RICAL POEMS OF ROBERT BROWNING

A. J. GEORGE

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INCLUDING THOSE REQUIRED FOR COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

ARRANGED IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER, WITH BIOGRAPHICAL AND LITERARY NOTES

BY

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BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1906

Published August, 1906

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

TO

THEODORE W. GORE

A LOVER OF BOOKS OLD AND NEW

PREFACE

IT is now generally admitted by competent students of Browning that — as a portion of his verse is so far below what is characteristic of him as a poet and artist — such a selection from his representative work in each period of the evolution of his mind and art as will present his peculiar excellencies should be made accessible both to the student and general reader. In my volume of "Select Poems of Robert Browning" — from "Pauline" to "Asolando" — an attempt has been made to reveal the principles which formed the mind and fashioned the art of this great teacher in his happiest moments and highest ideals. The poems are arranged in chronological order; and the notes are biographical and literary, relating each poem to the events in the author's life out of which it grew, and to the characteristic forms of art in his own career and that of his great contemporaries, Wordsworth and Tennyson.

The reception given to this volume by schools and colleges has led teachers in those schools where but little time can be given to Browning to ask that his representative Lyrics, including those required for the college entrance examination, be given a similar setting. For this reason I have consented to prepare the present edition with the hope that its use will result in a desire to read more of the work of this interesting teacher of art and life. These poems represent him at his best in that sphere of the simple, sensuous, and impassioned which is common to all the great English poets.

On one occasion Browning uttered this prohibition against those who would pry into his private life because he happened to be a man of genius:

> "A peep through my window, if you prefer;
> But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine."

During his life all self-respecting people honored this wish of his, and since his death have desired to know only such facts as influenced the development of his mind and art. In the absence of such aids we have had much glowing rhetoric and shrill panegyric,— in themselves somewhat repelling to the student and general reader who desired to come into close

relations with the personality of the poet. His nearest relatives and friends have now removed the prohibition, and have invited those who are interested in literary history to cross the threshold and sit by his fireside, and even listen to the sacred story of how he loved one only and how that love enriched and ennobled his life. In the "Life and Letters of Robert Browning," by Mrs. Sutherland Orr, "The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett," "Mrs. Browning's Letters," "Personalia," by Edmund Gosse, Mrs. Arthur Bronson's "Browning in Venice," and "Browning in Asolo," "Story and his Friends," by Henry James, there have been given to us those elements of perspective necessary to a right view of works of art such as he created. With Mrs. Orr's "Handbook to Robert Browning's Works," Dr. Berdoe's "The Browning Encyclopedia," Mr. Stopford Brooke's "The Poetry of Robert Browning," and Professor Dowden's "Robert Browning," there is little reason why one should be disturbed by the spectre of Browning's obscurity.

The method by which the lyrics in this volume were selected may seem puerile to the critics of the inner school, but to the ordinary reader I am sure it will be of interest. One of my divisions in the

Newton High School (1906), numbering seventy-five pupils, after having read about one hundred of Browning's typical poems, "The Select Poems of Browning," was asked to make a list of thirty-five which had interested them most as poetry and which they would reread for the mere pleasure of reading. When these lists were presented more than ninety per cent of them had included every poem in this volume.

The test which they applied was the test to which time subjects all forms of art — power to interest permanently. With such a test the critics have little to do, while the teacher has much. If the teacher conceives it to be his privilege and pleasure to introduce young minds to the typical works of a great author at first hand, and to lead them to an interest in the life and times — the soil which produced them — he has done much to prepare that natural atmosphere of the mind, free from all sophistication of the reasoning faculty, in which permanent standards of taste are attained.

The biographical notes present the main features of Browning's life, and the literary notes the leading characteristics of his art.

It is impossible to ascertain the date of composition of many of Browning's poems, and therefore I have arranged them in the order of their first publication by the poet, and have placed the date of publication at the head of each poem. In every case the latest text has been given.

A. J. G.

Brookline, May, 1906.

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INTRODUCTION

ENGLISH literature of the nineteenth century derives its distinction from, if not its superiority over, that of any preceding century, from the fact that it has kept close to life — its passion, its pathos, its power.

> The movement it has told of life,
> Its pain and pleasure, rest and strife.

It has revealed

> The thread which binds it all in one,
> And not its separate parts alone.

We hear much in these days of the Spirit of the Age, and perhaps too little of the Spirit of the Ages. The spirit of any age, however enlightened it may be, is an unsafe guide if it does not embody the best of what the ages have found to be true. We are constantly elevating costume above character, the transient above the abiding, phenomena above noumena,

cleverness above style, method above spirit. Our attention in the classroom and the study is too often directed away from the great sources of power to the forms under which that power has revealed itself.

A teacher of literature should present no literary creed to which he demands assent, nor hold a brief as for a client. He should try to reveal an attitude of mind which has been produced by reading and reflection, — an attitude which may be modified by further reading and reflection. His position should be neither that of a defendant nor that of a judge, but that of a guide. Now, the requisites for a good guide are: familiarity with the ground, and a willingness to keep himself in the background and allow us to do our own seeing.

When the Wordsworth Society was instituted, Mr. Matthew Arnold took great pains to warn its members against the spirit of a clique. He said: "If we are to get Wordsworth recognised by the public, we must recommend him, not in the spirit of a clique but in the spirit of disinterested lovers of poetry. We must avoid the historical estimate, and the personal estimate, and we must seek the *real estimate*." Mr.

Stopford Brooke, not long after Browning's death, warned us against those "who deceive themselves into a belief that they enjoy poetry because they enjoy Browning, while they never open Milton and have only heard of Chaucer and Spenser." A third great teacher and interpreter of literature, Professor Dowden, has sounded the same note of warning, and has pointed out the only method by which we can arrive at a real estimate. "Our prime object," says he, "should be to get into living relation with a man, with the good forces of nature and humanity that play in and through him. Approach a great writer in the spirit of cheerful and trustful fraternity; this is better than hero-worship. A great master is better pleased to find a brother than a worshipper or a serf." In keeping close to the great writers from Homer to Browning, we keep close to life, and if we thus become members of the one Catholic Apostolic Church of literature, it will matter little who may be the bishop of our particular diocese.

Browning's early life was spent near the busy haunts of men, and it was natural therefore that the subjects of his work should be man rather than nature. Wordsworth came to the love of man

through the love of nature; with Browning the order is reversed, man is everywhere primary in his thought.

The life and work of Browning, as with Wordsworth, falls naturally into three periods. The first period, until 1841, is that of preparation, in "Pauline," "Paracelsus," and "Sordello," during which time he was gradually coming to a consciousness of his powers. "Pauline" and "Paracelsus" are as distinctly revelations of his inner life as is the "Prelude" of Wordsworth's. In the second period, 1841–1868, from the publication of the first number of "Bells and Pomegranates" to the completion of "The Ring and the Book," he attained a full consciousness of his mission as a poet, and a full command of thought and expression upon a greater variety of subjects than had been seen in any poet since Shakespeare; we have studies of typical souls in almost every condition in life and of almost every form of experience, revealed in verse forms of widest range and of unique originality. This work is rich in imagination, vital in passion, and moving in melody; of highest perfection and universal appeal to the tenderest in human feeling and noblest in human

thought — verily, bells for delight and pomegranates for sustenance of man. In the third period, 1868–1889, to which he passed through "The Ring and the Book," we have less of the emotional imagination of the poet, and more of the subtle thinking about origins of thought and feeling. The romantic element of his nature, the revolutionary spirit, and the transcendental ideals were for a time subservient to that passion for scientific research. As Professor Dowden says, "he was condemned to write with his left hand;" and yet the Browningite of the narrow, exclusive, and sectarian school has often demanded loyalty to this work as a test of discipleship. Such blundering praise as this has done Browning more harm than all the blundering blame for obscurity and other faults. In this period master poems are infrequent, and yet at times the intellectual and imaginative elements are so fused by the vital soul of passion that the result is a "recapture of the first fine careless rapture."

Browning, with his first plunge into the depths said in "Paracelsus," — that poem of his youth where may be found those fundamental truths which filled his life with a radiant hope in an endless future:

> Truth is within ourselves : it takes no rise
> From outward things, whate'er you may believe :
> There is an inmost centre in us all,
> Where truth abides in fulness ; and around,
> Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
> This perfect, clear perception — which is truth ;
> A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
> Blunts it and makes it error : and "*to know*"
> Rather consists in opening out a way
> Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
> Than in affording entry for a light
> Supposed to be without.

Browning's fearless intellectual quest in an age of introspection led him at times to forsake the haunts of the muses and indulge in that fascinating activity of thinking about his thoughts, striving for a solution of the problem of Evil. The poet within him languished but was restored through that communion between head and heart from whence genuine inspiration rises.

"High art," says Mr. F. W. Myers, "is based upon unprovable intuitions, and of all the arts it is poetry whose intuitions take the brightest glow, and best illumine the mystery without us from the mystery within." This was the secret of Browning's work as

a poet, — he illumines the mystery without from the mystery within:

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

This is the note sounding everywhere in Browning's highest poetry, the note which it was the purpose of the volume of Selections to reveal. It is an appeal to the God-consciousness in every man — "what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose."

