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**BROWNING**

SECTION III

General Editor

GEO. P. BAKER



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**The Belles-Lettres Series**

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SECTION III

**THE ENGLISH DRAMA**

FROM ITS BEGINNING TO THE PRESENT DAY

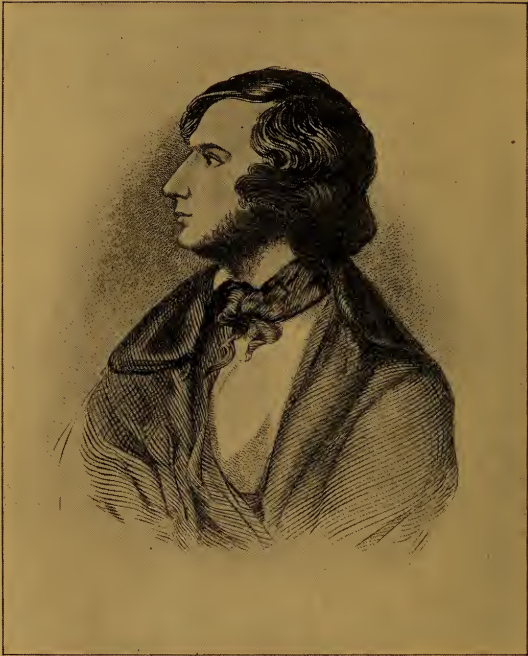
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GENERAL EDITOR

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BROWNING IN 1835

Engraved by J. G. Armytage

A BLOT IN THE  
'SCUTCHEON  
COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY  
A SOUL'S TRAGEDY  
AND  
IN A BALCONY

BY ROBERT BROWNING

EDITED BY

ARLO BATES

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE  
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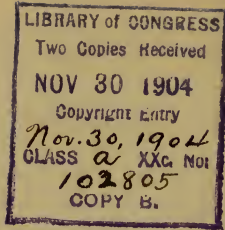
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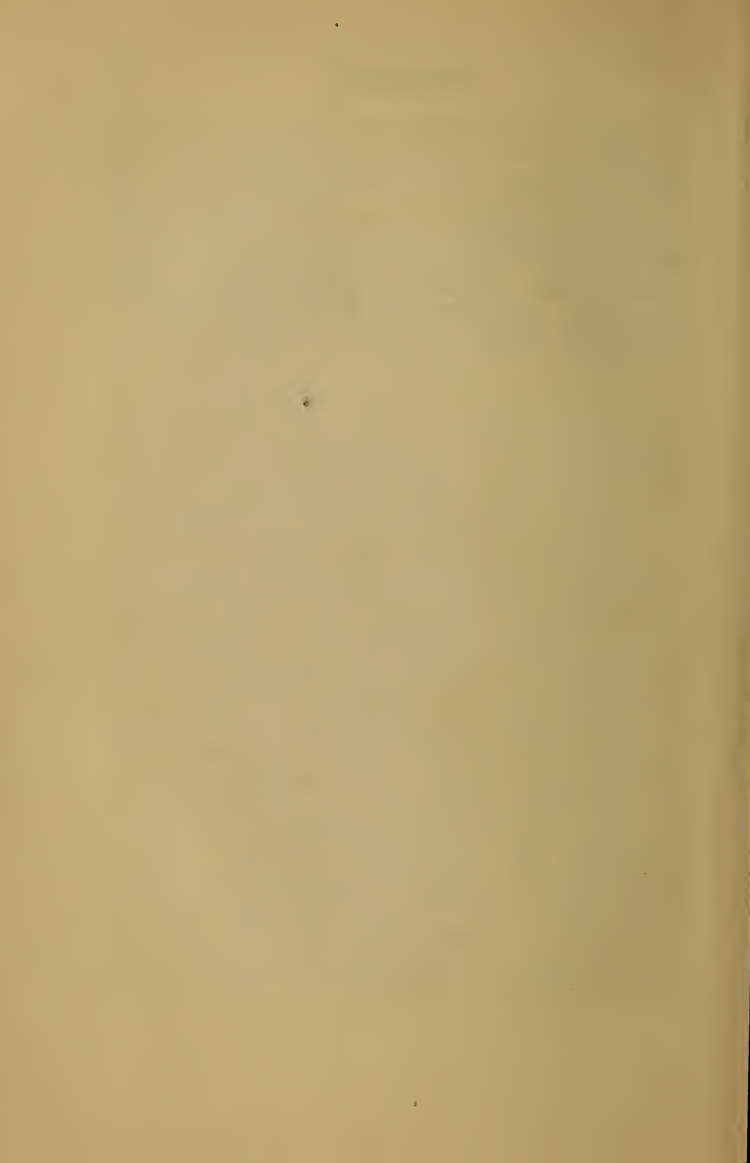


## Biography

ROBERT BROWNING was born May 7, 1812, in the Parish of St. Giles, Camberwell, London. His father was a bank clerk, but a man of cultivation and refined tastes. The boy was educated at a private school and by a tutor, and perhaps more by the intellectual and artistic atmosphere of his home than by either. He read largely, and tells how greatly he was delighted and impressed by the poems of Shelley, which came into his hands when he was a dozen years old. He attended lectures at University College, London, for a short time, but did not go either to Cambridge or Oxford. His first published poem, *Pauline*, appeared in January, 1833. In that year and the next he traveled in Russia and Italy, and in 1835 brought out *Paracelsus*. He made the acquaintance of Macready, the tragedian, who suggested the writing of a play, and the result was *Strafford*, acted and published in 1837. *Sordello* came next, 1840, and in 1841 Browning began the publication of *Bells and Pomegranates*. These poems appeared at irregular intervals in shilling numbers badly printed and bound in yellow paper covers. They included *Dramatic Lyrics*, 1842, *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, 1845, the dramas: *Pippa Passes*, 1841; *King Victor and King Charles*, 1842; *The Return of the Druses* and *A Blot in the Scutcheon*, 1843; *Colombe's Birthday*, 1844; *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*, 1846; *In a Balcony*, 1853. In 1846 he married the poetess, Elizabeth Barrett, and went to Italy. His only child, Robert Barrett Browning, was born in 1849. Mrs. Browning died in 1861. After the death of his wife, Browning divided his time

between England and the Continent, although Italy is perhaps to be regarded as having been his home. His reputation as a poet, though of slow growth, was well established during his lifetime, and his output was almost uninterrupted. The bulk of his work is large, and when the quality is considered is amazing. In 1850 he published *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*. *Men and Women* appeared in 1855, and *Dramatis Personæ* in 1864. In these two collections of lyrics are some of those which most strikingly combine Browning's deep insight into life with his command of melody, although it must be conceded that as time went on the lyric form became less satisfactory. In 1868-9 the poet published *The Ring and the Book*, the most wonderful poem of the latter half of the century and perhaps the most amazing *tour de force* in all literature. In the two books entitled *Pompilia* and *The Pope*, Browning is at the height of his superb power, both for matter and for form. After this came the beautiful paraphrases from the Greek tragedians, *Balaustion's Adventure* (1871) and *Aristophanes' Apology* (1875); several volumes, — *Jocoseria*, 1883, *Ferishtah's Fancies*, 1884, and *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day*, 1887, especially, — in which philosophical analysis was more notable than poetic beauty; *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Saviour of Society*, 1871, a study of the moral unsoundness of Napoleon III, biting and subtle but unpoetic, hard, and at times bewildering; *Fifine at the Fair*, 1872, a discussion of the relations of man and woman in which are strangely and often confusingly mingled truth and sophistry, obscurity and poetic beauty; *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*, 1873, a melodramatic story told with some heaviness of style but with great intensity; *Dramatic Idyls*, First Series, 1879, Second Series, 1880, of which the most striking are *Clive and Ivàn*

*Ivànovitch*; with a body of miscellaneous lyrics large enough and striking enough to have established the reputation of the poet. The amount and variety of this work is in itself astonishing, and yet more so is its quality. Robert Browning died at the Palazzo Rezzonico, on the Grand Canal in Venice, on December 12, 1889. His last book of poems, *Asolando*, was published in London the same month. His burial took place on December 31, in Westminster Abbey.



## Introduction

ALTHOUGH it is with Browning the dramatist that this book has to do, it must be remembered that the greater bulk of his poetry was not written for the stage. His artistic characteristics and rank as a playwright can be intelligently considered only when his work, with its wonderful variety of form, its amazing breadth, its great virility, its keen subtilty, and its almost unique originality, is studied as a whole. To understand Browning the dramatist, however, it is necessary to study at least the more strongly marked traits of Browning the poet.

A poet is to be estimated according to his manner and to his matter. His workmanship and his message have equal claims for consideration. Both what he says and the way in which he says it are to be judged by their imaginative beauty and imaginative truth. Mere mastery of music does not make the highest poetry, as is too often proved by the exquisitely melodious verse of Swinburne; and equally is it true, as might be illustrated by such a poem as Browning's own *Reverie*, that the highest is not attained when beauty of form is absent however rich and deep may be the thought. Poetry exists to express what cannot be said in prose, and this expression is possible because form is itself a language, an essential part of the message imperfection in which impairs the completeness of the whole. In

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even the most superficial examination of a poet's work, therefore, it is necessary to consider both his artistic technique and his message.

The limitations of Browning as a master of poetic form have been often dwelt upon. The common talk about his obscurity and roughness has so commonly been repeated that it comes at once to mind; nor is it difficult to find passages, especially in *Sordello* on the one hand or on the other in his latest work, which may seem to justify this. In the matter of melody and mastery of poetic form, however, not Tennyson and hardly Swinburne exceeded Browning at his best. The songs in *Pippa Passes*: "A King lived long ago," "You'll love me yet"; those in *Paracelsus*: "Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes," "Over the sea our galleys went," or the exquisite "Where the Main glideth" may serve as examples; or the wonderful silver-trumpet exultation of parts of *Saul*:

"Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,  
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver  
shock

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

And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell  
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.  
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ  
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!"

In the blank verse of Browning at its best the music is no less masterly and enticing. Take this from *The Ring and the Book*:

“ I stood at Naples once, a night so dark  
 I could have scarce conjectured there was earth  
 Anywhere, sky or sea or world at all :  
 But the night's black was burst through by a blaze —  
 Thunder struck blow on blow, earth groaned and bore,  
 Through her whole length of mountain visible :  
 There lay the city thick and plain with spires,  
 And like a ghost disshrouded, white the sea.”

Or passages like these in *Pippa Passes* :

“ The garden's silence ! even the single bee  
 Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped :  
 And where he hid you only could surmise  
 By some campanula chalice set a-swing.”

“ Sings, minding not that palpitating arch  
 Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine  
 From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor crowns cast off,  
 Violet and parsley crowns to trample on.”

Certain it is that no one with a quick ear can fail to recognize how fully Robert Browning had that power of evoking from words a music and an enchantment which belongs only to the true poet.

Imaginative beauty of phrase is perhaps even more common in the poetry of Browning than melody. As years went on he came more and more to sacrifice form to content, but he never lost wholly the magic quality of flashing a thought into beauty. Often the image used is suggested by some loveliness of nature, but whatever the phrase be, it is made alive by that identification of the mind of the poet with the idea which is the hallmark of genuine imagination.

“ The runnel slipped  
 Elate with rain.”— *Sordello*.

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“ Great stars  
That had a right to come first and see ebb  
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away.”  
—*Pippa Passes.*

“ For the air is still, and the water still,  
When the blue breast of the dipping coot  
Dives under and all is mute.”  
—*The Flight of the Duchess.*

“ The Duke rode past in his idle way,  
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.”  
—*The Statue and the Bust.*

“ When is man strong until he feels alone ? ”  
—*Colombe's Birthday.*

“ Infinite passion, and the pain  
Of finite hearts that yearn.”—*Two in the Campagna.*

“ A scanty patch  
Of primroses too faint to catch  
A weary bee.”—*Paracelsus.*

“ But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes . . .  
. . . . and God renews  
His ancient rapture.”—*Ib.*

Examples might be endlessly multiplied, but they are most surely convincing when the reader discovers them for himself, coming upon them as he reads and taking them in their proper settings.

Unfortunately for his art, Browning not infrequently, and as he grew older more and more often, allowed the pleasure of intellectual dexterity to override in his work the imaginative and poetic mood. That he recognized his own danger is sufficiently evident from the poem



called *Transcendentalism*, in which he warns a young poet against this very fault, and tells him instead of giving "naked thoughts" to take "the harp back to your heart again." It is also true that he is apt to assume in his readers special knowledge which they are not likely to possess. He is full of curious information, and his allusions to it are continually a stumbling-block to those not so well read. Both these causes have helped to make his work difficult to the average reader. The matter was discussed between him and Miss Barrett, and on April 22, 1846, she writes: "Your obscurities, . . . so far as they concern the medium, . . . you have been throwing off gradually and surely this long time."

More than all has Browning perplexed the Philistine by the subtilty of his thought. He deals with shades of character so delicate, with distinctions so complex that the intellect must be alert and keenly discerning which would always and easily follow him. It has been justly said of him: "Browning treats obscure subjects deeply, not deep subjects obscurely."

The subjects with which Browning most gladly dealt are characterized by the phrase just quoted. How wide is his range of thought and how varied can be appreciated only by the reader who knows the poet thoroughly. Great as is the variety of theme in Tennyson, Browning has surpassed it; and Browning has gone far deeper into the mysteries of human nature and life than any other poet of his century. Dr. Furnivall has called him "the manliest, the strongest, the life-fullest, the deepest, and the fullest poet of his time." It is hardly pos-

sible to make a fair estimate of a contemporary or to arrive at any conclusion which may not be discarded by posterity; but it seems sure that in the ultimate ranking of the poets who have thus far enriched English literature only three — Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Milton — can possibly be set higher in the list than Robert Browning, — and possibly not all of these.

The dramatic work of Browning is not in bulk a large part of his poetry, and it is not the best he has achieved. If his rank depended only on what he wrote for the stage a number of the Elizabethans would eclipse him. Yet taken for what they are, the plays of Browning stand higher as literature than those of any of his contemporaries, and with the exception of Shelley's *Cenci* higher than any poetry written for the English stage since the close of the Elizabethan period. Comparison with the dramas of Tennyson shows *Luria*, *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, and *Colombe's Birthday*, if less effective on the stage, to be superior in virility, in conviction, and in beauty; while in the century has appeared no other rival worthy of consideration.

In his plots, which for the most part he invented, Browning is not happy. He is seldom able to give to a play that unity of movement, uniform progression, and significance of action which are the essentials of successful dramatic effect. He is interested in the character, the temperament, the motives of his personages, and shows little of that love for action itself which is the mark of a genuine dramatist. In *Strafford*, his first immature attempt at dramatic work, he labored painfully to produce action, and the result was that he in-

volved his characters in a complication of intrigues which no audience could follow and which no reader can understand without more effort than is compatible with dramatic enjoyment. In *King Victor and King Charles* he deals again with court intrigue, and does indeed make it simpler; but he depends upon word rather than deed for the enlightenment of the audience. He shows in *The Return of the Druses* that he has learned by previous failures, and makes the story both more dramatic and more interesting; yet the action is still so largely intellectual and mental as to leave the play unfit for the stage. He brings to the making of *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* still greater knowledge of stage-craft; the story, however, is not only painful but unconvincing, and to a considerable extent is told rather than acted. He most nearly approaches the art of the skilled playwright in *Colombe's Birthday*. In every play which he wrote actually for the stage Browning gained something; and had the age demanded and circumstances favored, he might have followed in the steps of Dryden, who was by nature as little dramatic as he, yet who gave so much of the best of his productive life to the stage. By the time *Luria* was written Browning had come to be so fully under the dominion of his natural tendencies that the whole play may almost be said to take place in the minds of the characters. After that he can hardly be held to have written for representation; since *In a Balcony* and *A Soul's Tragedy* are scarcely more actable than *Pippa Passes*. In no one of all these has Browning been able to conceive and present an effective dramatic story, wrought out by

action rather than by speech and exhibiting by outward events what changes of character go on beneath the surface.

It is equally true that he is seldom able to place before the audience what in theatrical language is known as a good situation. In *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* the one strong situation is where Tresham believes his sister willing to marry one man while being the mistress of another ; the reappearance of Luitolfo in *A Soul's Tragedy* and the discovery of Norbert and Constance by the Queen are practically the only other good situations in the four plays given in the present volume. In these the audience is able to see and to feel the sharp contention of interests and emotions ; and the bringing of conflicting passions visibly to bay is one of the essentials of successful stage-craft.

All this is perhaps only resaying once more what has often been noted, that the dramas of Browning are inward. His temperament led him to select as the *motif* of a play a theme so spiritual that its completeness could not be made visible even to those of fairly acute perception in that swift first view which is all that the stage allows. When he had worked out this theme, moreover, he took no trouble to complete the outward story. The result in representation was sure to be disconcerting and episodic. Striking examples of this are *Pippa Passes* and *In a Balcony*, where as far as outward events are concerned nothing is finished and an audience must inevitably feel that it had seen only part of the play. Yet each is complete in the spiritually dramatic sense. The theme of the first, for instance, is the influence of

Pippa upon other lives, unseen and unseeing ; and this is fully shown. What happens as a consequence of the influence is not part of the spiritual theme. The drama, however, demands the completeness of the visible, whereas Browning was content with the working out of the spiritual.

In all his work Browning exhibits a curious lack of realization of his audience. This he shows often in the obscurity of his literary language : in the allusions to books few readers can have read, or to facts few are likely to know ; in the turns of thought which are almost arbitrarily personal ; in the lack of continuity which sometimes leaves gaps to be filled by the ordinary reader only with considerable difficulty. He shows it, too, in the choice of subject and in the subtilty of psychical distinctions and analysis. Especially in the dramas does he betray this lack of power to realize the audience to which a play must be addressed. The difficulties of language and the over-delicacies of thought — from a stage point of view — are everywhere present ; and what is of perhaps greater importance, the progress of the play is almost always dependent upon inner experiences neither visible to the audience nor coming within the probable range of their comprehension.

Next to plot and situation in the drama come the drawing of character and the exhibition of the action of one personality upon another. Browning possessed rather the art of analyzing than of developing character. The personages in his plays are apt to be much the same at the end as at the beginning. Perhaps the very

keenness of vision which enabled him to see into the secret recesses of the souls of the men and women of whom he wrote was a hindrance when he came to the attempt to show how those souls might be altered by circumstance and opportunity. He perceived what they were so clearly that it must have been difficult not to be blinded to the alterations which circumstance and human relations may bring. This is shown more strongly, if more subtly, in the fact that the plays are comparatively deficient in the interaction of personalities. Each character pursues his individual way, affected of course by the acts of others, but seldom much changed mentally. As Browning seems to care for his plot only in so far as it exhibits what his actors are rather than to be interested in what events may make of them, so he uses the relations of his personages as means to bring out the mental traits of each rather than as forces which must interact. Each temperament in his treatment remains almost agate-hard and intractable to the influence of others ; and while this makes greatly for vigor in the presentation of spiritual portraits, it tells almost equally against dramatic effectiveness.

It follows from this method that the characters in Browning's plays, if the seeming paradox may be permitted, have more personality than individuality. They are personal in the sense that they are well differentiated; but they lack the flavor of particular life which marks the human being as individual, forever unique among his fellows. Tresham, Mildred, Luria, Chiappino, and the rest are particularized so that we have no difficulty in regarding each as a person, yet

each somehow lacks individuality. No one of them lives and moves and has his being in an unviolated sphere of consciousness such as surrounds the soul of Othello, of Imogen, of Falstaff. To make comparison with the highest may seem unfair; but this best brings out the idea and Browning is worthy of being tried by lofty standards. Pompilia or the Pope in *The Ring and the Book* is no less true than Juliet or Coriolanus; but the same cannot be said of any one of the characters in Browning's plays. Some of the minor figures have a good deal of vitality. Guendolen, slight as is her part, is truly alive, perhaps because the poet was not hampered by the necessity of making her work out his plot, and so could write of her with freedom. On the whole, however, the personages in the dramas have something of the effect of figures in a camera obscura, startlingly real yet not wholly human.

Of the women in Browning's dramas Constance, Mildred, and Anael are the most carefully studied. Constance is easily the most subtle, although Anael is perhaps more difficult to understand. Ottima, in the one tremendous scene in the shrub-house, is more convincingly and passionately real than all the rest, and burns with a vitality at once splendid and terrible. Most attractive of his heroines — for it is hardly possible to call sweet and dear Pippa by so dignified a name — is Colombe, with her straightforwardness, her freshness, her delicious childliness. She is of character sufficiently complex to be interesting, yet she is always so readily understood as not to lose her hold on the sym-

pathy. She is warmly human, intellectual, — as every character must be in the hands of Browning, from Caliban up, — yet feminine, and admirably womanly in her faithfulness to love when against it is set the temptation of ambition.

Of his heroes, Browning has perhaps succeeded best with Luria. Norbert is, however, consistent, manly, and so attractive throughout that while Constance provokes speculation and the Queen arouses pity, Norbert takes the strongest hold upon the sympathy. Tresham dominates *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, even in spite of the possible intention of the author that Mildred should most command interest; Chiappino and Ogniben divide the honors in *A Soul's Tragedy*. Whether Colombe or Valence seem the more attractive must remain largely a question of personal taste; Colombe is impulsive and winning while it is not impossible to find Valence somewhat too unreasonably and all but exasperatingly perfect. The plays as a whole, like the dramatic lyrics and *The Ring and the Book*, show how naturally the genius of Browning turned for expression to the embodiment of masculine types.

The plays seem, moreover, to carry throughout the strongest marks of the characteristics which have been noted in considering the lyrics. The quality of portraying masculine types connects itself with the subtilty with which Browning followed the working of both temperament and intellect through their most intricate windings. He deals constantly with emotion, and he is in reality the most passionate poet of his time, Swinburne and Rossetti notwithstanding; but he is still a



poet of intellectual subtleties of character rather than of emotions. From this it follows logically that he is at his best rather with men than with women; with the sex which may feel no less strongly than the other, but which after all is less likely to be dominated and directed by emotion pure and simple. Browning succeeds best in portraying men because, to speak somewhat paradoxically, he is too keenly alive to the play of the intellect to be able to find the satisfactory expression of his genius in dealing with women.

If this claim be true, it necessarily follows that as a dramatist he must always be somewhat unequal in his treatment of men and of women. Such certainly seems to be the fact. This intellectual subtilty, moreover, leads him constantly toward regions of consciousness which cannot be successfully presented from the stage, or which at least can be effectively embodied in a play only by a poet who is born with supreme dramatic genius. The struggle to keep within bounds, so as not to confuse his audience, must in itself have been enough to prevent the free play of Browning's imagination. Constantly his imaginative perception saw farther than he dared say, and constantly in the plays he is apparently holding himself in hand, and resisting the impulse to utter what he feels could not be comprehended across the footlights.

Nothing more strikingly marks the fact that Browning was not at his ease in dramatic work than the inferiority of the quality of his verse in the plays. In *Strafford*, *King Victor and King Charles*, and *A Soul's Tragedy* is very little which is up to the aver-

age of his best work and hardly a line which approaches his highest. In the other dramas this is less markedly true, but he is evidently always at a disadvantage, always constrained by the conditions under which one writes for the stage. It is in *Pippa Passes*, which can never have been intended for actual representation, that he is poetically most successful; and it is in the scene in the shrub-house only that he shows an intensity and fire which suggest possibilities of dramatic greatness. Taken as a whole, the plays certainly do not represent Browning as a poet at the height of his power.

