opportunely,
sir—

Since at a birthday's close, like this of mine,
Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.
Most on a wedding day, as mine is too,
Should gifts go forward : yours comes first by right.
Ask of me !

Bells and Pomegranates.

Berth. He shall have whate'er he asks,
For his sake and for yours.

Val. [*Aside.*] If I should ask—
The withered bunch of flowers she wears—perhaps,
One last touch of . . .

[*After a pause, presenting his paper to the Prince.*]

Redress the wrongs of Cleves!

Berth. I will, sir!

The D. [*As VALENCE prepares to retire.*]—Nay, do
out your duty, first!

You bore this paper: I have registered
My answer to it: read it and have done!

[*VALENCE reads it.*]

—I take him—give up Juliers and the world.
This is my Birthday.

Mel. Berthold, my one hero
Of the world she gives up, one friend worth my books,
Sole man I think it pays the pains to watch,—
Speak, for I know you through your Popes and Kings!

Berth. [*After a pause.*] Lady, well rewarded! Sir,
as well deserved!

I could not imitate—I hardly envy—
I do admire you! All is for the best!
Too costly a flower were you, I see it now,
To pluck and put upon my barren helm
To wither—any garish plume will do!
I'll not insult you and refuse your rule—
You can so well afford to yield it me,
And I were left, without it, sadly off!
As it is—for me—if that will flatter you,
A somewhat wearier life seems to remain

Colombe's Birthday.

Than I thought possible where . . . 'faith, their life
Begins already—they're too occupied
To listen—and few words content me best !
[*Abruptly to the Courtiers.*] I am your Duke, though !
Who obey me here ?

The D. Adolf and Sabyne follow us—

Gui. [*Starting from the Courtiers.*] —And I ?
Do I not follow them, if I mayn't you ?
Shall not I get some little duties up
At Ravestein and emulate the rest ?
God save you, Gaucelme ! 'Tis my Birthday, too !

Berth. You happy handful that remain with me
. . . That is, with Dietrich the black Barnabite
I shall leave over you—will earn your wages,
Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his trade !
Meantime,—go copy me the precedents
Of every installation, proper styles,
And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes—
While I prepare to go on my old way,
And somewhat wearily, I must confess !

The D. [*With a light joyous laugh as she turns from
them.*] Come, Valence, to our friends—God's
earth . . .

Val. [*As she falls into his arms.*] —And thee !
[*Curtain falls.*]

DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND
LYRICS.

INSCRIBED
TO
JOHN KENYON, Esq.,
IN THE HOPE THAT A RECOLLECTION OF HIS OWN SUCCESSFUL
"RHYMED PLEA FOR TOLERANCE"
MAY INDUCE HIM TO ADMIT GOOD-NATUREDLY
THIS HUMBLER PROSE ONE OF
HIS VERY SINCERE FRIEND,

R. B.

Nov. 1845.

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX.”

(16—.)

I.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and He ;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all Three ;
“Good speed !” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts
undrew ;
“Speed !” echoed the wall to us galloping through ;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

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

III.

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;

II.

81

G

Bells and Pomegranates.

At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be ;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-
chime,
So Joris broke silence with, " Yet there is time ! "

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

Bells and Pomegranates.

PICTOR IGNOTUS.

FLORENCE, 15—.

I COULD have painted pictures like that youth's
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up! No bar
Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes!
Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
To outburst on your night with all my gift
Of fires from God: nor would this flesh have shrunk
From seconding that soul, with eyes uplift
And wide to Heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk
To the centre of an instant, or around
Sent calmly and inquisitive to scan
The license and the limit, space and bound,
Allowed to Truth made visible in Man.
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,
Over the canvas could my hand have flung,
Each face obedient to its passion's law,
Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue;
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
Or Rapture drooped the eyes as when her brood
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place,
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—
Men, women, children, hath it spilt, my cup?
What did ye give me that I have not saved?
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

And making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,
As still to Pope and Kaiser, South and North,
Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight
Through old streets named afresh from its event,
—Of reaching thus my home, where Age should greet
My face, and Youth, the star as yet distinct
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet,—
Oh, thus to live, I and my pictures, linked
With love about, and praise, till life should end,
And then not go to Heaven but linger here,
Here on my earth, its every man my friend,—
Oh, that grows frightful, 'tis so wildly dear!
But a voice changed it! Glimpses of such sights
Have scared me, like the revels thro' a door
Of some strange House of Idols at its rites;
This world seemed not the world it was before!
Mixed with my loving ones there trooped—for what?
Who summoned those cold faces which begun
To press on me and judge me? As asquat
And shrinking from the soldiery a nun,
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . . enough!
These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,
And where they live needs must our pictures live,
And see their faces, listen to their prate,
Partakers of their daily pettiness,
Discussed of,—“This I love or this I hate,
“This likes me more and this affects me less!”
Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles
My heart sinks as monotonous I paint

Bells and Pomegranates.

These endless cloisters and eternal aisles
With the same series, Virgin, Babe, and Saint,
With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard,
At least no merchant traffics in my heart ;
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward
Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart ;
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine
While, blackening in the daily candle smoke,
They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,
'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.
So die, my pictures ; surely, gently die !
Oh youth men praise so, holds their praise its worth ?
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry ?
Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth ?

ITALY IN ENGLAND.

THAT second time they hunted me
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
And Austria, hounding far and wide
Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,
Breathed hot and instant on my trace,
I made six days a hiding-place
Of that dry green old aqueduct
Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked
The fire-flies from the roof above,
Bright creeping thro' the moss they love.
—How long it seems since Charles was lost !
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
The country in my very sight ;
And when that peril ceased at night,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

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

Bells and Pomegranates.

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

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

“ And kneeling whisper *whence comes peace?*
“ Say it a second time ; then cease ;
“ And if the voice inside returns,
“ *From Christ and Freedom ; what concerns*
“ *The cause of Peace?*—for answer, slip
“ My letter where you placed your lip ;
“ Then come back happy we have done
“ Our mother service—I, the son,
“ As you the daughter of our land ! ”

Three mornings more, she took her stand
In the same place, with the same eyes :
I was no surer of sun-rise
Than of her coming : we conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard
She had a lover—stout and tall,
She said—then let her eyelids fall,
“ He could do much ”—as if some doubt
Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
“ She could not speak for others—who
“ Had other thoughts ; herself she knew : ”
And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days the scouts pursued
Another path : at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived
To furnish me : she brought the news :
For the first time I could not choose
But kiss her hand and lay my own
Upon her head—“ This faith was shown
“ To Italy, our mother ;—she
“ Uses my hand and blesses thee ! ”
She followed down to the sea-shore ;

Bells and Pomegranates.

I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
Concerning—much less wished for—ought
Beside the good of Italy
For which I live and mean to die !
In love I never was ; and since
Charles proved false, nothing could convince
My inmost heart I had a friend ;
However, if I pleased to spend
Real wishes on myself—say, Three—
I know at least what one should be ;
I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood thro' these two hands : and next,
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers—last
—Ah, there, what should one wish? For fast
Do I grow old and out of strength ;
If I resolved to seek at length
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared !
My brothers live in Austria's pay
—Disowned me long ago, men say ;
And all my early mates who used
To praise me so—perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine—
Are turning wise ; while part opine
“ Freedom grows License,” part suspect
“ Haste breeds Delay,” and recollect

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

They always said such premature
Beginnings never could endure :
So, with a sullen " All 's for best,"
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think, then, I should wish to stand
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile—some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt—what harm
If I sate on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes—just
Her children's ages and their names,
And what may be the husband's aims
For each of them—I'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way.

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

Bells and Pomegranates.

ENGLAND IN ITALY.

(PIANO DI SORRENTO.)

FORTÙ, Fortù, my loved one,
Sit by my side,
On my knees put up both little feet !
I was sure, if I tried,
I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco :
Now, open your eyes—
Let me keep you amused till he vanish
In black from the skies,
With telling my memories over
As you tell your beads ;
All the Plain saw me gather, I garland
—Flowers prove they, or weeds.

'Twas time, for your long hot dry Autumn
Had net-worked with brown
The white skin of each grape on the bunches,
Marked like a quail's crown,
Those creatures you make such account of,
Whose heads,—specked with white
Over brown like a great spider's back,
As I told you last night,—
Your mother bites off for her supper ;
Red-ripe as could be,
Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
In halves on the tree :
And 'twixt the loose walls of great flintstone,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

Or in the thick dust
On the path, or straight out of the rock side,
Wherever could thrust
Some starved sprig of bold hardy rock flower
Its yellow face up,
For the prize were great butterflies fighting,
Some five for one cup :
So I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
What change was in store,
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets
Which woke me before
I could open my shutter, made fast
With a bough and a stone,
And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs,
Sole lattice that 's known ;
Sharp rang the rings down the bird-poles
While, busy beneath,
Your priest and his brother were working,
The rain in their teeth.
And out upon all the flat house-roofs
Where split figs lay drying,
The girls took the frails under cover :
Nor use seemed in trying
To get out the boats and go fishing,
For under the cliff
Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock—
No seeing our skiff
Arrive about noon from Amalfi,
—Our fisher arrive,
And pitch down his basket before us,
All trembling alive
With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit,

Bells and Pomegranates.

—Touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner
Of horns and of humps,
Which only the fisher looks grave at,
While round him like imps
Cling screaming the children as naked
And brown as his shrimps,
Himself too as bare to the middle
—You see round his neck
The string and its brass coin suspended,
That saves him from wreck.
But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,
So back to a man
Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards
Grape-harvest began :
In the vat half-way up in our house-side
Like blood the juice spins
While your brother all bare-legged is dancing
Till breathless he grins
Dead-beaten, in effort on effort
To keep the grapes under,
For still when he seems all but master
In pours the fresh plunder
From girls who keep coming and going
With basket on shoulder,
And eyes shut against the rain's driving,
Your girls that are older,—
For under the hedges of aloe,
And where, on its bed
Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple
Lies pulpy and red,
All the young ones are kneeling and filling

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

Their laps with the snails
Tempted out by the first rainy weather,—
Your best of regales,
As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,
When, supping in state,
We shall feast our grape-gleaners—two dozen,
Three over one plate,—
Maccaroni so tempting to swallow
In slippery strings,
And gourds fried in great purple slices,
That colour of kings,—
Meantime, see the grape-bunch they've brought you,—
The rain-water slips
O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe
Which the wasp to your lips
Still follows with fretful persistence—
Nay, taste while awake,
This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball,
That peels, flake by flake,
Like an onion's, each smoother and whiter—
Next sip this weak wine
From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,
A leaf of the vine,—
And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh
That leaves thro' its juice
The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth
. . . Scirocco is loose!
Hark! the quick pelt of the olives
Which, thick in one's track,
Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them
Tho' not yet half black!
And how their old twisted trunks shudder!

Bells and Pomegranates.

The medlars let fall
Their hard fruit—the brittle great fig-trees
Snap off, figs and all,
For here comes the whole of the tempest !
No refuge but creep
Back again to my side and my shoulder,
And listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next week,
When all the vine-boughs
Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture
The mules and the cows ?
Last eve I rode over the mountains—
Your brother, my guide,
Soon left me to feast on the myrtles
That offered, each side,
Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious,
Or strip from the sorbs
A treasure, so rosy and wondrous,
Of hairy gold orbs !
But my mule picked his sure, sober path out,
Just stopping to neigh
When he recognised down in the valley
His mates on their way
With the faggots, and barrels of water ;
And soon we emerged
From the plain where the woods could scarce follow
And still as we urged
Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,
As up still we trudged
Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,
And place was e'en grudged

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

'Mid the rock-chasms, and piles of loose stones
Like the loose broken teeth
Of some monster, which climbed there to die
From the ocean beneath—
Place 'was grudged to the silver-gray fume-weed
That clung to the path,
And dark rosemary, ever a-dying,
Which, 'spite the wind's wrath,
So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,—
And lentisks as staunch
To the stone where they root and bear berries,
And—what shows a branch
Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets
Of pale seagreen leaves—
Over all trod my mule with the caution
Of gleaners o'er sheaves :
Foot after foot like a lady—
So, round after round,
He climbed to the top of Calvano,
And God's own profound
Was above me, and round me the mountains,
And under, the sea,
And with me, my heart to bear witness
What was and shall be !
Oh heaven, and the terrible crystal !
No rampart excludes
The eye from the life to be lived
In the blue solitudes !
Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement !
Still moving with you—
For ever some new head and breast of them
Thrusts into view

Bells and Pomegranates.

To observe the intruder—you see it
If quickly you turn
And, before they escape you, surprise them—
They grudge you should learn
How the soft plains they look on, lean over,
And love, they pretend,
—Cower beneath them—the flat sea-pine crouches,
The wild fruit-trees bend,
E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut—
All is silent and grave—
'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty—
How fair, but a slave !
So I turned to the sea,—and there slumbered
As greenly as ever
Those isles of the syren, your Galli ;
No ages can sever
The Three—nor enable their sister
To join them,—half way
On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—
No farther to-day,
Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave,
Watches breast-high and steady
From under the rock, her bold sister
Swum half-way already.
O when shall we sail there together
And see from the sides
Quite new rocks show their faces—new haunts
Where the syren abides ?
Oh, to sail round and round them, close over
The rocks, tho' unseen,
That ruffle the grey glassy water
To glorious green,—

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

Then scramble from splinter to splinter,
Reach land and explore
On the largest, the strange square black turret
With never a door—
Just a loop that admits the quick lizards ;
—To stand there and hear
The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
What life is, so clear ;
The secret they sang to Ulysses,
When ages ago
He heard and he knew this life's secret
I hear and I know !

Ah see ! O'er Calvano the sun breaks :
He strikes the great gloom
And flutters it over his summit
In airy gold fume !
All is over. Look out, see the gypsy,
Our tinker and smith,
Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,
And down-squatted forthwith
To his hammering under the wall there ;
One eye keeps aloof
The urchins that itch to be putting
His jews'-harps to proof,
While the other thro' locks of curled wire
Is watching how sleek
Shines the hog, come to share in the windfalls
—An abbot's own cheek !
All is over ! wake up and come out now,
And down let us go,
And see all the fine things set in order

Bells and Pomegranates.

At church for the show
Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening ;
To-morrow 's the Feast
Of the Rosary's virgin, by no means
Of virgins the least—
As we'll hear in the off-hand discourse
Which (all nature, no art)
The Dominican brother these three weeks
Was getting by heart.
Not a post nor a pillar but 's dizeded
With red and blue papers ;
All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar 's
A-blaze with long tapers ;
But the great masterpiece is the scaffold
Rigged glorious to hold
All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers,
And trumpeters bold,
Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,
Who, when the priest 's hoarse,
Will strike us up something that 's brisk,
For the feast's second course.
And then will the flaxen-wigged Image
Be carried in pomp
Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession
The priests mean to stomp.
And all round the glad church stand old bottles
With gunpowder stopped,
Which will be, when the Image re-enters,
Religiously popped.
And at night from the crest of Calvano
Great bonfires will hang,
On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

And more poppers bang !
At all events, come—to the garden,
As far as the wall,
See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
Till out there shall fall
A scorpion with wide angry nippers !

. . . “Such trifles” you say?
Fortù, in my England at home,
Men meet gravely to-day
And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
Be righteous and wise
—If ’tis proper Scirocco should vanish
In black from the skies !

THE LOST LEADER.

I.

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a ribband to stick in his coat—
Got the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote ;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was their’s who so little allowed :
How all our copper had gone for his service !
Rags—were they purple his heart had been proud !
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured
him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Made him our pattern to live and to die !
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from
their graves !
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

II.

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

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

THE LOST MISTRESS.

I.

ALL 's over, then—does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves.

II.

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that to-day ;
One day more bursts them open fully
—You know the red turns gray.

III.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?
May I take your hand in mine?
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest
Keep much that I'll resign :

IV.

For tho' no glance of the eyes so black
But I keep with heart's endeavour,—
If you only wish the snowdrops back
That shall stay in my soul for ever !—

V.

—Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger ;
I will hold your hand but so long as all may,
Or so very little longer !

Bells and Pomegranates.

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

I.

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

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

II.

Here's to Nelson's memory !
'Tis the second time that I, at sea,
Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
Have drunk it deep in British beer :

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

Nelson for ever—any time
Am I his to command in prose or rhyme !
Give me of Nelson only a touch,
And I guard it, be it little or much ;
Here 's one the Captain gives, and so
Down at the word, by George, shall it go !
He says that at Greenwich they show the beholder
Nelson's coat, "still with tar on the shoulder,
"For he used to lean with one shoulder digging,
"Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zigging,
"Up against the mizen rigging !"

III.

Nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west died
away ;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz
Bay ;
Bluish mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar
lay ;
In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar
grand and gray ;
"Here and here did England help me,—how can I
help England?"—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise
and pray,
Yonder where Jove's planet rises silent over Africa.

Bells and Pomegranates.

THE TOMB AT ST. PRAXED'S.

(ROME, 15—.)

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity !
Draw round my bed : is Anselm keeping back ?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not !

Well—

She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was !
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it ? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
“Do I live, am I dead ?” Peace, peace seems all :
St. Praxed's ever was the church for peace ;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know :
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care ;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same !
Yet still my niche is not so cramp'd but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk :
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands :
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him ! True peach,
Rosy and flawless : how I earned the prize !
Draw close : that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were
missed !

My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sinks,
And if ye find . . . Ah, God I know not, I ! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten figleaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst !
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years :
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant ! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
St. Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not ! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm ? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at !
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper then !
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas !
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There 's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not St. Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs ?
—That 's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters ? Ulpian serves his need !
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupifying incense-smoke !
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

And let the bedclothes for a mortcloth drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work :
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before this life I lived,
And this life too, Popes, Cardinals and Priests,
St. Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend ?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best !
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons ! Else I give the Pope
My villas : will ye ever eat my heart ?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
“Do I live, am I dead ?” There, leave me, there !
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it ! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble ! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world !
Well, go ! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row : and, going, turn your backs

Bells and Pomegranates.

—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was !

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

GARDEN FANCIES.

I.—THE FLOWER'S NAME.

I.

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

II.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
She went while her robe's edge brushed the box :
And here she paused in her gracious talk
To point me a moth on the milk-white flox.
Roses, ranged in valiant row,
Think will I never she passed you by !
She loves noble roses, I know ;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie !

III.

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip ;
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim,
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name :

Bells and Pomegranates.

What a name ! was it love, or praise ?
Speech half-asleep, or song half-awake ?
I must learn Spanish one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV.

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

v.

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

VI.

Where I find her not, beauties vanish ;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee ;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed it with me ?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest foot-fall
—Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces !
Roses, you are not so fair after all.

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

II.—SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS.

I.

PLAGUE take all pedants, say I !
He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to bother the land ;
This, that was a book in its time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
Just when the birds sang all together.

II.

Into the garden I brought it to read ;
And under the arbut and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.
Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge ;
Added up the mortal amount ;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

III.

Yonder 's a plum-tree, with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but sage ;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the middle age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;
When he'd be private, there might he spend
Hours alone in his lady's chamber :
Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

Bells and Pomegranates.

IV.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
—I knew at the bottom rain-drippings stagnate ;
Next a handful of blossoms I plucked
To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate ;
Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis ;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

V.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
A spider had spun his web across,
And sate in the midst with arms a-kimbo :
So I took pity, for learning's sake,
And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis,*
Cantate, quoth I, as I got a rake,
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow—
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks !
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow ?
Here's one stuck in his chapter six !

VII.