> But all, the world's coarse thumb
> And finger failed to plumb,
> . . . . . .
> All I could never be,
> All, men ignored in me,
> This, I was worth to God.

It is no easy-going moral creed that we find in —

> Progress is the law of life, man is not Man as yet.
> A principle of restlessness,
> Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all.
> Oh, if we draw a circle premature, Heedless of far gain,
> Greedy for quick returns of profit, Sure
> Bad is our bargain!

Browning's joyous, fearless activity in studying life; the noble aspirations of his intellect and the mighty passions of his heart; his steady certainty that God and man are one in kind, and are working together in the universe; his feeling that even human experience has its part in fashioning man for his place in the divine order, and that it is by certain types of experience, called by many failures, that man marks his ascent on the road to success, — make him one of the world's great teachers.

Thus at the close of his life, having been wearied out with contrarieties in his intellectual quest, he returns to his first great ideal in "Paracelsus": "God! Thou art Love! I build my faith on that!" and reënforces it with all the wealth of his rich experience of years by asserting that man, too, has the nature of God, has the principle of divinity, which is the culmination of the creative process called evolution. This is Browning's supreme revelation. It is this which gives the element of unity to his great poetry, and this element is none other than his own noble and unique personality revealing the sanity of true genius.

The message of Browning thus makes common

cause with that of Wordsworth and Tennyson. Wordsworth's highest note is —

> We live by Admiration, Hope, and Love;
> And even as these are well and wisely fix'd,
> In dignity of being we ascend.

While that of Tennyson is —

> To feel, altho' no tongue can prove,
> That every cloud that spreads above
> And veileth love, itself is love.

And Browning sings —

> My own hope is, a sun will pierce
> The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
> That after Last, returns the First,
> Though a wide compass round be fetched;
> That what began best, can't end worst,
> Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

These surpassing spirits, in their serene faith in God and immortality, in their yearning for expansion of the subtle thing called Spirit, and their belief in an endless future,

> Never turn their backs, but march breast forward,
> Never doubt clouds will break,
> Never dream, though right be worsted, wrong will triumph;
> Hold we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
> Sleep to wake.

Lyrical Poems of Browning

PARACELSUS

(1835)

SONG

THUS the Mayne glideth
Where my Love abideth.
Sleep 's no softer: it proceeds
On through lawns, on through meads,
On and on, whate'er befall,
Meandering and musical,
Though the niggard pasturage
Bears not on its shaven ledge
Aught but weeds and waving grasses
To view the river as it passes,
Save here and there a scanty patch
Of primroses too faint to catch
A weary bee.

And scarce it pushes
Its gentle way through strangling rushes

Where the glossy kingfisher
Flutters when noon-heats are near,
Glad the shelving banks to shun,
Red and steaming in the sun,
Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
Burrows, and the speckled stoat;
Where the quick sandpipers flit
In and out the marl and grit
That seems to breed them, brown as they:
Naught disturbs its quiet way,
Save some lazy stork that springs,
Trailing it with legs and wings,
Whom the shy fox from the hill
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

PIPPA PASSES

(1841)

NEW YEAR'S HYMN

All service ranks the same with God :
If now, as formerly he trod
Paradise, his presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work — God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we ; there is no last nor first.

Say not "a small event!" Why "small"?
Costs it more pain that this, ye call
A "great event," should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!

SONG

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

The hillside 's dew-pearled ;
The lark 's on the wing ;
The snail 's on the thorn :
God 's in his heaven —
All 's right with the world !

SONG

Give her but a least excuse to love me !
When — where —
How — can this arm establish her above me,
If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
There already, to eternally reprove me ?
(" Hist ! " — said Kate the Queen ;
But " Oh ! " cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
" 'T is only a page that carols unseen,
Crumbling your hounds their messes ! ")

Is she wronged ? — To the rescue of her honor,
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,
" 'T is only a page that carols unseen,
Fitting your hawks their jesses ! ")

SONG

A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than now ;
And the king's locks curled,
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn
Of some sacrificial bull —
Only calm as a babe new-born :
For he was got to a sleepy mood,
So safe from all decrepitude,
Age with its bane so sure gone by
(The gods so loved him while he dreamed)
That, having lived thus long, there seemed
No need the king should ever die.

Among the rocks his city was :
Before his palace, in the sun,

He sat to see his people pass,
And judge them every one
From its threshold of smooth stone.
They haled him many a valley-thief
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief.
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found
On the sea-sand left aground ;
And sometimes clung about his feet,
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
Of one with sullen thickset brows :
And sometimes from the prison-house
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
Who through some chink had pushed and pressed
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
Worm-like into the temple, — caught
He was by the very god
Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch !
These, all and every one,
The king judged, sitting in the sun.

His councillors, on left and right,
Looked anxious up, — but no surprise
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes
Where the very blue had turned to white.
'T is said, a Python scared one day
The breathless city, till he came,
With forky tone and eyes on flame,
Where the old king sat to judge alway ;
But when he saw the sweepy hair
Girt with a crown of berries rare,
Which the god will hardly give to wear
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
At his wondrous forest rites, —
Seeing this, he did not dare
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the world begun !

SONG

Over-head the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet ;

There was naught above me, naught below,
My childhood had not learned to know:
For, what are the voices of birds
— Ay, and of beasts, — but words, our words,
Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun.
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the seven and one,
Like the fingers of my hand:
Nay, I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;
And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me —
Suddenly God took me.

THE DAY'S CLOSE AT ASOLO

Oh, what a drear, dark close to my poor day!
How could that red sun drop in that black cloud?
Ah, Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed!
Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.
Oh lark, be day's apostle

To mavis, merle and throstle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights!
But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,
Toll the world to thy chantry;
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
Full complines with gallantry:
Then, owls and bats,
Cowls and twats,
Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!
[*After she has begun to undress herself.*
Now, one thing I should like to really know:
How near I ever might approach all these
I only fancied being, this long day:
— Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so
As to . . . in some way . . . move them — if you please,
Do good or evil to them some slight way.
For instance, if I wind
Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind
[*Sitting on the bedside.*
And border Ottima's cloak's hem.
Ah me, and my important part with them,

This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!
True in some sense or other, I suppose.
[*As she lies down.*
God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.
No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right

All service ranks the same with God —
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.
[*She sleeps.*

CAVALIER TUNES

(1842)

I. MARCHING ALONG

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

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

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry, as well!

England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here,
CHO.—Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

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

II. GIVE A ROUSE

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

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

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

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

III. BOOT AND SADDLE

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

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

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

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

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

(1842)

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

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

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect

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

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

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

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

A CHILD'S STORY

(1842)

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

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

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

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

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

" Come in ! " — the Mayor cried, looking bigger :
And in did come the strangest figure !
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red,
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,

No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in;
There was no guessing his kith and kin:
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!"

He advanced to the council-table:
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!
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 around his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe
To match with his coat of the self-same cheque;
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying

As if impatient to be playing
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,
In Tartary I freed the Cham,
Last June, from his huge swarm of gnats;
I eased in Asia the Nizam
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?"
"One? fifty thousand!" — was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

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

And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
  Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
  Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives —
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser,
Wherein all plunged and perished!
— Save one, who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary:
Which was, "At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
Into a cider-press's gripe:
And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,

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

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

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

The Piper's face fell, and he cried,
"No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
I 've promised to visit by dinner time
Bagdat, and accept the prime

Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he 's rich in,
For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:
With him I proved no bargain-driver,
With you, don't think I 'll bate a stiver!
And folks who put me in a passion
May find me pipe after another fashion."

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

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

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

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by,
— Could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
However, he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
And after him the children pressed;

Great was the joy in every breast.
"He never can cross that mighty top!
He 's forced to let the piping drop,
And we shall see our children stop!"
When, lo! as they reached the mountain-side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
Did I say all? No! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say, —
"It 's dull in our town since my playmates left!
I can't forget that I 'm bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me.
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange and new;
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,

And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
And honey-bees had lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles' wings:
And just as I became assured
My lame foot would be speedily cured,
The music stopped and I stood still,
And found myself outside the hill,
Left alone against my will,
To go now limping as before,
And never hear of that country more!"

Alas, alas, for Hamelin!
There came into many a burgher's pate
A text which says that heaven's gate
Opes to the rich at as easy rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
The Mayor sent East, West, North and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he 'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 't was a lost endeavor,
And Piper and dancers were gone forever,

They made a decree that lawyers never
Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
"And so long after what happened here
On the Twenty-second of July,
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six;"
And, the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it the Pied Piper's Street —
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labor.
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern
They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church-window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away,
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there 's a tribe
Of alien people, 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
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.
So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of scores out with all men — especially pipers!
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise!

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

(1845)

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

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

'T was moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
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:

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

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

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

"How they 'll greet us!" — and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,

With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

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

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

THE LOST LEADER

(1845)

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!

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:
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!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad, confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him — strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

HOME THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

(1845)

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

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows !
Hark ! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops — at the bent spray's edge
That 's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture !

And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
— Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

HOME THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

(1845)

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

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

(1845)

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.

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

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

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

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

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

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I
Might praise him that great way, and die!"

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

(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 :

"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.

'T was Easter Day : he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite.

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EVELYN HOPE

(1855)

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

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

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

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

But the time will come, — at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red —

And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

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

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

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY)

(1855)

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

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

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,

Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
— I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair 's
turned wool.