The plays included in this volume fairly present the most strongly marked characteristics of Browning as a dramatist. *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* is — except possibly *Colombe's Birthday* — the most obviously actable of Browning's plays. The story is simple, its presentation is direct, and it contains one really great dramatic situation.<sup>1</sup> As in all the plays, the dialogue lacks crispness and the speeches are too long; but on the whole the play is unusually free from those passages in which the intellect of the poet moves too rapidly to be followed by an ordinary audience at the theatre. The artificiality of the scheme has been censured, and not without justice. The plot is melodramatic in the sense that it rests upon manifest improbability. Melodrama is essentially sensational rather than inevitable, and in so far necessarily falls below the highest levels of art. The absence of acquaintance between the neighboring families is incredible. The relation between Mildred and her lover is not impossible, but it is

<sup>1</sup> See note on Act ii, ll. 250-360.

no less unlikely than unpleasant. The youthfulness which is insisted upon to make it less unreal produces rather the result of rendering the whole situation revolting. Mr. W. L. Courtney rather too sharply comments:

“The situation is not dramatically legitimate; but when we find that these two characters began their clandestine meetings when they were almost children, that they are not the characters of mingled goodness and badness which experience in such matters might create, but represented as living models of purity (‘a depth of purity immovable,’ is the expression of Tresham . . .), it is impossible to avoid the criticism that such a situation . . . is grotesquely abnormal.”  
— *Studies New and Old*.

The fact that not incident but emotion is the real subject — a fact which makes for the poetic while it lessens the dramatic value of the work, — preserves the play from sinking to low melodramatic levels. In any case, as was remarked by the *Literary Gazette* in its criticism of the first performance, “there is sufficient variety and constant moving in the action, which keeps the mind engaged, and prevents it from detecting and dwelling on the faultiness of the plot.”

While *Colombe's Birthday* stands next to *A Blot in the Scutcheon* as an acting play, it has hardly anything which can in the true dramatic sense be called action. It is an exquisite dialogue, relieved by some movement and by one or two fairly good situations. Its effectiveness depends chiefly upon the fact that its central motive — the triumph of love over ambition — is one

of which the attraction is perennial. All the characters move on somewhat conventional lines, but the genius of Browning imparts to them a good deal of reality. The story is too slight for the length at which it is treated, and for acting purposes would probably be more effective in three acts than in five, — perhaps even in one than in three; but as a closet drama we would not willingly have it shorter.

Of *In a Balcony* whatever is said is sure to be disagreed with by somebody. Diversity of interpretation is perhaps the best proof of the vitality and truth to human nature which a drama can have. The artificial and the false do not leave the reader or the spectator in doubt what is intended, but that which is full of the complexity and the mystery of life inevitably affects different natures in divers ways, and leads them to varied conclusions. *In a Balcony* has perhaps had this form of indorsement in a manner more marked than that accorded to any other of Browning's plays; and in a sense the highest praise one can bestow upon it is to say: "Others have interpreted it thus and so; but to me the conclusion that its meaning is different is no less than inevitable."

So clever a critic as the Rev. Stopford A. Brooke has written of the play thus: —

"I do not believe that Browning meant to make self-sacrifice the root of Constance's doings. If he did he has made a terrible mess of the whole thing. He was much too clear-headed a moralist to link self-sacrifice to systematic lying. Self-sacrifice is not self-sacrifice at all when it sacrifices truth. It may wear the

clothes of Love, but, in injuring righteousness, it injures the essence of love. It has a surface beauty, for it imitates love, but if mankind is allured by this beauty, mankind is injured. It is the false Florimel of self-sacrifice. Browning, who had studied self-sacrifice, did not exhibit it in Constance. The very first lie she urges her lover to tell (that is, to let the Queen imagine he loves her) is just the thing a jealous woman would invent to try her lover and the Queen, if she suspected the Queen of loving him, and him of being seduced from her by the worldly advantage of marrying the Queen." — *The Poetry of Robert Browning*.

Mr. Brooke has much more in this strain, and others have found it possible to take a view not dissimilar. Is it not likely that the "terrible mess" is made by the critic rather than by the poet? Anything more violently impossible — or so it seems — than that Constance is in the first instance urged by jealousy it is hardly possible to conceive; and one is unable to resist the feeling that a certain perhaps clerical narrowness is behind Mr. Brooke's remarks about lying. It is not, of course, necessary to defend the falsehoods of Constance, — indeed, to be frank, it is difficult to feel that they need defense, — but it seems fair to remark how little it is possible to conceive that to a court lady of the time and position of Constance her diplomacy would present itself as falsehood at all.

Mrs. Sutherland Orr, whose *Handbook* claims to be quasi-official in character, says of Constance that the poet "has given her, not the courage of an exclusively moral nature, but all the self-denial of a devoted one,

growing with the demands which are made upon it.”

The characters of Norbert and the Queen are sufficiently simple and plain, and it is Constance who has made readers to differ. It appears not so difficult to read her nature also, as it seems impossible not to accept the view that the central thought of the poem is the self-sacrifice of Constance and her regeneration through this.

In the light of what comes later it is plain that from the very first Constance is moved by a desire to protect and save Norbert from possibility of harm. How great to her mind are those possibilities is evident from her words :

“ We two, embracing under death’s spread hand.”

Throughout she shows the subtilty of her perception of character, and although she fails to plumb the depth of the nature of the Queen, yet in essentials she is right. She recognizes at the outset that her lover is full to the eyes of schemes for future shaping of the state. She tells him that he loves the world, and how completely right she is is shown in the brief scene when he comes to her from having spoken to his imperial mistress, ignorant of the real meaning of what has occurred, and feeling himself sure of carrying out the plans which have been maturing in his head through the year during which he has been shaping the destiny of the kingdom. He cries out in exultation :

“ See this Queen,

This people — in our phrase, this mass of men —  
See how this mass lies passive in my hand

And how my hand is plastic, and you by  
To make the muscles iron ! then, the strain,  
The grappling of the potter with his clay,  
The long uncertain struggle, — the success  
And consummation of the spirit-work." . . .

He is alive with eagerness to go on in his task, and Constance is too thoroughly feminine not to recognize that she has a rival in his ambition. Her breadth is shown in her acceptance of the fact. Indeed, the thing which endangers the hold of Constance upon the audience is a too logical and dispassionate appreciation of the situation, a too masculine analysis of her lover's character and motives. The key to the situation, however, is precisely her perfect perception of how truly his spirit is set on this grand project of working out the elevation of the people over whom in virtue of his place as the Queen's minister he has power.

No less evident is the limitation of Constance's power of insight. She fails to appreciate that with Norbert love is the dominant passion of his whole being. She is essentially intellectual, though a woman and so completely feminine, as he is essentially emotional though so masculine. The very clearness of her analysis blinds her to the possibilities of passion in the Queen, and no less has it prevented her from realizing the completeness of the devotion of Norbert to herself. When these forces which she has not appreciated spring into light she accepts them with an acute quickness of comprehension which would make her seem hard in her brilliant intellectuality were it not that in each case her magnificently disinterested self-sacrifice shows itself no less quickly.

“ *Queen.* Remember, I (and what am I to you?)  
 Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,  
 Do all but just unlove him ! He loves me.  
*Con.* He shall.”

This renunciation of Norbert rather than that the heart of the Queen shall be broken comes instantly. Here again a dramatic difficulty arises from the fact that the audience would more easily forgive ingratitude to the Queen than treason to the lover; the fact that Constance believes that Norbert, with his great schemes, could not be happy if deprived through loss of royal favor of the chance to carry them out makes it hard for her wholly to hold the sympathy of the reader.

One is always conscious in reading or in seeing the play of a secret persuasion that Constance is herself—perhaps unconsciously—keenly ambitious. She is ambitious for Norbert, and she interprets his ambitions by her own temperament, intensifying and misconceiving their relative value. This is perhaps reading into the drama more than Browning meant; but the poet has made Constance so human that each reader must interpret her for himself.

When she discovers later that ambition is in Norbert's mind subordinate to his passion she again meets him instantly on this new plane to which she had not before risen. The two points in the poem which seem to me most important, as far as the self-sacrifice of Constance is concerned, are the “He shall” just quoted and the line :

“ You were mine. Now I give myself to you.”



In the first she declares to the unconscious Queen her giving up of Norbert; in the second she declares to her equally unconscious lover that she gives him up for his own sake. She shows throughout a keen fear, a fear which seems almost more intellectual than passionate, lest harm come to Norbert through his love to her. After the Queen has been with her she satisfies her own heart by protesting to him her utter devotion; when the Queen returns, still failing to understand him, she proves her self-abandonment by trying by a supreme sacrifice to keep for him her mistress' favor, — “tempting him with a crown.” Only at the last does she see him as he is, and her hitherto intellectual love bursts, with the swiftness which is so strongly marked in all that pertains to her character, into complete and passionate devotion.

The real core of the play is this development of the love of Constance. She allows herself to be loved; she delights in the pretty play of intrigue; she is proud of the devotion of this man who is shaping the destinies of the kingdom; she is even great enough to be ready to make to the Queen the highest sacrifice of which her nature as it then is can be capable: but she is not touched by the flame of that passion which makes the very soul of Norbert incandescent. The great *motif* of *In a Balcony* is the awakening of the inmost consciousness of Constance to the nature and the greatness of the love of Norbert and her quick response to that call which this perception makes to her highest and most feminine nature.

The significance of the conclusion has been much

discussed. Of this little need be said here further than to give the following extract from a private letter, which is quoted in the *Century Magazine* for February, 1892 :

“ He [Browning] seemed as full of dramatic interest in reading ‘In a Balcony’ as if he had just written it for our benefit. One who sat near him said that it was the natural sequence that the step of the guard should be heard coming to take Norbert to his doom, as, with a nature like the Queen’s, who had known only one hour of joy in her sterile life, vengeance swift and terrible would follow on the sudden destruction of her happiness. ‘Now I don’t quite think that,’ answered Browning, as if he were following out the play as a spectator. ‘The Queen had a large and passionate temperament, which had only once been touched and brought into life. She would have died, as by a knife in her heart. The guards would have come to carry away her dead body.’ ‘But I imagine most people interpret it as I do,’ was the reply. ‘Then,’ said Browning, with quick interest, ‘don’t you think it would be well to put it in the stage directions, and have it seen that they were carrying her across the back of the stage?’ ”

Whether Browning was entirely in earnest in saying this seems at least an open question. He was not accustomed to explain his work to anybody, and his last suggestion might be construed as a quiz. Certain it is that many readers, perhaps most, will continue to believe the Queen alive within there and the footsteps of the guard pregnant with sinister meanings. The matter is,

however, of little consequence if the view of the significance of the poem just given is right. To call the drama incomplete,—“equivalent to the third or fourth act of what might prove a tragedy or a drama,” is Mrs. Sutherland Orr’s way of putting it, — or to consider of importance what comes after the closing words of Constance, is to ignore the fact that the aim is to picture the regeneration of the soul of Constance from intellectual love to supreme passion, her rise from intellectual self-sacrifice to that complete self-surrender which is the highest phase of human love; and to fail to consider how this aim is completely accomplished before the curtain falls.

The title, *A Soul’s Tragedy*, has puzzled more than one critic. Mr. Stopford A. Brooke remarks:

“Why this little thing is called *A Soul’s Tragedy* I cannot quite understand. That title supposes that Chiappino loses his soul at the end of the play. But it is plain from his talk with Eulalia that his soul is already lost. He is not worse at the end, but perhaps on the way to betterment. The tragedy is then in the discovery by the people that he who was thought to be a great soul is a fraud. But that conclusion was not Browning’s intention.” — *The Poetry of Robert Browning*.

This misses the chief point of the work. The tragedy lies in the discovery by Chiappino of his own worthlessness. He was at the beginning what he was in the end, and Eulalia from the first estimated him with cruel fairness. He was himself, however, blinded by egotism and by self-love, and believed in his own worth. In the end he faced his weakness and meanness

stripped of all disguises; he saw his worthlessness, and he knew that it had been mercilessly exposed before Eulalia. In no other way than by seeing how his conduct looked in the eyes of others could his vanity have been pierced, but with Ogniben, Eulalia, and Luitolfo surrounding him, each in full possession of all the facts, Chiappino could no longer deceive himself. Certainly a soul could experience few tragedies more terrible.

The device of putting the first act, "the poetry of Chiappino's life," into verse and the second act into prose is more fanciful than effective. It gives the work as a whole a somewhat disjointed and unsatisfactory quality. The verse, moreover, is not in the poet's best vein. The prose is much of it delightful. The talk of Ogniben is so clever, so shrewd, so keen that the Legate is constantly threatening to make a greater impression than Chiappino. Miss Barrett — then but a recent acquaintance of her future husband's — was entirely right when she wrote to him: "Your Ogniben (here is my only criticism in the ways of objection) seems to me almost too wise for a crafty worldling;" but if this point be waived, the second part is delightful reading.

Browning wrote to Miss Barrett: "It is all sneering and *disillusion*." And again: "Not a few points . . . successful in design and execution, yet . . . subject-matter and style are alike unpopular even for the literary *grex* that stand aloof from the purer *plebs*." Miss Barrett, on the other hand, writing perhaps with some added fervor from the growing attachment not yet spoken, says of the play: "For my part it delights me — and must raise your reputation as a poet and thinker

. . . *must*. Chiappino is highly dramatic in the first part, and speaks so finely sometimes that it is a wrench to one's sympathies to find him overthrown." Again: "*The Soul's Tragedy* is wonderful — it suggests the idea of more various power than was necessary to the completion of *Luria*." And yet again: "*The Tragedy* has wonderful things in it — thoughts, suggestions, . . . and more and more I feel, that you never did better dialogue than in the first part. Every pulse of it is alive and individual — dramatic dialogue of the best."

Even Miss Barrett, in the midst of all her enthusiasm, admitted that the *Tragedy* was not dramatically of Browning's most satisfactory work. The play has hardly more characterization than it has dramatic movement. The Legate is the most individual of its personages; Chiappino comes next, but he is too obviously meant to stand as a type; while Luitolfo and Eulalia are simply puppets to carry out the poet's purpose. In spite of all these obvious defects, however, the play — or at least the second part — is so full of wit, of wisdom, of penetrating humor, and of genial satire that it remains perpetually delightful.

The question has often been touched upon whether under different circumstances, with the impulse of a play-loving time, Browning might not have been a great dramatist and perhaps brought to the stage a new golden age of the poetic drama. John Forster, in the *Examiner* of May 7, 1837, comments on the production of Browning's earliest play:

"This is the work of a writer who is capable of

achieving the highest objects and triumphs of dramatic literature. They are not achieved here: but here they lie, 'in the rough,' before the reader. *Strafford* suggests the most brilliant career of dramatic authorship that has been known in our time. We are not sure that it will be realized."

To speculate upon possibilities of this sort is generally futile, but it is fascinating and may be instructive from the light thrown on the principles of art. Already it has been said that it seems that Browning might have been led in the way of Dryden to continue the composition of plays; and it is sure that he would in time have learned much of stage-craft; but it does not seem probable that he, more than Dryden, could have been a great playwright. The muse of neither of these poets was naturally dramatic, and in the case of either to work for the stage meant to work under constraint and at a disadvantage.

In the power of analyzing the human soul Browning greatly excelled Dryden, but in dramatic work this might as easily be a hindrance as a help. The power of creating character is by no means the same thing as the ability to construct plays. The common use of the word "dramatic" in both cases inevitably causes confusion. When Browning early commented upon his poems: "Their contents are always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons," he apparently showed that he himself labored under this error. He felt in himself high powers of characterization, and even if he did not misunderstand, he at least misnamed them powers of dramatization. Constantly in his plays he

is led out of the true dramatic road by facility in characterization. He dissects mental states when he should show how temperament is outwardly manifested ; how motives ripen into action ; how mind reacts upon mind. He is, in a word, analytic when he should be synthetic.

This analysis, moreover, not only is shown by word rather than by deed, but is too generally conveyed in the form of deliberate self-exposition on the part of the characters. Browning has the fault, one of the most dangerous for a dramatist, of turning naturally and constantly to monologue. His personages proclaim themselves in words in a fashion which may be masterly in the closet, but which can never be properly forceful on the stage. Luria is not ready to drink poison until he has spoken eighty lines of minute self-dissection ; Djabal and Anael begin their most poignant interview with a couple of asides in which they offer more than fifty lines of explanation of their motives and emotions ; King Victor takes eighty lines of soliloquy to insure against the possibility that the hearers may misunderstand his mental state. The audience at a play are little concerned with mental processes except as shown by events. They are interested in what happens outwardly, and with moral and mental changes and conditions as exhibited by deeds. A drama, in short, should be the exhibition of character by action ; whereas Browning makes a play an analysis of character by speech. Ill-advised admirers of Browning may claim that the poet might or should have succeeded on the stage, but it is no more true in his case than it was in that of Tennyson. The poet-laureate had every advantage of great popularity, of the reputa-

tion and wonderful stage-management of Irving, of lavish and rich setting, yet with all these his plays have been a failure, just as the plays of Browning were a failure. In either case a great poet was working under conditions to which his genius could not conform, and in both cases the result was in the end practically the same.

It is something to be able, in these days of the unwholesome and the sensational, when the stage holds the mirror up not to nature so much as to morbid or vulgar perversions, to add that Browning is always virile and sound. With the Mephistophelian spirit that denies he had nothing in common, nor for the neurotic or unclean pessimism of his day had he sympathy or tolerance. While as compared to his greatest poetry the plays must be regarded as inferior, they are still full of manliness, of vigor, and of deep interest; contributions to the literature of the nineteenth century of genuine merit and of lasting value.



## THE TEXTS

THE texts in this volume are those of the latest edition, 1888-94, which had the personal supervision of Robert Browning. The only changes beyond those noted in the variants are the substitution, in conformity with the usage of the series, of a ( for a [ on asides and stage directions, and the addition of some evident punctuation which had disappeared at the end of lines.

The variants given are chiefly from the first edition, for almost all changes, except in the matter of punctuation and italics, were made in the second edition of each play. The 1888-94 text has been carefully recollated with Nos. v, vi, viii, of *Bells and Pomegranates*, 1843, 1844, 1846, which contain the first editions of *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, *Colombe's Birthday*, and *A Soul's Tragedy*, and with the first version of *In a Balcony*, printed in Vol. II of *Men and Women*, 1855. This has been necessary because existing texts are inadequate as to variants and, especially some of the American reprints of the edition of 1888-94, are not free from oversights and errors. The variants are generally improvements, though they do not seem to be so in all cases. The two or three instances in which misprints — in one case pointed out by Browning himself — have been corrected are noted. The student has here, then, the final form of the plays as the poet wished them to stand. That Browning was influenced more than has been supposed by popular usage is perhaps shown by the careful change, in the 1888-94 edition of *A Soul's Tragedy*, of *had rather* to *would rather*. That by 1888 he had come to regard his plays as for the closet rather than the stage is evident from his dropping, in *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* and *Colombe's Birthday*, of all references to the setting and the curtain and of *exit* and *exeunt*, or the substitution for those words of some non-theatrical synonym such as *goes out* or *withdraws*.

Browning's changes in punctuation are so numerous that the attempt to note them all would require much space. They seem to be caused in general quite as much by uncertainty on the part of the poet as by any intelligent knowledge or theory of the effect or office of punctuation, and they are constantly inconsistent. The editor is enough of a conservative to find Browning's superabundant dashes, dots, and marks of parenthesis, especially when they trouble the

eye as they so often do by intruding themselves at the beginning of the line, rather trying than enlightening. Browning evidently had a feeling of a difference of value between a dash and three dots, and apparently used the dots to indicate a longer or more profound pause than the dash. Often he combined them : —

When man perceives . . .

— Ah, I can only speak as for myself.

— *Colombe's Birthday*, v, 313, 314.

After studying all the passages like this noted, the editor arrived at the somewhat remote theory that the dots to Browning's mind represented a feeling on the part of the speaker that what he had begun was after all not to be said, that he had come to that which word would not express ; while the dash indicated an outward rather than an inner pause. The idea is a little fantastic, but not on that account untenable. Even if it is true, the editor is not able to divine the difference in the placing of the dashes in passages like the following :

— Must have him load me with his benefits

— For fortune's fiercest stroke.

— *A Soul's Tragedy*, i, 173, 174.

— It had not looked so well to let me drop. —

— *Ib.*, i, 201.

The fact that in so many places Browning altered these marks from one edition to another seems to indicate that he had some theory — or perhaps more properly some feeling about their force. The result, however, is not infrequently to give an effect not unlike that produced by the young person who punctuates largely with emotional dashes ; for instance : —

And God's — So — seeing these men and myself.

And God's : so, seeing these men and myself.

— *A Soul's Tragedy*, i, 246.

Here, and in many other lines the changes are in the line of sanity and sobriety of punctuation.

All the prefatory matter of the original editions of the plays is reproduced, but the title-page of only *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* is given because *In a Balcony* had none and those of the three numbers of *Bells and Pomegranates* are, except in the name of the play or a quotation, practically identical.

BELLS AND POMEGRANATES.

N<sup>o</sup>. V.—A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

A Tragedy,

IN THREE ACTS.

BY ROBERT BROWNING,

AUTHOR OF "PARACELUSUS."

LONDON:  
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET  
MDCCCXLIII.

FACSIMILE TITLE-PAGE.

THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE,

February 11, 1843.

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PERSONS.

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MILDRED TRESHAM	. .	<i>Miss Helen Faucit.</i>
GUENDOLEN TRESHAM	. .	<i>Mrs. Stirling.</i>
THOROLD, Lord Tresham	. .	<i>Mr. Phelps.</i>
AUSTIN TRESHAM	. . .	<i>“ Hudson.</i>
HENRY, Earl Mertoun	. .	<i>“ Anderson.</i>
GERARD	. . . .	<i>“ G. Bennett.</i>

Other retainers *of* Lord Tresham.

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TIME, 17—.

*Persons.* The 1889 ed. omits the two preceding lines and the names of the actors.

*Lord.* Earl in 1889 ed.

# A Blot in the 'Scutcheon

1843

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## ACT I.

SCENE I. — *The interior of a lodge in Lord Tresham's park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his mansion. Gerard, the warrener, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.*

*1st Retainer.* Ay, do! push, friends, and then  
you'll push down me!

— What for? Does any hear a runner's foot  
Or a steed's trample or a coach-wheel's cry?  
Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?  
But there's no breeding in a man of you  
Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,  
Old Gerard!

5

*Gerard.* Save your courtesies, my friend.  
Here is my place.

*2nd Ret.* Now, Gerard, out with it!  
What makes you sullen, this of all the days

*warrener, his back.* A, warrener, sitting alone, his back.

I' the year? To-day that young rich bountiful, 10  
 Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they  
 match

With our Lord Tresham through the country-  
 side,

Is coming here in utmost bravery  
 To ask our master's sister's hand?

*Ger.* What then?

*2nd Ret.* What then? Why, you, she speaks  
 to, if she meets 15

Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart  
 The boughs to let her through her forest walks,  
 You, always favourite for your no-deserts,  
 You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mer-  
 toun sues

To lay his heart and house and broad lands too 20  
 At Lady Mildred's feet: and while we squeeze  
 Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss  
 One congee of the least page in his train,  
 You sit o' one side — "there's the Earl," say  
 I —

"What then?" say you!

