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SELECTIONS FROM  
BROWNING

WARREN



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*Robert Browning,*

ECLECTIC ENGLISH CLASSICS

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SELECTIONS FROM  
ROBERT BROWNING

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## INTRODUCTION

### BROWNING'S LIFE

ROBERT BROWNING was born May 7, 1812, in Southampton Street, Camberwell, a suburb of London on the south side of the Thames, which at that time combined the charms of city and country. From a nearby hill Browning could look down upon the great city of London spread out in its glory and its squalor, while in the other direction, but a short distance from his home, ran meadow, moor, and forest. At the present time London has spread southward and Southampton Street is an unsightly section of the city. The Browning house and its surroundings have entirely disappeared.

Browning's father, also named Robert, was a clerk in the Bank of England, holding increasingly important official positions. As he had a good income, he was able to indulge his taste for books and to spend his leisure hours in study. He was, indeed, a man of rare culture, with literary as well as artistic attainments. He wrote verse even more rapidly than his son, although he never published a single poem.

Browning's mother had a serene, lovable nature, and was deeply religious. To his early training received from her, Robert Browning's deep spiritual and religious feeling was probably due. To her, also, he owed his love of music, for she was an accomplished musician and often played to her children.

In such a home, surrounded by comforts and free from care, Robert Browning was brought up. He was able to devote himself to writing, without the necessity of working to earn his living. He himself fully appreciated what he owed to these circumstances. "My dear father," he said, "put me in a condition most favorable for the best work I was capable of. When

I think of the many authors who had to fight their way through all sorts of difficulties, I have no reason to be proud of my achievements." One who knew the family well and visited them frequently says, "Father, mother, only son, and only daughter formed a most united, harmonious, and intellectual family."

In the matter of education Browning's father allowed him full freedom of choice. His formal schooling was unusually meager — two short periods at private schools, some private tutoring, and two years at the London University. Most of his knowledge he owed to his father and to the well-stocked library from which he filled his mind with the curious and unusual learning found in such abundance in his later writings. His mother instructed him in music, and his love of art was strengthened by frequent visits to the Dulwich galleries near his home. His physical well-being was not neglected. He learned to fence, to box, to ride, and to dance.

Even in his boyhood the dramatic instinct was strong in Browning. In his school days he wrote several plays and formed a troupe of boy players for their presentation.

In the choice of a vocation, young Browning was as free and unhampered as he had been in his education. His father was willing that he should spend as long as he chose in preparation for his life work. He believed so strongly in the abilities and judgment of his son that he allowed him absolute freedom of selection of the particular line of art which he should study; for it seemed a foregone conclusion in the Browning family that Robert would be an artist in some direction. So it happened that at an early age young Browning began to prepare himself for the great work of writing poetry.

At this time the formal verse and prose of the eighteenth century were giving place to the liberty-loving spirit of the romantic movement. The young poets of the nineteenth century, — Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth — were breaking away from the conventions of the past and were seeking the freedom to feel, to think, to live, and to write as individuals.

Byron was the first of this modern group to interest young Browning, whose earliest boyish verses were written in imitation of Byron's style. A collection of these early poems was made by admiring friends, but fortunately it was destroyed. Browning's attention was turned from Byron to Shelley by his accidental discovery in a bookstall of a volume of Shelley's *Queen Mab*. His admiration for Shelley was an influential element in his poetic education.

Browning now entered upon the period of mental and spiritual struggle common to youth. In the outward aspects of life he remained obedient in all essentials to the good laws of use and custom. Underneath all his activities, however, ran a deep, restless current of revolt. He sought friendships outside of the home circle, at this time making the acquaintance of Alfred Donnett and of Eliza Flower, a charming woman nine years his senior. His friendships, his reading, and his aspirations all helped to broaden him. He caught the spirit of soaring toward higher aims, which dominated his later life and poetry.

In 1833 his first poem, *Pauline*, was published privately, through the generosity of his aunt, who paid for its publication; but no copies were sold. This poem, which deals with the dangers that beset the soul of a poet, is important because it reveals to us Browning's own imaginary experience. Such passages as the following show us what an ardent and impetuous temperament the boy poet possessed.

"I am made up of an intenses life  
Of a most clear idea of consciousness  
Of self, distinct from all its qualities,  
From all affections, passions, feelings, powers

. . . . .

And to a principle of restlessness  
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all."

In 1835 Browning's second poem, *Paracelsus*, was published. This, too, met with little success; but William Macready, the great actor of the time, was so much pleased with it that he

urged Browning to write a play for him. The play, *Strafford*, founded on the tragic life of the minister of Charles I was produced in 1837, but proved a failure.

In the following year Browning sailed for Italy, which was destined to be the land where most of his best work was to be done. As the ship on which he sailed was passing Gibraltar, a wave of homesickness or home pride, as Edward Dowden prefers to call it, prompted the poem *Home Thoughts, from Abroad*. A few days later Browning wrote in pencil on the flyleaf of a book one of his most spirited short poems, telling of the glory of motion on a horse, — "*How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*." In 1848 he completed *Sordello*, which was begun years before. This was the third of the series of somewhat long and detailed studies of the soul of a poet. Although it was not universally popular, it marked the beginning of Browning's success. During the remainder of his life he continued to write poems that met with increasing popular recognition and approval.

With his return to England began the most precious experience of Robert Browning's life. For some time he had been an enthusiastic admirer of the poetry of the distinguished Miss Barrett, who lived on Wimpole Street with her eccentric father and a younger sister. Miss Barrett was a delicate, bed-ridden woman, at this time in her fortieth year. Into the close-shuttered sickroom where her poems were written, a thin paper-covered volume called *Bells and Pomegranates* by Robert Browning found its way. It was not the first of Browning's writings that she had read and from the beginning she had been an ardent admirer of his poetry.

Their meeting, arranged after an interchange of letters, resulted in love at first sight and an almost immediate proposal of marriage. But there were difficulties in the way. In the first place, Elizabeth Barrett believed herself to be an incurable invalid, and in the second place, her father had forbidden her to marry. He was devotedly attached to his children and unwilling to share their love with others. In addition to these

two objections, Miss Barrett was six years Browning's senior. Browning, however, would recognize no barrier and after a brief struggle they were quietly married, in 1846, without the knowledge of Miss Barrett's father. Mr. Barrett never forgave his daughter for this action. He refused to see her and returned her letters unread.

Shortly after their marriage the Brownings left for Italy. There Mrs. Browning improved greatly in health, and a new life was opened up for the Brownings. They spent most of the time for the next fifteen years in Florence, in the famous old Casa Guidi, making occasional trips to various parts of Italy and to England, as well as to Paris. The story of their love and their life together is one of the most beautiful in history. They continued to work separately and to entertain a large and growing circle of distinguished literary friends.

An idea of the wonder of their love is expressed by Mrs. Browning in her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* published during their residence in Florence. Robert Browning's reply to these most exquisite of love poems is found in *One Word More*.

Mrs. Browning died in 1861. Not long after this bereavement Browning returned to London, where he made his home. Here he formed many new friendships. He went much into society and became a great favorite in the cultured and literary circle of the city. He was always the center of interest at any function that he attended.

At the time of his marriage the news was spread throughout London that the great poetess, Elizabeth Barrett, had married an obscure young literary man, Browning by name. As a matter of fact, during Mrs. Browning's lifetime her books sold by the thousands, while often her husband's works were in very small demand. This was a matter of great delight to Browning himself, for during their life together, each reveled in the genius of the other and considered the other's work as of higher merit. With the publication of *Dramatis Personae* in 1864, however, Browning was enthusiastically received by the entire English-speaking world. His former work, which had been scorned

and ridiculed by many at the time of publication, was revived and read with enjoyment. This fame, long delayed, was a joy tempered with sadness, because his wife, who had inspired his best work, had not lived to see its recognition.

During the twenty years after the death of his wife, Browning produced an unusual amount of poetry. In 1868 he began publishing his longest and most remarkable work, *The Ring and the Book*.

The last summer of his life was spent in Asolo, the place which he had visited on his first trip to Italy in 1838, the scene of his *Pippa Passes* and of other poems. In the autumn he went on a visit to his son in Venice. There he contracted a cold, which caused his death on Dec. 12, 1889. Just before his death he received word from London that his last volume of poems had been published, and that the newspapers were giving it high praise. "That is very gratifying," he said. These were almost his last words. He was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

### BROWNING'S POETRY

Browning's idea of the aim of poetry is well expressed in the following lines from his earliest poem, *Pauline*:

"And then thou saidst a perfect bard was one  
Who chronicled the stages of all life."

This is Browning's definition of a poet. There is no mention of skill in rime or rhythm, or in the use of beautiful language. The perfect bard is one who sees all and who has the mind and soul to paint all for his readers. It is not that the rhythm, the beauty of phrasing, the appeal to the senses, the lofty ideal are left out of Browning's poetry. They are all there, for they form a part of "all life"; but these elements of life and of poetry are not the essentials. The universal poet must see all and feel all in himself. The poet must be an observer, not merely a versifier.



In keeping with this belief, the larger part of Browning's own life was spent in the crowded city, where he could mingle with men, where he could walk the streets, visit the great market places and know the shopkeeper and the noble lady alike. Thus Browning's subject matter is taken from the very lives and souls of men and women. The trials, the agonies, the thrills, the perplexing problems of all men fill the storehouse of his mind. How faithfully he records these emotions can only be discovered by a reading of his poems.

Browning not only sets a high standard for the poet; but also for the reader. He insists that the reader shall exercise to the fullest extent his dramatic imagination, that he must visualize the actions which necessarily accompany the words of the characters. He must follow the gesture, the changing facial expression of the person addressed. He must appreciate the setting in which the characters are placed. His intelligence must be alert and wide awake so that he may understand and follow the rapidly changing situations and may grasp the full significance of ideas that are sometimes only partially expressed. Browning is abrupt. His lines often read as if he were carrying on a conversation with the reader. Although he always includes the vital words necessary to the thought, the transitions must often be supplied by the reader.

In both subject matter and manner, Browning's method of approach is *dramatic*. His characters are represented in moments of mental crises. *Andrea del Sarto* shows Andrea in a mood of scorching self-analysis. For the first time, he has come to the realization of his failure to attain the highest. He sees his love for Lucrezia, fruitless, tragic, self-devastating, in its true light. What is left for him? Nothing but a continuation of the life which he has helped to create. The student who is interested in things dramatic, however, must not always be looking for the thrilling situation, the exciting moment; for Browning's interest is in mind, in deliberation, rather than in action. A glance at some of the titles of his volumes serves to show how essentially dramatic was Browning's attitude of mind, not

only to the narrative but to the lyric as well. Various groups of poems were published under the following titles: *Dramatic Lyrics*, *Dramatic Romances*, *Dramatic Idyls*, and *Dramatis Personae*. His favorite method of character revelation was the dramatic monologue, in which the character speaks, unwittingly revealing his inner self. Even in the story poems, a speaker usually reveals his personality by his conversation.

With all Browning's ruthless prying and spying into the secrets of the soul, he remains the foremost optimist of the nineteenth century. He laughs to scorn the pessimist who rails at the failure and the uselessness of human endeavor. He frankly distrusts the cynic who will not admit that life with all its sordidness and sorrow is worth while. He feels that to offset man's frailties there is upward striving; to dispel his despondency, there is hope and belief in immortality, and, most important of all, love.

These two doctrines of love and belief in immortality are sung with triumphant and enduring praise throughout the poetry of Robert Browning. Love gives to the individual the greatest experiences of life. Love is the incentive for living and conquering obstacles. It prepares men for life, it enables them to bear loss and failure. Browning's own life illustrates this. His grief over the death of Mrs. Browning culminated in the accomplishment of his greatest work. Closely associated with this all-embracing love is his faith in personal immortality. He finds that this life is incomplete; that man's efforts and achievements are imperfect; and that nothing short of immortality will enable him to reach the goal of perfection.

The popularity of Browning's poetry has suffered in the past by his so-called obscurity and by his choice of unusual historical settings. He draws upon all periods of the world's history and interprets all civilizations. Men of great scholarship, however, have devoted themselves to the task of annotating and explaining away difficulties, so that the poems may be read with intelligence and appreciation. These men have done a great service. They have brought Browning's work from darkness

into light and have revealed the deep significance of his thoughts. To-day young people are discovering in Browning's poetry an inspiration to heroism and endeavor and achievement. They are finding him essentially the poet of youth and of enthusiasm.

The aim in this collection has been to select and group the poems with respect to their appeal to young students who are reading Browning for the first time. First come the rousing songs and the poems of stirring events, then descriptive poems, poems of love, character studies, and lastly reflective poems conveying the deeper spiritual truths of life. The volume closes with the *Epilogue to Asolando*, the last of Browning's poems, published on the day of his death.



## CAVALIER TUNES

(See Note, page 149)

### I. MARCHING ALONG

#### I

KENTISH Sir Byng <sup>1</sup> stood for his King,  
Bidding the crop-headed <sup>2</sup> Parliament swing;  
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop  
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,  
Marched them along, fifty-score strong, 5  
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

#### II

God for King Charles! Pym <sup>3</sup> and such carles <sup>4</sup>  
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous paroles <sup>5</sup>  
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,  
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup 10  
Till you're —

*(Chorus) Marching along, fifty-score strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.*

#### III

Hampden <sup>6</sup> to hell, and his obsequies' knell  
Serve Hazelrig, <sup>6</sup> Fiennes, <sup>6</sup> and young Harry <sup>6</sup> as well! 15

<sup>1</sup> An imaginary nobleman.

<sup>2</sup> The Puritans wore their hair close-cropped.

<sup>3</sup> A leader of the Parliamentary party.

<sup>4</sup> Churls.

<sup>5</sup> Speeches.

<sup>6</sup> Leaders of the Parliamentary party against King Charles I.

England, good cheer! Rupert <sup>1</sup> is near!  
 Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here,

*(Chorus) Marching along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?*

## IV

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls 20  
 To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!  
 Hold by the right, you double your might;  
 So, onward to Nottingham,<sup>2</sup> fresh for the fight,

*(Chorus) March we along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song! 25*

## II. GIVE A ROUSE

## I

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

## II

Who gave me the goods that went since? 5  
 Who raised me the house that sank once?  
 Who helped me to gold I spent since?  
 Who found me in wine you drank once?

*(Chorus) King Charles, and who'll do him right now?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now? 10  
 Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,  
 King Charles!*

<sup>1</sup> Prince of Bavaria, a nephew of Charles I, who went to England to fight in his cause.

<sup>2</sup> The place where Charles I raised his standard in 1642.

## III

To whom used my boy George quaff else,  
 By the old fool's side that begot him?  
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else, 15  
 While Noll's <sup>1</sup> damned troopers shot him?

*(Chorus) King Charles, and who'll do him right now?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?  
 Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,  
 King Charles!* 20

## III. BOOT AND SADDLE

## I

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!  
 Rescue my castle before the hot day  
 Brightens to blue from its silvery gray,

*(Chorus) Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

## II

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say; 5  
 Many's the friend there, will listen and pray  
 "God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay —

*(Chorus) Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"*

## III

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,  
 Flouts Castle Brancepeth <sup>2</sup> the Roundheads' <sup>3</sup> array. 10  
 Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

*(Chorus) Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"*

<sup>1</sup> The nickname of Oliver Cromwell, the leader of the Puritans.

<sup>2</sup> A castle to the rescue of which the Cavalier is riding. It is defended by his wife, Gertrude.

<sup>3</sup> A nickname applied to the Puritans because of their close-cropped hair.

## IV

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,  
 Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!  
 I've better counselors; what counsel they?" 15

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"*

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM  
 GHENT TO AIX"<sup>1</sup>

(See Note, page 149)

## I

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;  
 I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;  
 "Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;  
 "Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;  
 Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest, 5  
 And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

## II

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace  
 Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;  
 I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,  
 Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique<sup>2</sup> right, 10  
 Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,  
 Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

## III

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

<sup>1</sup> The places mentioned in the poem are all between Ghent in Belgium and Aix-la-Chapelle or Aachen, across the border in Germany.

<sup>2</sup> The pommel of the saddle.



At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see; 15  
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be;  
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,  
So Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

IV

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black every one, 20  
To stare through the mist at us galloping past,  
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,  
With resolute shoulders, each butting away  
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray;

V

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back 25  
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;  
And one eye's black intelligence, — ever that glance  
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!  
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon  
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on. 30

VI

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay spur!  
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,  
We'll remember at Aix" — for one heard the quick wheeze  
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,  
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank, 35  
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,  
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;  
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,  
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff; 40

Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,  
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

## VIII

"How they'll greet us!" — and all in a moment his roan  
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;  
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight 45  
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,<sup>1</sup>  
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,  
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

## IX

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,  
Shook off both my jack boots, let go belt and all, 50  
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
Called my Roland his pet name, my horse without peer;  
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,  
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

## X

And all I remember is, — friends flocking round 55  
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;  
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,  
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,  
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)  
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent. 60

<sup>1</sup> The city is assumed to have decided on self-destruction in preference to surrender.

## INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

(See Note, page 150)

## I

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon;  
 A mile or so away,  
 On a little mound, Napoleon  
 Stood on our storming-day;  
 With neck out-thrust, you fancy how, 5  
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
 As if to balance the prone brow  
 Oppressive with its mind.

## II

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans  
 That soar, to earth may fall, 10  
 Let once my army-leader Lannes <sup>1</sup>  
 Waver at yonder wall," —  
 Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
 A rider, bound on bound  
 Full-galloping; nor bridle drew 15  
 Until he reached the mound.

## III

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
 And held himself erect  
 By just his horse's mane, a boy;  
 You hardly could suspect — 20  
 (So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
 Scarce any blood came through)  
 You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
 Was all but shot in two.

<sup>1</sup> One of Napoleon's most distinguished marshals.

## IV

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace 25  
 We've got you Ratisbon!  
 The Marshal's in the market place,  
 And you'll be there anon  
 To see your flag-bird <sup>1</sup> flap his vans <sup>2</sup>  
 Where I, to heart's desire, 30  
 Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed; his plans  
 Soared up again like fire.

## V

The chief's eye flashed; but presently  
 Softened itself, as sheathes  
 A film the mother-eagle's eye 35  
 When her bruised eaglet breathes;  
 "You're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride  
 Touched to the quick, he said:  
 "I'm killed, Sire!" And his chief beside,  
 Smiling the boy fell dead. 40

## HERVÉ RIEL

(See Note, page 150)

## I

ON the sea and at the Hogue,<sup>3</sup> sixteen hundred ninety-two,  
 Did the English fight the French — woe to France!  
 And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the blue,  
 Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,  
 Came crowding ship on ship to St. Malo <sup>4</sup> on the Rance, 5  
 With the English fleet in view.

<sup>1</sup> Eagle.

<sup>2</sup> Wings.

<sup>3</sup> A cape on the coast of Normandy.

<sup>4</sup> A seaport at the mouth of the river Rance, on the northern coast of France.

## II

'Twas the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full chase;  
 First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Damfreville,<sup>1</sup>  
 Close on him fled, great and small,  
 Twenty-two good ships in all; 10  
 And they signaled to the place  
 "Help the winners of a race!  
 Get us guidance, give us harbor, take us quick — or,  
 quicker still,  
 Here's the English can and will!"

## III

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on board; 15  
 "Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass?"  
 laughed they;  
 "Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarred and  
 scored,  
 Shall the *Formidable* here with her twelve and eighty guns  
 Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow way,  
 Trust to enter where 'tis ticklish for a craft of twenty tons, 20  
 And with flow at full beside?  
 Now 'tis slackest ebb of tide.  
 Reach the mooring? Rather say,  
 While rock stands or water runs,  
 Not a ship will leave the bay!" 25

## IV

Then was called a council straight.  
 Brief and bitter the debate:  
 "Here's the English at our heels; would you have them take in  
 tow  
 All that's left us of the fleet, linked together stern and bow,  
 For a prize to Plymouth Sound? 30  
 Better run the ships aground!"

<sup>1</sup> The commander of the French squadron.

(Ended Damfreville his speech).

“Not a minute more to wait!

Let the Captains all and each

Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the beach! 35  
France must undergo her fate.

## V

“Give the word!” But no such word

Was ever spoke or heard;

For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these  
— A Captain? A Lieutenant? A Mate — first, second, third? 40  
No such man of mark, and meet

With his betters to compete;

But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville<sup>1</sup> for the fleet,  
A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.<sup>2</sup>

## VI

And, “What mockery or malice have we here?” cries Hervé Riel;

“Are you mad, you Malouins?<sup>3</sup> Are you cowards, fools, or  
rogues? 46

Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the soundings, tell  
On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell

’Twixt the offing here and Grève<sup>4</sup> where the river disem-  
bogues? <sup>5</sup>

Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying’s for? 50

Morn and eve, night and day,

Have I piloted your bay,

Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.<sup>6</sup>

Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse than fifty  
Hogues!

Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe me there’s  
a way! 55

<sup>1</sup> The French admiral.

<sup>2</sup> An inhabitant of Le Croisic, a fishing village in Brittany, where Hervé Riel dwelt.

<sup>3</sup> Inhabitants of St. Malo.

<sup>4</sup> The sands between St. Malo and Mont St. Michel.

<sup>5</sup> Empties.

<sup>6</sup> A fortified town on the mainland.

Only let me lead the line,  
 Have the biggest ship to steer,  
 Get this *Formidable* clear,  
 Make the others follow mine,  
 And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know well, 60  
 Right to Solidor past Grève,  
 And there lay them safe and sound;  
 And if one ship misbehave,  
 — Keel so much as grate the ground,  
 Why, I've nothing but my life, — here's my head!" cries Hervé  
 Riel. 65

## VII

Not a minute more to wait.  
 "Steer us in, then, small and great!  
 Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!" cried its chief.  
 Captains, give the sailor place!  
 He is Admiral, in brief. 70  
 Still the north wind, by God's grace!  
 See the noble fellow's face  
 As the big ship, with a bound,  
 Clears the entry like a hound,  
 Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide sea's profound!  
 See, safe through shoal and rock, 76  
 How they follow in a flock,  
 Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the ground,  
 Not a spar that comes to grief!  
 The peril, see, is past, 80  
 All are harbored to the last,  
 And just as Hervé Riel hollas "Anchor!" — sure as fate  
 Up the English come — too late!

## VIII

So, the storm subsides to calm;  
 They see the green trees wave 85  
 On the heights o'erlooking Grève.  
 Hearts that bled are stanch'd with balm.

"Just our rapture to enhance,  
 Let the English rake the bay,  
 Gnash their teeth and glare askance 90  
 As they cannonade away!  
 'Neath rampired <sup>1</sup> Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance!"  
 How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's countenance!  
 Out burst all with one accord,  
 "This is Paradise for Hell! 95  
 Let France, let France's King  
 Thank the man that did the thing!"  
 What a shout, and all one word,  
 "Hervé Riel!"  
 As he stepped in front once more, 100  
 Not a symptom of surprise  
 In the frank blue Breton eyes,  
 Just the same man as before.

## IX

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,  
 I must speak out at the end, 105  
 Though I find the speaking hard.  
 Praise is deeper than the lips;  
 You have saved the King his ships,  
 You must name your own reward.  
 'Faith, our sun was near eclipse! 110  
 Demand whate'er you will,  
 France remains your debtor still.  
 Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not Damfreville."

## X

Then a beam of fun outbroke  
 On the bearded mouth that spoke, 115  
 As the honest heart laughed through  
 Those frank eyes of Breton blue.

<sup>1</sup> Ramparted.



"Since I needs must say my say,  
 Since on board the duty's done,  
 And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it but a run? —  
 Since 'tis ask and have, I may — 121  
 Since the others go ashore —  
 Come! A good whole holiday!  
 Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle Aurore!"  
 That he asked and that he got, — nothing more. 125

## XI

Name and deed alike are lost;  
 Not a pillar nor a post  
 In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;  
 Not a head in white and black  
 On a single fishing-smack, 130  
 In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack  
 All that France saved from the fight whence England bore the  
 bell.<sup>1</sup>  
 Go to Paris; rank on rank  
 Search the heroes flung pell-mell  
 On the Louvre,<sup>2</sup> face and flank! 135  
 You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé Riel.  
 So, for better and for worse,  
 Hervé Riel, accept my verse!  
 In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more  
 Save the squadron, honor France, love thy wife the Belle  
 Aurore! 140

<sup>1</sup> Won the victory.

<sup>2</sup> The famous art gallery of Paris, where the heroes' portraits are displayed.

## PHEIDIPPIDES

Χαίρετε, νικῶμεν<sup>1</sup>

(See Note, page 151)

FIRST I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock!  
 Gods of my birthplace, demons<sup>2</sup> and heroes, honor to all!  
 Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, coequal in praise  
 — Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the aegis and spear!<sup>3</sup>  
 Also, ye of the bow and the buskin,<sup>4</sup> praised be your peer, 5  
 Now, henceforth and forever, — O latest to whom I upraise  
 Hand and heart and voice! For Athens, leave pasture and flock!  
 Present to help, potent to save, Pan — patron I call!

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix,<sup>5</sup> see, I return!  
 See, 'tis myself here standing alive, no specter that speaks! 10  
 Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me, Athens and  
 you,  
 “Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for aid!  
 Persia has come, we are here, where is She?” Your command  
 I obeyed,  
 Ran and raced; like stubble, some field which a fire runs through,  
 Was the space between city and city; two days, two nights  
 did I burn 15  
 Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.

Into their midst I broke; breath served but for “Persia has come!  
 Persia bids Athens proffer slaves’-tribute, water and earth.<sup>6</sup>  
 Razed to the ground is Eretria — but Athens, shall Athens sink,  
 Drop into dust and die — the flower of Hellas utterly die, 20

<sup>1</sup> “Rejoice, we conquer.”<sup>2</sup> Lesser divinities, guardian spirits.<sup>3</sup> The aegis, or shield, and the spear were the emblems of Athene.<sup>4</sup> Artemis was represented with a bow and with buskined legs, as a hunter.<sup>5</sup> The grasshopper, an Athenian symbol of the right of Athens to the territory which she occupied.<sup>6</sup> Symbols of submission.

Die, with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the stupid, the  
stander-by?

Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you stretch o'er  
destruction's brink?

How, — when? No care for my limbs! — there's lightning in  
all and some —

Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it birth!"

O my Athens — Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond? 25  
Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,  
Malice, — each eye of her gave me its glitter of gratified hate!  
Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for excuses. I stood  
Quivering, — the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an inch  
from dry wood.

"Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they debate? 30  
Thunder, thou Zeus! Athene, are Spartans a quarry beyond  
Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them 'Ye  
must'!"

No bolt launched from Olumpus! Lo, their answer at last!  
"Has Persia come, — does Athens ask aid, — may Sparta be-  
friend?

Nowise precipitate judgment — too weighty the issue at stake! 35  
Count we no time lost time which lags through respect to the  
gods!

Ponder that precept of old, 'No warfare, whatever the odds  
In your favor, so long as the moon, half-orbed, is unable to take  
Full-circle her state in the sky!' Already she rounds to it fast.  
Athens must wait, patient as we — who judgment suspend." 40

Athens, — except for that sparkle, — thy name, I had mold-  
ered to ash!

That sent a blaze through my blood; off, off and away was I  
back;

Not one word to waste, one look to lose on the false and the vile!

Yet "O gods of my land!" I cried, as each hillock and plain,  
 Wood and stream, I knew, I named, rushing past them again, 45  
 "Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honors we paid you  
 erewhile?

Vain was the filleted victim,<sup>1</sup> the fulsome libation!<sup>2</sup> Too rash  
 Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack!

"Oak and olive and bay,<sup>3</sup> — I bid you cease to enwreath  
 Brows made bold by your leaf! Fade at the Persian's foot, 50  
 You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn a  
 slave!

Rather I hail thee, Parnes,<sup>4</sup> — trust to thy wild waste tract!  
 Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain! What matter if slacked  
 My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to cave  
 No deity deigns to drape with verdure? — at least I can breathe,  
 Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the mute!" 56

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes' ridge;  
 Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a bar  
 Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the way.  
 Right! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure across. 60  
 "Where I could enter, there I depart by! Night in the fosse?<sup>5</sup>  
 Athens to aid? Though the dive were through Erebos,<sup>6</sup> thus  
 I obey —

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

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he — majestic Pan! 65  
 Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned his hoof;

<sup>1</sup> The animals offered up for sacrifice were usually adorned with bands or fillets of ribbon.

<sup>2</sup> The abundant offering of wine or oil made to the gods.

<sup>3</sup> Wreaths of oak for Zeus, of olive for Athene, and of bay for Phœbus Apollo.

<sup>4</sup> Mountains west of Athens.

<sup>5</sup> Ditch.

<sup>6</sup> Hades.

All the great god was good in the eyes grave-kindly — the curl  
 Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal's awe  
 As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs <sup>1</sup> grand I saw.  
 "Halt, Pheidippides!" — halt I did, my brain of a whirl — 70  
 "Hither to me! Why pale in my presence?" he gracious began;  
 "How is it, — Athens, only in Hellas, holds me aloof?

"Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no feast!  
 Wherefore? Than I what godship to Athens more helpful of old?  
 Ay, and still, and forever her friend! Test Pan, trust me! 75  
 Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have faith  
 In the temples and tombs! Go, say to Athens, 'The Goat-God  
 saith:

When Persia — so much as strews not the soil — is cast in  
 the sea,  
 Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your most and  
 least,  
 Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh,<sup>2</sup> made one cause with the free  
 and the bold!' 80

"Say Pan saith: 'Let this, foreshowing the place, be the  
 pledge!'"

(Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear  
 — Fennel <sup>3</sup> — I grasped it a-tremble with dew — whatever it  
 bode)

"While, as for thee" . . . But enough! He was gone. If I  
 ran hitherto —

Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer, but flew. 85  
 Parnes to Athens — earth no more, the air was my road;  
 Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the razor's  
 edge!

Pan for Athens, Pan for me! I too have a guerdon rare!

<sup>1</sup> Pan was represented as having the legs of a goat.

<sup>2</sup> Thigh encased in armor.

<sup>3</sup> The Greek name for *fennel* was *Marathon*; hence the sprig was prophetic of the battlefield where the victory was won.

Then spoke Miltiades.<sup>1</sup> "And thee, best runner of Greece,  
Whose limbs did duty indeed, — what gift is promised thy-  
self? 90

Tell it us straightway, — Athens the mother demands of her  
son!"

Rosily blushed the youth; he paused; but, lifting at length  
His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered the rest of  
his strength

Into the utterance — "Pan spoke thus: 'For what thou hast  
done

Count on a worthy reward! Henceforth be allowed thee re-  
lease 95

From the racer's toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in pelf!'

"I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to my mind!  
Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel may  
grow, —

Pound — Pan helping us — Persia to dust, and, under the deep,  
Whelm her away forever; and then, — no Athens to save, — 100  
Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the brave, —  
Hie to my house and home; and, when my children shall creep  
Close to my knees, — recount how the God was awful yet kind,  
Promised their sire reward to the full — rewarding him — so!"

Unforeseeing one! Yes, he fought on the Marathon day. 105

So, when Persia was dust, all cried "To Acropolis!"<sup>2</sup>

Run, Pheidippides, one race more! the meed is thy due!

'Athens is saved, thank Pan,' go shout!" He flung down his  
shield,

Ran like fire once more; and the space 'twixt the fennel field  
And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs through,  
Till in he broke: "Rejoice, we conquer!" Like wine through  
clay, 111

Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died — the bliss!

<sup>1</sup>The Greek general at the battle of Marathon. <sup>2</sup>The citadel of Athens.

So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of salute  
 Is still "Rejoice!" — his word which brought rejoicing indeed.  
 So is Pheidippides happy forever, — the noble strong man 115  
 Who could race like a god, bear the face of a god, whom a god  
 loved so well;

He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was suffered  
 to tell

Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he began,  
 So to end gloriously — once to shout, thereafter be mute:

"Athens is saved!" — Pheidippides dies in the shout for his  
 meed. 120

## TRAY

(See Note, page 152)

## I

SING me a hero! Quench my thirst  
 Of soul, ye bards!

Quoth Bard the first:

"Sir Olaf, the good knight, did don  
 His helm and eke his habergeon" . . .  
 Sir Olaf and his bard ——!

5

## II

"That sin-scathed brow" (quoth Bard the second),  
 "That eye wide ope as though Fate beckoned  
 My hero to some steep, beneath  
 Which precipice smiled tempting death" . . .  
 You too without your host have reckoned!

10

## III

"A beggar-child" (let's hear this third!)  
 "Sat on a quay's edge; like a bird  
 Sang to herself at careless play,  
 And fell into the stream. 'Dismay!  
 Help, you the standers-by!' None stirred.

15

## IV

"Bystanders reason, think of wives  
 And children ere they risk their lives.  
 Over the balustrade has bounced  
 A mere instinctive dog, and pounced  
 Plumb on the prize. 'How well he dives!

20

## V

"Up he comes with the child, see, tight  
 In mouth, alive too, clutched from quite  
 A depth of ten feet — twelve, I bet!  
 Good dog! What, off again? There's yet  
 Another child to save? All right!

25

## VI

"How strange we saw no other fall!  
 It's instinct in the animal.  
 Good dog! But he's a long while under;  
 If he got drowned I should not wonder —  
 Strong current, that against the wall!

30

## VII

"Here he comes, holds in mouth this time  
 What may the thing be? Well, that's prime!  
 Now, did you ever? Reason reigns  
 In man alone, since all Tray's pains  
 Have fished — the child's doll from the slime!'

35

## VIII

"And so, amid the laughter gay,  
 Trotted my hero off, — old Tray, —  
 Till somebody, prerogated  
 With reason, reasoned: 'Why he dived,  
 His brain would show us, I should say.

40



## IX

““John, go and catch — or, if needs be,  
 Purchase — that animal for me!  
 By vivisection, at expense  
 Of half-an-hour and eighteenpence,  
 How brain secretes dog’s soul, we’ll see!”” 45

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

## A CHILD’S STORY

*Written for, and inscribed to, W. M. the Younger*

(See Note, page 152)

## I

HAMELIN Town’s in Brunswick,  
 By famous Hanover city;  
 The river Weser, deep and wide,  
 Washes its wall on the southern side;  
 A pleasanter spot you never spied; 5  
 But, when begins my ditty,  
 Almost five hundred years ago,  
 To see the townsfolk suffer so  
 From vermin, was a pity.

## II

Rats! 10  
 They fought the dogs and killed the cats,  
 And bit the babies in the cradles,  
 And ate the cheeses out of the vats,  
 And licked the soup from the cooks’ own ladles,  
 Split open the kegs of salted sprats, 15  
 Made nests inside men’s Sunday hats,

And even spoiled the women's chats  
 By drowning their speaking  
 With shrieking and squeaking  
 In fifty different sharps and flats.

20

## III

At last the people in a body  
 To the Town Hall came flocking.  
 "'Tis clear," cried they, "our Mayor's a noddy;  
 And as for our Corporation — shocking  
 To think we buy gowns lined with ermine  
 For dolts that can't or won't determine  
 What's best to rid us of our vermin!  
 You hope, because you're old and obese,  
 To find in the furry civic robe ease?  
 Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking  
 To find the remedy we're lacking,  
 Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!"  
 At this the Mayor and Corporation  
 Quaked with a mighty consternation.

25

30

## IV

An hour they sat in council;  
 At length the Mayor broke silence:  
 "For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell,  
 I wish I were a mile hence!  
 It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—  
 I'm sure my poor head aches again,  
 I've scratched it so, and all in vain.  
 Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"  
 Just as he said this, what should hap  
 At the chamber-door but a gentle tap?  
 "Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?"  
 (With the Corporation as he sat,  
 Looking little though wondrous fat;

35

40

45

Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister  
 Than a too-long-opened oyster,  
 Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous 50  
 For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)  
 "Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?  
 Anything like the sound of a rat  
 Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

## V

"Come in!" — the Mayor cried, looking bigger; 55  
 And in did come the strangest figure!  
 His queer long coat from heel to head  
 Was half of yellow and half of red,  
 And he himself was tall and thin,  
 With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin, 60  
 And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,  
 No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,  
 But lips where smiles went out and in;  
 There was no guessing his kith and kin;  
 And nobody could enough admire 65  
 The tall man and his quaint attire.  
 Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,  
 Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,  
 Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!"

## VI

He advanced to the council-table; 70  
 And, "Please your honors," said he, "I'm able,  
 By means of a secret charm, to draw  
 All creatures living beneath the sun,  
 That creep or swim or fly or run,  
 After me so as you never saw! 75  
 And I chiefly use my charm  
 On creatures that do people harm,  
 The mole and toad and newt and viper;  
 And people call me the Pied Piper."

(And here they noticed round his neck  
 A scarf of red and yellow stripe, 80  
 To match with his coat of the self-same check;  
 And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;  
 And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying  
 As if impatient to be playing 85  
 Upon this pipe, as low it dangled  
 Over his vesture so old-fangled.)  
 "Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,  
 In Tartary I freed the Cham,<sup>1</sup>  
 Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats; 90  
 I eased in Asia the Nizam<sup>2</sup>  
 Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats;  
 And as for what your brain bewilders,  
 If I can rid your town of rats  
 Will you give me a thousand guilders?" 95  
 "One? fifty thousand!" — was the exclamation  
 Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

## VII

Into the street the Piper stepped,  
 Smiling first a little smile,  
 As if he knew what magic slept 100  
 In his quiet pipe the while;  
 Then, like a musical adept,  
 To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,  
 And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,  
 Like a candle flame where salt is sprinkled; 105  
 And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,  
 You heard as if an army muttered;  
 And the muttering grew to a grumbling;  
 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;

<sup>1</sup> The title of the ruler of Tartary, in Central Asia, usually spelled *Khan*.

<sup>2</sup> The title of the ruler of Hyderabad in India.

And out of the houses the rats came tumbling. 110  
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,  
 Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,  
 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,  
 Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,  
 Cocking tails and pricking whiskers, 115  
 Families by tens and dozens,  
 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives —  
 Followed the Piper for their lives.  
 From street to street he piped advancing,  
 And step for step they followed dancing, 120  
 Until they came to the river Weser,  
 Wherein all plunged and perished!  
 — Save one who, stout as Julius Caesar,<sup>1</sup>  
 Swam across and lived to carry  
 (As he, the manuscript he cherished) 125  
 To Rat-land home his commentary.  
 Which was, “At the first shrill notes of the pipe,  
 I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,  
 And putting apples, wondrous ripe,  
 Into a cider press’s gripe; 130  
 And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,  
 And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,  
 And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,  
 And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks;  
 And it seemed as if a voice 135  
 (Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery  
 Is breathed) called out, ‘Oh rats, rejoice!  
 The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!  
 So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,<sup>2</sup>  
 Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!’ 140  
 And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,  
 All ready staved, like a great sun shone  
 Glorious scarce an inch before me,

<sup>1</sup> See Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, Act I, scene II, lines 100–102.

<sup>2</sup> Refreshment.

Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore me!'  
— I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

145

## VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people  
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.  
"Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,  
Poke out the nests and block up the holes!  
Consult with carpenters and builders, 150  
And leave in our town not even a trace  
Of the rats!" — when suddenly, up the face  
Of the Piper perked in the market place,  
With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

## IX

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue; 155  
So did the Corporation too.  
For council dinners made rare havoc  
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;  
And half the money would replenish  
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish. 160  
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow  
With a gypsy coat of red and yellow!  
"Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,  
"Our business was done at the river's brink;  
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink, 165  
And what's dead can't come to life, I think.  
So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink  
From the duty of giving you something for drink,  
And a matter of money to put in your poke;  
But as for the guilders, what we spoke 170  
Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.  
Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.  
A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

## X

The Piper's face fell and he cried,  
 "No trifling! I can't wait, beside! 175  
 I've promised to visit by dinner time  
 Bagdat, and accept the prime <sup>1</sup>  
 Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,  
 For having left, in the Caliph's <sup>2</sup> kitchen,  
 Of a nest of scorpions no survivor; 180  
 With him I proved no bargain driver,  
 With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!  
 And folks who put me in a passion  
 May find me pipe after another fashion."

## XI

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d' ye think I brook 185  
 Being worse treated than a Cook?  
 Insulted by a lazy ribald  
 With idle pipe and vesture piebald?  
 You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,  
 Blow your pipe there till you burst!" 190

## XII

Once more he stepped into the street,  
 And to his lips again  
 Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;  
 And ere he blew three notes (such sweet  
 Soft notes as yet musician's cunning 195  
 Never gave the enraptured air)  
 There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling  
 Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling;  
 Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,  
 Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering, 200  
 And, like fowls in a farmyard when barley is scattering,  
 Out came the children running.

<sup>1</sup> The first portion.<sup>2</sup> Sultan of Turkey.