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trover ;
When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed so much of the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet.

VIII.

All that life, and fun, and romping,
All that frisking, and twisting, and coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping,
And clasps were cracking, and covers suppling !
As if you had carried sour John Knox
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna, or Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the Ballet with trousers and tunic.

IX.

Come, old martyr ! What, torment enough is it ?
Back to my room shall you take your sweet self !
Good bye, mother-beetle ; husband-*eft*, *sufficit* !
See the snug niche I have made on my shelf :
A's book shall prop you up, B's shall cover you
Here 's C to be grave with, or D to be gay,
And with E on each side, and F right over you,
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day !

Bells and Pomegranates.

FRANCE AND SPAIN.

I.—THE LABORATORY.

(*Ancien Régime.*)

I.

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy—
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

II.

He is with her ; and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do : they believe my tears
flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear
Empty church to pray God in for them !—I am here.

III.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
Pound at thy powder,—am I in haste?
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

IV.

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

v.

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures !
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a fillagree-basket !

vi.

Soon, at the King's, but a lozenge to give
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live !
To light a pastille, and Elise, with her head,
And her breast, and her arms, and her hands, should
drop dead !

vii.

Quick—is it finished ? The colour's too grim !
Why not like the phial's, enticing and dim ?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer !

viii.

What a drop ! She's not little, no minion like me—
That's why she ensnared him : this never will free
The soul from those masculine eyes,—say, “no !”
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

ix.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall,
Shrivelled ; she fell not ; yet this does it all !

x.

Not that I bid you spare her the pain !
Let death be felt and the proof remain ;

Bells and Pomegranates.

Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—
He is sure to remember her dying face !

XI.

Is it done? Take my mask off ! Nay, benot morose,
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close—
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee—
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me ?

XII.

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will !
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's.

II.—SPAIN—THE CONFSSIONAL.

I.

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies—there ! thro' my door
And ceiling, there ! and walls and floor,
There, lies, they lie, shall still be hurled,
Till spite of them I reach the world !

II.

You think Priests just and holy men !
Before they put me in this den
I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside.

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

III.

I had a lover—shame avaunt !
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest love e'er turned
His heart's own tint : one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

IV.

So next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
“ That is a sin,” I said—and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

V.

But when I faulted Beltran's name,
Ha ? quoth the father ; much I blame
The sin ; yet wherefore idly grieve ?
Despair not,—strenuously retrieve !
Nay, I will turn this love of thine
To lawful love, almost divine.

VI.

For he is young, and led astray,
This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
To change the laws of church and state ;
So thine shall be an angel's fate,
Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll
Its cloud away and save his soul.

Bells and Pomegranates.

VII.

For when he lies upon thy breast
Thou mayst demand and be possessed
Of all his plans, and next day steal
To me and all those plans reveal,
That I and every priest, to purge
His soul, may fast and use the scourge.

VIII.

That father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed bright ;
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy,
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

IX.

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of Heaven or fear of Hell ;
And I lay listening in such pride,
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning-light
To save his soul in his despite.

X.

I told the father all his schemes,
Who were his comrades, what their dreams ;
“And now make haste,” I said, “to pray
“The one spot from his soul away ;
“To-night he comes, but not the same
“Will look !” At night he never came.

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

XI.

Nor next night : on the after-morn
I went forth with a strength new-born :
The church was empty : something drew
My steps into the street : I knew
It led me to the market-place—
And, lo,—on high—the father's face !

XII.

That horrible black scaffold drest—
The stapled block . . . God sink the rest !
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast—
Till near one busy hangman pressed—
And—on the neck these arms caressed. . . .

XIII.

No part in aught they hope or fear !
No Heaven with them, no Hell,—and here
No Earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens
But shall bear God and Man my cry—
Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie !

Bells and Pomegranates.

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

I.

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

II.

Ours is a great wild country :
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop ;
For when you've pass'd the corn-field country,
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are pack'd,
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,
That 's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branch'd thro' and thro' with many a vein
Whence iron 's dug, and copper 's dealt ;
Look right, look left, look straight before,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till, at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea shore,
—And the whole is our Duke's country !

III.

I was born the day this present Duke was—
(And O, says the song, ere I was old !)
In the castle where the other Duke was—
(When I was happy and young, not old !)
I in the Kennel, he in the Bower :
We are of like age to an hour.
My father was Huntsman in that day ;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay,
Three, four times out of five,
With his huntspear he'd contrive
To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true both eyes betwixt ?
That's why the old Duke had rather
Lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call ;
That's why my father stood in the Hall
When the old Duke brought his infant out
To show the people, and while they pass'd
The wondrous bantling round about,
Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,
Just a month after the babe was born :

Bells and Pomegranates.

“And” quoth the Kaiser’s courier, “since
“The Duke has got an Heir, our Prince
“Needs the Duke’s self at his side :”
The Duke look’d down and seemed to wince,
But he thought of wars o’er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch ;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners,
Of all achievements after all manners,
And “ay,” said the Duke with a surly pride :
The more was his comfort when he died
At next year’s end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, and his foot
In a silk shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,
What he called stink and they, perfume :
—They should have set him on red Berold,
Mad with pride, like fire to manage !
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine !
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin !
—Hark, the wind’s on the heath at its game !
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame !
Had they broach’d a cask of white beer from Berlin
—Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

Cotnar, for instance, green as May sorrel,
And rosy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

IV.

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

V.

And he came back the pertest ape
That ever affronted human shape ;
Full of his travel, struck at himself—
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways
—Not he ! For in Paris they told the elf
That our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days ;
For the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
True Castles, with proper Towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it ;
'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it.

Bells and Pomegranates.

He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them
torn-out :

And chief in the chase his neck he perill'd
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength ;
—They should have set him on red Berold,
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire !

VI.

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard :
And out of a convent, at the word,
Came the Lady, in time of spring.
—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling !
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of urox or buffle
In winter-time when you need to muffle ;
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,
And so we saw the Lady arrive :
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger !
She was the smallest Lady alive,
Made, in a piece of Nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees—
In truth she was not hard to please !
Up she look'd, down she look'd, round at the mead,
Straight at the Castle, that 's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls :

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eye, do you understand?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it ;
And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she enquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired—
If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and gray bird on the field was the
plover ?

When suddenly appeared the Duke,
And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed
On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
And welcomed her with his grandest smile ;
And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward ;
And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis,
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The Lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown gray—
For such things must begin some one day !

VII.

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

Bells and Pomegranates.

VIII.

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

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX.

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

X.

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

Bells and Pomegranates.

We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on pannels,
And gather up Woodcraft's authentic traditions :
Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated,
—To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,
Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting your
stirrup—

We of the household took thought and debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"
And "ahs" while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-
hose ;

What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson ?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers, and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length, and not
murderers,
And oh the Duke's tailor—he had a hot time on't !

XI.

Now you must know, that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff coats and jackboots subsided,
The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part
provided,
"Had not the Duchess some share in the business?"
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses,
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses :

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function ;
Since ancient authors held this tenet,
"When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
"Let the dame of the Castle prick forth on her jennet,
"And with water to wash the hands of her liege
"In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,
"Let her superintend the disemboweling."
Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
And thrust her broad wings like a banner
Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon ;
And if day by day, and week by week,
You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
Would it cause you any great surprise
If when you decided to give her an airing
You found she needed a little preparing ?
—I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon ?
Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,

Bells and Pomegranates.

So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—
Was conduct ever more affronting?
With all the ceremony settled—
With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his oldest ewer,
And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-ball'd,—
No wonder if the Duke was nettled!
And when she persisted nevertheless,—
Well, I suppose here's the time to confess
That there ran half round our Lady's chamber
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber,
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
Adorer of Jacynth, of course, was your servant;
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
How could I keep at any vast distance?
And so, as I say, on the Lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was decorous and lawful;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,
As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct—
Oh, but the Lady heard the whole truth at once!
What meant she?—Who was she?—Her duty and
station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation—
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

And turn them out to carouse in a belfry,
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran
on!

Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed ;
And after her,—making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with all the grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,—
From door to staircase—oh, such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column !

XII.

However, at sunrise our company mustered,
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel ;
For the court-yard's four walls were filled with fog
You might cut as an axe chops a log,
Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness ;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,
And a sinking of the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen :
And lo, as he looked around, uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that from the valley under ;
And, looking thro' the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley what should meet him
But a troop of Gypsies on their march,
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

Bells and Pomegranates.

XIII.

Now in this land, Gypsies reach you only
After reaching all lands beside ;
North they go, south they go, trooping or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there :
But with us I believe they rise out of the ground,
And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned ;
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on :
For the earth—not a use to which they don't turn it,
The ore that grows in the mountains' womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle ;
Or a lock that 's a puzzle of wards within wards ;
Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve inwards,
Horseshoes they 'll hammer which turn on a swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel ;
Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle,
That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle :
But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters ;
Commend me to Gypsy glass-makers and potters !
Glasses they 'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
As if in water one dropped and let die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry ;
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

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

Bells and Pomegranates.

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

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

The main of the Lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude ;
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,
And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening
As tho' she engaged with hearty good will
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the Lady a thorough frightening.
And so just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who imp
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,
He bade me take the gypsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To while away a weary hour
For the Lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV.

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curvetter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what 's to be told you
Had all along been of this crone's devising
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising :
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,

Bells and Pomegranates.

And the face looked of quite another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the change
meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement,
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's :
And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
Come out as after the rain he paces,
Two unmistakeable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places.
So we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry ;
I told the command and produced my companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the Lady spoken :
So they went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

xv.

And now, what took place at the very first of all,
I cannot tell as I never could learn it :
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin you
'Twixt the eyes where the life holds garrison,
—Jacynth forgive me the comparison !

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

But where I begin my own relation
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree :—
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
By—was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber ?—and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
In a rosy sleep on the floor
With her head against the door ;
And in the midst, on the seat of state,
Like a queen the gypsy woman sate,
With head and face downbent
On the Lady's head and face intent,
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The Lady sate between her knees
And o'er them the Lady's clasped hands met,
And on those hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of the crone
Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil
—Very like by her hands slow fanning,
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
They moved to measure like bell clappers
—I said, is it blessing, is it banning,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Do they applaud you or burlesque you ?
Those hands and fingers with no flesh on ?
When, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,
At once I was stopped by the Lady's expression :
For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair unwinking,
Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving—
Life, that filling her, past redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white throat
 curving,
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
As she listened and she listened,—
When all at once a hand detained me,
And the selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furl'd
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world,
And word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread
The Gypsy said :—

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

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

Bells and Pomegranates.

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

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

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

Bells and Pomegranates.

Or thou step alone thro' the morass
Where never sound yet was
Save the dry clap of the stork's quick bill,
For the air is still, and the water still,
When the blue breast of the dipping coot
Dives under, and all is mute.
So at the last shall come old age,
Decrepit as befits that stage ;
How else wouldst thou retire apart
With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
And gather all to the very least
Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
Let fall through eagerness to find
The crowning dainties yet behind ?
Ponder on the entire past
Laid together thus at last,
When the twilight helps to fuse
The first fresh, with the faded hues,
And the outline of the whole,
As round eve-shades their framework roll,
Grandly fronts for once thy soul :
And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
Of yet another morning breaks,
And like the hand which ends a dream,
Death, with the might of his sunbeam
Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
Then—

Ay, then, indeed, something would happen !
But what ? For here her voice changed like a bird's ;
There grew more of the music and less of the words ;
Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

With those clever clerkly fingers,
What I've forgotten as well as what lingers
In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
To give you even this poor versiorr
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
—More fault of those who had the hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks !
But to return from this excursion,—
Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap—
And the charm vanished !
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep ; and but one spring made I
Down from the casement round to the portal,
Another minute and I had entered,
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess—I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful :
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding,
—I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die :
As for finding what she wanted,

Bells and Pomegranates.

You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve his wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what its friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers.
I preceded her ; the crone
Followed silent and alone ;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style ; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits ; her stature shrunk ;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard ;
We descended, I preceding,
Crossed the court with nobody heeding,
All the world was at the chase,
The court-yard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry ;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her ;
And, do you know, though it 's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad for her service
To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,
But unable to pay proper duty where owing it
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it :
For tho' the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused me,—
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the gypsy behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
—Something to the effect that I was in readiness
Whenever God should please she needed me,—
Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom—
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me—ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood,—that a true heart so may gain
Such a reward,—I should have gone home again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!
It was a little plait of hair
Such as friends in a convent make
To wear, each for the other's sake,—
This, see, which at my breast I wear,
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudging),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this is idle,
These are feelings it is not good to foster,—
I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost her!

Bells and Pomegranates.

XVI.

When the liquor 's out, why clink the cannakin?
I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,
And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib
Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,
When she heard what she called the flight of the
feloness—

But it seems such child's play
What they said and did with the lady away,
And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
Always made me—and no doubt makes you—sick.
And, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
As that sweet form disappeared thro' the postern,
She that kept it in constant good humour,
It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to
do more.

But the world thought otherwise and went on,
And my head's one that its spite was spent on:
Thirty years are fled since that morning,
And with them all my head's adorning,
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,
The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:
But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,
So they made no search and small inquiry—
And when fresh gypsies have paid us a visit, I've
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
The Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,
And the old one was in the young one's stead,
And took, in her place, the household's head,
And a blessed time the household had of it !
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
I could favour you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse
Till in short she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder !
You're my friend—
What a thing friendship is, world without end !
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up,
As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
And poured out all lovelily, sparkling, and sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—
Friendship's as good as that monarch of fluids
To supple a dry brain, fill you its ins-and-outs,—
Gives your Life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand
doubts
Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease !
I have seen my Lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gypsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before ;

Bells and Pomegranates.

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

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly?
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful:
What's a man's age? He must hurry more, that's all;
Cram in a day, what youth takes a year to hold;
When we mind labour, then only, we're too old—
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,
(Come all the way from the north parts with sperm oil)
I shall get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the gypsies
And find my lady or hear the last news of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapletted green with wreathy hop,
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop:
And when my Cotnar begins to operate
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,
And our wine skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
I shall drop in with—as if by accident—
“ You never knew then how it all ended,
“ What fortunes good or bad attended
“ The little lady your Queen befriended? ”
—And when that's told me, what's remaining?
This world's too hard for my explaining—
The same wise judge of matters equine
Who still preferred some hot four-year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
And for strong Cotnar drank French weak wine,
He also must be such a Lady's scorner!
Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau,
Now up now down, the world's one see-saw!
—So I shall find out some snug corner
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood knight,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Turn myself round and bid the world good night,
And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing,
Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
To a world where's to be no further throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them : Amen.

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES.

I.

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime ;
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods
Have struggled thro' its binding osier-rods ;
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
Wanting the brick-work promised by and by ;
How the minute gray lichens, plate o'er plate,
Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date !

II.

So the year's done with !
(*Love me for ever !*)
All March begun with,
April's endeavour ;
May-wreathes that bound me
June needs must sever !
Now snows fall round me,
Quenching June's fever—
(*Love me for ever !*)

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

SONG.

I.

NAY but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress ?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her ?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this one last tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall !

II.

Because you spend your lives in praising ;
To praise, you search the wide world over ;
So why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her ?
Above this tress, and this I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much !

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL.

MORNING, evening, noon, and night,
“Praise God,” sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned
By which the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well ;
O'er the work his boy's curls fell ;

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, “Praise God :”

Bells and Pomegranates.

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "well done ;
"I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

"As well as if thy voice to-day
"Were praising God the Pope's great way.

"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
"Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "would God that I
"Might praise Him, that great way, and die !"

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures always,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in Heaven, "Nor day nor night
"Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth ;

Entered in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well :

And morning, evening, noon, and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew :
The Man put off the Stripling's hue :

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay :

And ever o'er the trade he bent
And ever lived on earth content.

God said, "A praise is in mine ear ;
"There is no doubt in it, no fear :

"So sing old worlds, and so
"New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways :
"I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day : he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite :

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear.

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade
Till on his life the sickness weighed :

And in his cell when death drew near
An angel in a dream brought cheer :

Bells and Pomegranates.

And rising from the sickness drear
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned
And on his sight the angel burned.

“ I bore thee from thy craftsman’s cell,
“ And set thee here ; I did not well.

“ Vainly I left my angel’s sphere,
“ Vain was thy dream of many a year.

“ Thy voice’s praise seemed weak ; it dropped—
“ Creation’s chorus stopped !

“ Go back and praise again
“ The early way—while I remain.

“ With that weak voice of our disdain,
“ Take up Creation’s pausing strain.

“ Back to the cell and poor employ :
“ Become the craftsman and the boy !”

Theocrite grew old at home ;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter’s Dome.

One vanished as the other died :
They sought God side by side.

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

NIGHT AND MORNING.

I.—NIGHT.

I.

THE gray sea and the long black land ;
And the yellow half-moon large and low ;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

II.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each !

II.—MORNING.

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim—
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

Bells and Pomegranates.

CLARET AND TOKAY.

I.

My heart sunk with our Claret-flask,
Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
That serve this pond's black face for mask ;
And still at yonder broken edges
Of the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen.

II.

Our laughing little flask, compell'd
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady ;
As when, both arms beside her held,
Feet straightened out, some gay French lady
Is caught up from Life's light and motion
And dropped into Death's silent ocean !

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
Like a pygmy castle-warder,
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
Arms and accoutrements all in order ;
And fierce he looked north, then, wheeling south,
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,
Cocked his flap-hat with the toss-pot feather,
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
Gingled his huge brass spurs together,
Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
And then with an impudence nought could abash,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

Shrugged his hump-shoulder,
To tell the beholder,
For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the bolder,
And so with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,
And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,
Went the little man from Ausbruch, strutting !

SAUL.

SAID Abner, " At last thou art come !

" Ere I tell, ere thou speak,—

" Kiss my cheek, wish me well ! " Then I wished it,
And did kiss his cheek :

And he, " Since the King, oh my friend,

" For thy countenance sent,

" Nor drunken nor eaten have we ;

" Nor, until from his tent

" Thou return with the joyful assurance

" The king liveth yet,

" Shall our lip with the honey be brightened,

" —The water, be wet.

" For out of the black mid-tent's silence,

" A space of three days,

" No sound hath escaped to thy servants,

" Of prayer nor of praise,

" To betoken that Saul and the Spirit

" Have gone their dread ways.

" Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved !

" God's child, with his dew

Bells and Pomegranates.

“ On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies
“ Still living and blue
“ As thou brak'st them to twine round thy harp-strings,
“ As if no wild heat
“ Were raging to torture the desert ! ”
Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers,
And rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder.
The tent was unlooped ;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed,
And under I stooped ;
Hands and knees o'er the slippery grass-patch—
All withered and gone—
That leads to the second enclosure,
I groped my way on,
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open ;
Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered,
And was not afraid ;
And spoke, “ Here is David, thy servant ! ”
And no voice replied ;
And first I saw nought but the blackness ;
But soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness
—The vast, the upright
Main-prop which sustains the pavilion,—
And slow into sight
Grew a figure, gigantic, against it,
And blackest of all ;—
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,
Showed Saul.

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop ;
Both arms stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre
That goes to each side :
So he bent not a muscle but hung there
As, caught in his pangs
And waiting his change the king-serpent
All heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the Pine,
Till deliverance come
With the Spring-time,—so agonized Saul,
Drear and black, blind and dumb.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies
We twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide
—Those sunbeams like swords !
And I first played the tune all our sheep know,
As, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door
Till folding be done
—They are white and untorn by the bushes
For lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water
Within the stream's bed ;
How one after one seeks its lodging,
As star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,
—So blue and so far !