*3rd Ret.* I'll wager he has let 25  
 Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred swim  
 Over the falls and gain the river!

*Ger.* Ralph,  
 Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day  
 For you and for your hawks?

*4th Ret.* Let Gerard be!  
 He's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-  
 bow stock. 30  
 Ha, look now, while we squabble with him,  
 look!

Well done, now — is not this beginning, now,  
 To purpose?

*1st Ret.* Our retainers look as fine —  
 That's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds him-  
 self

With his white staff! Will not a knave behind 35  
 Prick him upright?

*4th Ret.* He's only bowing, fool!  
 The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

*1st Ret.* That's comfort. Here's a very  
 cavalcade!

*3rd Ret.* I don't see wherefore Richard, and  
 his troop

Of silk and silver varlets there, should find 40  
 Their perfumed selves so indispensable  
 On high days, holidays! Would it so disgrace  
 Our family, if I, for instance, stood —  
 In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,  
 A leash of greyhounds in my left? —

*Ger.* — With Hugh 45  
 The logman for supporter, in his right  
 The bill-hook, in his left the brushwood-shears!

*3rd Ret.* Out on you, crab! What next,  
what next? The Earl!

*1st Ret.* Oh Walter, groom, our horses, do  
they match

The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the six — 50  
They paw the ground — Ah Walter! and that  
brute

Just on his haunches by the wheel!

*6th Ret.* Ay — ay!

You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,  
At soups and sauces: what's a horse to you?  
D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the midst 55  
So cunningly? — then, Philip, mark this further;  
No leg has he to stand on!

*1st Ret.* No? That's comfort.

*2nd Ret.* Peace, Cook! The Earl descends.  
Well, Gerard, see

The Earl at least! Come, there's a proper man,  
I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede, 60  
Has got a starrier eye.

*3rd Ret.* His eyes are blue:  
But leave my hawks alone!

*4th Ret.* So young, and yet  
So tall and shapely!

*5th Ret.* Here's Lord Tresham's self!  
There now — there's what a nobleman should be!  
He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like 65  
A House's head.



*2nd Ret.* But you 'd not have a boy  
— And what 's the Earl beside? — possess too  
soon

That stateliness?

*1st Ret.* Our master takes his hand —  
Richard and his white staff are on the move —  
Back fall our people — (tsh! — there 's Timothy 70  
Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties,  
And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off!)  
— At last I see our lord's back and his friend's;  
And the whole beautiful bright company  
Close round them — in they go!

*Jumping down from the window-bench,  
and making for the table and its jugs.*

Good health, long life, 75  
Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!

*6th Ret.* My father drove his father first to  
court,

After his marriage day — ay, did he!

*2nd Ret.* God bless  
Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl!  
Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!

*Ger.* Drink, my boys! 80  
Don't mind me — all 's not right about me —  
drink!

*2nd Ret. (aside).* He's vexed, now, that he  
let the show escape!

(*To Gerard.*) Remember that the Earl returns  
this way.

*Ger.* That way?

*2nd Ret.* Just so.

*Ger.* Then my way's here. *Goes.*

*2nd Ret.* Old Gerard

Will die soon — mind, I said it! He was used 85

To care about the pitifullest thing

That touched the House's honour, not an eye

But his could see wherein: and on a cause

Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard

Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away 90

In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,

Such point decorous, and such square by rule —

He knew such niceties, no herald more:

And now — you see his humour: die he will!

[*1st*] *Ret.* God help him! Who's for the  
great servants'-hall 95

To hear what's going on inside? They'd follow

Lord Tresham into the saloon.

*3rd Ret.* I! —

*4th Ret.* I! —

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,

Some hint of how the parley goes inside!

Prosperity to the great House once more! 100

Here's the last drop!

*1st Ret.* Have at you! Boys, hurrah!

84 *Old Gerard.* A and 1888 ed. incorrectly give both this speech and *God help . . . saloon* to *2nd Ret.*; ll. 73-76 suggest that the second speech belongs to *1st Retainer.*

92 *point.* A, a point. *square,* A omits.

SCENE II. — *A Saloon in the Mansion.*

*Enter Lord Tresham, Lord Mertoun, Austin, and Guendolen.*

*Tresham.* I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet  
once more,

To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name  
— Noble among the noblest in itself,  
Yet taking in your person, fame avers,  
New price and lustre, — (as that gem you wear, 5  
Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,  
Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,  
Seems to re-ignite at the core) — your name  
Would win you welcome! —

*Mertoun.* Thanks!

*Tres.* — But add to that,  
The worthiness and grace and dignity 10  
Of your proposal for uniting both  
Our Houses even closer than respect  
Unites them now — add these, and you must  
grant

One favour more, nor that the least, — to think  
The welcome I should give; — 't is given! My  
lord, 15

My only brother, Austin: he's the king's.  
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen — betrothed  
To Austin: all are yours.

*Mert.* I thank you — less

6 hundred. A, thousand.

For the expressed commendings which your  
     seal,  
 And only that, authenticates — forbids 20  
 My putting from me . . . to my heart I take  
 Your praise . . . but praise less claims my  
     gratitude,  
 Than the indulgent insight it implies  
 Of what must needs be uppermost with one  
 Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to  
     ask, 25  
 In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,  
 A gift, which, if as calmly 't is denied,  
 He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,  
 Despair within his soul. That I dare ask  
 Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence 30  
 That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord  
     Tresham,  
 I love your sister — as you 'd have one love  
 That lady . . . oh more, more I love her!  
     Wealth,  
 Rank, all the world thinks me, they 're yours,  
     you know,  
 To hold or part with, at your choice — but  
     grant 35  
 My true self, me without a rood of land,

27 *as calmly 't is denied.* A, as quietly denied.

31 *yes.* A omits.

34 *me.* Italicized in A. Italics were, with few exceptions, discarded after the edition of 1849. 36 *me.* Italicized in A.

A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,  
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or  
life?

*Guendolen* (*apart to Austin*). Why, this is  
loving, Austin!

*Austin*. He's so young!

*Guen*. Young? Old enough, I think, to  
half surmise

40

He never had obtained an entrance here,  
Were all this fear and trembling needed.

*Aust*. Hush!

He reddens.

*Guen*. Mark him, Austin; that's true love!  
Ours must begin again.

*Tres*. We'll sit, my lord.  
Ever with best desert goes diffidence.

45

I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.

That I am wholly satisfied with you

On this occasion, when a falcon's eye

Were dull compared with mine to search out  
faults,

Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give

50

Or to refuse.

*Mert*. But you, you grant my suit?  
I have your word if hers?

*Tres*. My best of words  
If hers encourage you. I hope it will.

Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

*Mert.* I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, re-  
member, touch ;

55

I have been used to wander carelessly  
After my stricken game : the heron roused  
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing  
Thro' thicks and glades a mile in yours, — or  
else

Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight 60  
And lured me after her from tree to tree,  
I marked not whither. I have come upon  
The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,  
And — and then . . . I have seen her.

*Guen.* (*aside to Austin*). Note that mode  
Of faltering out that, when a lady passed, 65  
He, having eyes, did see her ! You had said —  
“ On such a day I scanned her, head to foot ;  
“ Observed a red, where red should not have  
been,  
“ Outside her elbow ; but was pleased enough  
“ Upon the whole.” Let such irreverent talk 70  
Be lessoned for the future !

*Tres.* What's to say  
May be said briefly. She has never known  
A mother's care ; I stand for father too.  
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems —  
You cannot know the good and tender heart, 75  
Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,  
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,

How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free  
As light where friends are — how imbued with  
    lore

The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet      80  
The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred  
    — thus

We brothers talk!

*Mert.*                   I thank you.

*Tres.*                                   In a word,  
Control's not for this lady; but her wish  
To please me outstrips in its subtlety  
My power of being pleased: herself creates      85  
The want she means to satisfy. My heart  
Prefers your suit to her as 't were its own.  
Can I say more?

*Mert.*                   No more — thanks, thanks — no  
    more!

*Tres.* This matter then discussed . . .

*Mert.*                   — We'll waste no breath  
On aught less precious. I'm beneath the roof      90  
Which holds her: while I thought of that, my  
    speech

To you would wander — as it must not do,  
Since as you favour me I stand or fall.  
I pray you suffer that I take my leave!

*Tres.* With less regret 't is suffered, that again      95  
We meet, I hope, so shortly.

91 *thought.* A, think.

91 *Which.* A, That.

*Mert.* We? again? —  
Ah, yes, forgive me — when shall . . . you will  
crown

Your goodness by forthwith apprising me  
When . . . if . . . the lady will appoint a day  
For me to wait on you — and her.

*Tres.* So soon 100  
As I am made acquainted with her thoughts  
On your proposal — howsoe'er they lean —  
A messenger shall bring you the result.

*Mert.* You cannot bind me more to you, my  
lord.

Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew 105  
A converse ne'er to disunite again.

*Tres.* So may it prove!

*Mert.* You, lady, you, sir, take  
My humble salutation!

*Guen. and Aust.* Thanks!

*Tres.* Within there!

*Servants enter. Tresham conducts Mer-  
toun to the door. Meantime Austin  
remarks,*

Well,

Here I have an advantage of the Earl,  
Confess now! I'd not think that all was safe 110  
Because my lady's brother stood my friend!  
Why, he makes sure of her — “do you say, yes —



"She'll not say, no," — what comes it to beside?  
I should have prayed the brother, "speak this  
speech,

"For Heaven's sake urge this on her — put in  
this — 115

"Forget not, as you 'd save me, t' other thing, —

"Then set down what she says, and how she  
looks,

"And if she smiles, and" (in an under breath)

"Only let her accept me, and do you

"And all the world refuse me, if you dare!" 120

*Guen.* That way you 'd take, friend Austin?

What a shame

I was your cousin, tamely from the first

Your bride, and all this fervour's run to waste!

Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?

The Earl's a fool.

*Aust.* Here's Thorold. Tell him so! 125

*Tres. (returning).* Now, voices, voices! 'St!  
the lady's first!

How seems he? — seems he not . . . come,  
faith give fraud

The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!

Down with fraud, up with faith! How seems  
the Earl?

A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth, 130

As you will never! come — the Earl?

*Guen.* He's young.

*Tres.* What's she? an infant save in heart  
and brain.

Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark! and  
you . . .

Austin, how old is she?

*Guen.* There's tact for you!  
I meant that being young was good excuse 135  
If one should tax him . . .

*Tres.* Well?

*Guen.* — With lacking wit.

*Tres.* He lacked wit? Where might he lack  
wit, so please you?

*Guen.* In standing straighter than the stew-  
ard's rod

And making you the tiresomest harangue,  
Instead of slipping over to my side 140

And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet lady,  
"Your cousin there will do me detriment  
"He little dreams of: he's absorbed, I see,  
"In my old name and fame — be sure he'll leave  
"My Mildred, when his best account of me 145  
"Is ended, in full confidence I wear

"My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.  
"I'm lost unless your gentleness vouch-  
safes" . . .

*Tres.* . . . "To give a best of best accounts,  
yourself,

Of me and my demerits." You are right! 150

He should have said what now I say for him.

Yon golden creature, will you help us all?

Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but  
you

— You are . . . what Austin only knows!

Come up,

All three of us: she's in the library 155

No doubt, for the day's wearing fast. Precede!

*Guen.* Austin, how we must —!

*Tres.* Must what? Must speak truth,  
Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him!

I challenge you!

*Guen.* Witchcraft's a fault in him,  
For you're bewitched.

*Tres.* What's urgent we obtain 160

Is, that she soon receive him — say, to-mor-  
row —

Next day at furthest.

*Guen.* Ne'er instruct me!

*Tres.* Come!

— He's out of your good graces, since forsooth,

He stood not as he'd carry us by storm

With his perfections! You're for the com-  
posed 165

Manly assured becoming confidence!

152 *Yon.* A, You. B, Yon. *You* is probably correct.

162 *furthest.* A, farthest.

— Get her to say, “to-morrow,” and I’ll give  
you . . .

I’ll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled  
With petting and snail-paces. Will you? Come!

SCENE III. — *Mildred’s chamber. A painted window overlooks the park. Mildred and Guendolen.*

*Guendolen.* Now, Mildred, spare those pains.

I have not left

Our talkers in the library, and climbed  
The wearisome ascent to this your bower  
In company with you, — I have not dared . . .

Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you 5

Lord Mertoun’s pedigree before the flood,

Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell

— Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most

Firm-rooted heresy — your suitor’s eyes,

He would maintain, were gray instead of  
blue — 10

I think I brought him to contrition! — Well,

I have not done such things, (all to deserve

A minute’s quiet cousin’s talk with you,)

To be dismissed so coolly.

*Mildred.*

*Guendolen!*

What have I done? what could suggest . . .

*Guen.*

There, there! 15

Do I not comprehend you’d be alone

To throw those testimonies in a heap,

*Overlooks . . . park. A, in the background.*

Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,  
 With that poor silly heartless Guendolen's  
 Ill-timed misplaced attempted smartnesses — 20  
 And sift their sense out? now, I come to spare  
 you

Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and have!  
 Demand, be answered! Lack I ears and eyes?  
 Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table  
 The Conqueror dined on when he landed first, 25  
 Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take —  
 The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great meed?  
 Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes!

*Mil.* My brother —  
 Did he . . . you said that he received him  
 well?

*Guen.* If I said only "well" I said not  
 much. 30

Oh, stay — which brother?

*Mil.* Thorold! who — who else?

*Guen.* Thorold (a secret) is too proud by  
 half, —

Nay, hear me out — with us he's even gentler  
 Than we are with our birds. Of this great  
 House

The least retainer that e'er caught his glance 35  
 Would die for him, real dying — no mere talk:  
 And in the world, the court, if men would cite  
 The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name

Rises of its clear nature to their lips.

But he should take men's homage, trust in it, 40

And care no more about what drew it down.

He has desert, and that, acknowledgment ;

Is he content ?

*Mil.* You wrong him, Guendolen.

*Guen.* He's proud, confess ; so proud with  
brooding o'er

The light of his interminable line, 45

An ancestry with men all paladins,

And women all . . .

*Mil.* Dear Guendolen, 't is late !

When yonder purple pane the climbing moon

Pierces, I know 't is midnight.

*Guen.* Well, that Thorold  
Should rise up from such musings, and receive 50

One come audaciously to graft himself

Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,

No slightest spot in such an one . . .

*Mil.* Who finds  
A spot in Mertoun ?

*Guen.* Not your brother ; therefore,  
Not the whole world.

*Mil.* I am weary, Guendolen. 55  
Bear with me !

*Guen.* I am foolish.

*Mil.* Oh no, kind !

But I would rest.

*Guen.* Good night and rest to you!  
I said how gracefully his mantle lay  
Beneath the rings of his light hair?

*Mil.* Brown hair.

*Guen.* Brown? why, it *is* brown: how could  
you know that? 60

*Mil.* How? did not you — Oh, Austin 't was,  
declared  
His hair was light, not brown — my head! —  
and look,  
The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber!  
Sweet,  
Good night!

*Guen.* Forgive me — sleep the soundlier for  
me! *Going, she turns suddenly.*

Mildred!

Perdition! all 's discovered! Thorold finds 65  
— That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers  
Was grander daughter still — to that fair dame  
Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance!

*Goes.*

*Mil.* Is she — can she be really gone at last?  
My heart! I shall not reach the window.  
Needs 70

Must I have sinned much, so to suffer.

*She lifts the small lamp which is suspended  
before the Virgin's image in the win-  
dow, and places it by the purple pane.*

There !

*She returns to the seat in front.*

Mildred and Mertoun ! Mildred, with consent  
 Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's bride !  
 Too late ! 'T is sweet to think of, sweeter still  
 To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up 75  
 The curse of the beginning ; but I know  
 It comes too late : 't will sweetest be of all  
 To dream my soul away and die upon.

*A noise without.*

The voice ! Oh why, why glided sin the snake  
 Into the paradise Heaven meant us both ? 80

*The window opens softly. A low voice sings.*

*There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer  
 than the purest ;*

*And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her sure  
 faith's the surest :*

*And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on  
 depth of lustre*

*Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than  
 the wild-grape cluster,*

*Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-  
 misted marble :* 85

*Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bub-  
 bling, the bird's warble !*

*(A figure wrapped in a mantle appears  
 at the window.*



And this woman says, " My days were sunless and  
 my nights were moonless,  
 " Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's  
 heart's outbreak tuneless,  
 " If you loved me not ! " And I who — ( ah, for  
 words of flame ! ) adore her,  
 Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably  
 before her —

90

( He enters, approaches her seat, and  
 bends over her.

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice  
 takes me,  
 And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as  
 hers she makes me !

( The Earl throws off his slouched hat  
 and long cloak.

My very heart sings, so I sing, Beloved !

*Mil.* Sit, Henry — do not take my hand !

*Mertoun.* 'T is mine.

The meeting that appalled us both so much 95  
 Is ended.

*Mil.* What begins now ?

*Mert.* Happiness

Such as the world contains not.

*Mil.* That is it.

Our happiness would, as you say, exceed

The whole world's best of blisses : we — do we

Deserve that? Utter to your soul, what mine 100  
 Long since, Beloved, has grown used to hear,  
 Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,  
 And so familiar now; this will not be!

*Mert.* Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's  
 face?

Compelled myself — if not to speak untruth, 105  
 Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside  
 The truth, as — what had e'er prevailed on me  
 Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last  
 Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,  
 And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too? 110  
 Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break  
 On the strange unrest of our night, confused  
 With rain and stormy flaw — and will you see  
 No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops  
 On each live spray, no vapour steaming up, 115  
 And no expressless glory in the East?  
 When I am by you, to be ever by you,  
 When I have won you and may worship you,  
 Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be"?

*Mil.* Sin has surprised us, so will punishment. 120

*Mert.* No — me alone, who sinned alone!

*Mil.* The night

You likened our past life to — was it storm  
 Throughout to you then, Henry?

*Mert.* Of your life

I spoke — what am I, what my life, to waste  
 A thought about when you are by me? — you 125  
 It was, I said my folly called the storm  
 And pulled the night upon. 'T was day with me—  
 Perpetual dawn with me.

*Mil.* Come what, come will,  
 You have been happy: take my hand!

*Mert.* (*after a pause*). How good  
 Your brother is! I figured him a cold — 130  
 Shall I say, haughty man?

*Mil.* They told me all.  
 I know all.

*Mert.* It will soon be over.

*Mil.* Over?  
 Oh, what is over? what must I live through  
 And say, "'t is over"? Is our meeting over?  
 Have I received in presence of them all 135  
 The partner of my guilty love — with brow  
 Trying to seem a maiden's brow — with lips  
 Which make believe that when they strive to  
 form

Replies to you and tremble as they strive,  
 It is the nearest ever they approached 140  
 A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's  
 . . . lip —

With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .

128 The comma after *what* is in all the editions, but is certainly an error.

142 *is.* Italicized in A.

Ah, God, some prodigy of thine will stop  
 This planned piece of deliberate wickedness  
 In its birth even! some fierce leprous spot 145  
 Will mar the brow's dissimulating! I  
 Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,  
 But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,  
 The love, the shame, and the despair — with  
 them

Round me aghast as round some cursed fount 150  
 That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll  
 not

. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should  
 draw

This vengeance down? I'll not affect a  
 grace

That's gone from me — gone once, and gone  
 for ever!

*Mert.* Mildred, my honour is your own. I'll  
 share 155

Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.

A word informs your brother I retract

This morning's offer; time will yet bring forth  
 Some better way of saving both of us.

*Mil.* I'll meet their faces, Henry!

*Mert.* When? to-morrow! 160

Get done with it!

*Mil.* Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!

150 *as round.* A, as men round. 160 *to-morrow!* A, to-morrow?

Next day! I never shall prepare my words  
And looks and gestures sooner. — How you  
must

Despise me!

*Mert.* Mildred, break it if you choose,  
A heart the love of you uplifted — still 165

Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,  
To heaven! but Mildred, answer me, — first  
pace

The chamber with me — once again — now,  
say

Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me  
You see contempt (for you did say contempt) 170

— Contempt for you in! I will pluck it off  
And cast it from me! — but no — no, you'll  
not

Repeat that? — will you, Mildred, repeat that?

*Mil.* Dear Henry!

*Mert.* I was scarce a boy — e'en now  
What am I more? And you were infantine 175  
When first I met you; why, your hair fell  
loose

On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens now  
Only in the recalling how it burned  
That morn to see the shape of many a dream —  
You know we boys are prodigal of charms 180  
To her we dream of — I had heard of one,  
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,

Might speak to her, might live and die her own,  
 Who knew? I spoke. Oh, Mildred, feel you  
 not

That now, while I remember every glance 185  
 Of yours, each word of yours, with power to  
 test

And weigh them in the diamond scales of pride,  
 Resolved the treasure of a first and last  
 Heart's love shall have been bartered at its  
 worth,

— That now I think upon your purity 190

And utter ignorance of guilt — your own  
 Or other's guilt — the girlish undisguised  
 Delight at a strange novel prize — (I talk  
 A silly language, but interpret, you !)

If I, with fancy at its full, and reason 195

Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,

If you had pity on my passion, pity

On my protested sickness of the soul

To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch

Your eyelids and the eyes beneath — if you 200

Accorded gifts and knew not they were gifts —

If I grew mad at last with enterprise

And must behold my beauty in her bower

Or perish — (I was ignorant of even

My own desires — what then were you?) if sor-

row —

205

Sin — if the end came — must I now renounce

My reason, blind myself to light, say truth  
Is false and lie to God and my own soul?  
Contempt were all of this!

*Mil.* Do you believe .

Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you — you believe <sup>210</sup>  
That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er  
The past. We'll love on; you will love me  
still.

*Mert.* Oh, to love less what one has injured!  
Dove,

Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast —  
Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into  
strength? <sup>215</sup>

Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for  
thee?

Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and device!  
Mildred, I love you and you love me.

*Mil.* Go!

Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.

*Mert.* This is not our last meeting?

*Mil.* One night more. <sup>220</sup>

*Mert.* And then — think, then!

*Mil.* Then, no sweet courtship-days,  
No dawning consciousness of love for us,  
No strange and palpitating births of sense  
From words and looks, no innocent fears and  
hopes,

Reserves and confidences: morning's over! <sup>225</sup>

*Mert.* How else should love's perfected noon-tide follow ?

All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

*Mil.* So may it be ! but ——

You are cautious, Love ?

Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls ?

*Mert.* Oh, trust me ! Then our final meeting's fixed

230

To-morrow night ?

*Mil.* Farewell ! Stay, Henry . . .  
wherefore ?

His foot is on the yew-tree bough ; the turf  
Receives him ; now the moonlight as he runs  
Embraces him — but he must go — is gone.

Ah, once again he turns — thanks, thanks, my  
Love !

235

He's gone. Oh, I'll believe him every word !

I was so young, I loved him so, I had  
No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.

There may be pardon yet : all's doubt beyond.  
Surely the bitterness of death is past.

240



ACT II.

SCENE. — *The Library.*

*Enter Lord Tresham, hastily.*

*Tresham.* This way! In, Gerard, quick!

*As Gerard enters, Tresham secures the door.*

Now speak! or, wait —

I'll bid you speak directly. *Seats himself.*

Now repeat

Firmly and circumstantially the tale

You just now told me; it eludes me; either

I did not listen, or the half is gone

5

Away from me. How long have you lived here?

Here in my house, your father kept our woods

Before you?