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

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March
by rights,
'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered
well off the heights:
You 've the brown ploughed land before, where the
oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray
olive-trees.

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

Is it ever hot in the square? There 's a fountain to spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such 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.

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 thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons, — I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

Ere 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.
By and by there 's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth ;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene picture — the new play, piping hot !
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were shot.

Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law of the Duke's!
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-and-so,
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and Cicero,
"And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming,) "the skirts of Saint Paul has reached.
Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous than ever he preached."
Noon strikes, — here sweeps the procession! our Lady borne smiling and smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck in her heart!
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest pleasure in life.
But bless you, it's dear — it's dear! fowls, wine, at double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays passing the gate

It 's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city !
Beggars can scarcely be choosers : but still — ah, the pity, the pity !
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow candles ;
One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals :
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life !

MY STAR

(1855)

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

MEMORABILIA

(1855)

Ah, 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!

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

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

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

ONE WORD MORE

TO E. B. B.

(1855)

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

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

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

You and I will never read that volume.
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
Cried, and the world cried too, "Ours, the treasure!"
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.
Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."
While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,

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

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

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

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?
This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not
Once, and only once, and for one only,
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language

Fit and fair and simple and sufficient —
Using nature that 's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that 's turned his nature.
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
None but would forego his proper dowry, —
Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—
Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once, and only once, and for one only
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal,
Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,
Desecrates, beside, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote belike, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked — "Shall smiting help us?"
When they drank and sneered — "A stroke is easy!"
When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,

Throwing him for thanks — "But drought was pleasant."
Thus old memories mar the actual triumph ;
Thus the doing 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,
Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude —
"How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us?"
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel —
"Egypt's flesh-pots — nay, the drought was better."

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

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,
Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water

Meant to save his own life in the desert;
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

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

Yet a semblance of resource avails us —
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last time.
He who works in fresco, steals a 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 with flowerets.
He who blows through bronze, may breathe through silver,

Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

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

Not but that you know me ! Lo, the moon's self !
Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
Curving on a sky imbrued with color,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,

Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
Fulled she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs,
Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

What, there 's nothing in the moon noteworthy?
Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal,
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),
All her magic ('t is the old sweet mythos),
She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman —
Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats — him, even!
Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal —
When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
Opens out anew for worse or better!
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg

Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?

Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire
Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?
Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,
When they ate and drank and saw God also!

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know,
Only this is sure — the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her!

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you — yourself my moon of poets!
Ah, but that 's the world's side, there 's the wonder.
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you!
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you —
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.

But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel,
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

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

PROSPICE

(1864)

Fear death? — to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle 's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so — one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,

Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute 's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

O LYRIC LOVE.

(1868–69)

O LYRIC Love, half angel and half bird
And all a wonder and a wild desire, —
Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,
Took sanctuary within the holier blue,
And sang a kindred soul out to his face, —
Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart —
When the first summons from the darkling earth
Reached thee amid thy chambers, blanched their blue,
And bared them of the glory — to drop down,
To toil for man, to suffer or to die, —
This is the same voice: can thy soul know change?
Hail then, and hearken from the realms of help!
Never may I commence my song, my due
To God who best taught song by gift of thee,
Except with bent head and beseeching hand —
That still despite the distance and the dark,
What was, again may be; some interchange
Of Grace, some splendour once thy very thought,

Some benediction anciently thy smile:
— Never conclude, but raising hand and head
Thither where eyes, that cannot reach, yet yearn
For all hope, all sustainment, all reward,
Their utmost up and on, — so blessing back
In those thy realms of help, that heaven thy home,
Some whiteness which, I judge, thy face makes proud,
Some wanness where, I think, thy foot may fall!

HERVÉ RIEL

(1876)

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

'T was the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full chase;
First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Damefreville;
Close on him fled, great and small,
Twenty-two good ships in all;

And they signalled to the place
"Help the winners of a race!
Get us guidance, give us harbor, take us quick —
or, quicker still,
Here 's the English can and will!"

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

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

"Give the word!" But no such word
Was ever spoke or heard;
For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid
all these
— A Captain? A Lieutenant? A Mate — first,
second, third?
No such man of mark, and meet
With his betters to compete!

But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for the fleet,
A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

And "What mockery or malice have we here?" cries Hervé Riel:
"Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards, fools, or rogues?
Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the soundings, tell
On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell
'Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river disembogues?
Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying 's for?
Morn and eve, night and day,
Have I piloted your bay,
Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.
Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse than fifty Hogues!
Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe me there 's a way!

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

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

Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide
sea's profound!
See, safe through shoal and rock,
How they follow in a flock,
Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates
the ground,
Not a spar that comes to grief!
The peril, see, is past,
All are harbored to the last,
And just as Hervé Riel hollas "Anchor!" — sure as
fate,
Up the English come — too late!

So, the storm subsides to calm:
They see the green trees wave
On the heights o'erlooking Grève.
Hearts that bled are stanched with balm.
"Just our rapture to enhance,
Let the English rake the bay,
Gnash their teeth and glare askance.
As they cannonade away!
'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the
Rance!"

How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's countenance!
Out burst all with one accord,
"This is Paradise for Hell!
Let France, let France's King
Thank the man that did the thing!"
What a shout, and all one word,
"Hervé Riel!"
As he stepped in front once more,
Not a symptom of surprise
In the frank blue Breton eyes,
Just the same man as before.

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,
I must speak out at the end,
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!
Demand whate'er you will,
France remains your debtor still.
Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not Damfreville."

Then a beam of fun outbroke
On the bearded mouth that spoke,
As the honest heart laughed through
Those frank eyes of Breton blue:
"Since I needs must say my say,
Since on board the duty's done,
And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it but a run? —
Since 't is ask and have, I may —
Since the others go ashore —
Come! A good whole holiday!
Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle Aurore!"
That he asked and that he got, — nothing more.

Name and deed alike are lost:
Not a pillar nor a post
In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;
Not a head in white and black
On a single fishing-smack,
In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack
All that France saved from the fight whence England bore the bell.

Go to Paris: rank on rank
  Search the heroes flung pell-mell
On the Louvre, face and flank!
  You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé Riel.
So, for better and for worse,
Hervé Riel, accept my verse!
In my verse Hervé Riel, do thou once more
Save the squadron, honour France, love thy wife the Belle Aurore!

PHEIDIPPIDES

(1879)

Χαίρετε, νικῶμεν.

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

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I return !
See, 't is myself here standing alive, no spectre that speaks !

Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me,
Athens and you,
"Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for
aid!
Persia has come, we are here, where is She?" Your
command I obeyed,
Ran and raced: like stubble, some field which a fire
runs through,
Was the space between city and city: two days, two
nights did I burn
Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up
peaks.

Into their midst I broke: breath served but for
"Persia has come!
Persia bids Athens proffer slaves'-tribute, water and
earth;
Razed to the ground is Eretria — but Athens, shall
Athens sink,
Drop into dust and die — the flower of Hellas utterly
die,
Die, with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the
stupid, the stander-by?

Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you stretch o'er destruction's brink?
How, — when? No care for my limbs! — there's lightning in all and some —
Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it birth!"

O my Athens — Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond?
Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,
Malice, — each eye of her gave me its glitter of gratified hate!
Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for excuses. I stood
Quivering, — the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an inch from dry wood:
"Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they debate?
Thunder, thou Zeus! Athene, are Spartans a quarry beyond
Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them 'Ye must'!"

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

Athens, — except for that sparkle, — thy name, I had mouldered 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,
"Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honors we paid you erewhile?
Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome libation! Too rash
Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack!

"Oak and olive and bay, — I bid you cease to enwreathe
Brows made bold by your leaf! Fade at the Persian's foot,
You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn a slave!
Rather I hail thee, Parnes, — trust to thy wild waste tract!
Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain! What matter if slacked
My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to cave

No deity deigns to drape with verdure? at least I can breathe,
Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the mute!"

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes' ridge;
Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden a bar
Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the way.
Right! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure across:
"Where I could enter, there I depart by! Night in the fosse?
Athens to aid? Though the dive were through Erebos, thus I obey —
Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise! No bridge
Better!" — when — ha! what was it I came on, of wonders that are?

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

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

"Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no feast!
Wherefore? Than I what godship to Athens more helpful of old?
Ay, and still, and forever her friend! Test Pan, trust me!
Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have faith
In the temples and tombs! Go, say to Athens, 'The Goat-God saith:
When Persia — so much as strews not the soil — is cast in the sea,

Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your most and least,
Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the free and the bold!'

"Say Pan saith: 'Let this, foreshowing the place, be the pledge!'"
(Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear
— Fennel — I grasped it a-tremble with dew — whatever it bode)
"While, as for thee" . . . But enough! He was gone. If I ran hitherto —
Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer, but flew.
Parnes to Athens — earth no more, the air was my road:
Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the razor's edge!
Pan for Athens, Pan for me! I too have a guerdon rare!

Then spoke Miltiades. "And thee, best runner of Greece,
Whose limbs did duty indeed, — what gift is promised thyself?

Tell it us straightway, — Athens the mother demands
of her son!"
Rosily blushed the youth: he paused: but, lifting at
length
His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered
the rest of his strength
Into the utterance — "Pan spoke thus: 'For what
thou hast done
Count on a worthy reward! Henceforth be allowed
thee release
From the racer's toil no vulgar reward in praise or in
pelf!'

