

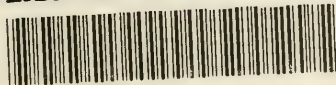
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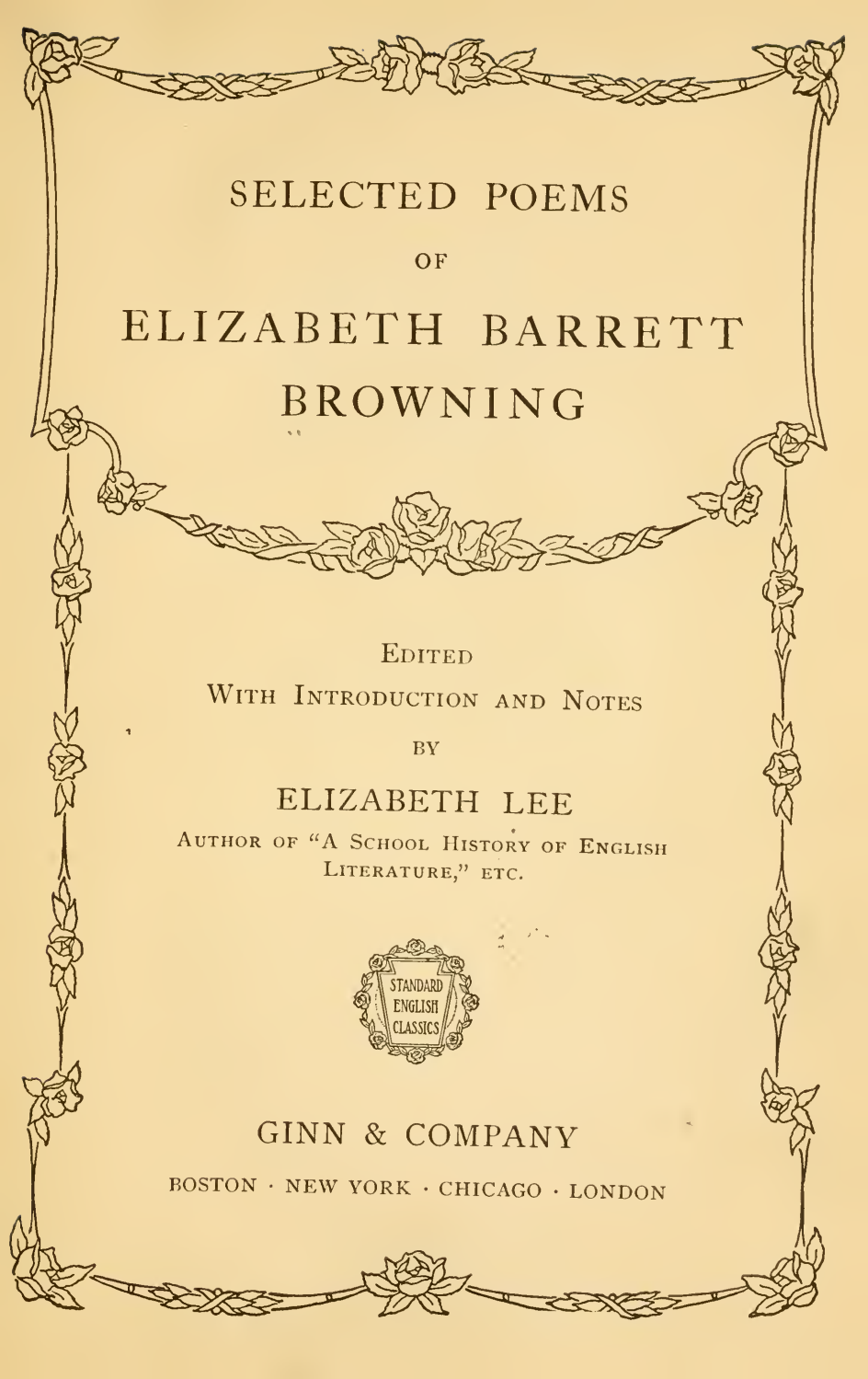
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ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

After the chalk drawing from life by Field Talfourd, Rome, 1859,
now in the National Portrait Gallery, London



SELECTED POEMS
OF
ELIZABETH BARRETT
BROWNING

EDITED
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY
ELIZABETH LEE
AUTHOR OF "A SCHOOL HISTORY OF ENGLISH
LITERATURE," ETC.



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I have endeavored to show in my introduction, Mrs. Browning has done some things that no other poet has done, and has said others that no other poet has said. And, further, at a time when women are daily playing a more important part in the world's history, it may not be wholly useless for young people of both sexes to know what a woman, whose mind and heart were equally developed, thought about the great questions of human life.

The business of the teacher of literature is not solely to fill the student's mind with facts and what is generally called useful knowledge; he must also aim at cultivating the student's imagination, at developing his thinking faculty, and at demonstrating the lasting pleasure afforded by the habit of reading the works of great writers with intelligence and sympathy. I trust that he will find in this little volume good material on which to work in that direction.

ELIZABETH LEE.

LONDON, July 5, 1904.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	ix

POEMS

THE SLEEP	1
COWPER'S GRAVE	3
A SEA-SIDE WALK	7
THE SEA-MEW	8
MY DOVES	10
LESSONS FROM THE GORSE	13
THE POET AND THE BIRD	14
LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP	15
RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY	40
THE LOST BOWER	61
THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN	77
WINE OF CYPRUS	83
THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST	90
THE DEAD PAN	95
A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT	104
SIX SONNETS FROM THE SERIES ENTITLED "SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE"	106
SONNETS:	
EXAGGERATION	109
ADEQUACY	109
INSUFFICIENCY	110
LIFE AND LOVE	110

	PAGE
INCLUSIONS	111
A DENIAL	112
PROOF AND DISPROOF	114
QUESTION AND ANSWER	116
PASSAGES FROM:	
A DRAMA OF EXILE	116
A VISION OF POETS	124
AURORA LEIGH	132
CASA GUIDI WINDOWS	141
NOTES	149

INTRODUCTION

I

Elizabeth Barrett Barrett, afterwards Elizabeth Barrett Browning, was born at Coxhoe Hall, near Durham, in the north of England, on March 6, 1806. Three years later her father bought the estate of Hope End in Herefordshire, and there, amid the beautiful scenery of the Malvern Hills, the poetess lived till 1832. Reminiscences of her childhood, of her delight in the external nature which surrounded her, are to be found in her poems, and the fine descriptions of English country in *Aurora Leigh* are drawn from her remembrance of Hope End and its neighborhood. In the same way George Eliot's admirable descriptions of the scenery and characteristics of the midlands in her novels are the outcome of her experiences in childhood and girlhood. In a poem entitled *Hector in the Garden*,¹ first published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1846, occur the following lines, which well indicate the little girl's surroundings.

Nine green years had scarcely brought me
To my childhood's haunted spring;
I had life, like flowers and bees,
In betwixt the country trees,
And the sun the pleasure taught me
Which he teacheth everything.

¹ She was fond of planting a bed of flowers to represent the figure of a man; hence the title of this poem. Hector's eyes were of "gentianellas azure," his nose of "gillyflowers and box," and "scented grasses put for locks," while purple violets formed the mouth, lilies the sword, and daisies the breastplate.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow :
 Little head leant on the pane,
 Little finger drawing down it
 The long trailing drops upon it,
 And the " Rain, rain, come to-morrow,"
 Said for charm against the rain.

.
 If I said it long enough,
 Then the rain hummed dimly off,

And the sun and I together
 Went a-rushing out of doors :
 We our tender spirits drew
 Over hill and dale in view,
 Glimmering hither, glimmering thither
 In the footsteps of the showers.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
 Through the grasses wet and fair,
 Straight I sought my garden-ground
 With the laurel on the mound,
 And the pear-tree oversweeping
 A side-shadow of green air.

She refers to her girlish skill in the cultivation of white roses in her poem *The Lost Bower*.¹ In a letter written to a friend in 1843 she gives some account of her youthful years. She tells how she early made poetry her vocation, — " wrote verses at eight years old or earlier. . . . The Greeks were my demigods, and haunted me out of Pope's Homer until I dreamt more of Agamemnon than of Moses the black pony." She could read Homer in the original at eight years old. When she was eleven or twelve she wrote an epic in four books called *The Battle of Marathon*. Her father, proud of her talent, had fifty copies printed in 1820.² To an accident

¹ Cf. p. 61.

² Only five of these copies are extant. The poem was reprinted in 1891.

with which she met while saddling her pony when a girl of fifteen is to be attributed the poor health and spinal weakness from which she afterwards suffered for so many years.

An Essay on Mind, with Other Poems was published in 1826. The didactic poem in two books that gives its title to the volume is inspired by Pope; many of the shorter pieces were written when she was thirteen. Writing about it to a friend in 1843, she characterizes it as "didactic pedantry," says that its circulation of its own accord has been very limited, and that it is her private wish that nothing should be said of it in any account of her and her work. In 1828 she lost her mother. The family lived on at Hope End until 1832, when the place was sold; they then removed to Sidmouth in Devonshire, where they resided till 1835, and where Elizabeth Barrett began to make poetry the serious pursuit of her life. She worked at her translation of the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus, which, with a few shorter poems, was published anonymously in 1833. Later in life she told how the *Prometheus* was written in twelve days, "and should have been thrown into the fire afterwards — the only means of giving it a little warmth."

In 1835 the Barretts took up their residence in London. Elizabeth's health broke down entirely, and until her marriage with Robert Browning in 1846 she led the life of a confirmed invalid, leaving her room and her house only on rare occasions and at long intervals. She continued throughout those ten years to compose verse, and in the earlier part of the time contributed poems to magazines like the *New Monthly* and *Finden's Tableaux*. The latter was edited by Miss Mary Russell Mitford (1787-1855), between whom and Elizabeth Barrett there sprang up a lifelong friendship.¹

¹ Cf. *A Literary Friendship*, by Elizabeth Lee, *Cornhill Magazine*, January, 1898.

From Miss Mitford's letters we learn much concerning the poetess's life in London. It was in 1836 that Miss Mitford first met her, and she thus describes her: "She is a delightful young creature, shy, timid, and modest. Nothing but her desire to see me got her out at all. . . . She is so sweet and gentle, and so pretty, that one looks at her as if she were some bright flower. . . . Everybody who then saw her said the same." She goes on to describe Miss Barrett's personal appearance at that time. We learn that she possessed a slight, delicate figure, with a shower of dark curls falling on either side of a most expressive face; large, tender eyes richly fringed by dark eyelashes; a smile like a sunbeam, and a look of youthfulness that belied her thirty years of life. Miss Barrett met also at this time Wordsworth and Walter Savage Landor. In 1838 she published a fresh volume of verse, *The Seraphim and Other Poems*. It was the first time that her name had appeared on a title-page; her former publications had all been anonymous. The book was fairly well received by the public and the critics, but no second edition was needed. A quarterly reviewer, however, writing in 1840, included Miss Barrett in a list of modern English poetesses. The only poem in the volume to which time has given a place among Miss Barrett's most popular productions is *Cowper's Grave*. Her aim in sending forth the volume to the world is sufficiently told in the closing passage of the preface: "I offer to the public, for the first time in my own name, these poems, which were not written because there is a public, but because they were thought and felt. . . . I assume no power of art except that power of love towards it, which has remained with me from my childhood until now. In the power of such a love, and in the event of my life being prolonged, I would fain hope to write hereafter better verses; but I never can feel more

intensely than at this moment — nor can it be needful that any should — the sublime uses of poetry and the solemn responsibilities of the poet.”

Acting under her physician's advice, Miss Barrett, in the summer of that year, went to Torquay, Devonshire, in the hope that the warmer climate might do something towards restoring her health. She was accompanied by her brother Edward, who was deeply attached to her. In July, 1840, he was drowned while boating in Babbicombe Bay off Torquay. The tragedy overshadowed the whole of his sister's life. She remained in Devonshire until the September of the following year, when she returned to her father's house to lead there the life of a confirmed invalid. One joy was her dog Flush, a present from Miss Mitford. “Flush is my constant companion, my friend, my amusement, lying with his head on one page of my folio while I read the other.” In a poem entitled *To Flush, my Dog*, his mistress thus describes him :

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
 Either side demurely
Of thy silver-suited breast
Shining out from all the rest
 Of thy body purely.

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
 Alchemise its dulness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold
 With a burnished fulness.

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
 Kindling, growing larger,

Up thou leapest with a spring,
 Full of prank and curveting,
 Leaping like a charger.

.
 But of *thee* it shall be said,
 This dog watched beside a bed
 Day and night unwearied,
 Watched within a curtained room
 Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
 Round the sick and dreary.

.
 And this dog was satisfied
 If a pale thin hand would glide
 Down his dewlaps sloping, —
 Which he pushed his nose within,
 After, — platforming his chin
 On the palm left open.

Despite the state of her health Miss Barrett saw a few intimate friends and did much literary work. She contributed a series of papers on the Greek Christian poets, and some notes on English poets to the *Athenæum* in 1842, which prove wide reading and a fine critical instinct. The year 1844 saw the publication of a new collection of *Poems*. It was in two volumes and dedicated to her father. The longest of the poems is the *Drama of Exile*, in which she deals with the subject of the Fall from a woman's point of view. Again the spirit in which she sent forth her productions to the world is best expressed in her own words in the preface: "Poetry has been as serious a thing to me as life itself, and life has been a very serious thing: there has been no playing at skittles for me in either. I never mistook pleasure for the final cause of poetry; nor leisure for the hour of the poet. I have done my work, so far, as work, — not as mere hand and head work, apart from the personal being, — but as the completed expression of that being to

which I could attain, — and as work I offer it to the public, — feeling its shortcomings more deeply than any of my readers, because measured from the height of my aspiration, — but feeling also that the reverence and sincerity with which the work was done should give it some protection with the reverent and sincere.”

In his volumes of 1842 Tennyson had published the best of his earlier work ; by 1844 Browning had issued *Paracelsus*, *Sordello*, six of the *Bells and Pomegranates* series, including *Pippa Passes*, the *Dramatic Lyrics*, and the tragedy of *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon*. So Miss Barrett's work sought a place among worthy compeers. It won high praise from the reviewers : “The critics have been good to me,” she writes to a friend. She received pleasant letters from Harriet Martineau, Mrs. Jameson, and also from Robert Browning. “I had a letter from Browning the poet last night, which threw me into ecstasies — Browning, the author of *Paracelsus*.” This was the real beginning of her acquaintance with Browning, the man, although she had long known him and had always intensely admired him in his work. In a letter written in April, 1843, she expresses her sorrow for an adverse review of Browning's *Blot on the 'Scutcheon*, and in *Lady Geraldine's Courtship* — a poem of her own first published in the 1844 volumes — occur the lines :

Or from Browning some “Pomegranate,” which, if cut deep down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.

The two poets continued to correspond, and in May, 1845, when Kenyon, Miss Barrett's cousin, and Robert Browning's friend, took Browning to see her. The visit was repeated and very soon the poet's friendship developed into love, and he asked her to be his wife. Miss Barrett fully returned

the love offered to her, but her feeble health — she never expected to be able to walk about again — naturally made her hesitate to lay the burden of an invalid wife on the man she loved. Her feelings during this period of stress are recorded in the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*,¹ and in a little group of poems² which I have included in my selections because they help to illustrate one of the most beautiful real love stories the world has to show us. But another obstacle, in some ways equally serious, lay in the lovers' path to happiness. Mr. Barrett had the strongest possible objection to any of his children getting married, so strong, indeed, that they all knew it was worse than useless to ask his consent. How, at length, the sincerity and great-heartedness of her poet lover overcame her scruples may be read in detail in *The Love-Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Barrett, 1845-1846*, published by Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. in 1899. Those letters stand as the utterances of two great geniuses who are at the same time two complete and genuine human beings and whose married life proved the reality of their mutual feeling. Suffice it to say here that on September 12, 1846, they were married in Marylebone Church, London, and a week after the pair left for Italy, which was henceforth to be their home. They settled for the winter at Pisa. Mrs. Browning has herself confessed all the happiness the change brought her :

The face of all the world is changed, I think,
 Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
 Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
 Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
 Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
 Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
 Of life in a new rhythm.

¹ Privately printed in 1847, and first issued to the public in the collected poems published in two volumes in 1850.

² Cf. pp. 110-116.

Robert Browning's side of the story may also be traced in his poems. In *By the Fireside* (1855) he gives what might well be an account of his love and courtship. He imagines himself a happy husband sitting one evening by the fireside, watching his wife.

You mutely sit
Musing by firelight, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it
Yonder, my heart knows how!

And he goes over with her the path that led to their great mutual happiness. Another poem, written the same year, *One Word More*, and inscribed to E. B. B., has for its theme that

God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her!

And as final poetical testimony we have the beautiful address to his dead wife at the end of the first book of *The Ring and the Book* (1868-1869), beginning

O lyric love, half angel and half bird,

and the last lines of the whole poem, in which he refers to the tablet on the walls of Casa Guidi.

No longer "faint and blind," Mrs. Browning's nature expanded in the sunshine of her husband's great and abiding love. Her marriage, she declared, "proved the possibility of book-making creatures living happily together." In the spring of 1847 the Brownings went to Florence, the Italian city most closely associated with their names, and there in the Casa Guidi, near the Pitti Palace, they resided, with a few brief visits to England, until Mrs. Browning's death. To crown her happiness a son was born to her in March, 1849.

Several visitors to the Casa Guidi have given us accounts of the life led there by its inmates. Mrs. Ogilvy, author

of *Highland Minstrelsy*, relates her impressions thus: "On reaching Florence from Rome, June, 1848, we at once called at Casa Guidi. Robert Browning was playing with all his heart and soul on a grand piano. He sprang up, striding forward with outstretched hand. His wife was curled up in a corner of a sofa in the middle of the large dim *sala* hung with old brown tapestry and ancient pictures. With her profuse feathery curls half hiding her small face, and her large, soft, pleading eyes, she always reminded me of a King Charles spaniel. Something unutterably pathetic looked out of those soft eyes. Light was not in favor with Mrs. Browning. She habitually sat in dark rooms, and was so little out of doors that her accuracy of observation was all the more remarkable. . . . She was intense rather than excitable, and she took life too seriously for her own happiness. . . . Her letters were written in minute scratches no thicker than the hairs on a daisy stalk, on tiny note sheets, folded sometimes into tiny envelopes, the whole forming apparently a doll's epistle. But if the writing was thin, the thoughts and feelings were stout and strong."

Mr. W. W. Story, writing in 1849 to J. R. Lowell from Rome, where the Brownings were then staying, says: "Mrs. Browning used to sit buried up in a large easy chair, lister and talking very quietly and pleasantly, with nothing of that peculiarity which one would expect from reading her poems. Her eyes are small, her mouth large, she wears a cap and long curls. Very unaffected and pleasant and simple-hearted is she, and Browning says 'her poems are the least good part of her.'"

In 1850 Mrs. Browning published in two volumes nearly all the poems that had appeared in 1838 and 1844, with a few new ones, and the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, written during the days of courtship and privately printed in 1847.

On Wordsworth's death, which occurred in April, 1850, the *Athenæum* strongly recommended that Elizabeth Barrett Browning should succeed him in the office of laureate, declaring that no living poet of either sex could prefer a higher claim than Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning. In writing to Miss Mitford about this time, she says :

“As for the laureateship, it won't be given to *me*, be sure, though the suggestion has gone the round of the English newspapers — *Galignani* and all — and notwithstanding that most kind and flattering recommendation of the *Athenæum*. . . . I think Leigh Hunt should have the laureateship. He has condescended to wish for it, and has ‘worn his singing clothes’ longer than most of his contemporaries, deserving the price of long as well as noble service. . . . In a sense Tennyson is worthier of it than Leigh Hunt; only Tennyson can wait — that is the single difference.”

As all the world knows, Tennyson was appointed, and it seems strange that so fine a critic as Mrs. Browning should place seniority in years as a special qualification for the office.

Casa Guidi Windows, a poem on contemporary Italian politics, appeared in 1851. With the greatest warmth and enthusiasm Mrs. Browning espoused the cause of Italian freedom, and in so doing produced of its kind a distinctly fine poem; but it did not attract much notice, and the parts now most relished are not the political disquisitions and tirades but the descriptions of Florence and its treasures and its heroes.

The Brownings were in Paris at the time of the *coup d'état*, December 2, 1851. In Mrs. Browning's eyes Louis Napoleon was a great hero; she held him in the highest estimation, approved his actions, and honored the man. It was doubtless his intervention in the cause of Italy that specially roused her admiration, and she expresses it with all the ardor of which her passionate nature was capable in the poem

Napoleon III in Italy, published in 1860. She praises that Napoleon who "leaving far behind the purple throng of vulgar monarchs,"

Tread'st higher in thy deed
 Than stair of throne can lead,
 To help in the hour of wrong
 The broken hearts of nations to be strong.

.

Courage, courage! happy is he,
 Of whom (himself among the dead
 And silent) this word shall be said:
 — That he might have had the world with him,
 But chose to side with suffering men,
 And had the world against him when
 He came to deliver Italy.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

There is no need in this place to defend or blame Mrs. Browning's attitude. We agree with her latest critic, Mr. Henry James, in deploring the fact that her interest in the cause of Italy lowered, as it were, her inspiration and her poetic pitch; thus the poems of which it is the main topic stand lower than the rest of her achievement. Our views of Louis Napoleon are undoubtedly both saner and juster than hers; but a person's enthusiasms, misplaced or otherwise, are part of his life, and no sketch of Mrs. Browning, however brief and modest in aim, would be adequate without some reference to this matter. Her sympathy with all who suffered from oppression, from factory children upwards, was intensely acute, and thus any who attempted to help the downtrodden easily won her regard and admiration.

Towards the end of 1852 the Brownings returned to their Florence home. *Aurora Leigh* was published in 1856. It had occupied Mrs. Browning for several years, and deservedly raised her poetical reputation still higher. It was well

received, and three editions were called for within a few months. She herself regarded it as her most mature work, the one into which entered her highest convictions upon life and art. In the early fifties, too, began her interest in spiritualism. The pseudo-science made a powerful appeal to her temperament. She was quite ready to put faith in spiritualistic manifestations, and welcomed any belief that rested on the possibility of communication with the world beyond the grave. Her husband, however, as is well known, was a thorough skeptic in all such matters.

In 1860 appeared *Poems before Congress*, the last volume published in her lifetime. It contains only eight poems. All — with the exception of one on the subject of slavery in America — deal with Italian politics and breathe her faith in Napoleon III's sincerity. Her strictures on England's attitude of non-intervention naturally prevented a very good reception of the little book in that country, but despite its general bias, it holds between its covers some fine and genuine poetry.

For some time now Mrs. Browning's strength had been failing, and frequent references are made to illness in her letters for the years 1859–1861. She died at Florence, June 29, 1861, and was buried there in the Protestant cemetery. The sarcophagus in which her remains lie was designed by Lord Leighton. The municipality of Florence placed a tablet on the walls of Casa Guidi with the following inscription from the pen of the poet Tommaseo:

Here lived and died Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who in her woman's heart reconciled the science of learning with the spirit of poetry and made of her verse a golden ring between Italy and England. Grateful Florence places this tablet. 1861.

To quote Mr. W. W. Story again. In a letter to Charles Eliot Norton he describes her death as told to him by Browning, and her funeral, which he attended, and then sums up her character thus: "She is a great loss to literature, to Italy, and to the world — the greatest poet among women. What energy and fire there was in that little frame; what burning words were winged by her pen; with what glorious courage she attacked error, however strongly entrenched in custom; how bravely she stood by her principles! Never did I see any one whose brow the world hurried and crowded so to crown, who had so little vanity and so much pure humility. Praise gratified her when just — blame when unjust scarcely annoyed her. She could afford to let her work plead for itself. Ready to accept criticism, she never feared it, but defended herself with spirit when unjustly attacked. For public opinion she cared not a straw, and could not bear to be looked on as a lion. Her faiths were rooted in the center of her being."

A volume entitled *Last Poems* was published in 1862; a few of them, notably the fine poem entitled *A Musical Instrument*, had already appeared in periodicals.

It gives the writer of this little Introduction, as an Englishwoman, great pleasure to record how much Mrs. Browning's poetry has always been appreciated in America. As early as 1842 we find a Boston editor asking her to contribute to his magazine. Laudatory notices of and extracts from her poems filled American periodicals. "I confess to a good deal of pleasure from these American courtesies," she writes; and again, "I confess I feel very much pleased at the kind spirit — the spirit of eager kindness indeed — with which the Americans receive my poetry." *Aurora Leigh* was most successful in America. "The publisher [she tells us] is said to have shed tears over the proofs, and the critics

congratulate me on having worked myself clear of all my affectations and mannerisms." Referring to the bad reception accorded by English reviewers to her *Poems before Congress* in 1860, she says: "For the rest, being turned out of the Old World, I fall on my feet in the New World, where people have been generous, and even publishers turned liberal. Think of my having an offer (on the ground of that book¹) from a periodical in New York of a hundred dollars for every single poem, though as short as a sonnet—that is, for its merely passing through their pages on the road to the publishers proper."

II

Wordsworth is at one with Milton in fixing upon passion as of the essence of poetry, which he in one place defines as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." It does not matter for poetry what the emotion is that overflows; it may be love or hate, pity or fear, awe or indignation, joy or sorrow; what matters for poetry is that some passion there should be, for some particular object, and that it should be sincerely and deeply felt. . . . Poetry requires a manner of viewing things which is not that of the average man, but is individual to the poet; it requires, in a word, genius.