All the little boys and girls,  
 With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,  
 And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls, 205  
 Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after  
 The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

## XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood  
 As if they were changed into blocks of wood,  
 Unable to move a step, or cry 210  
 To the children merrily skipping by,  
 — Could only follow with the eye  
 That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.  
 But how the Mayor was on the rack,  
 And the wretched Council's bosoms beat, 215  
 As the Piper turned from the High Street  
 To where the Weser rolled its waters  
 Right in the way of their sons and daughters!  
 However, he turned from South to West,  
 And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed, 220  
 And after him the children pressed;  
 Great was the joy in every breast.  
 "He never can cross that mighty top!  
 He's forced to let the piping drop,  
 And we shall see our children stop!" 225  
 When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,  
 A wondrous portal opened wide,  
 As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;  
 And the Piper advanced and the children followed,  
 And when all were in to the very last, 230  
 The door in the mountain-side shut fast.  
 Did I say all? No! One was lame,  
 And could not dance the whole of the way;  
 And in after years, if you would blame  
 His sadness, he was used to say, — 235



"It's dull in our town since my playmates left!  
 I can't forget that I'm bereft  
 Of all the pleasant sights they see,  
 Which the Piper also promised me.  
 For he led us, he said, to a joyous land, 240  
 Joining the town and just at hand,  
 Where waters gushed and fruit trees grew  
 And flowers put forth a fairer hue,  
 And everything was strange and new;  
 The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here, 245  
 And their dogs outran our fallow deer,  
 And honeybees had lost their stings,  
 And horses were born with eagles' wings;  
 And just as I became assured  
 My lame foot would be speedily cured, 250  
 The music stopped and I stood still,  
 And found myself outside the hill,  
 Left alone against my will,  
 To go now limping as before,  
 And never hear of that country more!" 255

## XIV

Alas, alas for Hamelin!

There came into many a burgher's pate  
 A text which says that heaven's gate  
 Opes to the rich at as easy rate  
 As the needle's eye takes a camel in! 260  
 The Mayor sent East, West, North, and South,  
 To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,  
 Wherever it was men's lot to find him,  
 Silver and gold to his heart's content,  
 If he'd only return the way he went, 265  
 And bring the children behind him.  
 But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavor,  
 And Piper and dancers were gone forever,  
 They made a decree that lawyers never

Should think their records dated duly 270  
 If, after the day of the month and year,  
 These words did not as well appear,  
 "And so long after what happened here  
 On the Twenty-second of July,  
 Thirteen hundred and seventy-six;" 275  
 And the better in memory to fix  
 The place of the children's last retreat,  
 They called it the Pied Piper's Street —  
 Where any one playing on pipe or tabor  
 Was sure for the future to lose his labor. 280  
 Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern  
 To shock with mirth a street so solemn;  
 But opposite the place of the cavern  
 They wrote the story on a column,  
 And on the great church window painted 285  
 The same, to make the world acquainted  
 How their children were stolen away,  
 And there it stands to this very day.  
 And I must not omit to say  
 That in Transylvania there's a tribe 290  
 Of alien people who ascribe  
 The outlandish ways and dress  
 On which their neighbors lay such stress,  
 To their fathers and mothers having risen  
 Out of some subterraneous prison 295  
 Into which they were trapped  
 Long time ago in a mighty band  
 Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,  
 But how or why, they don't understand.

## XV

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers 300  
 Of scores out with all men — especially pipers!  
 And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from mice,  
 If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise!

## THE TWINS

*"Give" and "It-shall-be-given-unto-you"*

(See Note, page 152)

## I

GRAND rough old Martin Luther  
 Bloomed fables — flowers on furze,  
 The better the uncouth.  
 Do roses stick like burrs?

## II

A beggar asked an alms 5  
 One day at an abbey door,  
 Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,  
 The Abbot replied, "We're poor!"

## III

"Poor, who had plenty once,  
 When gifts fell thick as rain; 10  
 But they give us naught, for the nonce,  
 And how should we give again?"

## IV

Then the beggar, "See your sins!  
 Of old, unless I err,  
 Ye had brothers for inmates, twins, 15  
 Date and Dabitur.

## V

"While Date was in good case  
 Dabitur flourished too;  
 For Dabitur's lenten face  
 No wonder if Date rue. 20

## VI

“Would ye retrieve the one?  
 Try and make plump the other!  
 When Date’s penance is done,  
 Dabitur helps his brother.

## VII

“Only, beware relapse!”  
 The Abbot hung his head.  
 This beggar might be perhaps  
 An angel, Luther said.

25

## THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

(See Note, page 153)

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

Then to his poor trade he turned,  
 Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he labored, long and well;  
 O’er his work the boy’s curls fell.

5

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

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

10

Said Blaise, the listening monk, “Well done;  
 I doubt not thou art heard, my son;

“As well as if thy voice to-day  
 Were praising God, the Pope’s great way.

“This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome  
Praises God from Peter’s dome.”

15

Said Theocrite, “Would God that I  
Might praise Him, that great way, and die!”

Night passed, day shone,  
And Theocrite was gone.

20

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

God said in heaven, “Nor day nor night  
Now brings the voice of my delight.”

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

25

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

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

30

And from a boy, to youth he grew;  
The man put off the stripling’s hue.

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

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

35

(He did God’s will; to him, all one  
If on the earth or in the sun.)

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

40

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

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

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

45

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

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

50

With his holy vestments dight,<sup>1</sup>  
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite;

And all his past career  
Came back upon him clear,

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

55

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

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

60

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

<sup>1</sup> Clothed.

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

"Vainly I left my angel sphere,  
Vain was thy dream of many a year. 65

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it dropped —  
Creation's chorus stopped!

"Go back and praise again  
The early way, while I remain. 70

"With that weak voice of our disdain,  
Take up creation's pausing strain.

Back to the cell and poor employ;  
Resume the craftsman and the boy!"

Theocrite grew old at home; 75  
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

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

## THE PATRIOT

*An Old Story*

(See Note, page 153)

### I

It was roses, roses all the way,

With myrtle mixed in my path like mad;

The house roofs seemed to heave and sway,

The church spires flamed, such flags they had,

A year ago on this very day. 5

## II

The air broke into a mist with bells,  
 The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.  
 Had I said, "Good folk, mere noise repels —  
 But give me your sun from yonder skies!"  
 They had answered, "And afterward, what else?" 10

## III

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun  
 To give it my loving friends to keep!  
 Naught man could do, have I left undone;  
 And you see my harvest, what I reap  
 This very day, now a year is run. 15

## IV

There's nobody on the housetops now —  
 Just a palsied few at the windows set;  
 For the best of the sight is, all allow,  
 At the Shambles' Gate — or, better yet,  
 By the very scaffold's foot, I trow. 20

## V

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,  
 A rope cuts both my wrists behind;  
 And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,  
 For they fling, whoever has a mind,  
 Stones at me for my year's misdeeds. 25

## VI

Thus I entered, and thus I go!  
 In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.  
 "Paid by the world, what dost thou owe  
 Me?" — God might question; now instead,  
 'Tis God shall repay; I am safer so. 30



## MY LAST DUCHESS

*Ferrara*<sup>1</sup>

(See Note, page 153)

THAT'S my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
 Looking as if she were alive. I call  
 That piece a wonder, now. Frà Pandolf's<sup>2</sup> hands  
 Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
 Will't please you sit and look at her? I said 5  
 "Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read  
 Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
 The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
 But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
 The curtain I have drawn for you, but I) 10  
 And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
 How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
 Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
 Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek; perhaps 15  
 Frà Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps  
 Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint  
 Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
 Half-flush that dies along her throat." Such stuff  
 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough 20  
 For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
 A heart — how shall I say? — too soon made glad,  
 Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
 Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast, 25  
 The dropping of the daylight in the West,

<sup>1</sup> A city on the Adriatic, whose dukes were noted patrons of art.<sup>2</sup> An imaginary artist.

The bough of cherries some officious fool  
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
 She rode with round the terrace — all and each  
 Would draw from her alike the approving speech, 30  
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men, — good! but thanked  
 Somehow — I know not how — as if she ranked  
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill 35  
 In speech — (which I have not) — to make your will  
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this  
 Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
 Or there exceed the mark" — and if she let  
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set 40  
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
 — E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
 Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands <sup>1</sup>; 45  
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
 The company below, then. I repeat,  
 The Count your master's known munificence  
 Is ample warrant that no just pretense 50  
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune <sup>2</sup> though,  
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity, 55  
 Which Claus of Innsbruck <sup>3</sup> cast in bronze for me!

<sup>1</sup> When questioned as to the nature of the "commands" Browning usually evaded an answer; but once he said "I meant he had her put to death."

<sup>2</sup> A work of art to which the duke calls attention.

<sup>3</sup> An imaginary artist.

## UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY

*As Distinguished by an Italian Person of Quality*

(See Note, page 154)

## I

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

## II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!  
 There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast; 5  
 While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

## III

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

## IV

But the city, oh the city — the square with the houses! Why?  
 They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take  
     the eye! 12  
 Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;  
 You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries  
     by;  
 Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets  
     high; 15  
 And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

## V

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,  
 'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off  
 the heights;  
 You've the brown plowed land before, where the oxen steam  
 and wheeze,  
 And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray olive trees. 20

## VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at once;  
 In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.  
 'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers  
 well,  
 The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell  
 Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and  
 sell. 25

## VII

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and  
 splash!  
 In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foambows  
 flash  
 On the horses with curling fish tails, that prance and paddle  
 and pash  
 Round the lady atop in her conch — fifty gazers do not abash,  
 Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a  
 sort of sash. 30

## VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you linger,  
 Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted forefinger.  
 Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and mingle,  
 Or thrud the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.  
 Late August or early September, the stunning cicala <sup>1</sup> is shrill, 35

<sup>1</sup> Locust.

And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs  
on the hill.  
Enough of the seasons, — I spare you the months of the fever  
and chill.

## IX

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells  
begin;  
No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in.  
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin. 40  
By and by there's the traveling doctor gives pills, lets blood,  
draws teeth;  
Or the Pulcinello trumpet <sup>1</sup> breaks up the market beneath.  
At the post office such a scene-picture — the new play, piping hot!  
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were  
shot.  
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes, 45  
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law  
of the Duke's!  
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-and-so,  
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and Cicero,<sup>2</sup>  
“And moreover,” (the sonnet goes riming,) “the skirts of Saint  
Paul has reached,<sup>3</sup>  
Having preached us those six Lent lectures more unctuous than  
ever he preached.” 50  
Noon strikes, — here sweeps the procession! <sup>4</sup> our Lady borne  
smiling and smart  
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords<sup>4</sup> stuck  
in her heart!  
*Bang-whang-whang* goes the drum, *too!le-te-tootle* the fife;  
No keeping one's haunches still; it's the greatest pleasure in life.

<sup>1</sup> Punch and Judy show announced by a trumpet.

<sup>2</sup> Who combines the qualities of the great writers, Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch, of the theologian St. Jerome, and of Cicero, the famous orator.

<sup>3</sup> Is almost as great a preacher as St. Paul.

<sup>4</sup> The procession bearing the image of the Virgin through the streets on Holy Thursday. The seven swords represent her seven sorrows.

## X

But bless you, it's dear — it's dear! fowls, wine, at double the  
rate.

They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays  
passing the gate <sup>1</sup> 55

It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city!  
Beggars can scarcely be choosers; but still — ah, the pity,  
the pity!

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls  
and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow  
candles; 60

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with  
handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better pre-  
vention of scandals.

*Bang-whang-whang* goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.

Oh, a day in the city square, there is no such pleasure in life!

"DE GUSTIBUS —" <sup>2</sup>

(See Note, page 155)

## I

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,  
(If our loves remain)

In an English lane,

By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.

Hark, those two in the hazel coppice — 5

A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,

Making love, say, —

The happier they!

<sup>1</sup> City taxes on country produce.

<sup>2</sup> From the Latin proverb, *De gustibus non est disputandum*, "There is no disputing about tastes."

Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,  
 And let them pass, as they will too soon, 10  
     With the beanflower's boon,  
     And the blackbird's tune,  
     And May, and June!

II

What I love best in all the world  
 Is a castle, precipice-encurled, 15  
 In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.  
 Or look for me, old fellow of mine,  
 (If I get my head from out the mouth  
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,  
 And come again to the land of lands) — 20  
 In a seaside house to the farther South,  
 Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,  
 And one sharp tree — 'tis a cypress — stands,  
 By the many hundred years red-rusted,  
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'er-crusted 25  
 My sentinel to guard the sands  
 To the water's edge. For, what expands  
 Before the house, but the great opaque  
 Blue breadth of sea without a break?  
 While, in the house, forever crumbles 30  
 Some fragment of the frescoed walls,  
 From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.  
 A girl barefooted brings, and tumbles  
 Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,  
 And says there's news to-day — the king 35  
 Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,<sup>1</sup>  
 Goes with his Bourbon<sup>2</sup> arm in a sling.  
 — She hopes they have not caught the felons.  
 Italy, my Italy!  
 Queen Mary's saying serves for me — 40

<sup>1</sup> The right wing of a bird; hence the right arm.

<sup>2</sup> A royal house whose members at one time occupied the throne of Naples.

(When fortune's malice  
Lost her, Calais) <sup>1</sup>

Open my heart and you will see  
Graved inside of it, "Italy."  
Such lovers old are I and she:  
So it always was, so shall ever be!

45

## THE LOST LEADER

(See Note, page 155)

## I

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

5

10

15

## II

We shall march prospering, — not through his presence;  
Songs may inspirit us, — not from his lyre;  
Deeds will be done, — while he boasts his quiescence,  
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire.

20

<sup>1</sup> The loss of Calais (1558), in the war with France, was so greatly regretted by Mary Tudor, Queen of England, that she declared that at her death the word "Calais" would be found written on her heart.



Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,  
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,  
 One more devils' triumph and sorrow for angels,  
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!  
 Life's night begins; let him never come back to us! 25  
 There would be doubt, hesitation, and pain,  
 Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,  
 Never glad confident morning again!  
 Best fight on well, for we taught him — strike gallantly,  
 Menace our heart ere we master his own; 30  
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,  
 Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

## MEMORABILIA

(See Note, page 156)

## I

АH, did you once see Shelley plain,  
 And did he stop and speak to you,  
 And did you speak to him again?  
 How strange it seems, and new!

## II

But you were living before that, 5  
 And also you are living after;  
 And the memory I started at —  
 My starting moves your laughter!

## III

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own  
 And a certain use in the world, no doubt 10  
 Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone  
 'Mid the blank miles round about.

## IV

For there I picked up on the heather  
 And there I put inside my breast  
 A molted feather, an eagle feather! 15  
 Well, I forget the rest.

## EVELYN HOPE

(See Note, page 156)

## I

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead!  
 Sit and watch by her side an hour.  
 That is her bookshelf, this her bed;  
 She plucked that piece of geranium flower,  
 Beginning to die, too, in the glass 5  
 Little has yet been changed, I think;  
 The shutters are shut, no light may pass  
 Save two long rays through the hinge's chink.

## II

Sixteen years old when she died!  
 Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name; 10  
 It was not her time to love; beside,  
 Her life had many a hope and aim,  
 Duties enough and little cares,  
 And now was quiet, now astir,  
 Till God's hand beckoned unawares, — 15  
 And the sweet white brow is all of her.

## III

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?  
 What, your soul was pure and true,  
 The good stars met in your horoscope,  
 Made you of spirit, fire, and dew — 20

And, just because I was thrice as old  
 And our paths in the world diverged so wide,  
 Each was naught to each, must I be told?  
 We were fellow mortals, naught beside?

## IV

No, indeed! for God above 25  
 Is great to grant, as mighty to make,  
 And creates the love to reward the love.  
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake!  
 Delayed it may be for more lives yet,  
 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few; 30  
 Much is to learn, much to forget  
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

## V

But the time will come, at last it will,  
 When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)  
 In the lower earth, in the years long still, 35  
 That body and soul so pure and gay?  
 Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,  
 And your mouth of your own geranium's red —  
 And what you would do with me, in fine,  
 In the new life come in the old one's stead. 40

## VI

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,  
 Given up myself so many times,  
 Gained me the gains of various men,  
 Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;  
 Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope, 45  
 Either I missed or itself missed me;  
 And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!  
 What is the issue? let us see!

## VII

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!

My heart seemed full as it could hold;

There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,

And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.

So, hush, — I will give you this leaf to keep;

See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!

There, that is our secret; go to sleep!

You will wake, and remember, and understand.

## LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

(See Note, page 157)

## I

WHERE the quiet-colored end of evening smiles

Miles and miles

On the solitary pastures where our sheep

Half asleep

Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or stop

As they crop —

Was the site once of a city great and gay,

(So they say)

Of our country's very capital, its prince

Ages since

Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far

Peace or war.

## II

Now, — the country does not even boast a tree,

As you see,

To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills

From the hills

Intersect and give a name to (else they run

Into one),

Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires  
 Up like fires 20  
 O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall  
 Bounding all,  
 Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,  
 Twelve abreast.

## III

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass 25  
 Never was!  
 Such a carpet as, this summer time, o'erspreads  
 And embeds  
 Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,  
 Stock or stone — 30  
 Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe  
 Long ago;  
 Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame  
 Struck them tame;  
 And that glory and that shame alike, the gold 35  
 Bought and sold.

## IV

Now, — the single little turret that remains  
 On the plains,  
 By the caper overrooted, by the gourd  
 Overscored, 40  
 While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks  
 Through the chinks —  
 Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time  
 Sprang sublime,  
 And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced 45  
 As they raced,  
 And the monarch and his minions and his dames  
 Viewed the games.

## V

And I know — while thus the quiet-colored eve  
     Smiles to leave 50  
 To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece  
     In such peace,  
 And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray  
     Melt away —  
 That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair 55  
     Waits me there  
 In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul  
     For the goal,  
 When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb  
     Till I come. 60

## VI

But he looked upon the city, every side,  
     Far and wide,  
 All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'  
     Colonnades,  
 All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts, — and then, 65  
     All the men!  
 When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,  
     Either hand  
 On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace  
     Of my face, 70  
 Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech  
     Each on each.

## VII

In one year they sent a million fighters forth  
     South and North,  
 And they built their gods a brazen pillar high 75  
     As the sky,  
 Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force —  
     Gold, of course.

Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!

Earth's returns

80

For whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin!

Shut them in,

With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!

Love is best.

## HOME THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

(See Note, page 157)

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent <sup>1</sup> to the Northwest died away;  
 Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz <sup>2</sup> Bay;  
 Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar <sup>3</sup> lay;  
 In the dimmest Northeast distance dawned Gibraltar <sup>4</sup> grand  
 and gray.

"Here and here did England help me; how can I help England?"

— say,

5

Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,  
 While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

## HOME THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

(See Note, page 157)

OH, to be in England now that April's there,  
 And whoever wakes in England sees, some morning, unaware,  
 That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf  
 Round the elm-tree bole <sup>5</sup> are in tiny leaf,  
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough

5

In England — now!

<sup>1</sup> A cape on the southwestern point of Portugal.

<sup>2</sup> A bay on the southwestern coast of Spain.

<sup>3</sup> A cape on the southwestern coast of Spain.

<sup>4</sup> A fortified British promontory, on the southern coast of Spain.

<sup>5</sup> Trunk.

And after April, when May follows  
 And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!  
 Hark, where my blossomed pear tree in the hedge  
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover 10  
 Blossoms and dewdrops — at the bent spray's edge —  
 That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over  
 Lest you should think he never could recapture  
 The first fine careless rapture!  
 And, though the fields look rough with hoary dew, 15  
 All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
 The buttercups, the little children's dower  
 — Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

## SONGS FROM "PIPPA PASSES"

(See Note, page 158)

## I

THE year's at the spring,  
 And day's at the morn;  
 Morning's at seven;  
 The hill-side's dew-pearled;  
 The lark's on the wing; 5  
 The snail's on the thorn;  
 God's in His heaven —  
 All's right with the world!

## II

## I

GIVE her but a least excuse to love me!  
 When — where —  
 How — can this arm establish her above me,  
 If fortune fixed her as my lady there,  
 There already, to eternally reprove me? 5



("Hist!" — said Kate<sup>1</sup> the queen;  
 But "Oh," cried the maiden, binding her tresses,  
 "'Tis only a page that carols unseen,  
 Crumbling your hounds their messes!")

## II

Is she wronged? — To the rescue of her honor, 10  
 My heart!  
 Is she poor? — What costs it to be styled a donor  
 Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.  
 But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!  
 ("Nay, list!" — bade Kate the queen;  
 And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses, 15  
 "'Tis only a page that carols unseen,  
 Fitting your hawks their jesses!")

## III

## I

YOU'LL love me yet! — and I can tarry  
 Your love's protracted growing;  
 June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,  
 From seeds of April's sowing.