*Gerard.* — As his father did, my lord.

I have been eating, sixty years almost,

Your bread.

*Tres.* Yes, yes. You ever were of all 10

The servants in my father's house, I know,

The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

*Ger.* I'll speak

God's truth. Night after night . . .

*Tres.* Since when?

*Ger.* At least

A month — each midnight has some man access

To Lady Mildred's chamber.

*Tres.* Tush, "access" — 15

No wide words like "access" to me!

*Ger.* He runs

Along the woodside, crosses to the South,

Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .

*Tres.* The last great yew-tree?

*Ger.* You might stand upon

The main boughs like a platform. Then he . . .

*Tres.* Quick! 20

*Ger.* Climbs up, and, where they lessen at the top,

— I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,

I think — for this I do not vouch — a line

That reaches to the lady's casement —

*Tres.* — Which

He enters not! Gerard, some wretched fool 25

Dares pry into my sister's privacy!

When such are young, it seems a precious thing

To have approached, — to merely have approached,

Got sight of, the abode of her they set

Their frantic thoughts upon. He does not enter? 30

Gerard?

*Ger.* There is a lamp that 's full i' the midst,

Under a red square in the painted glass  
Of Lady Mildred's . . .

*Tres.* Leave that name out! Well?  
That lamp?

*Ger.* — Is moved at midnight higher up  
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane; he waits 35  
For that among the boughs: at sight of that,  
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,  
Open the lady's casement, enter there . . .

*Tres.* — And stay?

*Ger.* An hour, two hours.

*Tres.* And this you saw  
Once? — twice? — quick!

*Ger.* Twenty times.

*Tres.* And what brings you 40  
Under the yew-trees?

*Ger.* The first night I left  
My range so far, to track the stranger stag  
That broke the pale, I saw the man.

*Tres.* Yet sent  
No cross-bow shaft through the marauder?

*Ger.* But  
He came, my lord, the first time he was seen, 45  
In a great moonlight, light as any day,  
From Lady Mildred's chamber.

*Tres.* (after a pause). You have no cause  
— Who could have cause to do my sister  
wrong?

*Ger.* Oh, my lord, only once — let me this  
once

Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted 50  
All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net  
Plucked me this way and that — fire if I turned  
To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire  
If down I flung myself and strove to die.  
The lady could not have been seven years old 55  
When I was trusted to conduct her safe  
Through the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white  
fawn

I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand  
Within a month. She ever had a smile  
To greet me with — she . . . if it could undo 60  
What's done, to lop each limb from off this  
trunk . . .

All that is foolish talk, not fit for you —  
I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt  
For Heaven's compelling. But when I was fixed  
To hold my peace, each morsel of your food 65  
Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place too,  
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubts  
What it behoved me do. This morn it seemed  
Either I must confess to you, or die:  
Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm 70  
That crawls, to have betrayed my lady.

*Tres.*

No —

No, Gerard!

*Ger.* Let me go!

*Tres.* A man, you say :  
What man ? Young ? Not a vulgar hind ? What  
dress ?

*Ger.* A slouched hat and a large dark foreign  
cloak

Wraps his whole form ; even his face is hid ; 75  
But I should judge him young : no hind, be sure !

*Tres.* Why ?

*Ger.* He is ever armed : his sword projects  
Beneath the cloak.

*Tres.* Gerard — I will not say  
No word, no breath of this !

*Ger.* Thanks, thanks, my lord ! *Goes.*

*Tres.* (*paces the room. After a pause.*) Oh,  
thought 's absurd ! — as with some mon-  
strous fact 80

Which, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to give  
Merciful God that made the sun and stars,  
The waters and the green delights of earth,  
The lie ! I apprehend the monstrous fact —  
Yet know the maker of all worlds is good, 85  
And yield my reason up, inadequate  
To reconcile what yet I do behold —  
Blasting my sense ! There 's cheerful day outside :  
This is my library, and this the chair

77 *projects.* Begins next line in A.

80 *Oh . . . fact.* A, Oh, thought 's absurd here ! — like some  
monstrous fact. 81 *Which.* A, That. 82 *God.* A, Heaven.

My father used to sit in carelessly 90  
 After his soldier-fashion, while I stood  
 Between his knees to question him : and here  
 Gerard our gray retainer, — as he says,  
 Fed with our food, from sire to son, an age, —  
 Has told a story — I am to believe ! 95

That Mildred . . . oh, no, no ! both tales are true,  
 Her pure cheek's story and the forester's !  
 Would she, or could she, err — much less, con-  
 found

All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . . Heaven  
 Keep me within its hand ! — I will sit here 100  
 Until thought settle and I see my course.  
 Avert, oh God, only this woe from me !

*As he sinks his head between his arms  
 on the table, Guendolen's voice is heard  
 at the door.*

Lord Tresham ! (*She knocks.*) Is Lord Tresham  
 there ?

*Tresham, hastily turning, pulls down the  
 first book above him and opens it.*

*Tres.* Come in ! (*She enters.*) Ha, Guendo-  
 len ! — good morning.

*Guen.* Nothing more ?

*Tres.* What should I say more ?

*Guen.* Pleasant question ! more ? 105

This more. Did I besiege poor Mildred's brain

Last night till close on morning with "the Earl,"  
 "The Earl" — whose worth did I asseverate  
 Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,  
 What is all this? You are not well!

*Tres.*

Who, I? 110

You laugh at me.

*Guen.* Has what I'm fain to hope,  
 Arrived then? Does that huge tome show some  
 blot

In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back  
 Than Arthur's time?

*Tres.* When left you Mildred's chamber?

*Guen.* Oh, late enough, I told you! The  
 main thing

115

To ask is, how I left her chamber, — sure,  
 Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon  
 Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

*Tres.*

Send her here!

*Guen.* Thorold?

*Tres.* I mean — acquaint her, Guendolen,  
 — But mildly!

*Guen.* Mildly?

*Tres.*

Ah, you guessed aright! 120

I am not well: there is no hiding it.

But tell her I would see her at her leisure —

That is, at once! here in the library!

The passage in that old Italian book

We hunted for so long is found, say, found — 125

And if I let it slip again . . . you see,  
That she must come — and instantly!

*Guen.*

I'll die

Piecemeal, record that, if there have not gloomed  
Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!

*Tres.*

Go! or, Guendolen,

Be you at call, — with Austin, if you choose, — 130  
In the adjoining gallery! There, go!

*Guendolen goes.*

Another lesson to me! You might bid  
A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct  
Some sly investigation point by point  
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch 135  
The inquisitorial cleverness some praise.  
If you had told me yesterday, "There's one  
"You needs must circumvent and practise with,  
"Entrap by policies, if you would worm  
"The truth out: and that one is — Mildred!"

There,

140

There — reasoning is thrown away on it!  
Prove she's unchaste . . . why, you may after  
prove  
That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you will!  
Where I can comprehend nought, nought's to  
say.

Or do, or think. Force on me but the first 145  
Abomination, — then outpour all plagues,  
And I shall ne'er make count of them.



*Enter Mildred.*

*Mildred.*

What book

Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen

Thought you were pale; you are not pale. That  
book?

That's Latin surely.

*Tres.*

Mildred, here's a line, 150

(Don't lean on me: I'll English it for you)

"Love conquers all things." What love con-  
quers them?

What love should you esteem — best love?

*Mil.*

True love.

*Tres.* I mean, and should have said, whose  
love is best

Of all that love or that profess to love? 155

*Mil.* The list's so long: there's father's,  
mother's, husband's . . .

*Tres.* Mildred, I do believe a brother's love

For a sole sister must exceed them all.

For see now, only see! there's no alloy

Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold 160

Of other loves — no gratitude to claim;

You never gave her life, not even aught

That keeps life — never tended her, instructed,

Enriched her — so, your love can claim no right

O'er her save pure love's claim: that's what I

call

165

162 *aught.* A, the dross. 165 *O'er her.* A, O'er her's.

Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope  
 To be such friends, for instance, she and you,  
 As when you hunted cowslips in the woods  
 Or played together in the meadow hay.

Oh, yes — with age, respect comes, and your  
 worth

170

Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,  
 There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed  
 esteem :

— Much head these make against the new-  
 comer !

The startling apparition, the strange youth —  
 Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say, 175  
 Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change  
 This Ovid ever sang about) your soul

. . . Her soul, that is, — the sister's soul !

With her

'T was winter yesterday ; now, all is warmth,  
 The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice, 180  
 "Arise and come away !" Come whither ? —

far

Enough from the esteem, respect, and all  
 The brother's somewhat insignificant  
 Array of rights ! All which he knows before,  
 Has calculated on so long ago !

185

I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)  
 Contented with its little term of life,

Intending to retire betimes, aware  
 How soon the background must be place for it,  
 — I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds 190  
 All the world's love in its unworldliness.

*Mil.* What is this for?

*Tres.* This, Mildred, is it for!

Or, no, I cannot go to it so soon!  
 That's one of many points my haste left out —  
 Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight  
 film 195

Between the being tied to you by birth,  
 And you, until those slender threads compose  
 A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes  
 And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours:  
 So close you live and yet so far apart! 200  
 And must I rend this web, tear up, break down  
 The sweet and palpitating mystery  
 That makes her sacred? You — for you I mean,  
 Shall I speak, shall I not speak?

*Mil.* Speak!

*Tres.* I will.

Is there a story men could — any man 205  
 Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?  
 I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip.  
 Say "There is no such story men could tell,"  
 And I'll believe you, though I disbelieve  
 The world — the world of better men than I, 210

191 *love.* A, loves.

193 *Or, no.* A, Oh, no.

And women such as I suppose you. Speak!  
*(After a pause.)* Not speak? Explain then!  
 Clear it up then! Move

Some of the miserable weight away  
 That presses lower than the grave! Not speak?  
 Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I 215  
 Could bring myself to plainly make their charge  
 Against you! Must I, Mildred? Silent still?  
*(After a pause.)* Is there a gallant that has night  
 by night

Admittance to your chamber?

*(After a pause.)* Then, his name!  
 Till now, I only had a thought for you: 220  
 But now, — his name!

*Mil.* Thorold, do you devise  
 Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit  
 There be! 'T is nought to say that I'll endure  
 And bless you, — that my spirit yearns to purge  
 Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire: 225  
 But do not plunge me into other guilt!  
 Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.

*Tres.* Then judge yourself! How should I  
 act? Pronounce!

*Mil.* Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me  
 thus!  
 To die here in this chamber by that sword 230  
 Would seem like punishment: so should I glide,  
 Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!

'T were easily arranged for me : but you —  
What would become of you ?

*Tres.* And what will now  
Become of me ? I'll hide your shame and mine<sup>235</sup>  
From every eye ; the dead must heave their  
hearts

Under the marble of our chapel-floor ;  
They cannot rise and blast you. You may wed  
Your paramour above our mother's tomb ;  
Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.<sup>240</sup>  
We too will somehow wear this one day out :  
But with to-morrow hastens here — the Earl !  
The youth without suspicion . . . face can  
come

From Heaven, and heart from . . . whence  
proceed such hearts ?

I have despatched last night at your command<sup>245</sup>  
A missive bidding him present himself  
To-morrow — here — thus much is said ; the  
rest

Is understood as if 't were written down —  
“ His suit finds favour in your eyes.” Now dic-  
tate

This morning's letter that shall countermand<sup>250</sup>  
Last night's — do dictate that !

*Mil.* But, Thorold — if  
I will receive him as I said ?

*Tres.* The Earl?

*Mil.* I will receive him.

*Tres.* (*starting up*). Ho there! Guendolen!

*Guendolen and Austin enter.*

And, Austin, you are welcome, too! Look there!

The woman there!

*Austin and Guendolen.* How? Mildred?

*Tres.* Mildred once! <sup>255</sup>

Now the receiver night by night, when sleep  
Blesses the inmates of her father's house,  
— I say, the soft sly wanton that receives  
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which  
holds

You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held <sup>260</sup>

A thousand Treshams — never one like her!

No lighter of the signal-lamp her quick

Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness

To mix with breath as foul! no loosener

O' the lattice, practised in the stealthy tread, <sup>265</sup>

The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!

Not one composer of the bacchant's mien

Into — what you thought Mildred's, in a word!

Know her!

*Guen.* Oh, Mildred, look to me, at least!

<sup>252</sup> *The Earl.* Italicized in A.

<sup>265</sup> *O' the lattice.* A, Of the lattice.

Thorold — she's dead, I'd say, but that she  
stands 270

Rigid as stone and whiter!

*Tres.* You have heard . . .

*Guen.* Too much! You must proceed no  
further.

*Mil.* Yes —

Proceed! All's truth. Go from me!

*Tres.* All is truth,  
She tells you! Well, you know, or ought to  
know,

All this I would forgive in her. I'd con 275

Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take

Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,

I'd bind myself before them to exact

The prescribed vengeance — and one word of  
hers,

The sight of her, the bare least memory 280

Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride

Above all prides, my all in all so long,

Would scatter every trace of my resolve.

What were it silently to waste away

And see her waste away from this day forth, 285

Two scathed things with leisure to repent,

And grow acquainted with the grave, and die

Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?

It were not so impossible to bear.

283 *Would scatter.* A, Had scattered.

289 *It were not.* A, This were not.

But this — that, fresh from last night's pledge  
renewed 290

Of love with the successful gallant there,  
She calmly bids me help her to entice,  
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth  
Who thinks her all that 's chaste and good and  
pure,

— Invites me to betray him . . . who so fit 295

As honour's self to cover shame's arch-deed?

— That she'll receive Lord Mertoun — (her  
own phrase) —

This, who could bear? Why, you have heard  
of thieves,

Stabbers, the earth's disgrace, who yet have  
laughed,

“Talk not to me of torture — I'll betray 300

“No comrade I've pledged faith to!” — you  
have heard

Of wretched women — all but Mildreds — tied  
By wild illicit ties to losels vile

You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll reply

“Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I find 305

“In him, why should I leave him then for gold,

“Repute or friends?” — and you have felt your  
heart

Respond to such poor outcasts of the world

292 *She.* A, She'll. 295 *Invites.* A, Invite.

297 *her own.* A, that's her.

300 *to me of torture.* A, of tortures to me.

308 *such poor outcasts.* A, these poor outcasts.



As to so many friends ; bad as you please,  
 You've felt they were God's men and women  
 still, 310

So, not to be disowned by you. But she  
 That stands there, calmly gives her lover up  
 As means to wed the Earl that she may hide  
 Their intercourse the surelier : and, for this,  
 I curse her to her face before you all. 315

Shame hunt her from the earth ! Then Heaven  
 do right  
 To both ! It hears me now — shall judge her  
 then !

*As Mildred faints and falls, Tresham  
 rushes out.*

*Aust.* Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany you !

*Guen.* We ?

What, and leave Mildred ? We ? Why, where's  
 my place

But by her side, and where yours but by mine ? 320  
 Mildred — one word ! Only look at me, then !

*Aust.* No, Guendolen ! I echo Thorold's  
 voice.

She is unworthy to behold . . .

*Guen.* Us two ?

If you spoke on reflection, and if I  
 Approved your speech — if you (to put the  
 thing 325

314 *surelier.* A, safelier. *this,* A, that.

320 *where.* A, where's.

At lowest) you the soldier, bound to make  
The king's cause yours and fight for it, and  
throw

Regard to others of its right or wrong,  
— If with a death-white woman you can help,  
Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred, 330

You left her — or if I, her cousin, friend  
This morning, playfellow but yesterday,  
Who said, or thought at least a thousand times,  
“ I'd serve you if I could,” should now face  
round

And say, “ Ah, that 's only to signify 335  
“ I'd serve you while you 're fit to serve your-  
self :

“ So long as fifty eyes await the turn  
“ Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,  
“ I'll proffer my assistance you 'll not need —  
“ When every tongue is praising you, I'll join 340  
“ The praisers' chorus — when you 're hemmed  
about

“ With lives between you and detraction — lives  
“ To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,  
“ Rough hand should violate the sacred ring  
“ Their worship throws about you, — then in-  
deed, 345

“ Who 'll stand up for you stout as I ? ” If so  
We said, and so we did, — not Mildred there

333 *Who said.* A, Who 've said. 335 *only to.* A, to only.

Would be unworthy to behold us both,  
 But we should be unworthy, both of us,  
 To be beheld by — by — your meanest dog, 350  
 Which, if that sword were broken in your face  
 Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,  
 And you cast out with hooting and contempt,  
 — Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain  
 Your side, go off with you and all your shame 355  
 To the next ditch you choose to die in! Austin,  
 Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred, —  
 here's

Your brother says he does not believe half —  
 No, nor half that — of all he heard! He says,  
 Look up and take his hand!

*Aust.* Look up and take 360  
 My hand, dear Mildred!

*Mil.* I — I was so young!  
 Beside, I loved him, Thorold — and I had  
 No mother; God forgot me: so, I fell.

*Guen.* Mildred!

*Mil.* Require no further! Did I dream  
 That I could palliate what is done? All's true. 365  
 Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand?  
 Let go my hand! You do not know, I see.  
 I thought that Thorold told you.

351 *your face.* A, your sight.

353 *hooting.* A, hootings. 356 *choose.* A, chose.

358 *does not believe half.* A, don't believe one half.

359 *he heard.* A, he's heard.

*Guen.* What is this?  
Where start you to?

*Mil.* Oh, Austin, loosen me!  
You heard the whole of it—your eyes were  
worse, 370  
In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless  
You stay to execute his sentence, loose  
My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you here?

*Guen.* Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours  
will wait  
Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse! 375  
Only, when you shall want your bidding done,  
How can we do it if we are not by?  
Here's Austin waiting patiently your will!  
One spirit to command, and one to love  
And to believe in it and do its best, 380  
Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world  
Has been won many a time, its length and  
breadth,  
By just such a beginning!

*Mil.* I believe  
If once I threw my arms about your neck  
And sunk my head upon your breast, that I 385  
Should weep again.

*Guen.* Let go her hand now, Austin!  
Wait for me. Pace the gallery and think  
On the world's seemings and realities,  
Until I call you. *Austin goes.*

*Mil.* No — I cannot weep.  
No more tears from this brain — no sleep — no  
tears! 390

O Guendolen, I love you!

*Guen.* Yes: and “love”  
Is a short word that says so very much!  
It says that you confide in me.

*Mil.* Confide!

*Guen.* Your lover's name, then! I've so  
much to learn,  
Ere I can work in your behalf!

*Mil.* My friend, 395  
You know I cannot tell his name.

*Guen.* At least  
He is your lover? and you love him too?

*Mil.* Ah, do you ask me that? — but I am  
fallen  
So low!

*Guen.* You love him still, then?

*Mil.* My sole prop  
Against the guilt that crushes me! I say, 400  
Each night ere I lie down, “I was so young —  
“I had no mother, and I loved him so!”  
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare  
Trust him my soul in sleep.

*Guen.* How could you let us  
E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then? 405

*Mil.* There is a cloud around me.

*Guen.* But you said

You would receive his suit in spite of this?

*Mil.* I say there is a cloud . . .

*Guen.* No cloud to me!

Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!

*Mil.* What maddest fancy . . .

*Guen.* (*calling aloud*). Austin! (spare your  
pains — 410

When I have got a truth, that truth I keep) —

*Mil.* By all you love, sweet Guendolen, forbear!

Have I confided in you . . .

*Guen.* Just for this!

Austin! — Oh, not to guess it at the first!

But I did guess it — that is, I divined, 415

Felt by an instinct how it was: why else  
Should I pronounce you free from all that heap  
Of sins which had been irredeemable?

I felt they were not yours — what other way  
Than this, not yours? The secret's wholly mine! 420

*Mil.* If you would see me die before his  
face . . .

*Guen.* I'd hold my peace! And if the Earl  
returns

To-night?

*Mil.* Ah Heaven, he's lost!

*Guen.* I thought so. Austin!

*Enter Austin.*

Oh, where have you been hiding?

*Aust.* Thorold's gone,  
I know not how, across the meadow-land. 425  
I watched him till I lost him in the skirts  
O' the beech-wood.

*Guen.* Gone? All thwarts us.

*Mil.* Thorold too?

*Guen.* I have thought. First lead this Mildred  
to her room.

Go on the other side; and then we'll seek  
Your brother: and I'll tell you, by the way, 430  
The greatest comfort in the world. You said  
There was a clue to all. Remember, Sweet,  
He said there was a clue! I hold it. Come!

427 *O' the.* A, Of the.

### ACT III.

SCENE I. — *The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under Mildred's window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

*Enter Tresham through the trees.*

Again here! But I cannot lose myself.  
The heath — the orchard — I have traversed  
glades  
And dells and bosky paths which used to lead  
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering  
My boy's adventurous step. And now they tend 5  
Hither or soon or late; the blackest shade  
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope  
wide,  
And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts  
Again my step; the very river put  
Its arm about me and conducted me 10  
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun  
Their will no longer: do your will with me!  
Oh, bitter! To have reared a towering scheme  
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,  
Were nothing: all men hope, and see their hopes 15  
Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew.  
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours  
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,



Were just as though I hoped that from these old  
 Confederates against the sovereign day, 20  
 Children of older and yet older sires,  
 Whose living coral berries dropped, as now  
 On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,  
 On many a beauty's wimple — would proceed  
 No poison-tree, to thrust, from hell its root, 25  
 Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.

Why came I here? What must I do? (*A bell  
 strikes.*) A bell?

Midnight! and 't is at midnight . . . Ah, I  
 catch

— Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning  
 now,

And I obey you! Hist! This tree will serve. 30

*He retires behind one of the trees. After  
 a pause, enter Mertoun cloaked as  
 before.*

*Mertoun.* Not time! Beat out thy last volup-  
 tuous beat

Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought the clock  
 I' the chapel struck as I was pushing through  
 The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise  
 My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past! 35  
 So much the more delicious task to watch  
 Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by thorn,  
 All traces of the rough forbidden path  
 My rash love lured her to! Each day must see

33 *I' the chapel.* A, In the chapel. 36 *to watch.* A, to see.

Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed: 40  
 Then there will be surprises, unforeseen  
 Delights in store. I'll not regret the past.

*The light is placed above in the purple pane.*

And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star!  
 I never saw it lovelier than now  
 It rises for the last time. If it sets, 45  
 'T is that the re-assuring sun may dawn.

*As he prepares to ascend the last tree of  
 the avenue, Tresham arrests his arm.*

Unhand me — peasant, by your grasp! Here's  
 gold.

'T was a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck  
 A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath  
 The casement there. Take this, and hold your  
 peace. 50

*Tres.* Into the moonlight yonder, come with  
 me!

Out of the shadow!

*Mert.* I am armed, fool!

*Tres.* Yes,

Or no? You'll come into the light, or no?  
 My hand is on your throat — refuse! —

*Mert.* That voice!

Where have I heard . . . no — that was mild  
 and slow. 55

I'll come with you. *They advance.*

46 *dawn.* A, rise.

55 *that.* Italicized in A.

56 *advance.* A, advance to front of stage.

*Tres.* You're armed: that's well. De-  
clare

Your name: who are you?

*Mert.* (Tresham! — she is lost!)

*Tres.* Oh, silent? Do you know, you bear  
yourself

Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had  
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look 60  
When they're detected, still your kind has  
looked!

The bravo holds an assured countenance,  
The thief is voluble and plausible,  
But silently the slave of lust has crouched  
When I have fancied it before a man. 65

Your name!