H. C. BEECHING (on the *Study of Poetry*).

In studying the work of any poet we should perhaps ask ourselves first what qualities we shall be likely to find in it. In Mrs. Browning's poetry, wherever we take it, we find the personal note, the original point of view,—here especially that of the woman,—and an absolute sincerity. True passion, likewise genuine emotion, is everywhere present. Her purely lyrical utterances, like the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and such poems as *The Sleep*, *Cowper's Grave*, *A Musical Instrument*, *The Cry of the Children*—to name a few of the chief—form perhaps her greatest achievement. As

¹ *Poems before Congress*. The volume contained *A Curse for a Nation*, which points out the wickedness of slaveholding.

a lyrist she may be compared with Tennyson and Campbell. But learned poems — if we may so call them — like *Wine of Cyprus* and *A Vision of Poets*, novel-poems like *Lady Geraldine's Courtship* and *Aurora Leigh*, and romantic ballad poems like the *Rhyme of the Duchess May*, are all in their kind of the very greatest excellence. In addition to fire and passion Mrs. Browning possessed a feeling for romance, an ingenious fancy, a vivid imagination, and a peculiar tenderness. Those qualities place her beside the highest in her craft. That she is a rare example of the union of a strong lyrical impulse and the deepest feeling with the highest and broadest culture — she is sometimes characterized as a learned poetess — constitutes perhaps her chief claim to originality. With her, as with all great lyrical poets, the heart was her source of inspiration.

Women who have gained a place among the great immortals as poets are few. With Sappho and Elizabeth Barrett Browning the tale seems ended. Excellent as is the work of her European contemporaries, Mme. Desbordes-Valmore (1786–1859) in France, Annette Droste-Hülshoff (1797–1848) in Germany, and Annie Vivante in Italy, that of Elizabeth Barrett Browning greatly surpasses theirs. Women so far have greatly succeeded in creative work only in the realms of fiction. There are indications that in the future they may become great dramatists, but none that they will become great lyric poets. At a first glance it would seem that women's rare capacity for emotion and their custom of drawing on their own personal experience rather than on a wide knowledge of life mark them out as the great lyrical poets of humanity. In the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* Mrs. Browning has achieved one of the great lyrics of the world. It fulfills all the necessary conditions of pure poetry: it is not only the expression of the love of an individual woman

but also the expression for all time of every high-souled woman's love, sincere, unselfish, passionate, enduring forever. But this is the outcome of genius, and genius knows no distinction of sex. Yet if not in this poem, which stands apart, in the others we may and should look for qualities — secondary it may be to the genius held in common with all great poets of either sex and of every age — specially to be found in woman's work. For

Woman is not undevelop't man
But diverse,

and Mrs. Browning is no exception. While she possesses some of the qualities of the greatest men, she possesses others that are to be found only in women. Her sympathy with the troubles and miseries and difficulties that beset women just because they are women, her insight into the hearts of women, her knowledge at first hand of all that peculiarly characterizes women, is of the highest value for her poetry because it assures to it qualities that give it unique beauty and meaning. Mrs. Browning gives the sanest answers to all questions that chiefly concern woman, such as her relations to men and to her own sex, and her conception of and relations to her art. Her views about women are best learned from *Aurora Leigh*, in which the main thought is that if women put the artist before the woman they, like Aurora, run the risk of suffering shipwreck.

But it is perhaps better for young students to approach Mrs. Browning's work on more general grounds. She came strongly under the influence of the two great poets of her time. Her *Vision of Poets*¹ was possibly inspired to some degree by Tennyson's *Dream of Fair Women* and *Two Voices*; *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*² belongs to the same

¹ Cf. p. 124.

² Cf. p. 15.

class of poems as *Locksley Hall*, and is written in the same meter. After her marriage her work was strongly influenced by that of Robert Browning, and there are lines and passages in *Aurora Leigh* that might well have been composed by him. Yet we know that neither saw the work of the other until it was completed. The process of assimilation goes on unconsciously, and in this case, as always, it was a great gain. Mrs. Browning reflects her age and voices aloud the things that were agitating more thoughtful minds at the period as insistently as Tennyson did, and more insistently, perhaps, than Browning did. *Aurora Leigh*, for example, is instinct with passionate feeling for the realities of modern life, and in it she paints the sharp contrasts, the blinding lights and dark shadows, the unrest, the inquiring spirit that are its characteristics. In many ways Browning was the greatest of the three, and not least in that the problems of the human heart and mind treated by him are not of an age but of all time.

As a sonnet writer Mrs. Browning ranks with the greatest who have used that form, — with Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Rossetti. Whatever the defects of her verse generally, — its lack of form and of a sense of melody, — in her sonnets all is perfection. It has been well said that she never found the sonnet too circumscribed for her; she moved “in it as freely as a fish in a deep pool, as a bird in the windless air.”

Her appreciation of the beauty of external nature is well expressed in her poems; she loved fine scenery, and trees and flowers, and horses and dogs and birds. Scarcely any better description of an infant child exists in English poetry than that of Marian's little boy in *Aurora Leigh*. Despite the strained rhymes, the lack of finish, the neglect of form and melody, her verse contains phrases that haunt us as

only the purest poetry has the power to do. Such are, to take a few at random :

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine ;
That mark upon his lip is wine.

But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath.

Those *never* loved
Who dream that they loved ONCE.

Our Euripides, the human —
With his droppings of warm tears ;
And his touches of things common,
Till they rose to touch the spheres !

God strikes a silence through you all,
And giveth his belovèd — sleep.

O poets ! from a maniac's tongue was poured the deathless singing !

It should always be remembered that no critic, however able, can argue men into a love of poetry. We come to poetry, as a modern critic well says, "upon instinct." The appreciation of poetry (said another) is a matter of perception, not of argument. All the critic can do for us is to give his impression of the poet's work, his judgment of it by certain standards ; he may also introduce to our notice poetry which, without his guidance, we might have neglected. The poets are always accessible, and each will choose from what they have to offer according to his taste and temperament. But it is well that the critic should occasionally remind us of the solace and delight eternally afforded by fine poetry.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Mrs. Browning's Life

1806 Born March 6.

History

1806 William Pitt died.
Charles James Fox died.
Battle of Jena.1814 Louis XVIII takes possession of
the throne of France.
1815 Battle of Waterloo.1817 Peace of Paris.
James Monroe elected President of
the United States.1819 Princess (afterwards Queen) Victoria
born.
1820 George III died.
Accession of George IV.

1820 Battle of Marathon.

1824 Accession of Charles X to the throne
of France.

1826 Essay on Mind.

1830 George IV died.
Accession of William IV.
Louis Philippe ascends the throne of
France.

1832 Reform Bill carried.

1833 Prometheus Bound.

1833 Act for Emancipation of Slaves
passed.

1835 Came to live in London.

1836 First meeting with Mary Russell
Mitford.

1838 The Seraphim and Other Poems.

Literature

1807 Longfellow born.
1809 Quarterly Review established.
Tennyson born.
1811 Thackeray born.
1812 Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.
Dickens born.
1813 Robert Browning born.
1814 Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*.
Scott, *Waverley*.
Jane Austen, *Emma*.
1816 Charlotte Brontë born.
1817 Jane Austen died.1819 George Eliot born.
Ruskin born.1821 Keats died.
1822 Shelley died.
Hugo, *Odes et Ballades*.
1824 Byron died.1830 Tennyson, *Poems Chiefly Lyrical*.1831 Hugo, *Notre Dame de Paris*.
1832 Scott died.
Goethe died.
Browning, *Pauline*.1834 Coleridge died.
Lamb died.1835 Browning, *Paracelsus*.
1836 Dickens, *Pickwick*.1837 Carlyle, *French Revolution*.

- 1840 Death of her brother Edward.
- 1840 Marriage of Queen Victoria.
- 1840 Browning, Sordello.
- 1841-1846 Browning, Bells and Pomegranates.
- 1842 Tennyson, Poems.
- 1843 Ruskin, Modern Painters.
- 1844 Contributed to *Athenæum* Essays on Greek Christian poets and English poets.
- 1844 Poems in two volumes.
- 1845 First meeting with Robert Browning.
- 1846 Married Robert Browning.
- 1847 Sonnets from the Portuguese privately printed.
- 1848 Louis Napoleon declared President of the French Republic.
- 1849 Her son born.
- 1849 Dickens, David Copperfield.
- 1849 Charlotte Brontë, Shirley.
- 1850 Poems in two volumes including Sonnets from the Portuguese.
- 1850 Wordsworth died.
- 1850 Tennyson, In Memoriam.
- 1850 Tennyson appointed Poet Laureate.
- 1851 Balzac died.
- 1851 James Fenimore Cooper died.
- 1851-1853 Ruskin, Stones of Venice.
- 1852 Mrs. Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin.
- 1852 Thackeray, Esmond.
- 1852 Death of Duke of Wellington.
- 1852 Louis Napoleon, declared Emperor of France as Napoleon III.
- 1852 Daniel Webster died.
- 1854-1856 Crimean War.
- 1855 Aurora Leigh.
- 1855 Charlotte Brontë died.
- 1855 George Eliot, Scenes from Clerical Life.
- 1856 Poems before Congress.
- 1856 Government of India transferred from East India Company to the Crown.
- 1857 Indian Mutiny.
- 1857 Washington Irving died.
- 1857 Darwin, Origin of Species.
- 1857 George Eliot, Adam Bede.
- 1857 Tennyson, Idylls of the King.
- 1860 Abraham Lincoln elected President of the United States.
- 1860 American Civil War.
- 1861 Victor Emmanuel declared King of Italy.
- 1861 Died, June 29.
- 1862 Accession of William I of Prussia (afterwards Emperor of Germany).
- 1862 Death of Prince Consort.
- 1862 Last Poems.

SELECTED POEMS OF
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

THE SLEEP

“He giveth His beloved sleep.” — PSALM cxxvii. 2.

I

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward unto souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace, surpassing this —
“He giveth His beloved, sleep”?

5

II

What would we give to our beloved?
The hero's heart, to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp, to sweep,
The patriot's voice, to teach and rouse,
The monarch's crown to light the brows?
“He giveth *His* beloved, sleep.”

10

III

What do we give to our beloved?
A little faith, all undisproved,
A little dust, to overweep,
And bitter memories, to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake?
“He giveth *His* beloved, sleep.”

15

IV

20 "Sleep soft, beloved!" we sometimes say,
 But have no tune to charm away
 Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep:
 But never doleful dream again
 Shall break the happy slumber, when
 "He giveth *His* beloved, sleep."

V

25 O earth, so full of dreary noises!
 O men, with wailing in your voices!
 O delvèd gold, the wailers heap!
 O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!
 God makes a silence through you all,
 30 And "giveth His beloved, sleep."

VI

His dews drop mutely on the hill,
 His cloud above it saileth still,
 Though on its slope men sow and reap.
 More softly than the dew is shed,
 35 Or cloud is floated overhead,
 "He giveth His beloved, sleep."

VII

Yea, men may wonder while they scan
 A living, thinking, feeling man,
 Confirmed, in such a rest to keep;
 40 But angels say — and through the word
 I think their happy smile is *heard* —
 "He giveth His beloved, sleep."

VIII

For me, my heart that erst did go
 Most like a tired child at a show,
 That sees through tears the jugglers leap, — 45
 Would now its wearied vision close,
 Would childlike on *His* love repose,
 Who “giveth His beloved, sleep!”

IX

And, friends, dear friends, — when it shall be
 That this low breath is gone from me, 50
 And round my bier ye come to weep,
 Let one, most loving of you all,
 Say, “Not a tear must o’er her fall —
 He giveth His beloved, sleep.”

COWPER'S GRAVE

I

It is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's
 decaying, —
 It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their praying:
 Yet let the grief and humbleness, as low as silence, languish!
 Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave her
 anguish.

II

O poets! from a maniac's tongue was poured the deathless 5
 singing!
 O Christians! at your cross of hope a hopeless hand was
 clinging!
 O men! this man, in brotherhood, your weary paths beguiling,
 Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while ye
 were smiling!

III

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming tears
 his story,
 10 How discord on the music fell, and darkness on the glory ;
 And how, when, one by one, sweet sounds and wandering
 lights departed,
 He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted ;

IV

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
 And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adora-
 tion :
 15 Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken ;
 Named softly, as the household name of one whom God hath
 taken.

V

With quiet sadness and no gloom, I learn to think upon
 him,
 With meekness, that is gratefulness to God whose heaven
 hath won him —
 Who suffered once the madness-cloud, to His own love to
 blind him ;
 20 But gently led the blind along where breath and bird could
 find him ;

VI

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick poetic
 senses,
 As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious influ-
 ences !
 The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within its num-
 ber ;
 And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a
 slumber.

VII

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods to share his home- 25
 caresses,
 Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses :
 The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's ways
 removing,
 Its women and its men became beside him, true and loving.

VIII

But while in blindness he remained unconscious of that
 guiding,
 And things provided came without the sweet sense of pro- 30
 viding,
 He testified this solemn truth, though frenzy desolated —
 Nor man, nor nature satisfy, whom only God created !

IX

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while she
 blesses
 And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her kisses ;
 That turns his fevered eyes around — “ My mother ! where 's 35
 my mother ? ” —
 As if such tender words and looks could come from any
 other ! —

X

The fever gone, with leaps of heart, he sees her bending
 o'er him ;
 Her face all pale from watchful love, the unwearied love she
 bore him ! —
 Thus woke the poet from the dream, his life's long fever
 gave him,
 Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes, which closed in death, 40
 to save him !

XI

Thus? oh, not *thus!* no type of earth could image that
 awaking,
 Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs, round him
 breaking,
 Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted;
 But felt *those eyes alone*, and knew, “*My Saviour! not*
deserted!”

XII

45 Deserted! who hath dreamt that when the cross in dark-
 ness rested,
 Upon the Victim's hidden face, no love was manifested?
 What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning drops
 averted,
 What tears have washed them from the soul, that *one* should
 be deserted?

XIII

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence rather :
 50 And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son and
 Father ;
 Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry, His universe hath
 shaken —
 It went up single, echoless, “My God, I am forsaken!”

XIV

It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,
 That, of the lost, no son should use those words of desola-
 tion ;
 55 That earth's worst frenzies, marring hope, should mar not
 hope's fruition,
 And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture, in a
 vision !

A SEA-SIDE WALK

I

We walked beside the sea,
After a day which perished silently
Of its own glory — like the Princess weird
Who, combating the Genius, scorched and seared,
Uttered with burning breath, “Ho! victory!” 5
And sank adown, an heap of ashes pale;
So runs the Arab tale.

II

The sky above us showed
An universal and unmoving cloud,
On which, the cliffs permitted us to see 10
Only the outline of their majesty,
As master-minds, when gazed at by the crowd!
And, shining with a gloom, the water grey
Swang in its moon-taught way.

III

Nor moon nor stars were out. 15
They did not dare to tread so soon about,
Though trembling, in the footsteps of the sun.
The light was neither night's nor day's, but one
Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt;
And Silence's impassioned breathings round 20
Seemed wandering into sound.

IV

O solemn-beating heart
Of nature! I have knowledge that thou art
Bound unto man's by cords he cannot sever —
And, what time they are slackened by him ever, 25

So to attest his own supernal part,
 Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong,
 The slackened cord along.

v

For though we never spoke
 30 Of the grey water and the shaded rock, —
 Dark wave and stone unconsciously, were fused
 Into the plaintive speaking that we used,
 Of absent friends and memories unforsook ;
 And, had we seen each other's face, we had
 35 Seen haply, each was sad.

THE SEA-MEW

[Affectionately inscribed to M. E. H.]

I

How joyously the young sea-mew
 Lay dreaming on the waters blue,
 Whereon our little bark had thrown
 A forward shade, the only one,
 5 (But shadows ever man pursue.)

II

Familiar with the waves and free,
 As if their own white foam were he,
 His heart, upon the heart of ocean,
 Lay learning all its mystic motion,
 10 And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

III

And such a brightness in his eye,
 As if the ocean and the sky

Within him had lit up and nurst
A soul, God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty. 15

IV

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
His white wing from the blue waves under,
And bound it, while his fearless eyes
Shone up to ours in calm surprise
As deeming us some ocean wonder! 20

V

We bore our ocean bird unto
A grassy place, where he might view
The flowers that curtsey to the bees,
The waving of the tall green trees,
The falling of the silver dew. 25

VI

But flowers of earth were pale to him
Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim ;
And when earth's dew around him lay,
He thought of ocean's wingèd spray,
And his eye waxèd sad and dim. 30

VII

The green trees round him only made
A prison, with their darksome shade :
And drooped his wing, and mournèd he
For his own boundless glittering sea —
Albeit he knew not they could fade. 35

VIII

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmuring,

In ocean's stead his heart to move,
 And teach him what was human love —
 40 He thought it a strange mournful thing.

IX

He lay down in his grief to die,
 (First looking to the sea-like sky,
 That hath no waves!) because, alas!
 Our human touch did on him pass,
 45 And with our touch, our agony.

MY DOVES

O Weisheit! Du red'st wie eine Taube! — GOETHE.

My little doves have left a nest
 Upon an Indian tree,
 Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
 Or motion from the sea :
 5 For, ever there, the sea-winds go
 With sunlit paces, to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
 The tropic stars looked down,
 And there my little doves did sit,
 10 With feathers softly brown,
 And glittering eyes that showed their right
 To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close
 Of murmuring waves beyond,
 15 And green leaves round, to interpose
 Their coral voices fond ;
 Interpreting that love must be
 The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers! Of living loves,
 Theirs hath the calmest fashion; 20
 Their living voice the likest moves
 To lifeless intonation, —
 The lovely monotone of springs
 And winds and such insensate things.

My little doves were ta'en away 25
 From that glad nest of theirs,
 Across an ocean rolling grey,
 And tempest-clouded airs.
 My little doves! — who lately knew
 The sky and wave, by warmth and blue! 30

And now, within the city prison,
 In mist and chillness pent,
 With sudden upward look they listen
 For sounds of past content —
 For lapse of water, swell of breeze, 35
 Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion —
 The triumph of the mart —
 The gold and silver as they clash on
 Man's cold metallic heart — 40
 The roar of wheels, the cry for bread, —
 These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
 Their fearless heads they lean,
 And almost seem to understand 45
 What human musings mean —
 ('Their eyes, with such a plaintive shine,
 Are fastened upwardly to mine!)

50 Soft falls their chant, as on the nest,
 Beneath the sunny zone ;
 For love that stirred it in their breast
 Has not aweary grown,
 And, 'neath the city's shade, can keep
 The well of music clear and deep.

55 And love that keeps the music, fills
 With pastoral memories :
 All echoings from out the hills,
 All droppings from the skies,
 All flowings from the wave and wind,
 60 Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,
 My little doves ! to move
 Along the city-ways, with heart
 Assured by holy love,
 65 And vocal with such songs as own
 A fountain to the world unknown.

'T was hard to sing by Babel's stream —
 More hard, in Babel's street !
 But if the soulless creatures deem
 70 Their music not unmeet
 For sunless walls — let *us* begin,
 Who wear immortal wings, within !

To me, fair memories belong
 Of scenes that used to bless ;
 75 For no regret, but present song,
 And lasting thankfulness ;
 And very soon to break away,
 Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
 For flowers the valley yields :
 I will have humble thoughts, instead
 Of silent, dewy fields :
 My spirit and my God shall be
 My seaward hill, my boundless sea !

80

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE

To win the secret of a weed's plain heart. — LOWELL.

I

Mountain gorses, ever-golden,
 Cankered not the whole year long !
 Do ye teach us to be strong,
 Howsoever pricked and holden
 Like your thorny blooms, and so
 Trodden on by rain and snow,

5

Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak as where ye grow ?

II

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms,
 Do ye teach us to be glad
 When no summer can be had,
 Blooming in our inward bosoms?
 Ye, whom God preserveth still,
 Set as lights upon a hill,

10

Tokens to the wintry earth that Beauty liveth still !

III

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
 From that academic chair
 Canopied with azure air,

15

That the wisest word man reaches
Is the humblest he can speak?

20 Ye, who live on mountain peak,
Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meek!

IV

Mountain gorses, since Linnaeus
Knelt beside you on the sod,
For your beauty thanking God, —
25 For your teaching, ye should see us
Bowing in prostration new!
Whence arisen, — if one or two

Drops be on our cheeks — O world, they are not tears but
dew.

THE POET AND THE BIRD

A FABLE

I

Said a people to a poet — “Go out from among us straight-
way!

While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of
divine.

There’s a little fair brown nightingale, who, sitting in the
gateway,

Makes fitter music to our ear, than any song of thine!”

II

5 The poet went out weeping — the nightingale ceased chanting:
“Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness
done?”

“I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,
Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun.”

III

The poet went out weeping, — and died abroad, bereft
there —

The bird flew to his grave and died, amid a thousand 10
wails : —

And, when I last came by the place, I swear the music left
there

Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's.

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE

*A poet writes to his friend. Place — A room in Wycombe Hall. Time —
Late in the evening.*

Dear my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit
o'er you ;

Down the purple of this chamber, tears should scarcely run
at will !

I am humbled who was humble ! Friend, — I bow my head
before you !

You should lead me to my peasants ! — but their faces are
too still.

There's a lady — an earl's daughter ; she is proud and she 5
is noble ;

And she treads the crimson carpet, and she breathes the
perfumed air ;

And a kingly blood sends glances up her princely eye to
trouble,

And the shadow of a monarch's crown, is softened in her
hair.

She has halls and she has castles, and the resonant steam-
eagles
10 Follow far on the directing of her floating dove-like hand —
With a thundrous vapour trailing, underneath the starry
vigils,
So they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of her
land.

There be none of England's daughters, who can show a
prouder presence ;
Upon princely suitors suing, she has looked in her disdain :
15 She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English
peasants ;
What was *I* that I should love her — save for feeling of the
pain ?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other
things.
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my
abasement,
20 In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings !
Many vassals bow before her, as her carriage sweeps their
door-ways ;
She has blest their little children, — as a priest or queen
were she !
Oh, too tender or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile, which she used to smile
on *me*.

25 She has members in the commons, she has lovers in the
palace, —
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine :

Oft the prince has named her beauty, 'twixt the red wine
and the chalice :

Oh, and what was *I* to love her ? my beloved, my Geraldine !

Yet I could not choose but love her — I was born to poet-
uses —

To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair ! 30

Nymphs of old Parnassus mountain, we are wont to call
the Muses —

And in silver-footed climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the people praised
me,

With their critical deductions for the modern writer's fault ;
I could sit at rich men's tables, — though the courtesies that 35
raised me,

Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the
salt.

And they praised me in her presence ; — “ Will your book
appear this summer ? ”

Then returning to each other — “ Yes, our plans are for the
moors ; ”

Then with whisper dropped behind me — “ There he is ! the
latest comer !

Oh, she only likes his verses ! what is over, she endures. 40

“ Quite low-born ! self-educated ! somewhat gifted though by
nature, —

And we make a point of asking him, — of being very kind ;
You may speak, he does not hear you ; and besides, he
writes no satire, —

'These new charmers keep their serpents with the antique
sting resigned.' ”

45 I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there among
 them, —
 Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning scorched
 my brow ;
 When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, over-rung
 them,
 And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature
 through.

I looked upward and beheld her! With a calm and regnant
 spirit,
 50 Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before
 them all —
 “ Have you such superfluous honour, sir, that, able to
 confer it,
 You will come down, Mr. Bertram, as my guest to Wycombe
 Hall? ”

Here she paused, — she had been paler at the first word of
 her speaking ;
 But because a silence followed it, blushed scarlet, as for
 shame,
 55 Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly — “ I
 am seeking
 More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of my
 claim.

“ Ne’ertheless, you see, I seek it — not because I am a
 woman,” —
 (Here her smile sprang like a fountain and, so, overflowed
 her mouth)
 “ But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades
 at gloaming,
 60 Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

“I invite you, Mr. Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches —

Sir, I scarce should dare — but only where God asked the thrushes first —

And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches, I will thank you for the woodlands, . . . for the human world, at worst.”

Then, she smiled around right childly, then, she gazed 65
around right queenly ;

And I bowed — I could not answer ! Alternated light and gloom —

While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely, She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can hear them still around me,

With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind ! 70

Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex ! where the hunter's arrow found me,

When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and blind !

In that ancient hall of Wycombe thronged the numerous guests invited,

And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding feet ;
And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly 75
freighted

All the air about the windows with elastic laughters sweet.

For at eve the open windows flung their light out on the terrace,
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual shadow sweep ;

While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the
heiress,
80 Trembled downward through their snowy wings, at music in
their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and
singing,
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the
dark ;
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight-
ringing,
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of
the park.

85 And though sometimes she would bind me with her silver-
corded speeches
To commix my words and laughter with the converse and
the jest, —
Oft I sate apart and, gazing on the river, through the
beeches,
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice o'er-
float the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed, and laugh
of rider,
90 Spread out cheery from the court-yard, till we lost them in
the hills ;
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens, through the laurels and
abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass — bareheaded —
with the flowing
Of the virginal white vesture, gathered closely to her throat ;

With the golden ringlets in her neck, just quickened by her going, 95

And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to float, —

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand held above her,

And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and the skies, —

As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to love her,

And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her eyes. 100

For her eyes alone smile constantly: her lips have serious sweetness,

And her front is calm — the dimple rarely ripples on her cheek:

But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, — as if they had by fitness

Won the secret of a happy dream, she did not care to speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the garden: 105

And I walked among her noble friends and could not keep behind;

Spake she unto all and unto me — “Behold, I am the warden

Of the song-birds in these lindens, which are cages to their mind.

“But within this swarded circle, into which the lime-walk brings us —

Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in reverent fear, — 110

I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings
 us,
 Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough to
 hear.

“The live air that waves the lilies, waves the slender jet of
 water,
 Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting
 saint !

115 Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping ! (Lough the sculptor
 wrought her)
So asleep she is forgetting to say *Hush!* — a fancy quaint.

“Mark how heavy white her eyelids ! not a dream between
 them lingers ;
 And the left hand’s index droppeth from the lips upon the
 cheek :

And the right hand, — with the symbol rose held slack
 within the fingers, —

120 Has fallen backward in the basin — yet this Silence will not
 speak !

“That the essential meaning growing, may exceed the special
 symbol,
 Is the thought, as I conceive it : it applies more high and
 low, —

Our true noblemen will often, through right nobleness, grow
 humble,
 And assert an inward honour, by denying outward show.”