Then the tune for which quails on the cornland
Will leave each his mate

Bells and Pomegranates.

To follow the player ; then, what makes
The crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another :
And then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing
Outside his sand house
—There are none such as he for a wonder—
Half bird and half mouse !
—God made all the creatures and gave them
Our love and our fear,
To show, we and they are his children,
One family here.

Then I played the help-tune of our Reapers,
Their wine-song, when hand
Grasps hand, eye lights eye in good friendship,
And great hearts expand,
And grow one in the sense of this world's life ;
And then, the low song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—
“ Bear, bear him along
“ With his few faults shut up like dead flowrets ;
“ Are balm-seeds not here
“ To console us ? The land has got none such
“ As he on the bier—
“ Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother ! ”
And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens—
Next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling :
And then, the great march
When man runs to man to assist him

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

And buttress an arch
Nought can break . . . who shall harm them, our
brothers ?

Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar
In glory enthroned—
But I stopped here—for here, in the darkness,
Saul groaned :

And I paused, held my breath in such silence !
And listened apart—
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered,—
And sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban
—At once with a start
All the lordly male-sapphires, and rubies
Courageous at heart ;
So the head, but the body still moved not,—
Still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing,
Pursued it unchecked,
As I sang, “ Oh, our manhood's prime vigour !
“ —No spirit feels waste,
“ No muscle is stopped in its playing
“ No sinew unbraced,—
“ And the wild joys of living ! The leaping
“ From rock up to rock—
“ The rending their boughs from the palm-trees,—
“ The cool silver shock
“ Of a plunge in the pool's living water—
“ The hunt of the bear,
“ And the sultriness showing the lion

Bells and Pomegranates.

- “ Is couched in his lair :
“ And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed over
“ With gold dust divine,
“ And the locust’s-flesh steeped in the pitcher—
“ The full draught of wine,
“ And the sleep in the dried river channel
“ Where tall rushes tell
“ The water was wont to go warbling
“ So softly and well,—
“ How good is man’s life here, mere living !
“ How fit to employ
“ The heart and the soul and the senses
“ For ever in joy !
“ Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father
“ Whose sword thou didst guard
“ When he trusted thee forth to the wolf hunt
“ For glorious reward ?
“ Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother
“ Held up, as men sung
“ The song of the nearly-departed,
“ And heard her faint tongue
“ Joining in while it could to the witness
“ “ Let one more attest,
“ “ I have lived, seen God’s hand thro’ that life-time,
“ “ And all was for best. . . ”
“ Then they sung thro’ their tears, in strong triumph,
“ Not much,—but the rest !
“ And thy brothers—the help and the contest,
“ The working whence grew
“ Such result, as from seething grape-bundles
“ The spirit so true—
“ And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

“ With wonder and hope,
“ And the promise and wealth in the future,—
“ The eye’s eagle scope,—
“ Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch,
“ A people is thine !
“ Oh all, all the world offers singly,
“ On one head combine,
“ On one head the joy and the pride,
“ Even rage like the throe
“ That opes the rock, helps its glad labour,
“ And lets the gold go—
“ And ambition that sees a sun lead it
“ Oh, all of these—all
“ Combine to unite in one creature
“ —Saul !”

(End of Part the First.)

TIME’S REVENGES.

I’VE a Friend, over the sea ;
I like him, but he loves me ;
It all grew out of the books I write ;
They find such favour in his sight
That he slaughters you with savage looks
Because you don’t admire my books :
He does himself though,—and if some vein
Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,
To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
Round should I just turn quietly,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand
Till I found him, come from his foreign land
To be my nurse in this poor place,
And make me broth, and wash my face,
And light my fire, and, all the while,
Bear with his old good-humoured smile
That I told him " Better have kept away
" Than come and kill me, night and day,
" With worse than fever's throbs and shoots,
" At the creaking of his clumsy boots."
I am as sure that this he would do
As that Saint Paul's is striking Two :
And I think I had rather . . . woe is me !
—Yes, rather see him than not see,
If lifting a hand would seat him there
Before me in the empty chair
To-night, when my head aches indeed,
And I can neither think, nor read,
And these blue fingers will not hold
The pen ; this garret's freezing cold !

And I've a Lady—There he wakes,
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
Within me, at her name, to pray
Fate send some creature in the way
Of my love for her, to be down-torn
Upthrust and onward borne
So I might prove myself that sea
Of passion which I needs must be !
Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint,
And my style infirm, and its figures faint,
All the critics say, and more blame yet,

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

And not one angry word you get !
But, please you, wonder I would put
My cheek beneath that Lady's foot
Rather than trample under mine
The laurels of the Florentine,
And you shall see how the Devil spends
The fire God gave for other ends !
I tell you, I stride up and down
This garret, crowned with Love's best crown,
And feasted with Love's perfect feast,
To think I kill for her, at least,
Body and soul and peace and fame,
Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,
As all my genius, all my learning
Leave me, where there's no returning,
—So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
Filled full, eaten out and in
With the face of her, the eyes of her,
The lips and little chin, the stir
Of shadow round her mouth ; and she
—I'll tell you,—calmly would decree
That I should roast at a slow fire
If that would compass her desire
And make her one whom they invite
To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be a Heaven ; there must be a Hell ;
Meantime, there is our Earth here—well !

Bells and Pomegranates.

THE GLOVE.

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur.*)

“ HEIGHO,” yawned one day King Francis,
“ Distance all value enhances !
“ When a man ’s busy, why leisure
“ Strikes him as wonderful pleasure,—
“ ’Faith, and at leisure once is he—
“ Straightway he wants to be busy.
“ Here we ’ve got peace ; and aghast I ’m
“ Caught thinking war the true pastime !
“ Is there a reason in metre ?
“ Give us your speech, master Peter ! ”
I who, if mortal dare say so,
Ne ’er am at loss with my Naso,
“ Sire,” I replied, “ joys prove cloudlets :
“ Men are the merest Ixions ”—
Here the King whistled aloud, “ Let ’s
“ . . Heigho . . go look at our lions ! ”
Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company Francis was leading
Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold ;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon,
And Sir De Lorge pressed ’mid the foremost

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

With the Dame he professed to adore most—
Oh, what a face ! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside ;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,
And shelved to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard the great lion brooded.
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
As glossy and black as a scarab,
And bade him make sport and at once stir
Up and out of his den the old monster.
They opened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled ; one's heart's beating redoubled ;
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter ;
Then earth in a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion !
. . . Such a brute ! were I friend Clement Marot
(Whose experience of nature 's but narrow,
And whose faculties move in no small mist
When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu !
One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
As over the barrier which bounded
His platform, and us who surrounded
The barrier, they reached and they rested

Bells and Pomegranates.

On the space that might stand him in best stead :
For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
And if, in this minute of wonder,
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
The lion at last was delivered ?
Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead ;
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,
Or catlike crouched hard by the fountain
To waylay the date-gathering negress :
So guarded he entrance or egress.
“ How he stands ! ” quoth the King : “ we may well
swear,
“ No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere,
“ And so can afford the confession
“ We exercise wholesome discretion
“ In keeping aloof from his threshold ;
“ Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,
“ Their first would too pleasantly purloin
“ The visitor's brisket or surloin :
“ But who 's he would prove so fool-hardy ?
“ Not the best man of Marignan, pardie ! ”

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
Fell close to the lion, and rested :
The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

For months past ; he sate there pursuing
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

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

“ Your heart's queen, you dethrone her ?
“ So should I ”—cried the King—“ 'twas mere vanity,
“ Not love, set the task to humanity ! ”
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I ; for I caught an expression
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,
As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful—
As if she had tried in a crucible
To what “ speeches like gold ” were reducible,
And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper ;
To know what she had *not* to trust to,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Was worth all the ashes, and dust too.
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter ;
Clement Marot stayed ; I followed after,
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant—
If she wished not the rash deed's recalcment ?
“ For I ”—so I spoke—“ am a Poet :
“ Human nature,—behoves that I know it !”

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

Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.

“ So, wiser I judged it to make
“ One trial what ‘ death for my sake ’
“ Really meant, while the power was yet mine,
“ Than defer it till time should define
“ Such a phrase not so simply as I,
“ Who took it to mean just ‘ to die.’
“ The blow a glove gives is but weak—
“ Does the mark yet discolour my cheek ?
“ But when the heart suffers a blow,
“ Will the pain pass so soon, do you know ? ”

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway :
No doubt that a noble should more weigh
His life than befits a plebeian ;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
—He’d have scarce thought you did him the worst
turn

If you whispered “ Friend, what you’d get, first earn ! ”
And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they married,
To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
These in wonder and praise, those in envy ;
And in short stood so plain a head taller
That he wooed and won . . . How do you call her ?
The beauty, that rose in the sequel

Bells and Pomegranates.

To the King's love, who loved her a week well ;
And 'twas noticed he never would honour
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
With the easy commission of stretching
His legs in the service and fetching
His wife from her chamber those straying
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
While the King took the closet to chat in,—
But of course this adventure came pat in ;
And never he finished the story,
How bringing the glove brought such glory,
But the wife smiled—" His nerves are grown firmer—
" Mine he brings now and utters no murmur ! "

Venienti occurrere morbo !

With which moral I drop my theorbo.

LURIA;
A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS.

I DEDICATE
THESE LAST ATTEMPTS FOR THE PRESENT AT DRAMATIC
POETRY
TO A GREAT DRAMATIC POET ;
“ WISHING WHAT I WRITE MAY BE READ BY HIS LIGHT : ”
—IF A PHRASE ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED, BY NOT THE LEAST
WORTHY OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,
TO SHAKESPEARE,
MAY BE APPLIED HERE, BY ONE WHOSE SOLE PRIVILEGE IS
IN A GRATEFUL ADMIRATION,
TO WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

March 29, 1846.

PERSONS.

LURIA, a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces.
HUSAIN, a Moor, his friend.
PUCCIO, the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA'S Chief
Officer.
BRACCIO, Commissary of the Republic of Florence.
JACOPO (LAPO), his Secretary.
TIBURZIO, Commander of the Pisans.
DOMIZIA, a noble Florentine Lady.

Time, 14—.

SCENE.—LURIA'S *Camp between Florence and Pisa.*

Luria.

ACT I.

MORNING.

BRACCIO, *as dictating to his Secretary* ; PUCCIO
standing by.

Braccio. [*To Puccio.*]

THEN you join battle in an hour ?

Puc.

Not I ;

Luria, the Captain.

Brac. [*To the Secretary.*] “ In an hour, the battle.”

[*To Puccio.*] Sir, let your eye run o'er this loose
digest,

And see if very much of your report
Have slipped away through my civilian phrase.
Does this instruct the Signory aright
How army stands with army ?

Puc. [*Taking the paper.*] All seems here :

—That Luria, seizing with our City's force
The several points of vantage, hill and plain,
Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side,
And baffling the Lucchese arrived too late,
Must, in the battle he delivers now,
Beat her best troops and first of chiefs.

Brac.

So sure ?

II.

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N

Bells and Pomegranates.

Tiburzio's a consummate captain too !

Puc. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in his hand.

Brac. [*To the Secretary.*] "The Signory hold Pisa
in their hand :"

Your own proved soldiership's our warrant, sir.

You, while my secretary ends his task,

Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,

To post with it to Florence !

Puc. [*Returning the paper.*] All seems here ;

Unless . . . Ser Braccio, 'tis my last report !

Since Pisa's outbreak and my overthrow,

And Luria's hastening at the city's call

To save her as he only could, no doubt ;

Till now that she is saved or sure to be,—

Whatever you tell Florence I tell you :

Each day's note you, her Commissary, make

Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.

No youngster am I longer, to my cost ;

Therefore while Florence gloried in her choice

And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria still,

As courage, prudence, conduct, zeal and faith

Had never met in any man before,

I saw no pressing need to swell the cry :

But now, this last report and I have done—

So, ere to-night comes with its roar of praise,

'Twere not amiss if someone old i' the trade

Subscribed with, "True, for once rash counsel's best ;

"This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful race,

"This boy to whose untried sagacity,

"Raw valour, Florence trusts without reserve

"The charge to save her, justifies her choice ;

"In no point has this stranger failed his friends ;

Luria.

“ Now praise ” ! I say this, and it is not here.

Brac. [*To the Secretary.*] Write, “ Puccio, superseded in the charge

“ By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,

“ And no reward our Signory can give

“ Their champion but he'll back it cheerfully.”

Aught more? Five minutes hence, both messengers !

[*Exit* PUCCIO.]

Brac. [*After a pause, and while he slowly tears the paper into shreds.*]

I think . . . pray God I hold in fit contempt

This warfare's noble art and ordering,

And,—once the brace of prizers fairly matched,

Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife as good,—

Spit properly at what men term their skill . . .

Yet here I think our fighter has the odds ;

With Pisa's strength diminished thus and thus,

Such points of vantage in our hands and such,

With Lucca off the stage, too,—all's assured :

Luria must win this battle. Write the Court

That Luria's trial end and sentence pass !

Sec. Patron,—

Brac. Aye, Lapo ?

Sec. If you trip, I fall ;

’Tis in self-interest I speak—

Brac. Nay, nay,

You overshoot the mark, my Lapo ! Nay !

When did I say pure love's impossible ?

I make you daily write those red cheeks thin,

Load your young brow with what concerns it least,

And, when we visit Florence, let you pace

The Piazza by my side as if we talked,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Where all your old acquaintances may see :
You'd die for me, I should not be surprised !
Now then !

Sec. Sir, look about and love yourself !
Step after step the Signory and you
Tread gay till this tremendous point 's to pass ;
Which, pass not, pass not ere you ask yourself
Bears the brain steadily such draughts of fire,
Or too delicious may not prove the pride
Of this long secret Trial you dared plan,
Dare execute, you solitary here,
With the gray-headed toothless fools at home,
Who think themselves your lords, they are such
slaves ?

If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,
Declare the treason, claim its penalty,—
And sudden out of all the blaze of life,
On the best minute of his brightest day,
From that adoring army at his back,
Thro' Florence' joyous crowds before his face,
Into the dark you beckon Luria . . .

Brac. Then—
Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people vaunt,
We of the other craft and mystery,
May we not smile demure, the danger past ?

Sec. Sir, no, no, no,—the danger, and your spirit
At watch and ward ? Where 's danger on your part
With that thin flitting instantaneous steel
'Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-force world ?
If Luria, that 's to perish sure as fate,
Should have been really guiltless after all ?

Brac. Ah, you have thought that ?

Luria.

Sec. Here I sit, your scribe,
And in and out goes Luria, days and nights ;
This Puccio comes ; the Moor his other friend,
Husain ; they talk—all that 's feigned easily ;
He speaks (I would not listen if I could)
Reads, orders, counsels ;—but he rests sometimes,—
I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched an hour
On the lynx-skins, yonder ; hold his bared black arms
Into the sun from the tent-opening ; laugh
When his horse drops the forage from his teeth
And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish songs :
That man believes in Florence as the Saint
Tied to the wheel believes in God !

Brac. How strange—
You too have thought that !

Sec. Do but you think too,
And all is saved ! I only have to write,
The man seemed false awhile, proves true at last ;
Bury it . . . so I write to the Signory . . .
Bury this Trial in your breasts for ever,
Blot it from things or done or dreamed about,
So Luria shall receive his meed to-day
With no suspicion what reverse was near,—
As if no meteoric finger hushed
The doom-word just on the destroyer's lip,
Motioned him off, and let life's sun fall straight.

Brac. [*Looks to the wall of the tent.*] Did he draw that ?

Sec. With charcoal, when the watch
Made the report at midnight ; Lady Domizia
Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you remember ;
That is his fancy how a Moorish front
Might join to, and complete, the body,—a sketch,—

Bells and Pomegranates.

And again where the cloak hangs, yonder in the shadow.

Brac. He loves that woman.

Sec.

She is sent the spy

Of Florence,—spies on you as you on him :
Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,
Were surely safe. What shall I write ?

Brac.

I see—

A Moorish front, nor of such ill design !
Lapo, there 's one thing plain and positive ;
Man seeks his own good at the whole world's cost.
What? If to lead our troops, stand forth our chief,
And hold our fate, and see us at their beck,
Yet render up the charge when peace returned,
Have ever proved too much for Florentines,
Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—
If in the struggle when the soldier's sword
Before the statist's pen should sink its point,
And to the calm head yield the violent hand,
Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
Before ambition with unvarying fortune,
Till Florence' self at last in bitterness
Be forced to own defeat the natural end,
And, sparing further to expose her sons
To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,
Have said "The Foreigner, no child of mine,
"Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach height by
height
"The glory, then descend into the shame ;
"So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
"And punishment the easier task for me"
—If on the best of us this brand she sets,

Luria.

Can I suppose an utter alien here,
This Luria, our inevitable foe,
Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
Born free from any ties that bind the rest
Of common faith in Heaven or hope on Earth,
No Past with us, no Future,—such a Spirit
Shall hold the path from which our staunchest broke,
Stand firm where every famed precursor fell ?
My Lapo, I will frankly say these proofs
So duly noted of the man's intent,
Are for the doting fools at home, not me ;
The charges here, they may be true or false,
—What is set down ? Errors and oversights,
This dallying interchange of courtesies
With Pisa's General, all that hour by hour
Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us
Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts,
Now overhazard, overcaution now ;
Even that he loves this Lady who believes
She outwits Florence, and whom Florence posted
By my procurement here, to spy on me,
Lest I one minute lose her from my sight—
She who remembering her whole House's fall,
That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,
Now labours to make Luria . . . poor device
As plain . . . the instrument of her revenge !
—That she is ever at his ear to prompt
Inordinate conceptions of his worth,
Exorbitant belief in its reward,
And after, when sure disappointment follows,
Proportionable rage at such a wrong—
Why, all these reasons, while I urge them most,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Weigh with me less than least ; as nothing weigh !
Upon that broad Man's heart of his, I go !
On what I know must be, yet while I live
Will never be, because I live and know !
Brute-force shall not rule Florence ! Intellect
May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies,—
But Intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
And Intellect's tradition so kept up
Till the good comes—'twas Intellect that ruled,
Not Brute-force bringing from the battle-field
The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces
We lent it there to lure its grossness on ;
All which it took for earnest and kept safe
To show against us in our market-place,
Just as the plumes and tags and swordsman's-gear
(Fetched from the camp where at their foolish best
When all was done they frightened nobody)
Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,
With our own warrant and allowance. No !
The whole procedure's overcharged,—its end
In too strict keeping with the bad first step.
To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration !
Well then, to perish for a single fault,
Let that be simple justice !—There, my Lapo !
The Moorish front ill suits our Duomo's body—
Blot it out—and bid Luria's sentence come !

Luria. [*Who, with DOMIZIA, has entered unobserved at the close of the last phrase, now advancing.*]

And Luria, Luria, what of Luria now ?

Brac. Ah, you so close, Sir ? Lady Domizia too ?
I said it needs must be a busy moment

Luria.

For one like you—that you were now i' the thick
Of your duties, doubtless, while we idlers sate . . .

Lur. No—in that paper,—it was in that paper
What you were saying!

Brac. Oh—my day's dispatch!
I censure you to Florence: will you see?

Lur. See your dispatch, the last, for the first time?
Why, if I should now? For in truth, Domizia,
He would be forced to set about another
In his sly cool way, the true Florentine,
To mention that important circumstance;
So while he wrote I should gain time, such time!
Do not send this!