*Mert.* I do conjure Lord Tresham — ay,  
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail —  
That he for his own sake forbear to ask  
My name! As heaven's above, his future weal  
Or woe depends upon my silence! Vain! 70  
I read your white inexorable face.  
Know me, Lord Tresham!

*He throws off his disguises.*

*Tres.* Mertoun!

(*After a pause.*) Draw now!

*Mert.* Hear me

But speak first!

*Tres.* Not one least word on your life!

Be sure that I will strangle in your throat  
 The least word that informs me how you live 75  
 And yet seem what you seem! No doubt 't was  
 you

Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin.  
 We should join hands in frantic sympathy  
 If you once taught me the unteachable,  
 Explained how you can live so, and so lie. 80  
 With God's help I retain, despite my sense,  
 The old belief — a life like yours is still  
 Impossible. Now draw!

*Mert.* Not for my sake,  
 Do I entreat a hearing — for your sake,  
 And most, for her sake!

*Tres.* Ha ha, what should I 85  
 Know of your ways? A miscreant like yourself,  
 How must one rouse his ire? A blow? — that's  
 pride  
 No doubt, to him! One spurns him, does one  
 not?

Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or spits  
 Into his face! Come! Which, or all of these? 90

*Mert.* 'Twixt him and me and Mildred, Hea-  
 ven be judge!

Can I avoid this? Have your will, my lord!

*He draws and, after a few passes, falls.*

76 *seem what you seem.* A, are what you are.

81 *retain.* A, will keep. .87 *pride.* A, great.

*Tres.* You are not hurt?

*Mert.* You 'll hear me now!

*Tres.* But rise!

*Mert.* Ah, Tresham, say I not "you 'll hear me now!"

And what procures a man the right to speak 95  
In his defence before his fellow man,  
But — I suppose — the thought that presently  
He may have leave to speak before his God  
His whole defence?

*Tres.* Not hurt? It cannot be!  
You made no effort to resist me. Where 100  
Did my sword reach you? Why not have re-  
turned

My thrusts? Hurt where?

*Mert.* My lord —

*Tres.* How young he is!

*Mert.* Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet  
I have entangled other lives with mine.  
Do let me speak, and do believe my speech! 105  
That when I die before you presently, —

*Tres.* Can you stay here till I return with  
help?

*Mert.* Oh, stay by me! When I was less  
than boy

I did you grievous wrong and knew it not —  
Upon my honour, knew it not! Once known, 110  
I could not find what seemed a better way

To right you than I took : my life — you feel  
 How less than nothing were the giving you  
 The life you 've taken ! But I thought my way  
 The better — only for your sake and hers : 115

And as you have decided otherwise,  
 Would I had an infinity of lives  
 To offer you ! Now say — instruct me — think !  
 Can you, from the brief minutes I have left,  
 Eke out my reparation ? Oh think — think ! 120  
 For I must wring a partial — dare I say,  
 Forgiveness from you, ere I die ?

*Tres.*

I do

Forgive you.

*Mert.* Wait and ponder that great word !  
 Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope  
 To speak to you of — Mildred !

*Tres.*

Mertoun, haste 125

And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you  
 Should tell me for a novelty you 're young,  
 Thoughtless, unable to recall the past.  
 Be but your pardon ample as my own !

*Mert.* Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke and  
 a drop 130

Of blood or two, should bring all this about !  
 Why, 't was my very fear of you, my love  
 Of you — (what passion like a boy's for one

113 *were the giving.* A, had been giving. 116 *And.* A, But.

119 *from the.* A, from out the. 133 *passion.* A, passion 's.

Like you ?) — that ruined me ! I dreamed of  
you —

You, all accomplished, courted everywhere, 135

The scholar and the gentleman. I burned

To knit myself to you : but I was young,

And your surpassing reputation kept me

So far aloof ! Oh, wherefore all that love ?

With less of love, my glorious yesterday 140.

Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,

Had taken place perchance six months ago.

Even now, how happy we had been ! And yet

I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham !

Let me look up into your face ; I feel 145

'T is changed above me : yet my eyes are glazed.

Where ? where ?

*As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.*

Ah, Mildred ! What will Mildred do ?

Tresham, her life is bound up in the life

That's bleeding fast away ! I'll live — must

live, —

There, if you'll only turn me I shall live 150

And save her ! Tresham — oh, had you but

heard !

Had you but heard ! What right was yours to

set

The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,  
 And then say, as we perish, " Had I thought,  
 " All had gone otherwise " ? We 've sinned and  
 die : 155

Never you sin, Lord Tresham ! for you 'll die,  
 And God will judge you.

*Tres.* Yes, be satisfied !

That process is begun.

*Mert.* And she sits there  
 Waiting for me ! Now, say you this to her —  
 You, not another — say, I saw him die 160  
 As he breathed this, " I love her " — you don't  
 know

What those three small words mean ! Say ; lov-  
 ing her

Lowers me down the bloody slope to death  
 With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,  
 Who had no pity, will have no remorse, 165  
 Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,  
 Dear Mildred ! 't is so easy, and you 'll 'scape  
 So much unkindness ! Can I lie at rest,  
 With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds  
 Done to you ? — heartless men shall have my  
 heart, 170

And I tied down with grave-clothes and the  
 worm,

156 *Never you sin.* A italicized *you*.

170 *shall have.* A, to have.



Aware, perhaps, of every blow — oh God! —  
 Upon those lips — yet of no power to tear  
 The felon stripe by stripe! Die, Mildred! Leave  
 Their honourable world to them! For God 175  
 We're good enough, though the world casts us  
 out. *A whistle is heard.*

*Tres.* Ho, Gerard!

*Enter Gerard, Austin and Guendolen, with lights.*

No one speak! You see what's done.  
 I cannot bear another voice.

*Mert.* There's light —  
 Light all about me, and I move to it,  
 Tresham, did I not tell you — did you not 180  
 Just promise to deliver words of mine  
 To Mildred?

*Tres.* I will bear those words to her.

*Mert.* Now?

*Tres.* Now. Lift you the body, and leave me  
 The head.

*As they have half raised Mertoun, he  
 turns suddenly.*

*Mert.* I knew they turned me: turn me not  
 from her!  
 There! stay you! there! *Dies.*

*Guen.* (after a pause). Austin, remain you  
 here 185

183 *Lift you the body.* A, Lift you the body, Gerard.

With Thorold until Gerard comes with help :  
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go  
To Mildred.

*Tres.* Guendolen, I hear each word  
You utter. Did you hear him bid me give  
His message? Did you hear my promise? I, 190  
And only I, see Mildred.

*Guen.* She will die.

*Tres.* Oh no, she will not die! I dare not  
hope  
She'll die. What ground have you to think  
she'll die?

Why, Austin 's with you!

*Aust.* Had we but arrived  
Before you fought!

*Tres.* There was no fight at all. 195  
He let me slaughter him — the boy! I'll trust  
The body there to you and Gerard — thus!  
Now bear him on before me.

*Aust.* Whither bear him?

*Tres.* Oh, to my chamber! When we meet  
there next,  
We shall be friends.

*They bear out the body of Mertoun.*

Will she die, Guendolen? 200

*Guen.* Where are you taking me?

*Tres.* He fell just here.

196 the boy! A, these boys!

Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life  
— You who have nought to do with Mertoun's  
fate,

Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,  
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help? 205

When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm  
Through our ancestral grounds, will not a shade  
Be ever on the meadow and the waste —  
Another kind of shade than when the night  
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up? 210

But will you ever so forget his breast  
As carelessly to cross this bloody turf  
Under the black yew avenue? That's well!  
You turn your head: and I then? —

*Guen.*

What is done

Is done. My care is for the living. Thorold, 215  
Bear up against this burden: more remains  
To set the neck to!

*Tres.*

Dear and ancient trees

My fathers planted, and I loved so well!  
What have I done that, like some fabled crime  
Of yore, lets loose a Fury leading thus 220  
Her miserable dance amidst you all?  
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone  
With all your tops a vast antiphony,

211 *his breast.* A, this night.

212 *carelessly.* A, willingly.

214 *I.* Italicized in A.

220 *a Fury leading thus.* A, a Fury — free to lead.

Demanding and responding in God's praise!  
 Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell — fare-  
 well!

225

SCENE II. — *Mildred's chamber.*

*Mildred alone.*

He comes not! I have heard of those who  
 seemed

Resourceless in prosperity, — you thought  
 Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet  
 Did they so gather up their diffused strength  
 At her first menace, that they bade her strike, 5  
 And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.  
 Oh, 't is not so with me! The first woe fell,  
 And the rest fall upon it, not on me:

Else should I bear that Henry comes not? —  
 fails

10

Just this first night out of so many nights?  
 Loving is done with. Were he sitting now,  
 As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd love  
 No more — contrive no thousand happy ways  
 To hide love from the loveless, any more.

15

I think I might have urged some little point  
 In my defence, to Thorold; he was breathless  
 For the least hint of a defence: but no,  
 The first shame over, all that would might fall.  
 No Henry! Yet I merely sit and think

The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have  
crept 20

Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost  
Her lover — oh, I dare not look upon  
Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'T is she,  
Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The world  
Forsakes me: only Henry's left me — left? 25

When I have lost him, for he does not come,  
And I sit stupidly . . . Oh Heaven, break up  
This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,  
By any means or any messenger!

*Tres.* (*without*). Mildred!

*Mil.* Come in! Heaven hears me!

(*Enter Tresham.*) You? alone? 30

Oh, no more cursing!

*Tres.* Mildred, I must sit.

There — you sit!

*Mil.* Say it, Thorold — do not look  
The curse! deliver all you come to say!

What must become of me? Oh, speak that  
thought

Which makes your brow and cheeks so pale!

*Tres.* My thought? 35

*Mil.* All of it!

*Tres.* How we waded — years ago —  
After those water-lilies, till the plash,  
I know not how, surprised us; and you dared

37 *those water-lilies.* A, the water-lilies.

Neither advance nor turn back : so, we stood  
 Laughing and crying until Gerard came — 40  
 Once safe upon the turf, the loudest too,  
 For once more reaching the relinquished prize !  
 How idle thoughts are, some men's, dying men's !  
 Mildred, —

*Mil.* You call me kindlier by my name  
 Than even yesterday : what is in that ? 45

*Tres.* It weighs so much upon my mind that I  
 This morning took an office not my own !  
 I might . . . of course, I must be glad or  
 grieved,

Content or not, at every little thing  
 That touches you. I may with a wrung heart 50  
 Even reprove you, Mildred ; I did more :  
 Will you forgive me ?

*Mil.* Thorold ? do you mock ?  
 Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that  
 word !

*Tres.* Forgive me, Mildred ! — are you silent,  
 Sweet ?

*Mil.* (*starting up*). Why does not Henry Mer-  
 toun come to-night ? 55  
 Are you, too, silent ?

*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to  
 his scabbard, which is empty.*

Ah, this speaks for you !

You 've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now proceed!

What is it I must pardon? This and all?

Well, I do pardon you — I think I do.

Thorold, how very wretched you must be! 60

*Tres.* He bade me tell you . . .

*Mil.* What I do forbid

Your utterance of! So much that you may tell

And will not — how you murdered him . . .

but, no!

You 'll tell me that he loved me, never more

Than bleeding out his life there: must I say 65

“Indeed,” to that? Enough! I pardon you.

*Tres.* You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh words, yes:

Of this last deed Another's judge; whose doom

I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.

*Mil.* Oh, true! There's nought for me to pardon! True! 70

You loose my soul of all its cares at once.

Death makes me sure of him forever! You

Tell me his last words? He shall tell me them,

And take my answer — not in words, but reading

Himself the heart I had to read him late, 75

Which death . . .

62 *that you.* A italicized *you.* 71 *You loose.* A, You loosed.

72 *You.* Italicized in A. 73 *He.* Italicized in A.

*Tres.* Death? You are dying too? Well  
said

Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you'd die:  
But she was sure of it.

*Mil.* Tell Guendolen  
I loved her, and tell Austin . . .

*Tres.* Him you loved:  
And me?

*Mil.* Ah, Thorold! Was't not rashly done 80  
To quench that blood, on fire with youth and  
hope

And love of me — whom you loved too, and yet  
Suffered to sit here waiting his approach  
While you were slaying him? Oh, doubtlessly  
You let him speak his poor confused boy's-speech 85  
— Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath  
And respite me! — you let him try to give  
The story of our love and ignorance,  
And the brief madness and the long despair —  
You let him plead all this, because your code 90  
Of honour bids you hear before you strike:  
But at the end, as he looked up for life  
Into your eyes — you struck him down!

*Tres.* No! No!  
Had I but heard him — had I let him speak  
Half the truth — less — had I looked long on him 95  
I had desisted! Why, as he lay there,

82 *whom you loved too.* A, you loved I think. 88 *love.* A, loves.



The moon on his flushed cheek; I gathered all  
 The story ere he told it : I saw through  
 The troubled surface of his crime and yours  
 A depth of purity immovable. 100  
 Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest  
 Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath ;  
 I would not glance : my punishment 's at hand.  
 There, Mildred, is the truth! and you—say on—  
 You curse me?

*Mil.* As I dare approach that Heaven 105  
 Which has not bade a living thing despair,  
 Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,  
 But bids the vilest worm that turns on it  
 Desist and be forgiven,— I — forgive not,  
 But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls! 110

*Falls on his neck.*

There! Do not think too much upon the past!  
 The cloud that 's broke was all the same a cloud  
 While it stood up between my friend and you;  
 You hurt him 'neath its shadow : but is that  
 So past retrieve? I have his heart, you know; 115  
 I may dispose of it : I give it you!  
 It loves you as mine loves! Confirm me, Henry!

*Dies.*

*Tres.* I wish thee joy, Beloved! I am glad  
 In thy full gladness!

*Guen. (without).* Mildred! Tresham!  
*(Entering with Austin.)* Thorold,

I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons!  
That 's well.

120

*Tres.* Oh, better far than that!

*Guen.* She 's dead!

Let me unlock her arms!

*Tres.* She threw them thus  
About my neck, and blessed me, and then died:  
You 'll let them stay now, Guendolen!

*Aust.* Leave her  
And look to him! What ails you, Thorold?

*Guen.* White 125  
As she, and whiter! Austin! quick — this side!

*Aust.* A froth is oozing through his clenched  
teeth;  
Both lips, where they 're not bitten through, are  
black:

Speak, dearest Thorold!

*Tres.* Something does weigh down  
My neck beside her weight: thanks: I should  
fall

130

But for you, Austin, I believe! — there, there,  
'T will pass away soon! — ah, — I had forgotten:  
I am dying.

*Guen.* Thorold — Thorold — why was  
this?

*Tres.* I said, just as I drank the poison off,  
The earth would be no longer earth to me,  
The life out of all life was gone from me.

135

There are blind ways provided, the foredone  
 Heart-weary player in this pageant-world  
 Drops out by, letting the main masque defile  
 By the conspicuous portal : I am through— 140  
 Just through !

*Guen.* Don't leave him, Austin ! Death is  
 close.

*Tres.* Already Mildred's face is peacefuller.  
 I see you, Austin — feel you : here 's my hand,  
 Put yours in it — you, Guendolen, yours too !  
 You 're lord and lady now — you 're Treshams ;  
 name 145

And fame are yours : you hold our 'scutcheon up.  
 Austin, no blot on it ! You see how blood  
 Must wash one blot away : the first blot came  
 And the first blood came. To the vain world's  
 eye

All 's gules again : no care to the vain world, 150  
 From whence the red was drawn !

*Aust.* No blot shall come !

*Tres.* I said that : yet it did come. Should it  
 come,  
 Vengeance is God's, not man's. Remember me !

*Dies.*

*Guen.* (*letting fall the pulseless arm*). Ah,  
 Thorold, we can but — remember you !

## Notes to A Blot in the 'Scutcheon

*For the meaning of single words see the Glossary.*

*A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* was written in 1843 in five days, in response to an invitation from Macready that Browning should prepare a play for him. The tragedian received and read it with warm expressions of approval, but he soon found himself, in consequence of the failure of other plays, so embarrassed financially that he did not wish to produce it. He had not the manliness to confess the truth, and seems to have gone to work in a manner not too honorable to provoke Browning to refuse to have it played. It was read to the players by the head prompter, one Wilmot, "a broadly comic personage with a wooden leg and a very red face, whose vulgar sallies were the delight of all the idle jesters that hung about the theatre."<sup>1</sup> The result, according to Lady Martin, who as Helen Faucit played Mildred, was that "the delicate, subtle lines were twisted, perverted, and even sometimes made ridiculous." Macready told Browning that it was received with shouts of laughter, and although he afterwards reread it to the company, he turned his part in it over to Mr. Phelps. It was Macready's hope that the poet would withdraw the play, but as this was not done, the tragedian took advantage of the temporary illness of Phelps to resume at rehearsals the part of Tresham himself. He changed the title to *The Sisters*, and proposed to cut out the first act and the tragic conclusion, ending it with lines of his own. Browning at once took the poem to his publishers, had it hastily printed as number five of *Bells and Pomegranates*, and put a copy into the hands of each of the actors. He then had Phelps restored to the caste as Tresham; and on Feb. 11 the play was given with marked success — at least of esteem. It was announced to be played three times a week until further notice, but the financial breaking down of Macready closed the theatre almost immediately.

<sup>1</sup> Edmund Gosse: *Personalialia* (1890), pp. 59-60.

Mr. Phelps revived the play at Sadler's Wells Theatre Nov. 27, 1848, and it had a run of two weeks.

It was brought out in America in 1885 by Mr. Lawrence Barrett. He omitted the first scene and the last third of the second act.

The London Browning Society gave the play May 2, 1885, at St. George's Hall, and March 15, 1888, at the Olympic Theatre.

The London *Examiner* of Feb. 18, 1844, commented: "In performance it was successful: a result which it had been hardly safe to predict of a work of so much rare beauty and of such decisive originality." The *Athenæum*, Dec. 2, 1848, on the occasion of the revival, said: "The play as now acted commanded well-deserved applause: giving satisfaction to a numerous though not overflowing audience."

When the play was given in 1888, Frederick Wedmore wrote the notice in the *Academy*, and in the course of it remarked: "*A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* is a great example of true dramatic literature, as distinguished from theatrical writing." The *Athenæum*, on the same occasion, in the review quoted below (67, 30, p. 80), said: "Though far from being dramatic, *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* is profoundly human and sympathetic."

**Act I, Scene i.** Mr. Barrett omitted this scene.

**3, 4. poursuivant.** A herald or advance messenger. Browning probably used this and kindred Elizabethan words to give the flavor of a previous century. 'Bravery' in the sense of finery below, and the allusions to hawking are examples of the same thing. Commentators have noted that the poet is not always careful in holding strictly to seventeenth-century terms, but this seems of no possible importance.

**5, 41. Their perfumed selves so indispensable.** After praising the naturalness and appropriateness of lines 68-75, W. L. Courtney comments on 40-41: "It reminds one of Hamlet's waterfly, Osric, rather than of Tresham's retainers." — *Studies New and Old*.

**6, 44. cast of Swedish hawks.** Cast is technically a pair; a **leash of greyhounds** — from the leash or thong that holds them — is three hounds.

**8, 93. no herald more.** It was the business of a herald to regulate all the details of court ceremonial and etiquette.

**Act II, Scene ii.** Mr. Barrett played scenes 2 and 3 with the same set, the "chamber" being represented as adjoining the "saloon," and looking out upon the park.

**10, 16. he's the king's.** He is in the army.

**12-13, 74-80. Her beauty . . . yet.** This portrait of a sister is one of the most beautiful passages in the play.

**14, 109. Here . . . Earl.** The exposition, as it is technically called, the explanation to the audience of the situation, is begun in sc. 1 by calling attention to the fact that Gerard is mysteriously ill at ease. Here it is continued by the comment of Austin, who, while attaching to it no sinister meaning, notices the unusual manner of Mertoun. The strokes are perhaps less broad than those which playwrights generally employ for such a purpose as that of preparing the audience for the terrible disclosure which comes in sc. 3.

**16, 133. Mildred is fourteen.** The propriety of making Mildred so young has been questioned and defended. Dr. Rolfe and Miss Hersey say: "This extraordinary statement seems to be the chief dramatic blemish of the play." It is evidently a device on the part of the poet to make the youth of Mildred an excuse for her sin, and seems as unsuccessful as it is improbable (but see note on sc. 3, l. 237). The only thing to do in this case is to receive the fact as an arbitrary sign that Mildred was so far from a realization of the nature of what she was doing that she fell without that moral degradation which would be an essential condition of deliberate transgression. Certainly this supposition must be accepted or the whole scheme of the tragedy as Browning conceived it goes to pieces. This method of impressing the fact upon the audience may not be regarded as wisely chosen, but of its intention there can be no doubt.

**16, 138-148. In . . . vouchsafes.** Guendolen is delightful in every word throughout the scene. This speech in which, influenced by the remark of Austin (ll. 109-120), she changes from her position of l. 43, yet without openly declaring that she has any fault to find beyond a whimsical charge, is deliciously feminine.

**17-18, 162-169. Come, . . . Come.** The impetuosity of Tresham, which has been insisted upon throughout the scene as a preparation for the climax of act iii, is here made the final note.

**18, 6. Lord Mertoun's pedigree.** The important idea of the honor of the house of Tresham is first touched upon by the retainer, sc. 1, l. 87; in sc. 2 the opening words of Tresham show the importance he attaches to a name; at l. 130 he returns to the fact that Mertoun is of lineage satisfactory to a degree that the others do not appreciate; and here Guendolen again brings forward the idea of Tresham's pride of race. Her jesting farewell, ll. 65-68, emphasizes the idea again. This is of course all part of the carrying out of the spirit of the title. How effective it is upon the audience might possibly be questioned, since on the stage those things most move the audience which are shown by action. In the present case, however, it is no matter. The normal human feelings of a brother who discovers that a dearly loved sister has been betrayed are sufficient to account for the emotion of Tresham in the succeeding acts, and it is to these feelings that any spectator would be likely to attribute his action.

**19, 24. Am I perplexed.** Here again in playfulness Guendolen touches upon the matter of ancestry, and claims to have understood and remembered some minute account of the pedigree which Tresham has given them, so that she knows whether William the Conqueror, eating from the rocks of the kingdom he has invaded but not yet conquered, bade Mertoun's ancestor sit on his left (the bow-hand) or granted him the "great meed" of the place of honor on his right (the arrow-hand).

**21, 67-68. that fair dame . . . dance.** Legend thus accounts for the founding of the Order of the Garter, 1340-1350. King Edward III picked up a garter dropped at a ball by the Countess of Salisbury, placing it on his knee with the words to his courtiers, *Honi soit qui mal y pense* (shamed be he who thinks evil of it). His words became the motto of the order.

**22, 75. soothes up.** This is the most Elizabethan touch in the play.

**22, 81. There's a woman like a dew-drop.** This song is one of the most beautiful of Browning's love lyrics, but it is here inappropriate to a degree almost shocking. Lawrence Barrett omitted it on the ground that it too much delayed the action, as it no doubt does. Exquisite as the song is, one who realizes the situation in which it is sung cannot wonder that on the first per-

formance of the play "the audience was not quite sure whether to laugh or no."

26, 150-151. **cursed fount . . . spouts blood.** Cf. *Julius Cæsar*, ii. 2, 76-78. In this speech, ll. 132-154, Browning proves his power of writing great dramatic poetry. This is direct, simple enough to be easily followed, yet it is full of variety and charged throughout with intense emotion.