"I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most
to my mind!
Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel
may grow, —
Pound — Pan helping us — Persia to dust, and,
under the deep,
Whelm her away forever; and then, — no Athens to
save, —
Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the
brave, —
Hie to my house and home: and, when my children
shall creep

Close to my knees, — recount how the God was awful yet kind,
Promised their sire reward to the full — rewarding him — so!"

Unforeseeing one! Yes, he fought on the Marathon day:
So, when Persia was dust, all cried "To Akropolis!
Run, Pheidippides, one race more! the need 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,
Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died — the bliss!

So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of salute
Is still "Rejoice!" — his word which brought rejoicing indeed.

So is Pheidippides happy forever, — the noble strong man
Who could race like a god, bear the face of a god, whom a god loved so well;
He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was suffered to tell
Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he began,
So to end gloriously — once to shout, thereafter be mute:
"Athens is saved!" — Pheidippides dies in the shout for his meed.

MULÉYKEH

(1880)

If a stranger passed the tent of Hóseyn, he cried "A churl's!"
Or haply "God help the man who has neither salt nor bread!"
—"Nay," would a friend exclaim, "he needs nor pity nor scorn
More than who spends small thought on the shore-sand, picking pearls,
—Holds but in light esteem the seed-sort, bears instead
On his breast a moon-like prize, some orb which of night makes morn.

"What if no flocks and herds enrich the son of Sinán?
They went when his tribe was mulct, ten thousand camels the due,
Blood-value paid perforce for a murder done of old.
'God gave them, let them go! But never since time began,

Muléykeh, peerless mare, owned master the match of you,
And you are my prize, my Pearl: I laugh at men's land and gold!'

"So in the pride of his soul laughs Hóseyn — and right, I say.
Do the ten steeds run a race of glory? Outstripping all,
Ever Muléykeh stands first steed at the victor's staff.
Who started, the owner's hope, gets shamed and named, that day.
'Silence,' or, last but one, is 'The Cuffed,' as we use to call
Whom the paddock's lord thrusts forth. Right, Hóseyn, I say, to laugh!"

"Boasts he Muléykeh the Pearl?" the stranger replies: "Be sure
On him I waste nor scorn nor pity, but lavish both
On Duhl the son of Sheybán, who withers away in heart
For envy of Hóseyn's luck. Such sickness admits no cure.

A certain poet has sung, and sealed the same with an oath,
'For the vulgar — flocks and herds! The Pearl is a prize apart.'"

Lo, Duhl the son of Sheybán comes riding to Hóseyn's tent,
And he casts his saddle down, and enters and "Peace!" bids he.
"You are poor, I know the cause: my plenty shall mend the wrong.
'T is said of your Pearl — the price of a hundred camels spent
In her purchase were scarce ill paid: such prudence is far from me
Who proffer a thousand. Speak! Long parley may last too long."

Said Hóseyn, "You feed young beasts a many, of famous breed,
Slit-eared, unblemished, fat, true offspring of Múzennem:
There stumbles no weak-eyed she in the line as it climbs the hill.

But I love Muléykeh's face: her forefront whitens indeed
Like a yellowish wave's cream-crest. Your camels — go gaze on them!
Her fetlock is foam-splashed too. Myself am the richer still."

A year goes by: lo, back to the tent again rides Duhl.
"You are open-hearted, ay — moist-handed, a very prince.
Why should I speak of sale? Be the mare your simple gift!
My son is pined to death for her beauty: my wife prompts 'Fool,
Beg for his sake the Pearl! Be God the rewarder, since
God pays debts seven for one: who squanders on Him shows thrift.'"

Said Hóseyn, "God gives each man one life, like a lamp, then gives
That lamp due measure of oil: lamp lighted — hold high, wave wide
Its comfort for others to share! once quench it, what help is left?

The oil of your lamp is your son: I shine while Muléykeh lives.
Would I beg your son to cheer my dark if Muléykeh died?
It is life against life: what good avails to the life-bereft?"

Another year, and — hist! What craft is it Duhl designs?
He alights not at the door of the tent as he did last time,
But, creeping behind, he gropes his stealthy way by the trench
Half-round till he finds the flap in the folding, for night combines
With the robber — and such is he: Duhl, covetous up to crime,
Must wring from Hóseyn's grasp the Pearl, by whatever the wrench.

"He was hunger-bitten, I heard: I tempted with half my store,
And a gibe was all my thanks. Is he generous like Spring dew?
Account the fault to me who chaffered with such an one!

He has killed, to feast chance comers, the creature he rode : nay, more —
For a couple of singing-girls his robe has he torn in two:
I will beg! Yet I nowise gained by the tale of my wife and son.

"I swear by the Holy House, my head will I never wash
Till I filch his Pearl away. Fair dealing I tried, then guile,
And now I resort to force. He said we must live or die :
Let him die, then, — let me live! Be bold — but not too rash !
I have found me a peeping-place : breast, bury your breathing while
I explore for myself! Now, breathe! He deceived me not, the spy!

"As he said — there lies in peace Hóseyn — how happy ! Beside
Stands tethered the Pearl : thrice winds her head-stall about his wrist :
'T is therefore he sleeps so sound — the moon through the roof reveals.

And, loose on his left, stands too that other, known far and wide,
Buhéyseh, her sister born: fleet is she yet ever missed
The winning tail's fire-flash a-stream past the thunderous heels.

"No less she stands saddled and bridled, this second, in case some thief
Should enter and seize and fly with the first, as I mean to do.
What then? The Pearl is the Pearl: once mount her we both escape."
Through the skirt-fold in glides Duhl, — so a serpent disturbs no leaf
In a bush as he parts the twigs entwining a nest: clean through,
He is noiselessly at his work: as he planned, he performs the rape.

He has set the tent-door wide, has buckled the girth, has clipped
The headstall away from the wrist he leaves thrice bound as before,

He springs on the Pearl, is launched on the desert
like bolt from bow.
Up starts our plundered man: from his breast though
the heart be ripped,
Yet his mind has the mastery: behold, in a minute
more,
He is out and off and away on Buhéyseh, whose
worth we know!

And Hóseyn — his blood turns flame, he has learned
long since to ride,
And Buhéyseh does her part, — they gain — they are
gaining fast
On the fugitive pair, and Duhl has Ed-Dárraj to cross
and quit,
And to reach the ridge El-Sabán, — no safety till that
be spied!
And Buhéyseh is, bound by bound, but a horse-length
off at last,
For the Pearl has missed the tap of the heel, the
touch of the bit.

She shortens her stride, she chafes at her rider the
strange and queer:
Buhéyseh is mad with hope — beat sister she shall and
must,

Though Duhl, of the hand and heel so clumsy, she has to thank.
She is near now, nose by tail — they are neck by croup — joy ! fear !
What folly makes Hóseyn shout " Dog Duhl, Damned son of the Dust,
Touch the right ear and press with your foot my Pearl's left flank ! "

And Duhl was wise at the word, and Muléykeh as prompt perceived
Who was urging redoubled pace, and to hear him was to obey,
And a leap indeed gave she, and evanished forevermore.
And Hóseyn looked one long last look as who, all bereaved,
Looks, fain to follow the dead so far as the living may:
Then he turned Buhéyseh's neck slow homeward, weeping sore.

And, lo, in the sunrise, still sat Hóseyn upon the ground
Weeping: and neighbors came, the tribesmen of Bénu-Asád

In the vale of green Er-Rass, and they questioned him of his grief:
And he told from first to last how, serpent-like, Duhl had wound
His way to the nest, and how Duhl rode like an ape, so bad!
And how Buhéyseh did wonders, yet Pearl remained with the thief.

And they jeered him, one and all: "Poor Hóseyn is crazed past hope!
How else had he wrought himself his ruin, in fortune's spite?
To have simply held the tongue were a task for boy or girl,
And here were Muléykeh again, the eyed like an antelope,
The child of his heart by day, the wife of his breast by night!" —
"And the beaten in speed!" wept Hóseyn.
"You never have loved my Pearl."

EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO

(1889)

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?

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 drivel
— Being — who?

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.

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!"

NOTES

First Period : – 1841

Robert Browning was born May 7, 1812. It is not without its significance that this poet, in whom was

> A principle of restlessness,
> Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all,

should have been born, like his great predecessor, Milton, in the busy metropolis of London, and of an ancestry which united taste and refinement with the ordinary activities of men of business. His home influences were in many respects like those of Milton two centuries earlier, and like Milton he was ever ready in later life to pay tribute to the father's self-sacrifice and the mother's tender and sympathetic guidance. Living at Camberwell, a suburb of London, he was not deprived of nature's attractions in rivers, woods, and hills, while enjoying the sights and sounds of the busy haunts of men. Nature and human life thus came to be of interest to him almost simultaneously with the arts of poetry, painting, and music. It is no wonder that under the influences of such an environment, the child came to live in dreams. He was educated at home, in music, singing, dancing, boxing, riding, and fencing, until he was ten years of age, when he was placed in a day school at Peckham, where he remained until he was

fourteen. During these days he seemed more in love with nature than with books. He began to seek melodious expression for his feelings, sometimes after the manner of Pope, but oftener in a Byronic vein. His father, fearing the results of such a revolutionary spirit, often inveighed against the temper of this "new fangled Byron." When only twelve, Browning gave his mother some manuscript ballads for which he had failed to find a publisher, and she with a true motherly instinct showed them to some friends, who detected the latent poetic fervor in them; she bought then for him a pirated volume of Shelley's *Queen Mab and Other Poems*, and one of Keats. Soon after this, as he said, "two nightingales strove one against the other," and he became possessed of the spirits of these romancers.