Brac. And wherefore?

Lur. These Lucchese
Are not arrived—they never will arrive!
And I must fight to-day, arrived or not,
And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure,
And then will be arriving my Lucchese,
But slowly, oh so slowly, just in time
To look upon my battle from the hills,
Like a late moon, of use to nobody,—
And I must break my battle up, send forth,
Surround on this side, hold in check on that!
Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
You make me send for fresh instructions home,
—Incompleteness, incompleteness!

Brac. Ah, we scribes!
Why, I had registered that very point,
The non-appearance of our foes' ally,
As a most happy fortune; both at once
Were formidable—singly faced, each falls.

Bells and Pomegranates.

Lur. And so no battle for my Florentines !
No crowning deed, decisive and complete,
For all of them, the simple as the wise,
Old, young, alike, that do not understand
Our wearisome pedantic art of war,
By which we prove retreat may be success,
Delay—best speed,—half loss, at times,—whole gain—
They want results . . . as if it were their fault !
And you, with warmest wish to be my friend,
Will not be able now to simply say
“Your servant has performed his task—enough !
“You ordered, he has executed : good !
“Now walk the streets in holiday attire,
“Congratulate your friends, till noon strikes fierce,
“Then form bright groups beneath the Duomo’s
shade !”

No ! you will have to argue and explain,
Persuade them all is not so ill in the end,
Tease, tire them out ! Arrive, arrive, Lucchese !

Dom. Well, you will triumph for the Past enough
Whatever be the Present’s chance—no service
Falls to the ground with Florence ; she awaits
Her saviour, will receive him fittingly.

Lur. Ah Braccio, you know Florence . . will she,
think you,
Receive one . . . what means “fittingly receive ?”
—Receive compatriots, doubtless—I am none :
And yet Domizia promises so much !

Brac. Kind women still give men a woman’s prize.
I know not o’er which gate most boughs will arch,
Nor if the Square will wave red flags or blue—
I should have judged, the fullest of rewards

Luria.

Our State gave Luria, when she made him chief
Of her whole force, in her best Captain's place.

Lur. That my reward? Florence on my account
Relieved Ser Puccio?—mark you, my reward!
And Puccio's having all the fight's true joy—
Goes here and there, directs, may fight himself,
While I must order, stand aloof, o'ersee!
That was my calling—there was my true place!
I should have felt, in some one over me,
Florence impersonate, my visible Head,
As I am over Puccio,—taking life
Directly from her eye!—They give me you!
But do you cross me, set me half to work?
I enjoy nothing—but I will, for once!
Decide, shall we join battle? may I wait?

Brac. Let us compound the matter; wait till
noon;
Then, no arrival,—

Lur. Ah, noon comes too fast!
I wonder, do you guess why I delay
Involuntarily the final blow
As long as possible? Peace follows it!
Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads
Come out again, the penetrating eyes;
As if a spell broke, all's resumed, each art
You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile!
'Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white palace-front
The interrupted scaffold climbs anew;
The walls are peopled by the Painter's brush;
The Statue to its niche ascends to dwell;
The Present's noise and trouble have retired
And left the eternal Past to rule once more.—

Bells and Pomegranates.

You speak its speech and read its records plain,
Greece lives with you, each Roman breathes your
friend,

—But Luria,—where will then be Luria's place?

Dom. Highest in honour, for that Past's own sake,
Of which his actions, sealing up the sum
By saving all that went before from wreck,
Will range as part, with which be worshipped too.

Lur. Then I may walk and watch you in your
streets

Leading the life my rough life helps no more,
So different, so new, so beautiful—

Nor fear that you will tire to see parade

The club that slew the lion, now that crooks

And shepherd-pipes come into use again?

For very lone and silent seems my East

In its drear vastness—still it spreads, and still

No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere—

Not ever more!—Well, well, to-day is ours!

Dom. [*To BRAC.*] Should he not have been one of
us?

Lur. Oh, no!

Not one of you, and so escape the thrill

Of coming into you, and changing thus,—

Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts

The boundless unrest of the savage heart!

The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land,

Breaks there and buries its tumultuous strength;

Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile;

Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,

In rapture of assent, subdued and still,

'Neath those strange banks, those unimagined skies!

Luria.

Well, 'tis not sure the quiet lasts for ever !
Your placid heads still find our hands new work ;
Some minutes' chance—there comes the need of
mine—

And, all resolved on, I too hear at last.
Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser Braccio !
You hold my strength ; 'twere best dispose of it !
What you created, see that you find food for—
I shall be dangerous else !

Brac. How dangerous, Sir ?

Lur. Oh, there are many ways, Domizia warns me,
And one with half the power that I possess,
Grows very formidable ! Do you doubt ?
Why, first, who holds the army . . .

Dom. While we talk
Morn wears, we keep you from your proper place
In the field !—

Lur. Nay, to the field I move no more !—
My part is done, and Puccio's may begin !
I cannot trench upon his province longer
With any face.—You think yourselves so safe ?
Why see—in concert with Tiburzio, now—
One could . . .

Dom. A trumpet !

Lur. My Lucchese at last !
Arrived, as sure as Florence stands ! your leave !

[*Springs out.*]

Dom. How plainly is true greatness characterized
By such unconsciousness as Luria's here,
And sharing least the secret of itself !
Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,
Such save the world which none but they could save,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.

Brac. Yes: and how worthy note, that those same
great ones

In hand or head, with such unconsciousness

And all its due entailed humility,

Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,

From taking up whatever offices

Involve the whole world's safety or mishap,

Into their mild hands as a thing of course!

The Statist finds it natural to lead

The mob who might as easily lead him—

The Soldier marshals men who know as much—

Statist and Soldier verily believe!

While we poor scribes . . . you catch me thinking,
now,

That I shall in this very letter write

What none of you are able! To it, Lapo!

[*Exit* DOMIZIA.]

This last, worst, all affected childish fit

Convinces me: the Past was no child's play;

It was a man beat Pisa,—not a child.

'Tis mere dissimulation—to remove

The fear, he best knows we should entertain.

The utmost danger was at hand. 'Tis written?

Now make the duplicate, lest this should fail,

And speak your fullest on the other side.

Sec. I noticed he was busily repairing

My half-effacement of his *Duomo* sketch,

And to it, while he spoke of Florence, turned

As the Mage Negro King to Christ the Babe.—

I judge his childishness the true relapse

To boyhood of a man who has worked lately,

Luria.

And presently will work, so, meantime, plays :
Whence more than ever I believe in him.

Brac. [*After a pause.*] The sword ! At best, the
soldier, as he says,

In Florence—the black face, the barbarous name,
For Italy to boast her show of the age,
Her man of men !—To Florence with each letter !

Bells and Pomegranates.

ACT II.

NOON.

Dom. Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce thy heart

Thro' all its safeguards? Hate is said to help—
Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm,
And this my hate, made of so many hates,
Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,
And will thee dead . . . yet do I trust it not ;
Nor Man's devices, nor Heaven's memory
Of wickedness forgot on Earth so soon,
But thy own nature,—Hell and thee I trust,
To keep thee constant in that wickedness,
Where my revenge may meet thee : turn aside
For gratitude a single step, or shame,—
Grace thou this Luria, this wild mass of rage
That I prepare to launch against thee now,
With other payment than thy noblest found,—
Give his desert for once its due reward,—
And past thee would my sure destruction roll.
But thou who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,
It cannot be thou dost except this Moor
From the accustomed fate of zeal and truth ;
Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
And then—I reach thee ! Old and trained, my sire
Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,
Die awe-struck and submissive, when at last
The strange blow came for the expected wreath ;
And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment

Luria.

To exile, never to return,—they say,
Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul
As if some natural law had changed,—how else
Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing thus,
Judge Porzio's actions worthy such an end?
But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
—Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on hour,
In which no way of getting his fair fame
From their inexplicable charges free,
Was found save to pour forth the impatient blood
And show its colour whether false or no!
My brothers never had a friend like me
Close in their need to watch the time, then speak,
—Burst with a wakening laughter on their dream,
Say, Florence was one falsehood, so false here,—
And show them what a simple task remained—
To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God's name
The City wedded to its wickedness—
None stood by them as I by Luria stand!
So, when the stranger cheated of his due
Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,
Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy throat
For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,
Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died!
He comes . . . his friend . . . black faces in the camp
Where moved those peerless brows and eyes of old!

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Dom. Well, and the movement—is it as you hope?
'Tis Lucca?

Lur. Ah, the Pisan trumpet merely!

II.

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O

Bells and Pomegranates.

Tiburzio's envoy I must needs receive—

Dom. Whom I withdraw before ; yet if I lingered
You could not wonder, for my time fleets fast ;
The overtaking night brings Florence' praise
And where will then be room for mine ? Yet still
Remember who was first to promise it,

And envies those who also can perform ! [*Exit.*

Lur. This trumpet from the Pisans ?—

Hus. In the camp ;

A very noble presence—Braccio's visage
On Puccio's body—calm and fixed and good ;
A man I seem as I had seen before—
Most like it was some statue had the face.

Lur. Admit him ! This will prove the last delay !

Hus. Ay, friend, go on, and die thou going on !
Thou heard'st what the grave woman said but now :
To-night rewards thee ! That is well to hear !
But stop not therefore ; hear it, and go on !

Lur. Oh, their reward and triumph and the rest
They round me in the ears with, all day long ?
But that, I never took for earnest, friend !
Well would it suit us,—their triumphal arch
Or storied pillar, thee and me, the Moors !
Just gratitude in those Italian eyes—
That, we shall get ?

Hus. It is too cold an air—
Our sun rose out of yonder mound of mist—
Where is he now ? So I trust none of them !

Lur. Truly ?

Hus. I doubt and fear. There stands a wall
'Twixt our expansive and explosive race
And those absorbing, concentrating men !

Luria.

They use thee !

Lur. And I feel it, Husain ; yes,
And care not—yes, an alien force like mine
Is only called to play its part outside
Their different nature ; where its sole use seems
To fight with and keep off an adverse force
As alien,—which repelled, ours too withdraws ;
Inside, they know not what to do with me ;
So I have told them laughingly and oft,
But long since I prepared to learn the worst.

Hus. What is the worst ?

Lur. I will forestall them, Husain,
And speak my destiny they dare not speak—
Banish myself before they find the heart !
I will be first to say, “ the work rewards !
“ I know, for all your praise, my use is over,
“ So may it be !—meanwhile ’tis best I go,
“ And carry safe my memories of you all
“ To other scenes of action, newer lands,”—
Thus leaving them confirmed in their belief
They would not easily have tired of me !
You think this hard to say ?

Hus. Say it or not,
So thou but go, so they but let thee go !
This hating people, that hate each the other,
And in one blandness to us Moors unite—
Locked each to each like slippery snakes, I say,
Which still in all their tangles, hissing tongue
At threatening tail, ne’er do each other harm ;
While any creature of a better blood,
They seem to fight for, while they circle safe
And never touch it,—pines without a wound

Bells and Pomegranates.

Withers away before their eyes and breath.
See thou if Puccio come not safely out
Of Braccio's grasp, the Braccio sworn his foe,
And Braccio safely from Domizia's toils
Who hates him most!—But thou, the friend of all,
. . . Come out of them!

Lur. The Pisan trumpet now!

Hus. Breathe free—it is an enemy, no friend!

[*Exit.*

Lur. He keeps his instincts, no new culture mars
Their perfect use in him; and so the brutes
Rest not, are anxious without visible cause,
When change is in the elements at work
Which man's trained senses fail to apprehend.
But here . . . he takes the distant chariot-wheels
For thunder, festal fire for lightning's flash, . . .
The finer traits of cultivated life
For treachery and malevolence: I see.

Enter TIBURZIO.

Lur. Quick, sir, your message. I but wait your
message

To sound the charge. You bring not overtures
For truce?—I would not, for your General's sake,
You spoke of truce—a time to fight is come,
And whatsoever the fight's event, he keeps
His honest soldier's name to beat me with,
Or leaves me all himself to beat, I trust!

Tib. I am Tiburzio.

Lur. You? Ah, yes . . . Tiburzio!
You were the last to keep the ford i' the valley

Luria.

From Puccio, when I threw in succours there !
Why, I was on the heights—thro' the defile
Ten minutes after, when the prey was lost !
You wore an open scull-cap with a twist
Of water-reeds—the plume being hewn away ;
While I drove down my battle from the heights,
—I saw with my own eyes !

Tib. And you are Luria

Who sent my cohort, that laid down its arms
In error of the battle-signal's sense,
Back safely to me at the critical time—
One of a hundred deeds—I know you ! Therefore
To none but you could I . . .

Lur. No truce, Tiburzio !

Tib. Luria, you know the peril's imminent
On Pisa,—that you have us in the toils,
Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts
The rage of her implacablest of foes
From Pisa,—if we fall to-day, she falls.
Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, 'tis too late.
You have so plainly here the best of it
That you must feel, brave soldier that you are,
How dangerous we grow in this extreme,
How truly formidable by despair :
Still probabilities should have their weight—
The extremest chance is ours ; but that chance failing
You win this battle : wherefore say I this ?
To be well apprehended when I add
This danger absolutely comes from you.
Were you, who threaten thus, a Florentine . . .

Lur. Sir, I am nearer Florence than her sons.
I can, and have perhaps obliged the State,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Nor paid a mere son's duty.

Tib.

Even so!

Were you the son of Florence, yet endued
With all your present nobleness of soul,
No question, what I must communicate
Would not detach you from her.

Lur.

Me detach?

Tib. Time urges: you will ruin presently
Pisa, you never knew, for Florence' sake
You think you know. I have from time to time
Made prize of certain secret missives sent
From Braccio here, the Commissary, home—
And knowing Florence otherwise, can piece
The entire chain out from these scattered links.
Your Trial occupies the Signory;
They sit in judgment on your conduct now!
When men at home enquire into the acts
Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .
Brief, they are Florentines! You, saving them,
Will seek the sure destruction saviours find.

Lur. Tiburzio—

Tib.

All the wonder is of course!

I am not here to teach you, or direct,
Only to loyally apprise—scarce that.
This is the latest letter, sealed and safe,
As it left here an hour ago. One way
Of two thought free to Florence, I command.
The duplicate is on its road:—but this,—
Read it, and then I shall have more to say.

Lur. Florence!

Tib.

Now, were yourself a Florentine,
This letter, let it hold the worst it can,

Luria.

Would be no reason you should fall away—
The Mother city is the mother still,
And recognition of the children's service
Her own affair ; reward . . there's no reward !
But you are bound by quite another tie ;
Nor Nature shows, nor Reason, why at first
A foreigner, born friend to all alike,
Should give himself to any special State
More than another, stand by Florence' side
Rather than Pisa's—'tis as fair a city
You war against, as that you fight for—famed
As well as she in story, graced no less
With noble heads and patriotic hearts,—
Nor to a stranger's eye would either cause,
Stripped of the cumulative loves and hates
Which take importance from familiar view,
Stand as the Right, and Sole to be upheld.
Therefore, should the preponderating gift
Of love and trust Florence was first to throw,
Which made you hers not Pisa's, void the scale,—
Old ties dissolving, things resume their place
And all begins again. Break seal and read !
At least let Pisa offer for you now !
And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice—
Tho' for myself I lose, in gaining you,
This last fight and its opportunity ;
The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
Or in the turn of battle dying so
That shame should want its extreme bitterness.

Lur. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa now
As I for Florence . . say my chance were yours !
You read this letter, and you find . . no, no !

Bells and Pomegranates.

Too mad !

Tib. I read the letter, find they purpose
When I have crushed their fœe, to crush me : well ?

Lur. And you, their captain, what is it you do ?

Tib. Why as it is, all cities are alike—
I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,
As you, or more : my weak head, they will say,
Prompted this last expedient, my faint heart
Entailed on them indelible disgrace,
Both which defects ask proper punishment.
Another tenure of obedience, mine !
You are no son of Pisa's : break and read !

Lur. And act on what I read ? what act were fit ?
If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
In Florence, who to me stands for Mankind,
—If that breaks up and, disemprisoning
From the abyss . . . Ah friend, it cannot be !
You may be very sage, yet . . all the world
Having to fail, or your sagacity,
You do not wish to find yourself alone !
What would the world be worth ? Whose love be
sure ?

The world remains—you are deceived !

Tib. Your hand !
I lead the vanguard.—If you fall, beside,
The better—I am left to speak ! For me,
This was my duty, nor would I rejoice
If I could help, it misses its effect :
And after all you will look gallantly
Found dead here with that letter in your breast !

Lur. Tiburzio—I would see these people once
And test them ere I answer finally !

Luria.

At your arrival let the trumpet sound :
If mine returns not then the wonted cry,
It means that I believe—am Pisa's !

Tib.

Well ! [*Exit.*

Lur. My heart will have it he speaks true ! My
blood

Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend ;
If he had stept into my watch-tent, night
And the wide desert full of foes around,
I should have broke the bread and given the salt
Secure, and when my hour of watch was done
Taken my turn to sleep between his knees
Safe in the unclouded brow and honest cheek.
Oh, world where all things pass and nought abides,
Oh, life the long mutation—is it so ?
Is it with life as with the body's change ?
—Where, e'en tho' better follow, good must pass,
Nor manhood's strength can mate with boyhood's
grace,
Nor age's wisdom in its turn find strength,
But silently the first gift dies away,
And tho' the new stays—never both at once !
Life's time of savage instinct 's o'er with me,
It fades and dies away, past trusting more,
As if to punish the ingratitude
With which I turned to grow in these new lights
And learned to look with European eyes.
Yet it is better, this cold certain way,
Where Braccio's brow tells nothing,—Puccio's mouth,
Domizia's eyes reject the searcher . . yes . .
For on their calm sagacity I lean,
Their sense of right, deliberate choice of good,

Bells and Pomegranates.

That as they know my deeds they deal with me.
Yes, that is better . . . that is best of all !
Such faith stays when the wild belief would go !
Yes—when the desert creature's heart, at fault
Amid the scattering tempest and its sands,
Betrays its steps into the pathless drift—
The calm instructed eye of man holds fast
By the sole bearing of the visible star,
Sure that when slow the whirling wreck subsides,
The boundaries, lost now, shall be found again,—
The palm-trees and the pyramid over all !
Yes : I trust Florence—Pisa is deceived.

Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Brac. Noon's at an end : no Lucca ! You must fight.

Lur. Do you remember ever, gentle friends,
I am no Florentine ?

Dom. It is yourself
Who still are forcing us importunately,
To bear in mind what else we should forget.

Lur. For loss !—For what I lose in being none !
No shrewd man, such as you yourselves respect,
But would remind you of the stranger's loss
In natural friends and advocates at home,
Hereditary loves, or rivalships,
With precedents for honour and reward.
Still, there's a gain, too ! If you recollect,
The stranger's lot has special gain as well !
Do you forget there was my own far East
I might have given away myself to, once,

Luria.

As now to Florence, and for such a gift,
Stood there like a descended Deity?
There, worship greets us! what do I get here?

[Shows the letter.

See! Chance has put into my hand the means
Of knowing what I earn, before I work!
Should I fight better, should I fight the worse,
With the crown palpably before me? see!
Here lies my whole reward! Best know it now?
Or keep it for the end's entire delight?

Brac. If you serve Florence as the vulgar serve,
For swordsman's pay alone,—break seal and read!
In that case you will find your full desert!