27, 167-168. **pace the chamber.** Here, in striking contrast to the lines just noted, is a passage which rings false in every word. Mertoun throughout the scene lacks verisimilitude, and the next long speech — ll. 174-209 — is both artificial and pretty nearly impossible, one would think, on the stage.

30, 230-231. **Then . . . To-morrow night.** The insistence upon the delay which gives another night for the completion of the plot, the rather inadequate reason and the doubtful probability of the lovers taking the risk of another clandestine meeting, add greatly to the artificiality of the story. It is possible, however, to see in Mildred's shrinking, ll. 161-164, a natural and feminine weakness.

30, 237-238. **I . . . mother.** Charles Dickens, who read the play in manuscript, declared: "I know nothing that is so affecting, nothing in any book I have ever read, as Mildred's recurrence to that, 'I was so young — I had no mother.'"

30, 239-240. **There . . . past.** In Mr. Barrett's production these two lines were omitted, with a great gain, it is said, in theatrical effect.

39, 150-151. **here's a line . . . me.** The stage business obviously is that Mildred looks over his shoulder at the copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* where he points out the line. He shrinks from her touch.

39-42, 157-232. **Mildred . . . bliss.** Here the speeches, although of some length, are admirably appropriate. Tresham's indirect approach to his question and the fluctuations of his overwrought feeling are masterly.

43, 235. **Become . . . me.** The acting version of Mr. Barrett omitted the rest of the act except ll. 241, 284-287. Guendolen, Austin, and Mildred pass across the scene with these few words, and disappear into the house. Tresham enters, solilo-



quizes, and hides among the trees. Mildred's chamber opens by a bow-window and small balcony on the park. Ll. 424-443 are made the beginning of the third act. It thus escapes the hopelessly long speech of Guendolen, ll. 353-369, which hinders the action with no dramatic gain, and leaves out the discovery on her part of the identity of the lover, a detail which is of much interest in building up Guendolen's character, but which is of no essential importance to the play since nothing comes of it. On the other hand it lessens the effect of what is the supreme dramatic situation of the tragedy, Tresham's belief that Mildred will marry Mertoun while she has another lover. Painful as this is, it is tremendously effective, and both Tresham and Mildred have in it ample opportunity for their best art. Helen Faucit was especially effective in this scene, and it is manifestly for the stage the best in the whole part. As an example of the sort of adverse criticism which has so often assailed Browning, may be quoted a part of the article in which the London *Era* commented on the revival of the play in 1888. Of the speech of Guendolen alluded to above it said: "Any ordinary good-hearted young woman in any ordinary piece would have expressed her feelings in half-a-dozen straightforward lines, at least. Not so Mr. Browning's Guendolen. She begins to reason like a lawyer, and for several mortal minutes poor Mildred has to lie on the floor to recover herself at leisure. Were these long passages poetry, they might be endured for the sake of the word-music; but they are of the strange uncouth language Mr. Browning has invented." Flippant as this is, it has a sufficient basis in truth to make it tell.

**43, 243-244. face can . . . hearts.** Tresham looks in her face, and seeing its beauty and purity, exclaims that a face may come from heaven while the heart behind it may be vile enough to come from hell.

**55, 20. Confederates against the sovereign day.** The trees are this in that they keep perpetual shadow under them. The line has an Elizabethan flavor.

**55, 31. voluptuous.** The word in the mouth of Mertoun here has an unpleasant flavor.

**Act III, Scene ii.** Mr. Barrett had Tresham disappear among the trees. Mildred delivered her soliloquy from a balcony, and then

descended into the park. This disregarded all previous statements about Mildred's chamber, which could be reached only by climbing, but gave opportunity for the stage business noted below (l. 56).

**66, 4. diffused.** Browning takes the Elizabethan license of accenting the word on the first syllable.

**67, 30. Come in!** The London *Athenæum*, commenting on the performance of the play in 1888, remarks: "What lover dreading a surprise, will sing a love song while clambering at midnight to his mistress's casement [i, 2.]? What Hero, again, with the signal lamp burning that bids Leander speed to her chamber, will, when she hears a knock at her door, say calmly, 'Come in!' and welcome composedly the brother whose meeting with the anticipated visitor is the thing of all others the one she most dreads? These, and other details, though comparatively unimportant, prove how little the author has the theatrical insight."

**68, 56. Ah, this speaks for you!** In Barrett's version Mildred, walking among the trees, comes upon the hat and cloak of Mertoun where he flung them down before the duel. As a stage device this is far more effective than the empty scabbard.

**73, 137-140. There are . . . portal.** "These lines are like those of Middleton." *Athenæum* notice quoted at l. 30.

## Colombe's Birthday

## Dedication.

No One Loves And Honours Barry Cornwall More Than Robert Browning :  
Who Having Nothing Better Than This Play To Give Him In Proof Of It ;  
Must Say So.

March, 1844.

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### PERSONS.

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COLOMBE OF RAVESTEIN, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves.

SABYNE }  
ADOLF } Her Attendants.

GUIBERT }  
GAUCELME }  
MAUFROY } Courtiers.  
CLUGNET }

VALENCE, Advocate of Cleves.

PRINCE BERTHOLD, Claimant of the Duchy

MELCHIOR, his Confidant.

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PLACE, *The Palace of Juliers.*

Time, 16—.

*Dedication.* In the 1849 ed., and thereafter, these lines of verse on the 1844 title-page follow a half-title :—

“ Ivy and violet, what do ye here,

“ With blossom and shoot in the warm spring-weather,

“ Hiding the arms of Monchenci and Vere ? ” HANMER.

After A, the Dedication and the Persons are on successive pages.

March. London, 1888-94 ed.

# Colombe's Birthday

1844

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## ACT I.

MORNING.

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

*Gaucelme, Clugnet, Maufroy and other Courtiers, round Guibert, who is silently reading a paper : as he drops it at the end —*

*Guibert.* That this should be her birthday ;  
and the day

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

*1st Courtier.* Ay, indeed ?

*2nd Court.* Well, Guibert ?

*3rd Court.* But your news, my friend,  
your news !

The sooner, friend, one learns Prince Berthold's  
pleasure,

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

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

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

*Gaucelme.* Come, Guibert, this outgrows a  
jest, I think !

You're hardly such a novice as to need  
The lesson, you pretend.

*Guib.* What lesson, sir ?  
That everybody, if he'd thrive at court,  
Should, first and last of all, look to himself ?  
Why, no : and therefore with your good ex-  
ample,

(— Ho, Master Adolf ! ) — to myself I'll look.

*Enter Adolf.*

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

16 *where she lived queen.* A, where queen she lived.

21 *outgrows.* A, outgoes.

*Adolf.* By virtue of your place,  
 Sir Guibert ! 'T was the Prince's express charge, 30  
 His envoy told us, that the missive there  
 Should only reach our lady by the hand  
 Of whosoever held your place.

*Guib.* Enough !

*Adolf retires.*

Then, gentles, who 'll accept a certain poor  
 Indifferently honourable place, 35  
 My friends, I make no doubt, have gnashed their  
 teeth

At leisure minutes these half-dozen years,  
 To find me never in the mood to quit ?  
 Who asks may have it, with my blessing, and —  
 This to present our lady. Who 'll accept ? 40  
 You, — you, — you ? There it lies, and may,  
 for me !

*Maufroy (a youth, picking up the paper, reads aloud).* " Prince Berthold, proved by titles following

" Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this day  
 " To claim his own, with license from the Pope,  
 " The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and  
 France " . . . 45

*Gauc.* Sufficient " titles following," I judge !  
 Don't read another ! Well, — " to claim his  
 own " ?

*Mauf.* " — And take possession of the Duchy  
held  
" Since twelve months, to the true heir's preju-  
dice,  
" By " . . . Colombe, Juliers' mistress, so she  
thinks, 50  
And Ravestein's mere lady, as we find.  
Who wants the place and paper? Guibert's  
right.  
I hope to climb a little in the world, —  
I'd push my fortunes, — but, no more than he,  
Could tell her on this happy day of days, 55  
That, save the nosegay in her hand perhaps,  
There's nothing left to call her own. Sir Clug-  
net,  
You famish for promotion; what say you?  
*Clugnet (an old man).* To give this letter were  
a sort, I take it,  
Of service: services ask recompense: 60  
What kind of corner may be Ravestein?  
*Guib.* The castle? Oh, you'd share her for-  
tunes? Good!  
Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,  
With no such bad remainder of a roof.  
*Clugn.* Oh, — but the town?  
*Guib.* Five houses, fifteen huts; 65  
A church whereto was once a spire, 't is judged;  
And half a dyke, except in time of thaw.



*Clugn.* Still, there 's some revenue?

*Guib.* Else Heaven forfend!

You hang a beacon out, should fogs increase;  
So, when the Autumn floats of pine-wood steer 70  
Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks to you,  
Their grateful raftsmen flings a guilder in; —  
That 's if he mean to pass your way next time.

*Clugn.* If not?

*Guib.* Hang guilders, then! He blesses  
you.

*Clugn.* What man do you suppose me? Keep  
your paper! 75

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

*Gauc.* Some one must tell her.

*Guib.* Some one may: you may!

*Gauc.* Sir Guibert, 't is no trifle turns me  
sick

Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine, 80  
But this goes near it. Where 's there news at  
all?

Who 'll have the face, for instance, to affirm  
He never heard, e'en while we crowned the girl,  
That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law;  
That one, confessed her father's cousin's child, 85  
And, she away, indisputable heir,  
Against our choice protesting and the Duke's,

73 *mean.* A, means.

85 *That one.* A, And one.

Claimed Juliers? — nor, as he preferred his  
claim,

That first this, then another potentate,  
Inclined to its allowance? — I or you, 90  
Or any one except the lady's self?

Oh, it had been the direst cruelty  
To break the business to her! Things might  
change :

At all events, we 'd see next masque at end,  
Next mummary over first: and so the edge 95

Was taken off sharp tidings as they came,  
Till here 's the Prince upon us, and there 's she  
— Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,

With just the faintest notion possible  
That some such claimant earns a livelihood 100

About the world, by feigning grievances —  
Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,  
And fewer listen to, a second time.

Your method proves a failure; now try mine!  
And, since this must be carried . . .

*Guib.* (*snatching the paper from him*). By your  
leave! 105

Your zeal transports you! 'T will not serve the  
Prince

So much as you expect, this course you 'd take.  
If she leaves quietly her palace, — well;  
But if she died upon its threshold, — no :  
He 'd have the trouble of removing her. 110

Come, gentles, we're all — what the devil  
knows!

You, Gaucelme, won't lose character, beside :  
You broke your father's heart superiorly  
To gather his succession — never blush !  
You're from my province, and, be comforted, 115  
They tell of it with wonder to this day.  
You can afford to let your talent sleep.

We'll take the very worst supposed, as true :  
There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his  
child

Among the river-flowers at Ravestein, 120  
With whom the right lay ! Call the Prince our  
Duke !

There, she's no Duchess, she's no anything  
More than a young maid with the bluest eyes :  
And now, sirs, we'll not break this young maid's  
heart

Coolly as Gaucelme could and would ! No  
haste ! 125

His talent's full-blown, ours but in the bud :  
We'll not advance to his perfection yet —  
Will we, Sir Maufroy ? See, I've ruined Mau-  
froy

Forever as a courtier !

118-120 Not in first edition.

121 *Call the Prince our Duke.* A, Let the Prince be Duke.

125 *Coolly as Gaucelme.* A, So coolly as he.

*Gauc.* Here's a coil!

And, count us, will you? Count its residue, 130  
 This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd!  
 A birthday, too, a gratulation day!  
 I'm dumb: bid that keep silence!

*Maufroy and others.* Eh, Sir Guibert?

He's right: that does say something: that's  
 bare truth.

Ten — twelve, I make: a perilous dropping off! 135

*Guib.* Pooh — is it audience hour? The ves-  
 tible

Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort  
 That want our privilege of entry here.

*Gauc.* Adolf! (*Re-enter Adolf.*) Who's out-  
 side?

*Guib.* Oh, your looks suffice!  
 Nobody waiting?

*Mauf.* (*looking through the door-folds.*) Scarce  
 our number!

*Guib.* 'Sdeath! 140

Nothing to beg for, to complain about?

It can't be! Ill news spreads, but not so fast  
 As thus to frighten all the world!

*Gauc.* The world

Lives out of doors, sir — not with you and me  
 By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs, 145  
 Wherever warmth's perpetual: outside's free

To every wind from every compass-point,  
 And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.  
 The Prince comes and the lady's People go ;  
 The snow-goose settles down, the swallows  
 flee —

150

Why should they wait for winter-time? 'T is  
 instinct.

Don't you feel somewhat chilly?

*Guib.*

That's their craft?

And last year's crowd-ers-round and criers-forth  
 That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads,  
 Lighted the bonfires, sang the loyal songs !

155

Well 't is my comfort, you could never call me  
 The People's Friend! The People keep their  
 word —

I keep my place: don't doubt I'll entertain  
 The People when the Prince comes, and the  
 People

Are talked of! Then, their speeches — no one  
 tongue

160

Found respite, not a pen had holiday  
 — For they wrote, too, as well as spoke, these  
 knaves!

Now see: we tax and tithe them, pill and poll,  
 They wince and fret enough, but pay they must  
 — We manage that, — so, pay with a good grace

165

They might as well, it costs so little more.

149 *and the lady's People go.* A, And the people go; 'tis in-  
 stinct. 151 Not in first edition. 155 *Lighted.* A, Lit up.

But when we 've done with taxes, meet folk next  
 Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,  
 In public — there they have us if they will,  
 We 're at their mercy after that, you see ! 170  
 For one tax not ten devils could extort —  
 Over and above necessity, a grace ;  
 This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit —  
 Their vine-leaf wrappage of our tribute penny,  
 And crowning attestation, all works well. 175  
 Yet this precisely do they thrust on us !  
 These cappings quick, these crook-and-cringings  
     low,  
 Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,  
 With grin that shuts the eyes and opes the  
     mouth —  
 So tender they their love ; and, tender made, 180  
 Go home to curse us, the first doit we ask.  
 As if their souls were any longer theirs !  
 As if they had not given ample warrant  
 To who should clap a collar on their neck,  
 Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank, 185  
 And take them for the brute they boast them-  
     selves !  
 Stay — there 's a bustle at the outer door —  
 And somebody entreating . . . that 's my name !  
 Adolf, — I heard my name !

175 *crowning*. Even the edition of 1888 has *crowding*, but as Browning wrote to Prof. Rolfe that this was a "vile misprint," the proper reading is restored in the text. 181 *us, we*. A, you, you.

*Adolf.* 'T was probably  
The suitor.

*Guib.* Oh, there is one?

*Adolf.* With a suit 190  
He 'd fain enforce in person.

*Guib.* The good heart  
— And the great fool! Just ope the mid-door's  
fold!

Is that a lappet of his cloak, I see?

*Adolf.* If it bear plenteous sign of travel . . . ay,  
The very cloak my comrades tore!

*Guib.* Why tore? 195

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

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

*Guib.* Where 's he now?

*Adolf.* Gone for a minute possibly, not more:  
They have ado enough to thrust him back. 200

*Guib.* Ay — but my name, I caught?

*Adolf.* Oh, sir — he said  
— What was it? — You had known him for-  
merly,

And, he believed, would help him did you guess  
He waited now; you promised him as much:  
The old plea! 'Faith, he 's back, — renews the  
charge! 205

194 *sign.* A, signs.

195 *comrades.* A, comrade.

202 *What was it?* A, What said he?

(*Speaking at the door.*) So long as the man par-  
leys, peace outside —

Nor be too ready with your halberts, there!

*Gauc.* My horse bespattered, as he blocked  
the path

A thin sour man, not unlike somebody.

*Adolf.* He holds a paper in his breast, whereon <sup>210</sup>  
He glances when his cheeks flush and his brow  
At each repulse —

*Gauc.* I noticed he 'd a brow.

*Adolf.* So glancing, he grows calmer, leans  
awhile

Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,  
And presently turns round, quiet again, <sup>215</sup>  
With some new pretext for admittance. —

Back!

(*To Guibert.*) — Sir, he has seen you! Now cross  
halberts! Ha —

Pascal is prostrate — there lies Fabian too!

No passage! Whither would the madman press?  
Close the doors quick on me!

*Guib.* Too late! He 's here. <sup>220</sup>

*Enter, hastily and with discomposed dress, Valence.*

*Valence.* Sir Guibert, will you help me? — me,  
that come

Charged by your townsmen, all who starve at  
Cleves,



To represent their heights and depths of woe  
Before our Duchess and obtain relief?  
Such errands barricade such doors, it seems: 225  
But not a common hindrance drives me back  
On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit  
With hope for the first time, which sent me  
forth.

Cleves, speak for me! Cleves' men and women,  
speak!

Who followed me — your strongest — many a  
mile 230

That I might go the fresher from their ranks,  
— Who sit — your weakest — by the city gates,  
To take me fuller of what news I bring  
As I return — for I must needs return!  
— Can I? 'T were hard, no listener for their  
wrongs, 235

To turn them back upon the old despair —  
Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus —  
So, I do — any way you please — implore!  
If you . . . but how should you remember  
Cleves?

Yet they of Cleves remember you so well! 240  
Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,  
Your words and deeds caught up at second  
hand,—

Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts,  
O' the very levity and recklessness

Which only prove that you forget their wrongs.<sup>245</sup>  
 Cleves, the grand town, whose men and women  
     starve,

Is Cleves forgotten? Then, remember me!  
 You promised me that you would help me once,  
 For other purpose: will you keep your word?

*Guib.* And who may you be, friend?

*Val.* Valence of Cleves.<sup>250</sup>

*Guib.* Valence of . . . not the advocate of  
     Cleves,

I owed my whole estate to, three years back?  
 Ay, well may you keep silence! Why, my lords,  
 You've heard, I'm sure, how, Pentecost three  
     years,

I was so nearly ousted of my land<sup>255</sup>  
 By some knave's-pretext — (eh? when you re-  
     fused me

Your ugly daughter, Clugnet!) — and you've  
     heard

How I recovered it by miracle  
 — (When I refused her!) Here's the very  
     friend,

— Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank!<sup>260</sup>

Nay, Valence, this procedure's vile in you!

I'm no more grateful than a courtier should,

But politic am I — I bear a brain,

Can cast about a little, might require

<sup>245</sup> *that you.* A, yourself.

Your services a second time. I tried 265  
 To tempt you with advancement here to court  
 — “No!” — well, for curiosity at least  
 To view our life here — “No!” — our Duch-  
 ess, then, —

A pretty woman's worth some pains to see,  
 Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown 270  
 Complete the forehead pale and tresses pure .

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

*Guib.* So much for taste! But “come,” —  
 So may you be, for anything I know,  
 To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's daugh-  
 ter, 275

And with an equal chance you get all three.  
 If it was ever worth your while to come,  
 Was not the proper way worth finding too?

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

*Guib.* — And said? —

*Val.* — That I had brought the miseries 280  
 Of a whole city to relieve.

*Guib.* — Which saying  
 Won your admittance? You saw me, indeed,  
 And here, no doubt, you stand: as certainly,  
 My intervention, I shall not dispute,  
 Procures you audience; which, if I procure, — 285

271 *Complete.* A, Completes.

285 *which, if I procure.* A, but, if so I do.

That paper's closely written — by Saint Paul,  
 Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies,  
 Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B and C!  
 Perhaps you'd enter, make a reverence,  
 And launch these "miseries" from first to last? <sup>290</sup>

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

*Gauc.* (to *Valence*). My worthy sir, one ques-  
 tion! You've come straight  
 From Cleves, you tell us; heard you any talk  
 At Cleves about our lady?

*Val.* Much.

*Gauc.* And what?

*Val.* Her wish was to redress all wrongs she  
 knew. 295

*Gauc.* That, you believed?

*Val.* You see me, sir!

*Gauc.* — Nor stopped

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

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

*Gauc.* This is the lady's birthday, do you  
 know? 300

— Her day of pleasure?

*Val.* — That the great, I know,  
 For pleasure born, should still be on the watch  
 To exclude pleasure when a duty offers:  
 Even as, for duty born, the lowly too

May ever snatch a pleasure if in reach : 305

Both will have plenty of their birthright, sir !

*Gauc.* (*aside to Guibert*). Sir Guibert, here 's  
your man ! No scruples now —

You 'll never find his like ! Time presses hard.

I 've seen your drift and Adolf's too, this while,

But you can't keep the hour of audience back 310

Much longer, and at noon the Prince arrives.

(*Pointing to Valence.*) Entrust him with it —  
fool no chance away !

*Guib.* Him ?

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

*Guib.* No bad thought ! Yet, 't is yours, who  
ever played

The tempting serpent : else 't were no bad  
thought ! 315

I should — and do — mistrust it for your sake,  
Or else . . .

*Enter an Official who communicates with Adolf.*

*Adolf.* The Duchess will receive the court.

*Guib.* Give us a moment, Adolf ! Valence,  
friend,

I 'll help you. We of the service, you 're to  
mark,

Have special entry, while the herd . . . the folk 320

312 *him.* Italicized in A.

320 *folk.* A, folks.

Outside, gets access through our help alone ;  
 — Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose  
 So ever will be : your natural lot is, therefore,  
 To wait your turn and opportunity,  
 And probably miss both. Now, I engage 325  
 To set you, here and in a minute's space,  
 Before the lady, with full leave to plead  
 Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C,  
 To heart's content.

*Val.* I grieve that I must ask, —  
 This being, yourself admit, the custom here, — 330  
 To what the price of such a favour mounts ?

*Guib.* Just so ! You're not without a cour-  
 tier's tact.

Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,  
 Do such as we without a recompense.

*Val.* Yours is ? —

*Guib.* A trifle : here's a document 335  
 'T is some one's duty to present her Grace —  
 I say, not mine — these say, not theirs — such  
 points

Have weight at court. Will you relieve us all  
 And take it ? Just say, " I am bidden lay  
 " This paper at the Duchess' feet ! "

*Val.* No more ? 340

I thank you, sir !

321 gets. A, get. 330-331 *This being . . . mounts.* A reads :

From this yourself admit the custom here,  
 What will the price of such a favour be ?

*Adolf.* Her Grace receives the court.

*Guib. (aside).* Now, *sursum corda*, quoth the  
mass-priest! Do —

Whoever's my kind saint, do let alone  
These pushings to and fro, and pullings back;  
Peaceably let me hang o' the devil's arm 345  
The downward path, if you can't pluck me off  
Completely! Let me live quite his, or yours!

*The Courtiers begin to range themselves,  
and move toward the door.*

After me, Valence! So, our famous Cleves  
Lacks bread? Yet don't we gallants buy their  
lace?

And dear enough — it beggars me, I know, 350  
To keep my very gloves fringed properly.  
This, Valence, is our Great State Hall you cross;  
Yon gray urn's veritable marcasite,  
The Pope's gift: and those salvers testify  
The Emperor. Presently you'll set your foot 355  
. . . But you don't speak, friend Valence!

*Val.* I shall speak.

*Gauc. (aside to Guibert).* Guibert — it were  
no such ungraceful thing  
If you and I, at first, seemed horror-struck  
With the bad news. Look here, what you shall  
do!

Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword and cry 360  
"Yield strangers our allegiance? First I'll perish

“Beside your Grace!” — and so give me the  
cue

To . . .

*Guib.* — Clap your hand to note-book and  
jot down

That to regale the Prince with? I conceive.