125 “Nay, your Silence,” said I, “truly, holds her symbol rose
 but slackly,
 Yet *she holds it* — or would scarcely be a Silence to our
 ken !

And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk
blackly

In the presence of the social law, as most ignoble men.

“Let the poets dream such dreaming! Madam, in these
British islands,

'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that ¹³⁰
exceeds :

Soon we shall have nought but symbol! and, for statues
like this Silence,

Shall accept the rose's marble — in another case, the weed's.”

“Not so quickly,” she retorted, — “I confess, where'er you
go, you

Find for things, names — shows for actions, and pure gold
for honour clear ;

But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw ¹³⁵
you

The world's book, which now reads dryly, and sit down
with Silence here.”

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indig-
nation ;

Friends who listened, laughed her words off, while her
lovers deemed her fair :

A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted
station,

Near the statue's white reposing — and both bathed in sunny ¹⁴⁰
air ! —

With the trees round, not so distant, but you heard their
vernal murmur,

And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and outward
move ;

And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be
warmer,
And recoiling backward, trembling with the too much light
above —

145 'Tis a picture for remembrance ! and thus, morning after
morning,
Did I follow as she drew me, by the spirit, to her feet —
Why, her greyhound followed also ! dogs — we both were
dogs for scorning —
To be sent back when she pleased it, and her path lay
through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of oath and spite of
sorrow,
150 Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed
along ;
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns
to-morrow,
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a
song.

Ay, and sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down in
the gowans,
With the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast
before ;
155 And the river running under ; and across it, from the
rowans,
A brown partridge whirring near us, till we felt the air it
bore, —

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems
Made by Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various, of our
own ;

Read the pastoral parts of Spenser — or the subtle inter-
flowings

Found in Petrarch's sonnets — here's the book — the leaf ¹⁶⁰
is folded down! —

Or at times a modern volume, — Wordsworth's solemn-
thoughted idyl,

Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie, —
Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which, if cut deep
down the middle,

Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined human-
ity! —

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my ¹⁶⁵
making —

Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their
worth, —

For the echo, in you, breaks upon the words which you are
speaking,

And the chariot wheels jar in the gate, through which you
drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence round
us flinging

A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the ¹⁷⁰
breast, —

She would break out on a sudden, in a gush of woodland
singing,

Like a child's emotion in a god — a naiad tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing! scarce I know which is
divinest —

For her looks sing too — she modulates her gestures on the
tune ;

175 And her mouth stirs with the song, like song; and when
 the notes are finest,
 'T is the eyes that shoot out vocal light, and seem to swell
 them on.

Then we talked — oh, how we talked! her voice, so cadenced
 in the talking,
 Made another singing — of the soul! a music without
 bars —

While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round where
 we were walking,
 180 Brought interposition worthy-sweet, — as skies about the
 stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always
 thought them —

She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on branch,
 Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought
 them,

In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the
 grange.

185 In her utmost lightness there is truth — and often she speaks
 lightly;

Has a grace in being gay, which even mournful souls
 approve;

For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck
 so rightly,

As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on — *we* talked truly! upon all things —
 substance — shadow —

190 Of the sheep that browsed the grasses — of the reapers in
 the corn —

Of the little children from the schools, seen winding through
the meadow —

Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by its
scorn.

So, of men, and so, of letters — books are men of higher
stature,

And the only men that speak aloud for future times to
hear.

So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into ¹⁹⁵
nature,

Yet will lift the cry of “progress,” as it trod from sphere to
sphere.

And her custom was to praise me, when I said, — “The Age
culls simples,

With a broad clown's back turned broadly, to the glory of
the stars —

We are gods by our own reck'ning, — and may well shut up
the temples,

And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our ²⁰⁰
cars.

“For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-
admiring,

With, at every mile run faster, — ‘O the wondrous, wondrous
age,’

Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our iron, —
Or if angels will commend us, at the goal of pilgrimage.

“Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep ²⁰⁵
resources,

But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright without
bane? —

When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestic
 white horses,
 Are we greater than the first men, who led black ones by
 the mane?

“If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in
 rising,
 210 If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric breath,
 ’T were but power within our *tether* — no new spirit-power
 conferring —
 And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in
 death.”

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her — loved
 her certes
 As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands!
 215 As I loved pure inspirations — loved the graces, loved the
 virtues, —
 In a Love content with writing his own name, on desert
 sands.

Or at least I thought so, purely! — thought, no idiot Hope
 was raising
 Any crown to crown Love’s silence — silent Love that sate
 alone —
 Out, alas! the stag is like me — he, that tries to go on
 grazing
 220 With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with
 sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled! I told you that her hand had many
 suitors —
 But she smiles them down imperially, as Venus did, the
 waves —

And with such a gracious coldness, that they cannot press
their futures

On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning, as I sat alone within the inner chamber 225
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought
serene —

For I had been reading Camöens — that poem you remember,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as the sweetest ever
seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it, taking
from it

A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own, — 230
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would over-
come it,

Springs up freely from his clasping, and goes swinging in the
sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur,—it grew deep as it grew
longer —

Speakers using earnest language — “Lady Geraldine, you
would!”

And I heard a voice that pleaded ever on, in accents 235
stronger,

As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric
good.

Well I knew that voice — it was an earl's, of soul that
matched his station —

Of a soul complete in lordship, — might and right read on
his brow;

Very finely courteous — far too proud to doubt his domination
Of the common people, — he atones for grandeur by a bow. 240

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes, of less
expression

Than resistance,—coldly casting off the looks of other men,
As steel, arrows,—inelastic lips, which seem to taste pos-
session

And be cautious lest the common air should injure or
distrain.

245 For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing by
his order

With a bearing not ungraceful; fond of art, and letters too,
Just a good man, made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks
that border

A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice—I heard it—and I could not help
the hearkening:

250 In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart within
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses till they ran on all
sides, darkening,

And scorched, weighed, like melted metal, round my feet
that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake—for
wealth, position, . . .

For the sake of liberal uses, and great actions to be done—

255 And she answered, answered gently—"Nay, my lord, the
old tradition

Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is,
should be won."

"Ah, that white hand!" he said quickly,—and in his he
either drew it,

Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied—

“Nay indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best
 eschew it,
 And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy to ²⁶⁰
 decide.”

What he said again, I know not. It is likely that his trouble
 Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in
 slow scorn —

“And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall
 be noble,
 Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was
 born.”

There, I maddened! her words stung me! Life swept ²⁶⁵
 through me into fever,

And my soul sprang up astonished; sprang full-statured in
 an hour.

Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic NEVER,
 To a Pythian height dilates you, — and despair sublimes to
 power?

From my brain, the soul-wings budded! — waved a flame
 about my body,

Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn out, ²⁷⁰
 as man,

From amalgamate false natures; and I saw the skies grow
 ruddy

With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits
 can.

I was mad — inspired — say either! anguish worketh inspira-
 tion!

Was a man or beast — perhaps so; for the tigers roar when
 speared;

275 And I walked on, step by step, along the level of my passion —
 Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and never
 feared.

He had left her, — peradventure, when my footstep proved
 my coming —

But for *her* — she half arose, then sate, grew scarlet and
 grew pale :

Oh, she trembled! — 't is so always with a worldly man or
 woman

280 In the presence of true spirits — what else *can* they do but
 quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-brothers,
 Far too strong for it! then drooping, bowed her face upon
 her hands —

And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and
 others!

I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my
 sands.

285 I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted, though leaf-
 verdant, —

Trod them down with words of shaming, — all the purples
 and the gold,

All the “landed stakes” and lordships — all that spirits pure
 and ardent

Are cast out of love and reverence, because chancing not to
 hold.

“For myself I do not argue,” said I, “though I love you,
 Madam,

290 But for better souls, that nearer to the height of yours have
 trod —

And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to
Adam,

Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

“Yet, O God” (I said), “O grave” (I said), “O mother’s
heart and bosom,

With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and
little child!

We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of heart-²⁹⁵
closing!

We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies defiled!

“Learn more reverence, Madam, not for rank or wealth —
that needs no learning;

That comes quickly — quick as sin does! ay, and often works
to sin;

But for Adam’s seed, MAN! ‘Trust me, ’tis a clay above
your scorning,

With God’s image stamped upon it, and God’s kindling³⁰⁰
breath within.

“What right have you, Madam, gazing in your shining
mirror daily,

Getting, so, by heart, your beauty, which all others must
adore,—

While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to
vow gaily,

You will wed no man that ’s only good to God,—and nothing
more?

“Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God—³⁰⁵
the sweetest woman

Of all women He has fashioned—with your lovely spirit-
face,

Which would seem too near to vanish, if its smile were not
so human, —

And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to
grace :

“What right *can* you have, God’s other works to scorn,
despise, revile them

310 In the gross, as mere men, broadly — not as *noble* men, for-
sooth, —

But as Parias of the outer world, forbidden to asso-
ciate with them,

In the hope of living, dying, near that sweetness of your
mouth?

“Have you any answer, Madam? If my spirit were less
earthly —

If its instrument were gifted with more vibrant silver
strings,

315 I would kneel down where I stand, and say — ‘Behold me ! I
am worthy

Of thy loving, for I love thee ! I am worthy as a king.’

“As it is — your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain
upon her —

That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and
you again,

Love you, Madam — dare to love you — to my grief and your
dishonour —

320 To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain !”

More mad words like these — mere madness ! friend, I need
not write them fuller ;

And I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of
tears —

Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! Why, a beast had scarce
been duller,
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of the
spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating with ³²⁵
thunder,
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face up like
a call.

Could you guess what words she uttered? She looked up,
as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said "Bertram!" it
was all.

If she had cursed me — and she might have — or if even,
with queenly bearing
Which at need is used by women, she had risen up and said, ³³⁰
"Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you a
full hearing —
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat less,
instead" —

I had borne it! — but that "Bertram" — why, it lies there on
the paper
A mere word, without her accent, — and you cannot judge
the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion! I seemed swim- ³³⁵
ming in a vapour;
And her gentleness did shame me, whom her scorn made
desolate.

So, struck backward, and exhausted by that inward flow of
passion
Which had passed, in deadly rushing, into forms of abstract
truth,

With a logic agonizing through unfit demonstration,
340 And with youth's own anguish turning grimly grey the hairs
of youth, —

With the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake
wisely

I spake basely— using truth, — if what I spake, indeed was
true —

To avenge wrong on a woman — *her*, who sate there weigh-
ing nicely

A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as I
could do! —

345 With such wrong and woe exhausted — what I suffered and
occasioned, —

As a wild horse through a city, runs with lightning in his
eyes,

And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall,
impassioned,

Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly drops
and dies —

So I fell, struck down before her! Do you blame me, friend,
for weakness?

350 'T was my strength of passion slew me! — fell before her
like a stone;

Fast the dreadful world rolled from me, on its roaring wheels
of blackness!

When the light came I was lying in this chamber — and
alone.

Oh, of course, she charged her lacqueys to bear out the
sickly burden,

And to cast it from her scornful sight — but not *beyond* the
gate —

She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon ³⁵⁵
Such a man as I — 't were something to be level to her hate.

But for *me* — you now are conscious why, my friend, I write
this letter, —

How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life
undone !

I shall leave this house at dawn — I would to-night, if I
were better —

And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for the ³⁶⁰
sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart with no last gazes,
No weak moanings — one word only, left in writing for her
hands, —

Out of reach of her derisions, and some unavailing praises,
To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign
lands.

Blame me not, I would not squander life in grief — I am ³⁶⁵
abstemious ;

I but nurse my spirit's falcon, that its wing may soar again !
There 's no room for tears of weakness, in the blind eyes of
a Phemius :

Into work the poet kneads them, — and he does not die *till*
then.

CONCLUSION

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence ever
Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell the tears on every leaf : ³⁷⁰
Having ended, he leans backward in his chair, with lips that
quiver
From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts
of grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'T is a dream — a dream
of mercies!

'T wixt the purple lattice-curtains, how she standeth still and
pale!

375 'T is a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self curses —
Sent to sweep a patient quiet, o'er the tossing of his wail.

“Eyes,” he said, “now throbbing through me! are y^e eyes
that did undo me?”

Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone!
Underneath that calm white forehead, are ye ever burning
torrid,

380 O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?”

With a murmurous stir, uncertain, in the air, the purple curtain
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale
brows;

While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for ever,
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's
slant repose.

385 Said he — “Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand there
steady!

Now I see it plainly, plainly; now I cannot hope or doubt —
There, the cheeks of calm expression — there, the lips of
silent passion,

Curvèd like an archer's bow, to send the bitter arrows out.”

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling, —
390 And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured
pace;

With her two white hands extended, as if praying one
offended,

And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his face.

Said he, — “Wake me by no gesture, — sound of breath, or
stir of vesture ;
Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine !
No approaching — hush ! no breathing ! or my heart must ³⁹⁵
swoon to death in
The too utter life thou bringest — O thou dream of Geraldine !”

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling —
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes and tenderly ;
“Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far
above me,
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart, than such a one as *I?*” ⁴⁰⁰

Said he — “I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that
river,
Flowing ever in a shadow, greenly onward to the sea ;
So, thou vision of all sweetness — princely to a full com-
pleteness, —
Would my heart and life flow onward — deathward —
through this dream of *THEE!*”

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling, — ⁴⁰⁵
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her
cheeks ;
Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly
told him,
“Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . ’t is the vision only speaks.”

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before
her —
And she whispered low in triumph — “It shall be as I have ⁴¹⁰
sworn !
Very rich he is in virtues, — very noble — noble, certes ;
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly born.”

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY

In the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun, —
Toll slowly.

And the oldest ringer said, "Ours is music for the dead
 When the rebecks are all done."

5 Six abeles i' the kirkyard grow on the north side in a row, —
Toll slowly.

And the shadows of their tops rock across the little slopes
 Of the grassy graves below.

On the south side and the west, a small river runs in haste, —
 10 *Toll slowly.*

And between the river flowing, and the fair green trees
 a-growing,
 Do the dead lie at their rest.

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow grey: —
Toll slowly.

15 Through the rain of willow-branches, I could see the low
 hill-ranges,
 And the river on its way.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled solemnly, —
Toll slowly.

While the trees' and rivers' voices flowed between the solemn
 noises, —

20 Yet death seemed more loud to me.

There I read this ancient rhyme, while the bell did all the time
Toll slowly.

And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,
 Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME

Broad the forest stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged, — 25
Toll slowly.

And three hundred years had stood, mute adown each hoary
 wood,
 Like a full heart, having prayed.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang
 west, —
Toll slowly. 30

And but little thought was theirs, of the silent antique years,
 In the building of their nest.

Down the sun dropt, large and red, on the towers of Lin-
 teged, —
Toll slowly.

Lance and spearhead on the height, bristling strange in fiery 35
 light,
 While the castle stood in shade.

There, the castle stood up black, with the red sun at its
 back, —
Toll slowly.

Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with a top that flickers fire,
 When the wind is on its track. 40

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall, —
Toll slowly.

And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights
 had stood,
 And to-night anears its fall.

45 Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride
did come, —

Toll slowly.

One who proudly trod the floors, and softly whispered in the
doors,

“May good angels bless our home.”

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies, —

50

Toll slowly.

Oh, a bride of cordial mouth, — where the untired smile of
youth

Did light outward its own sighs.

'T was a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and her uncle's ward, the Earl

Toll slowly.

55 Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of dowry
gold,

To his son Lord Leigh, the churl.

But what time she had made good all her years of woman-
hood, —

Toll slowly.

Unto both these lords of Leigh, spake she out right sovranly,

60

“My will runneth as my blood.”

“And while this same blood makes red this same right
hand's veins,” she said, —

Toll slowly.

“'T is my will, as lady free, not to wed a lord of Leigh,

But, Sir Guy of Linteged.”

65 The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for wilful
youth, —

Toll slowly.

“Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat soft
and small,
For so large a will, in sooth.”

She too smiled by that same sign, — but her smile was cold
and fine, —
Toll slowly. 70

“Little hand clasps muckle gold; or it were not worth the
hold
Of thy son, good uncle mine!”

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in
his teeth, —
Toll slowly.

“He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an
she loathed,
Let the life come or the death.” 75

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father’s child might
rise, —
Toll slowly.

“Thy hound’s blood, my lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly
heel,” quoth she,
“And he moans not where he lies. 80

“But a woman’s will dies hard, in the hall or on the
sword!” —
Toll slowly.

“By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl
and dowered lady,
I deny you wife and ward!”

Unto each she bowed her head and swept past with lofty 85
tread, —
Toll slowly.

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the
priest

Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm rode
amain : —

90 *Toll slowly.*

Wild the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out on
the turf,

In the pauses of the rain.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm pursued
amain, —

95 *Toll slowly.*

Steed on steed-track, dashing off — thickening, doubling,
hoof on hoof,

In the pauses of the rain.

And the bridegroom led the flight, on his red-roan steed of
might, —

Toll slowly.

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no harm,

100 Smiling out into the night.

“Dost thou fear?” he said at last ; — “Nay!” she answered
him in haste, —

Toll slowly.

“Not such death as we could find — only life with one
behind —

Ride on fast as fear — ride fast !”

105 Up the mountain wheeled the steed — girth to ground, and
fetlocks spread, —

Toll slowly.

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks, — down he staggered
 — down the banks,
 To the towers of Linteged.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed
 about, —

Toll slowly.

110

In the courtyard rose the cry — “Live the Duchess and Sir
 Guy!”

But she never heard them shout.

On the steed she dropped her cheek, kissed his mane and
 kissed his neck, —

Toll slowly.

“I had happier died by thee, than lived on a Lady Leigh,” 115
 Were the words which she did speak.

But a three months’ joyaunce lay ’twixt that moment and
 to-day, —

Toll slowly.

When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle wall,
 To recapture Duchess May.

120

And the castle standeth black, with the red sun at its back,—

Toll slowly.

And a fortnight’s siege is done — and, except the Duchess,
 none,

Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so grey 125
 of blee,

Toll slowly.

And thin lips, that scarcely sheathe the cold white gnashing
 of his teeth,

Gnashed in smiling, absently, —

Cried aloud — “ So goes the day, bridegroom fair of Duchess
May! ” —

Toll slowly.

130

“ Look thy last upon that sun. If thou seest to-morrow’s
one,

’T will be through a foot of clay.

“ Ha, fair bride! Dost hear no sound, save that moaning
of the hound? ”

Toll slowly.

135

“ Thou and I have parted troth, — yet I keep my vengeance-
oath,

And the other may come round.

“ Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past com-
pare,” —

Toll slowly.

“ Yet thine old love’s faulchion brave is as strong a thing
to have,

140

As the will of lady fair.

“ Peck on blindly, netted dove! — If a wife’s name thee
behave,” —

Toll slowly.

“ Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has
hid the sorrow

Of thy last ill-mated love.

145 “ O’er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back
troth,” —

Toll slowly.

“ He shall altar be and priest, — and he will not cry at least
‘ I forbid you, I am loth! ’

“I will wring thy fingers pale, in the gauntlet of my mail,” —

Toll slowly.

150

“‘Little hand and muckle gold’ close shall lie within my hold,

As the sword did, to prevail.”

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, —

Toll slowly.

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put away 155

All his boasting, for a jest.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it, —

Toll slowly.

“Tower is strong and will is free — thou canst boast, my lord of Leigh, —

But thou boastest little wit.”

160

In her tire-glass gazed she, and she blushed right womanly, —

Toll slowly.

She blushed half from her disdain — half, her beauty was so plain,

— “Oath for oath, my lord of Leigh!”

Straight she called her maidens in — “Since ye gave me blame herein,” — 165

Toll slowly.

“That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make it fine,

Come and shrive me from that sin.

“It is three months gone to-day since I gave mine hand away :” —

Toll slowly.

170

“Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride-
state in them,
While we keep the foe at bay.

“On your arms I loose my hair; — comb it smooth and crown
it fair,” —
Toll slowly.

175 “I would look in purple-pall from this lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that ’s there!”

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, —
Toll slowly.

180 On the tower the castle’s lord leant in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

With a spirit-laden weight did he lean down passionate, —
Toll slowly.

They have almost sapped the wall, — they will enter there
withal
With no knocking at the gate.

185 Then the sword he leant upon, shivered — snapped upon
the stone, —
Toll slowly.

“Sword,” he thought, with inward laugh, “ill thou servest
for a staff,
When thy nobler use is done!

190 “Sword, thy nobler use is done! — tower is lost, and shame
begun:” —
Toll slowly.

“If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to
speech,
We should die there, each for one.

“If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly fall,” —

Toll slowly.

“But if *I* die here alone, — then I die who am but one, 195
And die nobly for them all.

“Five true friends lie for my sake — in the moat and in the
brake,” —

Toll slowly.

“Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a black wound in the
breast,

And not one of these will wake. 200

“And no more of this shall be! — heart-blood weighs too
heavily,” —

Toll slowly.

“And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the
brave

Heaped around and over me.

“Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a 205
plighted faith,” —

Toll slowly.

“Since my pale young sister’s cheeks blush like rose when
Ronald speaks,

Albeit never a word she saith —

“These shall never die for me — life-blood falls too
heavily :” —

Toll slowly.

“And if *I* die here apart, — o’er my dead and silent heart
They shall pass out safe and free. 210

“When the foe hath heard it said — ‘Death holds Guy of
Linteged,’ —

Toll slowly.

215 "That new corse new peace shall bring; and a blessed,
blessed thing
Shall the stone be at its head.

"Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my
memory," —
Toll slowly.

"Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my
widowed bride,
220 Whose sole sin was love of me.

"With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her
and entreat:" —
Toll slowly.

"And their purple-pall will spread underneath her fainting
head,
While her tears drop over it.

225 "She will weep her woman's tears, she will pray her woman's
prayers," —
Toll slowly.

"But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring
again
By the suntime of her years.

"Ah, sweet May — ah, sweetest grief! — once I vowed thee
my belief," —
230 *Toll slowly.*

"That thy name expressed thy sweetness, — May of poets,
in completeness!
Now my May-day seemeth brief."

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er his eyes grown strange
and dim, —
Toll slowly.

Till his true men, in the place, wished they stood there face ²³⁵
to face

With the foe instead of him.

“One last oath, my friends, that wear faithful hearts to do
and dare!” —

Toll slowly.

“Tower must fall and bride be lost! — swear me service
worth the cost,”

Bold they stood around to swear.

²⁴⁰

“Each man clasp my hand, and swear, by the deed we failed
in there,” —

Toll slowly.

“Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow
to-night!” —

Pale they stood around — to swear.

“One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts to ²⁴⁵
do and dare!”

Toll slowly.

“Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before
you all, —

Guide him up the turret-stair.

“Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this
height!”

Toll slowly.

²⁵⁰

“Once in love and twice in war, hath he borne me strong
and far, —

He shall bear me far to-night.”

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him
speaking so, —

Toll slowly.

255 " 'Las! the noble heart," they thought, " he in sooth is grief-
distraught. —

Would we stood here with the foe!"

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt their thought and their
reply, —

Toll slowly.

" Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride here, must
ride fast,

260 As we wish our foes to fly."

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he
did wear, —

Toll slowly.

Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes of
the floors ;

But they goad him up the stair.

265 Then from out her bower chambère, did the Duchess May
repair, —

Toll slowly.

" Tell me now what is your need," said the lady, " of this
steed,

That ye goad him up the stair?"

Calm she stood! unbodkined through, fell her dark hair to
her shoe, —

270 *Toll slowly.*

And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

" Get thee back, sweet Duchess May! hope is gone like
yesterday," —

Toll slowly.

“One half-hour completes the breach; and thy lord grows ²⁷⁵
wild of speech. —

Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.

“In the east tower, high’st of all, — loud he cries for steed
from stall,” —

Toll slowly.

“‘He would ride as far,’ quoth he, ‘as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall.’ ²⁸⁰

“And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof
did fall.” —

Toll slowly.

“Wifely prayer meets deathly need! may the sweet Heavens
hear thee plead,

If he rides the castle-wall!”

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on ²⁸⁵
the floor, —

Toll slowly.

And tear after tear you heard, fall distinct as any word

Which you might be listening for.

“Get thee in, thou soft ladye! — here is never a place for
thee!” —

Toll slowly.

²⁹⁰

“Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in its
moan

May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.”

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face, —

Toll slowly.

Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering, seems ²⁹⁵
to look

Right against the thunder-place.

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the stone
beside, —

Toll slowly.

“Go to, faithful friends, go to! — judge no more what ladies
do, —

300 No, nor how their lords may ride!”

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did kiss
and stroke: —

Toll slowly.

Soft he neighed to answer her; and then followed up the
stair,

For the love of her sweet look:

305 Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair around, —

Toll slowly.

Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside her
treading,

Did he follow, meek as hound.

On the east tower, high'st of all, — there, where never a
hoof did fall, —

310 *Toll slowly.*

Out they swept, a vision steady, noble steed and lovely
lady,

Calm as if in bower or stall.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up
silently, —

Toll slowly.

315 And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within her
eyes,

Which he could not bear to see.

Quoth he, "Get thee from this strife, — and the sweet saints
bless thy life!" —

Toll slowly.

"In this hour, I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed —
But no more of my noble wife."

320

Quoth she, "Meekly have I done all thy biddings under
sun:" —

Toll slowly.

"But by all my womanhood, — which is proved so, true and
good,
I will never do this one.

"Now by womanhood's degree, and by wifehood's verity," —

325

Toll slowly.

"In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of *me*.

"By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardiè," —

Toll slowly.

330

"If, this hour, on castle-wall, can be room for steed from
stall,
Shall be also room for *me*.

"So the sweet saints with me be," (did she utter solemnly), —

Toll slowly.

"If a man, this eventide, on this castle-wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with *me*."

335

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he laughed out bitter-
well, —

Toll slowly.

"Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other
eves,

To hear chime a vesper-bell?"