Lur. Give me my one last happy moment, friends!
You need me now, and all the gratitude
This letter may contain would never balance
The after-feeling that your need's at end!
This moment . . . Oh the East has use with you!
Its sword still flashes . . . is not flung aside
With the past praise in a dark corner yet!
How say you? 'Tis not so with Florentines—
Captains of yours—for them, the ended war
Is but a first step to the peace begun
—He who did well in war just earns the right
To begin doing well in peace, you know!
Now, certain my precursors,—would not such
Look to themselves in such a chance as this,
Secure the ground they trod upon, perhaps?
For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to hear,
Of strange occurrences, ingratitude,
Treachery even,—say that one of you
Surmised this letter carried what might turn

Bells and Pomegranates.

To harm hereafter, cause him prejudice—
What would he do?

Dom. [*Hastily.*] Thank God and take revenge!
Turn her own force against the city straight,
And even at the moment when the foe
Sounded defiance . . .

[TIBURZIO'S *trumpet sounds in the distance.*

Lur. Ah, you Florentines!
So would you do? Wisely for you, no doubt!
My simple Moorish instinct leads to sink
The obligation you relieved me from,
Still deeper! [*To PUCCIO.*] Sound our answer, I should
say!
And thus!—[*Tearing the paper*]—The battle! That
solves every doubt!
[*As the Trumpet answers, the scene shuts.*

Luria.

ACT III.

AFTERNOON.

Puccio, as making a report to JACOPO.

Puc. And here, your Captain must report the rest ;
For, as I say, the main engagement over,
And Luria's special part in it performed,
How could subalterns like myself expect
Leisure or leave to occupy the field
And glean what dropped from his wide harvesting ?
I thought when Lucca at the battle's end
Came up, just as the Pisan centre broke,
That Luria would detach me and prevent
The flying Pisans seeking what they found,
Friends in the rear, a point to rally by :
But no—more honourable proved my post !
I had the august captive to escort
Safe to our camp—some other could pursue,
Fight, and be famous ; gentler chance was mine—
Tiburzio's wounded spirit must be soothed !
He's in the tent there.

Jac. Is the substance down ?
I write—"The vanguard beaten, and both wings
In full retreat—Tiburzio prisoner"—
And now,—“That they fall back and form again
On Lucca's coming.”—Why then, after all,
'Tis half a victory, no conclusive one ?

Puc. Two operations where a sole had served.

Jac. And Luria's fault was—?

Puc. Oh, for fault . . . not much !

Bells and Pomegranates.

He led the attack a thought impetuously,
—There's commonly more prudence ; now, he seemed
To hurry measures, otherwise well-judged ;
By over concentrating strength, at first,
Against the enemy's van, both sides escaped :
That's reparable—yet it is a fault.

Enter BRACCIO.

Jac. As good as a full victory to Florence,
With the advantage of a fault beside—
What is it, Puccio?—that by pressing forward
With too impetuous . . .

Brac. The report anon !
Thanks, Sir—you have elsewhere a charge, I know.

[*Exit* PUCCIO.]

There's nothing done but I would do again ;
Yet, Lapo, it may be the Past proves nothing,
And Luria has kept faithful to the end !

Jac. I was for waiting.

Brac. Yes : so was not I !
He could not choose but tear that letter—true !
Still, certain of his tones, I mind, and looks—
You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I.
So Porzio seemed an injured man, they say !
Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure ground.

Enter LURIA, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Luria. [*To* PUCCIO.] Say, at his pleasure I will see
Tiburzio :

All's at his pleasure.

Dom. [*To* LURIA.] Were I not so sure

Luria.

You would reject, as you do constantly,
Praise,—I might tell you what you have deserved
Of Florence by this last and crowning feat :
But words are vain !

Lur. Nay, you may praise me now !
I want instruction every hour, I find,
On points where once I saw least need of it ;
And praise, I have been used to do without,
Seems not so easy to dispense with now :
After a battle half one's strength is gone—
All justice, power and beauty scarce appear
Monopolized by Florence, as of late,
To me, the stranger ; you, no doubt, may know
Why Pisa needs must give her rival place ;
And I am growing nearer you, perhaps,
For I, too, want to know and be assured :
So, when a cause does not reward itself,
Its friend needs fresh sustainments ; praise is one,
And here stand you—you, Lady, praise me well !
But yours—your pardon—is unlearned praise :
To the motive, the endeavour,—the heart's self—
Your quick sense looks ; you crown and call aright
The soul of the purpose, ere 'tis shaped as act,
Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes itself a king ;
But when the act comes, stands for what 'tis worth,
—Here 's Puccio, the skilled soldier, he 's my judge !
Was all well, Puccio ?

Puc. All was . . . must be well :
If we beat Lucca presently, as doubtless . . .
—No, there 's no doubt we must—All was well done.

Lur. In truth ? But you are of the trade, my
Puccio !

Bells and Pomegranates.

You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy !
There's none knows like a fellow of the craft
The all unestimated sum of pains
That go to a success the world can see ;
They praise then, but the best they never know :
—But you know !—Oh, if envy mix with it,
Hate even, still the bottom praise of all,
Whatever be the dregs, that drop's pure gold !
—For nothing's like it ; nothing else records
Those daily, nightly drippings in the dark
Of the heart's blood the world lets drop away
For ever . . . So, pure gold that praise must be !
And I have yours, my soldier ; yet the best
Is still to come—there's one looks on apart
Whom all refers to, failure or success ;
What's done might be our best, our utmost work,
And yet inadequate to serve his need :
Here's Braccio now, for Florence—here's our ser-
vice—

Well done for us, is it well done for him ?
The chosen engine, tasked to its full strength
Answers the end ?—Should he have chosen higher ?
Do we help Florence, now our best is done ?

Brac. This battle, with the foregone services,
Saves Florence.

Lur. Why then, all is very well !
Here am I in the middle of my friends,
Who know me and who love me, one and all !
And yet . . . 'tis like . . . this instant while I speak
Is like the turning moment of a dream
When . . . Ah, you are not foreigners like me !
Well then, one always dreams of friends at home,

Luria.

And always comes, I say, the turning point
When something changes in the friendly eyes
That love and look on you . . . so slight, so slight . . .
And yet it tells you they are dead and gone,
Or changed and enemies for all their words,
And all is mockery, and a maddening show !
You, now, so kind here, all you Florentines,
What is it in your eyes . . . those lips, those brows . . .
Nobody spoke it . . . yet I know it well !—
Come now—this battle saves you, all 's at end,
Your use of me is o'er, for good, for evil,—
Come now, what 's done against me, while I speak,
In Florence? Come ! I feel it in my blood,
My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ear
That spite of all this smiling and kind speech
You are betraying me ! What is it you do ?
Have it your way, and think my use is over ;
That you are saved and may throw off the mask—
Have it my way, and think more work remains
Which I could do,—so show you fear me not !
Or prudent be, or generous, as you choose,
But tell me—tell what I refused to know
At noon lest heart might fail me ! Well ? That
letter ?

My fate is known at Florence ! What is it ?

Brac. Sir, I shall not conceal what you divine ;
It is no novelty for innocence
To be suspected, but a privilege :
The after certain compensation comes.
Charges, I say not whether false or true,
Have been preferred against you some time since,
Which Florence was bound plainly to receive,

Bells and Pomegranates.

And which are therefore undergoing now
The due investigation. That is all.
I doubt not but your innocence will shine
Apparent and illustrious, as to me,
To them this evening when the trial ends.

Lur. My trial?

Dom. Florence, Florence to the end,
My whole heart thanks thee!

Puc. [*To BRACCIO.*] What is "Trial," Sir?
It was not for a Trial—surely no—
I furnished you those notes from time to time?
I hold myself aggrieved—I am a man—
And I might speak,—ay, and the mere truth, too,
And yet not mean at bottom of my heart
What should assist a—Trial, do you say?
You should have told me!

Dom. Nay, go on, go on!
His sentence! Do they sentence? What is it?
The block? Wheel?

Brac. Sentence there is none as yet,
Nor shall I give my own opinion here
Of what it should be, or is like to be:
When it is passed, applaud or disapprove!
Up to that point what is there to impugn?

Lur. They are right, then, to try me?

Brac. I assert
Maintain and justify the absolute right
Of Florence to do all she can have done
In this procedure,—standing on her guard,
Receiving even services like yours
With utmost fit suspicious wariness.
In other matters—keep the mummery up!

Luria.

Take all the experiences of the whole world,
Each knowledge that broke thro' a heart to life,
Each reasoning which to work out cost a brain,
—In other cases, know these, warrant these,
And then dispense with them—'tis very well !
Let friend trust friend, and love demand its like,
And gratitude be claimed for benefits,—
There 's grace in that—and when the fresh heart breaks
The new brain proves a martyr, what of it ?
Where is the matter of one moth the more
Singed in the candle at a summer's end ?
But Florence is no simple John or James
To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit,
That he 's the one excepted man by fate,
And, when fate shows him he 's mistaken there,
Die with all good men's praise, and yield his place
To Paul and George intent to try their chance :
Florence exists because these pass away ;
She 's a contrivance to supply a type
Of Man which men's deficiencies refuse ;
She binds so many, she grows out of them—
Stands steady o'er their numbers tho' they change
And pass away . . . there 's always what upholds,
Always enough to fashion the great show !
As, see, yon hanging city in the sun
Of shapely cloud substantially the same !
A thousand vapours rise and sink again,
Are interfused, and live their life and die,—
Yet ever hangs the steady show i' the air
Under the sun's straight influence : that is well !
That is worth Heaven to hold, and God to bless !
And so is Florence,—the unseen sun above,

Bells and Pomegranates.

That draws and holds suspended all of us—
Binds transient mists and vapours into one
Differing from each and better than they all.
And shall she dare to stake this permanence
On any one man's faith? Man's heart is weak,
And its temptations many: let her prove
Each servant to the very uttermost
Before she grant him her reward, I say!

Dom. And as for hearts she chances to mistake,
That are not destined to receive reward,
What should she do for these?

Brac. What does she not?
Say that she gives them but herself to serve!
Here's Luria—what had profited his strength,
When half an hour of sober fancying
Had shown him step by step the uselessness
Of strength exerted for its proper sake?
But the truth is she did create that strength,
Drew to the end the corresponding means.
The world is wide . . . are we the only men?
Oh, for the time, the social purpose' sake,
Use words agreed on, bandy epithets,
Call any man, sole Great and Wise and Good!
But shall we, therefore, standing by ourselves,
Insult our souls and God with the same speech?
There, swarm the ignoble thousands under Him—
What marks us from the hundreds and the tens?
Florence took up, turned all one way the soul
Of Luria with its fires, and here he stands!
She takes me out of all the world as him,
Fixing my coldness till like ice it stays
The fire! So, Braccio, Luria, which is best?

Luria.

Lur. Ah, brave me? And is this indeed the way
To gain your good word and sincere esteem?
Am I the baited tiger that must turn
And fight his baiters to deserve their praise?
Obedience has no fruit then?—Be it so!
Do you indeed remember I stand here
The Captain of the conquering army,—mine—
With all your tokens, praise and promise, ready
To show for what their names were when you gave,
Not what you style them now you take away?
If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
And in their first enthusiastic thrill
Of victory, tell them how you menace me—
Commending to their plain instinctive sense,
My story first, your comment afterward,—
Will they take, think you, part with you or me?
When I say simply, I, the man they know,
Ending my work, ask payment and find Florence
Has all this while provided silently
Against the day of pay and proving words,
By what you call my sentence that 's to come—
Will they sit waiting it complacently?
When I resist that sentence at their head
What will you do, my mild antagonist?

Brac. Then I will rise like fire, proud and
triumphant

That Florence knew you thoroughly and by me,
And so was saved: "See, Italy," I'll say,
"The need of our precautions—here 's a man
"Was far advanced, just touched on the reward
"Less subtle cities had accorded him—
"But we were wiser; at the end comes this!"

Bells and Pomegranates.

And from that minute all your strength will go—
The very stones of Florence cry against
The all-exacting, unenduring Luria,
Resenting her first slight probation thus
As if he only shone and cast no shade,
He only walked the earth with privilege
Against suspicion, free from causing fear—
So, for the first inquisitive mother's-word,
Turned round and stood on his defence, forsooth !
And you will sink into the savage back.
Reward? you will not be worth punishment !

Lur. And Florence knew me thus ! Thus I have
lived,—

And thus you, with the clear fine intellect,
Braccio, the cold acute instructed mind
Out of the stir, so calm and unconfused,
Reported me—how could you otherwise !
Ay?—and what dropped from *you*, just now, more-
over?

Your information, Puccio?—Did your skill
And understanding sympathy approve
Such a report of me? Was this the end?
Or is this the end even? Can I stop?
You, Lady, with the woman's stand apart,
The heart to see with, not those learned eyes,
. . . I cannot fathom why you would destroy me,—
It is but natural, therefore, I should ask
Had you a further end in all you spoke,
All I remember now for the first time?

Dom. I am a daughter of the Traversari,
Sister of Porzio and of Berto both.
I have foreseen all that has come to pass :

Luria.

I knew the Florence that could doubt their faith,
Must needs mistrust a stranger's—holding back
Reward from them, must hold back his reward.
And I believed, that shame they bore and died,
He would not bear, but live and fight against—
Seeing he was of other stuff than they.

Lur. Hear them! All these against one Foreigner!
And all this while where is in the whole world
To his good faith a single witness?

Tiburzio. [*Who has entered during the preceding
dialogue.*] Here!

Thus I bear witness to it, not in word
But deed. I live for Pisa; she's not lost
By many chances,—much prevents from that!
Her army has been beaten, I am here,
But Lucca comes at last, one chance exists.
I rather had see Pisa three times lost
Than saved by any traitor, even you.
The example of a traitor's happy fortune
Would bring more evil in the end than good.
Pisa rejects such: save yourself and her!
I, in her name, resign forthwith to you
My charge,—the highest of her offices.
You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence
Her army, give her calumny that ground—
Nor bring it with you: you are all we gain,
And all she'll lose, a head to deck some bridge,
And save the crown's cost that should deck the head.
Leave her to perish in her perfidy,
Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,
A proverb and a bye word in men's mouths!
Go you to Pisa—Florence is my place—

Bells and Pomegranates.

Leave me to tell her of the rectitude
I from the first told Pisa, knowing it.
To Pisa !

Dom. Ah, my Braccio, are you caught ?

Brac. Puccio, good soldier and selected man,
Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye
Ready as fit to serve in this event
Florence who clear foretold it from the first—
Thro' me she gives you the command and charge
She takes, thro' me, from him who held it late !
A painful trial, very sore, was yours :
All that could draw out, marshal in array
The selfish passions 'gainst the public good—
Sights, scorns, neglects, were heaped on you to bear :
And ever you did bear and bow the head !
It had been sorry trial to precede
Your feet, hold up the promise of reward
For luring gleam ; your footsteps kept the track
Thro' dark and doubt : take all the light at once !
Trial is over, consummation shines ;
Well you have served, as well henceforth command !

Puc. No, no . . . I dare not . . . I am grateful, glad ;
But Luria—you shall understand he's wronged—
And he's my Captain—this is not the way
We soldiers climb to fortune : think again !
The sentence is not even passed, beside !
I dare not . . . where's the soldier could ?

Lur. Now, Florence—

Is it to be ?—You will know all the strength
Of the savage—to your neck the proof must go ?
You will prove the brute nature ? Ah, I see !
The savage plainly is impassible—

Luria.

He keeps his calm way thro' insulting words,
Cold looks, sharp gestures—any one of which
Would stop you and offend your finer sense :
But if he steadily pursues the path
Without a mark upon his callous hide
Thro' the mere brushwood you grow angry with,
And leave the tatters of your flesh upon,
—You have to learn that when the true bar comes,
The thick mid forest, the real obstacle,
Which when you reach, you give the labour up,
Nor dash on, but lie down composed before,
—He goes against it, like the brute he is !
It falls before him, or he dies in his course !
I kept my course thro' past ingratitude—
I saw . . . it does seem now as if I saw,
Could not but see, those insults as they fell,
—Ay, let them glance from off me, very like,
Laughing perhaps to think the quality
You grew so bold on while you so despised,
The Moor's dull mute inapprehensive mood,
Was saving you ; I bore and kept my course :
Now real wrong fronts me—see if I succumb !
Florence withstands me?—I will punish her !

At night my sentence will arrive, you say !
Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel—
Retaining my full power to will and do :
After—it is to see. Tiburzio, thanks !
Go—you are free—join Lucca. I suspend
All further operations till the night.
Thank you, and for the silence most of all !
[*To BRACCIO.*] Let my self-justified accuser go

Bells and Pomegranates.

Safe thro' the army which would trample him
Dead in a moment at my word or sign !
Go, Sir, to Florence ; tell friends what I say—
That while I wait their sentence, theirs waits them.
[To DOMIZIA.] You . . Lady, you have dark Italian
 eyes !
I would be generous if I might . . Oh, yes
When I remember how so oft it seemed
You were inclined to break the barrier down
And lift me to you . . all that praise of old !
Alas for generosity—this hour
Demands strict justice—bear it as you may !
I must—the Moor,—the Savage, pardon you !
[To PUCCIO.] Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them
 forth !—

Luria.

ACT IV.

EVENING.

Enter PUCCIO and JACOPO.

Puc. What Luria will do? Ah, 'tis yours, fair Sir,
Your and your subtle-witted master's part,
To tell me that; I tell you what he can.

Jac. Friend, you mistake my station! I observe
The game, watch how my betters play, no more.

Puc. But mankind are not pieces . . . there's your
fault!

You cannot push them and, the first move made,
Lean back to study what the next should be,
In confidence that when 'tis fixed at length,
You'll find just where you left them, blacks and
whites:

Men go on moving when your hand's away.
You build, I notice, firm on Luria's faith
This whole time,—firmlier than I choose to build,
Who never doubted it—of old, that is—
With Luria in his ordinary mind:
But now, oppression makes the wise man mad—
How do I know he will not turn and stand
And hold his own against you, as he may?
But say that he withdraws to Pisa—well,—
Then, even if all happens to your wish,
Which is a chance . . .

Jac. Nay—'twas an oversight
Not waiting till the proper warrant came:

Bells and Pomegranates.

You could not take what was not ours to give.
But when at night the sentence really comes,
And Florence authorizes past dispute
Luria's removal and your own advance,
You will perceive your duty and accept?

Puc. Accept what? muster-rolls of soldiers' names?
An army upon paper?—I want men,
Their hearts as well as hands—and where's a heart
That's not with Luria in the multitude
I come from walking thro' by Luria's side?
You gave him to them, set him on to grow
A head upon their trunk, one blood feeds both,
They feel him there and live and well know why
—For they do know, if you are ignorant,
Who kept his own place and kept theirs alike,—
Managed their ease yet never spared his own :
All was your deed : another might have served—
There's peradventure no such dearth of men—
But you chose Luria—so they grew to him :
And now, for nothing they can understand,
Luria's removed, off is to roll the head—
The body's mine—much I shall do with it!

Jac. That's at the worst!

Puc. No—at the best it is!
Best, do you hear? I saw them by his side :
Only we two with Luria in the camp
Are left that know the secret? That you think?
Hear what I saw : from rear to van no heart
But felt the quiet patient hero there
Was wronged, nor in the moveless ranks an eye
But glancing told its fellow the whole story
Of that convicted silent knot of spies

Luria.

Who passed thro' them to Florence—they might pass—
No breast but gladlier beat when free of them !
Our troops will catch up Luria, close him round,
Lead him to Florence as their natural lord,
Partake his fortunes, live or die with him !