(*To Valence*). Do, Valence, speak, or I shall half  
suspect

365

You're plotting to supplant us, me the first,  
I' the lady's favour! Is't the grand harangue  
You mean to make, that thus engrosses you?  
— Which of her virtues you'll apostrophize?

Or is't the fashion you aspire to start,

370

Of that close-curled, not unbecoming hair?

Or what else ponder you?

*Val.*

My townsmen's wrongs.



ACT II.

NOON.

SCENE. — *The Presence-chamber.*

*The Duchess and Sabyne.*

*The Duchess.* Announce that I am ready for  
the court!

*Sabyne.* 'T is scarcely audience-hour, I think ;  
your Grace

May best consult your own relief, no doubt,  
And shun the crowd : but few can have arrived.

*Duch.* Let those not yet arrived, then, keep  
away !

5

'T was me, this day last year at Ravestein,  
You hurried. It has been full time, beside,  
This half-hour. Do you hesitate ?

*Sab.* Forgive me !

*Duch.* Stay, Sabyne ; let me hasten to make  
sure

Of one true thanker : here with you begins

10

My audience, claim you first its privilege !

It is my birth's event they celebrate :

You need not wish me more such happy days,

But—ask some favour ! Have you none to ask ?

4 *but few can have arrived.* A, but if there's few arrived.

Has Adolf none, then? this was far from least 15  
 Of much I waited for impatiently,  
 Assure yourself! It seemed so natural  
 Your gift, beside this bunch of river-bells,  
 Should be the power and leave of doing good  
 To you, and greater pleasure to myself. 20  
 You ask my leave to-day to marry Adolf?  
 The rest is my concern.

*Sab.* Your Grace is ever

Our lady of dear Ravestein,— but, for Adolf . . .

*Duch.* “But”? You have not, sure, changed  
 in your regard

And purpose towards him?

*Sab.* We change?

*Duch.* Well then? Well? 25

*Sab.* How could we two be happy, and, most  
 like,

Leave Juliers, when — when . . . but 't is au-  
 dience-time!

*Duch.* “When, if you left me, I were left  
 indeed!”

Would you subjoin that? — Bid the court  
 approach! —

Why should we play thus with each other,  
 Sabyne? 30

17 *It seemed so natural.* A, So natural it seemed.

19 *of doing good.* A, to do you good.

20 Not in first edition.

25 *We.* Italicized in A.

Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss,  
 If friends detain me, and get blame for it,  
 There is a cause? Of last year's fervid throng  
 Scarce one half comes now.

*Sab.* (*aside*). One half? No, alas!

*Duch.* So can the mere suspicion of a cloud 35  
 Over my fortunes, strike each loyal heart.  
 They've heard of this Prince Berthold; and,  
 forsooth,

Some foolish arrogant pretence he makes,  
 May grow more foolish and more arrogant,  
 They please to apprehend! I thank their love. 40  
 Admit them!

*Sab.* (*aside*). How much has she really learned?

*Duch.* Surely, whoever's absent, Tristan  
 waits?

— Or at least Romuald, whom my father raised  
 From nothing—come, he's faithful to me, come!  
 (Sabyne, I should but be the prouder—yes, 45  
 The fitter to comport myself aright)  
 Not Romuald? Xavier—what said he to that?  
 For Xavier hates a parasite, I know!

*Sabyne goes out.*

*Duch.* Well, sunshine's everywhere, and  
 summer too.

Next year 't is the old place again, perhaps — 50

38 *Some foolish.* A, Each foolish. 39 *May . . . arrogant.*  
 A, More foolish and more arrogant may grow.

The water-breeze again, the birds again.  
 — It cannot be! It is too late to be!  
 What part had I, or choice in all of it?  
 Hither they brought me; I had not to think  
 Nor care, concern myself with doing good 55  
 Or ill, my task was just — to live, — to live,  
 And, answering ends there was no need explain,  
 To render Juliers happy — so they said.  
 All could not have been falsehood: some was  
     love,  
 And wonder and obedience. I did all 60  
 They looked for: why then cease to do it now?  
 Yet this is to be calmly set aside,  
 And — ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I  
     know,  
 Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .  
 It cannot nor it shall not be! His right? 65  
 Well then, he has the right, and I have not,  
 — But who bade all of you surround my life  
 And close its growth up with your ducal crown  
 Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me perishing?  
 I could have been like one of you, — loved,  
     hoped, 70  
 Feared, lived, and died like one of you — but  
     you  
 Would take that life away and give me this,  
 And I will keep this! I will face you! Come!

66 *and I have not.* A, I have it not.

*Enter the Courtiers and Valence.*

*The Courtiers.* Many such happy mornings  
to your Grace!

*Duch. (aside, as they pay their devoir).* The  
same words, the same faces, — the same  
love!

75

I have been overfearful. These are few;  
But these, at least, stand firmly: these are mine.  
As many come as may; and if no more,  
'T is that these few suffice — they do suffice!  
What succour may not next year bring me?  
Plainly,

80

I feared too soon. (*To the Courtiers.*) I thank  
you, sirs: all thanks!

*Valence (aside, as the Duchess passes from one  
group to another, conversing).* 'T is she —  
the vision this day last year brought,

When, for a golden moment at our Cleves,  
She tarried in her progress hither. Cleves  
Chose me to speak its welcome, and I spoke  
— Not that she could have noted the recluse  
— Ungainly, old before his time — who gazed.  
Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and that  
gaze

85

Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her own!  
She was above it — but so would not sink  
My gaze to earth! The People caught it, hers —  
Thenceforward, mine; but thus entirely mine,

90

Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul  
 Ere she retired and left me — them? She  
 turns —

There's all her wondrous face at once! The  
 ground

Reels and . . . (*suddenly occupying himself with  
 his paper*). 95

These wrongs of theirs I have to plead!

*Duch.* (*to the Courtiers*). Nay, compliment  
 enough! and kindness' self

Should pause before it wish me more such years.

'T was fortunate that thus, ere youth escaped,

I tasted life's pure pleasure — one such, pure, 100

Is worth a thousand, mixed — and youth's for  
 pleasure :

Mine is received; let my age pay for it.

*Gaucelme.* So, pay, and pleasure paid for,  
 thinks your Grace,

Should never go together?

*Guibert.* How, Sir Gaucelme?

Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly 105

At the snatched breathing-intervals of work?

As good you saved it till the dull day's-end

When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone.

Eat first, then work upon the strength of food!

*Duch.* True: you enable me to risk my future, 110

By giving me a past beyond recall.

I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year :  
 Let me endeavour to be the Duchess now !  
 And so, — what news, Sir Guibert, spoke you  
 of ?

*As they advance a little, and Guibert  
 speaks —*

— That gentleman ? —

*Val. (aside).* I feel her eyes on me. 115

*Guib. (to Valence).* The Duchess, sir, inclines  
 to hear your suit.

Advance ! He is from Cleves.

*Val. (coming forward. Aside).* Their wrongs  
 — their wrongs !

*Duch.* And you, sir, are from Cleves ? How  
 fresh in mind,

The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves !  
 She entertained me bravely, but the best 120  
 Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by  
 With insuppressive joy on every face !  
 What says my ancient famous happy Cleves ?

*Val.* Take the truth, lady — you are made  
 for truth !

So think my friends : nor do they less deserve 125  
 The having you to take it, you shall think,  
 When you know all — nay, when you only  
 know

112 *I lived . . . year.* A, A girl one happy leisure year I lived.

113 *to be the Duchess.* A, to be Duchess. 120 *me.* A, us.

125 *nor do they less deserve.* A, nor less do they deserve.

How, on that day you recollect at Cleves,  
 When the poor acquiescing multitude  
 Who thrust themselves with all their woes apart 135  
 Into unnoticed corners, that the few,  
 Their means sufficed to muster trappings for,  
 Might fill the foreground, occupy your sight  
 With joyous faces fit to bear away  
 And boast of as a sample of all Cleves 13  
 — How, when to daylight these crept out once  
     more,  
 Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags  
 Whence the scant coin, which had not half  
     bought bread,  
 That morn he shook forth, counted piece by  
     piece,  
 And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent them 140  
 To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path  
 — How, when the golden flood of music and  
     bliss  
 Ebbed, as their moon retreated, and again  
 Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare  
 — Then I, their friend, had only to suggest 145  
 “Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp!”  
 And as one man they cried “He speaks the  
     truth:  
 “Show her the horror! Take from our own  
     mouths

137 *unconscious*. A, *inconscious*.

140 *on perfumes spent them*. A, *on perfumes spent*.



"Our wrongs and show them, she will see them too!"

This they cried, lady! I have brought the wrongs. 150

*Duch.* Wrongs? Cleves has wrongs — apparent now and thus?

I thank you. In that paper? Give it me!

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

Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are reduced  
Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon! I forget 155  
I buy the privilege of this approach,  
And promptly would discharge my debt. I lay  
This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet.

*Presenting Guibert's paper.*

*Guib.* Stay! for the present . . .

*Duch.* Stay, sir? I take aught

That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride 160  
Than this your ducal circlet. Thank you, sir!

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

What have I done to you? Your deed or mine  
Was it, this crowning me? I gave myself  
No more a title to your homage, no,  
Than church-flowers, born this season, wrote  
the words 165

151 *apparent now and thus?* A, which now and thus I know?

158 *This.* Italicized in A.

165 *wrote the words.* A, gave the words.

In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.  
For such a flower, you plucked me; well, you  
erred —

Well, 't was a weed; remove the eye-sore quick!  
But should you not remember it has lain  
Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined, 170  
Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things?  
— That if 't be faded 't is with prayer's sole  
breath —

That the one day it boasted was God's day?  
Still, I do thank you! Had you used respect,  
Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf, 175  
Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet  
May yield some wandering insect rest and food:  
So, fling me forth, and — all is best for all!  
(*After a pause.*) Prince Berthold, who art  
Juliers' Duke it seems —

The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and the  
Pope's — 180

Be mine, too! Take this People! Tell not me  
Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,  
— But take them, from a heart that yearns to  
give!

Find out their love, — I could not; find their  
fear, —

I would not; find their like, — I never shall, 185

174 *Still.* A, But. 175 *my last.* A, the last.

176 *Here lose . . . yet.* A, Till losing the poor relic which even yet.

180 The first edition transposes *King's* and *Pope's*.

185 *never shall.* A, never will.

Among the flowers ! *Taking off her coronet.*

Colombe of Ravestein

Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here !

*Val. (advancing to Guibert).* Sir Guibert,  
knight, they call you — this of mine

Is the first step I ever set at court.

You dared make me your instrument, I find ; 190

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

We reckon to the utmost presently :

But as you are a courtier and I none,

Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,

Have too far outraged, by my ignorance 195

Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed

A second step and risk addressing her :

— I am degraded — you let me address !

Out of her presence, all is plain enough

What I shall do — but in her presence, too, 200

Surely there 's something proper to be done.

*(To the others.)* You, gentles, tell me if I guess  
aright —

May I not strike this man to earth ?

*The Courtiers (as Guibert springs forward, with-  
holding him).* Let go !

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

*Duch. (to Valence).* Oh, be acquainted with  
your party, sir ! 205

He 's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts ;

A lion crests him for a cognizance ;  
 "Scorning to waver" — that 's his 'scutcheon's  
 word ;

His office with the new Duke — probably  
 The same in honour as with me ; or more, 210  
 By so much as this gallant turn deserves.  
 He's now, I dare say, of a thousand times  
 The rank and influence that remain with her  
 Whose part you take ! So, lest for taking it  
 You suffer . . .

*Val.* I may strike him then to earth ? 215

*Guib.* (*falling on his knee*). Great and dear  
 lady, pardon me ! Hear once !

Believe me and be merciful — be just !  
 I could not bring myself to give that paper  
 Without a keener pang than I dared meet  
 — And so felt Clugnet here, and Maufroy here 220  
 — No one dared meet it. Protestation's cheap,—  
 But, if to die for you did any good,  
 (*To Gaucelme.*) Would not I die, sir ? Say your  
 worst of me !

But it does no good, that 's the mournful truth.  
 And since the hint of a resistance, even, 225  
 Would just precipitate, on you the first,  
 A speedier ruin — I shall not deny,  
 Saving myself indubitable pain,  
 I thought to give you pleasure (who might say ?)

*229 give you pleasure. A, get you pleasure.*

By showing that your only subject found 230  
 To carry the sad notice, was the man  
 Precisely ignorant of its contents ;  
 A nameless, mere provincial advocate ;  
 One whom 't was like you never saw before,  
 Never would see again. All has gone wrong ; 235  
 But I meant right, God knows, and you, I trust !

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

*Guib.* (*rising, to Valence*). Sir, and you ?

*Val.* — Rejoice that you are lightened of a  
 load.

Now, you have only me to reckon with. 240

*Duch.* One I have never seen, much less  
 obliged ?

*Val.* Dare I speak, lady ?

*Duch.* Dare you ! Heard you not  
 I rule no longer ?

*Val.* Lady, if your rule  
 Were based alone on such a ground as these  
 (*pointing to the Courtiers*) Could furnish you,  
 — abjure it ! They have hidden 245  
 A source of true dominion from your sight.

*Duch.* You hear them — no such source is  
 left . . .

*Val.* Hear Cleves !  
 Whose haggard craftsmen rose to starve this day,

230 *By . . . found.* A, In that your only subject we could find.

248 *to starve this day.* A, this day to starve.

Starve now, and will lie down at night to starve,  
 Sure of a like to-morrow — but as sure 250  
 Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,  
 Since end things must, end howsoe'er things may.  
 What curbs the brute-force instinct in its hour?  
 What makes — instead of rising, all as one,  
 And teaching fingers, so expert to wield 255  
 Their tool, the broadsword's play or carbine's  
 trick,  
 — What makes that there's an easier help, they  
 think,  
 For you, whose name so few of them can spell,  
 Whose face scarce one in every hundred saw, —  
 You simply have to understand their wrongs, 260  
 And wrongs will vanish — so, still trades are  
 plied,  
 And swords lie rusting, and myself stand here?  
 There is a vision in the heart of each  
 Of justice, mercy, wisdom, tenderness  
 To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its cure : 265  
 And these embodied in a woman's form  
 That best transmits them, pure as first received,  
 From God above her, to mankind below.

249 *Starve now*, . . . *starve*. A, Are starving now, and will lie down at night.

253 Not in first edition. 258 *For you*. A, And you.

259 *in every*. A, for every.

260 *You simply* . . . *wrongs*. A, That you have simply to receive their wrongs.

263–268 These six lines are not in first edition.

Will you derive your rule from such a ground,  
 Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say, 270  
 Of this man — this — and this ?

*Duch.* (after a pause). You come from Cleves ?  
 How many are at Cleves of such a mind ?

*Val.* (from his paper). “ We, all the manufac-  
 turers of Cleves — ”

*Duch.* Or stay, sir — lest I seem too covet-  
 ous —

Are you my subject ? such as you describe, 275  
 Am I to you, though to no other man ?

*Val.* (from his paper). — “ Valence, ordained  
 your Advocate at Cleves — ”

*Duch.* (replacing the coronet). Then I remain  
 Cleves' Duchess ! Take you note,  
 While Cleves but yields one subject of this  
 stamp,

I stand her lady till she waves me off ! 280  
 For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold ;  
 Laugh at each menace ; and, his power defying,  
 Return his missive with its due contempt !

*Casting it away.*

*Guib.* (picking it up). — Which to the Prince  
 I will deliver, lady,  
 (Note it down, Gaucelme) — with your message  
 too ! 285

*Duch.* I think the office is a subject's, sir !

271 *Of this man . . . and this.* A, Of this — and this — and this.

— Either . . . how style you him ? — my special  
guarder

The Marshal's — for who knows but violence  
May follow the delivery ? — Or, perhaps,  
My Chancellor's — for law may be to urge 290  
On its receipt ! — Or, even my Chamberlain's —  
For I may violate established form !

(*To Valence.*) Sir, — for the half-hour till this  
service ends,

Will you become all these to me ?

*Val.* (*falling on his knee.*) My liege !

*Duch.* Give me !

*The Courtiers present their badges of office.*

(*Putting them by.*) Whatever was their virtue  
once, 295

They need new consecration. *Raising Valence.*

Are you mine ?

I will be Duchess yet ! *She retires.*

*The Courtiers.* Our Duchess yet !

A glorious lady ! Worthy love and dread !

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

*Guib. (to Valence).* Well done, well done, sir !

I care not who knows, 300

You have done nobly and I envy you —

Tho' I am but unfairly used, I think :

For when one gets a place like this I hold,

One gets too the remark that its mere wages,

296 *They need.* A, There needs.



The pay and the preferment, make our prize. 305  
 Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,  
 We 're laughed at — much would zeal and faith  
 subsist

Without these also! Yet, let these be stopped,  
 Our wages discontinue, — then, indeed,  
 Our zeal and faith, (we hear on every side,) 310  
 Are not released — having been pledged away  
 I wonder, for what zeal and faith in turn?  
 Hard money purchased me my place! No, no —  
 I 'm right, sir — but your wrong is better still,  
 If I had time and skill to argue it. 315

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

If you like, — fight you, as you seem to wish —  
 (The kinder of me that, in sober truth,  
 I never dreamed I did you any harm) . . .

*Gauc.* — Or, kinder still, you 'll introduce, no  
 doubt, 320

His merits to the Prince who 's just at hand,  
 And let no hint drop he 's made Chancellor  
 And Chamberlain and Heaven knows what be-  
 side!

*Clugnet (to Valence).* You stare, young sir, and  
 threaten! Let me say,  
 That at your age, when first I came to court 325

309 Not in first edition. 312 for *what zeal*. A, with what  
 zeal. 313 *Hard money*. A, 'T was money.

I was not much above a gentleman ;  
While now . . .

*Val.* You are Head-Lackey ? With your  
office

I have not yet been graced, sir !

*Other Courtiers (to Clugnet).* Let him talk !  
Fidelity, disinterestedness,  
Excuse so much ! Men claim my worship ever <sup>330</sup>  
Who staunchly and steadfastly . . .

*Enter Adolf.*

*Adolf.* The Prince arrives.

*Courtiers.* Ha ? How ?

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

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

*2nd Court.* Let Gaucelme speak first !

*3rd Court.* Better I began <sup>335</sup>  
About the state of Juliers : should one say  
All 's prosperous and inviting him ?

*4th Court.* — Or rather,  
All 's prostrate and imploring him ?

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

*4th Court. (to Valence).* Sir — sir —  
If you 'll but lend that paper — trust it me, <sup>340</sup>  
I 'll warrant . . .

<sup>330</sup> *claim.* A, claimed. <sup>331</sup> *staunchly.* A, stanch.

<sup>340</sup> *lend.* A, give.

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

*Clugn.* Has not the Chamberlain a hearing  
first

By virtue of his patent?

*Gauc.* Patents? — Duties?

All that, my masters, must begin again!

One word composes the whole controversy: 345

We're simply now — the Prince's!

*The Others.* Ay — the Prince's!

*Enter Sabyne.*

*Sabyne.* Adolf! Bid . . . Oh, no time for  
ceremony!

Where's whom our lady calls her only subject?

She needs him. Who is here the Duchess's?

*Val.* (*starting from his reverie*). Most grate-  
fully I follow to her feet. 350

## ACT III.

AFTERNOON.

SCENE. — *The Vestibule.*

*Enter Prince Berthold and Melchior.*

*Berthold.* A thriving little burgh this Juliers looks.

(*Half-apart.*) Keep Juliers, and as good you kept Cologne :

Better try Aix, though ! —

*Melchior.* Please 't your Highness speak ?

*Berth.* (*as before.*) Aix, Cologne, Frankfort,  
— Milan ; — Rome ! —

*Melch.* The Grave.

More weary seems your Highness, I remark, 5  
Than sundry conquerors whose path I've  
watched

Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.

I could well wish you, for your proper sake,

Had met some shade of opposition here

— Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock, 10

Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.

You must not look for next achievement's palm

So easily : this will hurt your conquering.

*Berth.* My next ? Ay, as you say, my next  
and next !

Well, I am tired, that 's truth, and moody too, 15  
 This quiet entrance-morning : listen why !  
 Our little burgh, now, Juliers — 't is indeed  
 One link, however insignificant,  
 Of the great chain by which I reach my hope,  
 — A link I must secure ; but otherwise, 20  
 You 'd wonder I esteem it worth my grasp.  
 Just see what life is, with its shifts and turns !  
 It happens now — this very nook — to be  
 A place that once . . . not a long while since,  
 neither —

When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on 25  
 Of foreign courts, and bore my claims about,  
 Discarded by one kinsman, and the other  
 A poor priest merely, — then, I say, this place  
 Shone my ambition's object ; to be Duke —  
 Seemed then, what to be Emperor seems now. 30  
 My rights were far from judged as plain and sure  
 In those days as of late, I promise you :  
 And 't was my day-dream, Lady Colombe here  
 Might e'en compound the matter, pity me,  
 Be struck, say, with my chivalry and grace — 35  
 (I was a boy !) — bestow her hand at length,  
 And make me Duke, in her right if not mine.  
 Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers now.

21 *esteem*. A, esteemed. 24 *not a long*. A, but a short.

31 *judged as plain and sure*. A, being judged apparent. The second edition had : *far from being judged as plain*.

Harken : if ever I be Emperor,  
Remind me what I felt and said to-day ! 40

*Melch.* All this consoles a bookish man like  
me.

— And so will weariness cling to you. Wrong,  
Wrong ! Had you sought the lady's court your-  
self, —

Faced the redoubtables composing it,  
Flattered this, threatened that man, bribed the  
other, — 45

Pleaded by writ and word and deed, your cause, —  
Conquered a footing inch by painful inch, —  
And, after long years' struggle, pounced at last  
On her for prize, — the right life had been lived,  
And justice done to divers faculties 50  
Shut in that brow. Yourself were visible  
As you stood victor, then ; whom now — (your  
pardon !)

I am forced narrowly to search and see,  
So are you hid by helps — this Pope, your uncle —  
Your cousin, the other King ! You are a mind, — 55  
They, body : too much of mere legs-and-arms  
Obstructs the mind so ! Match these with their  
like :

40 *Remind me . . . to-day.* A, Will you remind me this, I feel and say? 44 Not in first edition. 45 *that man.* A, that, and. 47 *Conquered . . . inch.* A, Conquered yourself a footing inch by inch. 51 *Shut.* A, Safe. 52 *then ; whom.* A, you, whom. 53 *I am forced narrowly.* A, Narrowly am I forced. 54 *So are you . . . uncle.* A, So by your uncle are you hid, this Pope.

Match mind with mind!

*Berth.* And where's your mind to match?  
They show me legs-and-arms to cope withal!  
I'd subjugate this city — where's its mind? 60

*The Courtiers enter slowly.*

*Melch.* Got out of sight when you came troops  
and all!

And in its stead, here greets you flesh-and-blood:  
A smug œconomy of both, this first!

*As Clugnet bows obsequiously.*

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

*Berth.* Help me receive them!

*Melch.* Oh, they just will say 65

What yesterday at Aix their fellows said —  
At Treves, the day before! Sir Prince, my friend,  
Why do you let your life slip thus? — Mean-  
time,

I have my little Juliers to achieve —  
The understanding this tough Platonist, 70  
Your holy uncle disinterred, Amelius:  
Lend me a company of horse and foot,  
To help me through his tractate — gain my  
Duchy!