## II

I plant a heartful now; some seed 5  
 At least is sure to strike  
 And yield — what you'll not pluck indeed,  
 Not love, but, may be, like.

## III

You'll look at least on love's remains,  
 A grave's one violet; 10  
 Your look? — that pays a thousand pains.  
 What's death? You'll love me yet!

<sup>1</sup> Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus from 1473 to 1488.

## MEETING AT NIGHT

(See Note, page 158)

## I

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

## II

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

## PARTING AT MORNING

(See Note, page 158)

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

SUMMUM BONUM <sup>1</sup>

(See Note, page 158)

ALL the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee;  
 All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart of one gem;  
 In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of the sea;  
 Breath and bloom, shade and shine, — wonder, wealth, and  
 — how far above them —

Truth, that's brighter than gem, 5

Trust, that's purer than pearl, —

Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe — all were for me  
 In the kiss of one girl.

## LIFE IN A LOVE

(See Note, page 158)

ESCAPE me?

Never —

Beloved!

While I am I, and you are you,  
 So long as the world contains us both, 5

Me the loving and you the loth,

While the one eludes, must the other pursue.

My life is a fault at last, I fear;

It seems too much like a fate, indeed!

Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed. 10

But what if I fail of my purpose here?

It is but to keep the nerves at strain,

To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,

And baffled, get up and begin again, —

So the chase takes up one's life, that's all. 15

<sup>1</sup> The highest good.

While, look but once from your farthest bound  
 At me so deep in the dust and dark,  
 No sooner the old hope goes to ground  
 Than a new one, straight to the selfsame mark,  
 I shape me —  
 Ever  
 Removed!

20

## SONG FROM "JAMES LEE'S WIFE"

AMONG THE ROCKS

(See Note, page 159)

### I

OH, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,  
 This autumn morning! How he sets his bones  
 To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet  
 For the ripple to run over in its mirth;

Listening the while, where on the heap of stones  
 The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

5

### II

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true;  
 Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.

If you loved only what were worth your love,  
 Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you.

Make the low nature better by your throes!  
 Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!

10

## MISCONCEPTIONS

(See Note, page 159)

## I

THIS is a spray the bird clung to,  
 Making it blossom with pleasure,  
 Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,  
 Fit for her nest and her treasure  
 Oh, what a hope beyond measure 5  
 Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to, —  
 So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

## II

This is a heart the queen leant on,  
 Thrilled in a minute erratic,  
 Ere the true bosom she bent on, 10  
 Meet for love's regal dalmatic.<sup>1</sup>  
 Oh, what a fancy ecstatic  
 Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on, —  
 Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

## A FACE

(See Note, page 159)

IF one could have that little head of hers  
 Painted upon a background of pale gold,  
 Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!  
 No shade encroaching on the matchless mold  
 Of those two lips, which should be opening soft 5  
 In the pure profile; not as when she laughs,

<sup>1</sup> A robe worn by medieval kings at their coronation.

For that spoils all; but rather as if aloft  
 Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's  
 Burden of honey-colored buds to kiss  
 And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this. 10  
 Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,  
 How it should waver on the pale gold ground  
 Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts!  
 I know, Correggio <sup>1</sup> loves to mass, in rifts  
 Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb 15  
 Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb;  
 But these are only massed there, I should think,  
 Waiting to see some wonder momentarily  
 Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky  
 (That's the pale ground you'd see this sweet face by), 20  
 All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye  
 Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

## MY STAR

(See Note, page 160)

ALL that I know  
 Of a certain star  
 Is, it can throw  
 (Like the angled spar <sup>2</sup>)  
 Now a dart of red, 5  
 Now a dart of blue;  
 Till my friends have said  
 They would fain see, too,  
 My star that dartles the red and the blue!  
 Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled; 10  
 They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.  
 What matter to me if their star is a world?  
 Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

<sup>1</sup> Italian painter (1494-1534).<sup>2</sup> The Iceland spar, a mineral that refracts light.

PROSPICE <sup>1</sup>

(See Note, page 160)

FEAR death? — to feel the fog in my throat,  
 The mist in my face,  
 When the snows begin, and the blasts denote  
 I am nearing the place,  
 The power of the night, the press of the storm, 5  
 The post of the foe,  
 Where he stands, the Arch Fear <sup>2</sup> in a visible form?  
 Yet the strong man must go;  
 For the journey is done and the summit attained,  
 And the barriers fall, 10  
 Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,  
 The reward of it all  
 I was ever a fighter, so — one fight more,  
 The best and the last!  
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore, 15  
 And bade me creep past.  
 No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,  
 The heroes of old,  
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears  
 Of pain, darkness, and cold. 20  
 For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,  
 The black minute's at end,  
 And the elements' rage, the fiend voices that rave,  
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,  
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain, 25  
 Then a light, then thy breast,  
 O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee <sup>3</sup> again,  
 And with God be the rest!

<sup>1</sup> Look forward.<sup>2</sup> Death.<sup>3</sup> This refers to Browning's wife.

## THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

(See Note, page 160)

## I

I SAID — Then, dearest, since 'tis so,  
 Since now at length my fate I know,  
 Since nothing all my love avails,  
 Since all my life seemed meant for fails,  
 Since this was written and needs must be — 5  
 My whole heart rises up to bless  
 Your name in pride and thankfulness!  
 Take back the hope you gave, — I claim  
 Only a memory of the same,  
 — And this beside, if you will not blame, 10  
 Your leave for one more last ride with me.

## II

My mistress bent that brow of hers;  
 Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs  
 When pity would be softening through,  
 Fixed me a breathing-while or two 15  
 With life or death in the balance; right!  
 The blood replenished me again;  
 My last thought was at least not vain;  
 I and my mistress, side by side,  
 Shall be together, breathe and ride, 20  
 So, one day more am I deified.  
 Who knows but the world may end to-night?

## III

Hush! if you saw some western cloud  
 All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed  
 By many benedictions — sun's 25  
 And moon's and evening star's at once —



And so, you, looking and loving best,  
 Conscious grew, your passion drew  
 Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,  
 Down on you, near and yet more near, 30  
 Till flesh must fade for heaven was here! —  
 Thus leant she and lingered — joy and fear  
 Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

## IV

Then we began to ride. My soul  
 Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll 35  
 Freshening and fluttering in the wind.  
 Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry?  
 Had I said that, had I done this,  
 So might I gain, so might I miss. 40  
 Might she have loved me? just as well  
 She might have hated, who can tell!  
 Where had I been now if the worst befell?  
 And here we are riding, she and I.

## V

Fail I alone, in words and deeds? 45  
 Why, all men strive and who succeeds?  
 We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,  
 Saw other regions, cities new,

As the world rushed by on either side.  
 I thought, — all labor, yet no less 50  
 Bear up beneath their unsuccess.  
 Look at the end of work, contrast  
 The petty done, the undone vast,  
 This present of theirs with the hopeful past!  
 I hoped she would love me; here we ride. 55

## VI

What hand and brain went ever paired?  
 What heart alike conceived and dared?  
 What act proved all its thought had been?  
 What will but felt the fleshly screen?

We ride and I see her bosom heave. 60  
 There's many a crown for who can reach.  
 Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!  
 The flag stuck on a heap of bones,  
 A soldier's doing! what atones?  
 They scratch his name on the Abbey stones.<sup>1</sup> 65  
 My riding is better, by their leave.

## VII

What does it all mean, poet? Well,  
 Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell  
 What we felt only; you expressed  
 You hold things beautiful the best, 70  
 And pace them in rime so, side by side.  
 'Tis something, nay 'tis much; but then,  
 Have you yourself what's best for men?  
 Are you — poor, sick, old ere your time —  
 Nearer one whit your own sublime 75  
 Than we who never have turned a rime?  
 Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

## VIII

And you, great sculptor — so, you gave  
 A score of years to Art, her slave,  
 And that's your Venus, whence we turn 80  
 To yonder girl that fords the burn!  
 You acquiesce, and shall I repine?  
 What, man of music, you grown gray  
 With notes and nothing else to say,

<sup>1</sup> The monuments in Westminster Abbey, London, the chief burial place of the famous men of Great Britain.

Is this your sole praise from a friend,  
 "Greatly his opera's strains intend,  
 But in music we know how fashions end!"  
 I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

85

## IX

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate  
 Proposed bliss here should sublimate  
 My being — had I signed the bond —  
 Still one must lead some life beyond,  
 Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.  
 This foot once planted on the goal,  
 This glory garland round my soul,  
 Could I descry such? Try and test!  
 I sink back shuddering from the quest.  
 Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?  
 Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

90

95

## X

And yet — she has not spoke so long!  
 What if heaven be that, fair and strong  
 At life's best, with our eyes upturned  
 Whither life's flower is first discerned,  
 We, fixed so, ever should so abide?  
 What if we still ride on, we two,  
 With life forever old yet new,  
 Changed not in kind but in degree,  
 The instant made eternity, —  
 And heaven just prove that I and she  
 Ride, ride together, forever ride?

100

105

110

## BY THE FIRESIDE

(See Note, page 161)

## I

How well I know what I mean to do  
 When the long dark autumn evenings come;  
 And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?  
 With the music of all thy voices, dumb  
 In life's November too!

5

## II

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,  
 O'er a great wise book, as beseemeth age;  
 While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,  
 And I turn the page, and I turn the page,  
 Not verse now, only prose!

10

## III

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,  
 "There he is at it, deep in Greek;  
 Now then, or never, out we slip  
 To cut from the hazels by the creek  
 A mainmast for our ship!"

15

## IV

I shall be at it indeed, my friends!  
 Greek puts already on either side  
 Such a branch-work forth as soon extends  
 To a vista opening far and wide,  
 And I pass out where it ends.

20

## V

The outside frame, like your hazel trees —  
 But the inside archway widens fast,  
 And a rarer sort succeeds to these,  
 And we slope to Italy at last  
 And youth, by green degrees. 25

## VI

I follow wherever I am led,  
 Knowing so well the leader's hand.  
 Oh woman country, wooed not wed,  
 Loved all the more by earth's male lands,  
 Laid to their hearts instead! 30

## VII

Look at the ruined chapel again  
 Halfway up in the Alpine gorge!  
 Is that a tower, I point you plain,  
 Or is it a mill, or an iron forge  
 Breaks solitude in vain? 35

## VIII

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;  
 The woods are round us, heaped and dim;  
 From slab to slab how it slips and springs,  
 The thread of water single and slim,  
 Through the ravage some torrent brings! 40

## IX

Does it feed the little lake below?  
 That speck of white just on its marge  
 Is Pella <sup>1</sup>; see, in the evening glow,  
 How sharp the silver spear heads charge  
 When Alp meets heaven in snow! 45

<sup>1</sup> A village in northern Italy on the Lake of Orta, distinguished from afar by its white houses.

## X

On our other side is the straight-up rock;  
 And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it  
 By boulder stones, where lichens mock -  
 The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit  
 Their teeth to the polished block.

50

## XI

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,  
 And thorny balls, each three in one,  
 The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!  
 For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,  
 These early November hours,

55

## XII

That crimson the creeper's leaf across  
 Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,  
 O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,  
 And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped  
 Elf-neededled mat of moss.

60

## XIII

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged  
 Last evening — nay, in to-day's first dew  
 Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,  
 Where a freaked fawn-colored flaky crew  
 Of toadstools peep indulged.

65

## XIV

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge  
 That takes the turn to a range beyond,  
 Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge,  
 Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond  
 Danced over by the midge.

70

## XV

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,  
Blackish-gray and mostly wet;  
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dike.  
See here again, how the lichens fret  
And the roots of the ivy strike! 75

## XVI

Poor little place, where its one priest comes  
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,  
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,  
Gathered within that precinct small  
By the dozen ways one roams — 80

## XVII

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,  
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,  
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,  
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread  
Their gear on the rock's bare juts. 85

## XVIII

It has some pretension too, this front,  
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise  
Set over the porch, Art's early wont;  
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,  
But has borne the weather's brunt — 90

## XIX

Not from the fault of the builder, though,  
For a pent-house properly projects  
Where three carved beams make a certain show,  
Dating — good thought of our architect's —  
Five, six, nine, he lets you know. 95

## XX

And all day long a bird sings there,  
 And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;  
 The place is silent and aware;  
 It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,  
 But that is its own affair.

100

## XXI

My perfect wife, my Leonor,  
 Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,  
 Whom else could I dare look backward for,  
 With whom besides should I dare pursue  
 The path gray heads abhor?

105

## XXII

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;  
 Youth, flowery all the way, there stops —  
 Not they; age threatens and they contemn,  
 Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,  
 One inch from life's safe hem!

110

## XXIII

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,  
 No longer watch you as you sit  
 Reading by firelight, that great brow  
 And the spirit-small hand propping it,  
 Mutely, my heart knows how —

115

## XXIV

When, if I think but deep enough,  
 You are wont to answer, prompt as rime;  
 And you, too, find without rebuff  
 Response your soul seeks many a time,  
 Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

120



## XXV

My own, confirm me! If I tread  
This path back, is it not in pride  
To think how little I dreamed it led  
To an age so blest that, by its side,  
Youth seems the waste instead? 125

## XXVI

My own, see where the years conduct!  
At first, 'twas something our two souls  
Should mix as mists do; each is sucked  
In each now; on, the new stream rolls,  
Whatever rocks obstruct. 130

## XXVII

Think, when our one soul understands  
The great Word which makes all things new,  
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,  
How will the change strike me and you  
In the house not made with hands? 135

## XXVIII

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,  
Your heart anticipate my heart,  
You must be just before, in fine,  
See and make me see, for your part,  
New depths of the divine! 140

## XXIX

But who could have expected this  
When we two drew together first  
Just for the obvious human bliss,  
To satisfy life's daily thirst  
With a thing men seldom miss? 145

## XXX

Come back with me to the first of all,  
 Let us lean and love it over again,  
 Let us now forget and now recall,  
 Break the rosary in a pearly rain,  
 And gather what we let fall! 150

## XXXI

What did I say? — that a small bird sings  
 All day long, save when a brown pair  
 Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings  
 Strained to a bell; 'gainst noonday glare  
 You count the streaks and rings. 155

## XXXII

But at afternoon or almost eve  
 'Tis better; then the silence grows  
 To that degree, you half believe  
 It must get rid of what it knows,  
 Its bosom does so heave. 160

## XXXIII

Hither we walked then, side by side,  
 Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,  
 And still I questioned or replied,  
 While my heart, convulsed to really speak,  
 Lay choking in its pride. 165

## XXXIV

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,  
 And pity and praise the chapel sweet,  
 And care about the fresco's loss,  
 And wish for our souls a like retreat,  
 And wonder at the moss. 170

## XXXV

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,  
 Look through the window's grated square.  
 Nothing to see! For fear of plunder,  
 The cross is down and the altar bare,  
 As if thieves don't fear thunder. 175

## XXXVI

We stoop and look in through the grate,  
 See the little porch and rustic door,  
 Read duly the dead builder's date;  
 Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,  
 Take the path again — but wait! 180

## XXXVII

Oh moment one and infinite!  
 The water slips o'er stock and stone;  
 The West is tender, hardly bright;  
 How gray at once is the evening grown —  
 One star, its chrysolite! 185

## XXXVIII

We two stood there with never a third,  
 But each by each, as each knew well;  
 The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,  
 The lights and the shades made up a spell  
 Till the trouble grew and stirred. 190

## XXXIX

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!  
 And the little less, and what worlds away!  
 How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,  
 Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,  
 And life be a proof of this! 195

## XL

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen  
 So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her;  
 I could fix her face with a guard between,  
 And find her soul as when friends confer,  
 Friends — lovers that might have been. 200

## XLI

For my heart had a touch of the woodland time,  
 Wanting to sleep now over its best.  
 Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,  
 But bring to the last leaf no such test!  
 "Hold the last fast!" runs the rime. 205

## XLII

For a chance to make your little much,  
 To gain a lover and lose a friend,  
 Venture the tree and a myriad such,  
 When nothing you mar but the year can mend;  
 But a last leaf — fear to touch! 210

## XLIII

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall  
 Eddying down till it find your face  
 At some slight wind — best chance of all!  
 Be your heart henceforth its dwelling place  
 You trembled to forestall! 215

## XLIV

Worth how well, those dark gray eyes,  
 That hair so dark and dear, how worth  
 That a man should strive and agonize,  
 And taste a veriest hell on earth  
 For the hope of such a prize! 220

## XLV

You might have turned and tried a man,  
 Set him a space to weary and wear,  
 And prove which suited more your plan,  
 His best of hope or his worst despair,  
 Yet end as he began. 225

## XLVI

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,  
 And filled my empty heart at a word.  
 If two lives join, there is oft a scar,  
 They are one and one, with a shadowy third;  
 One near one is too far. 230

## XLVII

A moment after, and hands unseen  
 Were hanging the night around us fast;  
 But we knew that a bar was broken between  
 Life and life; we were mixed at last  
 In spite of the mortal screen. 235

## XLVIII

The forests had done it; there they stood;  
 We caught for a moment the powers at play.  
 They had mingled us so, for once and good,  
 Their work was done — we might go or stay,  
 They relapsed to their ancient mood. 240

## XLIX

How the world is made for each of us!  
 How all we perceive and know in it  
 Tends to some moment's product thus,  
 When a soul declares itself — to wit,  
 By its fruit, the thing it does! 245

## L

Be hate that fruit, or love that fruit,  
 It forwards the general deed of man,  
 And each of the Many helps to recruit  
 The life of the race by a general plan;  
 Each living his own, to boot.

250

## LI

I am named and known by that moment's feat;  
 There took my station and degree;  
 So grew my own small life complete,  
 As nature obtained her best of me —  
 One born to love you, sweet!

255

## LII

And to watch you sink by the fireside now  
 Back again, as you mutely sit  
 Musing by firelight, that great brow  
 And the spirit-small hand propping it,  
 Yonder, my heart knows how!

260

## LIII

So, earth has gained by one man the more,  
 And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too;  
 And the whole is well worth thinking o'er  
 When autumn comes — which I mean to do,  
 One day, as I said before.

265

INSTANS TYRANNUS <sup>1</sup>

(See Note, page 162)

## I

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

## II

I struck him, he groveled of course — 5  
 For, what was his force?  
 I pinned him to earth with my weight  
 And persistence of hate;  
 And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,  
 As his lot might be worse. 10

## III

“Were the object less mean, would he stand  
 At the swing of my hand!  
 For obscurity helps him, and blots  
 The hole where he squats.”  
 So, I set my five wits on the stretch 15  
 To inveigle the wretch.  
 All in vain! Gold and jewels I threw,  
 Still he couched there perdue; <sup>2</sup>  
 I tempted his blood and his flesh,  
 Hid in roses my mesh, 20  
 Choicest cates and the flagon’s best spilth;  
 Still he kept to his filth.

<sup>1</sup> “The Threatening Tyrant.”<sup>2</sup> Hidden.

## IV

Had he kith now or kin, were access  
 To his heart, did I press;  
 Just a son or a mother to seize! 25  
 No such booty as these.  
 Were it simply a friend to pursue  
 'Mid my million or two,  
 Who could pay me, in person or pelf,  
 What he owes me himself! 30  
 No; I could not but smile through my chafe;  
 For the fellow lay safe  
 As his mates do, the midge and the nit,  
 — Through minuteness, to wit.

## V

Then a humor more great took its place 35  
 At the thought of his face;  
 The droop, the low cares of the mouth,  
 The trouble uncouth  
 Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain  
 To put out of its pain. 40  
 And, "no!" I admonished myself,  
 "Is one mocked by an elf,  
 Is one baffled by toad or by rat?  
 The gravamen's <sup>1</sup> in that!  
 How the lion, who crouches to suit 45  
 His back to my foot,  
 Would admire <sup>2</sup> that I stand in debate!  
 But the small turns the great  
 If it vexes you, — that is the thing!  
 Toad or rat vex the king? 50  
 Though I waste half my realm to unearth  
 Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!"

<sup>1</sup> Grievance.<sup>2</sup> Wonder.



## VI

So, I soberly laid my last plan  
 To extinguish the man.  
 Round his creep-hole, with never a break, 55  
 Ran my fires for his sake;  
 Overhead, did my thunder combine  
 With my underground mine,  
 Till I looked from my labor content  
 To enjoy the event. 60

## VII

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?  
 Did I say "without friend"?  
 Say rather, from marge to blue marge  
 The whole sky grew his targe <sup>1</sup>  
 With the sun's self for visible boss, <sup>2</sup> 65  
 While an Arm ran across  
 Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast  
 Where the wretch was safe pressed!  
 Do you see! Just <sup>3</sup> my vengeance complete,  
 The man sprang to his feet, 70  
 Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!  
 — So, *I* was afraid!