340

She clung closer to his knee — “Ay, beneath the cypress-
tree !” —

Toll slowly.

“Mock me not; for elsewhere than along the greenwood
fair,

Have I ridden fast with thee !

345 “Fast I rode with new-made vows, from my angry kinsman’s
house !”

Toll slowly.

“What ! and would you men should reck, that I dared more
for love’s sake,

As a bride than as a spouse ?

“What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before
all,” —

350

Toll slowly.

“That a bride may keep your side, while through castle-gate
you ride,

Yet eschew the castle-wall ?”

Ho ! the breach yawns into ruin, and roars up against her
suing, —

Toll slowly.

355 With the inarticulate din, and the dreadful falling in —
Shrieks of doing and undoing !

Twice he wrung her hands in twain, — but the small hands
closed again, —

Toll slowly.

Back he reined the steed — back, back ! but she trailed
along his track,

360

With a frantic clasp and strain.

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window
and door, —

Toll slowly.

And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of
“kill!” and “flee!”

Strike up clear the general roar.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain, — but they closed and ³⁶⁵
clung again, —

Toll slowly.

While she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon
the rood,

In a spasm of deathly pain.

She clung wild and she clung mute, — with her shuddering
lips half-shut, —

Toll slowly.

370

Her head fallen as half in swound, — hair and knee swept
on the ground, —

She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown on the slippery coping-
stone, —

Toll slowly.

Back the iron hoofs did grind, on the battlement behind, ³⁷⁵

Whence a hundred feet went down.

And' his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank
bestrode, —

Toll slowly.

“Friends, and brothers! save my wife! — Pardon, sweet, in
change for life, —

But I ride alone to God.”

380

Straight as if the Holy name had upbreathed her like a
flame, —

Toll slowly.

She upsprang, she rose upright! — in his selle she sate in
sight;

By her love she overcame.

385 And her head was on his breast where she smiled as one at
rest, —

Toll slowly.

“Ring,” she cried, “O vesper-bell, in the beechwood’s old
chappelle!

But the passing-bell rings best.”

They have caught out at the rein, which Sir Guy threw loose
— in vain, —

390 *Toll slowly.*

For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised in air,
On the last verge, rears amain.

And he hangs, he rocks between — and his nostrils curdle
in, —

Toll slowly.

395 And he shivers head and hoof — and the flakes of foam
fall off;

And his face grows fierce and thin!

And a look of human woe, from his staring eyes did go, —

Toll slowly.

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony

400 Of the headlong death below, —

And, “Ring, ring, thou passing-bell,” still she cried, “i’ the
old chapelle!” —

Toll slowly.

Then back-toppling, crashing back — a dead weight flung
 out to wrack,
 Horse and riders overfell.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, — 405
Toll slowly.

And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the kirkyard, while the
 chime
 Slowly tolled for one at rest.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did run, —
Toll slowly. 410

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and
 its change,
 Here, where all done lay undone.

And beneath a willow tree I a little grave did see, —
Toll slowly.

Where was graved, — HERE, UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD, A 415
 THREE-YEAR CHILD,
 EIGHTEEN HUNDRED FORTY-THREE.

Then, O Spirits — did I say — ye who rode so fast that
 day, —
Toll slowly.

Did star-wheels and angel wings, with their holy winnowings,
 Keep beside you all the way? 420

Though in passion ye would dash, with a blind and heavy
 crash,
Toll slowly.

Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment in the
 field, —
 Though your heart and brain were rash, —

425 Now, your will is all unwilling — now, your pulses are all
stilled, —

Toll slowly.

Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the
child,

Whose small grave was lately filled.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient now, —

430

Toll slowly.

And the children might be bold to pluck the kingcups from
your mould,

Ere a month had let them grow.

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder near, in spring, —

Toll slowly.

435 Let her build her nest, and sit all the three weeks out on it,
Murmuring not at anything.

In your patience ye are strong, cold and heat ye take not
wrong ; —

Toll slowly.

When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,

440

Time will seem to you not long.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, —

Toll slowly.

And I said in underbreath, — All our life is mixed with
death, —

And who knoweth which is best ?

445 Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, —

Toll slowly.

And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our
incompleteness, —

Round our restlessness, His rest.

THE LOST BOWER

I

In the pleasant orchard closes,
“God bless all our gains,” say we;
But “May God bless all our losses”
Better suits with our degree.—

Listen, gentle — ay, and simple! Listen, children on the 5
knee!

II

Green the land is, where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played —
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade;

Summer-snow of apple-blossoms, running up from glade to 10
glade.

III

There is one hill I see nearer,
In my vision of the rest;
And a little wood seems clearer,
As it climbeth from the west,

Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland 15
crest.

IV

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
And, completing the ascent,
Where the wind blows and sun dazzles,
Thrills in leafy tremblement;

Like a heart that, after climbing, beateth quickly through 20
content.

V

Not a step the wood advances
 O'er the open hill-top's bound :
 There, in green arrest, the branches
 See their image on the ground :

25 You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with sight and
 glad with sound.

VI

For you hearken on your right hand,
 How the birds do leap and call
 In the greenwood, out of sight and
 Out of reach and fear of all ;

30 And the squirrels crack the filberts, through their cheerful
 madrigal.

VII

On your left, the sheep are cropping
 The slant grass and daisies pale ;
 And five apple-trees stand, dropping
 Separate shadows toward the vale,

35 Over which, in choral silence, the hills look you their " All
 hail ! "

VIII

Far out, kindled by each other,
 Shining hills on hills arise ;
 Close as brother leans to brother,
 When they press beneath the eyes

40 Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of paradise.

IX

While beyond, above them mounted,
 And above their woods also,

Malvern hills, for mountains counted
 Not unduly, loom a-row —
 Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions through the sunshine 45
 and the snow.¹

X

Yet, in childhood, little prized I
 That fair walk and far survey :
 'T was a straight walk, unadvised by
 The least mischief worth a nay —
 Up and down — as dull as grammar on the eve of holiday. 50

XI

But the wood, all close and clenching
 Bough in bough and root in root, —
 No more sky (for over-branching)
 At your head than at your foot, —
 Oh, the wood drew me within it, by a glamour past dispute. 55

XII

Few and broken paths showed through it,
 Where the sheep had tried to run, —
 Forced with snowy wool to strew it
 Round the thickets, when anon
 They, with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back into the 60
 sun.

XIII

But my childish heart beat stronger
 Than those thickets dared to grow :
 I could pierce them ! I could longer
 Travel on, methought, than so.
 Sheep for sheep-paths ! braver children climb and creep 65
 where they would go.

¹ The Malvern hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langland's visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

XIV

And the poets wander, said I,
 Over places all as rude!
 Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
 Sate to meet him in a wood —

70 Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with solitude.

XV

And if Chaucer had not travelled
 Through a forest by a well,
 He had never dreamt nor marvelled
 At those ladies fair and fell

75 Who lived smiling without loving, in their island-citadel.

XVI

Thus I thought of the old singers,
 And took courage from their song,
 Till my little struggling fingers
 Tore asunder gyve and thong

80 Of the lichens which entrapped me and the barrier branches
 strong.

XVII

On a day, such pastime keeping,
 With a fawn's heart debonair,
 Under-crawling, overleaping
 Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,

85 I stood suddenly astonished — I was gladdened unaware.

XVIII

From the place I stood in, floated
 Back the covert dim and close ;

And the open ground was coated
 Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
 And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worthily 90
 across.

XIX

Here a linden-tree stood, brightening
 All adown its silver rind;
 For, as some trees draw the lightning,
 So this tree, unto my mind,
 Drew to earth the blessed sunshine, from the sky where it 95
 was shrined.

XX

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
 An old hawthorn also grew;
 And wood-ivy like a spirit
 Hovered dimly round the two,
 Shaping thence that Bower of beauty which I sing of thus 100
 to you.

XXI

'Twas a bower for garden fitter,
 Than for any woodland wide.
 Though a fresh and dewy glitter
 Struck it through from side to side,
 Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-cunning 105
 plied.

XXII

Oh, a lady might have come there,
 Hooded fairly like her hawk,
 With a book or lute in summer,
 And a hope of sweeter talk, —
 Listening less to her own music, than for footsteps on the 110
 walk!

XXIII

But that bower appeared a marvel
 In the wildness of the place !
 With such seeming art and travail,
 Finely fixed and fitted was
 115 Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from the
 base.

XXIV

And the ivy, veined and glossy,
 Was inwrought with eglantine ;
 And the wild hop fibred closely,
 And the large-leaved columbine,
 120 Arch of door and window-mullion did right sylvanly entwine.

XXV

Rose-trees, either side the door, were
 Growing lithe and growing tall ;
 Each one set a summer warder
 For the keeping of the hall, —
 125 With a red rose, and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the
 wall.

XXVI

As I entered — mosses hushing
 Stole all noises from my foot ;
 And a green elastic cushion,
 Clasped within the linden's root.
 130 Took me in a chair of silence, very rare and absolute.

XXVII

All the floor was paved with glory, —
 Greenly, silently inlaid,

Through quick motions made before me,
 With fair counterparts in shade,
 Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which slanted overhead. 135

XXVIII

“Is such pavement in a palace?”
 So I questioned in my thought:
 The sun, shining through the chalice
 Of the red rose hung without,
 Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my doubt. 140

XXIX

At the same time, on the linen
 Of my childish lap there fell
 Two white may-leaves, downward winning
 Through the ceiling's miracle,
 From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet blessing 145
 well.

XXX

Down to floor and up to ceiling,
 Quick I turned my childish face;
 With an innocent appealing
 For the secret of the place,
 To the trees, which surely knew it, in partaking of the 150
 grace.

XXXI

Where's no foot of human creature,
 How could reach a human hand?
 And if this be work of nature,
 Why is nature sudden bland,
 Breaking off from other wild work? It was hard to under- 155
 stand.

XXXII

Was she weary of rough-doing,
 Of the bramble and the thorn?
 Did she pause in tender rueing,
 Here, of all her sylvan scorn?

160 Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was the sudden mildness,
 worn?

XXXIII

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
 Be the work of Dryad strong;
 Who, surviving all that chancèd
 In the world's old pagan wrong,

165 Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on the last true poet's
 song?

XXXIV

Or was this the house of fairies,
 Left, because of the rough ways,
 Unassoiled by Ave Marys
 Which the passing pilgrim prays, —

170 And beyond St. Catherine's chiming, on the blessed Sabbath
 days?

XXXV

So, young muser, I sate listening
 To my fancy's wildest word —
 On a sudden, through the glistening
 Leaves around, a little stirred,

175 Came a sound, a sense of music, which was rather felt than
 heard.

XXXVI

Softly, finely, it inwound me —
 From the world it shut me in, —

Like a fountain, falling round me,
 Which with silver waters thin
 Clips a little marble Naiad, sitting smilingly within. 180

XXXVII

Whence the music came, who knoweth?
 I know nothing. But indeed
 Pan or Faunus never bloweth
 So much sweetness from a reed
 Which has sucked the milk of waters, at the oldest riverhead. 185

XXXVIII

Never lark the sun can waken
 With such sweetness! when the lark,
 The high planets overtaking
 In the half-evanished Dark,
 Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the mark. 190

XXXIX

Never nightingale so singeth —
 Oh! she leans on thorny tree,
 And her poet-song she flingeth
 Over pain to victory!
 Yet she never sings such music, — or she sings it not to me. 195

XL

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
 Nor small finches sing as sweet,
 When the sun strikes through the bushes,
 To their crimson clinging feet,
 And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer heavens 200
 complete.

XLI

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd
 Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
 He of green and azure dreamèd,
 While it sate in spirit-ruth
 205 On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent
 mouth.

XLII

If it *were* a bird? — ah, sceptic,
 Give me “Yea” or give me “Nay” —
 Though my soul were nympholeptic,
 As I heard that virelay,
 210 You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is far away.

XLIII

I rose up in exaltation
 And an inward trembling heat,
 And (it seemed) in geste of passion,
 Dropped the music to my feet,
 215 Like a garment rustling downwards! — such a silence
 followed it.

XLIV

Heart and head beat through the quiet,
 Full and heavily, though slower;
 In the song, I think, and by it,
 Mystic Presences of power
 220 Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned me to
 the Hour.

XLV

In a child-abstraction lifted,
 Straightway from the bower I past;

Foot and soul being dimly drifted
 Through the greenwood, till, at last,
 In the hill-top's open sunshine, I all consciously was cast. 225

XLVI

Face to face with the true mountains,
 I stood silently and still ;
 Drawing strength from fancy's dauntings,
 From the air about the hill,
 And from Nature's open mercies, and most debonair good- 230
 will.

XLVII

Oh! the golden-hearted daisies
 Witnessed there, before my youth,
 To the truth of things, with praises
 Of the beauty of the truth ;
 And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for both. 235

XLVIII

And I said within me, laughing,
 I have found a bower to-day,
 A green lusus fashioned half in
 Chance, and half in Nature's play —
 And a little bird sings nigh it, I will nevermore missay. 240

XLIX

Henceforth, *I* will be the fairy
 Of this bower, not built by one ;
 I will go there, sad or merry,
 With each morning's benison ;
 And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I have 245
 won.

L

So I said. But the next morning,
 (— Child, look up into my face —
 'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorning!
 This is truth in its pure grace;)

²⁵⁰ The next morning, all had vanished, or my wandering
 missed the place.

LI

Bring an oath most sylvan-holy,
 And upon it swear me true —
 By the wind-bells swinging slowly
 Their mute curfews in the dew —

²⁵⁵ By the advent of the snowdrop — by the rosemary and rue, —

LII

I affirm by all or any,
 Let the cause be charm or chance,
 That my wandering searches many
 Missed the bower of my romance —

²⁶⁰ That I nevermore, upon it, turned my mortal countenance.

LIII

I affirm that, since I lost it,
 Never bower has seemed so fair —
 Never garden-creeper crossed it,
 With so deft and brave an air —

²⁶⁵ Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard them
 there.

LIV

Day by day, with new desire,
 Toward my wood I ran in faith —

Under leaf and over brier —
 Through the thickets, out of breath —
 Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep as long 270
 as death.

LV

But his sword of mettle clashèd,
 And his arm smote strong, I ween;
 And her dreaming spirit flashèd
 Through her body's fair white screen, —
 And the light thereof might guide him up the cedar alleys 275
 green.

LVI

But for me, I saw no splendour —
 All my sword was my child-heart;
 And the wood refused surrender
 Of that bower it held apart,
 Safe as CEdipus's grave-place 'mid Colone's olives swart. 280

LVII

As Aladdin sought the basements
 His fair palace rose upon,
 And the four-and-twenty casements
 Which gave answers to the sun;
 So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked up, and I looked 285
 down.

LVIII

Years have vanished since, as wholly
 As the little bower did then;
 And you call it tender folly
 That such thoughts should come again?
 Ah! I cannot change this sighing for your smiling, brother 290
 men!

LIX

For this loss it did prefigure
 Other loss of better good,
 When my soul, in spirit-vigour
 And in ripened womanhood,

295 Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbour in a wood.

LX

I have lost — oh, many a pleasure —
 Many a hope, and many a power —
 Studious health and merry leisure —
 The first dew on the first flower !

300 But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower.

LXI

I have lost the dream of Doing,
 And the other dream of Done —
 The first spring in the pursuing,
 The first pride in the Begun, —

305 First recoil from incompleteness, in the face of what is won —

LXII

Exaltations in the far light,
 Where some cottage only is —
 Mild dejections in the starlight,
 Which the sadder-hearted miss ;

310 And the child-cheek blushing scarlet, for the very shame of
 bliss.

LXIII

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
 Which the thunder could not break ;

Something too of the strong leaping
 Of the staglike heart awake,
 Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it ought to 315
 take.

LXIV

Some respect to social fictions
 Has been also lost by me ;
 And some generous genuflexions,
 Which my spirit offered free
 To the pleasant old conventions of our false Humanity. 320

LXV

All my losses did I tell you,
 Ye perchance would look away ; —
 Ye would answer me, “ Farewell ! you
 Make sad company to-day ;
 And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words you 325
 say.”

LXVI

For God placed me like a dial
 In the open ground, with power ;
 And my heart had for its trial,
 All the sun and all the shower !
 And I suffered many losses ; and my first was of the bower. 330

LXVII

Laugh you ? If that loss of mine be
 Of no heavy-seeming weight —
 When the cone falls from the pine-tree,
 The young children laugh thereat ;
 Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and the tempest shall be 335
 great.

LXVIII

One who knew me in my childhood,
 In the glamour and the game,
 Looking on me long and mild, would
 Never know me for the same.

340 Come, unchanging recollections, where those changes over-
 came.

LXIX

By this couch I weakly lie on,
 While I count my memories, —
 Through the fingers which, still sighing,
 I press closely on mine eyes, —

345 Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I behold the bower
 arise.

LXX

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
 Stroked with light adown its rind —
 And the ivy-leaves serenely
 Each in either intertwined;

350 And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither grown
 nor pined.

LXXI

From those overblown faint roses,
 Not a leaf appeareth shed,
 And that little bud discloses
 Not a thorn's-breadth more of red,

355 For the winters and the summers which have passed me
 overhead.

LXXII

And that music overfloweth,
 Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves;

Thrush or nightingale — who knoweth?
 Fay or Faunus — who believes?

But my heart still trembles in me, to the trembling of the ³⁶⁰
 leaves.

LXXIII

Is the bower lost, then? Who sayeth
 That the bower indeed is lost?
 Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
 Through the sunshine and the frost, —

And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and utter- ³⁶⁵
 most —

LXXIV

Till another open for me
 In God's Eden-land unknown,
 With an angel at the doorway,
 White with gazing at His Throne;

And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing — "ALL IS ³⁷⁰
 LOST . . . and *won!*"

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

"Φεῦ, φεῦ, τί προσδέρκεσθέ μ' ὀμμασιν, τέκνα;" — MEDEA.

I

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
 Ere the sorrow comes with years?
 They are leaning their young heads against their mothers, —
 And *that* cannot stop their tears.
 The young lambs are bleating in the meadows; 5
 The young birds are chirping in the nest;
 The young fawns are playing with the shadows;
 The young flowers are blowing toward the west —

But the young, young children, O my brothers,
 10 They are weeping bitterly! —
 They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
 In the country of the free.

II

Do you question the young children in the sorrow,
 Why their tears are falling so? —
 15 The old man may weep for his to-morrow
 Which is lost in Long Ago —
 The old tree is leafless in the forest —
 The old year is ending in the frost —
 The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest —
 20 The old hope is hardest to be lost :
 But the young, young children, O my brothers,
 Do you ask them why they stand
 Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
 In our happy Fatherland?

III

25 They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
 And their looks are sad to see,
 For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
 Down the cheeks of infancy —
 "Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary ;
 30 Our young feet," they say, "are very weak!
 Few paces have we taken, yet are weary —
 Our grave-rest is very far to seek.
 Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
 For the outside earth is cold, —
 35 And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
 And the graves are for the old.

IV

" True," say the children, " it may happen
 That we die before our time.
 Little Alice died last year — her grave is shapen
 Like a snowball, in the rime. 40
 We looked into the pit prepared to take her —
 Was no room for any work in the close clay :
 From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
 Crying, ' Get up, little Alice ! it is day.'
 If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower, 45
 With your ear down, little Alice never cries ! —
 Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
 For the smile has time for growing in her eyes, —
 And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
 The shroud, by the kirk-chime ! 50
 It is good when it happens," say the children,
 " That we die before our time."

V

Alas, alas, the children ! they are seeking
 Death in life, as best to have !
 They are binding up their hearts away from breaking, 55
 With a cerement from the grave.
 Go out, children, from the mine and from the city —
 Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do —
 Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty —
 Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through ! 60
 But they answer, " Are your cowslips of the meadows
 Like our weeds anear the mine ?
 Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
 From your pleasures fair and fine !

VI

65 "For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
 And we cannot run or leap —
 If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
 To drop down in them and sleep.
 Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping —
 70 We fall upon our faces, trying to go ;
 And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
 The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
 For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,
 Through the coal-dark, underground —
 75 Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
 In the factories, round and round.

VII

"For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning, —
 Their wind comes in our faces, —
 Till our hearts turn, — our heads with pulses burning,
 80 And the walls turn in their places —
 Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling —
 Turns the long light that drops adown the wall —
 Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling —
 All are turning, all the day, and we with all. —
 85 And all day, the iron wheels are droning ;
 And sometimes we could pray,
 'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)
 'Stop! be silent for to-day!'"

VIII

Ay! be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
 90 For a moment, mouth to mouth —
 Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
 Of their tender human youth!

Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
 Is not all the life God fashions or reveals —
 Let them prove their inward souls against the notion 95
 That they live in you, or under you, O wheels! —
 Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
 Grinding life down from its mark ;
 And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
 Spin on blindly in the dark. 100

IX

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
 To look up to Him and pray —
 So the blessed One, who blesseth all the others,
 Will bless them another day.
 They answer, " Who is God that He should hear us, 105
 While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
 When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
 Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word!
 And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
 Strangers speaking at the door : 110
 Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
 Hears our weeping any more ?

X

" Two words, indeed, of praying we remember ;
 And at midnight's hour of harm, —
 ' Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber, 115
 We say softly for a charm.¹

¹ A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his commission. The name of the poet of " Orion " and " Cosmo de' Medici " has, however, a change of associations, and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still, — however we may be open to the reproach of being somewhat gelid in our humanity.

We know no other words except 'Our Father,'
 And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
 God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
 120 And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
 'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
 (For they call Him good and mild)
 Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
 'Come and rest with me, my child.'

XI

125 "But, no!" say the children, weeping faster,
 "He is speechless as a stone;
 And they tell us, of His image is the master
 Who commands us to work on.
 Go to!" say the children, — "Up in Heaven,
 130 Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
 Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving —
 We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."
 Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
 O my brothers, what ye preach?
 135 For God's possible is taught by His world's loving —
 And the children doubt of each.

XII

And well may the children weep before you;
 They are weary ere they run;
 They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
 140 Which is brighter than the sun:
 They know the grief of man, but not the wisdom;
 They sink in man's despair, without its calm —
 Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom, —
 Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm, —

Are worn, as if with age, yet unretrievingly
 No dear remembrance keep, — 145
 Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly :
 Let them weep! Let them weep!

XIII

They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,
 And their look is dread to see, 150
 For they mind you of their angels in high places,
 With eyes turned on Deity ;—
 “ How long,” they say, “ how long, O cruel nation,
 Will you stand, to move the world, on a child’s heart,—
 Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation, 155
 And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
 Our blood splashes upward, O our tyrants,
 And your purple shows your path ;
 But the child’s sob curseth deeper in the silence
 Than the strong man in his wrath !” 160

WINE OF CYPRUS

[GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, ESQ., AUTHOR OF “SELECT PASSAGES
 FROM THE GREEK FATHERS,” ETC., TO WHOM THESE
 STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED.]

I

If old Bacchus were the speaker,
 He would tell you, with a sigh,
 Of the Cyprus in this beaker,
 I am sipping like a fly, —
 Like a fly or gnat on Ida 5
 At the hour of goblet-pledge,
 By queen Juno brushed aside, a
 Full white arm-sweep, from the edge.

II

Sooth the drinking should be ampler,
10 When the drink is so divine ;
And some deep-mouthed Greek exemplar
 Would become your Cyprian wine !
Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright in,
 While his one eye over-leered —
15 Nor too large were mouth of Titan,
 Drinking rivers down his beard.

III

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
 That his ears alone pricked out ;
Fauns around him, pressing, leaping,
20 Each one pointing to his throat :
While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,
 Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
Cry, — “ O earth, that thou wouldst grant us
 Springs to keep, of such a taste ! ”

IV

25 But for me, I am not worthy
 After gods and Greeks to drink ;
And my lips are pale and earthy,
 To go bathing from this brink.
Since you heard them speak the last time,
30 They have faded from their blooms ;
And the laughter of my pastime
 Has learnt silence at the tombs.

V

Ah, my friend ! the antique drinkers
 Crowned the cup and crowned the brow.

Can I answer the old thinkers 35
 In the forms they thought of, now?
 Who will fetch from garden-closes
 Some new garlands while I speak,
 That the forehead, crowned with roses,
 May strike scarlet down the cheek? 40

VI

Do not mock me ! with my mortal,
 Suits no wreath again, indeed :
 I am sad-voiced as the turtle,
 Which Anacreon used to feed :
 Yet as that same bird demurely 45
 Wet her beak in cup of his, —
 So, without a garland, surely
 I may touch the brim of this.

VII

Go ! — let others praise the Chian ! —
 This is soft as Muses' string — 50
 This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
 This is rapid as his spring, —
 Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
 Light as ever trod her feet !
 And the brown bees of Hymettus 55
 Make their honey not so sweet.

VIII

Very copious are my praises,
 Though I sip it like a fly ! —
 Ah — but, sipping, — times and places
 Change before me suddenly 60

As Ulysses' old libation

Drew the ghosts from every part,
So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
Stirs the Hades of my heart.

IX

65 And I think of those long mornings
Which my thought goes far to seek,
When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek :
70 Past the pane the mountain spreading,
Swept the sheep's-bell's tinkling noise,
While a girlish voice was reading,
Somewhat low for *αι*'s and *οι*'s.

X

Then, what golden hours were for us! —
While we sate together there ;
75 How the white vests of the chorus
Seemed to wave up a live air !
How the cothurns trod majestic
Down the deep iambic lines ;
And the rolling anapæstic
80 Curled, like vapour over shrines!

XI

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous !
How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
In the gnarlèd oak beneath !
85 Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
Who was born to monarch's place —
And who made the whole world loyal,
Less by kingly power than grace.

XII

Our Euripides, the human —
 With his droppings of warm tears ; 90
 And his touches of things common,
 Till they rose to touch the spheres !
 Our Theocritus, our Bion,
 And our Pindar's shining goals ! —
 These were cup-bearers undying 95
 Of the wine that 's meant for souls.

XIII

And my Plato, the divine one, —
 If men know the gods aright
 By their motions as they shine on
 With a glorious trail of light ! — 100
 And your noble Christian bishops,
 Who mouthed grandly the last Greek :
 Though the sponges on their hyssops
 Were distent with wine — too weak.