After completing his studies at the school he remained at home with a tutor, and fed his appetite on history, poetry, music, and experimental science. In *Pauline* he said, while looking back to these days:

> So, as I grew, I rudely shaped my life
> To my immediate wants; yet strong beneath
> Was a vague sense of power, though folded up —
> A sense that, though those shades and times were past,
> Their spirit dwelt in me, with them should rule.

He attended lectures at London University for a short time, and then began that study in the greater University of men and things through travel. He was twenty, and had already planned "a series of monodramatic epics, narratives of the lives of typical souls," — the vein which he worked so assiduously and successfully through life. His first production in this line was *Pauline; A Fragment of a Confession*, a poem full of

autobiographical pictures of life. It was published anonymously in 1833, when he was twenty-one years of age, and the expense of printing was borne by his aunt. How little it attracted readers of poetry is revealed in the fact that it was not republished until 1868.

PARACELSUS

1835

Pauline made but little stir in the literary world of its day, although it attracted a few of the poet's personal friends. Mr. W. J. Fox, editor of the *Monthly Repository*, was the earliest of Browning's sympathetic critics, and to him the poet owed much. That the poem attracted so few seems the more surprising when we consider that hardly any first publication of an English poet revealed so much of promise.

Soon after *Pauline* was given to the world, Browning visited St. Petersburg for a time with the Russian Consul-General. He returned to England early in 1834 with this thought in his heart:

> Oh to be in England,
> Now that April 's there!

and during the fall and winter he wrote *Paracelsus*, which was published in the summer of 1835 at his father's expense.

In *Pauline* he had said, "I am made up of intensest life," and this is first made evident in *Paracelsus*. The scientific spirit of the fifteenth century, in its chivalrous quest of knowledge, its noble enthusiasm in life, fascinated him. It was through *Paracelsus*, which reveals the fallacy of the intellect, that the

most intellectual poet of our time became introduced to the literary world.

Song: "Thus the Mayne glideth"

One travelling from Nuremberg to Frankfort would pass through the country here described and would find Browning's description true to the sentiment of the scenery.

The three great teachers, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning, by virtue of the vision and faculty divine, while musing

On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,

have revealed the same essential truth, — the divinity of Nature and Man. In scientific accuracy of description, Tennyson and Browning are much alike. They often describe aspects of nature and animal life for their own sakes; while Wordsworth does this rarely. If he portrays the shadow which the daisy casts, it is to reveal its almost human purpose —

To protect the lingering dewdrop from the sun.

In this lyric Browning reveals only sights and sounds.

The muses are jealous mistresses and will not send their choicest gifts of song to those who plunge into the controversies of the world.

Second Period: 1841–1868

PIPPA PASSES

1841

New Year's Hymn

The publication of *Paracelsus* extended Browning's social circle. On meeting friends at dinner at Sargeant Talfourd's,

the toast "The Poets of England" was proposed, with a kindly reference to the young poet, the author of *Paracelsus*. Wordsworth, who was present, leaned across the table and graciously said, "I am proud to drink your health, Mr. Browning." Browning's father had removed to Hatcham, and in 1835 his friendship with the actor Macready began and brought with it significant consequences; for Macready requested him to write a play, and from 1837 to 1846 he became a writer of plays. *Strafford*, the first of these, was played by Macready at Covent Garden, but without financial success. In the spring of 1838 he set out upon his first visit to Italy. *Sordello*, a companion to *Paracelsus*, was begun in 1835, but as he wished to execute a part of the work in Italy it was not published until 1840.

On his return from Italy, *Pippa Passes*, the dramas, *King Victor and King Charles*, and *The Return of the Druses* occupied his attention. At the same time he began short lyrical pieces, and in 1841 issued the first series of his poems in a pamphlet called *Bells and Pomegranates*. (Cf. Exodus, xxviii. 33, 34.) This idea was suggested by Moxon the publisher, and the expense of publication was borne by his father. The first of this series was *Pippa Passes*, a lyrical mask, suggested by his visit to Asolo, his first love among Italian cities, which was destined to be his last love as well. Mrs. Orr says that the idea of this poem came to Browning when he was walking alone in Dulwich wood, from thinking of one walking alone through life, apparently too humble to have any influence, and yet unconsciously affecting the lives of others.

Pippa is a little silk-weaver of Asolo, in the Trevisan, who on waking early one New Year's day, her only holiday in the year, plans how she will celebrate. She remembers four representative types — "four happiest ones" — the wealthy Ottima,

the young bride Phene, the young patriot Luigi, and the Bishop. As her fancy works, she says:

> For am I not, this day,
> Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?
> I may fancy all day — and it shall be so —
> That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names,
> Of the Happiest Four in Asolo.

Then she bursts forth in this dewy morning *Song of Service,* her New Year's Hymn, as she takes the street, fancy free.

Song: "The year's at the spring"

This radiantly beautiful song, with its liquid melody, Pippa sings as she ascends the hill where Ottima sits with her paramour Sebald, who after having killed her husband Luca, is about to crown her; as they hear it, they are arrested in their vicious lives and change their manners. The song bears marks of the influence of Keats.

Song: Give her but a least excuse," etc.

Some art students, learning that one of their number is in love with a young Greek girl, who is an artist's model, play a trick on him by sending to him letters as from her, which lead him to believe she is a woman of birth and culture. When they are married he learns that she is only an ignorant peasant girl and is about to discard her with a sum of money, but he hears Pippa singing this song as she passes, his manhood is awakened, and he repents.

Song: "A king lived long ago"

(This song was first published in the *Monthly Repository*, 1835–1836.)

Luigi, a young patriot who thinks all kings are tyrants, is believed to have joined the secret society of the Carbonari, and is under suspicion by the authorities. He is visiting his mother, and is urged by her not to think so rashly of the Emperor, when he hears Pippa singing this old folk-song as she passes the tower where he is. He sees how he has misjudged his ruler, and becomes a real patriot.

Song: "Over-head the tree-tops meet"

As Pippa passes the house of the bishop, he is planning her death because she is the child of his brother, at whose death he connived and whose property he is enjoying. When he hears this song his conscience is aroused and he repents. Mr. Chesterton thinks that in this episode of the poem Browning made a literary mistake. He says: "The whole central and splendid idea of the drama is the fact that Pippa is utterly remote from the grand folk whose lives she troubles and transforms. To make her in the end turn out to be the niece of one of them is like a whiff from an Adelphi melodrama."

The Day's Close at Asolo

At last, tired out with her day's fancies, Pippa returns to her squalid room, unconscious of the great work she has done. As she lies down to sleep, she thinks of the silk she may weave as possibly destined to adorn Ottima's cloak, and this song voices itself. It is full of Browning's revelation of the truth that Pippa, having rekindled the flame of love and devotion in the hearts of these great ones, is happier than they. Speaking of the happy instinct which caused Browning to make the central character here a woman, Mr. Chesterton says: "A man's

good work is effected by doing what he does, a woman's by being what she is." *Pippa Passes* has already won a place among poems of supreme glory, which means enduring fame for its author. It suggests Wordsworth's little poem written in the album of his god-daughter:

> Small service is true service while it lasts:
> Of humblest friends, bright creature!
> Scorn not one:
> The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,
> Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun.

There are in this poem no bewildering byways and obscure nooks of a remote time to be examined by the intellect; only the natural passion of a simple and wholesome child-life to be enjoyed by tender and delicate imaginative insight.

Second Period: 1841–1868

CAVALIER TUNES

Marching Along — Give a Rouse — Boot and Saddle

1842

In 1842 Browning published series ii and iii of *Bells and Pomegranates;* the former being the drama, *King Victor and King Charles*, and the latter, *Dramatic Lyrics*, sixteen in all. The latter are original in form, vivid in imagination, vital in passion, rich and true in conception, while they sparkle with the colors of nature and throb with the life of the spirit; they are preludes to the symphony to be. They are verily bells for the delight, and food for the sustenance of man.

It is evident that while preparing *Strafford*, a drama dealing with the great period in English history, the period of the civil war, Browning became an enthusiastic admirer of the romantic spirit of the young cavaliers. This was natural for a youth of his temperament and ideals. Mrs. Bridell Fox says: "He was at this time slim and dark and very handsome and — may I hint it? — just a trifle of a dandy, addicted to lemon-colored kid gloves and such things; quite the glass of fashion and the mold of form."

In these poems Browning succeeds admirably in bringing before us an intensely animated picture. They are the only instances where he takes his subject from English life. The romantic life of the cavalier interested him. Of the three songs, the second is the most moving. The scene is at the height of the civil war between Cavalier and Puritan, and the cavaliers are assembled in the ancient banqueting hall, where, amid shouts of the followers of Charles and the clinking of glasses, a toast is proposed to their picturesque leader. The spirit of loyalty, the enthusiasm, the dash and daring, give the piece rapidity of movement and fill it with picturesqueness and passion.