Jac. And by mistake catch up along with him
Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self-despite
To still continue Second in Command !

Puc. No, Sir, no second nor so fortunate !
Your tricks succeed with me too well for that !
I am as you have made me, and shall die
A mere trained fighting hack to serve your end ;
With words, you laugh at while they leave your mouth,
For my life's rules and ordinance of God !
Duty have I to do, and faith to keep,
And praise to earn, and blame to guard against,
As I was trained. I shall accept your charge,
And fight against one better than myself,
And my own heart's conviction of his wrongs—
That you may count on!—just as hitherto
Have I gone on, persuaded I was slighted,
Degraded, all the terms we learn by rote,—
Because the better nature, fresh-inspired,
Mounted above me to its proper place :
What mattered all the kindly graciousness
And cordial brother's bearing? This was clear—
I was once captain, am subaltern now,
And so must keep complaining like a fool !
So take the curse of a lost man, I say !
You neither play your puppets to the end,
Nor treat the real man,—for his realness' sake
Thrust rudely in their place,—with such regard

Bells and Pomegranates.

As might console them for their altered rank.
Me, the mere steady soldier, you depose
For Luria, and here 's all that he deserves !
Of what account, then, are my services ?
One word for all : whatever Luria does,
—If backed by his indignant troops he turns
In self-defence and Florence goes to ground,—
Or for a signal, everlasting shame
He pardons you, and simply seeks his friends
And heads the Pisan and the Lucchese troops
—And if I, for you ingrates past belief,
Resolve to fight against one false to us,
Who, inasmuch as he is true, fights there—
Whichever way he wins, he wins for me,
For every soldier, for the common good !
Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this !

[*Exeunt.*

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Hus. Saw'st thou ?—For they are gone ! The world
lies bare
Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen
Like what it is, now Florence goes away !
Thou livest now, with men art man again !
Those Florentines were eyes to thee of old ;
But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each—
There lie beneath thee thine own multitudes—
Sawest thou ?

Lur. I saw.

Hus. So hold thy course, my King !
The years return—Let thy heart have its way !
Ah, they would play with thee as with all else ?

Luria.

Turn thee to use, and fashion thee anew,
Find out God's fault in thee as in the rest?
Oh, watch but, listen only to these men
Once at their occupation! Ere ye know,
The free great heaven is shut, their stifling pall
Drops till it frets the very tingling hair—
So weighs it on our head,—and, for the earth,
The common earth is tethered up and down,
Over and across—here shalt thou move, they say!

Lur. Ay, Husain?

Hus. So have they spoiled all beside!
So stands a man girt round with Florentines,
Priests, graybeards, Braccios, women, boys and spies,
All in one tale, each singing the same song,
How thou must house, and live at bed and board,
Take pledge and give it, go their every way,
Breathe to their measure, make thy blood beat time
With theirs—or—all is nothing—thou art lost—
A savage . . . how should such perceive as they?
Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close naked hand!
Look up to it! Why down they pull thy neck
Lest it crush thee who feel it and would kiss,
Without their priests that needs must glove it first
In mercy to thy lip it else will wound!
Love Woman—why a very beast thou art!
Thou must . . .

Lur. Peace, Husain!

Hus. Ay, but, spoiling all,
For all else true things substituting false,
That they should dare spoil, of all instincts, thine!
Should dare to take thee with thine instincts up,
Thy battle-ardours, like a ball of fire,

Bells and Pomegranates.

And class them and allow them place and play
So far, no farther—unabashed the while !
Thou with the soul that never can take rest—
Thou born to do, undo, and do again,
But never to be still,—thou wouldst make war ?
Oh, that is commendable, just and right !
Come over, say they, have the honour due
In living out thy nature ! Fight thy best—
It is to be for Florence not thyself !
For thee it were a horror and a plague—
For us, when war is made for Florence, see,
How all is changed . . . the fire that fed on earth
Now towers to heaven !—

Lur. And what sealed up so long
My Husain's mouth ?

Hus. Oh, friend, oh, lord—for me,
What am I ?—I was silent at thy side
That am a part of thee—It is thy hand,
Thy foot that glows when in the heart fresh blood
Boils up as thine does ! Thou wilt live again,
Again love as thou likest, hate as freely,
Turn to no Braccios nor Domizias now
To ask, before thy very limbs may move,
If Florence' welfare be not touched therein !

Lur. So clear what Florence must expect of me ?

Hus. Both armies against Florence ! Take revenge !
Wide, deep—to live upon, in feeling now,—
And after, in remembrance, year by year—
And, in the dear conviction, die at last !
She lies now at thy pleasure—pleasure have !
Their vaunted intellect that gilds our sense,
They blend with life to show it better by,

Luria.

—How think'st thou?—I have turned that light on them!
They called our thirst of war a transient thing;
The battle element must pass away
From life, they said, and leave a tranquil world:
—Master, I took their light and turned it full
On that dull turgid vein they said would burst
And pass away; and as I looked on Life,
Still everywhere I tracked this, though it hid
And shifted, lay so silent as it thought,
Changed oft the hue yet ever was the same:
Why 'twas all fighting, all their nobler life!
All work was fighting, every harm—defeat,
And every joy obtained—a victory!
Be not their dupe!

—Their dupe? That hour is past!
Here stand'st thou in the glory and the calm!
All is determined! Silence for me now!

[*Exit* HUSAIN.]

Lur. Have I heard all?

DOMIZIA. [*Advancing from the background.*]

No, Luria, I am here.

Not from the motives these have urged on thee,
Ignoble, insufficient, incomplete,
And pregnant each with sure seeds of decay
As failing of sustainment from thyself,
—Neither from low revenge, nor selfishness,
Nor savage lust of power, nor one, nor all,
Shalt thou abolish Florence! I proclaim
The angel in thee and reject the spirits
Which ineffectual crowd about his strength
And mingle with his work and claim a share!

Bells and Pomegranates.

—Inconsciously to the augustest end
Thou hast arisen : second not to him
In rank so much as time, who first ordained
The Florence thou art to destroy, should be—
Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke first
The pride of lonely power, the life apart,
And made the eminences, each to each,
Lean o'er the level world and let it lie
Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath their arms—
So the few famous men of old combined
And let the multitude rise underneath
And reach them and unite—so Florence grew :
Braccio speaks well, it was well worth the price.
But when the sheltered Many grew in pride
And grudged their station to the glorious ones,
Who, greater than their kind, are truly great
Only in voluntary servitude—
Which they who, being less, would fain be more,
And so accept not, then are least of all—
Time was for thee to rise, and thou art here.
Such plague possessed this Florence—who can tell
The mighty girth and greatness at the heart
Of those so noble pillars of the grove
She pulled down in her envy? Who as I
The light weak parasite born but to twine
Round each of them and, measuring them, so live?
My light love keeps the matchless circle safe,
My slender life proves what has past away!
I lived when they departed; lived to cling
To thee, the mighty stranger; thou would'st rise
And burst the thraldom, and avenge, I knew.
I have done nothing—all was thy strong heart—

Luria.

But as a bird's weight breaks the infant tree
Which after holds an aery in its arms,
So did I care that nought should warp thy spire
From rising to the height ; the roof is reached—
Break through and there is all the sky above !
Go on to Florence, Luria ! 'Tis man's cause !
But fail thou, and thy fall is least to dread !
Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
Encouragest her sin so much the more—
And while the bloody past is justified,
The murder of those gone before approved,
Thou all the surelier dost work against
The men to come, the Lurias yet unborn,
That, greater than thyself, are reached o'er thee
Who giv'st the vantage-ground their foes require,
As o'er my prostrate House thyself wast reached !
Man calls thee—God shall judge thee : all is said !
The mission of my House fulfilled at last !
And the mere woman, speaking for herself,
Reserves speech ; it is now no woman's time.

[*Exit DOMIZIA.*

Lur. [*Sol.*] So at the last must figure Luria then !
Doing the various work of all his friends
And answering every purpose save his own.
No doubt, 'tis well for them to see ; but him—
After the exploit what remains ? Perchance
A little pride upon the swarthy brow
At having brought successfully to bear
'Gainst Florence' self her own especial arms,
Her craftiness impelled by fiercer strength
From Moorish blood than feeds the northern wit—
But after !—once the easy vengeance willed,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Beautiful Florence at a word laid low
—(Not in her Domes and Towers and Palaces,
Not in a dream that outrage!)—but laid low
As shamed in her own eyes henceforth for ever,
And for the rival cities round to see,
Conquered and pardoned by a hireling Moor!
—For him who did the irreparable wrong
What would be left, the life's illusion fled,—
What hope or trust in the forlorn wide world?

How strange that Florence should mistake me so!
How grew this? What withdrew her faith from me?
Some cause! These fretful-blooded children talk
Against their mother,—they are wronged, they say—
Notable wrongs a smile makes up again!
So, taking fire at each supposed offence,
These may speak rashly, suffer for rash speech—
But what could it have been in word or deed
That injured me? Some one word spoken more
Out of my heart, and all had changed perhaps!
My fault it must have been,—for what gain they?
Why risk the danger? See what I could do!
And my fault wherefore visit upon them,
My Florentines? The generous revenge
I meditate! To stay here passively,
Go at their summons, be as they dispose—
Why, if my very soldiers stop not that,
And if I moderate my chiefs, what then?
I ruin Florence—teach her friends mistrust—
Confirm her enemies in harsh belief—
And when she finds one day, as she must find,
The strange mistake, and how my heart was hers,

Luria.

This shall console me, that my Florentines
Walk with a sadder step, a graver face,
Who took me with such frankness, praised me so,
At the glad outset! Had they been less sure
They had less feared what seemed a change in me.
And is it they who will have done the harm?
How could they interpose with those old fools
In the council? Suffer for those old fools' sakes—
They, who made pictures of me, turned the songs
About my battles? Ah, we Moors get blind
Out of our proper world where we are right!
The sun that guides is closer to us! See—
See, my own orb! He sinks from out the sky!
Why there! a whole day has he blessed the land,
My land, our Florence all about the hills,
The fields and gardens, vineyards, olive-grounds,
All have been blest—and yet we Florentines
With minds intent upon our battle here,
Found that he rose too soon, or rose too late,
Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa more—
And so we wronged him! does he turn in ire
To burn the earth that cannot understand?
Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky,
His task once ended? Night wipes blame away:
Another morning from my East shall rise
And find all eyes at leisure, all disposed
To watch it and approve its every work.
So, praise the new sun, the successor praise!
Praise the new Luria, and forget the old!

[*Taking a phial from his breast.*

—Strange! This is all I brought from my own Land
To help me—Europe would supply the rest,

Bells and Pomegranates.

All needs beside, all other helps save this !
I thought of adverse fortune, battles lost,
The natural upbraidings of the loser,
And then this quiet remedy to seek
At end of the disastrous day— [He drinks.

'Tis sought !

This was my happy triumph-morning : Florence
Is saved : I drink this, and ere night,—die !—Strange!

Luria.

ACT V.

NIGHT.

LURIA. PUCCIO.

Lur. I thought to do this, not to talk this : well !
Such were my projects for the City's good,
To save her in attack or by defence.
Time, here as elsewhere, soon or late may take
With chance and change our foresight by surprise ;
But not a little we provide against
—If you see clear on every point.

Puc.

Most clear.

Lur. Then all is said—not much, to count the
words,
Yet for an understanding ear enough,
And all that my brief stay permits, beside.
Nor must you blame me as I sought to teach
My elder in command or threw a doubt
Upon the very skill it comforts me
To know I leave,—that steady soldiership
Which never failed me : yet, because it seemed
A stranger's eye might haply note defect
Which skill thro' use and custom overlooks,
I have gone into the old cares once more,
As if I had to come and save again
Florence . . that May . . that morning ! 'Tis night
now—

Well—I broke off with ? . . .

Puc.

Of the past campaign

You spoke—of measures to be kept in mind

Bells and Pomegranates.

For future use.

Lur. True, so . . . but time—no time !
As well end here : remember this, and me !
Farewell now !

Puc. Dare I speak ?

Lur. —The south o' the river,—
How is the second stream called . . no,—the third ?

Puc. Pesa.

Lur. And a stone's cast from the fording place,
To the East,—the little mount's name ?

Puc. Lupo.

Lur. Ay !

Ay—there the tower and all that side is safe !
With San Romano, west of Evola,
San Miniato, Scala, Empoli,
Five towers in all,—forget not !

Puc. Fear not me !

Lur. —Nor to memorialize the Council now,
I' the easy hour, on those battalions' claim
On the other side, by Staggia on the hills,
That kept the Siennese at check !

Puc. One word—
Sir, I must speak ! That you submit yourself
To Florence' bidding howso'er it prove,
And give up the command to me—is much,
Too much, perhaps : but what you tell me now
Even affects the other course to choose—
Poor as it may be, perils even that !
Refuge you seek at Pisa—yet these plans
All militate for Florence, all conclude
The formidable work to make her queen
Of the country,—which her rivals rose against

Luria.

When you began it,—which to interrupt,
Pisa would buy you off in any case !
You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's help
With this made perfect and on record ?

Lur.

I—

At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say ?

Puc. Where are you going ? Then you must decide
To leave the camp a silent fugitive,
Alone, at night—you stealing thro' our lines
Who were this morning's Luria,—you, escaped
To painfully begin the world once more,
With such a Past, as it had never been !
Where are you going ?

Lur.

Not so far, my Puccio,
But I shall get to hear and know and praise
(If you mind praise from your old captain yet)
Each happy blow you strike for Florence !

Puc.

—Ay,

But ere you gain your shelter, what may come !
For see—tho' nothing's surely known as yet,
Still . . truth must out . . I apprehend the worst.
If mere suspicion stood for certainty
Before, there's nothing can arrest the steps
Of Florence toward your ruin, once on foot.
Forgive her fifty times, it matters not !
And having disbelieved your innocence,
How can she trust your magnanimity ?
You may do harm to her—why then, you will !
And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.
Have you a friend to count on ?

Lur.

One sure friend.

Puc. Potent ?

Bells and Pomegranates.

Lur. All potent.

Puc. And he is apprised?

Lur. He waits me.

Puc. So!—Then I, put in your place,
Making my profit of all done by you,
Calling your labours mine, reaping their fruit,
To this the State's gift now add this from you—
That I may take to my peculiar store
All these instructions to do Florence good,
And if by putting some few happily
In practice I should both advantage her
And draw down honour on myself,—what then?

Lur. Do it, my Puccio! I shall know and praise!

Puc. Though so men say, “mark what we gain by
change
—A Puccio for a Luria!”

Lur. Even so.

Puc. Then not for fifty hundred Florences
Would I accept one office save my own,
Fill any other than my rightful post
Here at your feet, my Captain and my Lord!
That such a cloud should break, such trouble be,
Ere a man settles soul and body down
Into his true place and takes rest for ever!
There were my wise eyes fixed on your right hand,
And so the bad thoughts came and the worse words,
And all went wrong and painfully enough,—
No wonder, till, the right spot stumbled on,
All the jar stops and there is peace at once!
I am yours now,—a tool your right hand wields.
God's love, that I should live, the man I am,
On orders, warrants, patents and the like,

Luria.

As if there were no glowing eye i' the world
To glance straight inspiration to my brain,
No glorious heart to give mine twice the beats !
For see,—the doubt where is it?—Fear? 'tis flown !
And Florence and her anger are a tale
To scare a child—Why, half a dozen words
Will tell her, spoken as I now can speak,
Her error, my past folly—and all 's right,
And you are Luria, the great chief again !
Or at the worst—which worst were best of all—
To exile or to death I follow you.

Lur. Thanks, Puccio ! Let me use the privilege
You grant me : if I still command you,—stay !
Remain here—my vicegerent, it shall be,
And not successor : let me, as of old,
Still serve the State, my spirit prompting yours ;
Still triumph, one for both—There ! Leave me now !
You cannot disobey my first command ?
Remember what I spoke of Jacopo
And what you promised to observe with him :
Send him to speak with me—nay, no farewell—
You will be by me when the sentence comes.

[*Exit* PUCCIO.]

Lur. So there 's one Florentine returns again !
Out of the genial morning company
One face is left to take into the night.

Enter JACOPO.

Jac. I wait for your commands, Sir.

Lur.

What, so soon ?

I thank your ready presence and fair word.

Bells and Pomegranates.

I used to notice you in early days
As of the other species, so to speak,
The watchers of the lives of us who act—
That weigh our motives, scrutinize our thoughts ;
So I propound this to your faculty
As you would tell me were a town to take
. . . That is, of old. I am departing hence
Under these imputations : that is nought—
I leave no friend on whom they may rebound,
Hardly a name behind me in the land,
Being a stranger ; all the more behoves
That I regard how altered were the case
With natives of the country, Florentines
On whom the like mischance should fall ; the roots
O' the tree survive the ruin of the trunk—
No root of mine will throb . . . you understand :
But I had predecessors, Florentines,
Accused as I am now and punished so—
The Traversari—you know more than I
How stigmatized they are and lost in shame.
Now, Puccio who succeeds me in command
Both served them and succeeded in due time ;
He knows the way, and holds the documents,
And has the power to lay the simple truth
Before an active spirit, as I know yours :
And also there 's Tiburzio, my new friend,
Will at a word confirm such evidence,
He being the chivalric soul we know.
I put it to your instinct—were 't not well,
—A grace, though but for contrast's sake, no more,
If you who witness and have borne a share
Involuntarily in my mischance,

Luria.

Should, of your proper motion, set your skill
To indicate . . . that is, investigate
The reason or the wrong of what befel
Those famous citizens your countrymen ?
Nay—you shall promise nothing—but reflect,
And if your sense of justice prompt you—good !

Jac. And if, the trial past, their fame stands white
To all men's eyes, as yours, my lord, to mine—
Their ghosts may sleep in quiet satisfied !
For me, a straw thrown up into the air,
My testimony goes for a straw's worth :
I used to hold by the instructed brain,
And move with Braccio as the master-wind ;
The heart leads surelier : I must move with you—
As greatest now, who ever were the best.
So let the last and humblest of your servants
Accept your charge, as Braccio's heretofore.

[*Exit* JACOPO.]

Lur. Another !—Luria goes not poorly forth !
If one could wait ! The only fault's with Time :
All men become good creatures . . . but so slow !

Enter DOMIZIA.

Lur. Ah, you once more ?

Dom. Domizia, that you knew,
Performed her task and died with it—'Tis I !
Let the Past sleep now.

Lur. I have done with it.

Dom. How inexhaustibly the spirit grows !
One object she seemed erewhile born to reach
With her whole energies and die content,

Bells and Pomegranates.

So like a wall at the world's end it stood,
With nought beyond to live for—is it reached, . . .
Already are new undreamed energies
Outgrowing under and extending further
To a new object ;—there 's another world !
See : I have told the purpose of my life,—
'Tis gained—you are decided, well or ill—
My work is done with you, your brow declares :
But—leave you ? More of you seems yet to reach !
I stay for what I just begin to see.

Lur. So that you turn not to the Past !

Dom.

You trace

Nothing but ill in it—my selfish impulse
Which sought its ends and disregarded yours ?

Lur. Speak not against your nature : best each keep
His own—you yours—most now when I keep mine,
At least fall by it, having weakly stood.
God's finger marks distinctions all so fine
We would confound—the Lesser has its use
Which when it apes the Greater, is foregone.
I, born a Moor, lived half a Florentine ;
But, punished properly, can die a Moor.
Beside there is what makes me understand
Your nature . . . I have seen it—

Dom.

One like mine ?