XIV

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him, 105
 With his glorious mouth of gold ;
 And your Basil, you upraised him
 To the height of speakers old :
 And we both praised Heliodorus
 For his secret of pure lies ; — 110
 Who forged first his linkèd stories
 In the heat of lady's eyes.

XV

And we both praised your Synesius,
 For the fire shot up his odes ;

115 Though the Church was scarce propitious,
 As he whistled dogs and gods. —
 And we both praised Nazianzen,
 For the fervid heart and speech :
 Only I eschewed his glancing
 120 At the lyre hung out of reach.

XVI

Do you mind that deed of Atè,
 Which you bound me to so fast, —
 Reading “ De Virginitate,”
 From the first line to the last ?
 125 How I said at ending, solemn
 As I turned and looked at you,
 That St. Simeon on the column
 Had had somewhat less to do ?

XVII

For we sometimes gently wrangled ;
 130 Very gently, be it said, —
 Since our thoughts were disentangled
 By no breaking of the thread !
 And I charged you with extortions
 On the nobler fames of old —
 135 Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
 Stained the purple they would fold.

XVIII

For the rest — a mystic moaning,
 Kept Cassandra at the gate,
 With wild eyes the vision shone in —
 140 And wide nostrils scenting fate.

And Prometheus, bound in passion
 By brute Force to the blind stone,
 Showed us looks of invocation
 Turned to ocean and the sun.

XIX

And Medea we saw, burning 145
 At her nature's planted stake ;
 And proud Œdipus, fate-scorning,
 While the cloud came on to break —
 While the cloud came on slow — slower,
 Till he stood discrowned, resigned! — 150
 But the reader's voice dropped lower
 When the poet called him BLIND!

XX

Ah, my gossip ! you were older,
 And more learned, and a man ! —
 Yet that shadow — the enfolder 155
 Of your quiet eyelids — ran
 Both our spirits to one level ;
 And I turned from hill and lea
 And the summer sun's green revel, —
 To your eyes that could not see. 160

XXI

Now Christ bless you with the one light
 Which goes shining night and day !
 May the flowers which grow in sunlight
 Shed their fragrance in your way !
 Is it not right to remember 165
 All your kindness, friend of mine, —
 When we two sate in the chamber,
 And the poets poured us wine?

XXII

170 So, to come back to the drinking
 Of this Cyprus : — it is well, —
 But those memories, to my thinking,
 Make a better œnomel ;
 And whoever be the speaker,
 None can murmur with a sigh —
 175 That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
 I am sipping like a fly.

THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST

So the dreams depart,
 So the fading phantoms flee,
 And the sharp reality
 Now must act its part.

WESTWOOD'S *Beads from a Rosary.*

I

Little Ellie sits alone
 Mid the beeches of a meadow,
 By a stream-side, on the grass :
 And the trees are showering down
 5 Doubles of their leaves in shadow,
 On her shining hair and face.

II

She has thrown her bonnet by :
 And her feet she has been dipping
 In the shallow water's flow —
 10 Now she holds them nakedly
 In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
 While she rocketh to and fro.

III

Little Ellie sits alone, —
 And the smile, she softly useth,
 Fills the silence like a speech ; 15
 While she thinks what shall be done, —
 And the sweetest pleasure chooseth,
 For her future within reach.

IV

Little Ellie in her smile
 Chooseth . . . “ I will have a lover, 20
 Riding on a steed of steeds !
 He shall love me without guile ;
 And to him I will discover
 That swan's nest among the reeds.

V

“ And the steed shall be red-roan, 25
 And the lover shall be noble,
 With an eye that takes the breath, —
 And the lute he plays upon
 Shall strike ladies into trouble,
 As his sword strikes men to death. 30

VI

“ And the steed, it shall be shod
 All in silver, housed in azure,
 And the mane shall skim the wind ;
 And the hoofs, along the sod,
 Shall flash onward and keep measure, 35
 Till the shepherds look behind.

VII

" But my lover will not prize
 All the glory that he rides in,
 When he gazes in my face.
 He will say, ' O Love, thine eyes
 Build the shrine my soul abides in ;
 And I kneel here for thy grace.'

VIII

" Then, ay, then — he shall kneel low, —
 With the red-roan steed anear him,
 Which shall seem to understand —
 Till I answer, ' Rise and go !
 For the world must love and fear him
 Whom I gift with heart and hand.'

IX

" Then he will arise so pale,
 I shall feel my own lips tremble
 With a *yes* I must not say —
 Nathless, maiden-brave, ' Farewell,'
 I will utter, and dissemble —
 ' Light to-morrow with to-day.'

X

" Then he will ride through the hills
 To the wide world past the river,
 There to put away all wrong ;
 To make straight distorted wills,
 And to empty the broad quiver
 Which the wicked bear along.

XI

“Three times shall a young foot-page
Swim the stream, and climb the mountain,
And kneel down beside my feet —
‘Lo! my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity’s counting!
What wilt thou exchange for it?’

65

XII

“And the first time, I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon, —
And the second time, a glove;
But the third time, I may bend
From my pride, and answer — ‘Pardon —
If he come to take my love.’

70

XIII

“Then the young foot-page will run —
Then my lover will ride faster,
Till he kneeleth at my knee:
‘I am a duke’s eldest son!
Thousand serfs do call me master —
But, O Love, I love but *thee!*’

75

XIV

“He will kiss me on the mouth
Then, and lead me as a lover,
Through the crowds that praise his deeds:
And, when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto him I will discover
That swan’s nest among the reeds.”

80

XV

85 Little Ellie, with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gaily, —
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe, —
And went homeward, round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
90 What more eggs were with the *two*

XVI

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
Winding by the stream, light-hearted,
Where the osier pathway leads —
Past the boughs she stoops — and stops :
95 Lo! the wild swan had deserted —
And a rat had gnawed the reeds.

XVII

Ellie went home sad and slow ;
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds,
100 Sooth I know not ! but I know
She could never show him — never,
That swan's nest among the reeds !

THE DEAD PAN

Excited by Schiller's "Götter Griechenlands," and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch ("De Oraculorum Defectu"), according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of "Great Pan is dead!" swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners, — and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller, that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonouring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem as well as of affectionate gratitude. — E. B. B.

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
 Can ye listen in your silence?
 Can your mystic voices tell us
 Where ye hide? In floating islands,
 With a wind that evermore
 Keeps you out of sight of shore?

Pan, Pan is dead.

5

In what revels are ye sunken
 In old Æthiopia?
 Have the Pygmies made you drunken,
 Bathing in mandragora
 Your divine pale lips that shiver
 Like the lotus in the river?

Pan, Pan is dead.

10

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
 In gigantic Alpine rows?
 The black poppies out of number
 Nodding, dripping from your brows

15

To the red lees of your wine, —
 And so kept alive and fine ?

Pan, Pan is dead.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corses
 Where the silver spheres roll on,
 Stung to life by centric forces
 Thrown like rays out from the sun? —
 While the smoke of your old altars
 Is the shroud that round you welters?

Great Pan is dead.

“ Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,”
 Said the old Hellenic tongue !
 Said the hero-oaths, as well as
 Poets' songs the sweetest sung !
 Have ye grown deaf in a day?
 Can ye speak not yea or nay —

Since Pan is dead?

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
 All alone, O Naiades,
 While your drenchèd locks dry slow in
 This cold feeble sun and breeze? —
 Not a word the Naiads say,
 Though the rivers run for aye —

For Pan is dead.

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,
 O ye Dryads, could ye flee ?
 At the rushing thunder-stroke, would
 No sob tremble through the tree? —
 Not a word the Dryads say,
 Though the forests wave for aye —

For Pan is dead.

Have ye left the mountain places 50
 Oreads wild, for other tryst?
 Shall we see no sudden faces
 Strike a glory through the mist?
 Not a sound the silence thrills,
 Of the everlasting hills. 55

Pan, Pan is dead.

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
 Crowned to starry wanderings, —
 With your chariots in procession,
 And your silver clash of wings! 60
 Very pale ye seem to rise,
 Ghosts of Grecian deities —

Now Pan is dead!

Jove! that right hand is unloaded,
 Whence the thunder did prevail : 65
 While in idiocy of godhead
 Thou art staring the stars pale!
 And thine eagle, blind and old,
 Roughs his feathers in the cold.

Pan, Pan is dead. 70

Where, O Juno, is the glory
 Of thy regal look and tread?
 Will they lay, for evermore, thee,
 On thy dim, straight, golden bed?
 Will thy queendom all lie hid 75
 Meekly under either lid?

Pan, Pan is dead.

Ha, Apollo! Floats his golden
 Hair, all mist-like where he stands;

80 While the Muses hang enfolding
 Knee and foot with faint wild hands?
 'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
 Niobe looked lost as thou!
 Pan, Pan is dead.

85 Shall the casque with its brown iron,
 Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse, —
 And no hero take inspiring
 From the God-Greek of her lips?
 'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
 90 Mars the mighty, cursing it?
 Pan, Pan is dead.

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
 He swoons, — bound with his own vines!
 And his Mænads slowly saunter,
 95 Head aside, among the pines,
 While they murmur dreamingly, —
 "Evohe — ah — evohe —!"
 Ah, Pan is dead!

Neptune lies beside the trident,
 100 Dull and senseless as a stone;
 And old Pluto deaf and silent
 Is cast out into the sun.
 Ceres smileth stern thereat, —
 "We *all* now are desolate —
 105 Now Pan is dead."

Aphrodite! dead and driven
 As thy native foam, thou art;
 With the cestus long done heaving
 On the white calm of thine heart!

Gods ! we vainly do adjure you, —
 Ye return nor voice nor sign :
 Not a votary could secure you
 Even a grave for your Divine !
 145 Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these grey old gods do lie.

Pan, Pan is dead.

Even that Greece who took your wages,
 Calls the obolus outworn :
 150 And the hoarse deep-throated ages
 Laugh your godships unto scorn —
 And the poets do disclaim you,
 Or grow colder if they name you —
 And Pan is dead.

Gods bereavèd, gods belated, —
 With your purples rent asunder !
 Gods discrowned and desecrated,
 Disinherited of thunder !
 155 Now, the goats may climb and crop
 160 The soft grass on Ida's top —
 Now Pan is dead.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
 When a cry more loud than wind,
 Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
 165 From the pilèd Dark behind ;
 And the sun shrank and grew pale,
 Breathed against by the great wail —
 "Pan, Pan is dead."

And the rowers from the benches
 170 Fell, — each shuddering on his face —

While departing Influences
 Struck a cold back through the place ;
 And the shadow of the ship
 Reeled along the passive deep —
 Pan, Pan is dead.

175

And that dismal cry rose slowly,
 And sank slowly through the air ;
 Full of spirit's melancholy
 And eternity's despair !
 And they heard the words it said —
 PAN IS DEAD — GREAT PAN IS DEAD —
 PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

180

'T was the hour when One in Sion
 Hung for love's sake on a cross —
 When His brow was chill with dying,
 And His soul was faint with loss ;
 When His priestly blood dropped downward,
 And His kingly eyes looked throneward —
Then, Pan was dead.

185

By the love He stood alone in,
 His sole Godhead rose complete :
 And the false gods fell down moaning,
 Each from off his golden seat —
 All the false gods with a cry
 Rendered up their deity —
 Pan, Pan was dead.

190

195

Wailing wide across the islands,
 They rent, vest-like, their Divine !
 And a darkness and a silence
 Quenched the light of every shrine ;

200

And Dodona's oak swang lonely
Henceforth, to the tempest only.

Pan, Pan was dead.

Pythia staggered, — feeling o'er her
205 Her lost god's forsaking look!
Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror,
And her crispy fillets shook —
And her lips gasped through their foam,
For a word that did not come.

210 Pan, Pan was dead.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
Ye are silent evermore!
And I dash down this old chalice,
Whence libations ran of yore.
215 See! the wine crawls in the dust
Wormlike — as your glories must!

Since Pan is dead.

Get to dust, as common mortals,
By a common doom and track!
220 Let no Schiller from the portals
Of that Hades, call you back, —
Or instruct us to weep all
At your antique funeral.

Pan, Pan is dead.

225 By your beauty, which confesses
Some chief Beauty conquering you, —
By our grand heroic guesses,
Through your falsehood, at the True, —
We will weep *not* . . . ! earth shall roll
230 Heir to each god's aureole —

And Pan is dead.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
 Sung beside her in her youth:
 And those debonair romances
 Sound but dull beside the truth. 235
 Phœbus' chariot-course is run!
 Look up, poets, to the sun!

Pan, Pan is dead.

Christ hath sent us down the angels;
 And the whole earth and the skies 240
 Are illumed by altar-candles
 Lit for blessed mysteries;
 And a Priest's Hand through creation
 Waveth calm and consecration —

And Pan is dead. 245

Truth is fair: should we forgo it?
 Can we sigh right for a wrong?
 God Himself is the best Poet,
 And the Real is His song.
 Sing His truth out fair and full, 250
 And secure His beautiful.

Let Pan be dead.

Truth is large. Our aspiration
 Scarce embraces half we be.
 Shame! to stand in His creation 255
 And doubt Truth's sufficiency! —
 To think God's song unexcelling
 The poor tales of our own telling —

When Pan is dead!

What is true and just and honest, 260
 What is lovely, what is pure —
 All of praise that hath admonisht, —

Till there was not a sign of a leaf indeed
 To prove it fresh from the river.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
 (How tall it stood in the river!) 20
 Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
 Steadily from the outside ring,
 And notched the poor dry empty thing
 In holes, as he sat by the river.

“This is the way,” laughed the great god Pan, 25
 (Laughed while he sat by the river),
 “The only way, since gods began
 To make sweet music, they could succeed.”
 Then dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
 He blew in power by the river. 30

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
 Piercing sweet by the river!
 Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
 The sun on the hill forgot to die,
 And the lilies revived, (and the dragon-fly 35
 Came back to dream on the river.)

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
 To laugh as he sits by the river,
 Making a poet out of a man:
 The true gods sigh for the cost and pain, — 40
 For the reed which grows nevermore again
 As a reed with the reeds in the river.

SIX SONNETS FROM THE SERIES ENTITLED
 "SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE"

I

I thought once how Theocritus had sung
 Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
 Who each one in a gracious hand appears
 To bear a gift for mortals, old or young :
 5 And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
 I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
 The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years, . . .
 Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
 A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
 10 So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
 Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair ;
 And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,
 "Guess now who holds thee ?"— "Death !" I said. But, there,
 The silver answer rang, . . . "Not Death, but Love."

X

Yet, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
 And worthy of acceptation. Fire is bright,
 Let temple burn, or flax! An equal light
 Leaps on the flame from cedar-plank or weed.
 5 And love is fire: and when I say at need
I love thee . . . mark! . . . I love thee! . . . in thy sight
 I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
 With conscience of the new rays that proceed
 Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
 10 In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
 Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
 And what I *feel*, across the inferior features
 Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
 How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XIV

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
 Except for love's sake only. Do not say,
 "I love her for her smile . . . her look . . . her way
 Of speaking gently, . . . for a trick of thought
 That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
 A sense of pleasant ease on such a day" —
 For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
 Be changed, or change for thee, — and love so wrought,
 May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
 Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,
 A creature might forget to weep, who bore
 Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby.
 But love me for love's sake, that evermore
 Thou may'st love on through love's eternity.

XX

Belovèd, my Belovèd, when I think
 That thou wast in the world a year ago,
 What time I sate alone here in the snow
 And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
 No moment at thy voice, . . . but, link by link,
 Went counting all my chains, as if that so
 They never could fall off at any blow
 Struck by thy possible hand . . . why, thus I drink
 Of life's great cup of wonder. Wonderful,
 Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
 With personal act or speech, — nor ever cull
 Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
 Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
 Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

XXVI

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

XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
 For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
 5 I love thee to the level of every day's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
 I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
 I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise;
 I love thee with the passion put to use
 10 In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith;
 I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
 With my lost saints, — I love thee with the breath,
 Smiles, tears, of all my life! — and if God choose,
 I shall but love thee better after death.

EXAGGERATION

We overstate the ills of life, and take
 Imagination, given us to bring down
 The choirs of singing angels overshadowed
 By God's clear glory — down our earth to rake
 The dismal snows instead; flake following flake, 5
 To cover all the corn. We walk upon
 The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
 And pant like climbers. Near the alderbrake
 We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
 Refuses to sing loud, as else she would. 10
 O brothers! let us leave the shame and sin
 Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
 The holy name of GRIEF! — holy herein,
 That, by the grief of ONE, came all our good.

ADEQUACY

Now, by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
 Belovèd England, doth the earth appear
 Quite noble enough for men to overbear
 The will of God in, with rebellious wills!
 We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils 5
 Ingloriously its course; nor that the clear
 Strong stars, without significance, insphere
 Our habitation. We, meantime, our ills
 Heap up against this good; and lift a cry
 Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast, 10
 As if ourselves were better certainly
 Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
 I ask Thee not my joys to multiply, —
 Only to make me worthier of the least.

INSUFFICIENCY

When I attain to utter forth in verse
 Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
 Along my pulses, yearning to be free
 And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,
 5 To the individual, true, and the universe,
 In consummation of right harmony.
 But, like a wind-exposed, distorted tree,
 We are blown against for ever by the curse
 Which breathes through nature. Oh, the world is weak—
 10 The effluence of each is false to all;
 And what we best conceive, we fail to speak.
 Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall!
 And then resume thy broken strains, and seek
 Fit peroration, without let or thrall.

LIFE AND LOVE

I

Fast this Life of mine was dying,
 Blind already and calm as death;
 Snowflakes on her bosom lying,
 Scarcely heaving with her breath.

II

5 Love came by, and having known her
 In a dream of fabled lands,
 Gently stooped, and laid upon her
 Mystic chrism of holy hands;

III

Drew his smile across her folded
 Eyelids, as the swallow dips, . . . 10
 Breathed as finely as the cold did,
 Through the locking of her lips.

IV

So, when Life looked upward, being
 Warmed and breathed on from above,
 What sight could she have for seeing, 15
 Evermore . . . but only LOVE?

INCLUSIONS

Oh, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to lie along in thine?
 As a little stone in a running stream, it seems to lie and
 pine!

Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear, . . . unfit to plight
 with thine.

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear, drawn closer to thine
 own?

My cheek is white, my cheek is worn, by many a tear run 5
 down.

Now leave a little space, Dear, . . . lest it should wet thine
 own.

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear, commingled with thy
 soul? —

Red grows the cheek, and warm the hand, . . . the part is
 in the whole! . . .

Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate, when soul is joined to
 soul.

A DENIAL

We have met late — it is too late to meet,
 O friend, not more than friend!
 Death's forecome shroud is tangled round my feet,
 And if I step or stir, I touch the end.

5 In this last jeopardy
 Can I approach thee, I, who cannot move?
 How shall I answer thy request for love?
 Look in my face and see.

I love thee not, I dare not love thee! go
 10 In silence; drop my hand.
 If thou seek roses, seek them where they blow
 In garden-alleys, not in desert-sand.
 Can life and death agree,
 That thou shouldst stoop thy song to my complaint?
 15 I cannot love thee. If the word is faint,
 Look in my face and see.

I might have loved thee in some former days.
 Oh, then my spirits had leapt
 As now they sink, at hearing thy love-praise!
 20 Before these faded cheeks were overwept,
 Had this been asked of me,
 To love thee with my whole strong heart and head,—
 I should have said still . . . yes, but *smiled* and said,
 “Look in my face and see!”

25 But now . . . God sees me, God, who took my heart
 And drowned it in life's surge.
 In all your wide warm earth I have no part—
 A light song overcomes me like a dirge.
 Could Love's great harmony

The saints keep step to when their bonds are loose, 30
 Not weigh me down? am I a wife to choose?

Look in my face and see —

While I behold as plain as one who dreams,
 Some woman of full worth,

Whose voice, as cadenced as a silver stream's, 35
 Shall prove the fountain-soul which sends it forth

One younger, more thought-free

And fair and gay than I thou must forget,

With brighter eyes than these . . . which are not wet . . . 40
 Look in my face and see.

So farewell thou, whom I have known too late

To let thee come so near.

Be counted happy while men call thee great,

And one belovèd woman feels thee dear! —

* Not I! — that cannot be. 45

I am lost, I am changed, — I must go farther, where

The change shall take me worse, and no one dare

Look in my face and see.

Meantime I bless thee. By these thoughts of mine

I bless thee from all such! 50

I bless thy lamp to oil, thy cup to wine,

Thy hearth to joy, thy hand to an equal touch

Of loyal troth. For me,

I love thee not, I love thee not! — away!

Here's no more courage in my soul to say 55

“Look in my face and see.”

PROOF AND DISPROOF

Dost thou love me, my Belovèd?
 Who shall answer yes or no?
 What is provèd or disprovèd
 When my soul inquireth so,
 5 Dost thou love me, my Belovèd?

I have seen thy heart to-day,
 Never open to the crowd,
 While to love me aye and aye
 Was the vow as it was vowed
 10 By thine eyes of steadfast grey.

Now I sit alone, alone —
 And the hot tears break and burn.
 Now, Belovèd, thou art gone,
 Doubt and terror have their turn.
 15 *Is* it love that I have known?

I have known some bitter things, —
 Anguish, anger, solitude.
 Year by year an evil brings,
 Year by year denies a good ;
 20 March winds violate my springs.

I have known how sickness bends,
 I have known how sorrow breaks, —
 How quick hopes have sudden ends,
 How the heart thinks till it aches
 25 Of the smile of buried friends.

Last I have known *thee*, my brave
 Noble thinker, lover, doer!
 The best knowledge last I have.
 But thou comest as the thrower
 Of fresh flowers upon a grave.

30

Count what feelings used to move me!
 Can this love assort with those?
 Thou, who art so far above me,
 Wilt thou stoop so, for repose?
 Is it true that thou canst love me?

35

Do not blame me if I doubt thee.
 I can call love by its name
 When thine arm is wrapt about me;
 But even love seems not the same,
 When I sit alone, without thee.

40

In thy clear eyes I descried
 Many a proof of love, to-day;
 But to-night, those unbelied
 Speechful eyes being gone away,
 There 's the proof to seek, beside.

45

Dost thou love me, my Belovèd?
 Only *thou* canst answer yes!
 And, thou gone, the proof 's disprovèd,
 And the cry rings answerless —
 Dost thou love me, my Belovèd?

50

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Love you seek for, presupposes
 Summer heat and sunny glow.
 Tell me, do you find moss-roses
 Budding, blooming in the snow?
 5 Snow might kill the rose-tree's root —
 Shake it quickly from your foot,
 Lest it harm you as you go.

From the ivy where it dapples
 A grey ruin, stone by stone,
 10 Do you look for grapes or apples,
 Or for sad green leaves alone?
 Pluck the leaves off, two or three —
 Keep them for morality
 When you shall be safe and gone.

FROM "A DRAMA OF EXILE"

I. MAN'S LOVE FOR WOMAN

Adam. What is this, Eve? thou droppest heavily
 In a heap earthward; and thy body heaves
 Under the golden floodings of thine hair!

Eve. O Adam, Adam! by that name of Eve —
 5 Thine Eve, thy life — which suits me little now,
 Seeing that I now confess myself thy death
 And thine undoer, as the snake was mine, —
 I do adjure thee, put me straight away,
 Together with my name! Sweet, punish me!
 10 O love, be just! and, ere we pass beyond

The light cast outward by the fiery sword,
 Into the dark which earth must be to us,
 Bruise my head with thy foot, — as the curse said
 My seed shall the first tempter's: strike with curse,
 As God struck in the garden! and as HE, 15
 Being satisfied with justice and with wrath,
 Did roll His thunder gentler at the close, —
 Thou, peradventure, may'st at last recoil
 To some soft need of mercy. Strike, my lord!
 I, also, after tempting, writhe on the ground; 20
 And I would feed on ashes from thine hand,
 As suits me, O my tempted!

Adam. My beloved,
 Mine Eve and life — I have no other name
 For thee or for the sun than what ye are,
 My blessèd life and light! If we have fallen, 25
 It is that we have sinned, — we: God is just;
 And, since His curse doth comprehend us both,
 It must be that His balance holds the weights
 Of first and last sin on a level. What!
 Shall I who had not virtue to stand straight 30
 Among the hills of Eden, here assume
 To mend the justice of the perfect God,
 By piling up a curse upon His curse,
 Against thee — thee —

Eve. For so, perchance, thy God
 Might take thee into grace for scorning me; 35
 Thy wrath against the sinner giving proof
 Of inward abrogation of the sin!
 And so, the blessèd angels might come down
 And walk with thee as erst, — I think they would, —
 Because I was not near to make them sad, 40
 Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

Adam. They know me. I am deepest in the guilt,
If last in the transgression.

Eve.

THOU!

Adam.

If God,

Who gave the right and joyaunce of the world
Both unto thee and me, — gave thee to me,
45 The best gift last; the last sin was the worst,
Which sinned against more complement of gifts
And grace of giving. God! I render back
Strong benediction and perpetual praise
50 From mortal feeble lips (as incense-smoke,
Out of a little censer, may fill Heaven),
That Thou, in striking my benumbèd hands,
And forcing them to drop all other boons
Of beauty and dominion and delight, —
55 Hast left this well-belovèd Eve — this life
Within life — this best gift between their palms,
In gracious compensation!

Eve.

Is it thy voice?

Or some saluting angel's — calling home
My feet into the garden?

Adam.

O my God!

60 I, standing here between the glory and dark, —
The glory of Thy wrath projected forth
From Eden's wall; the dark of our distress,
Which settles a step off in that drear world —
Lift up to Thee the hands from whence hath fallen
65 Only creation's sceptre, — thanking Thee
That rather Thou hast cast me out with *her*
Than left me lorn of her in Paradise; —
With angel looks and angel songs around,
To show the absence of her eyes and voice,
70 And make society full desertness
Without the uses of her comforting.