<sup>1</sup> Shield.

<sup>2</sup> The central projection of the shield.

<sup>3</sup> "Just (as) my vengeance (was) complete."

## THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

(See Note, page 163)

THAT second time they hunted me  
 From hill to plain, from shore to sea,  
 And Austria, hounding far and wide  
 Her bloodhounds through the country-side,  
 Breathed hot and instant on my trace, — 5  
 I made six days a hiding place  
 Of that dry green old aqueduct  
 Where I and Charles,<sup>1</sup> when boys, have plucked  
 The fireflies from the roof above,  
 Bright creeping through the moss they love. 10  
 — How long it seems since Charles was lost!  
 Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed  
 The country in my very sight;  
 And when that peril ceased at night,  
 The sky broke out in red dismay 15  
 With signal fires; well, there I lay  
 Close covered o'er in my recess,  
 Up to the neck in ferns and cress,  
 Thinking on Metternich<sup>2</sup> our friend,  
 And Charles's miserable end, 20  
 And much beside, two days; the third,  
 Hunger o'ercame me when I heard  
 The peasants from the village go  
 To work among the maize; you know,  
 With us in Lombardy, they bring 25  
 Provisions packed on mules, a string  
 With little bells that cheer their task,  
 And casks, and boughs on every cask

<sup>1</sup> Charles Albert, Prince of Carignano at first supported the Revolution for Italian liberty but later abandoned it.

<sup>2</sup> Foreign minister of Austria, an indomitable foe of Italian liberty.

To keep the sun's heat from the wine;  
 These I let pass in jingling line, 30  
 And, close on them, dear noisy crew,  
 The peasants from the village, too;  
 For at the very rear would troop  
 Their wives and sisters in a group  
 To help, I knew. When these had passed, 35  
 I threw my glove to strike the last,  
 Taking the chance. She did not start,  
 Much less cry out, but stooped apart,  
 One instant rapidly glanced round,  
 And saw me beckon from the ground. 40  
 A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;  
 She picked my glove up while she stripped  
 A branch off, then rejoined the rest  
 With that; my glove lay in her breast.  
 Then I drew breath; they disappeared. 45  
 It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone  
 Exactly where my glove was thrown.  
 Meanwhile came many thoughts; on me  
 Rested the hopes of Italy. 50  
 I had devised a certain tale  
 Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail  
 Persuade a peasant of its truth;  
 I meant to call a freak of youth  
 This hiding, and give hopes of pay, 55  
 And no temptation to betray.  
 But when I saw that woman's face,  
 Its calm simplicity of grace,  
 Our Italy's own attitude  
 In which she walked thus far, and stood, 60  
 Planting each naked foot so firm,  
 To crush the snake and spare the worm —

At first sight of her eyes, I said,  
 "I am that man upon whose head  
 They fix the price, because I hate  
 The Austrians over us. The State 65  
 Will give you gold — oh, gold so much! —  
 If you betray me to their clutch,  
 And be your death, for aught I know,  
 If once they find you saved their foe. 70  
 Now, you must bring me food and drink,  
 And also paper, pen and ink,  
 And carry safe what I shall write  
 To Padua, which you'll reach at night  
 Before the duomo <sup>1</sup> shuts; go in, 75  
 And wait till Tenebrae <sup>2</sup> begin;  
 Walk to the third confessional,  
 Between the pillar and the wall,  
 And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*  
 Say it a second time, then cease; 80  
 And if the voice inside returns,  
*From Christ and Freedom; what concerns*  
*The cause of Peace?* — for answer, slip  
 My letter where you placed your lip;  
 Then come back happy; we have done 85  
 Our mother service — I, the son,  
 As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand  
 In the same place, with the same eyes.  
 I was no surer of sunrise 90  
 Than of her coming. We conferred  
 Of her own prospects, and I heard  
 She had a lover — stout and tall,  
 She said — then let her eyelids fall,

<sup>1</sup> Cathedral.

<sup>2</sup> A religious service held in Holy Week, at which it is customary to darken the church.

"He could do much" — as if some doubt                   95  
 Entered her heart, — then, passing out,  
 "She could not speak for others, who  
 Had other thoughts; herself she knew."  
 And so she brought me drink and food.  
 After four days, the scouts pursued                   100  
 Another path; at last arrived  
 The help my Paduan friends contrived  
 To furnish me. She brought the news.  
 For the first time I could not choose  
 But kiss her hand, and lay my own                   105  
 Upon her head — "This faith was shown  
 To Italy, our mother; she  
 Uses my hand and blesses thee."  
 She followed down to the seashore;  
 I left and never saw her more.                   110

How very long since I have thought  
 Concerning — much less wished for — aught  
 Beside the good of Italy,  
 For which I live and mean to die!  
 I never was in love; and since                   115  
 Charles proved false, what shall now convince  
 My inmost heart I have a friend?  
 However, if I pleased to spend  
 Real wishes on myself — say, three —  
 I know at least what one should be.                   120  
 I would grasp Metternich until  
 I felt his red wet throat distill  
 In blood through these two hands. And next,  
 — Nor much for that am I perplexed —  
 Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,                   125  
 Should die slow of a broken heart  
 Under his new employers. Last  
 — Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast

Do I grow old and out of strength.  
 If I resolved to seek at length 130  
 My father's house again, how scared  
 They all would look, and unprepared!  
 My brothers live in Austria's pay  
 — Disowned me long ago, men say;  
 And all my early mates who used 135  
 To praise me so — perhaps induced  
 More than one early step of mine —  
 Are turning wise; while some opine  
 "Freedom grows license," some suspect  
 "Haste breeds delay," and recollect 140  
 They always said, such premature  
 Beginnings never could endure!  
 So, with a sullen "All's for best,"  
 The land seems settling to its rest.  
 I think, then, I should wish to stand 145  
 This evening in that dear, lost land,  
 Over the sea the thousand miles,  
 And know if yet that woman smiles  
 With the calm smile; some little farm  
 She lives in there, no doubt. What harm 150  
 If I sat on the door-side bench,  
 And, while her spindle made a trench  
 Fantastically in the dust,  
 Inquired of all her fortunes — just  
 Her children's ages and their names, 155  
 And what may be the husband's aims  
 For each of them. I'd talk this out,  
 And sit there, for an hour about,  
 Then kiss her hand once more, and lay  
 Mine on her head, and go my way. 160

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

## A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

*Shortly after the Revival of Learning in Europe*

(See Note, page 163)

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,  
 Singing together.  
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,<sup>1</sup>  
 Each in its tether <sup>2</sup>  
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain, 5  
 Cared for till cock-crow;  
 Look out if yonder be not day again  
 Rimming the rock-row! <sup>3</sup>  
 That's the appropriate country; there man's thought,  
 Rarer, intenser, 10  
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,  
 Chafes in the censer.  
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;  
 Seek we sepulture  
 On a tall mountain, citted to the top, 15  
 Crowded with culture!  
 All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;  
 Clouds overcome <sup>4</sup> it;  
 No! yonder sparkle is the citadel's  
 Circling its summit. 20  
 Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights;  
 Wait ye the warning?  
 Our low life was the level's and the night's;  
 He's for the morning.  
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head, 25  
 'Ware the beholders!

<sup>1</sup> The farms and villages occupied by common and uneducated people.<sup>2</sup> Narrow limits.<sup>3</sup> Ridge of the mountain.<sup>4</sup> Pass over.

This is our master, famous, calm and dead,  
Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorp and croft  
Safe from the weather! 30

He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,  
Singing together,

He was a man born with thy face and throat,  
Lyric Apollo!

Long he lived nameless; how should spring take note  
Winter would follow? 35

Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!  
Cramped and diminished,

Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!  
"My dance is finished?" 40

No, that's the world's way; (keep the mountain-side,  
Make for the city!)

He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride  
Over men's pity;

Left play for work, and grappled with the world  
Bent on escaping.<sup>1</sup> 45

"What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled?  
Show me their shaping,"<sup>2</sup>

Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage, —  
Give!" — So, he gowned<sup>3</sup> him, 50

Straight got by heart that book to its last page;  
Learned, we found him.

Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,  
Accents uncertain.

"Time to taste life," another would have said,  
"Up with the curtain!" 55

This man said rather, "Actual life comes next?  
Patience a moment!

<sup>1</sup> The world of the past.

<sup>2</sup> Mind.

<sup>3</sup> Put on the student's gown, that is, become a student.



Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,  
 Still there's the comment. 60

Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,  
 Painful or easy!

Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,  
 Ay, nor feel queasy.<sup>1</sup>

Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,  
 When he had learned it, 65

When he had gathered all books had to give!  
 Sooner, he spurned it.

Image the whole, then execute the parts —  
 Fancy the fabric. 70

Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,  
 Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached; there's the market place  
 Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace 75  
 (Hearten our chorus!)

That before living he'd learn how to live —  
 No end to learning.

Earn the means first — God surely will contrive  
 Use for our earning. 80

Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes!  
 Live now or never!"

He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!  
 Man has Forever."

Back to his book then; deeper drooped his head; 85  
*Calculus*<sup>2</sup> racked him;

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead;  
*Tussis*<sup>3</sup> attacked him.

"Now, master, take a little rest!" — not he!  
 (Caution redoubled! 90

Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly!)  
 Not a whit troubled,

<sup>1</sup> Nauseated.<sup>2</sup> The disease known as the stone.<sup>3</sup> A cough.

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,  
     Fierce as a dragon  
 He (soul-hydroptic <sup>1</sup> with a sacred thirst) 95  
     Sucked at the flagon.  
 Oh, if we draw a circle premature,  
     Heedless of far gain,  
 Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure  
     Bad is our bargain! 100  
 Was it not great? did not he throw on God  
     (He loves the burthen) —  
 God's task to make the heavenly period  
     Perfect the earthen?  
 Did not he magnify the mind, show clear 105  
     Just what it all meant?  
 He would not discount life, as fools do here,  
     Paid by installment.  
 He ventured neck or nothing — heaven's success  
     Found, or earth's failure. 110  
 "Wilt thou trust death or not?" He answered "Yes!  
     Hence with life's pale lure!"  
 That low man seeks a little thing to do,  
     Sees it and does it;  
 This high man, with a great thing to pursue, 115  
     Dies ere he knows it.  
 That low man goes on adding one to one,  
     His hundred's soon hit;  
 This high man, aiming at a million,  
     Misses an unit. 120  
 That, has the world here — should he need the next,  
     Let the world mind him!  
 This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed  
     Seeking shall find him.  
 So, with the throttling hands of death at strife, 125  
     Ground he at grammar;

<sup>1</sup> Thirsty.

Still, through the rattle, parts of speech were rife;

While he could stammer

He settled *Hoti's*<sup>1</sup> business — let it be! —

Properly based *Oun* — <sup>1</sup>

130

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,<sup>1</sup>

Dead from the waist down.

Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.

Hail to your purlieus,

All ye highfliers of the feathered race,

135

Swallows and curlews!

Here's the top-peak; the multitude below

Live, for they can, there;

This man decided not to Live but Know —

Bury this man there?

140

Here — here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,

Lightnings are loosened,

Stars come and go! Let joy break with the storm,

Peace let the dew send!

Lofty designs must close in like effects;

145

Loftily lying,

Leave him — still loftier than the world suspects,

Living and dying.

<sup>1</sup> Learned treatises have been written on the Greek particles, *ὅτι*, *that*, etc., *οὐδὲν*, *then*, etc., and *δέ*, *but*, etc., the use of which is carefully discriminated.

## ANDREA DEL SARTO

*Called "The Faultless Painter"*

(See Note, page 164)

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,  
 No, my Lucrezia! bear with me for once;  
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.  
 You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?  
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear, 5  
 Treat his own subject after his own way,  
 Fix his own time, accept too his own price,  
 And shut the money into this small hand  
 When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?  
 Oh, I'll content him, — but to-morrow, Love! 10  
 I often am much wearier than you think,  
 This evening more than usual; and it seems  
 As if — forgive now — should you let me sit  
 Here by the window, with your hand in mine,  
 And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,<sup>1</sup> 15  
 Both of one mind, as married people use,<sup>2</sup>  
 Quietly, quietly the evening through,  
 I might get up to-morrow to my work  
 Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.  
 To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this! 20  
 Your soft hand is a woman of itself,  
 And mine, the man's bared breast she curls inside.  
 Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve  
 For each of the five pictures we require;  
 It saves a model. So! keep looking so — 25  
 My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!  
 — How could you ever prick those perfect ears,

<sup>1</sup> A town near Florence, on the hillside.<sup>2</sup> As married people are in the habit of being.

Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet —  
 My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,  
 Which everybody looks on and calls his, 30  
 And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,  
 While she looks — no one's; very dear, no less.  
 You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,  
 There's what we painters call our harmony!  
 A common grayness silvers everything, — 35  
 All in a twilight, you and I alike  
 — You, at the point of your first pride in me  
 (That's gone, you know) — but I, at every point;  
 My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down  
 To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole. 40  
 There's the bell clinking from the chapel top;  
 That length of convent wall across the way  
 Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;  
 The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,  
 And autumn grows, autumn in everything. 45  
 Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape,  
 As if I saw alike my work and self  
 And all that I was born to be and do.  
 A twilight piece. Love, we are in God's hand.  
 How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead; 50  
 So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!  
 I feel he laid the fetter; let it lie!  
 This chamber for example — turn your head —  
 All that's behind us! You don't understand  
 Nor care to understand about my art, 55  
 But you can hear at least when people speak;  
 And that cartoon, the second from the door  
 — It is the thing, Love! so such things should be —  
 Behold Madonna! — I am bold to say.  
 I can do with my pencil what I know, 60  
 What I see, what at bottom of my heart  
 I wish for, if I ever wish so deep —  
 Do easily, too — when I say, perfectly,

I do not boast, perhaps; yourself are judge,  
 Who listened to the Legate's talk last week; 65  
 And just as much they used to say in France  
 At any rate, 'tis easy, all of it!  
 No sketches first, no studies, that's long past;  
 I do what many dream of, all their lives,  
 — Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do, 70  
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such  
 On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,  
 Who strive — you don't know how the others strive  
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared  
 Carelessly passing with your robes afloat, — 75  
 Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,  
 (I know his name, no matter) — so much less!  
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia; I am judged.  
 There burns a truer light of God in them,  
 In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain, 80  
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt  
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.  
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,  
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,  
 Enter and take their place there sure enough, 85  
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.  
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.  
 The sudden blood of these men! at a word —  
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.  
 I, painting from myself and to myself, 90  
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame  
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks  
 Morello's <sup>1</sup> outline there is wrongly traced,  
 His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,  
 Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that? 95  
 Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?  
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,

<sup>1</sup> The highest of the Apennines, north of Florence.

Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray,  
 Placid and perfect with my art; the worse!  
 I know both what I want and what might gain, 100  
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh  
 "Had I been two, another and myself,  
 Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.  
 Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth  
 The Urbinate <sup>1</sup> who died five years ago. 105  
 ('Tis copied, George Vasari <sup>2</sup> sent it me.)  
 Well, I can fancy how he did it all,  
 Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,  
 Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,  
 Above and through his art — for it gives way; 110  
 That arm is wrongly put — and there again —  
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,  
 Its body, so to speak; its soul is right,  
 He means right — that, a child may understand.  
 Still, what an arm! and I could alter it; 115  
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch —  
 Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?  
 Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,  
 We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.  
 Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think — 120  
 More than I merit, yes, by many times.  
 But had you — oh, with the same perfect brow,  
 And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,  
 And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird  
 The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare — 125  
 Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!  
 Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged  
 "God and the glory! never care for gain.  
 The present by the future, what is that?

<sup>1</sup> The famous Italian painter, Raphael, or Rafael (1483-1520) was born in Urbino.

<sup>2</sup> George Vasari (1511-1574), an Italian painter, the author of the famous *Lives of Italian Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*.

Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo! <sup>1</sup> 130  
 Rafael is waiting; up to God, all three!"  
 I might have done it for you. So it seems;  
 Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.  
 Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;  
 The rest avail not. Why do I need you? 135  
 What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?  
 In this world, who can do a thing, will not;  
 And who would do it, cannot, I perceive.  
 Yet the will's somewhat — somewhat, too, the power —  
 And thus we half-men struggle. At the end, 140  
 God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.  
 'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,  
 That I am something underrated here,  
 Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.  
 I dared not, do you know, leave home all day, 145  
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.<sup>2</sup>  
 The best is when they pass and look aside;  
 But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.  
 Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,  
 And that long festal year at Fontainebleau! <sup>3</sup> 150  
 I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,  
 Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,  
 In that humane great monarch's golden look, —  
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl  
 Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile, 155  
 One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,  
 The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,  
 I painting proudly with his breath on me,  
 All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,  
 Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls 160  
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts, —  
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,

<sup>1</sup> Michelangelo, or Michelagnolo (1475-1564), famous Italian artist.

<sup>2</sup> See note, page 164

<sup>3</sup> A town southeast of Paris, formerly a royal residence.



This, in the background, waiting on my work,  
 To crown the issue with a last reward!  
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days? 165  
 And had you not grown restless . . . but I know —  
 'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;  
 Too live the life grew, golden and not gray;  
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt  
 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world. 170  
 How could it end in any other way?  
 You called me, and I came home to your heart.  
 The triumph was — to reach and stay there; since  
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?  
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold, 175  
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!  
 "Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;  
 The Roman's is the better when you pray,  
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife —"  
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge 180  
 Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows  
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.  
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,  
 Said one day Agnolo, his very self,  
 To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . . 185  
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts  
 Upon a palace wall for Rome to see,  
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)  
 "Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub  
 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how, 190  
 Who, were he set to plan and execute  
 As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,  
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"  
 To Rafael's! — And indeed the arm is wrong.  
 I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see, 195  
 Give the chalk here — quick, thus the line should go!  
 Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!  
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,

(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?  
 Do you forget already words like those?) 200  
 If really there was such a chance so lost, —  
 Is, whether you're — not grateful — but more pleased.  
 Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!  
 This hour has been an hour! Another smile?  
 If you would sit thus by me every night 205  
 I should work better, do you comprehend?  
 I mean that I should earn more, give you more.  
 See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;  
 Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,  
 The cue-owls speak the name we call them by. 210  
 Come from the window, love, — come in, at last,  
 Inside the melancholy little house  
 We built to be so gay with. God is just.  
 King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights  
 When I look up from painting, eyes tired out, 215  
 The walls become illumined, brick from brick,  
 Distinct instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,  
 That gold of his I did cement them with!  
 Let us but love each other. Must you go?  
 That Cousin here again? he waits outside? 220  
 Must see you — you, and not with me? Those loans?  
 More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?  
 Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?  
 While hand and eye and something of a heart  
 Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth? 225  
 I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit  
 The gray remainder of the evening out,  
 Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly  
 How I could paint, were I but back in France,  
 One picture, just one more — the Virgin's face, 230  
 Not yours this time! I want you at my side  
 To hear them — that is, Michel Agnolo —  
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.  
 Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.

I take the subjects for his corridor. 235  
 Finish the portrait out of hand — there, there,  
 And throw him in another thing or two  
 If he demurs; the whole should prove enough  
 To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,  
 What's better and what's all I care about, 240  
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!  
 Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,  
 The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.  
 I regret little, I would change still less. 245  
 Since there my past life lies, why alter it?  
 The very wrong to Francis! — it is true  
 I took his coin, was tempted and complied,  
 And built this house and sinned, and all is said.  
 My father and my mother died of want. 250  
 Well, had I riches of my own? you see  
 How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.  
 They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died;  
 And I have labored somewhat in my time  
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son 255  
 Paint my two hundred pictures — let him try!  
 No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,  
 You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.  
 This must suffice me here. What would one have?  
 In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance — 260  
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,  
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,  
 For Leonard,<sup>1</sup> Rafael, Agnolo, and me  
 To cover — the three first without a wife,  
 While I have mine! So — still they overcome 265  
 Because there's still Lucrezia, — as I choose.

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

<sup>1</sup> Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), famous Italian artist and scientist.

## ABT VOGLER

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

(See Note, page 165)

## I

WOULD that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,  
 Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,  
 Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon  
 willed<sup>1</sup>

Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,  
 Man, brute, reptile, fly, — alien of end and of aim, 5  
 Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep re-  
 moved, —  
 Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable  
 Name,  
 And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he  
 loved!

## II

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,  
 This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to  
 raise! 10

Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now  
 combine,

Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise!  
 And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,  
 Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,  
 Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace  
 well, 15

Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the legend that Solomon possessed power over spirits of the earth and the air by virtue of a seal on which the name of God was engraved.