Lur. In my own East . . . if you would stoop and
help

My barbarous illustration . . . it sounds ill
Yet there 's no wrong at bottom—rather praise—

Dom. Well ?

Lur. We have creatures there which if you saw
The first time, you would doubtless marvel at,

Luria.

For their surpassing beauty, craft and strength.
And tho' it were a lively moment's shock
Wherein you found the purpose of their tongues
That seemed innocuous in their lambent play,
Yet, once made know such grace required such guard,
Your reason soon would acquiesce, I think,
In the Wisdom which made all things for the best,
So take them, good with ill, contentedly—
The prominent beauty with the secret sting.
I am glad to have seen you wondrous Florentines
Yet . . .

Dom. I am here to listen.

Lur. My own East !
How nearer God we were ! He glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours !
We feel Him, nor by painful reason know !
The everlasting minute of creation
Is felt there ; *Now* it is, as it was *Then* ;
All changes at His instantaneous will,
Not by the operation of a law
Whose maker is elsewhere at other work !
His soul is still engaged upon his world—
Man's praise can forward it, Man's prayer suspend,
For is not God all-mighty ?—To recast
The world, erase old things and make them new,
What costs it Him ? So man breathes nobly there
And inasmuch as Feeling, the East's gift,
Is quick and transient—comes, and lo, is gone—
While Northern Thought is slow and durable,
Oh, what a mission was reserved for me,
Who, born with a perception of the power

Bells and Pomegranates.

And use of the North's thought for us of the East,
Should have stayed there and turned it to account,
Giving Thought's character and permanence
To the too-transitory Feelings there—
Writing God's messages in mortal words !
Instead of which, I leave my fated field
For this where such a task is needed least,
Where all are born consummate in the art
I just perceive a chance of making mine,—
And then, deserting thus my early post,
I wonder that the men I come among
Mistake me ! There, how all had understood,
Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp and keep,
Fresh instinct to translate them into law !
Me who . . .

Dom. Who here the greater task achieve,
More needful even : who have brought fresh stuff
For us to mould, interpret and prove right,—
New feeling fresh from God, which, could we know
O' the instant, where had been our need of it ?
—Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,
What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,
All their revelation, taught us so long since
That, having mere tradition of the fact,
Truth copied falteringly from copies faint,
The early traits all dropped away,—we said
On sight of faith of yours, so looks not faith
We understand, described and taught before.
But still the truth was shown ; and tho' at first
It suffer from our haste, yet trace by trace
Old memories reappear, the likeness grows,
Our slow Thought does its work, and all is known

Luria.

Oh, noble Luria! what you have decreed
I see not, but no animal revenge, . . .
It cannot be the gross and vulgar way
Traced for me by convention and mistake
Has gained that calm approving eye and brow.
Spare Florence after all! Let Luria trust
To his own soul, and I will trust to him!

Lur. In time!

Dom. How, Luria?

Lur. It is midnight now—
And they arrive from Florence with my fate.

Dom. I hear no step . . .

Lur. I feel it, as you say.

Enter HUSAIN.

Hus. The man returned from Florence!

Lur. As I knew.

Hus. He seeks thee.

Lur. And I only wait for him.

Aught else?

Hus. A movement of the Lucchese troops
Southward—

Lur. . . . Toward Florence? Have out instantly . . .
Ah, old use clings! Puccio must care henceforth!
In—quick—'tis nearly midnight! Bid him come!

Enter TIBURZIO, BRACCIO, and PUCCIO.

Lur. Tiburzio,—not at Pisa?

Tib. I return

From Florence: I serve Pisa, and must think
By such procedure I have served her best.

Bells and Pomegranates.

A people is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one—
And those who live as models for the mass
Are singly of more value than they all.
Such man are you, and such a time is this
That your sole fate concerns a nation more
Than its immediate welfare ; and to prove
Your rectitude, and duly crown the same,
Of consequence beyond the day's event.
Keep but the model safe, new men will rise
To study it, and many another day.
I might go try my fortune as you bade,
And joining Lucca, helped by your disgrace,
Repair our harm—so were to-day's work done :
But I look farther. I have testified
(Declaring my submission to your arms)
Your full success to Florence, making clear
Your probity as none else could : I spoke—
And it shone clearly !

Lur. Ah—till Braccio spoke !

Brac. Till Braccio told in just a word the whole—
His old great error, and return to knowledge—
Which told . . . Nay, Luria, I should droop the head
Whom all shame rests with, yet I dare look up,
Sure of your pardon now I sue for it,
Knowing you wholly—so let midnight end !
Sunrise will come next ! Still you answer not ?
The shadow of the night is past away :
The circling faces here 'mid which it rose
Are all that felt it,—they close round you now
To witness its completest vanishing.
Speak, Luria ! Here begins your true career—

Luria.

Look up to it!—All now is possible—
The glory and the grandeur of each dream—
And every prophecy shall be fulfilled
Save one . . . (nay, now your word must come at
last)
—That you would punish Florence!
Hus. [*Pointing to LURIA'S dead body.*] That is
done!—

Curtain falls.

HERE ends my first series of "Bells and Pomegranates:" and I take the opportunity of explaining, in reply to inquiries, that I only meant by that title to indicate an endeavour towards something like an alternation, or mixture, of music with discoursing, sound with sense, poetry with thought; which looks too ambitious, thus expressed, so the symbol was preferred. It is little to the purpose, that such is actually one of the most familiar of the many Rabbinical (and Patristic) acceptations of the phrase; because I confess that, letting authority alone, I supposed the bare words, in such juxtaposition, would sufficiently convey the desired meaning. "Faith and good works" is another fancy, for instance, and perhaps no easier to arrive at: yet Giotto placed a pomegranate fruit in the hand of Dante, and Raffaello crowned his Theology (in the *Camera della Segnatura*) with blossoms of the same; as if the Bellari and Vasari would be sure to come after, and explain that it was merely "*simbolo delle buone opere—il qual Pomo granato fu però usato nelle vesti del Pontefice appresso gli Ebrei.*"

R. B.

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

A Soul's Tragedy.

PART FIRST, BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE POETRY
OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE: AND PART
SECOND, ITS PROSE.

PART I.

Inside LUITOLFO'S house at Faenza.
CHIAPPINO, EULALIA.

Eulalia.

WHAT is it keeps Luitolfo? Night's fast
falling,
And 'twas scarce sunset . . . had the Ave-bell
Sounded before he sought the Provost's House?
I think not: all he had to say would take
Few minutes, such a very few, to say!
How do you think, Chiappino? If our lord
The Provost were less friendly to your friend
Than everybody here professes him,
I should begin to tremble—should not you?
Why are you silent when so many times
I turn and speak to you?

Ch. That's good!

Eu. You laugh?

Ch. Yes. I had fancied nothing that bears price
In the whole world was left to call my own,

Bells and Pomegranates.

And, may be, felt a little pride thereat :
Up to a single man's or woman's love,
Down to the right in my own flesh and blood,
There's nothing mine, I fancied,—till you spoke !
—Counting, you see, as “nothing” the permission
To study this peculiar lot of mine
In silence : well, go silence with the rest
Of the world's good ! What can I say shall serve ?

Eu. This, lest you, even more than needs, embitter

Our parting : say your wrongs have cast, for once,
A cloud across your spirit !

Ch. How a cloud ?

Eu. No man nor woman loves you, did you say ?

Ch. My God, were't not for thee !

Eu. Ay, God remains,

Even did Men forsake you.

Ch. Oh, not so !

Were't not for God, I mean, what hope of truth—
Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with Man ?
I, now—the homeless, friendless, penniless,
Proscribed and exiled wretch who speak to you,
Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for my death,
(The thing that tempts me most) help speaking lies
About your friendship, and Luitolfo's courage,
And all our townsfolk's equanimity,—
Through sheer incompetence to rid myself
Of the old miserable lying trick
Caught from the liars I have lived with,—God,
Did I not turn to thee ! It is thy prompting
I dare to be ashamed of, and thy counsel
Would die along my coward lip, I know—

A Soul's Tragedy.

But I do turn to thee! This craven tongue,
These features which refuse the soul its way,
Reclaim Thou! Give me truth—truth, power to
speak

—And after be sole present to approve
The spoken truth!—or, stay, that spoken truth,
Who knows but you, too, might approve?

Eu.

Ah, well—

Keep silence, then, Chiappino!

Ch.

You would hear,

And shall now,—why the thing we're pleased to style
My gratitude to you and all your friends
For service done me, is just gratitude
So much as yours was service—and no more.
I was born here, so was Luitolfo,—both
At one time, much with the same circumstance
Of rank and wealth; and both, up to this night
Of parting company, have side by side
Still fared, he in the sunshine—I, the shadow:
“Why?” asks the world: “Because,” replies the
world

To its complacent self, “these playfellows,
Who took at church the holy-water drop
One from the other's finger, and so forth,—
Were of two moods: Luitolfo was the proper
Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,
Fit for the sunshine, so it followed him;
A happy-tempered bringer of the best
Out of the worst; who bears with what's past
cure

And puts so good a face on 't—wisely passive
Where action's fruitless, while he remedies

Bells and Pomegranates.

In silence what the foolish rail against ;
A man to smooth such natures as parade
Of opposition must exasperate—
No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak
Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous
At lucky junctures ; one who won't forego
The after-battle work of binding wounds,
Because, forsooth, he'd have to bring himself
To side with their inflictors for their leave !”
—Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat
What comes so glibly from the common mouth
About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend ?

Eu. Because that friend's sense is obscured . . .

Ch. I thought

You would be readier with the other half
Of the world's story,—my half!—Yet, 'tis true,
For all the world does say it ! say your worst !
True, I thank God, I ever said “you sin,”
When a man did sin : if I could not say it,
I glared it at him,—if I could not glare it,
I prayed against him,—then my part seemed over ;
God's may begin yet—so it will, I trust !

Eu. If the world outraged you, did we ?

Ch. What's “me”

That you use well or ill ? It's Man, in me,
All your successes are an outrage to,
You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say !
Here's our Faenza birthplace—they send here
A Provost from Ravenna—how he rules,
You can at times be eloquent about—
“Then, end his rule” ! ah yes, one stroke does
that !

A Soul's Tragedy.

But patience under wrong works slow and sure :
Must violence still bring peace forth ? He, beside,
Returns so blandly one's obeisance—ah—
Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,
Some human sympathy which, once excite,
And all the lump were leavened quietly—
So, no more talk of striking for this time !
But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear
These pretty takings-up and layings-down
Our cause, just as you think occasion suits !
Enough of earnest, is there ? You'll play, will you ?
Diversify your tactics,—give submission,
Obsequiousness and flattery a turn,
While we die in our misery patient deaths ?
We all are outraged then, and I the first !
I, for Mankind, resent each shrug and smirk,
Each beck and bend, each . . . all you do and are,
I hate !

Eu. We share a common censure, then !
'Tis well you have not poor Luitolfo's part
Or mine to point out in the wide offence.

Ch. Oh, shall I let you so escape me, Lady ?
Come, on your own ground, Lady,—from yourself,
Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine,
What have I got to be so grateful for ?
These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other
Paid by Luitolfo ?

Eu. Shame, Chiappino !

Ch. Shame

Fall presently on who deserves it most !
Which is to see : he paid my fines—my friend,
Your prosperous smooth husband presently,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Then, scarce your wooer,—now your lover: well—
I loved you!

Eu. Hold!

Ch. You knew it, years ago;
When my voice faltered and my eyes grew dim
Because you gave me your silk mask to hold—
My voice that greatens when there's need to curse
The people's Provost to their heart's content,
—My eyes, the Provost, who bears all men's eyes,
Banishes now because he cannot bear!
You knew . . . but you do your parts—my part, I!
So be it! you flourish—I decay! All's well!

Eu. I hear this for the first time!

Ch. Oh, the fault was there?

Then my days spoke not and my nights of fire
Were voiceless? Then the very heart may burst
Yet all prove nought, because no mincing speech
Tells leisurely that thus it is and thus?
Eulalia—truce with toying for this once—
A banished fool, who troubles you to-night
For the last time—Oh, what's to fear from me?
You knew I loved you!

Eu. Not so, on my faith!

You were my now-affianced lover's friend—
Came in, went out with him, could speak as he;
All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit;
See how your words come from you in a crowd!
Luitolfo's first to place you o'er himself
In all that challenges respect and love—
Yet you were silent then, who blame me now!
I say all this by fascination, sure—
I am all but wed to one I love, yet listen—

A Soul's Tragedy.

It must be, you are wronged, and that the wrongs
Luitolfo pities . . .

Ch. —You too pity? Do!

But hear first what my wrongs are ; so began
This talk and so shall end this talk. I say,
Was't not enough that I must strive, I saw,
To grow so far familiar with your charms
As to contrive some way to win them—which
To do, an age seemed far too little—for, see !
We all aspire to Heaven—and there is Heaven
Above us—go there ! Dare we go? no, surely !
How dare we go without a reverent pause,
A growing less unfit for Heaven?—Even so,
I dared not speak—the greater fool, it seems !
Was't not enough to struggle with such folly,
But I must have, beside, the very man
Whose slight, free, loose and incapacious soul
Gave his tongue scope to say whate'er he would
—Must have him load me with his benefits
For fortune's fiercest stroke !

Eu. Justice to him

That's now entreating, at his risk perhaps,
Justice for you ! Did he once call those acts
Of simple friendship—bounties, benefits ?

Ch. No—the straight course had been to call
them so—

Then, I had flung them back, and kept myself
Unhampered, free as he to win the prize
We both sought—but “the gold was dross,” he
said,

“He loved me, and I loved him not—to spurn
“A trifle out of superfluity :

Bells and Pomegranates.

“ He had forgotten he had done as much ” !
So had not I !—Henceforth, try as I could
To take him at his word, there stood by you
My benefactor—who might speak and laugh
And urge his nothings—even banter me
Before you—but my tongue was tied. A dream !
Let’s wake : your husband . . . how you shake at
that !

Good—my revenge !

Eu. Why should I shake ? what forced,
Or forces me to be Luitolfo’s bride ?

Ch. There’s my revenge, that nothing forces you !
No gratitude, no liking of the eye,
Nor longing of the heart, but the poor bond
Of habit—here so many times he came,
So much he spoke,—all these compose the tie
That pulls you from me ! Well, he paid my fines,
Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe, dish from table—
—He spoke a good word to the Provost here—
Held me up when my fortunes fell away
—It had not looked so well to let me drop—
Men take pains to preserve a tree-stump, even,
Whose boughs they played beneath—much more a
friend !

But one grows tired of seeing, after the first,
Pains spent upon impracticable stuff
Like me : I could not change—you know the rest.
I’ve spoke my mind too fully out, for once,
This morning to our Provost ; so ere night
I leave the city on pain of death—and now
On my account there’s gallant intercession
Goes forward—that’s so graceful !—and anon

A Soul's Tragedy.

He'll noisily come back : the intercession
Was made and fails—all 's over for us both—
'Tis vain contending—I had better go :
And I do go—and so to you he turns
Light of a load, and ease of that permits
His visage to repair its natural bland
Economy, sore broken late to suit
My discontent : so all are pleased—you, with him,
He with himself, and all of you with me
—Who, say the citizens, had done far better
In letting people sleep upon their woes,
If not possessed with talent to relieve them
When once they woke ;—but then I had, they'll say,
Doubtless some unknown compensating pride
In what I did—and as I seem content
With ruining myself, why so should they be,
And so they are, and so be with his prize
The devil when he gets them speedily !
Why does not your Luitolfo come ? I long
To don this cloak and take the Lugo path.
It seems you never loved me, then ?

Eu. Chiappino !

Ch. Never ?

Eu. Never.

Ch. That 's sad—say what I might,

There was no helping being sure this while
You loved me—love like mine must have return,
I thought—no river starts but to some sea !
And had you loved me, I could soon devise
Some specious reason why you stifled love,
Some fancied self-denial on your part
Which made you choose Luitolfo ; so excepting

Bells and Pomegranates.

From the wide condemnation of all here,
One woman ! Well, the other dream may break !
If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,
Loved me, tho' in the vilest breast 'twere lodged,
I should, I think, be forced to love again—
Else there 's no right nor reason in the world !

Eu. "If you knew," say you,—but I did not know—
That 's where you're blind, Chiappino ! a disease
Which if I may remove, I'll not repent
The listening to : you cannot, will not, see
How, place you but in every circumstance
Of us, you are just now indignant at,
You'd be as we.

Ch. I should be ? . . . that again !
I, to my Friend, my Country and my Love,
Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines ?

Eu. As we.

Ch. Now I'll say something to remember !
I trust in Nature for the stable laws
Of Beauty and Utility—Spring shall plant,
And Autumn garner to the end of time :
I trust in God—the Right shall be the Right
And other than the Wrong while He endures—
I trust in my own soul that can perceive
The outward and the inward, nature's good
And God's—So—seeing these men and myself,
Having a right to speak, thus do I speak :
I'll not curse . . . God bears with them—well may I—
But I—protest against their claiming me !
I simply say, if that 's allowable,
I would not . . . broadly . . . do as they have done—
—God curse this townful of born slaves, bred slaves,

A Soul's Tragedy.

Branded into the blood and bone slaves! Curse
Whoever loved, above his liberty,
House, land or life! and . . . [*A knocking without.*
. . . Bless my hero-friend,

Luitolfo!

Eu. How he knocks!

Ch. The peril, Lady!

"Chiappino, I have run a risk! My God!

"How when I prayed the Provost—(he's my friend)—

"To grant you a week's respite of his sentence

"That confiscates your goods, and exiles you,

"He shrugged his shoulder . . . I say, shrugged it!

Yes,

"And fright of that drove all else from my head.

"Here's a good purse of *scudi*—off with you!

"Lest of that shrug come—what God only knows!

"The *scudi*—friend, they're trash—no thanks, I beg—

"Take the North gate,—for San Vitale's suburb

"Whose double taxes you appealed against,

"In discomposure at your ill-success

"Is apt to stone you: there, there—only go!

"Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily—

"Shake . . . oh, you hurt me, so you squeeze my
wrist!"

—Is it not thus you'll speak, adventurous friend?

[*As he opens the door, LUITOLFO rushes in,
his garments disordered.*

Eu. Luitolfo! Blood?

Luit. There's more—and more of it!

Eulalia—take the garment . . . no . . . you, friend!

You take it and the blood from me—you dare!

Eu. Oh, who has hurt you? where's the wound?

Bells and Pomegranates.

Ch. "Who," say you ?

The man with many a touch of virtue yet !
The Provost's friend has proved too frank of speech
And this comes of it. Miserable hound !
This comes of temporizing, as I said !
Here's fruit of your smooth speeches and fair looks !
Now see my way ! As God lives, I go straight
To the palace and do justice, once for all !

Luit. What says he ?

Ch. I'll do justice on him !

Luit. Him ?

Ch. The Provost.

Luit. I've just killed him !

Eu. Oh, my God !

Luit. My friend, they're on my trace—they'll have
me—now !

They're round him, busy with him : soon they'll find
He's past their help, and then they'll be on me !
Chiappino ! save Eulalia . . I forget . .
Were you not bound . . for . . .

Ch. Lugo !

Luit. Ah—yes—yes—

That was the point I prayed of him to change.

Well—go—be happy . . is Eulalia safe ?

They're on me !

Ch. 'Tis through me they reach you, then !

Friend, seem the man you are ! Lock arms—that's
right.

Now tell me what you've done ; explain how you
That still professed forbearance, still preached peace,
Could bring yourself . . .

Luit. What was peace for, Chiappino ?