For the atmosphere out of which such poems evolved, one should read Scott's *Peveril of the Peak*.

The title of the third poem was originally *My Wife Gertrude*. Compare Burns's *Jacobite Songs* and Tennyson's *Hands all Round* and *Riflemen, Form*.

I. 1. **Kentish.** Kent revolted against Charles.

2. **Crop-headed.** The Puritans wore the hair cut short as a protest against the frivolity of the Cavaliers with their long curls, "love knots," as the Puritans called them.

7, 14. **Pym** and **Hampden.** The most eminent leaders of the

Puritans against Charles I. The former was one of the noblest types of Puritan.

15. **Hazelrig, Fiennes.** Leading members of Parliament. The former Charles tried to impeach. **Young Harry.** Son of Sir Henry Vane. Cf. Milton's Sonnet: *To Sir Henry Vane.*

16. **Rupert.** Prince Rupert, who led the Cavaliers from Nottingham to their defeat at Naseby.

23. **Nottingham.** This old castle here was considered the key to the Midlands. Here Charles unfurled his standard and mustered his troops in 1642.

II. 16. **Noll.** A nickname for Oliver Cromwell.

III. 10. **Brancepeth.** About five miles from Durham. It was the ancient seat of the Nevilles.

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

1842

(The original title was *Camp.*)

The events of this poem were associated with the siege of the ancient city of Ratisbon, in Bavaria, situated on the Danube. In 1809 Napoleon stormed and took the town. The blending of the lyrical element in the young soldier's nature — his delight in serving the Emperor — with the dramatic situation — the silent, brooding, anxious Napoleon — the Napoleon of so many portraits — renders the ballad vivid, picturesque, tragic. Browning's expression is most luminous when his passion is the deepest; hence it is in dealing with the feelings of men and women, rather than with their intricate thinking, that he is master of poetic expression.

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

1842

This child's poem, from one of the old legends of cheating magicians, full of fancy and moving melody, was written and inscribed to a little son of the actor, William Macready, who was confined to the house by illness. The lad had some talent for drawing, and Browning had previously written a poem for him to illustrate, founded on the death of the Pope's legate at the Council of Trent. This poem was never printed, but the boy made such clever drawings for it, the poet wrote *The Pied Piper*. "The daintiest bit of folklore in English verse," says Mr. E. C. Stedman. It carried Browning's name into myriads of homes in England and America.

1. **Hamelin.** An old town in Brunswick.
89. **Cham.** Title of the rulers of Tartary.
91. **Nizam.** Title of the rulers of one of the states of India.
179. **Caliph.** Title of the successor of Mohammed.

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

1845

In 1843 Series IV and V of *Bells and Pomegranates* were published; the former a tragedy, *The Return of the Druses;* and the latter a tragedy, *Blot in the 'Scutcheon.* Mrs. Orr says that in 1844 he visited Italy, and on his return journey stopped at Leghorn with the purpose of meeting E. J. Trelawney, who

had known Byron and was the last man to see Shelley alive. In 1844 Series VI, a drama, *Colombe's Birthday*, was issued; and in 1845 Series VII, *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics.* This series contained twenty-five poems in which the poet is seen ascending the heights — his Mount of Vision.

It was during the year 1845 that he met for the first time Miss Elizabeth Barrett, the gifted poet, who was living at Wimpole Street, London. She was living an invalid life, and in grief at the death of a favorite brother. For a revelation of the new life which thus came to two souls, one should read *Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett.* Visits were frequent, and discussions were held on the nature of poetry and the arts; often he left his manuscript for her correction, while he took away one of hers for review. She longed to go to a milder climate for her health, but the imperious will of the father prevented. "He came and prayed over her," says Mr. Chesterton, "with a kind of melancholy glee, and with the avowed solemnity of a watcher by a deathbed." Yet, in spite of all this paternal cruelty, she did not lose courage; her love of her art saved her for the love of a personal embodiment of that art, and she continued to write the cleverest poetry yet produced by an Englishwoman.

Miss Barrett had already written of *Bells and Pomegranates:*

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

And it was for the volume of 1845 she had the greatest admiration.

This spirited poem, which has no historical foundation, was conceived by Browning on his first visit to Italy in 1838, "and

written on shipboard off the African coast," says Professor Dowden, "when the fancy of a gallop 'on the back of a certain good horse York,' which he often rode at Hatcham, suddenly presented itself in pleasant contrast to the tedium of hours on shipboard." It was written on the fly-leaf of Bartoli's *Simbali*.

THE LOST LEADER

1845

While this poem has been considered as a direct thrust at Wordsworth for the conservatism of his later life, yet it was intended to reveal rather a type than any particular character, as Browning himself confessed. He says: "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 the other 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 riband.' These never influenced the change of politics in the great poet."

Browning himself became more conservative and tolerant later in life, for he once said of the English county gentleman, "Talk of abolishing that class of men! They are the salt of the earth!"

The late Senator Hoar wrote of the sentiments of the poem as follows: "I would not speak without reverence of the great genius of Browning, or of the gentle Shelley without a pitying love. . . . I am speaking only of their relation to righteousness and liberty as wrought out in the conduct of states. I am speaking of the history of England for a hundred years. What

did they do for it? What accomplishment for humanity have they to show outside their place in literature? What great moral battlefield, what great victory, did they win? What are the deeds these great men did while Wordsworth 'boasts his quiescence'? I am speaking solely of political achievements. What great leader in the battle of freedom points for inspiration to Robert Browning or Shelley? . . . The name that Browning would blot out shines like a constellation in the sky. The 'lost soul' of Wordsworth, as he said of Milton's, was

> Like a star and dwelt apart,
> Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free."

HOME THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

1845

(As first printed, this title included three poems, *Oh to be in England; Here's to Nelson's Memory;* and *Nobly Cape Saint Vincent.*)

This poem and the one which follows it were bits from Browning's experience when abroad in 1838, and reveal almost the only note typically English to be found in his works. Everywhere in Tennyson the note is personal, English, of the country to which he belonged. His scenery, men and women, social and political ideas, are thoroughly English. Wordsworth's sympathies and ideals are universal, they "span the total of humanity," and yet the atmosphere which prevades his work is English. Although at heart a true Englishman, delighting in England's natural charms and proud of her power and influence, Browning is in no sense a historian of English life and its ideals.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

1845

(First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, August, 1844.)

In this simple legend, breathing the atmosphere of Catholic Europe, Browning has enshrined the most moving truth of the Christian religion: that human praise emanating from the soul joyous in its simple work is more pleasing to the Lord than that which often clothes itself in the garments of formal religious worship. Religion in our Western world tends to become more intellectual, and expresses its principles in theological formulae; it therefore has no place for the child. "Formalism," says Bishop Brooks, "comes from the sheer loss of the poetic sense. When Christianity returns to its normal condition it will be a children's religion."

> Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
> Whose loves in higher love endure;
> What souls possess themselves so pure,
> Or is their blessedness like theirs?
>
> *In Memoriam*, xxxii.

EVELYN HOPE

1855

In 1846 series VIII, the last of *Bells and Pomegranates*, *Luria*, and *A Soul's Tragedy* was published. Miss Barrett now began to grow stronger, to take drives and even walks. "Something like a miracle of the healing of the sick," says Professor

Dowden, "had been effected." Longer resistance to the natural gravitation of the two toward each other was impossible. In March they were engaged, and planned marriage in the late summer, with a visit to Italy. But the opportune moment did not come until the Barretts planned to go to Tunbridge; it was then decided they must act. He wrote on September 10th, "We must be *married directly* and go to Italy. I will go for a license to-day and we can be married on Saturday. I will call to-morrow at three and arrange everything with you." On the 11th she wrote: "But come to-morrow, come. Almost everybody is to be away at Richmond, at a picnic, and we shall be free on all sides." A license was procured, and on September 12th they were privately married at Marylebone church, being attended by only two witnesses and Miss Barrett's maid, not even their most intimate friends knowing of the act. After the marriage ceremony they parted. Mrs. Browning drove to the house of a friend, where she made the event known to her sisters and then returned home. On "Sept. 12—4½ P.M.," she wrote: "I write a word that you may read it and know how all is safe so far, and that I am not slain downright with the day. Oh, *such a day!*" For the next week there was much letter writing in preparation for their flight, and on the eve of the day before she left home she wrote (it is the last of the published *Letters*): "It is dreadful . . . dreadful . . . to have to give pain here by a voluntary act—for the first time in my life." On the 19th she quietly left Wimpole Street forever, taking with her Flush, her pet dog, and her maid. She said to Flush, "O Flush, if you make a noise, I am lost." She met her husband at a stationer's shop, and they were soon on their way to Havre, completing thus the most romantic first act in the lives of two poets. Mr. Barrett, after the marriage,

said: "I 've no objection to the young man, but my daughter should have been thinking of another world."

They remained in Paris two weeks, and then, in company with Mrs. Jameson, set out for Italy. Mrs. Jameson wrote to a friend at the time as follows: "Both excellent; but God help them! for I know not how the two poet heads and poet hearts will get on through this prosaic world."