Eve. Or is it but a dream of thee, that speaks
Mine own love's tongue?

Adam. Because with *her*, I stand
Upright, as far as can be in this fall,
And look away from Heaven, which doth accuse me, 75
And look away from earth, which doth convict me,
Into her face; and crown my discrowned brow
Out of her love; and put the thought of her
Around me, for an Eden full of birds;
And lift her body up — thus — to my heart; 80
And with my lips upon her lips, — thus, thus, —
Do quicken and sublimate my mortal breath,
Which cannot climb against the grave's steep sides,
But overtops this grief!

Eve. I am renewed:
My eyes grow with the light which is in thine; 85
The silence of my heart is full of sound.
Hold me up — so! Because I comprehend
This human love, I shall not be afraid
Of any human death; and yet because
I know this strength of love, I seem to know 90
Death's strength, by that same sign. Kiss on my lips,
To shut the door close on my rising soul, —
Lest it pass outwards in astonishment,
And leave thee lonely.

Adam. Yet thou liest, *Eve*,
Bent heavily on thyself across mine arm, 95
Thy face flat to the sky.

Eve. Ay! and the tears
Running, as it might seem, my life from me,
They run so fast and warm. Let me lie so,
And weep so, — as if in a dream or prayer, —
Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard, tight thought 100
Which clipped my heart, and showed me evermore

Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the snake,
 And as the pure ones loathe our sin. To-day,
 All day, belovèd, as we fled across
 105 This desolating radiance, cast by swords
 Not suns, — my lips prayed soundless to myself,
 Striking against each other — “O Lord God!”
 (’T was so I prayed), “I ask Thee by my sin,
 “And by Thy curse, and by Thy blameless heavens,
 110 “Make dreadful haste to hide me from Thy face
 “And from the face of my belovèd here,
 “For whom I am no helpmeet, quick away
 “Into the new dark mystery of death!
 “I will lie still there; I will make no plaint;
 115 “I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word, —
 “Nor struggle to come back beneath the sun,
 “Where peradventure I might sin anew
 “Against Thy mercy and his pleasure. Death,
 “O death, whate’er it be, is good enough
 120 “For such as I. For Adam there’s no voice
 “Shall ever say again, in heaven or earth,
 “*It is not good for him to be alone.*”

Adam. And was it good for such a prayer to pass,
 My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual lives?
 125 If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?

Eve. ’T was an ill prayer: it shall be prayed no more;
 And God did use it like a foolishness,
 Giving no answer. Now my heart has grown
 Too high and strong for such a foolish prayer;
 130 Love makes it strong: and since I was the first
 In the transgression, with a steady foot
 I will be the first to tread from this sword-glare
 Into the outer darkness of the waste, —
 And thus I do it.

II. THE FATE OF WOMAN

CHRIST. Speak, Adam. Bless the woman, man —
It is thine office.

Adam. Mother of the world,
Take heart before this Presence. Lo! my voice,
Which, naming erst the creatures, did express —
God breathing through my breath — the attributes 5
And instincts of each creature in its name,
Floats to the same afflatus, — floats and heaves
Like a water-weed that opens to a wave, —
A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,
Out fairly and wide. Henceforward, arise, aspire 10
Unto the calms and magnanimities,
The lofty uses, and the noble ends,
The sanctified devotion and full work,
To which thou art elect for evermore,
First woman, wife, and mother.

Eve. And first in sin. 15

Adam. And also the sole bearer of the Seed
Whereby sin dieth! Raise the majesties
Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-beloved,
And front with level eyelids the To come,
And all the dark o' the world. Rise, woman, rise 20
To thy peculiar and best altitudes
Of doing good and of enduring ill, —
Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,
And reconciling all that ill and good
Unto the patience of a constant hope, — 25
Rise with thy daughters! If sin came by thee,
And by sin, death, — the ransom-righteousness,
The heavenly life and compensative rest
Shall come by means of thee. If woe by thee

30 Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth
An angel of the woe thou didst achieve ;
Found acceptable to the world instead
Of others of that name, of whose bright steps
Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be satisfied ;
35 Something thou hast to bear through womanhood —
Peculiar suffering answering to the sin ;
Some pang paid down for each new human life ;
Some weariness in guarding such a life —
Some coldness from the guarded ; some mistrust
40 From those thou hast too well served ; from those beloved
Too loyally, some treason : feebleness
Within thy heart, — and cruelty without ;
And pressures of an alien tyranny,
With its dynastic reasons of larger bones
45 And stronger sinews. But, go to ! thy love
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes,
After its own life-working. A child's kiss,
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad ;
A poor man, served by thee, shall make thee rich ;
50 A sick man, helped by thee, shall make thee strong ;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown
I set upon thy head, — Christ witnessing
With looks of prompting love — to keep thee clear
55 Of all reproach against the sin foregone,
From all the generations which succeed.
Thy hand which plucked the apple, I clasp close ;
Thy lips which spake wrong counsel, I kiss close, —
I bless thee in the name of Paradise,
60 And by the memory of Edenic joys
Forfeit and lost ; — by that last cypress tree
Green at the gate, which thrilled as we came out ;

And by the blessèd nightingale, which threw
 Its melancholy music after us ; —
 And by the flowers, whose spirits full of smells
 Did follow softly, plucking us behind
 Back to the gradual banks and vernal bowers
 And fourfold river-courses : — by all these,
 I bless thee to the contraries of these,
 I bless thee to the desert and the thorns,
 To the elemental change and turbulence,
 And to the roar of the estrangèd beasts,
 And to the solemn dignities of grief, —
 To each one of these ends, — and to this END
 Of Death and the hereafter !

Eve.

I accept

For me and for my daughters this high part,
 Which lowly shall be counted. Noble work
 Shall hold me in the place of garden-rest ;
 And in the place of Eden's lost delight,
 Worthy endurance of permitted pain ;
 While on my longest patience there shall wait
 Death's speechless angel, smiling in the east
 Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow myself
 Humbly henceforward on the ill I did.
 That humbleness may keep it in the shade.

A VISION OF POETS

.
 The poet rose up on his feet :
 He stood before an altar set
 For sacrament, with vessels meet,

5 And mystic altar-lights which shine
 As if their flames were crystalline
 Carved flames that would not shrink or pine.

The altar filled the central place
 Of a great church, and toward its face
 Long aisles did shoot and interlace.

10 And from it a continuous mist
 Of incense (round the edges kissed
 By a yellow light of amethyst)

15 Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,
 Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
 Cloud above cloud, victoriously,

Broke full against the archèd roof,
 And, thence refracting, eddied off,
 And floated through the marble woof

20 Of many a fine-wrought architrave,—
 Then, poising its white masses brave,
 Swept solemnly down aisle and nave.

And now in dark, and now in light,
 The countless columns, glimmering white,
 Seemed leading out to Infinite.

Plunged half-way up the shaft they showed, 25
In that pale shifting incense-cloud
Which flowed them by, and overflowed,

Till mist and marble seemed to blend,
And the whole temple, at the end,
With its own incense to distend ; 30

The arches, like a giant's bow,
To bend and slacken,— and below,
The nichèd saints to come and go.

Alone, amid the shifting scene,
That central altar stood serene 35
In its clear steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware
Of a chief angel standing there
Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw 40
That *they* saw God — his lips and jaw,
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's Law

They could enunciate, and refrain
From vibratory after-pain ;
And his brow's height was sovereign — 45

On the vast background of his wings
Rises his image ! and he flings,
From each plumed arc, pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more
Or less, the angel-heart) before, 50
And round him, upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes :
 While at his side, 'twixt lights and glooms,
 The phantasm of an organ booms.

55 Extending from which instrument
 And angel, right and left-way bent,
 The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
 And toward the altar, — pale and crowned,
 60 With sovran eyes of depth profound.

Deathful their faces were ; and yet
 The power of life was in them set —
 Never forgot nor to forget.

Sublime significance of mouth,
 65 Dilated nostril full of youth,
 And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
 Beyond your count, but side by side
 Did front the altar, glorified ;

70 Still as a vision, yet exprest
 Full as an action — look and geste
 Of buried saint, in risen rest !

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
 His spirit seemed to sink in him,
 75 Then, like a dolphin, change and swim

The current — These were poets true,
 Who died for Beauty, as martyrs do
 For Truth — the ends being scarcely two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful
These poets were — of iron rule, 80
The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here, Homer, with the broad suspense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There, Shakespeare! on whose forehead climb 85
The crowns o' the world! Oh, eyes sublime —
With tears and laughters for all time!

Here Æschylus, the women swooned
To see so awful when he frowned
As the gods did, — he standeth crowned. 90

Euripides, with close and mild
Scholastic lips, — that could be wild,
And laugh or sob out like a child

Right in the classes. Sophocles,
With that king's look which down the trees 95
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban! Hesiod old,
Who, somewhat blind and deaf and cold,
Cared most for gods and bulls. And bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear, 100
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear,
Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul.
And Sappho crowned with aureole 105

Of ebon curls on calmèd brows —
O poet-woman! none forgoes
The leap, attaining the repose!

110 Theocritus, with glittering locks,
Dropt sideways, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes, who took
The world with mirth, and laughter-struck
The hollow caves of Thought and woke

115 The infinite echoes hid in each.
And Virgil: shade of Mantuan beech
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high! —
For his gods wore less majesty
120 Than his brown bees hummed deathlessly.

Lucretius — nobler than his mood:
Who dropped his plummet down the broad
Deep universe, and said “No God,”

125 Finding no bottom: he denied
Divinely the divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber-side,

By grace of God! his face is stern
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he could not learn.

130 And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed:
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head
(With languid sleep-smile you had said
From his own verse engenderèd) 135

On Ariosto's, till they ran
Their curls in one. — The Italian
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn 140
For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri; and fancy-willed
Boiardo — who with laughter filled
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out 145
To sleek that storm. And not without
The wreath he died in, and the doubt

He died by, Tasso; bard and lover,
Whose visions were too thin to cover
The face of a false woman over. 150

And soft Racine, — and grave Corneille —
The orator of rhymes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple. And Petrarch pale,

Who from his brain-lighted heart hath thrown
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun, 155
Each perfumed with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,
Compelling India's Genius sad
From the wave through the Lusiad,

160 The murmurs of a purple ocean
 Indrawn in vibrative emotion
 Along the verse. And while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
 Between the bright curls blown upon
 165 By airs celestial, — Calderon.

And bold De Vega, — who breathed quick
 Song after song, till death's old trick
 Put pause to life and rhetoric.

170 And Goethe, — with that reaching eye
 His soul reached out from, far and high,
 And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front
 Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon 't, —
 Too large for wreath of modern wont.

175 And Chaucer, with his infantine
 Familiar clasp of things divine —
 That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here, Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim!
 The shapes of suns and stars did swim
 180 Like clouds from them, and granted him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there,
 Whose active fancy debonaire
 Drew straws like amber — foul to fair.

185 Drayton and Browne, — with smiles they drew
 From outward nature, to renew
 From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben —
 Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows, when
 The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings 190
 Set in his eyes. Deep lyric springs
 Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
 All statue-blind; and Keats the real
 Adonis, with the hymeneal 195

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
 His youthful curls, kissed straight and sheen
 In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron, — sad as grave
 And salt as life; forlornly brave, 200
 And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who
 Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
 Their wings, with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced (and other more) 205
 The lighted altar looming o'er
 The clouds of incense dim and hoar:

And all their faces, in the lull
 Of natural things, looked wonderful
 With life and death and deathless rule. 210

AURORA LEIGH

A GIRL'S EDUCATION IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH
CENTURY

I learnt the collects and the catechism,
The creeds, from Athanasius back to Nice,
The Articles . . . the Tracts *against* the times,
(By no means Buonaventure's "Prick of Love,")
5 And various popular synopses of
Inhuman doctrines never taught by John,
Because she liked instructed piety.
I learnt my complement of classic French
(Kept pure of Balzac and neologism,)
10 And German also, since she liked a range
Of liberal education, — tongues, not books.
I learnt a little algebra, a little
Of the mathematics, — brushed with extreme flounce
The circle of the sciences, because
15 She misliked women who are frivolous.
I learnt the royal genealogies
Of Oviedo, the internal laws
Of the Burmese empire, . . . by how many feet
Mount Chimborazo outsoars Himmelah,
20 What navigable river joins itself
To Lara, and what census of the year five
Was taken at Klagenfurt, — because she liked
A general insight into useful facts.
I learnt much music — such as would have been
25 As quite impossible in Johnson's day
As still it might be wished — fine sleights of hand
And unimagined fingering, shuffling off
The hearer's soul through hurricanes of notes
To a noisy Tophet ; and I drew . . . costumes
30 From French engravings, nereids neatly draped,

With smirks of simmering godship, — I washed in
 From nature landscapes, (rather say, washed out).
 I danced the polka and Cellarius,
 Spun glass, stuffed birds, and modelled flowers in wax,
 Because she liked accomplishments in girls. 35
 I read a score of books on womanhood
 To prove, if women do not think at all,
 They may teach thinking, (to a maiden-aunt
 Or else the author) — books demonstrating
 Their right of comprehending husband's talk 40
 When not too deep, and even of answering
 With pretty "may it please you," or "so it is," —
 Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,
 Particular worth and general missionariness,
 As long as they keep quiet by the fire 45
 And never say "no" when the world says "ay,"
 For that is fatal, — their angelic reach
 Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn,
 And fatten household sinners, — their, in brief,
 Potential faculty in everything 50
 Of abdicating power in it : she owned
 She liked a woman to be womanly,
 And English women, she thanked God and sighed,
 (Some people always sigh in thanking God)
 Were models to the universe. And last 55
 I learnt cross-stitch, because she did not like
 To see me wear the night with empty hands
 A-doing nothing. So, my shepherdess
 Was something after all, (the pastoral saints
 Be praised for 't) leaning lovelorn with pink eyes 60
 To match her shoes, when I mistook the silks ;
 Her head uncrushed by that round weight of hat
 So strangely similar to the tortoise-shell
 Which slew the tragic poet.

ENGLAND

First, the lime,
(I had enough, there, of the lime, be sure, —
My morning-dream was often hummed away
By the bees in it;) past the lime, the lawn,
5 Which, after sweeping broadly around the house,
Went trickling through the shrubberies in a stream
Of tender turf, and wore and lost itself
Among the acacias, over which you saw
The irregular line of elms by the deep lane
10 Which stopped the grounds and dammed the overflow
Of arbutus and laurel. Out of sight
The lane was ; sunk so deep, no foreign tramp
Nor drover of wild ponies out of Wales
Could guess if lady's hall or tenant's lodge
15 Dispensed such odours — though his stick well-crooked
Might reach the lowest trail of blossoming briar
Which dipped upon the wall. Behind the elms,
And through their tops, you saw the folded hills
Striped up and down with hedges, (burly oaks
20 Projecting from the lines to show themselves)
Through which my cousin Romney's chimneys smoked
As still as when a silent mouth in frost
Breathes — showing where the woodlands hid Leigh Hall ;
While, far above, a jut of table-land,
25 A promontory without water, stretched, —
You could not catch it if the days were thick,
Or took it for a cloud ; but, otherwise
The vigorous sun would catch it up at eve
And use it for an anvil till he had filled
30 The shelves of heaven with burning thunderbolts,

And proved he need not rest so early : — then,
 When all his setting trouble was resolved
 To a trance of passive glory, you might see
 In apparition on the golden sky
 (Alas, my Giotto's background!) the sheep run 35
 Along the fine clear outline, small as mice
 That run along a witch's scarlet thread.

Not a grand nature. Not my chestnut-woods
 Of Vallombrosa, cleaving by the spurs
 To the precipices. Not my headlong leaps 40
 Of waters, that cry out for joy or fear
 In leaping through the palpitating pines,
 Like a white soul tossed out to eternity
 With thrills of time upon it. Not indeed
 My multitudinous mountains, sitting in 45
 The magic circle, with the mutual touch
 Electric, panting from their full deep hearts
 Beneath the influent heavens, and waiting for
 Communion and commission. Italy
 Is one thing, England one.

On English ground 50

You understand the letter, — ere the fall
 How Adam lived in a garden. All the fields
 Are tied up fast with hedges, nosegay-like ;
 The hills are crumpled plains, the plains, parterres, —
 The trees, round, woolly. ready to be clipped ; 55
 And if you seek any wilderness
 You find, at best, a park. A nature tamed
 And grown domestic like a barn-door fowl,
 Which does not awe you with its claws and beak,
 Nor tempt you to an eyrie too high up, 60
 But which, in cackling, sets you thinking of

Your eggs to-morrow at breakfast, in the pause
Of finer meditation.

Rather say,

A sweet familiar nature, stealing in
65 As a dog might, or child, to touch your hand
Or pluck your gown, and humbly mind you so
Of presence and affection, excellent
For inner uses, from the things without.
I learnt to love that England. Very oft,
70 Before the day was born, or otherwise
Through secret windings of the afternoons,
I threw my hunters off and plunged myself
Among the deep hills, as a hunted stag
Will take the waters, shivering with the fear
75 And passion of the course. And when, at last
Escaped, — so many a green slope built on slope
Betwixt me and the enemy's house behind,
I dared to rest, or wander, like a rest
Made sweeter for the step upon the grass, —
80 And view the ground's most gentle dimplement,
(As if God's finger touched but did not press
In making England!) such an up and down
Of verdure, — nothing too much up or down,
A ripple of land; such little hills, the sky
85 Can stoop to tenderly and the wheatfields climb;
Such nooks of valleys lined with orchises,
Fed full of noises by invisible streams;
And open pastures, where you scarcely tell
White daisies from white dew, — at intervals
90 The mythic oaks and elm-trees standing out
Self-poised upon their prodigy of shade, —
I thought my father's land was worthy too
Of being my Shakespeare's.

ITALY

JOURNEYING TO ITALY THROUGH FRANCE

The next day, we took train to Italy
 And fled on southward in the roar of steam.
 The marriage-bells of Romney must be loud,
 To sound so clear through all! I was not well ;
 And truly, though the truth is like a jest, 5
 I could not choose but fancy, half the way,
 I stood alone i' the belfry, fifty bells
 Of naked iron, mad with merriment,
 (As one who laughs and cannot stop himself)
 All clanking at me, in me, over me, 10
 Until I shrieked a shriek I could not hear,
 And swooned with noise, — but still, along my swoon,
 Was 'ware the baffled changes backward rang,
 Prepared, at each emerging sense, to beat
 And crash it out with clangour. I was weak ; 15
 I struggled for the posture of my soul
 In upright consciousness of place and time,
 But evermore, 'twixt waking and asleep,
 Slipped somehow, staggered, caught at Marian's eyes
 A moment, (it is very good for strength 20
 To know that some one needs you to be strong)
 And so recovered what I called myself,
 For that time.

I just knew it when we swept
 Above the old roofs of Dijon. Lyons dropped
 A spark into the night, half trodden out 25
 Unseen. But presently the winding Rhone
 Washed out the moonlight large along his banks,

Which strained their yielding curves out clear and clean
To hold it, — shadow of town and castle blurred
30 Upon the hurrying river. Such an air
Blew thence upon the forehead, — half an air
And half a water, — that I leaned and looked ;
Then, turning back on Marian, smiled to mark
That she looked only on her child, who slept,
His face towards the moon too.

35 So we passed
The liberal open country and the close,
And shot through tunnels, like a lightning wedge
By great Thor-hammers driven through the rock,
Which, quivering through the intestine blackness, splits,
40 And lets it in at once : the train swept in
Athrob with effort, trembling with resolve,
The fierce denouncing whistle wailing on
And dying off smothered in the shuddering dark,
While we, self-awed, drew troubled breath, oppressed
45 As other Titans, underneath the pile
And nightmare of the mountains. Out, at last,
To catch the dawn afloat upon the land !
— Hills, slung forth broadly and gauntly everywhere,
Not cramped in their foundations, pushing wide
50 Rich outspreads of the vineyard and the corn,
(As if they entertained i' the name of France)
While, down their straining sides, streamed manifest
A soil as red as Charlemagne's knightly blood,
To consecrate the verdure. Some one said,
55 "Marseilles !" And lo, the city of Marseilles
With all her ships behind her, and beyond,
The scimitar of ever-shining sea,
For right-hand use, bared blue against the sky !

That night we spent between the purple heaven
 And purple water : I think Marian slept ; 60
 But I, as a dog awatch for his master's foot,
 Who cannot sleep or eat before he hears,
 I sate upon the deck and watched the night
 And listened through the stars for Italy.
 Those marriage-bells I spoke of sounded far, 65
 As some child's go-cart in the street beneath
 To a dying man who will not pass the day,
 And knows it, holding by a hand he loves.
 I, too, sate quiet, satisfied with death,
 Sate silent : I could hear my own soul speak ; 70
 And had my friend, — for Nature comes sometimes
 And says, " I am ambassador for God."

I felt the wind soft from the land of souls ;
 The old miraculous mountains heaved in sight,
 One straining past another along the shore, 75
 The way of grand dull Odyssean ghosts,
 Athirst to drink the cool blue wine of seas
 And stare on voyagers. Peak pushing peak
 They stood : I watched beyond that Tyrian belt
 Of intense sea betwixt them and the ship, 80
 Down all their sides the misty olive-woods
 Dissolving in the weak congenial moon,
 And still disclosing some brown convent-tower
 That seems as if it grew from some brown rock, —
 Or many a little lighted village, dropped 85
 Like a fallen star upon so high a point,
 You wonder what can keep it in its place
 From sliding headlong with the waterfalls
 Which drop and powder all the myrtle groves
 With spray of silver. Thus my Italy 90
 Was stealing on us. Genoa broke with day ;

The Doria's long pale palace striking out,
From green hills in advance of the white town,
A marble finger dominant to ships,
95 Seen glimmering through the uncertain grey of dawn.

FLORENCE

I found a house at Florence on the hill
Of Bellosguardo. 'Tis a tower that keeps
A post of double observation o'er
The valley of Arno (holding as a hand
5 The outspread city) straight toward Fiesole
And Mount Morello and the setting sun. —
The Vallombrosan mountains to the right,
Which sunrise fills as full as crystal cups
Wine-filled, and red to the brim because it's red.
10 No sun could die, nor yet be born, unseen
By dwellers at my villa : morn and eve
Were magnified before us in the pure
Illimitable space and pause of sky,
Intense as angels' garments blanched with God,
15 Less blue than radiant. From the outer wall
Of the garden, dropped the mystic floating grey
Of olive-trees, (with interruptions green
From maize and vine) until 'twas caught and torn
On that abrupt black line of cypresses
20 Which signed the way to Florence. Beautiful
The city lay along the ample vale,
Cathedral, tower and palace, piazza and street ;
The river trailing like a silver cord
Through all, and curling loosely, both before
25 And after, over the whole stretch of land
Sown whitely up and down its opposite slopes,
With farms and villas.

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS

FLORENCE AND MICHEL ANGELO

For me who stand in Italy to-day,
 Where worthier poets stood and sang before,
 I kiss their footsteps, yet their words gainsay :
 I can but muse in hope upon this shore
 Of golden Arno, as it shoots away 5
 Straight through the heart of Florence, 'neath the four
 Bent bridges, seeming to strain off like bows,
 And tremble, while the arrowy undertide
 Shoots on and cleaves the marble as it goes,
 And strikes up palace-walls on either side, 10
 And froths the cornice out in glittering rows,
 With doors and windows quaintly multiplied,
 And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon all,
 By whom if flower or kerchief were thrown out,
 From any lattice there, the same would fall 15
 Into the river underneath, no doubt, —
 It runs so close and fast 'twixt wall and wall.
 How beautiful ! the mountains from without
 Listen in silence for the word said next,
 (What word will men say?) here where Giotto planted 20
 His campanile, like an unperplexed
 Question to Heaven, concerning the things granted
 To a great people, who, being greatly vexed
 In act, in aspiration keep undaunted !
 (What word says God?) the sculptor's Night and Day, 25
 And Dawn and Twilight, wait in marble scorn,
 Like dogs upon a dunghill, on the clay
 From whence the Medicean stamp's outworn, —
 The final putting off of all such sway

30 By all such hands, and freeing of the unborn
 In Florence, and the world outside his Florence.
 That's Michel Angelo! his statues wait
 In the small chapel of the dim St. Lawrence!
 Day's eyes are breaking bold and passionate
 35 Over his shoulder, and will flash abhorrence
 On darkness, and with level looks meet fate,
 When once loose from that marble film of theirs:
 The Night has wild dreams in her sleep; the Dawn
 Is haggard as the sleepless: Twilight wears
 40 A sort of horror: as the veil withdrawn
 'Twixt the artist's soul and works had left them heirs
 Of the deep thoughts which would not quail nor fawn,
 Of angers and contempts, his hope and love;
 For not without a meaning did he place
 45 Princely Urbino on the seat above
 With everlasting shadow on his face;
 While the slow dawns and twilights disapprove
 The ashes of his long-extinguished race,
 Which never shall clog more the feet of men.

SAVONAROLA

'Tis true that when the dust of death has choked
 A great man's voice, the common words he said
 Turn oracles,—the meanings which he yoked
 Like horses, draw like griffins!—this is true
 5 And acceptable. Also I desire,
 When men make record, with the flowers they strew,
 "Savonarola's soul went out in fire
 Upon our Grand-duke's piazza, and burned through
 A moment first, or ere he did expire,
 10 The veil betwixt the right and wrong, and showed

How near God sate and judged the judges there," —
Desire upon the pavement overstrewed
To cast my violets with as reverent care,
And prove that all the winters which have snowed
Cannot snow out the scent, from stones and air, 15
Of a sincere man's virtues. This was he,
Savonarola, who, while Peter sank
With his whole boat-load, called courageously
"Wake Christ, wake Christ!" — who, having tried the tank
Of old church-waters used for baptistry 20
Ere Luther lived to spill them, said they stank!
Who also, by a princely deathbed, cried
"Loose Florence, or God will not loose thy soul,"
While the Magnificent fell back and died
Beneath the star-looks, shooting from the cowl, 25
Which turned to wormwood-bitterness the wide
Deep sea of his ambitions. It were foul
To grudge Savonarola and the rest
Their violets! rather pay them quick and fresh!
The emphasis of death makes manifest 30
The eloquence of action in our flesh;
And men who, living, were but dimly guessed,
When once free from their life's entangled mesh,
Show their full length in graves, or even indeed
Exaggerate their stature, in the flat, 35
To noble admirations which exceed
Nobly, nor sin in such excess. For that
Is wise and righteous.