## III

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion  
he was,

Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,  
Raising my rampired <sup>1</sup> walls of gold as transparent as glass,

Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest; 20

For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,  
When a great illumination surprises a festal night —

Outlining round and round Rome's dome <sup>2</sup> from space to spire)

Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was  
in sight.

## IV

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match man's  
birth, 25

Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;  
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the  
earth,

As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the  
sky.

Novel splendors burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with mine,  
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering  
star; 30

Meteor-moons, balls of blaze; and they did not pale nor pine,  
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near nor  
far.

## V

Nay more; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and  
glow,

Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the Protoplast,<sup>3</sup>  
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should  
blow, 35

<sup>1</sup> Fortified as with a rampart.

<sup>2</sup> The dome of St. Peter's cathedral in Rome was formerly illuminated for certain festivals.

<sup>3</sup> The original model from which copies are made.

Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at last;  
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the body  
and gone,

But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth  
their new.

What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall be anon;  
And what is, — shall I say, matched both? for I was made  
perfect too. 40

## VI

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my soul,  
All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly  
forth,

All through music and me! For think, had I painted the whole,  
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-  
worth.

Had I written the same, made verse — still, effect proceeds  
from cause, 45

Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told;  
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,  
Painter and poet are proud, in the artist list enrolled. —

## VII

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,  
Existent behind all laws, that made them, and, lo, they are! 50  
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,  
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a  
star.

Consider it well; each tone of our scale in itself is naught;  
It is everywhere in the world — loud, soft, and all is said.  
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought, 55  
And, there! Ye have heard and seen; consider and bow the  
head!

VIII

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared;  
 Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow;  
 For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,  
 That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go. 60  
 Never to be again! But many more of the kind  
 As good, nay, better, perchance — is this your comfort to  
 me?  
 To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind  
 To the same, same self, same love, same God; ay, what was  
 shall be.

IX

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name? 65  
 Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!  
 What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?  
 Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power ex-  
 pands?  
 There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as  
 before;  
 The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound; 70  
 What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;  
 On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

X

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist;  
 Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power  
 Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist,  
 When eternity affirms the conception of an hour. 76  
 The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,  
 The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,  
 Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;  
 Enough that he heard it once; we shall hear it by and by. 80

## XI

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence  
 For the fullness of the days? Have we withered or agonized?  
 Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue  
 thence?

Why rushed the discords in but that harmony should be  
 prized?

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear, 85  
 Each sufferer says his says, his scheme of the weal and woe;  
 But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;  
 The rest may reason and welcome; 'tis we musicians know.

## XII

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign.  
 I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce. 90  
 Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,  
 Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor, — yes,  
 And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,  
 Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep;  
 Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is  
 found, 95  
 The C Major<sup>1</sup> of this life; so, now I will try to sleep.

<sup>1</sup> The keynote of the simplest musical scale; hence symbolic of everyday life.



## SAUL

(See Note, page 166)

## I

SAID Abner,<sup>1</sup> "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,  
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss  
his cheek.

And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,  
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent  
Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet, 5  
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.  
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,  
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,  
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit<sup>2</sup> have ended their strife,  
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon  
life. 10

## II

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his dew  
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue  
Just broken to twine round thy harp strings, as if no wild heat  
Were now raging to torture the desert!"

## III

Then I, as was meet,  
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet, 15  
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;  
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;

<sup>1</sup> Saul's chief captain.

<sup>2</sup> In ancient times melancholy was supposed to be caused by an evil spirit that had taken possession of its victim.

Hands and knees on the slippery grass patch, all withered and  
gone,  
That extends to the second inclosure, I groped my way on  
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I  
prayed, 20  
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid  
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice replied.  
At the first I saw naught but the blackness; but soon I descried  
A something more black than the blackness — the vast, the  
upright  
Main prop which sustains the pavilion; and slow into sight 25  
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.  
Then a sunbeam, that burst through the tent roof, showed Saul.

## IV

He stood as erect as that tent prop, both arms stretched out  
wide  
On the great cross support in the center, that goes to each  
side;  
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in his pangs  
And waiting his change, the king serpent all heavily hangs, 31  
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come  
With the springtime, — so agonized Saul, drear and stark,  
blind and dumb.

## V

Then I tuned my harp, — took off the lilies we twine round its  
chords  
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide — those sun-  
beams like swords! 35  
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,  
So docile they come to the pen door till folding be done.  
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed  
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;  
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star 40  
Into eve and the blue far above us, — so blue and so far!

## VI

— Then, the tune for which quails on the cornland will each  
 leave his mate  
 To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate  
 Till for boldness they fight one another; and then, what has  
 weight  
 To set the quick jerboa <sup>1</sup> a-musing outside his sand house — 45  
 There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half mouse!  
 God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,  
 To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

## VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine song,  
 when hand  
 Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great  
 hearts expand 50  
 And grow one in the sense of this world's life. — And then, the  
 last song  
 When the dead man is praised on his journey — “Bear, bear  
 him along  
 With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm seeds  
 not here  
 To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.  
 Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!” — And then, the  
 glad chant 55  
 Of the marriage, — first go the young maidens; next, she whom  
 we vaunt  
 As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling. — And then, the great  
 march  
 Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch  
 Naught can break; who shall harm them, our friends? — Then,  
 the chorus intoned  
 As the Levites <sup>2</sup> go up to the altar in glory enthroned. 60  
 But I stopped here; for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

<sup>1</sup> A jumping rodent.<sup>2</sup> The priests, who were of the tribe of Levi.

## VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;  
 And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered; and sparkles  
   'gan dart

From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start  
 All its lordly male-sapphires,<sup>1</sup> and rubies courageous at heart. 65  
 So the head; but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.  
 And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,  
 As I sang, —

## IX

“Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit feels waste,  
 Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.  
 Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock, 70  
 The strong rending of boughs from the fir tree, the cool silver  
   shock

Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,  
 And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.  
 And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,  
 And the locust-flesh<sup>2</sup> steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of  
   wine, 75

And the sleep in the dried river channel where bulrushes tell  
 That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.  
 How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ  
 All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!  
 Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou  
   didst guard 80  
 When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward?  
 Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men  
   sung

The low song of the nearly departed, and hear her faint tongue  
 Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more attest,  
 I have lived, seen God's hand through a lifetime, and all was for  
   best?' 85

<sup>1</sup> Sapphires of superior quality.

<sup>2</sup> In eastern countries locusts are sometimes used for food.

Then they sung through their tears in strong triumph, not much,  
 but the rest.  
 And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence  
 grew  
 Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained  
 true;  
 And the friends of thy boyhood — that boyhood of wonder and  
 hope,  
 Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's  
 scope, — 90  
 Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;  
 And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head com-  
 bine!  
 On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like  
 the throe  
 That, a-work in the rock, helps its labor and lets the gold go)  
 High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning  
 them, — all 95  
 Brought to blaze on the head of one creature — King Saul!"

## X

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, — heart, hand, harp, and  
 voice,  
 Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice  
 Saul's fame in the light it was made for — as when, dare I say,  
 The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its  
 array, 100  
 And upsoareth the cherubim chariot — "Saul!" cried I, and  
 stopped,  
 And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung  
 propped  
 By the tent's cross support in the center, was struck by his  
 name.  
 Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the  
 aim,

And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held (he  
alone, 105

While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust  
of stone

A year's snow bound about for a breastplate, — leaves grasp of  
the sheet?

Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,  
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain  
of old,

With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold — 110  
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and  
scar

Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest — all hail, there  
they are!

— Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest  
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on his  
crest

For their food in the ardors of summer. One long shudder  
thrilled 115

All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled  
At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.  
What was gone, what remained? All to traverse 'twixt hope and  
despair.

Death was past, life not come; so he waited. Awhile his right  
hand

Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant, forthwith to  
remand 120

To their place what new objects should enter; 'twas Saul as  
before.

I looked up, and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any more  
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the shore,  
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean — a sun's slow decline

Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and entwine  
Base with base to knit strength more intensely; so, arm folded  
arm 126

O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

## XI

What spell or what charm,  
 (For awhile there was trouble within me) what next should I  
 urge  
 To sustain him where song had restored him? Song filled to  
 the verge  
 His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields 130  
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty; beyond, on what  
 fields,  
 Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye,  
 And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they  
 put by?  
 He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not; he lets me praise  
 life,  
 Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

## XII

Then fancies grew rife 135  
 Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round me the  
 sheep  
 Fed in silence — above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep;  
 And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might lie  
 'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the  
 sky;  
 And I laughed — "Since my days are ordained to be passed  
 with my flocks, 140  
 Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the rocks,  
 Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show  
 Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!  
 Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that  
 gains  
 And the prudence that keeps what men strive for!" And now  
 these old trains 145  
 Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once more the  
 string  
 Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus —

“Yea, my King,”

I began — “thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that spring  
From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by brute;  
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears  
fruit. 150

Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree, — how its stem trem-  
bled first

Till it passed the kid’s lip, the stag’s antler; then safely outburst  
The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when these too, in  
turn

Broke a-bloom and the palm tree seemed perfect, yet more was  
to learn,

E’en the good that comes in with the palm fruit. Our dates shall  
we slight, 155

When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the  
plight

Of the palm’s self whose slow growth produced them? Not so!  
stem and branch

Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm wine  
shall stanch

Every wound of man’s spirit in winter. I pour thee such wine.  
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be thine! 160

By the spirit, when age shall o’ercome thee, thou still shalt enjoy  
More indeed, than at first when, unconscious, the life of a boy.<sup>1</sup>

Crush that life, and behold its wine running! Each deed thou  
hast done

Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e’en as the sun  
Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though

tempests efface, 165  
Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must everywhere

trace  
The results of his past summer prime, — so, each ray of thy  
will,

Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill

<sup>1</sup> “Thou didst enjoy” is understood before “the life of a boy.”



Thy whole people, the countless, with ardor, till they too give  
forth

A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South and the  
North

170

With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the past!  
But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last.

As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her height,  
So with man — so his power and his beauty forever take flight.

No! Again a long draught of my soul wine! Look forth o'er  
the years!

175

Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the  
seer's!

Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his tomb — bid  
arise

A gray mountain of marble heaped four-square, till, built to the  
skies,

Let it mark where the great First King slumbers, whose fame  
would ye know?

Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go  
In great characters cut by the scribe, — Such was Saul, so he  
did;

With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid, —  
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault  
to amend,

In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall  
spend

(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and record  
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story, — the statesman's  
great word

Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's a-wave  
With smooth paper-reeds<sup>1</sup> grazing each other when prophet-  
winds rave;

So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part  
In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou  
art!"

190

<sup>1</sup> The papyrus from which paper was made in ancient times.

## XIV

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst grant me,  
that day,

And, before it, not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,  
Carry on and complete an adventure, — my shield and my sword  
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my  
word, —

Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavor 195  
And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed hopeless as  
ever

On the new stretch of heaven above me — till, mighty to save,  
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance — God's throne  
from man's grave!

Let me tell out my tale to its ending — my voice to my heart  
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night I took  
part, 200

As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,  
And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish like sleep!

For I wake in the gray dewy covert, while Hebron<sup>1</sup> upheaves  
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron<sup>2</sup>  
retrieves

Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

## XV

I say then, — my song 205

While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and, ever more strong,  
Made a proffer of good to console him — he slowly resumed  
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand replumed  
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes  
Of his turban, and see — the huge sweat that his countenance  
bathes, 210

He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,  
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.

<sup>1</sup> A city near Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> A brook near Jerusalem.

He is Saul, ye remember in glory, — ere error had bent  
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though  
much spent

Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did  
choose, 215

To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.  
So sank he along by the tent prop, till, stayed by the pile  
Of his armor and war cloak and garments, he leaned there  
awhile,

And sat out my singing, — one arm round the tent prop, to  
raise

His bent head, and the other hung slack — till I touched on the  
praise 220

I foresaw from all men in all time to the man patient there;  
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware  
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees  
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak roots  
which please

To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know 225  
If the best I could do had brought solace. He spoke not, but  
slow

Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care  
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow through my  
hair

The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head,  
with kind power —

All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower. 230  
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized  
mine —

And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the  
sign?

I yearned — “Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,  
I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this;  
I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence, 235  
As this moment, — had love but the warrant, love's heart to  
dispense!”

## XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more — no song more!  
outbroke —

## XVII

“I have gone the whole round of creation; I saw and I spoke;  
I, a work of God’s hand for that purpose, received in my brain  
And pronounced on the rest of his handwork — returned him  
again 240

His creation’s approval or censure. I spoke as I saw.  
I report, as a man may of God’s work — all’s love, yet all’s law.  
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked  
To perceive him has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was asked.  
Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.  
Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite  
Care! 246

Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?  
I but open my eyes, — and perfection, no more and no less,  
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God  
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod. 250  
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew  
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)  
The submission of man’s nothing-perfect to God’s all-complete,  
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.  
Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known, 255  
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.  
There’s a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,  
I am fain to keep still in abeyance (I laugh as I think),  
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst  
E’en the Giver in one gift. — Behold, I could love if I durst! 260  
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o’ertake  
God’s own speed in the one way of love; I abstain for love’s sake,  
— What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors  
great and small,  
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth  
appall?

In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?  
 Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift, 266  
 That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts  
 shift?

Here, the creature surpass the creator, — the end, what began?  
 Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,  
 And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone  
 can? 270

Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less  
 power,

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvelous dower  
 Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,  
 Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?  
 And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest), 275  
 These good things being given, to go on, and give one more,  
 the best?

Aye, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height  
 This perfection, — succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute  
 of night?

Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the mistake,  
 Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now, — and bid him awake 280  
 From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set  
 Clear and safe in new light and new life, — a new harmony yet  
 To be run and continued, and ended — who knows? — or  
 endure!

The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make  
 sure;

By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss, 285  
 And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in this.

## XVIII

“ I believe it! 'Tis thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive.  
 In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.  
 All's one gift; thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my  
 prayer

As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air. 290

From thy will stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread  
Sabaoth.<sup>1</sup>

I will? — the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not loath  
To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I dare  
Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my de-  
spair?

This; — 'tis not what man *does* which exalts him, but what man  
*would do!* 295

See the King — I would help him, but cannot, the wishes fall  
through.

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,  
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would — knowing which,  
I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now!  
Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou — so wilt  
thou! 300

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown —  
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down  
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,  
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!  
As thy love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved 305  
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being beloved!  
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the  
most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh that I seek  
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be  
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me, 310  
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever; a Hand like this hand  
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ  
stand!"

## XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night:  
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,  
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware. 315  
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,

<sup>1</sup> Armies.

As a runner beset by the populace famished for news —  
 Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with  
 her crews;

And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot  
 Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge; but I fainted not,  
 For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed  
 All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest, 322  
 Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.

Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth —  
 Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth; 325

In the gathered intensity brought to the gray of the hills;  
 In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden wind-thrills;  
 In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling  
 still,

Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff and  
 chill

That rose heavily as I approached them, made stupid with  
 awe; 330

E'en the serpent that slid away silent — he felt the new law.  
 The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the  
 flowers;

The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved the vine-  
 bowers;

And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,  
 With their obstinate, all but hushed voices — "E'en so, it is  
 so!" 335

## RABBI BEN EZRA

(See Note, page 168)

## I

GROW old along with me! <sup>1</sup>  
 The best is yet to be,  
 The last of life, for which the first was made;  
 Our times are in his hand  
 Who saith "A whole I planned, 5  
 Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid!"

## II

Not that, <sup>2</sup> amassing flowers,  
 Youth sighed "Which rose make ours,  
 Which lily leave and then as best recall?"  
 Not that, admiring stars, 10  
 It yearned "Nor Jove, nor Mars;  
 Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

## III

Not for such hopes and fears  
 Annulling youth's brief years,  
 Do I remonstrate; folly wide the mark! 15  
 Rather I prize the doubt  
 Low kinds exist without,  
 Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

## IV

Poor vaunt of life indeed,  
 Were man but formed to feed 20

<sup>1</sup> The rabbi is inviting a young friend to talk with him of old age.

<sup>2</sup> Connect the whole of this stanza with "Do I remonstrate," line 15. "I do not remonstrate that" etc.



On joy, to solely seek and find and feast;  
 Such feasting ended, then  
 As sure an end to men;  
 Irks <sup>1</sup> care the crop-full bird? Frets <sup>1</sup> doubt the maw-crammed  
 beast?

V<sup>2</sup>

Rejoice we are allied 25  
 To that which doth provide  
 And not partake, effect and not receive!  
 A spark disturbs our clod;  
 Nearer we hold of God  
 Who gives, than of his tribes that take, I must believe. 30

## VI

Then, welcome each rebuff  
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!  
 Be our joys three parts pain!  
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain; 35  
 Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

## VII

For thence — a paradox  
 Which comforts while it mocks —  
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail;  
 What I aspired to be, 40  
 And was not, comforts me;  
 A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

## VIII

What is he but a brute  
 Whose flesh has soul to suit,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Does care irk (trouble) . . . does doubt fret, etc.?

<sup>2</sup> The divine element in us disturbs our lower natures (clod). We are nearer to God, who provides, than to the lower animals who receive his gifts.

<sup>3</sup> Whose soul does not soar above the animal needs of his body.

Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play? 45  
 To man, propose this test —  
 Thy body at its best,  
 How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

## IX

Yet gifts should prove their use;  
 I own the Past profuse <sup>1</sup> 50  
 Of power each side, perfection every turn;  
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,  
 Brain treasured up the whole;  
 Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn"?

## X

Not once beat "Praise be thine! 55  
 I see the whole design,  
 I, who saw power, see now love perfect too.  
 Perfect I call thy plan;  
 Thanks that I was a man!  
 Maker, remake, complete, — I trust what thou shalt do!" 60

## XI

For pleasant is this flesh;  
 Our soul, in its rose-mesh  
 Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest.  
 Would we some prize might hold  
 To match those manifold 65  
 Possessions of the brute, — gain most, as we did best!

## XII

Let us not always say  
 "Spite of this flesh to-day  
 I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"

<sup>1</sup> I own that my past was profuse of power, etc.

As the bird wings and sings,  
 Let us cry "All good things  
 Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

70

## XIII

Therefore I summon age  
 To grant youth's heritage,  
 Life's struggle having so far reached its term. 75  
 Thence shall I pass, approved  
 A man, for aye removed  
 From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.

## XIV

And I shall thereupon  
 Take rest, ere I be gone 80  
 Once more on my adventure brave and new;  
 Fearless and unperplexed,  
 When I wage battle next,  
 What weapons to select, what armor to indue.

## XV

Youth ended, I shall try 85  
 My gain or loss thereby;  
 Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold;  
 And I shall weigh the same,  
 Give life its praise or blame.  
 Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old. 90

## XVI

For note, when evening shuts,  
 A certain moment cuts  
 The deed off, calls the glory from the gray;  
 A whisper from the west  
 Shoots — "Add this to the rest, 95  
 Take it and try its worth; here dies another day."

## XVII

So, still within this life,  
 Though lifted o'er its strife,  
 Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,  
 "This rage was right i' the main, 100  
 That acquiescence vain;  
 The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

## XVIII

For more is not reserved  
 To man, with soul just nerved  
 To act to-morrow what he learns to-day; 105  
 Here, work enough to watch  
 The Master work, and catch  
 Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

## XIX

As it was better, youth  
 Should strive, through acts uncouth, 110  
 Toward making, than repose on aught found made;  
 So, better, age, exempt  
 From strife, should know, than tempt  
 Further. Thou waitedst age; wait death nor be afraid!

XX<sup>1</sup>

Enough now, if the Right 115  
 And Good and Infinite  
 Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,  
 With knowledge absolute,  
 Subject to no dispute  
 From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone. 120

<sup>1</sup> Man has learned enough when he has gained absolute, undisputed knowledge of God and right and goodness.

## XXI

Be there, for once and all,  
 Severed great minds from small,  
 Announced to each his station in the Past!  
 Was I the world arraigned,<sup>1</sup>  
 Were they my soul disdained, 125  
 Right? <sup>1</sup> Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

## XXII

Now, who shall arbitrate?  
 Ten men love what I hate,  
 Shun what I follow, slight what I receive,  
 Ten, who in ears and eyes 130  
 Match me. We all surmise,  
 They this thing, and I that; whom shall my soul believe?

XXIII <sup>2</sup>

Not on the vulgar mass  
 Called "work" must sentence pass,  
 Things done, that took the eye and had the price; 135  
 O'er which, from level stand,  
 The low world laid its hand,  
 Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice.

XXIV <sup>2</sup>

But all, the world's coarse thumb  
 And finger failed to plumb, 140  
 So passed in making up the main account;  
 All instincts immature,  
 All purposes unsure,  
 That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount;

<sup>1</sup> Let age decide who was right—I (whom) the world condemned or they (whom) my soul disdained.