They travelled slowly, owing to Mrs. Browning's health, and decided to spend the winter in Pisa. Of the life here, Mrs. Browning wrote, "I never was so happy before." Their housekeeping was as plain as their thinking was high. "Their custom was," says Mr. Edmund Gosse, "to write alone, and not to show each other what they had written. This was a rule which he sometimes broke, but she never. He worked in a room down stairs, where their meals were served; she in a room on the floor above. One day early in 1847, their breakfast being over, Mrs. Browning went upstairs, while her husband stood at the window watching the street till the table should be cleared. He was presently aware of some one behind him, although the servant was gone. It was Mrs. Browning, who held him by the shoulder to prevent his turning to look at her, and at the same time pushed a packet of papers, the very notes and chronicle of her betrothal, into the pocket of his coat, and then she fled again to her own room." The parcel contained the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* which have now made her name so famous because they reveal her highest imaginative flights, her keenest emotions, and her subtlest technical skill, as illustrated in the following:

> I lived with visions for my company
> Instead of men and women, years ago,
> And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know

A sweeter music than they played to me.
But soon their trailing purple was not free
Of this world's dust, — their lutes did silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind below
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come, . . . to *be*,
Beloved, what they *seemed*. Their shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendours . . . (better, yet the same, . . .
As river water hallowed into fonts . . .)
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
My soul with satisfaction of all wants —
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

In April they went to Florence, first living in an apartment at Via delle Belle Donne and later in the Palazzo Guidi, the *Casa Guidi* of Mrs. Browning's poems. "We are as happy," wrote Browning, "as two owls in a hole, two toads under a tree-stump, or any other queer two poking creatures that we let live after the fashion of their black hearts, only Ba [his wife] is fat and rosy; yes, indeed!" In this year the memorable friendship with the American sculptor, W. W. Story, began. During the next two years he was busy preparing for the press an edition of his poems, and *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, and she was at work upon *Aurora Leigh*. In March, 1849, a son was born to them. "A lovely, fat, strong child, with double chin and rosy cheeks, and a great wide chest," is the mother's description of him. But the joy of the event was soon colored with sorrow at the death of Browning's mother.

In 1850 *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* was published, and Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. "I dared not reserve for myself," said Browning, "the finest sonnets written in any language since Shakespeare's." It was natural that these years should be fruitful ones. He wrote an essay on his

young ideal, Shelley, his only significant prose work. In 1851 they returned to London, and the circle of friends was widened; but the climate did not suit Mrs. Browning, and they went to Rome. In 1853 Story wrote Lowell from the baths of Lucca: "Of society there is none we care to meet but the Brownings, who are living here. With them we have constant and delightful intercourse. They are so simple, unaffected, and sympathetic."

Mrs. Browning writes: "You know Mr. and Mrs. Story. She and I go backward and forward to tea, drinking and gossiping at one another's houses, and our husbands hold the reins." They returned to Florence in May, 1853. Plans were now made for the publication of *Men and Women*, in two volumes, and two volumes of Mrs. Browning's; this necessitated their going to London to superintend the work.

In *Evelyn Hope* the passion has become by the death of its object a spiritual longing for its realization in the next world. The poem is as fresh and wholesome as Wordsworth's *Lucy Poems*, Burns's *To Mary in Heaven* and *Prayer for Mary*, or Landor's *Rose Aylmer*; it appeals to all classes, because free from the atmosphere of the laboratory on the one hand and of the cloister on the other. Here, assuredly, Browning agrees with the greatest poetic artists that

> Song 's our art.

"Not the saintly ascetic," says Mr. C. H. Herford, "nor the doer of good works, but the artist and lover dominated his imagination." Cf. Wordsworth, *Highland Girl*, for a contrast in treatment of love.

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY

1855

This picture is full of that subtle play of humor which is Browning's best. Its revelations are true to much of the life of a large class of the present day, — a class of men and women who have no resources within themselves, and who when alone with books and nature are most miserable. Their nerves are worn so bare that rest is pain; activity in the busy crowd is their only recreation.

42. **Pulcinello.** Italian for clown.

49. Has nearly equalled St. Paul.

52. **Seven swords.** Alluding to "the seven sorrows of Our Lady." Browning uses this symbol amid the gayety of dress to reveal peculiarities of the people.

56. **Oil pays.** Town dues have to be paid on all provisions entering cities of Italy.

60. **Yellow candles.** Used at funerals and penitential rites.

MY STAR

1855

This poem might be styled "Any Husband to any Wife," in its revelation of

> The gleam,
> The light that never was, on sea or land,
> The consecration and the poet's dream.

It is without doubt Browning's tribute to his wife. Cf. Wordsworth, *She was a Phantom of Delight.*

MEMORABILIA

1855

"Composed," says Dr. Berdoe, "in the Roman Campagna in the winter of 1853–54."

This poem originated in the fact that when on one occasion Browning was in a London bookstore, he overheard a stranger say that he had seen and spoken to Shelley. Years after this Browning wrote: "I have not yet forgotten how strangely the sight of one who had spoken with Shelley affected me."

It is one of the few poems in which Browning lays aside his dramatic masque and speaks in *propria persona*. The memory of his first discovery of Shelley while crossing a tract of life otherwise uninteresting, gives the time and place distinction by suggesting, as did the eagle's feather, that there are men who, while they inhabit the upper regions, at times drop celestial plumage in the path of ordinary mortals.

Browning's youthful enthusiasm for Shelley is revealed in the following, from *Pauline:*

> Sun-treader, life and light be thine forever!
> Thou art gone from us; years go by and spring
> Gladdens and the young earth is beautiful,
> Yet thy songs come not, other bards arise.
> But none like thee: they stand, thy majesties,
> Like mighty works which tell some spirit there
> Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
> Till, its long task completed, it hath risen
> And left us, never to return, and all
> Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain.

What Browning's idea of Shelley was in 1885 is seen in a letter which he wrote to Dr. Furnivall, quoted by Professor Dowden: "For myself I painfully contrast my notions of Shelley the *man* and Shelley, well, even the poet, with what they were sixty years ago."

ONE WORD MORE

1855

This epilogue to his "fifty men and women" is Browning's *Epithalamium*, — his expression of joy, peace, and high endeavor which his marriage brought him. It should be read with the similar revelations of domestic happiness of his two great contemporaries, Wordsworth and Tennyson, who owed quite as much of their success as poets to noble women as did Browning, albeit in a different way. They all reveal the power of the woman of their love to keep them true to a high ideal of art and life. See Wordsworth, "O dearer far than light and life are dear," and Tennyson, "Dear, near and true, no truer time itself," etc.

22. **San Sisto.** In Dresden. **Foligno.** In the Vatican.
23. In the Pitti Palace.
57. **Bice.** Beatrice
58. **Picture.** By Giotto.
136–139. Titles of poems in *Men and Women.*

PROSPICE

1864

First appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1864.

(The original title was *James Lee.*)

Before *Men and Women* issued from the press in the fall of 1855, the Brownings went to Paris and spent the winter there. They returned to London in June, 1856, because of their anxiety for the health of their friend, John Kenyon. In the autumn they went to Florence.

It was in 1858 that Hawthorne and other Americans became acquainted with the Brownings, and it is from them that we get some of the most interesting and valuable information of their life in Florence.

Mr. William Sharp says: "It is, strangely enough, from Americans that we have the best accounts of the Brownings in their life at Casa Guidi. From R. H. Stoddard, Bayard Taylor, Nathaniel Hawthorne, George Stillman Hillard, and W. W. Story." In this year they spent some time in Paris, where Browning's father was living. On returning to Florence the winter was found to be too severe for Mrs. Browning, and they went to Rome. From this time until 1861 they lived either in Rome or in Florence. Browning was now modelling in clay in the studio of his friend Story, but no diversion could drive away the feeling of anxiety for his wife's health. Suffering from a bronchial attack not considered serious, early in the morning of June 29, 1861, "while talking, jesting, and giving expression to her love in tenderest moods," says W. W. Story, she passed from him, at Casa Guidi. She was buried in the

Protestant Cemetery at Forence, where now stands the beautiful memorial of her designed by Lord Leighton.

The municipality of Florence placed a tablet in the walls of Casa Guidi with the following from the poet Tommaseo:

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

Browning's nature was a strong one, but the loss of such associations as had glorified his life and art was well-nigh insupportable. "I shall grow still, I hope," he said, "but my root is taken." Special help came to him at this time from a generous and gifted American lady, Mrs. Blagden, who had been a friend of the family in Florence. He soon went to London, chiefly in order to give his son an English education. In his home at Warwick Crescent he lived in retirement and loneliness save for an occasional vacation in the Pyrenees or in Brittany, although hard at work on a new volume of his poems. Early in 1863 he abandoned his habit of seclusion, as being "morbid and unworthy," as Mr. Gosse says, "and began to seek recreation at dining-table, concert-hall, and places of refined entertainment," as means of escape for his restless energy. In 1864 the new volume, *Dramatis Personæ*, eighteen poems, was published.

Prospice, like *One Word More*, is full of revelations of the poet's personal love. It was written in the autumn following her death, and reveals his heroic determination, through the memory of her love, to meet and conquer all the enemies of faith and hope in personal immortality. It is a trumpet-call

to all who are wavering. It is as characteristic of Browning as *Crossing the Bar* is of Tennyson, and *Afterthought*, of Wordsworth.