THE CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA NOVELLA: CIMABUE

Or enter, in your Florence wanderings,
Santa Maria Novella church. You pass
The left stair, where, at plague-time, Macchiavel
Saw one with set fair face as in a glass,
5 Dressed out against the fear of death and hell,
Rustling her silks in pauses of the mass,
To keep the thought off how her husband fell,
When she left home, stark dead across her feet —
The stair leads up to what Orgagna gave
10 Of Dante's dæmons ; but you, passing it,
Ascend the right stair of the farther nave,
To muse in a small chapel scarcely lit
By Cimabue's Virgin. Bright and brave,
That picture was accounted, mark, of old !
15 A king stood bare before its sovran grace ;
A reverent people shouted to behold
The picture, not the king ; and even the place
Containing such a miracle grew bold,
Named the Glad Borgo from that beauteous face,
20 Which thrilled the artist, after work, to think
That his ideal Mary-smile should stand
So very near him ! — he, within the brink
Of all that glory, let in by his hand
With too divine a rashness ! Yet none shrink
25 Who gaze here now — albeit the thing is planned
Sublimely in the thought's simplicity.
The Virgin, throned in empyreal state,
Minds only the young babe upon her knee ;
While, each side, angels bear the royal weight,
30 Prostrated meekly, smiling tenderly

Oblivion of their wings ! the Child thereat
Stretches its hand like God. If any should,
Because of some stiff draperies and loose joints,
Gaze scorn down from the heights of Raffaelhood,
On Cimabue's picture, — Heaven anoints 35
The head of no such critic, and his blood
The poet's curse strikes full on, and appoints
To ague and cold spasms for evermore.
A noble picture ! worthy of the shout
Wherewith along the streets the people bore 40
Its cherub-faces, which the sun threw out
Until they stooped and entered the church door ! —
Yet rightly was young Giotto talked about,
Whom Cimabue found among the sheep,
And knew, as gods know gods, and carried home 45
To paint the things he painted, with a deep
And fuller insight, and so overcome
His chapel-Virgin with a heavenlier sweep
Of light ? For thus we mount into the sum
Of great things known or acted. I hold, too, 50
That Cimabue smiled upon the lad,
At the first stroke which passed what he could do, —
Or else his Virgin's smile had never had
Such sweetness in 't. All great men who foreknew
Their heirs in art, for art's sake have been glad, 55
And bent their old white heads as if uncrowned,
Fanatics of their pure ideals still,
Far more than of their laurels which were found
With some less stalwart struggle of the will.
If old Margheritone trembled, swooned, 60
And died despairing at the open sill
Of other men's achievements, (who achieved,

By loving art beyond the master!) he
 Was old Margheritone and conceived
 65 Never, at youngest and most ecstasy,
 A Virgin like that dream of one, which heaved
 The death-sigh from his heart. If wistfully
 Margheritone sickened at the smell
 Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go! —
 70 Strong Cimabue stood up very well
 In spite of Giotto's, — and Angelico,
 The artist-saint, kept smiling in his cell
 The smile with which he welcomed the sweet slow
 Inbreak of angels, (whitening through the dim
 75 That he might paint them!) while the sudden sense
 Of Raffael's future was revealed to him
 By force of his own fair works' competence.
 The same blue waters where the dolphins swim
 Suggest the tritons. Through the blue Immense,
 80 Strike out, all swimmers! cling not in the way
 Of one another, so to sink; but leave
 The strong man's impulse, catch the fresh'ning spray
 He throws up in his motions, and discern
 By his clear, westering eye, the time of day.

VALLOMBROSA

And Vallombrosa, we two went to see
 Last June, beloved companion, — where sublime
 The mountains live in holy families,
 And the slow pinewoods ever climb and climb
 5 Half up their breasts; just stagger as they seize
 Some grey crag — drop back with it many a time,
 And straggle blindly down the precipice!
 The Vallombrosan brooks were strewn as thick

That June-day, knee-deep, with dead beechen leaves,
As Milton saw them ere his heart grew sick, 10
And his eyes blind. I think the monks and beeves
Are all the same too : scarce they have changed the wick
On good Saint Gualbert's altar, which receives
The convent's pilgrims ; and the pool in front
Where in the hill-stream trout are cast, to wait 15
The beatific vision and the grunt
Used at refectory, keeps its weedy state,
To baffle saintly abbots, who would count
The fish across their breviary, nor 'bate
The measure of their steps. O waterfalls 20
And forests ! sound and silence ! mountains bare,
That leap up peak by peak and catch the palls
Of purple and silver mist, to rend and share
With one another, at electric calls
Of life in the sunbeams, — till we cannot dare 25
Fix your shapes, learn your number ! we must think
Your beauty and your glory helped to fill
The cup of Milton's soul so to the brink,
That he no more was thirsty when God's will
Had shattered to his sense the last chain-link 30
By which he drew from Nature's visible
The fresh well-water. Satisfied by this,
He sang of Adam's paradise and smiled,
Remembering Vallombrosa. Therefore is
The place divine to English man and child — 35
We all love Italy.

LOVE FOR ITALY

How oft, indeed,
We all have sent our souls out from the north,
On bare white feet which would not print nor bleed,
To climb the Alpine passes and look forth,
5 Where the low murmuring Lombard rivers lead
Their bee-like way to gardens almost worth,
The sight which thou and I see afterward
From Tuscan Bellosguardo, wide awake,
When standing on the actual, blessèd sward
10 Where Galileo stood at nights to take
The visions of the stars, we find it hard,
Gazing upon the earth and heaven, to make
A choice of beauty.

NOTES

THE SLEEP

First published in *The Seraphim and Other Poems*, 1838. The poem was set to music by Sir Frederick Bridge, so that it might be sung at Robert Browning's funeral in Westminster Abbey, December 31, 1889.

1 6 "He giveth His beloved, sleep"? Cf. Psalm cxxvii. 2: "It is vain for you that ye rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of toil: for so he giveth unto his beloved sleep." The psalmist is probably one of the Hebrew prophets.

COWPER'S GRAVE

First published in *The Seraphim and Other Poems*, 1838.

3 1 William Cowper (1731-1800) is buried in what is now called the Cowper Chapel of Dereham Church, Norfolk.

3 5 a maniac's tongue. Cowper, unhappily, suffered throughout his life from fits of depression that at times culminated in madness and made his confinement necessary; his morbid condition of mind led him to see in himself one who was forsaken by his God.

3 5-6 deathless singing: one of Mrs. Browning's most haunting phrases. Cf. *Introd.*, p. xxvii.

4 21-24 Cowper was a close observer and a faithful painter of nature.

5 25 Wild timid hares. In order to distract his mind Cowper tamed hares, and found relief from his melancholy in tending them. Cf. his poem, *Epitaph on a Hare*.

5 33-38 Cf. Cowper's poem, *On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture out of Norfolk*.

6 51 Immanuel: a symbolic name, meaning "With us (is) God." Cf. Isaiah vii. 14: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

A SEA-SIDE WALK

First published in *The Seraphim and Other Poems*, 1838. The poem plainly shows the influence of Wordsworth.

7 3-7 A reference to a well-known tale in *The Arabian Nights*.

7 13-14 the water grey . . . moon-taught way: an allusion to the cause of the tides.

THE SEA-MEW

First published in *The Seraphim and Other Poems*, 1838. This poem was a special favorite with Miss Mitford and H. S. Boyd. Writing to the former in 1850, Mrs. Browning says: "*None of these simple poems of mine have been favorites with general readers. The unintelligible ones are always preferred, I observe, by extractors, compilers, and ladies and gentlemen who write to tell me I'm a muse.*"

MY DOVES

First published in *The Seraphim and Other Poems*, 1838. The motto means: "O wisdom, you speak like a dove!"

11 22-24 Cf. Wordsworth, *Three years she grew in sun and shower*:

And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things.

12 67 Cf. Psalm cxxxvii. 1-4:

By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
Upon the willows in the midst thereof
We hanged up our harps.
For there they that led us captive required of us songs,
And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying,
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing the Lord's song
In a strange land?

12 68 Babel here means London, which is sometimes called "the modern Babylon" on account of its luxury and wealth.

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE

First printed in *The Athenæum*, October, 1841, and afterwards in Vol. II of *Poems*, 1844.

13 4 holden: archaic form of *held*.

14 22 Linnaeus (1707-1778). The founder of the science of modern botany was a native of Sweden. He was for many years professor of botany at the University of Upsala in Sweden.

THE POET AND THE BIRD

First published in *Poems*, 1844. Cf. Tennyson's poem, *The Poet's Song*, the leading thought of which is similar.

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP

First published in *Poems*, 1844. It appears at the end of Vol. I. It was written, or at least finished, to make enough material for the 1844 volumes. Mrs. Browning says of it in a letter: "In that poem I endeavored to throw conventionalities into the fire of poetry, to make them glow and glitter as if they were not dull things." It was admired by Carlyle and Miss Harriet Martineau, and was moreover the germ of *Aurora Leigh*. Writing to John Kenyon in 1844, Miss Barrett says: "I have a great fancy for writing some day a longer poem of a like class,—a poem comprehending the aspect and manners of modern life, and flinching at nothing of the conventional. I think it might be done with good effect." Writing to Robert Browning in 1845, she says: "But my chief *intention* just now is the writing of a sort of novel-poem—a poem as completely modern as *Geraldine's Courtship*, running into the midst of our conventions, and rushing into drawing-rooms and the like, 'where angels fear to tread'; and so, meeting face to face and without mask the Humanity of the age, and speaking the truth as I conceive of it out plainly. That is my intention. It is not mature enough yet to be called a plan. I am waiting for a story, and I won't take one, because I want to make one, and I like to make my own stories, because then I can take liberties with them in the treatment."

The poem shows the influence of Tennyson, and is of the same class as his *Locksley Hall*, and written in a similar meter,—the trochaic eight-accent truncated verse.

17 36 Still suggested . . . salt. In olden days the inferior members of a great household, though dining at the same time and at the same

table as the superior members, always sat below the massive silver salt cellar which was placed in the middle of the table.

19 71-72 Cf. Tennyson, *Locksley Hall*:

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore!

20 86 **commix**: a strong form of *mix*.

20 92 **abeles**: white or silver poplars, so called from the white color of the twigs and leaves.

21 97-98 Cf. Tennyson, *The Gardener's Daughter*:

For up the porch there grew an Eastern rose,
That, flowering high, the last night's gale had caught,
And blown across the walk. One arm aloft —
Gown'd in pure white, that fitted to the shape —
Holding the bush, to fix it back, she stood.

21 108 **lindens**: lime trees.

22 115 **Lough the sculptor** (1806-1876). John Graham Lough first exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1826. He executed some important works such as the statue of Queen Victoria in the London Royal Exchange, and the monument to the poet Southey in Keswick Church. His works have not sustained their original reputation.

24 153 **gowans**: the Gaelic word for daisies.

24 155 **rowans**: mountain-ash trees.

25 159 **the pastoral parts of Spenser**. Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579-1580) was the first poem he published. It appeared anonymously under the editorship of one who had been a fellow-student at Cambridge, E. K. (Edward Kirke). Edmund Spenser was born in 1552 and died in 1599. His fame rests on his great allegorical poem, *The Faerie Queene*, published 1590-1596.

25 160 **Petrarch's sonnets**. Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374) was one of the greatest Italian lyric poets. He perfected the form of the sonnet. The earliest English sonnets follow closely the structure used by him. Cf. Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, canto iv. 30-31.

25 161 **Wordsworth's solemn-thoughted idyl**. Good examples of Wordsworth's idyls are *Michael* (1800), *Resolution and Independence* (published 1807), *The Solitary Reaper* (published 1807). Wordsworth (1770-1850) is the great poet of nature; as Ruskin says, "the keenest-eyed of all modern poets for what is deep and essential in nature."

25 162 **Howitt's ballad-verse**. Mary Howitt (1799-1888), wife of

William Howitt (1792-1879), wrote, with her husband, several volumes of verse, of which the chief are *The Forest Minstrel* (1827) and *Book of the Seasons* (1831).

25 162 Tennyson's enchanted reverie. Tennyson (1809-1892) had published in 1842 two volumes, which contained most of his finest lyrics, and the best of the poems he had composed prior to that date. They include *Locksley Hall*, *Ulysses*, *The Lady of Shalott*, and the *Dream of Fair Women*. His fame as a great poet was assured by this publication.

25 163 from Browning some "Pomegranate." Robert Browning (1812-1889) published a series of poems under the title *Bells and Pomegranates* during the years 1841-1846. They include *Pippa Passes* and the *Dramatic Lyrics*, which are among the most popular of his writings. Cf. *Introd.*, p. xv.

27 193-194 books are men . . . future times to hear. Cf. Milton, *Areopagitica*: "Books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them, to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them"; and Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* ("Of Kings' Treasuries").

27 197-212 Mrs. Browning here puts forward the same teaching that is to be found in the writings of Ruskin and Browning at this period.

28 222 she smiles them down . . . waves. A beautiful painting by Botticelli in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence well illustrates the legend that Venus was born from the sea foam.

29 227 Camöens. Luiz de Camöens (1524-1580), the greatest poet of Portugal, is best known as the author of *The Lusiad* (1572). The allusion here is to his *Rimas*, short love poems after the model of the Italians.

31 268 Pythian: an allusion to Apollo, the god of poetry and inspiration, whose chief seat of worship was at Delphi, originally called Pytho.

31 271 amalgamate: amalgamated, mixed so as to form a compound.

33 296-300 Cf. Burns, *Is there for honest poverty:*

The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that.

34 311 Parias (usually spelled *pariahs*) are actually members of the lowest class of the Hindoo population below the four castes; hence the word is commonly used to mean an outcast.

34 317 ermined pride: ermine fur forms an important part of the official robes of peers and peeresses; hence it is a sign of rank.

35 324 the spheres: the heavenly bodies.

37 361 oriel: a portion of the room which juts out and contains windows looking towards the east.

37 367 Phemius: the celebrated minstrel who sang to Penelope's suitors in the palace of Ulysses at Ithaca.

37 368 Cf. Shelley, *Julian and Maddalo*, 546:

Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong;
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.

37 372 Cf. Mrs. Browning's sonnet entitled *Grief*, beginning, "I tell you hopeless grief is passionless."

38 378 Parian statue-stone. Parian marble was a white marble of mellow tone and somewhat large grain, highly valued by the ancients and largely used by their sculptors. It was obtained from Mt. Marpessa (now Mt. Elias) in Paros, an island in the Ægean Sea. The quarries are not yet exhausted.

THE RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY

First published in *Poems*, 1844.

40 4 rebecks. The rebeck is the earliest form of musical instrument belonging to the viol class. It usually had three strings, but sometimes only one or two. It was used in Europe as early as the eighth century and is supposed to have been invented by the Moors of Spain.

45 125 blee: color, hue. Cf. Old English *bleó*, *blió*: color, hue, complexion.

46 139 faulchion: falchion.

47 151 muckle: much; a northern form of Old English *mýcel*, great.

48 181 passionate: affected with grief and sorrow, suffering agony. Cf. the *passion* of our Lord.

55 329 pardiè: literally, "by God!" (*par Dieu!*); an archaic oath or interjection.

55 337 selle: an obsolete form of *sell*, a saddle.

58 388 passing-bell: a church bell tolled at the time of a person's death or immediately afterwards.

59 423 thick-bossed: thickly studded with knobs or protuberant ornaments.

60 439 eternity's evangel: the good tidings of eternity. Cf. Greek *angelos*, a messenger.

THE LOST BOWER

First published in *Poems*, 1844. The scene of the poem is a wood above the garden at Hope End (cf. *Introd.*, pp. ix, x), and the subject is an actual fact of Elizabeth Barrett's childhood.

61 1 orchard closes. A close is any place surrounded by a fence, wall, or hedge; hence orchards so inclosed are here meant.

61 10 Summer-snow of apple-blossoms. Cf. Heine, *Harzreise*, "Der weisse Blüthenschaum bleibt an den Bäumen hangen" (the white foam of blossoms hangs on the trees).

63 45 William Langland's *Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman* was probably composed about 1362.

64 68-70 Cf. Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, canto i, stanzas 10-13.

66 120 window-mullion: the upright division between the lights of windows in Gothic architecture.

66 121-125 When a child Elizabeth Barrett was noted for her skill in cultivating white roses.

68 162 Dryad: nymphs of the trees. The Greeks imagined that the nymphs lived in the trees and died when the trees died.

68 168-170 Ave Marys: prayers to the Virgin.

69 183 Pan was the Greek god of flocks and herds, hence the patron of shepherds who inspired pastoral and nature poetry.

69 183 Faunus, half man, half goat, was the attendant of Pan, and is sometimes identified with Pan. A most beautiful representation of a faun is to be seen in a statue by Praxiteles in the sculpture gallery of the Capitol at Rome. That statue plays an important part in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *The Marble Faun* (1860).

70 208 nympholeptic: snatching at something far above. Cf. Robert Browning's poem *Numpholeptos*, in which a nymph has entranced a young man who has fallen in love with her heavenly attractions.

70 209 virelay: an old French verse form in short lines running on two rhymes. Cf. Austin Dobson, *July*, for a modern imitation of the form.

70 213 geste: gesture.

71 238 lusus: a Latin word meaning something done in sport. Cf. the expression *lusus naturae*.

72 246-250 Cf. Amiel, *Journal Intime*: "Revois deux fois pour voir juste, revois qu' une fois pour voir beau" (look twice to see with accuracy, but only look once to see what is beautiful).

73 270-275 Cf. Tennyson's version of *The Sleeping Beauty* in *The Day-Dream*.

73 280 **Ædipus**. The hero of Sophocles's tragedy, *Ædipus at Colonus*, was buried at Colonus. Sophocles describes the place as

the noblest spot
 Colonus, glistening bright,
 Where evermore, in thickets freshly green,
 The clear-voiced nightingale
 Still haunts, and pours her song,
 By purpling ivy hid,
 And the thick leafage, sacred to the god,
 With all its myriad fruits,
 By mortal's foot untouched,
 By sun's hot ray unscathed,
 Sheltered from every blast.

(Plumptre's translation of the *Tragedies of Sophocles*.)

73 281 The story of Aladdin is one of the *Arabian Nights* tales.

76 341 A reference to Miss Barrett's ill health and long confinement to her room.

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

First printed in *Blackwood's Magazine*, August, 1843. The poem was suggested by the report of the commissioners, one of whom was Miss Barrett's friend, R. H. Horne, appointed to investigate the subject of the employment of young children. Mrs. Browning tells how "the first stanza came into my head in a hurricane, and I was obliged to make the other stanzas like it." In 1846 Mr. Russell, the singer, proposed to set it to music with a burden,

And the threads twirl, twirl, twirl,
 Before each boy and girl,
 And the wheels, big and little, still whirl, whirl, whirl,

and an accompaniment, *agitato*, imitating the roar of the machinery. Mrs. Browning objected to the proposition, but Robert Browning advised her to yield, so long as Russell specified that the burden was by the singer, because nothing but good could come of a wider spreading of the poem.

79 50 **kirk-chime**: church bell.

79 56 **cerement**: cloth dipped in melted wax and used in wrapping dead bodies when they are embalmed; hence any grave cloth.

WINE OF CYPRUS

First published in *Poems*, 1844. Hugh Stuart Boyd (d. 1848) was a blind scholar and great friend of Miss Barrett's. She frequently visited him and read and discussed Greek literature with him. Besides this poem, three sonnets published in Vol. I of *Poems* (1850) commemorate the friendship. Robert Browning always said that this poem affected him more profoundly than any other the poetess ever wrote.

83 1 Bacchus: the god of wine in Roman mythology. He is represented as a beautiful youth with flowing golden locks crowned by a wreath of ivy. His chariot was drawn by panthers.

83 3 Cyprus . . . beaker. The island of Cyprus is famed for its excellent wine.

83 5 Ida: a mountain range of Mysia in Asia Minor.

83 7 Juno: in Roman mythology the wife of Jupiter and queen of Olympus.

84 15 Titan. The Titans were the giant gods who ruled in Olympus under Cronos until overthrown by Zeus. Cf. Keats, *Hyperion*.

85 44 Anacreon (563-478 B.C.): a Greek poet who wrote odes, chiefly in praise of the Muses, wine, and love.

85 49 the Chian: wine produced in Chios, one of the most beautiful and fertile of the Ægean Islands.

85 51 Rhea's lion. Rhea was the wife of Saturn, and mother of Ceres, Juno, Neptune, Pluto, etc. She is generally represented seated on a throne with lions by her, or in a chariot drawn by lions.

85 53 Paphia: Venus. Paphos was a city of Cyprus in which Venus was worshiped.

85 55 Hymettus: a mountain in Attica famous for its honey.

86 61-62 Ulysses . . . every part: an allusion to Homer's *Odyssey*, Book XI, where the ceremonies performed by Ulysses on his descent into hell are described.

86 64 Hades: the lower regions (hell) of Greek mythology.

86 69 Boyd lived at Great Malvern, Worcestershire.

86 75 An allusion to the chorus, an important feature of the Greek drama.

86 77 cothurns: the buskins (boots with high heels designed to add to the stature and so to the dignity of the tragic actor) of the Greeks and Romans. Among the ancients the cothurnus was a characteristic part of the costume of tragic actors; hence the word is sometimes figuratively used for tragedy. Cf. Milton, *Il Penseroso*:

Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
 In scepter'd pall come sweeping by,
 Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
 Or the tale of Troy divine,
 Or what (though rare) of later age
 Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.

86 81 Æschylus (525-456 B.C.): the father of Greek tragedy. Only seven of the sixty plays ascribed to him survive, among them the *Prometheus Bound* (in some ways the perfection of his art) and the trilogy of the *Oresteia*, comprising the *Agamemnon*, perhaps the greatest of all Greek plays. Mrs. Browning translated the *Prometheus Bound*, and Robert Browning the *Agamemnon*.

86 85 Sophocles (496-405 B.C.): the greatest Greek tragic poet. Only seven of his plays survive, but each of those is a masterpiece of human genius. As a dramatic artist Sophocles reigns supreme.

87 89 Euripides (480-406 B.C.): the latest of the three great tragic poets of Greece. A larger number of his plays have survived than of either of the others. Robert Browning prefixed lines 89-92 to his *Balaustion's Adventure* (1871), which contains his transcript from Euripides's *Alcestis*, and writes towards the end:

I know the poetess who graved in gold,
 Among her glories that shall never fade,
 This style and title for Euripides,
 "The Human with his droppings of warm tears."

87 93 Theocritus (b. *cir.* 300 B.C.): a Greek poet, the originator of pastoral poetry. His short poems dealing with pastoral subjects, and representing a single scene, came to be called idyls (Gr. *eidullia*), "little pictures." He greatly influenced both Virgil and Tennyson.

87 93 Bion: a Greek bucolic poet who flourished in the third century B.C. Little of his work has survived except his *Lament for Adonis*, translated by Mrs. Browning and published in Vol. I of the 1850 edition of *Poems*.

87 94 Pindar (522-443 B.C.): a great Greek lyric poet who celebrated in his odes the victories in the national games.

87 97 Plato (427-347 B.C.): the great Greek philosopher. He was a disciple of Socrates and embodied the results of his own speculations and those of his master in a long series of written *Dialogues*, of which the *Republic* is perhaps the most important.

87 103 hysop: a plant referred to in the Old Testament, and identified with the common caper. It played a part in the purification ceremonies of the temple.

87 105 Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407): so named (Gr. *chrysostomos*, golden-mouthed) from his great eloquence. He preached chiefly at Antioch, and is reputed the greatest orator of the Church. He has left works consisting of admirable *Homilies* and of *Commentaries* on the Bible.

87 107 Basil (*cir.* A.D. 329-379): one of the greatest of the Greek fathers of the Church.

87 109 Heliodorus, the earliest and best of the Greek romance writers, flourished in the fourth century A.D. His work was distinguished by its strict morality.

87 113 Synesius (*cir.* A.D. 378-430) turned Christian under the influence of Hypatia of Alexandria about 401 and became bishop of Ptolemais. His life and works are of great interest for the study of the relations between Neoplatonism and Christianity.

88 117 Nazianzen. Gregory Nazianzen (*cir.* A.D. 325-390) led a life of religious study at Nazianzus. His very numerous works, which consist of poems, speeches, and letters—he was before all an orator—combine what there is in Christianity of the mystic and Oriental with the symmetry and harmony of the Greek genius.

88 121 Atè: the goddess of vengeance and mischief in Greek mythology.

88 123 "De Virginitate": a poem on *Celibacy* by Nazianzen. In her essays on *The Greek Christian Poets*, first printed in *The Athenæum* (London), 1842, Miss Barrett writes: "The poem on *Celibacy*—which state is commended by Gregory as becometh a bishop—has occasionally graphic touches, but is dull enough generally to suit the fairest spinster's view of that melancholy subject."

88 127 St. Simeon, the Stylite, spent thirty-seven years on different pillars, each loftier and narrower than the preceding. He was imitated by a group of Christian ascetics, which persisted until the twelfth century. *Stylite* is derived from the Greek *stulos*, a column. Cf. Tennyson, *St. Simeon Stylites*:

I, Simeon of the pillar, by surname
Stylites, among men; I, Simeon,
The watcher on the column till the end.

88 135 your Porsons. Richard Porson (1759-1808) was an eminent critic and Greek scholar.

88 138 **Cassandra**, the daughter of Priam, was gifted with the power of prophecy, but no one believed her predictions. She plays an important part in Æschylus's *Agamemnon*.