<sup>2</sup> Not achievements alone are the measure of man's success in life but his instincts and purposes are also placed to his credit.

## XXV

Thoughts hardly to be packed 145  
 Into a narrow act,  
 Fancies that broke through language and escaped;  
 All I could never be,  
 All men ignored in me,  
 This I was worth to God, whose wheel <sup>1</sup> the pitcher shaped. 150

## XXVI

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,  
 That metaphor! <sup>1</sup> and feel  
 Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay, —  
 Thou, to whom fools propound,  
 When the wine makes its round, 155  
 "Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

## XXVII

Fool! All that is at all  
 Lasts ever, past recall;  
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure;  
 What entered into thee, 160  
*That* was, is, and shall be;  
 Time's wheel runs back or stops; Potter and clay endure.

## XXVIII

He fixed thee mid this dance  
 Of plastic circumstance,  
 This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest 165  
 Machinery just meant  
 To give thy soul its bent,  
 Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

<sup>1</sup> The metaphor of the Potter's wheel. God is the Potter; time, the wheel; and man, the clay. Cf. Isaiah, lxiv, 8 and Jeremiah, xviii, 2-6.

XXIX<sup>1</sup>

What though the earlier grooves  
 Which ran the laughing loves 170  
 Around thy base, no longer pause and press?  
 What though, about thy rim,  
 Skull-things in order grim  
 Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

## XXX

Look thou not down but up! 175  
 To uses of a cup,  
 The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,  
 The new wine's foaming flow,  
 The Master's lips aglow!  
 Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's  
 wheel? 180

## XXXI

But I need, now as then,  
 Thee, God, who moldest men;  
 And since, not even while the whirl was worst,  
 Did I, — to the wheel of life,  
 With shapes and colors rife, 185  
 Bound dizzily, — mistake my end, to stake Thy thirst;

## XXXII

So take and use Thy work,  
 Amend what flaws may lurk,  
 What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!  
 My times be in Thy hand! 190  
 Perfect the cup as planned!  
 Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

<sup>1</sup> What though the pleasures of youth have lost their influence and the graver forces of old age prevail?

## ONE WORD MORE

*To E. B. B.*

(See Note, page 168)

## I

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

## II

Rafael made a century<sup>1</sup> of sonnets, 5  
 Made and wrote them in a certain volume  
 Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil  
 Else he only used to draw Madonnas;  
 These, the world might view — but one, the volume.  
 Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you. 10  
 Did she live and love it all her lifetime?  
 Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,  
 Die, and let it drop beside her pillow  
 Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,  
 Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving — 15  
 Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,  
 Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's?

## III

You and I would rather read that volume,  
 (Taken to his beating bosom by it)  
 Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael, 20  
 Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas —

<sup>1</sup> One hundred.



Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,<sup>1</sup>  
 Her, that visits Florence in a vision,  
 Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre —  
 Seen by us and all the world in circle.<sup>1</sup>

25

## IV

You and I will never read that volume.  
 Guido Reni,<sup>2</sup> like his own eye's apple  
 Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.  
 Guido Reni dying, all Bologna  
 Cried, and the world cried too, "Ours, the treasure!"  
 Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

30

## V

Dante<sup>3</sup> once prepared to paint an angel —  
 Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."<sup>4</sup>  
 While he mused and traced it and retraced it,  
 (Peradventure with a pen corroded<sup>5</sup>  
 Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,  
 When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,<sup>6</sup>  
 Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,  
 Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,  
 Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,  
 Let the wretch go festering through Florence) —  
 Dante, who loved well because he hated,

35

40

<sup>1</sup> The names in lines 22 to 24 refer to Raphael's famous paintings of Madonnas,—the "Sistine Madonna" in the Dresden museum, the "Madonna of Foligno" in the Vatican, Rome, the "Madonna del Granduca" at Florence, and "La Belle Jardinière" (the "Madonna of the Garden") in the Louvre at Paris. The top of the last-named painting is circular in form; hence "seen in circle."

<sup>2</sup> Famous Italian painter (1575-1642).

<sup>3</sup> The most famous Italian poet (1265-1321), author of the *Divina Commedia*, of which the *Inferno* forms a part.

<sup>4</sup> Dante's romantic love for Beatrice (pronounced Bā-a-trē'che) is related in his *Vita Nuova*.

<sup>5</sup> Dante consigned his personal enemies to various places in his *Inferno*.

<sup>6</sup> An episode related in the *Inferno*, xxxii.

Hated wickedness that hinders loving,  
 Dante standing, studying his angel, —  
 In there broke the folk of his Inferno. 45  
 Says he — “ Certain people of importance”  
 (Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)  
 “ Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet.”  
 Says the poet — “ Then I stopped my painting.”

## VI

You and I would rather see that angel, 50  
 Painted by the tenderness of Dante,  
 Would we not? — than read a fresh Inferno.

## VII

You and I will never see that picture.  
 While he mused on love and Beatrice,  
 While he softened o'er his outlined angel, 55  
 In they broke those “ people of importance;”  
 We and Bice <sup>1</sup> bear the loss forever.

## VIII

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?  
 This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not  
 Once, and only once, and for one only, 60  
 (Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language  
 Fit and fair and simple and sufficient —  
 Using nature that's an art to others,  
 Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.  
 Aye, of all the artists living, loving, 65  
 None but would forego his proper dowry, —  
 Does he paint? he fain would write a poem, —  
 Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,  
 Put to proof art alien to the artist's,  
 Once, and only once, and for one only, 70

<sup>1</sup> Diminutive of Beatrice, pronounced Bē'che.

So to be the man and leave the artist,  
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

## IX

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!  
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,<sup>1</sup>  
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him, 75  
Even he, the minute makes immortal,  
Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,  
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.  
While he smites, how can he but remember,  
So he smote before, in such a peril, 80  
When they stood and mocked — "Shall smiting help us?"  
When they drank and sneered — "A stroke is easy!"  
When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,  
Throwing him for thanks — "But drought was pleasant."  
Thus old memories mar the actual triumph; 85  
Thus the doing savors of disrelish;  
Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;  
O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,  
Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture.  
For he bears an ancient wrong about him, 90  
Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,  
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude —  
"How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us?"  
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel —  
"Egypt's flesh-pots<sup>2</sup> — nay, the drought was better." 95

## X

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!  
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's<sup>3</sup> cloven brilliance,<sup>3</sup>  
Right-arm's rod-sweep,<sup>4</sup> tongue's imperial fiat.  
Never dares the man put off the prophet.

<sup>1</sup> Moses. Cf. Numbers xx, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Exodus xvi, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Exodus xxxiv, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Numbers xx, 11.

## XI

Did he love one face from out the thousands, 100  
 (Were she Jethro's <sup>1</sup> daughter, white and wifely,  
 Were she but the Ethiopian bondslave,) <sup>2</sup>  
 He would envy yon dumb patient camel,  
 Keeping a reserve of scanty water  
 Meant to save his own life in the desert; 105  
 Ready in the desert to deliver  
 (Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)  
 Hoard and life together for his mistress.

## XII

I shall never, in the years remaining,  
 Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues, 110  
 Make you music that should all-express me,  
 So it seems; I stand on my attainment.  
 This of verse alone, one life allows me;  
 Verse and nothing else have I to give you.  
 Other heights in other lives, God willing; 115  
 All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!

## XIII

Yet a semblance of resource avails us —  
 Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.  
 Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,  
 Lines I write the first time and the last time. 120  
 He who works in fresco steals a hair-brush,  
 Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,  
 Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,  
 Makes a strange art of an art familiar,  
 Fills his lady's missal-marge <sup>3</sup> with flowerets. 125  
 He who blows through bronze may breathe through silver,  
 Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.  
 He who writes may write for once as I do.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Exodus ii, 21.    <sup>2</sup> Cf. Numbers xii, 1.    <sup>3</sup> Margin of a prayer book.

## XIV

Love, you saw me gather men and women,  
 Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy, 130  
 Enter each and all, and use their service,  
 Speak from every mouth, — the speech, a poem.  
 Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,  
 Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving.  
 I am mine and yours — the rest be all men's, 135  
 Karshish, Cleon, Norbert, and the fifty.<sup>1</sup>  
 Let me speak this once in my true person,  
 Not as Lippo, Roland, or Andrea,<sup>1</sup>  
 Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence:  
 Pray you, look on these my men and women, 140  
 Take and keep my fifty poems finished;  
 Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!  
 Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

## XV

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!  
 Here in London, yonder late in Florence, 145  
 Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.  
 Curving on a sky imbrued with color,  
 Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,  
 Came she, our new crescent of a hair's breadth.  
 Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,<sup>2</sup> 150  
 Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,  
 Perfect till the nightingales applauded.  
 Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,  
 Hard to greet, she traverses the house roofs,  
 Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver, 155  
 Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

<sup>1</sup> The names in lines 136 and 138 are the names of characters in Browning's poems.

<sup>2</sup> The church of San Miniato in Florence.

## XVI

What, there's nothing in the moon noteworthy?  
 Nay; for if that moon could love a mortal,  
 Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),  
 All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos <sup>1</sup>), 160  
 She would turn a new side to her mortal,  
 Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman —  
 Blank to Zoroaster <sup>2</sup> on his terrace,  
 Blind to Galileo <sup>3</sup> on his turret,  
 Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats <sup>4</sup> — him, even! 165  
 Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal —  
 When she turns round, comes again in heaven,  
 Opens out anew for worse or better!  
 Proves she like some portent of an iceberg  
 Swimming full upon the ship it founders, 170  
 Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?  
 Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire <sup>5</sup>  
 Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?  
 Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu <sup>6</sup>  
 Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest, 175  
 Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.  
 Like the bodied heaven in his clearness  
 Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,  
 When they ate and drank and saw God also!

## XVII

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know. 180  
 Only this is sure — the sight were other,  
 Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,  
 Dying now impoverished here in London.

<sup>1</sup> The myth of the mortal Endymion, beloved by Diana.

<sup>2</sup> Founder of the Persian religion.

<sup>3</sup> Famous Italian astronomer (1564-1642).

<sup>4</sup> John Keats (1795-1821), English poet, tells in *Endymion* of the love of Endymion for the moon.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Exodus, xxiv, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Exodus xxiv, 1, 10.

God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures  
 Boasts two soul sides, one to face the world with, 185  
 One to show a woman when he loves her!

## XVIII

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!  
 This to you — yourself my moon of poets!  
 Ah, but that's the world's side — there's the wonder,  
 Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you! 190  
 There, in turn I stand with them and praise you —  
 Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.  
 But the best is when I glide from out them,  
 Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,  
 Come out on the other side, the novel 195  
 Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,  
 Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

## XIX

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,  
 Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,  
 Wrote one song — and in my brain I sing it, 200  
 Drew one angel — borne, see, on my bosom!

## EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO

(See Note, page 169)

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,  
 When you set your fancies free,  
 Will they pass to where — by death, fools think, imprisoned —  
 Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,  
 — Pity me? 5

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!  
 What had I on earth to do  
 With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?  
 Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivell  
 — Being — who? 10

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,  
 Never doubted clouds would break,  
 Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would  
 triumph,  
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
 Sleep to wake. 15

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time  
 Greet the unseen with a cheer!  
 Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,  
 "Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed, — fight on, fare ever  
 There as here!" 20



## NOTES

### CAVALIER TUNES (Page 17)

1842

These songs appear in the first pages of the volume of *Dramatic Lyrics*. Browning shows in these poems his ability to put himself completely into the character and personality of others,—this time, of the Cavaliers or rough Royalist soldiers who fought for King Charles I in the years 1642–1649 against the Puritan Parliament. In reading these songs the essential thing is to get the rhythm and the swing. The first is a true marching song; the second is sung in the smoke-wreathed tavern tap-room; and the last vividly suggests the rapid motion of horseback riding.

### “HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX” (Page 20)

1845

Although there is no historical foundation for this ride from Ghent to Aix, Browning no doubt had in mind the stirring events of the time of the “Pacification of Ghent” 1576, when Holland, Zealand and the southern Netherlands joined together under the leadership of William of Orange in order to combat more successfully the inroads of Philip II of Spain. The actual route covers a distance of over ninety miles. Browning writes to an American inquirer about the poem: “I wrote it under the bulwark of a vessel off the African coast after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate even the fancy of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse ‘York,’ then in my stable at home.”

At any rate the rhythm is again the essential thing. This swing and motion characterize the poem from beginning to end and fill it

with intense life. The reader seems to have passed through the experiences himself. He hears the steady galloping of the horses, first three of them, then two, and finally one; he experiences the tense straining of eyes, mind, and heart toward the goal, as the long night passes; he watches the sun rise and catches the first glimpse of the towers of Aix in the distance; he makes the last desperate spurt and arrives in time to save the city of Aix.

### INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP (Page 23)

1842

This poem was founded on fact, a real incident drawn from Napoleon's siege of Ratisbon, or Regensburg, a Bavarian town on the Danube, in 1809.

It is written in a favorite form of the author's, the dramatic monologue. He leaves to the imagination of the reader the setting in which the story is told and the character of the speaker. The poem is essentially dramatic.

### HERVÉ RIEL (Page 24)

1871

This poem was written at Le Croisic, France, on September 30, 1867, but was not published until 1871. The 100 pounds which the poet received for it, was contributed to the Paris Relief Fund for the aid of the starving citizens, after the siege of the city by the Germans in 1871. The story is a true one, an incident in the battle of the Hogue off the coast of Normandy. France's loss of this battle marks the beginning of England's position as mistress of the seas. How the remnant of the great French fleet was saved from the hands of the English enemy is dramatically told by Browning. The only possible escape from the trap in which the French ships found themselves was the passage of the twenty-two ships up the shallow rock-bound river, Rance, to the safety of St. Malo. After the boatmen and the pilots of the vicinity had laughed to scorn the proposed undertaking, and Damfreville, the commander, had ordered the ships to

be run ashore and grounded, the simple sailor, Hervé Riel, stepped forward and volunteered to guide the ships to safety. When this was accomplished, the only reward asked by the simple Breton sailor was permission to have a whole day's holiday to go ashore to see his wife. In order to appreciate the story the students should look up in a geography the Hogue, the Rance, and St. Malo. Le Croisic, the home of Hervé Riel, is a small fishing village at the mouth of the Loire. Browning was fond of the region and frequently visited it in his later life. Let the French students in the class pronounce the difficult names as—Riel, Damfreville, Malouins, Croisic, Grève, the Louvre, etc.

### PHEIDIPPIDES (Page 30)

1879

In this poem, Browning has gone to ancient Athens for his material and has succeeded in telling a good story as well as in giving us a splendid interpretation of Greek life. During the invasion of Greece by the Persians in 490 B. C., according to the historian Herodotus, the Athenians, alarmed by the approach of the barbarians sent the runner, Pheidippides, to ask for aid from the Spartans. The distance from Athens to Sparta, about 140 miles, was covered by this marvelous runner in forty-eight hours. His mission was a useless one, for the Spartans refused to risk the bad omen of marching out of the city when the moon had not reached the full. Pheidippides, in despair, started back at once to bear his discouraging message to the Athenian rulers. On his return over the Parnes mountains, he came upon Pan, who inspired in him renewed confidence and courage by promising to come to the aid of the Athenians in battle. They were to put absolute trust in him and the day would be saved. The Athenians, encouraged by the message of Pheidippides, fought with unconquerable courage and energy, and under the leadership of Miltiades, won the battle of Marathon. The character of Pheidippides stands out above the story, passionately patriotic, self-effacing and noble.

For a full interpretation of the classical allusions the pupils should consult a classical dictionary.

## TRAY (Page 35)

1879

Browning was a great lover of animals. His mother had early inculcated in him this fondness for beasts, and to her he owed much of his knowledge of their ways and habits. He was an enthusiastic supporter of institutions for the protection of dumb animals and was at one time a vice president of the "Victoria Street Refuge for Animals." This poem describes an actual incident witnessed by a friend of Browning's in Paris and is an expression of protest against vivisection, which the poet called an "infamous practice."

In the first two stanzas the first and second bards' attempts to sing of conventional heroes are interrupted. The third bard's hero is a dog who has rescued a child from drowning.

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN (Page 37)

1843

Browning wrote the *Pied Piper* to amuse the sick son of William Macready, the actor. It was not intended for publication, but fortunately for us, it was included at the end of *Dramatic Lyrics* to fill up the final pages.

## THE TWINS (Page 47)

1854

*The Twins* first appeared in a little volume which bore the title *Two Poems by E. B. B. and R. B.* It contained *A Plea for the Ragged Schools of London* by Mrs. Browning and *The Twins* by Robert Browning. The poem is a poetical rendition of a parable in the *Table Talk of Martin Luther*, which shows that charity and prosperity go hand in hand. The Latin words *Date* (give) and *Dabitur* (it shall be given you) are the names of the two brothers who dwelt in the monastery.

## THE BOY AND THE ANGEL (Page 48)

1844

This poem, though it has no historical foundation, represents the spirit of the Middle Ages. The lesson is the same as that found in *Pippa Passes* that "all service ranks the same with God." Theocrite, the poor boy artisan, longs to be Pope that he may praise God in the great way. His wish is granted and Gabriel, the angel, is sent to take the place of the artisan. But God misses "the little human praise" given without fear and with absolute faith. So once again a change is made. This time the angel Gabriel takes the place of the Pope and Theocrite returns to his humble bench. At Theocrite's death the two appear before God, side by side, the highest and the lowest equal in the sight of God.

## THE PATRIOT (Page 51)

1855

This is another monologue in which it is necessary for the reader to visualize clearly the speaker, his story, and his state of mind. It is well to notice the chronological order used. A year ago the patriot entered the city amid the plaudits of the crowd. They would then have given him the sun if he had asked for it (lines 1-10). He strove to grasp that sun for his people and left nothing undone with which he could serve them (lines 11-15). Yet now he goes with his hands bound, on the way to his execution, while the people fling stones at him (lines 16-25). Meditation on the mutabilities of life (lines 26-30).

## MY LAST DUCHESS (Page 53)

1843

*My Last Duchess* is another poem of the Italian Renaissance period in which we learn much of the two characters, the Duchess and the

Duke who is speaking. The subtitle, tells us the locality, Ferrara, in which the incident takes place. The Duke is speaking to an ambassador who has come to make arrangements with him for a second marriage. The Duke, an art connoisseur, is showing the envoy his art treasures, among which is this portrait of his late Duchess. The sight of the picture starts a train of memories in the mind of the speaker, which he does not hesitate to express, although he is talking to a comparative stranger. His conversation reveals his character in all its smallness and meanness. He is jealous, for he would have none but a monk to paint his lady and even then, the work must be done in a single day. He is hatefully proud, for though the smiling joy and plebeian effusiveness of the Duchess offend him, he would not stoop to reprove her. His cruelty is shown in the fact that he frowns upon her innocent amusements and finally brings about her death. He could not love, for he loves himself and his "nine-hundred-year-old name" too much. He stands a pitiless, overbearing, heartless figure, typical of the Renaissance criminal. On the other hand, his Duchess, aglow with life and love, vivacious and overflowing with happiness, is glad to thank the friendly courtier who brings her a bough from the blossoming cherry tree; she loves to caress the white mule which bears her about the castle terraces; she glows with enthusiasm over the radiant sunset. But her husband cannot bear this indiscriminate bestowal of her favors. She smiles too much to please him, so he crushes her. It does not matter whether he broke her heart or killed her in cold blood. In either case a dastardly murder has been committed. Notice the final touch, which completes our character sketch of this monster man, when as he turns with his guest to leave the gallery, he points out a group of statuary as another bit of art of special merit.

#### UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY (Page 55)

1855

It is generally considered that the country is more romantically beautiful and poetical than the city; but this opinion is not held by this Italian gentleman of reduced circumstances. He scorns the

charms of country life and lauds the city as an ideal place for the home of the gentleman of leisure. It seems to be a characteristic of the Italian to love the city, where he may keep in close touch with his fellows. This trait of character is admirably developed by Browning in this poem. Notice the manner in which the Italian shows his abhorrence for the beauties to be found in the country. He does not see them; therefore he declines to admire them.

### DE GUSTIBUS (Page 58)

1855

The speaker first describes his friend's love of rural England, and then his own love of a castle among the Apennines. Lines 43 and 44 are written on the walls of the Pallazzo Rezzonico, Venice, in which Browning died.