A Soul's Tragedy.

I tried peace—did that say that when peace failed
Strife should not follow? All my peaceful days
Were just the prelude to a day like this.
I cried "You call me 'friend'—save my true friend!
"Save him, or lose me!"

Ch. But you never said
You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus!

Luit. Why should I say it? What else did I mean?

Ch. Well? He persisted?

Luit. . . . Would so order it
You should not trouble him too soon again—
I saw a meaning in his eye and lip—
I poured my heart's store of indignant words
Out on him—then,—I know not.—He retorted—
And I . . . some staff lay there to hand—I think
He bade his servants thrust me out—I struck—
. . . Ah, they come! Fly you, save yourselves, you two!
The dead back-weight of the beheading axe!
The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge!

Eu. They do come! Torches in the Place! Fare-
well—

Chiappino! You can work no good to us—
Much to yourself; believe not all the world
Must needs be cursed henceforth!

Ch. And you?

Eu. I stay.

Ch. Ha, ha! now listen! I am master here!
This was my coarse disguise—this paper shows
My path of flight and place of refuge—see—
Lugo—Argenta—past San Nicolo—
Ferrara, then to Venice and all's safe!
Put on the cloak! His people have to fetch

Bells and Pomegranates.

A compass round about.—There's time enough
Ere they can reach us—so you straightway make
For Lugo . . . Nay, he hears not! On with it—
The cloak, Luitolfo, do you hear me? See—
He obeys he knows not how.—Then, if I must . . .
Answer me! Do you know the Lugo gate?

Eu. The north-west gate, over the bridge!

Luit. I know!

Ch. Well, there—you are not frightened? All my
route

Is traced in that—at Venice you'll escape
Their power! Eulalia—I am master here!

[*Shouts from without. He pushes out LUITOLFO,
who complies mechanically.*

In time! nay, help me with him—So!—he's gone.

Eu. What have you done? On you, perchance all
know

The Provost's hater, will men's vengeance fall
As our accomplice . . .

Ch. Mere accomplice? See!

[*Putting on LUITOLFO'S vest.*

Now, Lady, am I true to my profession,
Or one of these?

Eu. You take Luitolfo's place?

Ch. Die for him!

Eu. Well done! [*Shouts increase.*

Ch. How the people tarry!

I can't be silent . . . I must speak . . . or sing—
How natural to sing now!

Eu. Hush and pray!

We are to die—but even I perceive
'Tis not a very hard thing so to die—

A Soul's Tragedy.

My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes,
Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's life
With the stern husband ; Tisbe's heart goes forth
Each evening after that wild son of hers,
To track his thoughtless footstep thro' the streets—
How easy for them both to die like this !
I am not sure that I could live as they.

Ch. Here they come, crowds ! They pass the gate ?
Yes !—No !—

One torch is in the court-yard. Here flock all !

Eu. At least Luitolfo has escaped !—What cries !

Ch. If they would drag one to the market-place
One might speak there !

Eu. List, list !

Ch. They mount the steps !

Enter the Populace.

Ch. I killed the Provost !

The Populace. [*Speaking together.*] 'Twas Chiappino,
friends !

Our saviour.—The best man at last as first !

He who first made us see what chains we wore,

He also strikes the blow that shatters them,

He at last saves us—our best citizen !

—Oh, have you only courage to speak now ?

My eldest son was christened a year since

“Cino” to keep Chiappino's name in mind—

Cino, for shortness merely, you observe !

The City's in our hands.—The guards are fled—

Do you, the cause of all, come down—come down—

Come forth to counsel us, our chief, our king,

Bells and Pomegranates.

Whate'er rewards you ! Choose your own reward !
The peril over, its reward begins !
Come and harangue us in the market-place !

Eu. Chiappino !

Ch. Yes . . I understand your eyes !

You think I should have promptlier disowned
This deed with its strange unforeseen success
In favour of Luitolfo—but the peril,
So far from ended, hardly seems begun !
To-morrow, rather, when a calm succeeds,
We easily shall make him full amends :
And meantime . . if we save them as they pray,
And justify the deed by its effects ?

Eu. You would, for worlds, you had denied at once !

Ch. I know my own intention, be assured !

All's well ! Precede us, fellow-citizens !

A Soul's Tragedy.

PART II.

The Market-place. LUITOLFO *in disguise mingling with the Populace assembled opposite the Provost's Palace.*

1st Bystander. [*To LUITOLFO.*] You a friend of Luitolfo's? Then your friend is vanished,—in all probability killed on the night that his patron the tyrannical Provost was loyally suppressed here, exactly a month ago, by our illustrious fellow-citizen, thrice-noble saviour, and new Provost that is like to be this very morning,—Chiappino!

Luit. *He* the new Provost?

2nd. Up those steps will he go, and beneath yonder pillar stand, while Ogniben, the Pope's Legate from Ravenna, reads the new dignitary's title to the people, according to established usage.—For which reason there is the assemblage you inquire about.

Luit. Chiappino—the old Provost's successor? Impossible! But tell me of that presently—What I would know first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo must so necessarily have been killed on that memorable night?

3rd. You were Luitolfo's friend? So was I—Never, if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a milk-sop! He, with all the opportunities in the world, furnished by daily converse with our oppressor, would not stir a finger to help us: so when Chiappino rose

Bells and Pomegranates.

in solitary majesty and how does one go on saying? . . . dealt the godlike blow,—this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing the indignation of an aroused and liberated people, fled precipitately: he may have got trodden to death in the press at the south-east gate when the Provost's guards fled thro' it to Ravenna with their wounded master,—if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge.

Luit. Or why not simply have lain *perdue* in some quiet corner,—such as San Cassiano, where his estate was,—receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here . . . how, for instance, the Provost was not dead after all, only wounded . . . or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost . . . and thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning—might it not have been so?

3rd. Why, he may have taken that care of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock.—I'll tell you how his uncle, just such another gingerly trader on tiptoes with finger on lip,—how he met his death in the great plague-year: *dico vobis!* Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house; then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger.—And so did he begin—but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say,—thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague,

A Soul's Tragedy.

this exhausted so much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent,—consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of a stone—Ha, ha !

Luit. [*Aside.*] (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me.) Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude !

3rd. Why, he had a house here, and a woman to whom he was affianced ; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir . . .

Luit. Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me with your pleasantry—I know Chiappino better !

1st. (Our friend has the bile ! after all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities—.) Pray how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night ?

Luit. It is most to the purpose that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him with proposing to accept.

1st. Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable—up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children—out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant—we were to defy the world : but, next grey morning, “what will Rome say,” began everybody—(you know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome). And quietly into the town by the Ravenna road comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of Pontifical

Bells and Pomegranates.

Legate—trots briskly thro' the streets humming a "*Cur fremuère gentes,*" and makes directly for the Provost's Palace—there it faces you—"One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!" (laughing gently to himself)—"Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar—So! And now, my revolters and good friends, what do you want? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost—and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resorts to another method; 'tis I come, and not another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile,—I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves,—and now pray what does please you? To live without any government at all? Or having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a Justice anterior to all institutions,—and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place,—once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him — and this so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him so late that evening—I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to

A Soul's Tragedy.

hear what you will do next."—And thus ran he on easily and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of Law, Order and Paternal Government by somebody from rather a distance : all our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser ; but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly and set things right again . . .

Luit. Do you see?—I recognise him there !

3rd. Ay, but mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure Republic . . . "And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?"—returns the Legate—thereupon speaking, for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the Best and Wisest—and it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light—"Oh, are you there?" quoth Chiappino :—"In that, I agree," returns Chiappino, and so on.

Luit. But did Chiappino cede at once to this ?

1st. Why, not altogether at once—for instance, he said that the difference between him and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way,—whereas what right, asked he, has any man to wish to be superior to another?—whereat, "Ah Sir," answers the Legate, "this is the death of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers—this—that your right hand, (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it dis-

Bells and Pomegranates.

played so ostentatiously, not to destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand—yourself set about attacking yourself—for see now! Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, that are apt to waylay us the weaker ones in the road of Life,—and when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same,—you are found delivering an opinion like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one's fellows,—all that you so disclaim,—but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose to it,—only in a lower stage of manifestation? You don't want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion—to have me hold solemnly up your gown's tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while—but neither does our gaping friend, the burgess yonder, want the other kind of kingship, that consists in understanding better than his fellows this and similar points of human nature, nor to roll under the tongue this sweeter morsel still, the feeling that, thro' immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above you and me!”—And so chatting they glided off arm in arm.

A Soul's Tragedy.

Luit. And the result is . . .

1st. Why, that a month having gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love—at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's goods,—becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship—which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently!

Luit. [*Withdrawing a little.*] I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever—yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger,—wherefore, disregarding her injunctions to continue in my retreat and wait the result of, what she called, some experiment yet in process—I hastened here without her leave or knowledge—what could I else?—Yet if what they say be true . . . if it were for such a purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh, no, no! I must confront him and her before I believe this of them—and at the word, see!

Enter CHIAPPINO and EULALIA.

Eu. We part here, then? The change in your principles would seem to be complete!

Ch. Now, why refuse to see that in my present course I change no principles, only re-adapt them and more adroitly? I had despaired of what you may call the material instrumentality of Life; of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind thro' such a deranged machinery as the existing modes of government—but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform

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these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to the soul I am about to bestow on them . . . do you see? Why should one desire to invent, so long as it remains possible to renew and transform? When all further hope of the old organization shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it will be time to try and create another.

Eu. And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system of absolute government by a Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavouring to realize those visions of a perfect State, we once heard of?

Ch. Say, I would fain realize my conception of a Palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one perfectly; here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground; here I stand without a stone to lay, or a labourer to help me,—stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which the night comes. On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer me . . . turn and see it . . . the old Provost's House to experiment upon—ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now—but materials abound, a crowd of workmen offer their services; here, exists yet a Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there, a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough; and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these to heart's content—ought I not rather make the best of such an opportunity, than continue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down, never to rise again? But you can-

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not understand this nor me : it is better we should part as you desire.

Eu. So the love breaks away too !

Ch. No, rather my soul's capacity for love widens—needs more than one object to content it,—and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part,—nor in finding the so many and so various loves, united in the love of a woman,—finding all uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. I shall give the intellectual part of my love to Men, the mighty dead, or illustrious living ; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. What do I lose ?

Eu. Nay, I only think, what do I love ! and, one more word—which shall complete my instruction—does Friendship go too ?—What of Luitolfo—the author of your present prosperity ?

Ch. How the author ?—

Eu. That blow now called yours . . .

Ch. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a blind natural operation—and to which all my thoughts and life directly and advisedly tended. I would have struck it, and could not. He would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine—a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away—a mere first step with me, on which I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it ?

Eu. So we profess, so we perform !

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Enter OGNIBEN. *EULALIA stands apart.*

Ogni. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!—By your leave, Sir! Perform? What does the lady say of Performing?

Ch. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust Profession, only Performance.

Ogni. She'll not say that, Sir, when she knows you longer; you'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men by their professions! For tho' the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust it and know the man by it, I say—not by his performance—which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must with its accidents and circumstances,—the profession was purely the man's own! I judge people by what they might be,—not are, nor will be.

Ch. But have there not been found, too, performing natures, not merely promising?

Ogni. Plenty: little Bindo of our town, for instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio, once, "I will repay you"!—for a favour done him: so when his father came to die and Bindo succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway for Masaccio and shares all with him; gives him half the land, half the money, half the kegs of wine in the cellar. "Good," say you—and it is good: but had little Bindo found himself possessor of all this wealth some five years before—on the happy night when Masaccio procured him that interview in the garden with his pretty cousin

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Lisa—instead of being the beggar he then was,—I am bound to believe that in the warm moment of promise he would have given away all the wine-kegs, and all the money, and all the land, and only reserved to himself some hut on a hill-top hard by, whence he might spend his life in looking and seeing his friend enjoy himself: he meant fully that much, but the world interfered!—To our business—did I understand you just now within-doors? You are not going to marry your old friend's love, after all?

Ch. I must have a woman that can sympathize with and appreciate me, I told you.

Ogni. Oh, I remember! you, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one (—avowedly lesser—contest with you on that score would never do!)—such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward: why, that were being not merely as great as yourself, but greater considerably! Mean-time, might not the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather?—on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together, and then going on by yourself as far as you please? So God serves us!

Ch. And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness—

Ogni. Ah, my friend, wish for nothing so foolish! Worship your love, give her the best of you to see; be to her like the Western Lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court—send her only your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like

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birds, and fruits and gems—so shall you, what is unseen of you, be supposed altogether a Paradise by her,—as these Western lands by Spain—tho' I warrant there is filth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as possible. Do you want your mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to kiss—don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips! You understand my humour by this time? I help men to carry out their own principle: if they please to say two and two make five, I assent, if they will but go on and say four and four make ten!

Ch. But these are my private affairs—what I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my public appearance presently: for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, tho' you and I may thoroughly discern—and easily too—the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged . . . and heretofore by myself . . . incompatible with its existence . . . when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one . . .

Ogni. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say,—new truths, old truths! why there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world—we know all we shall ever know, and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we do know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like: a philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when

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a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others—and so he re-states it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time.—As for adding to the original stock of truths,—impossible!—So you see the expression of them is the grand business:—you have got a truth in your head about the right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it—which now you confess to be imperfect—but what then? There is Truth in Falsehood, Falsehood in Truth.—No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without the help of a good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones: and as when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was,—do not conclude that he saw nothing in the sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says,—so, thro' the contradictory expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at bottom. Ah, what an answer is there! to what will it not prove applicable!—"Contradictions?"—Of course there were, say you!

Ch. Still the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I say in reply?

Ogni. Why look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer—you begin to perceive that, when all 's done and said, both great parties in the state, the advocates of change in the

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present system of things, and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good, and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances—to which result they contribute in equal proportions, those who spent their life in pushing it onward as those who gave theirs to the business of pulling it back—now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you—but it steadily advances, you rejoice to see! By the side of such a rejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet, and says, “Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle; I, for one, shall win in the end by the blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving”—even he seems graceful in his avowal, when one considers that he might say, “I shall win quite as much by the blows our antagonist gives him, and from which he saves me—I thank the antagonist equally!” Moreover, you must enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosity with age and experience—

Ch. And naturally time must wear off such asperities—the bitterest adversaries get to discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies—do they not?

Ogni. Ay, had the young David but sate first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common sympathies—He of Gath, it is recorded, was born of a Father and Mother, had brothers and sisters like another man,—they, no more than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other; but, for the sake of one broad antipathy

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that had existed from the beginning, David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone with the better appetite for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eyesight, go on discovering much good on the worse side, remember that the same process should proportionably magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side—and when I profess no sympathy for the Goliaths of our time, and you object that a large nature should sympathize with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, however limited—I answer, so I do—but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finelier or widelier I may extend its action. I desire to be able, with a quickened eyesight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only,—but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms, where already every body sees no foulness at all. I must retain too my old power of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts . . . else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has his Archangels and consorts with them—tho' he made too, and intimately sees what is good in the worm. Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and so ought to speak—I do justice to your own principles, that is all.

Ch. But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics: what more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution, which pressed soreliest on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from.—Do the classes, hitherto without

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opinion, get leave to express it? there is a confederacy immediately, from which—exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you!

Ogni. And a journey over the sea to you!—That is the generous way. Say—emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go! The first time a poor devil, who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so begins pettishly while he rubs his soles, “Woe be to whoever brings any thing in the shape of a stick this way,”—you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with,—you, go away to every body’s sorrow! Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as “Let no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise our slaves if need require.” Well—there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether—yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly—for, do you know what is to . . . all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all you Men of Genius? It is this—that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life, in one effort at setting up your own Genius in his place,—still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably . . . would one think it? . . . that the rest of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, was not, nor ever could be, just on a level and equality with yourselves.—That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe!

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Ch. Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think, with doing just the reverse, and at once acknowledging the natural inequality of mankind by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to the civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank !

Ogni. Not I ! (always on your own ground and showing, be it noted !) Who doubts that, with a weapon to brandish, a man is the more formidable ? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully.—We could pin lions with it moreover, while in its present owner's hands it hardly prods rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining rod that may serve you in undreamed-of ways.—Beauty, Strength, Intellect—men often have none of these and yet conceive pretty accurately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor.—You know at least what it is you make up your mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in your power ; wanting Beauty, you cultivate Good Humour, missing Wit, you get Riches ; but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid little peevish Cecco of our own town into natural Lord of the best of us—a Duke, he is now ! there indeed is a Virtue to be revered !

Ch. Ay, by the vulgar—not by Messere Stiatto the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than any body.

Ogni. What else should Stiatto pay court to ? He

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has talent, not honour and riches—men naturally covet what they have not.

Ch. No—or Cecco would covet talent which he has not, whereas he covets more riches, of which he has plenty already.

Ogni. Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich—but just such another talent as Stiatto's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the talent a purse indeed, to do something with! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting. I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people; they know your antecedents and will accept you with a joyful unanimity: whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up! you are nerving yourself to an effort? Beware the disaster of Messere Stiatto we were talking of—who determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new tragedy with our townsmen,—heard too plainly “hiss, hiss, hiss,” increase every moment, till at last the man fell senseless—not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by resolve!

Ch. Do you begin to throw off the mask? to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap?

Ogni. Where is the trap, my friend? You hear what I engage to do, for my part—you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedience to Rome's authority

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in my person—and I shall authorize no more than the simple re-establishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself—the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

Ch. And that stipulation ?

Ogni. Oh, the obvious one—that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost . . .

Ch. Ha !

Ogni. Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty, of course ; what did you expect ?

Ch. Who heard of this ?

Ogni. Rather who needed to hear of this ?

Ch. Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you . . .

Ogni. Many more such rumours reach me, friend, than I choose to receive : those which wait longest have best chance—has the present one sufficiently waited ? Now is its time for entry with effect. See the good people crowded about yonder palace-steps which we may not have to ascend after all !—my good friends—(nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose)—who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost ?—his successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt, bare justice we all anticipate ? Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know ?

Luit. [*Coming forward.*] I !

All. Luitolfo !

Luit. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now to relieve my friend of an unearned

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responsibility.—Having taken thought, I am grown stronger—I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino—we are friends still—I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seems at first. So they tell me my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

Eu. I was determined to justify my choice, Chiappino ; to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

Ogni. Now, in these last ten minutes of silence, what have I been doing, deem you? Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text "Let whoso thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." To your house, Luitolfo.—Still silent, my patriotic friend? Well, that is a good sign, however! And you will go aside for a time? That is better still. I understand—it would be easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot, and shock us all, but you will live and grow worthy of coming back to us one day. There, I will tell every body ; and you only do right to believe you will get better as you get older! All men do so,—they are worst in childhood, improve in manhood, and get ready in old age for another world : Youth, with its Beauty and Grace, would really seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid, when they leave us. The sweetest

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child we all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in it—he would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those angelic infantine desires when he got six feet high, black and bearded: but, little by little, he sees fit to forego claim after claim on the world, puts up with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion,—and when the octogenarian asks barely a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and will thank you as for his full allowance and right in the common good of life,—hoping nobody may murder him,—he who began by asking and expecting the whole of us to bow down in worship to him,—why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly out of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder! And now—(Ay, good bye to you! He turns round the North-west gate—going to Lugo again? Good bye)!—And now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's Palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home. I have known *Four-and-twenty* leaders of revolts!—

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