Third Period, 1868–1889

THE RING AND THE BOOK

1868-9

O Lyric Love

Between 1865 and 1876 Browning lived in London, but made frequent visits to France, Normandy, and Scotland. The loss of his father, and of his sister-in-law, Miss Arabella Barrett, bore heavily upon him. Honor came to him from an increasing number of readers of his poetry. As so many were young men of Oxford and Cambridge, he wrote: "All my new cultivators are young men." He was made honorary Fellowof Balliol through his friendship with the great teacher Benjamin Jowett.

This exquisite lyric is the posy to the ring in *The Ring and the Book*. It is a cry from the depths of his passionate heart to the gentle soul which had passed on to become his better angel. Thought and feeling become united in a noble elegy, profound, and subtle, yet sweet and moving with its solemn music.

HERVÉ RIEL

1876

After the death of Mrs. Blagden, in 1872, Miss Ann Egerton-Smith, a woman of wealth and refinement, whom he had

known in Florence, became an inmate of his home and an influence in his life.

Hervé Riel was written during Browning's visit to Le Croisic, a little town in Brittany, in 1867. It was first printed in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1871, and the proceeds (£100) sent to the people of Paris, who were suffering from the results of the Franco-Prussian war. The facts regarding the Breton sailor as given by the poet are essentially historical, but had been forgotten until this poem recalled them. Records show that the holiday was for life. It is significant of the poet's sympathies that this dashing ballad of the sea, heroic in devotion to home and fatherland, should be in every detail of thought and feeling instinct with the soul of a Breton sailor from Le Croisic. For a similar type of English sailors' heroism see Tennyson's *Revenge*.

1. **Hogue.** The naval battle of La Hogue in 1692, on the rocky Norman coast, crushed the attempts of the French Jacobites to restore James II to the English throne.

5. **Saint Malo.** On northern coast of France.

30. **Plymouth Sound.** On the coast of Cornwall and Devon.

43. **Tourville.** Commander of the French fleet.

44. **Croisickese.** A native of Le Croisic.

46. **Malouins.** Inhabitants of Malo.

PHEIDIPPIDES

1879

In 1872 Browning dedicated a volume of his poems "To Alfred Tennyson. In poetry illustrious and consummate; in friendship noble and sincere." In the preface to that volume

he paid his compliments to those who had complained that he was obscure, saying, "Nor do I apprehend any more charges of being wilfully obscure, unconsciously careless, or perversely harsh." About this time he wrote to a friend: "I can have little doubt that my writing has been in the main too hard for many I should have been pleased to communicate with; but I never designedly tried to puzzle people, as some of my critics have supposed. On the other hand, I never pretended to offer such literature as should be a substitute for a cigar or a game at dominoes to an idle man. So, perhaps, on the whole, I get my deserts and something over, — not a crowd, but a few I value more."

After the death of his wife, Browning did not return to Italy until the fall of 1878, from which time until his death he spent a part of each year at Venice or Asolo.

In 1879 Browning published the first series of *Dramatic Idyls.* While he is interested mainly in the Epic of Thought, which yields a philosophy of life, he often has the genuine Homeric delight in the Epic of Action, which attracts us by pictures of noble personalities. In Hervé Riel and Pheidippides, heroic idyls of different times and nations, he touches those feelings which respond to the folk-lore of all peoples. He gives us the riches of ballad literature, — a natural, as contrasted with a literary poetry.

This idyl of heroic devotion is based on Greek legendary history as given by Herodotus (Book VI) and others. It falls naturally into three parts. The first reveals how the Athenian athlete Pheidippides ran two days and two nights to reach Sparta and implore her aid against the Persians; the second introduces Miltiades, asking what reward Pan promised him; the third, revealing the pathos and power of the old story,

shows how the youth fought at Marathon. This is another illustration of Browning's "apparent failure" which is highest success; in this respect Browning's narrative ballads differ from the old folk-ballads, which never reach a climax of passion; the feeling is distributed throughout. Cf. Mrs. Browning's *The Dead Pan*.

Mrs. Orr calls attention to the metre here, which the poet created as specially fit for such a poem.

χαίρετε νικῶμεν. Rejoice, we conquer!

4, 5. **Her.** Minerva. **Ye.** Diana.

8. **Pan.** The goat god, the pasturer, the god of the shepherds.

9. **Tettix.** The Athenians wore the golden grasshopper in the hair.

31. **Athene.** Patron goddess of Athens.

32. **Phoibos.** Apollo. **Artemis.** Diana.

47. **Filleted.** Sacrificial.

49. **Oak,** etc. Used in making the wreaths for victors.

52. **Parnes.** A mountain above Tegea, now called Ozia.

62. **Erebos.** Lower world.

105. **Marathon day.** B. C. Sept. 490. Patriots' Day of Greece, as it saved her from the Persians.

109. **Fennel-field.** The Greek for fennel was ὁ Μάραθρὼν (Marathon). In this lies the significance of Pan's gift to Pheidippides.

MULÉYKEH

1880

In 1880 Browning made the acquaintance of an American lady, Mrs. Arthur Bronson, who was living at Asolo. Through

her generous hospitality and ready sympathy, she became associated with the remaining years of his life. In this year he published the second series of *Dramatic Idyls*.

In *Muléykeh*, a pathetic idyl of the East, Browning makes central a characteristic feature of oriental character, — the affection of man for his noble associate, the horse. Hoseyn, who was despised for his poverty, had a beautiful horse, the envy of Duhl, who sought to get possession of her, — by fair means at first, — and at last by foul, in which he succeeds, thus giving the romance to the story, as it is told by Browning, the race and its results. Such a poem as this, full of action and passion, would seem naturally to belong to the period of youth rather than to that of age. Here Browning reveals his power "to recapture the first fine careless rapture." The pathetic close, as Professor Dowden says, "shows that to perfect love, pride in the supremacy of the beloved is more than possession."

Cf. Kipling's *The Ballad of East and West* for one element of this poem and Wordsworth's *Hart Leap Well* for the other.

EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO

1889

From 1884 to 1889 Browning's life was quiet and uneventful, although full of interest; there was little searching, but much rest and peace in the enjoyment of those truths of the heart which, once wakened, perish never. There was a sweetness and graciousness in his old age born of serenity and the assur-

ance that he had attained, not to the very things for which he had sought, but to something infinitely higher, that

> Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
> We feel that we are greater than we knew.

"Love, honor, troops of friends," came to him, and he acknowledged them all with a full heart.

He spent a part of almost every year in travel, mostly in Italy, and when in 1885 his son visited there, for the first time since childhood, he thought of securing a haven of rest from the storms of age, and negotiated for the Palazzo Manzoni, which he considered the loveliest house in Venice. When the bargain was about to be closed, he found to his great disappointment that the foundations were not sound, and the cherished hope had to be abandoned.

In 1887 he published a volume, *Parleyings with Certain People,* which revealed that he still loved the intellectual gymnastics of his middle life. While the subjects are varied, only here and there is to be found the fascinating lyrical cry, or any descriptive beauty, and it is evident, as Mr. Stopford Brooke says, that "imagination such as belongs to a poet has deserted Browning."

It was in this year that he changed his London residence from Warwick Crescent to De Vere Gardens. In Italy he and his sister were guests of Mrs. Bronson in Venice. In 1888 his son, soon after his marriage, acquired the Palazzo Rezzonico, on the Grand Canal, and there he found a "corner for his old age." In the spring of 1889 he was in England, but returned to Italy in July. He was delighted to visit Asolo, fragrant with the memory of Pippa's songs, and said to Mrs. Bronson: "I was right to fall in love with the place fifty years ago, was

I not?" He even planned to purchase a house there, where he might spend his summers, enjoying the life with nature. "It shall have a tower," he said, "whence I can see Venice at every hour of the day, and I shall call it Pippa's Tower." On his return to Venice in November, full of plans for the future, he began to have some discomfort from shortness of breath, which interfered with vigorous exercise; and, having taken cold, physicians perceived the gravity of the situation. He had already arranged for a new volume of his poems, *Asolando*, to be brought out in England, and on the evening of December 12, as he lay in bed, he heard the great bell of San Marco strike ten and asked if there were any news of the volume. His son read him a telegram telling that it was that day published, and of the great prospects of its sale. The aged poet smiled and said, "How gratifying!" and passed away.

A private service was held in the Palazzo Rezzonico. Then the body was taken to De Vere Gardens; and on the last day of the year, amid a throng of mourners of all classes, to the music of Mrs. Browning's "He giveth his beloved sleep," it was laid at rest in Westminster Abbey.

The city of Venice affixed a memorial tablet to the Rezzonico Palace with the following inscription:

A
ROBERTO BROWNING
MORTO EN QUESTO PALAZZO
Il 12 *Dicembre* 1889
VENEZIE
POSE

"Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside it, 'Italy.'"

Asolo also placed a tablet on the house which Browning had occupied there.

Asolando was dedicated "To Mrs. Arthur Bronson. To whom but you, dear Friend, should I dedicate verses — some few written, all of them supervised, in the comfort of your presence."

The volume reveals the sights and sounds, the joyous reveries and noble emotions, his vespers on that evening of Extraordinary Beauty and Splendor — his closing years.

> But 't is endued with power to stay,
> And sanctify one closing day,
> That frail mortality may see —
> What is ? — ah no, but what *can* be.

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