### THE LOST LEADER (Page 60)

1845

The subject of this poem is undoubtedly William Wordsworth, though it might equally well have been the novelist Charles Kingsley, or the poet Robert Southey. Wordsworth in his youth had been an enthusiastic propagandist of social reform and democracy. After the French Revolution, however, he became the most careful Conservative and Tory. Browning himself says of this poem, "*I did* in my hasty youth presume to use the great and venerated personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model; one from which this or that particular feature may be selected and turned to account. Had I intended more, — above all, such a boldness as portraying the entire man, I should not have talked about 'handfuls of silver and bits of ribbon.' These never influenced the change of politics in the great poet, whose defection, nevertheless, accompanied as it was by a regular face-about of his special party, was to my juvenile apprehension, and even mature consideration, an event to deplore. . . . So, though I dare not deny the original of my little poem, I altogether

refuse to have it considered as the 'very effigies' of such a moral and intellectual superiority."

## MEMORABILIA (Page 61)

1855

From the time that Browning, when a mere boy, accidentally discovered a pirated edition of part of Shelley's work, he was tremendously influenced by the freedom and new beauty of the earlier poet. And so this poem is an exaltation of an almost ideal being. He meets someone who has actually seen Shelley and talked with him and he is lost in his wonderment at the miracle, so much so that he becomes confused when this acquaintance smiles at his youthful enthusiasm. He changes the subject; but the thought of what Shelley has done for him remains in his mind and in metaphorical language he speaks of the bleak moor over which he was passing when he found the "molted feather, an eagle's feather." The blank miles around him were forgotten, as only the hand's breadth of ground where the feather fell had meaning for him. The eagle feather, with its association of wind and cloud and freedom, suggests the spirit of Shelley; the bleak moor, the groping period of Browning's early life when the poetry of Shelley came to him and showed him the way. Truly he did forget the rest.

## EVELYN HOPE (Page 62)

1855

This beautiful poem expresses Browning's firm belief that all must and will come out right in the end. It is an expression of his fine high optimism, even in the face of great tragedy. As we read, we find ourselves in the close-shuttered intimate room of the beautiful Evelyn Hope who is dead. By her side sits the elderly man who has loved her so long, unknown to her. As he sits here, he muses on his love for this young girl and expresses the conviction that eventually in the Great Beyond, she will understand, appreciate, and return his love and that therefore in view of this great love, there can be no occasion for mourning.



## LOVE AMONG THE RUINS (Page 64)

1855

The scene of this poem is the Roman Campagna (a large plain in Italy, surrounding Rome). In the ruined turret, amidst the pastoral quiet that has succeeded to the rush and turmoil of the ancient city a "girl with eager eyes" awaits her lover. Contrasting the joy of their meeting with the "centuries of folly, noise, and sin," that the city has looked down upon, he decides that "Love is best."

Notice that the first half of each stanza is in direct contrast with the last half.

## HOME THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

## HOME THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD (Page 67)

1845

The two poems, *Home Thoughts, from the Sea* and *Home Thoughts, from Abroad* were written by Browning on his first trip to Italy in 1838, but they were not published until 1845 in his volume entitled *Dramatic Romances*. In Browning's revision of 1863, these two poems were put among the lyrics, where they seem more properly to belong.

No great poet of English birth has written less of England than Browning and yet here and there throughout his poems are many lines which show his love of his native country. These two poems particularly show us what Browning might have written in honor of England, had a larger part of his life been spent there. *Home Thoughts, from the Sea* was written as the ship on which the poet was traveling was passing through the Strait of Gibraltar. It celebrates the grandeur and the glory of English achievement, and inspires the poet to a desire to do something for England too.

The other poem, *Home Thoughts, from Abroad* is an expression of the poet's memory of the beauties of England in April, with its blossoming trees and its fields gay with buttercups and with the song of the chaffinch and the thrush.

“Far brighter than this gaudy melon flower!” would seem to indicate that the poem was written after Browning’s arrival in Italy.

### SONGS FROM “PIPPA PASSES” (Page 68)

1841

Pippa, the little silk winder, walks through the streets of Asolo on her holiday. She sings as she passes, exercising a lasting though unconscious influence on various groups of people as she goes. These are three of the songs which she sings.

### MEETING AT NIGHT

#### PARTING AT MORNING (Page 70)

1845

These two companion poems were published first in the seventh number of *Bells and Pomegranates* under the title of Night and Morning. The present title was given in the *Poetical Works* of 1863. The speaker is a man who goes from the work of the day to the quiet peace and love of his home and in the morning returns to take up his duties among men. Line 3 in the second poem has occasioned much discussion.

#### SUMMUM BONUM (Page 71)

1889

This little love lyric, written in the last year of Browning’s life, shows the youthfulness of his spirit.

#### LIFE IN A LOVE (Page 71)

1855

The speaker in this poem has resolved to spend his life in pursuit of the woman he loves, no matter what efforts she may make to

elude him. No sooner does one hope die than a new one springs up in its place. Even if he fails of his purpose, the struggle will have been worth while.

AMONG THE ROCKS (Song from "James Lee's Wife") (Page 72)

1864

This poem is taken from a series of nine lyrics, called *James Lee's Wife*. Each of the nine parts is in the form of a soliloquy, expressing the musings and emotions of a wife whose husband, if he ever was capable of love, has ceased to love her. In the poem selected, the autumn morning seems an appropriate incentive for the expression of her philosophy. She, too, has reached the autumn period of life when she can give of herself to the "low nature" without any thought of return.

It will be noticed that while Browning shows himself to be a great lover of nature, he is so much more a lover of human nature that he describes natural scenes in terms of human characteristics.

MISCONCEPTIONS (Page 73)

1855

This is a poem of disappointment in love with a touch of happiness in the review of the past. Just as the spray burst into bloom through joy over the moment when the bird had rested on it, so the lover's heart was thrilled by a moment of his lady's favor, before she forsook him.

A FACE (Page 73)

1864

The speaker, a painter, imagines how the head of a beautiful girl whom he knows would look "painted upon a background of pale gold, such as the early Tuscan's art prefers."

## MY STAR (Page 74)

1855

This poem, which has been set to music, is said to be a tribute to Mrs. Browning. She is his particular star and shines for him alone. When his friends, too, would gaze at it, its light is dimmed. They must content themselves with Saturn in the heavens above.

## PROSPICE (Page 75)

1864

*Prospice* (look forward) was written in the autumn after Mrs. Browning's death. Not only is it an expression of Browning's grief, but it sounds his strong conviction and faith in a personal immortality. Near the end of his own life he said to a friend: "Death, death! It is this harping on death I despise so much, — this idle and often cowardly as well as ignorant harping! Why should we not change like everything else? . . . For myself, I deny death as an end of anything. Never say of me that I am dead."

## THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER (Page 76)

1855

The speaker is a young man whose offer of marriage has just been rejected by the girl whom he loves, whose friendship, shown on their frequent rides together, he has misunderstood. There is no recrimination; not even any sadness. Since she cannot return his love, he will be content with the sweet memory of their friendship. He only asks that she shall accompany him on one more ride which shall be their last together. She consents to go with him, as they had planned before his declaration.

What need is there for regret over what is past, — where he failed and how? It is enough that they are riding on together. Why not be content with the gifts that life bestows? Failure is to be found

everywhere. Is not an unfulfilled ideal better than the glory garland of the victor? "Who knows what's fit for us?"

In this poem Browning develops a favorite theme that life is greater than art. The poet who writes of love in such a way as to thrill the heart cannot be so great as the lovers who have actually experienced the great emotions. Is there any man who will not turn from the rarest sculpture or painting to look upon a beautiful girl who crosses his path? Fame is for him who can reach it; but to the speaker there is no desire to try for it, while he may "*ride forever ride.*"

### BY THE FIRESIDE (Page 80)

1855

The speaker is a middle-aged man addressing his "perfect wife, my Leonor." He is looking ahead to the time when they shall have reached that period of life symbolized by "the long dark autumn evenings" — "in life's November," when life's page shall no longer be verse for them but prose. Sitting by the fireside they will review their life together, feeling ever the "love of wedded souls" which has brought them a true spiritual awakening. They will pass again through the pleasant woods which they traversed together in their youth. First come the hazel trees of England and rapidly succeeding them Italy, the land of youth, the woman country loved by earth's male lands. Italy shall be the guide, and he will follow wherever she leads.

Up into the oft-visited and much loved ravine they go, where the ruined chapel stands. Caught in the spell of the picturesque beauty which unrolls itself at their feet, they stop, and the poet losing himself in retrospection marvels at the wonder of all that middle age and declining years may mean to man.

Stanzas xxi to xxxi contain the real thought of the poem, for in them we see how these two have developed a lofty spirituality through their love for each other.

The lines in stanza xxiii

"that great brow  
And the spirit-small hand propping it"

are descriptive of Mrs. Browning and probably much of this poem is a reflection of the inner significance of the poet's own wedded life.

With the lines in stanza xxxi

“What did I say? . . . that a small bird sings”

Browning continues the description of the scene in the gorge. In the deepening twilight, as the silence grows to such degree that you half believe it must get rid of what it knows, they wander side by side, arm in arm and cheek to cheek. Over the ruined bridge to the chapel they go and peer through the window at the barren interior; gaze at the frescoes and the builder's date above the door and then cross the bridge again — but wait! Suddenly in the quiet and the peace of the forest, as the sun is setting in the West comes to them the one moment of supreme exaltation when they know

“ . . . that a bar was broken between  
Life and life; we were mixed at last  
In spite of the mortal screen.”

#### INSTANS TYRANNUS (Page 91)

1855

There is a striking vigor and strength in the speech of this threatening tyrant. His phrasing is clear-cut, incisive, bold even to the abrupt climax at the end. We feel that he is a man of force, of insight, and of action. Yet, with his power and strength, he cannot understand this other man who for some cause undefined was, in the beginning, least to his mind of all men in his realm. It is this other who is the real hero, who with splendid faith and courage resists all persecution. Temptation and the wiles of the crafty do not affect him. He pursues his course calmly and surely, unafraid. His very steadfastness causes the king greater anger and he determines to outwit his victim in a final great test. Then it is that the proud figure of the vassal rises to sublime heights of nobility and —

“The man sprang to his feet,  
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!”

## THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND (Page 94)

1845

The background of the story is the struggle of Italy against Austria in the Revolution of 1848. The speaker was formerly an important Italian leader. Now broken and old, an exile in England, he delights in living over his experiences in the struggle of Italian liberals against Austrian oppression. He describes his escape from the Austrians through the help of a simple peasant girl. Though there is no historical basis for this story, it reflects with extraordinary clearness and accuracy the state of affairs in Italy at that time.

## A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL (Page 99)

1855

This poem is not based on historical incident, though it gives an accurate idea of the love of learning in the early years of the Renaissance. "Grammarian" must be understood, not in its restricted modern sense, but as one dedicated to learning, or letters, in general.

The enthusiastic students of the dead scholar are bearing his body for burial up the steep mountain-side to the most lofty peak. They do not weep, they sing as they go, exulting in the glory of their hero who, forgetting all that attracts and draws the average man, — fame, love, personal gain — devoted himself to study and the pursuit of knowledge. The swinging, marching movement of the students is in exact accord with the message which they shout.

The bearers review his life as they go, ever higher and higher on up toward their goal. The Grammarian did not take up scholarship as the only calling open to him. He could have done anything; but he chose to study Greek grammar and spared nothing, not even his health, to carry out his hard work.

The parts in parenthesis are the directions of the leader to his companions.

## ANDREA DEL SARTO (Page 104)

1855

Before reading this masterpiece of character drawing, it is necessary that we understand the facts of the life of Andrea del Sarto, or rather the facts given us by Vasari, the Italian chronicler, for it is from this source that Browning draws his material. Andrea del Sarto was born in Florence in 1486. His father was a tailor, hence, his name "Sarto," the Italian for "tailor." At an early age he was apprenticed to a goldsmith, later to a wood-carver and painter. By 1509 he had acquired a reputation as a painter and was known among his contemporaries as "Andrew the unerring" or "the faultless painter." He worked with rapidity and with absolute correctness of detail but his painting was often characterized by lack of depth and soul. Though his pictures are superior technically to those of his contemporaries — Rafael, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, yet the work of these other painters shows greater inspiration.

In his youth, Andrea fell in love with the beautiful Lucrezia del Fede, the wife of a capmaker, and after her husband's death, he married her. For the rest of his life he devoted himself to satisfying the desires and selfish caprices of this woman. She did not appreciate the genius of her husband except in so far as it gained for her the money with which to satisfy her whims and needs. She encouraged him to take commissions which he could not execute well. Having completely entrapped the heart of Andrea, she caused him to neglect the studies which might have made him more than the "faultless painter." He forgot all other claims upon him, and neglected even his own family who were dependent upon him.

The fame of Andrea's painting reached the court of Francis I of France, and Andrea was persuaded to go there to paint for the king. He was fêted and bounteously rewarded in advance by the French king. "But one day came to him certain letters from Florence written by his wife with bitter complaints. Moved by all this, he resolved to resume his chains. Taking money which the king confided to him for the purchase of pictures and statues,—he set off, having sworn on the Gospels to return in a few months. Arrived in



Florence he lived joyously with his wife for some time, making presents to her father and sisters, but doing nothing for his own parents, who died in poverty and misery. When the period specified by the king had come, he found himself at the end not only of his own money, but of that of the king. He remained in Florence, therefore, procuring a livelihood as he best might."

This sad story is told by Browning in his favorite monologue form and the two characters stand out clearly: Andrea, the gentle, weak, enamored man who would have lived nobly, perhaps, had he married someone else, and beautiful Lucrezia, the false, selfish woman, long since grown weary of the protestations of the husband whom she slights.

The picture of Andrea del Sarto and his wife Lucrezia, painted by Andrea himself and now hanging in the Pitti Palace, Florence, occasioned the writing of the poem, according to Mr. Furnivall. A friend of Mrs. Browning's had asked the poet to buy for him a copy of the picture. Since none could be procured, Browning wrote the poem trying to put into it what the picture meant to him.

#### ABT VOGLER (Page 112)

1864

The original of this poem, Abbé Georg Joseph Vogler, was born at Würzburg, Bavaria, June 15, 1749. He became director of music to the King of Sweden in 1786. While occupying this position, he invented the orchestrion, a mechanically operated pipe-organ that is capable of producing a variety of orchestral effects. He visited London in 1790 and gave a series of successful concerts. After his trip to London he was engaged to rebuild several large organs in Europe, including that of the Pantheon in Paris.

Browning shows us Abt Vogler as a great extemporizer. As this poem is written, the musician has just finished a marvelous phantasy of extemporization. He sits bowed over his organ, weeping with emotion aroused by the glorious music he has composed. He wishes that he might have been a builder so that his inspiration would have

remained a permanent possession of humanity. Or if he could have been a painter or a poet, then too would his art have been lasting.

Yet there is another point of view; for painter and poet are bound by conventionality, by rules of form, while his creation comes from the very soul. It is not all sorrow that he feels, for he appreciates the source of his inspiration. It is not he that has produced this beautiful music but the hand of God, which has opened up heaven to him and permitted him to enter the celestial gates and behold the eternal radiance there. Thus, after all, the loss of the music may not be irreparable. The inspiration may come again to him.

Man spends the span of his life wondering over the problem of what it all means. The philosopher puzzles, the scholar studies, and no answer is given. To the musician alone, who has heard the voice of the Eternal, comes the solution. He has lived close to Nature, has felt the throbbing of the Divine within. He it is who "knows."

### SAUL (Page 117)

1845-1855

The first nine stanzas of this poem were published in *Bells and Pomegranates* No. VII: *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* in 1845. The complete poem, with ten additional stanzas, appeared in *Men and Women* in 1855.

The work is based on the incident in I Samuel xvi, 14-23 in which David by playing on his harp drives away the evil spirit that is troubling Saul. From this bare incident from the Scriptures, Browning weaves a wonderful tapestry of color and life. The Bible merely gives us the fact that Saul was consoled by David. Browning interprets for us the music that David might have played and sung. Through him we see at the beginning the great figure of Saul

. . . "erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out wide . . .  
drear and stark, blind and dumb."

Then later calmed, assuaged, peaceful —

" . . . he slowly resumed  
His old motions and habitudes kingly."

David, the simple shepherd, has wrought this change. He has chosen as his first motive the simple primeval songs which will quiet the tortured nerves and rest the weary soul of the king. He sings as if he were on his own mountain-side playing to the sheep, to the quail, to the crickets and to the jerboa.

Then when the tension is relieved and Saul is somewhat relaxed, David's theme becomes that of the "help-tunes" of the great epochs in human life, first of the reapers, then of burial, of marriage, of soldiers and of priests.

Suddenly there is another greater change; Saul is drawn from his reverie, he is awake and David goes on to sing to him of human aspiration. The first is a hymn of praise to physical life, to youth, to strength, to the splendid embodiment of physical manhood, the finest specimen on the earth of the athlete, King Saul. The mere joy of living, the rapture of the plunge into cold water, the deliciousness of food and wine, the joy of deep sleep, all have their places in life. They have all played an important part in the youth of Saul himself; and David, with keen insight into the life of the king, takes him back with the music to those days when he knew no despondency.

With the calling of his name in line 96, Saul comes fully to himself. He hopes, he believes, the evil spirit is gone.

. . . "What next should I urge  
To sustain him where song had restored him?"

asks Saul and almost instantly comes the divine inspiration of the prophet, of the seer. Now he sings in a finer, purer strain, praising the unborn generations and the reward and repose of the next world. In the eighteenth stanza we reach the great climax in which in contrast to the figure of King Saul in stanza ix as the perfection of physical manhood, we find the Christ as the culmination of all human history and endeavor, the greatest inspiration and leader of mankind.

During these eighteen stanzas we have seen the effect of the music upon Saul; in the nineteenth, we see the effect of his own genius upon David himself, as he staggers away exhausted, toward his home, surrounded by visions and cohorts of angels. Seldom do we find in literature any idea of the feeling of the great genius, of the musician,

the painter, the poet, after he has finished the great masterpiece. May not this stanza represent in words the feelings of Browning himself when he had finished a great poem?

### RABBI BEN EZRA (Page 132)

1864

Rabbi Ben Ezra was a Spanish philosopher and poet of the twelfth century, distinguished alike for his piety and for his learning. The philosophy of the poem is drawn from the rabbi's writings. The idea of the poem is that a complete view of life must ignore neither youth nor age. Each stage of life has its worth as a period in the evolution of the soul; but old age, so far from being a period of decline, is the best time of our existence, — the summit from which the experiences of youth and manhood can be viewed as part of the general landscape of life. The pleasures of youth are not to be despised. The conflict between flesh and spirit is as fruitful as it is inevitable; but the greatest heights are reached only when the body promotes the loftiest aims of the soul. Obstacles and suffering are necessary spurs to man's development. His success should be measured not alone by his achievements, but by his unsure purposes and unfulfilled aspirations as well.

The last eight stanzas of the poem elaborate the metaphor of the Potter's Wheel, in which God is the Potter, life, the wheel, and man, the clay from which the cup is fashioned to slake the thirst of God. (Cf. Isaiah lxiv, 8; and Jeremiah xviii, 3 to 6.)

### ONE WORD MORE (Page 140)

1855

A few years after the Brownings were married, Mrs. Browning brought to her husband the manuscript of her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Very modestly, almost diffidently, she presented this passionate outpouring of her love for him. Browning had just prepared for publication a volume of poems which he called *Fifty Men and Women*. To this he added the epilogue, *One Word More*, which is

his reply to her poems. It might more properly be placed as a dedication, for in this poem he gives her not only *One Word More* but the entire book. After the first introductory lines, Browning proceeds to develop the idea that he would prefer to honor his wife in some other way than poetry, — by a painting or a piece of music, but that he must rely upon the only gift which God has given him, — poetry. He recalls the fact that the painter Raphael made a “century of sonnets” to express his love in an individual way, that Dante, the poet, honored his Beatrice by painting an angel. As these men longed to express themselves to the one woman loved best, in a way new and untried by them, so Browning in this poem wished to write, for her alone, something which should express his great love. The culmination of Browning’s tribute is found in the wonderful stanzas, xii–xv.

“Let me speak this once in my true person.”

As for Mrs. Browning, she is his “moon of poets.” The world sees one side of her in her poetry, never the intimate tender side, which is turned away from the world toward him alone.

#### EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO (Page 148)

1889

It is particularly appropriate that this poem should close any collection of Browning’s poetry, not only because it is the last poem which he wrote, but also because it expresses so strongly the triumphant doctrine of his life and of his work.

“One who never turned his back but marched breast forward.”

In regard to the third stanza, one evening just before his final illness as the poet was reading the printer’s proof-sheets to his daughter-in-law and sister, he said: “It almost looks like bragging to say this, and as if I ought to cancel it; but it’s the simple truth; and as it is true it shall stand.” This poem should be compared with Tennyson’s farewell, *Crossing the Bar*.



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