89 141 **Prometheus** stole fire from Heaven and taught its uses to mortals. He forms the subject of one of Æschylus's finest plays.

89 145 **Medea**, daughter of the king of Colchis, was a sorceress who helped Jason, the leader of the Argonauts, to obtain the golden fleece. She married Jason, and becoming jealous of him, in revenge murdered two of her children before his face. That episode is the subject of a tragedy by Euripides.

89 147 **Œdipus** unwittingly murdered his father and married his mother, not knowing the relationship of either to himself. When he discovered what he had done, he put out his eyes, left Thebes, and, accompanied by his daughter Antigone, returned to Colonos, where he died and was buried. His history forms the subject of two plays by Sophocles.

90 172 **œnomet**: a drink made of wine mixed with honey.

THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST

First published in Vol. II of *Poems*, 1844. The idea of the poem is akin to that of *The Lost Bower*. In that case it was the loss of a dream, an illusion; here it is a real loss, — the destruction of the nest.

THE DEAD PAN

First published in *Poems*, 1844. The Greek writer Plutarch tells how, when Christ was born, the oracles ceased, and a voice was heard by mariners at sea crying, "The great Pan is dead!" Cf. Milton, *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, stanzas xix-xxi.

The Oracles are dumb;
 No voice or hideous hum
 Runs through the archèd roof in words deceiving.
 Apollo from his shrine
 Can no more divine,
 With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
 No nightly trance, or breathèd spell,
 Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

The lonely mountains o'er,
 And the resounding shore,
 A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;

From haunted spring, and dale,
 Edged with poplar pale,
 The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
 With flower-inwoven tresses torn
 The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

In consecrated earth,
 And on the holy hearth,
 The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
 In urns and altars round,
 A drear and dying sound
 Affrights the flamens at their service quaint;
 And the chill marble seems to sweat,
 While each peculiar power foregoes his wonted seat.

95 1 Hellas. The ancient Greeks called their country Hellas; the Romans gave it the name Græcia.

95 9 Æthiopia: a country of Africa, south of Egypt.

95 10 Pygmies. Greek legend tells of a nation of dwarfs dwelling on the banks of the Upper Nile. Every spring the cranes made war on them and devoured them.

95 11 mandragora: a vegetable narcotic to which many superstitions were attached by the ancients.

95 13 lotus: the Egyptian water lily.

96 23-24 According to the Ptolemaic system of the universe, nine transparent spheres, carrying the sun, moon, planets, and fixed stars, revolved round the earth, which was stationary.

97 64 Jove: Jupiter, or Zeus, the chief god of the Greeks and Romans, king of Olympus and of earth. The eagle was his attendant bird.

98 80 the Muses: the nine daughters of Jupiter and Mnemosyne, goddesses of poetry, history, and other arts and sciences.

98 83 Niobe. According to Greek mythological legend, Niobe, the mother of twelve children, taunted Latona, who had only two, — Apollo and Diana. In revenge Latona's children caused all the sons and daughters of Niobe to die. She, inconsolable, wept herself to death and was changed into a stone from which ran water. There is a fine group of Niobe and her children, probably by the Greek sculptor Praxiteles, in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

98 86 Pallas: Pallas Athene, or Minerva, was the goddess of wisdom.

98 94 Mænads: a name of the Bacchantes. In the festivals of Bacchus their actions were those of mad women.

98 97 **Evohe**: a joyous shout used in the festivals of Bacchus.

98 106 **Aphrodite**: the Greek name of Venus.

98 107 **native foam**. Cf. *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*, 28 222 and note.

98 108 **cestus**: the girdle of Venus, which had the magical power of moving to ardent love.

99 110 **Ai Adonis**: a sign of woe. Adonis was a beautiful youth beloved by Venus. He was killed during the chase, and the spot on which his blood fell was sprinkled with nectar by Venus, who grieved greatly for his death. On this spot sprang up the anemone and other flowers. Cf. Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*.

99 113 **the Loves**. Cupid, the son of Venus, is always represented as a naked blind boy armed with a bow and arrows.

99 115 **Frore**: frozen (obsolete).

99 120 **Hermes**: the Greek name of Mercury, the herald of the gods.

99 123 **caduceus**: the wand always carried by Mercury.

99 127 **Cybele** (known also as Rhea: cf. note, p. 157): a Greek goddess, generally represented as a robust woman with keys in her hand, her head crowned with turrets.

99 136 **Vesta**. In Roman mythology Vesta was the goddess of the home. The chief duty of the virgins consecrated to her service was to take care that the fire in her temple was never extinguished.

100 149 **obolus**: a small Greek coin.

100 162-181. An allusion to Plutarch's story.

102 201 **Dodona**: the most ancient oracle in Greece.

102 204 **Pythia**: the priestess of Apollo, who delivered the answers at Delphi, a famous oracle in Greece. Cf. note, p. 153.

102 214 **of yore**: literally, *of years*.

102 220 **Schiller** (1759-1805). The great German poet, in his poem *The Gods of Greece*, laments the death of the gods, and regrets that with them beauty and art and poetry died out of the world. Mrs. Browning takes a different view. *and others*

102 230 **aureole**: a luminous emanation, or cloud, surrounding a figure or an object.

103 236 **Phæbus**: Apollo, the sun.

103 241 **illumed**: illumined.

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

First printed in *The Cornhill Magazine*, then under Thackeray's editorship, July, 1860. Pan is treated throughout the poem as the god of poets and the inventor of the syrinx, or Pandean pipes. He is always represented as having horns, a goat's beard, a crooked nose, pointed ears, a tail, and goat's feet.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

Privately printed, 1847, as "*Sonnets*, by E. B. B.," and first offered to the public in Vol. II of *Poems*, 1850. These forty-four sonnets (the sonnet entitled *Future and Past* was incorporated as No. 42 of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* in the edition of 1856) were written by Elizabeth Barrett during the period of Robert Browning's courtship and engagement, and were not shown to him until some months after their marriage. Edmund Gosse, in *Critical Kit-Kats* (1896), relates the story as told him by Robert Browning: "One day early in 1847, their breakfast being over, Mrs. Browning went upstairs, while her husband stood at the window watching the street till the table should be cleared. He was presently aware of some one behind him, although the servant was gone. It was Mrs. Browning, who held him by the shoulder to prevent his turning to look at her, and at the same time pushed a packet of papers into the pocket of his coat. She told him to read that and to tear it up if he did not like it; and then she fled again to her own room." Recognizing their greatness, Browning felt that he dared not reserve to himself "the finest sonnets written in any language since Shakespeare's," and persuaded his wife to print them. He suggested the title *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (Mrs. Browning proposed *Sonnets translated from the Bosnian*) because one of his favorite poems in her works was *Catarina to Camöens*. *Catarina*, wrote Mrs. Browning in 1855 to Ruskin, who had admired the poem, "is his [i.e. Browning's] favourite among my poems for some personal fanciful reasons besides the rest."

The sonnets here selected are numbered in the series I, X, XIV, XX, XXVI, and XLIII, respectively.

EXAGGERATION, ADEQUACY, AND INSUFFICIENCY

These three sonnets were first published in *Poems*, 1844.

LIFE AND LOVE

First printed in Vol. II of *Poems*, 1850.

INCLUSIONS

First printed in Vol. II of *Poems*, 1850.

A DENIAL

First printed in the 1856 edition of the collected poems.

PROOF AND DISPROOF

First printed in the 1856 edition of the collected poems.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

First printed in the 1856 edition of the collected poems.

These five poems, like the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, are a commentary on the poetess's love story.

A DRAMA OF EXILE

(LINES 417-550; 1823-1907)

First printed in Vol. I of *Poems*, 1844. In her preface to the poems published in 1844 Miss Barrett herself refers to the subject of this poem thus: "My subject was the new and strange experience of the fallen humanity, as it went forth from Paradise into the wilderness; with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of originating the Fall to her offence,—appeared to me imperfectly apprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than a man." The poem, in fact, is an expression of the idea that the woman who brought sin into the world shall free the world from sin. The passages here selected are those that embody the woman's point of view and are therefore of special interest psychologically. The form approaches that of the Greek drama and consists of 2270 lines of blank verse interspersed in the Greek manner with many beautiful lyrics. She says herself, "I never wrote any poem with so much sense of pleasure in the composition, and so rapidly, with continuous flow—from fifty to a hundred lines a day, and quite in a glow of pleasure and impulse all through."

The scene of the drama is the outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with cloud, from the depth of which revolves a sword of fire self-moved. In the first passage Adam and Eve are in the extremity of the sword-glare, and in the second they have moved farther on, and a wild, open country is seen vaguely in the approaching night. The vision of Christ appears in the midst of the zodiac, which pales before the heavenly light.

119 82 sublimate : purify, idealize (properly a process in chemistry by which a solid substance is brought by heat into a state of vapor).

121 7 afflatus : an impelling mental force acting from within; hence religious, poetic, or oratorical inspiration.

121 20 dark : darkness (adjective for noun).

122 61 forfeit : deprived of by one's own act.

A VISION OF POETS

(LINES 214-423)

First printed in Vol. II of *Poems*, 1844. In this poem, of which only the portion that presents the great poets of the world is given here, Miss Barrett endeavored to indicate the necessary relations of genius to suffering and self-sacrifice. "I have attempted to express in this poem my view of the mission of the poet, of the self-abnegation implied in it, of the great work involved in it, . . . and of the obvious truth, above all, that if knowledge is power, suffering should be acceptable as a part of knowledge." It is written in stanzas, each one an octosyllabic triplet. Tennyson's *Two Voices* (1833) is in the same meter, but Miss Barrett in a letter to Robert Browning written in 1846 disclaims any debt to Tennyson, even for the "rhymetrical form" of the poem. Robert Browning greatly admired the passage selected here: "A line, a few words, and the man is there," was his criticism.

124 18 woof : the threads that run from side to side of a web.

124 19 architrave : in architecture that which rests immediately on a column, and supports those portions of the structure that are above it.

125 42 Sinai's Law. Cf. Exodus xix *et seq.*

126 77-78 Cf. Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn* :

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' — that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

127 81 cilix : the hair shirt worn by monks and ascetics next the skin as a means of mortifying the flesh without ostentation.

127 82 Homer, the earliest of Greek poets, lived probably 850-800 B.C. His name is inseparably connected with the world epics, the *Iliad* (the wrath of Achilles) and the *Odyssey* (the wanderings and return of Ulysses). It is probable that the poems are by several hands, and that when they were finished they were designated by the name of one of the authors — Homer. Cf. Tennyson, *The Palace of Art* :

And there the Ionian father of the rest;
A million wrinkles carved his skin;
A hundred winters snow'd upon his breast,
From cheek and throat and chin

127 97 Hesiod: a Greek poet; he flourished about the eighth century B.C. His chief poem, — which is poor poetry, — *Works and Days*, gives a valuable picture of the Greek village community of his time.

127 105 Sappho: the greatest poetess of antiquity; flourished about 596 B.C. Her lyrics are unsurpassed for depth of feeling, passion, and grace.

128 112 Aristophanes (448–388 B.C.): the greatest of Greek comedy writers. Only eleven of his fifty-four plays are extant. His four masterpieces are the *Acharnians*, the *Knights*, the *Clouds*, and the *Wasps*. Political satire is their prevailing characteristic. His style is so fine, so supple, and so varied that Plato is said to have written of him, “The Graces, seeking an imperishable sanctuary, found the soul of Aristophanes.”

128 116 Virgil (70–19 B.C.): the greatest of Latin poets; he was born near Mantua in Italy. He went to Rome and became one of the court poets of the Emperor Augustus, and owed much to his patron Mæcenas. His chief works are the *Eclogues*, pastorals modeled on those of Theocritus; the *Georgics*, which deal with the arts of agriculture; and the *Æneid*, one of the great epic poems of the world, dealing with the life of Æneas the Trojan, the legendary founder of the Roman nation. Cf. Tennyson’s beautiful lines *To Virgil*.

128 120 An allusion to a famous passage in the *Georgics* on the subject of bees. Cf. Tennyson, *To Virgil*:

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, *hive* and horse and herd.

128 121 Lucretius: a Latin poet; he lived in the first half of the first century B.C. His chief work is *De Natura Rerum* (Concerning the Nature of Things), a poem in which he denies all religious belief, setting up as the highest good a calm and tranquil mind, to be reached only through a materialistic philosophy. Cf. Tennyson’s poem, *Lucretius* (published 1868).

128 130 Ossian: a Gaelic heroic poet, said to have flourished in the third century. James Macpherson (1736–1796), the alleged translator of the Ossianic poems, probably arranged what he found and in the process occasionally combined legends of different periods. Macpherson’s *Ossian* had great influence on European literature.

129 136 Ariosto (1474–1533), one of the greatest poets of Italy, published the first edition of his *Orlando Furioso*, an epic of the adventures

of Roland that forms a continuation of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, in 1516.

129 139 Dante (1265-1321), the greatest of Italian poets and author of the *Divine Comedy*, one of the great epics of the world, was born at Florence, and died and was buried at Ravenna. He also wrote the *New Life*, a record in prose and verse of his love for Beatrice. The greater part of his life was spent as a political exile in wandering from city to city. Cf. Tennyson, *The Palace of Art*:

And there the world-worn Dante grasp'd his song,
And somewhat grimly smiled.

129 142 Alfieri (1749-1803): an Italian dramatist; he is the author of twenty-one tragedies and six comedies.

129 144 Boiardo (1434-1494): an Italian poet, whose fame rests on his long narrative poem, the *Orlando Innamorato* (1486), a recast of the old Charlemagne romances. Cf. note on Ariosto above.

129 145 Berni (*cir.* 1497-1535): an Italian poet, who recast Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* (see note to Boiardo above) in 1542. Berni's version is read in Italy in preference to the original.

129 148 Tasso (1544-1595): the author of the Italian epic *La Gerusalemme Liberata* (Jerusalem Delivered), an idealized story of the First Crusade, completed in 1575. The next year he began to show signs of mental disorder (induced, it is erroneously said, by a hopeless passion for the Princess Leonora d'Este, sister of his patron, the Duke of Ferrara), and was confined for seven years. During that period his poem was published without his permission or revision and was at once recognized as a great work. He was liberated in 1586. His story forms the subject of Goethe's play *Torquato Tasso*.

129 151 Racine (1639-1699): the great French dramatist; he is regarded in France as the greatest of all masters of tragic pathos. He is perhaps greater as a poet than as a dramatist.

129 151 Corneille (1606-1684): the greatest of French tragic dramatists. His first great tragedy was *The Cid*, and it was quickly followed by such fine works as *Horace*, *Cinna*, and *Polyeucte*.

130 165 Calderon (1600-1681): the greatest dramatist of Spain; he was the author of one hundred and eighteen dramas. Schlegel, the German critic, placed him as a fourth after Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare; but his fidelity to Spanish modes of thought and to the manners of his age and country must detract from his universal fame.

130 166 [Lope] **de Vega** (1562-1635): a most prolific Spanish writer for the stage; he produced some twelve hundred plays between 1588 and the year of his death. Both Molière and Calderon owe something to his work.

130 169 **Goethe** (1749-1832), the great German writer, was the author of plays, lyrics, prose tales, and scientific and critical works. *Faust* is his greatest drama, and *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is perhaps his greatest prose work. Cf. Matthew Arnold, *Memorial Verses* :

When Goethe's death was told, we said:
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.

And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, and insane distress,
And headlong fate, be happiness.

130 172 **Schiller** (1759-1805): the foremost of German dramatists, and one of the greatest dramatists of the world. The trilogy *Wallenstein* (1798-1799) ranks as his finest drama. From 1794 he was the friend of Goethe, and the correspondence of the two poets is of the highest interest.

130 181 **Cowley** (1618-1667) wrote verses of no great excellence, though very popular in his lifetime. His claim to the remembrance of posterity resides in his *Essays*, published in 1668.

130 184 **Drayton** (1563-1631): the greatest of the group sometimes called Patriotic Poets, including Warner and Daniel. Drayton's most considerable poem is *Poly-Olbion*, a poetical description of England, of the wonders of "Albion's glorious isle," published between 1612 and 1622.

130 184 **Browne** (1591-1645?): the author of *Britannia's Pastorals* (1613), a poem that tells in quiet, cheerful fashion of country sights and sounds.

131 187 **Marlowe** (1564-1593): the greatest English dramatist before Shakespeare, was the first to write fine blank verse. He is the author of four plays, — *Tamburlaine*, *Dr. Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Edward II*.

131 187 **Webster**. The work of John Webster, about whose life no facts are known, stands among the Elizabethan dramatists next to that of Shakespeare in grandeur of conception and execution. His two great tragedies are *Vittoria Corombona* (printed 1612) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (acted probably in 1618).

131 187 Fletcher (1579-1625) collaborated with Beaumont (1548-1616) in a dozen plays, the best of which are perhaps *Philaster* (acted before 1611) and the *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1611).

131 187 Ben Jonson (1573-1637): the chief of the Elizabethan dramatists after Shakespeare. His finest work is to be found in the four plays, *Every Man in his Humour* (1598), *Volpone, or the Fox* (1605), *Epicæne, or the Silent Woman* (1609), and *The Alchemist* (1610).

131 194 Keats (1795-1821): cf. Mrs. Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, Book I, lines 1003-1010:

By Keats's soul, the man who never stepped
In gradual progress like another man,
But, turning grandly on his central self,
Ensphered himself in twenty perfect years
And died, not young (the life of a long life
Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a tear
Upon the world's cold cheek to make it burn
For ever).

131 198 Rome-grave. Keats died at Rome and was buried in the Protestant cemetery there. Cf. Shelley, *Adonais*, stanzas 49-51.

AURORA LEIGH

First published in 1856. Mrs. Browning had long had in mind the idea of writing such a poem as this. In 1844, when *Lady Geraldine's Courtship* was published, she wrote: "I have a great fancy for writing some day a longer poem of a like class,—a poem comprehending the aspect and manners of modern life. . . . I do think that a true poetical novel—modern, and on the level of the manners of the day—might be as good a poem as any other, and much more popular besides." It had a very great success and embodies her highest convictions on life and art. Swinburne in an admiring criticism finds it full of noble passion and noble pathos. Walter Savage Landor declared that he had no idea any one in this age was capable of so much poetry. Ruskin called it "the noblest monument of English poetry," and Dante Gabriel Rossetti characterized it as "an astounding work," while Barry Cornwall exclaimed that it was "a hundred times over the finest poem ever written by a woman." It is a blank-verse poem of some 10,900 lines. The story deals with problems affecting men and women and their life in modern society, the intercourse between rich and poor, and the difficulties inseparable from quixotic attempts to amalgamate the two classes. Cf. note to *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*, p. 151.

A GIRL'S EDUCATION IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH
CENTURY

Note the irony of the description, true enough in 1856, but happily things soon began to improve. The first girls' high school in England was opened in 1872.

(BOOK I, LINES 392-455)

132 2 Athanasius (A.D. 296-373): one of the greatest of the fathers of the Church. He attended the Nicene Council in 325 and helped to establish the Nicene Creed, which opposed the beliefs of Arius and his followers.

132 3 The Articles: The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.

132 3 Tracts against the times. The *Tracts for the Times* expounded the views of the leaders of the religious revival which commenced in Oxford in 1833, and was led by John Keble and John Henry (afterwards Cardinal) Newman. A woman like Aurora's aunt would have been hostile to the movement.

132 9 Balzac (1799-1850): the great French novelist. His finest work, the series of novels known as *La Comédie Humaine*, aims at presenting a complete picture of modern civilization.

132 9 neologism: a new word or phrase, or new use of a word.

132 16-17 royal genealogies of Oviedo. Oviedo was a Spaniard, born at Madrid in 1847. He wrote a general history of the West Indies.

132 18 Burmese empire: the largest of all the provinces of the Indian Empire.

132 19 Chimborazo: a high peak of the Andes in Ecuador, South America.

132 22 Klagenfurt: the capital (since 1518) of the duchy of Carinthia in Austria.

132 29 Tophet: the symbol among the later Jews for hell and torment. It was the name of a valley near Jerusalem which was the scene of the worship of Moloch.

133 33 Cellarius (d. 1707): a learned German writer, sometime professor of history at the University of Halle.

ENGLAND

(BOOK I, LINES 578-645; 1068-1092)

135 35 Giotto (? 1276-1337). He inaugurated a new era in art by going to nature for his models. His finest work in painting (fresco) is to be seen in Padua in the Scrovegno Chapel in the old Arena of

that city. He was superintendent of works of the cathedral of Florence and designed the beautiful Campanile.

135 39 Vallombrosa: a celebrated Benedictine monastery situated among the Apennines in a valley surrounded with forests of fir, beech, and chestnut trees (hence the name "shady valley"). Cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I. 303.

Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades
High over-arched embower.

135 60 eyrie: the old spelling of *aery* or *aerie*, the nest of the eagle; hence, figuratively, any lofty habitation.

ITALY

JOURNEIVING TO ITALY THROUGH FRANCE

(BOOK VII, LINES 395-489)

138 38 Thor-hammers. The hammer of Thor, the god of thunder in Scandinavian mythology, had the property of returning to his hand after being hurled among the heathen Teutons. The sign of the hammer was analogous to that of the cross among the Christians.

138 53 Charlemagne (or Charles the Great) (742-814): a whole literature centers round the exploits of Charlemagne and of his generals.

139 76 Odyssean ghosts: an allusion to the eleventh book of Homer's *Odyssey*, in which is related the visit of Odysseus to Hades.

139 79-80 Tyrian belt of intense sea: the blue Mediterranean.

140 92 The Doria's long pale palace. The Palazzo Doria, the residence of the great Genoese family of the Dorias in the sixteenth century, is one of the principal buildings of Genoa.

FLORENCE

(BOOK VII, LINES 515-541)

140 2 Bellosguardo: a hill outside Florence whence there is a magnificent view of the beautiful city and its surroundings.

140 6 Mount Morello: a mountain near Florence.

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS

First published in 1851. The house in which the Brownings lived at Florence was called Casa Guidi and was situated near the Pitti Palace. In this poem we have the expression of Mrs. Browning's warm championship of the cause of

Italian liberty. It is, she tells us herself, in the advertisement to the first edition, "a simple story of personal impressions," and makes no pretence to "continuous narrative nor exposition of political philosophy." The politics of the poem have ceased to interest, but it will live by reason of its sincerity and enthusiasm, and its beautiful descriptions of Florence, its art treasures, and its surroundings. We give a few of such passages.

FLORENCE AND MICHEL ANGELO

(PART I, LINES 49-97)

141 25-26 **the sculptor's . . . Twilight.** These famous statues, generally considered to be Michel Angelo's greatest works in sculpture, are in the chapel of the Medici in the Church of San Lorenzo at Florence, on the tombs of Giuliano de' Medici, third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and of Lorenzo of Urbino, his grandson.

142 45 **Princely Urbino.** Lorenzo de' Medici (d. 1579) was made Duke of Urbino by his uncle, Pope Leo X.

SAVONAROLA

(PART I, LINES 250-287)

142 7 **Savonarola** (1452-1498). He became Prior of San Marco at Florence, and greatly influenced the citizens by his wonderful sermons, in which he sometimes questioned the authority of the pope. Finally he was burnt as a heretic in the Piazza della Signoria at Florence, where it has been a custom to strew with violets the pavement on which he suffered martyrdom, in grateful recognition of the anniversary. Cf. George Eliot's novel *Romola*, published in 1863.

143 24 **the Magnificent:** Lorenzo de' Medici.

THE CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA NOVELLA: CIMABUE

(PART I, LINES 320-403)

144 2 **Santa Maria Novella:** a Dominican church in Florence, begun about 1278. It contains fine frescoes by Ghirlandajo and Orcagna.

144 3-8 The story is told by Macchiavelli in his description of the plague at Florence.

144 9-10 **Orgagna . . . daemons** (1308?-1376?): long reputed the painter of the frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa representing the Triumph of Death, the Last Judgment, and Hell. He painted the frescoes

in the Strozzi Chapel of the Church of Santa Maria Novella at Florence. The name is commonly written Orcagna.

144 13-41 **Cimabue** (1240-?1302): the last of the old painters of Italy. His most important painting is the colossal Madonna preserved in the church of Santa Maria Novella at Florence. Charles of Anjou, in his passage through Florence, was permitted to see this picture while it was yet in the artist's studio. The populace followed the royal visitor, and from the universal delight and admiration, the quarter of the city in which the artist lived was called "Borgo Allegri." The picture was carried in triumph to the church and deposited there.

145 60 **Margheritone** (1216-1293): an Italian painter and sculptor and a man of note in his day. He is said (but little credence should be given to the story) to have died from despair at the success of the younger painters whose work was becoming known.

146 71 **Angelico** (1387-1455). The best known works of Fra Angelico are the frescoes in the monastery of San Marco at Florence.

146 76 **Raffaël** (1483-1520): Raffaello Sanzio, commonly called Raphael, is one of the greatest of Italian painters.

VALLOMBROSA

(PART I, LINES 1129-1164)

146 2 **beloved companion**: her husband, Robert Browning.

147 13 **Saint Gualbert's altar**: in the monastery of Vallombrosa. Saint Gualbert (d. 1073) was the founder of the order of Vallombrosa.

LOVE FOR ITALY

(PART I, LINES 1172-1184)

148 10 **Galileo** (1564-1642). Cf. *Paradise Lost*, I. 287.

. . . like the moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
At evening, from the top of Fesolè
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
Rivers, or mountains, in her spotty globe.

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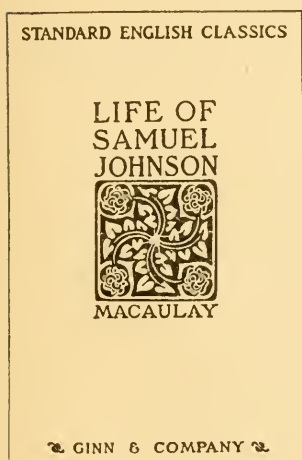


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