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

*Melch.* To help me through your uncle's  
comment, Prince! *Goes.* 75

58 *Match mind.* A, But mind. 67 *At.* A, And.

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

How do I let my life slip? Say, this life,  
I lead now, differs from the common life  
Of other men in mere degree, not kind,  
Of joys and griefs, — still there is such de-  
gree —

80

Mere largeness in a life is something, sure, —  
Enough to care about and struggle for,  
In this world: for this world, the size of things;  
The sort of things, for that to come, no doubt.  
A great is better than a little aim:

85

And when I wooed Priscilla's rosy mouth  
And failed so, under that gray convent-wall,  
Was I more happy than I should be now

*By this time, the Courtiers are ranged  
before him.*

If failing of my Empire? Not a whit.

— Here comes the mind, it once had tasked me  
sore

90

To baffle, but for my advantages!

All's best as 't is; these scholars talk and talk.

*Seats himself.*

*The Courtiers.* Welcome our Prince to Ju-  
liers! — to his heritage!

Our dutifullest service proffer we!

80 *Of joys . . . degree.* A, Of joys and sorrows, — such degree there is. 81 Not in first edition.

91 *but for my advantages.* A, let advantages alone.



*Clugnet.* I, please your Highness, having exercised  
95

The function of Grand Chamberlain at court,  
With much acceptance, as men testify . . .

*Berth.* I cannot greatly thank you, gentlemen!  
The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy  
founded

On strictest justice — you concede it, therefore, 100  
I do not wonder: and the kings my friends  
Protest they mean to see such claim enforced, —  
You easily may offer to assist.

But there's a slight discretionary power  
To serve me in the matter, you've had long, 105  
Though late you use it. This is well to say —  
But could you not have said it months ago?  
I'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon,  
true —

'T is flung me — I stoop down, and from the  
ground

Pick it, with all you placid standers-by: 110  
And now I have it, gems and mire at once,  
Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you say!

*Guibert.* (By Paul, the advocate our doughty  
friend  
Cuts the best figure!)

*Gaucelme.* If our ignorance  
May have offended, sure our loyalty . . . 115

95 *please.* A, please 't. 102 *Protest . . . see.* A, Protesting  
they will see. 103 *assist.* A, assist us.

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

I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope!  
And since I have been forced repeat my claims  
As if they never had been urged before,  
As I began, so must I end, it seems. 120

The formal answer to the grave demand!  
What says the lady?

*Courtiers* (one to another). *1st Courtier.* Marshal!  
*2nd Court.* Orator!

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

*1st Court.* Your place!

*2nd Court.* Just now it was your own!

*Guib.* The devil's! 125

*Berth.* (to *Guibert*). Come forward, friend —  
you with the paper, there!

Is Juliers the first city I've obtained?

By this time, I may boast proficiency

In each decorum of the circumstance.

Give it me as she gave it — the petition, 130

Demand, you style it! What's required, in brief?

What title's reservation, appanage's

Allowance? I heard all at Treves, last week.

*Gauc.* (to *Guibert*). "Give it him as she gave it!"

119 urged. A, made.

120 so must I end, it seems. A, so probably I end.

*Guib.* And why not ?

(*To Berthold*). The lady crushed your summons  
thus together, 135

And bade me, with the very greatest scorn  
So fair a frame could hold, inform you . . .

*Courtiers* Stop —

Idiot !

*Guib.* — Inform you she denied your  
claim,

Defied yourself ! (I tread upon his heel,  
The blustering advocate !)

*Berth.* By heaven and earth ! 140

Dare you jest, sir ?

*Guib.* Did they at Treves, last week ?

*Berth.* (*starting up*). Why then, I look much  
bolder than I knew,

And you prove better actors than I thought :

Since, as I live, I took you as you entered  
For just so many dearest friends of mine, 145

Fled from the sinking to the rising power  
— The sneaking'st crew, in short, I e'er de-  
spised !

Whereas, I am alone here for the moment,

With every soldier left behind at Aix !

Silence ? That means the worst ? I thought as  
much ! 150

What follows next then ?

141 *Did they.* A, Did he.

*Courtiers.* Gracious Prince, he raves!

*Guib.* He asked the truth and why not get the truth?

*Berth.* Am I a prisoner? Speak, will somebody?

— But why stand paltering with imbeciles?

Let me see her, or . . .

*Guib.* Her, without her leave, 155  
Shall no one see; she's Duchess yet!

*Courtiers* (*footsteps without, as they are disputing*). Good chance!

She's here — the Lady Colombe's self!

*Berth.* 'T is well!  
(*Aside.*) Array a handful thus against my world?  
Not ill done, truly! Were not this a mind  
To match one's mind with? Colombe! Let us  
wait! 160

I failed so, under that gray convent wall!  
She comes.

*Guib.* The Duchess! Strangers, range  
yourselves!

*As the Duchess enters in conversation  
with Valence, Berthold and the  
Courtiers fall back a little.*

*Duchess.* Presagefully it beats, presagefully,  
My heart: the right is Berthold's and not mine.

*Valence.* Grant that he has the right, dare I  
mistrust 165

Your power to acquiesce so patiently  
 As you believe, in such a dream-like change  
 Of fortune — change abrupt, profound, com-  
 plete?

*Duch.* Ah, the first bitterness is over now!  
 Bitter I may have felt it to confront 170  
 The truth, and ascertain those natures' value  
 I had so counted on; that was a pang:  
 But I did bear it, and the worst is over.  
 Let the Prince take them!

*Val.* And take Juliers too?  
 — Your people without crosses, wands and  
 chains — 175  
 Only with hearts?

*Duch.* There I feel guilty, sir!  
 I cannot give up what I never had:  
 For I ruled these, not them — these stood be-  
 tween.

Shall I confess, sir? I have heard by stealth  
 Of Berthold from the first; more news and  
 more: 180

Closer and closer swam the thundercloud,  
 But I was safely housed with these, I knew.  
 At times when to the casement I would turn,  
 At a bird's passage or a flower-trail's play,  
 I caught the storm's red glimpses on its edge — 185  
 Yet I was sure some one of all these friends

178 *I ruled these.* A, these I ruled.

186 *of all these friends.* A, of those about me.

Would interpose : I followed the bird's flight  
Or plucked the flower : some one would inter-  
pose !

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

*Duch.* Now, sadly conscious my real sway  
was missed, 190

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

*Val.* Then you acquiesce ?

*Duch.* Remember over whom it was I ruled !

*Guib.* (*stepping forward*). Prince Berthold,  
yonder, craves an audience, lady ! 195

*Duch.* (*to Valence*). I only have to turn, and I  
shall face

Prince Berthold ! Oh, my very heart is sick !

It is the daughter of a line of Dukes

This scornful insolent adventurer

Will bid depart from my dead father's halls ! 200

I shall not answer him — dispute with him —

But, as he bids, depart ! Prevent it, sir !

Sir — but a mere day's respite ! Urge for me

— What I shall call to mind I should have  
urged

When time's gone by : 't will all be mine, you  
urge ! 205

190 *Now.* A, So.

203 *but a mere day's respite.* A, but a day's sole respite.

A day — an hour — that I myself may lay  
My rule down! 'T is too sudden — must not  
be!

The world's to hear of it! Once done — for-  
ever!

How will it read, sir? How be sung about?  
Prevent it!

*Berth. (approaching).* Your frank indignation,  
lady, 210

Cannot escape me. Overbold I seem;  
But somewhat should be pardoned my surprise  
At this reception, — this defiance, rather.  
And if, for their and your sake, I rejoice  
Your virtues could inspire a trusty few 215  
To make such gallant stand in your behalf,  
I cannot but be sorry, for my own,  
Your friends should force me to retrace my steps:  
Since I no longer am permitted speak  
After the pleasant peaceful course prescribed 220  
No less by courtesy than relationship —  
Which I remember, if you once forgot.  
But never must attack pass unrepelled.  
Suffer that, through you, I demand of these,  
Who controverts my claim to Juliers?

213, 218, 220 Not in first edition. 214 *sake*. A, *sakes*.  
221 *by*. A, *of*. 222–224 *Which I . . . of these*. A reads:

If you forgot once, I remember now!

But, unrepelled, attack must never pass.

Suffer, through you, your subjects I demand.

*Duch.*

— Me 225

You say, you do not speak to —

*Berth.*

Of your subjects

I ask, then : whom do you accredit ? Where

Stand those should answer ?

*Val. (advancing).*

The lady is alone.

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

*Val.* I said she was alone —

*Berth.*

And weak, I said. 230

*Val.* When is man strong until he feels alone ?

It was some lonely strength at first, be sure,

Created organs, such as those you seek,

By which to give its varied purpose shape :

And, naming the selected ministrants,

235

Took sword, and shield, and sceptre, — each, a  
man !

That strength performed its work and passed its  
way :

You see our lady : there, the old shapes stand !

— A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chancellor —

“ Be helped their way, into their death put life 240

“ And find advantage ! ” — so you counsel us.

But let strength feel alone, seek help itself, —

And, as the inland-hatched sea-creature hunts

The sea's breast out, — as, littered 'mid the  
waves

The desert-brute makes for the desert's joy, 245



So turns our lady to her true resource,  
 Passing o'er hollow fictions, worn-out types,  
 — And I am first her instinct fastens on.  
 And prompt I say, as clear as heart can speak,  
 The People will not have you; nor shall have! <sup>250</sup>  
 It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves  
 And fight you to the last, — though that does  
     much,  
 And men and children, — ay, and women too,  
 Fighting for home, are rather to be feared  
 Than mercenaries fighting for their pay — <sup>255</sup>  
 But, say you beat us, since such things have  
     been,  
 And, where this Juliers laughed, you set your  
     foot  
 Upon a steaming bloody splash — what then?  
 Stand you the more our lord that there you stand?  
 Lord it o'er troops whose force you concentrate, <sup>260</sup>  
 A pillared flame whereto all ardours tend —  
 Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes you amplify,  
 A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows  
     brood —  
 But never, in this gentle spot of earth,  
 Can you become our Colombe, our play-queen, <sup>265</sup>  
 For whom, to furnish lilies for her hair,

246, 247 Not in first edition. 248 *And I.* A, So, I. 249 *as clear.* A, so clear. 259 *that there.* A, as there. 262 *'mid priests.* A, 'mongst priests. 266 *For whom.* A, Whom we.

We'd pour our veins forth to enrich the soil.  
 — Our conqueror? Yes! — Our despot? Yes!  
 — Our Duke?

Know yourself, know us!

*Berth.* (*who has been in thought*). Know your lady, also!

(*Very deferentially.*) — To whom I needs must exculpate myself 270

For having made a rash demand, at least.

Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be

Her chief adviser, I submit my claims,

*Giving papers.*

But, this step taken, take no further step,

Until the Duchess shall pronounce their worth. 275

Here be our meeting-place; at night, its time:

Till when I humbly take the lady's leave!

*He withdraws. As the Duchess turns to Valence, the Courtiers interchange glances and come forward a little.*

*1st Court.* So, this was their device!

*2nd Court.* No bad device!

*3rd Court.* You'd say they love each other,

Guibert's friend

From Cleves, and she, the Duchess!

267 *We'd.* A, Would.    273 *Her chief.* A, The chief.

279 *You'd say . . . friend.* A reads:

They love each other, Guibert's friend and she!

4 *Court.* Plainly!

5 *Court.*

Pray, Guibert, what is next to do?

*4th Court.* — And moreover, <sup>280</sup>  
That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to help  
Their loves!

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

*Guib. (advancing).* I laid my office at the  
Duchess' foot —

*Others.* And I — and I — and I!

*Duch.* I took them, sirs.

*Guib. (apart to Valence).* And now, sir, I am  
simple knight again — <sup>285</sup>

Guibert, of the great ancient house, as yet  
That never bore affront; whate'er your birth, —  
As things stand now, I recognize yourself  
(If you'll accept experience of some date)  
As like to be the leading man o' the time, <sup>290</sup>  
Therefore as much above me now, as I  
Seemed above you this morning. Then, I  
offered

To fight you: will you be as generous  
And now fight me?

*Val.* Ask when my life is mine!

*Guib.* ('T is hers now!)

*Clugn. (apart to Valence, as Guibert turns from  
him).* You, sir, have insulted me <sup>295</sup>

Grossly, — will grant me, too, the selfsame  
favour

283 *I laid.* A, I lay.

285 *I am simple knight again.* A, simple knight again am I.

291 *Therefore.* A, And so.

You've granted him, just now, I make no question?

*Val.* I promise you, as him, sir.

*Clugn.* Do you so?

Handsomely said! I hold you to it, sir.

You'll get me reinstated in my office 300

As you will Guibert!

*Duch.* I would be alone!

*They begin to retire slowly; as Valence is about to follow —*

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

*Gauc.* You hear that? Ah, light breaks upon me! Cleves —

It was at Cleves some man harangued us all —  
With great effect, — so those who listened said, 305  
My thoughts being busy elsewhere: was this he?

Guibert, — your strange, disinterested man!

Your uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend!

The modest worth you mean to patronize!

He cares about no Duchesses, not he — 310

His sole concern is with the wrongs of Cleves!

What, Guibert? What, it breaks on you at last?

*Guib.* Would this hall's floor were a mine's  
roof! I'd back

And in her very face . . .

*Gauc.*

Apply the match

303-312 *You hear . . . at last.* Not in first edition.

313 *I'd.* A, I'll.

That fired the train, — and where would you  
be, pray? 315

*Guib.* With him!

*Gauc.* Stand, rather, safe outside with me!  
The mine's charged: shall I furnish you the  
match

And place you properly? To the antechamber!

*Guib.* Can you?

*Gauc.* Try me! Your friend's in fortune!

*Guib.* Quick —

To the antechamber! He is pale with bliss! 320

*Gauc.* No wonder! Mark her eyes!

*Guib.* To the antechamber!

*The Courtiers retire.*

*Duch.* Sir, could you know all you have done  
for me

You were content! You spoke, and I am saved.

*Val.* Be not too sanguine, lady! Ere you  
dream,

That transient flush of generosity 325

Fades off, perchance. The man, beside, is  
gone, —

Him we might bend; but see, the papers here —

Inalterably his requirement stays,

And cold hard words have we to deal with now.

315 *That fired.* A, That fires. *would.* A, will.

324 *Ere you dream.* A, Ere now, even.

326 *The man, beside, is gone.* A, The man and mood are gone.

327 Not in first edition.

In that large eye there seemed a latent pride, 330  
 To self-denial not incompetent,  
 But very like to hold itself dispensed  
 From such a grace : however, let us hope !  
 He is a noble spirit in noble form.

I wish he less had bent that brow to smile 335  
 As with the fancy how he could subject  
 Himself upon occasion to — himself !  
 From rudeness, violence, you rest secure ;  
 But do not think your Duchy rescued yet !

*Duch.* You, — who have opened a new  
 world to me, 340

Will never take the faded language up  
 Of that I leave ? My Duchy — keeping it,  
 Or losing it — is that my sole world now ?

*Val.* Ill have I spoken if you thence despise  
 Juliers ; although the lowest, on true grounds, 345  
 Be worth more than the highest rule, on false :  
 Aspire to rule, on the true grounds !

*Duch.* Nay, hear —  
 False, I will never — rash, I would not be !  
 This is indeed my birthday — soul and body,  
 Its hours have done on me the work of years. 350  
 You hold the requisition : ponder it !  
 If I have right, my duty 's plain : if he —  
 Say so, nor ever change a tone of voice !

330 *seemed.* A, was.

347 *Aspire to rule.* A, Aspire to that.

At night you meet the Prince ; meet me at eve !  
 Till when, farewell ! This discomposes you ? 355  
 Believe in your own nature, and its force  
 Of renovating mine ! I take my stand  
 Only as under me the earth is firm :  
 So, prove the first step stable, all will prove.  
 That first, I choose : (*Laying her hand on his.*) —  
 the next to take, choose you ! 360

*She withdraws.*

*Val. (after a pause).* What drew down this on  
 me ? — on me, dead once,  
 She thus bids live, — since all I hitherto  
 Thought dead in me, youth's ardours and emprise,  
 Burst into life before her, as she bids  
 Who needs them. Whither will this reach,  
 where end ? 365  
 Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet she's  
 above —

So very far above me ! All's too plain :  
 I served her when the others sank away,  
 And she rewards me as such souls reward —  
 The changed voice, the suffusion of the cheek, 370  
 The eye's acceptance, the expressive hand,  
 — Reward, that's little, in her generous thought,  
 Though all to me . . .

354 *At night you meet the Prince.* A, At night the Prince you meet.

359 *will prove.* A, will be. 370, 371 Not in first edition.

372 *in her generous thought.* A, that is nought to her.

I cannot so disclaim  
 Heaven's gift, nor call it other than it is!  
 She loves me!

(*Looking at the Prince's papers.*) — Which love,  
 these, perchance, forbid. 375

Can I decide against myself — pronounce  
 She is the Duchess and no mate for me?

— Cleves, help me! Teach me, — every hag-  
 gard face, —

To sorrow and endure! I will do right  
 Whatever be the issue. Help me, Cleves! 380

375 *perchance, forbid.* A, forbid, perchance.



ACT IV.

EVENING.

SCENE. — *An Antechamber.*

*Enter the Courtiers.*

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

*Gaucelme.* Is Guibert ready for its match?  
He cools!

Not so friend Valence with the Duchess there!  
“Stay, Valence! Are not you my better self?”  
And her cheek mantled —

*Guibert.* Well, she loves him, sir: 5  
And more, — since you will have it I grow  
cool, —

She’s right: he’s worth it.

*Gauc.* For his deeds to-day?  
Say so!

*Guib.* What should I say beside?

*Gauc.* Not this —  
For friendship’s sake leave this for me to say —  
That we’re the dupes of an egregious cheat! 10  
This plain unpractised suitor, who found way  
To the Duchess through the merest die’s turn-  
up

A year ago, had seen her and been seen,  
Loved and been loved.

*Guib.*

Impossible!

*Gauc.*

— Nor say,

How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover, 15  
Was this which — taking not their stand on facts  
Boldly, for that had been endurable,  
But worming on their way by craft, they choose  
Resort to, rather, — and which you and we,  
Sheep-like, assist them in the playing-off! 20  
The Duchess thus parades him as preferred,  
Not on the honest ground of preference,  
Seeing first, liking more, and there an end —  
But as we all had started equally,  
And at the close of a fair race he proved 25  
The only valiant, sage and loyal man.  
Herself, too, with the pretty fits and starts, —  
The careless, winning, candid ignorance  
Of what the Prince might challenge or forego —  
She had a hero in reserve! What risk 30  
Ran she? This deferential easy Prince  
Who brings his claims for her to ratify  
— He's just her puppet for the nonce! You'll  
see, —

16 *their stand.* A, his stand. 18 *on their way by craft, they choose.* A, on his way by craft, he chose. 20 *assist them.* A, assist him. 21 *The Duchess . . . preferred.* A, The fruit is, she prefers him to ourselves. 22 *the honest ground.* A, the simple ground. 23 *Seeing . . . end.* A, First seeing, liking more, and so an end. 27 *Herself.* A, And she. 32 *Who.* A, That.

Valence pronounces, as is equitable,  
 Against him : off goes the confederate : 35  
 As equitably, Valence takes her hand !

*The Chancellor.* You run too fast : her hand,  
 no subject takes.

Do not our archives hold her father's will ?  
 That will provides against such accident,  
 And gives next heir, Prince Berthold, the rever-  
 sion 40  
 Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding so.

*Gauc.* I know that, well as you, — but does  
 the Prince ?

Knows Berthold, think you, that this plan, he  
 helps,

For Valence's ennoblement, — would end,  
 If crowned with the success which seems its due, 45  
 In making him the very thing he plays,  
 The actual Duke of Juliers ? All agree  
 That Colombe's title waived or set aside,  
 He is next heir.

*Chan.* Incontrovertibly.

*Gauc.* Guibert, your match, now, to the train !

*Guib.* Enough ! 50

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

39 *That will . . . accident.* A, Against such accident that will provides. 42-48 Seven lines not in first edition. 49 *He is next heir.* A, He is next heir ?

*Gauc.* Selfish, friend, you never were:  
 'T was but a series of revenges taken  
 On your unselfishness for prospering ill. 55  
 But now that you 're grown wiser, what 's our  
 course ?

*Guib.* — Wait, I suppose, till Valence weds  
 our lady,  
 And then, if we must needs revenge ourselves,  
 Apprise the Prince.

*Gauc.* — The Prince, ere then dismissed  
 With thanks for playing his mock part so well ? 60  
 Tell the Prince now, sir ! Ay, this very night,  
 Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,  
 Explain how such a marriage makes him Duke,  
 Then trust his gratitude for the surprise !

*Guib.* — Our lady wedding Valence all the  
 same 65

55 *On your . . . ill.* A, Upon unselfishness that prospered ill.  
 55-77 *Wait . . . renewed.* A reads :

*Guib.* Wait, I suppose, till Valence weds our lady,  
 And then apprise the Prince —

*Gauc.* — Ere then, retired ?  
 Tell the Prince now, sir ! Ay, this very night —  
 Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,  
 Tell what has been, declare what 's like to be,  
 And really makes him all he feigned himself ;  
 Then trust his gratitude for the surprise !

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

*Gauc.* The shame of it — the suddenness and shame !  
 With Valence there to keep her to her word,  
 And Berthold's own reproaches and disgust —  
 We 'll try it ! — Not that we can venture much !  
 Her confidence we 've lost forever — his  
 Must be to gain !

*Guib.* To-night, then, venture we !  
 Yet — may a lost love never be renewed ?

As if the penalty were undisclosed ?

Good ! If she loves, she 'll not disown her love,  
Throw Valence up. I wonder you see that.

*Gauc.* The shame of it — the suddenness and  
shame !

Within her, the inclining heart — without, 70

A terrible array of witnesses —

And Valence by, to keep her to her word,

With Berthold's indignation or disgust !

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

Her confidence we 've lost forever : Berthold's 75

Is all to gain.

*Guib.* To-night, then, venture we !

Yet — if lost confidence might be renewed ?

*Gauc.* Never in noble natures ! With the base  
ones, —

Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smarting-while,  
And something grows and grows and gets to be 80

A mimic of the lost joint, just so like

As keeps in mind it never, never will

Replace its predecessor ! Crabs do that :

But lop the lion's foot — and . . .

*Guib.* To the Prince !

*Gauc. (aside).* And come what will to the  
lion's foot, I pay you, 85

My cat's-paw, as I long have yearned to pay.

81 *A mimic . . . like.* A, A mimic of the joint, and just so  
like.

(*Aloud.*) Footsteps! Himself! 'T is Valence  
breaks on us,  
Exulting that their scheme succeeds. We'll  
hence —

And perfect ours! Consult the archives, first —  
Then, fortified with knowledge, seek the Hall! 90

*Clugnet (to Gaucelme as they retire).* You have  
not smiled so since your father died!

*As they retire, enter Valence with papers.*

*Valence.* So must it be! I have examined  
these

With scarce a palpitating heart — so calm,  
Keeping her image almost wholly off,  
Setting upon myself determined watch, 95  
Repelling to the uttermost his claims:

And the result is — all men would pronounce  
And not I, only, the result to be —

Berthold is heir; she has no shade of right  
To the distinction which divided us, 100

But, suffered to rule first, I know not why,  
Her rule connived at by those Kings and Popes,  
To serve some devil's-purpose, — now 't is  
gained,

88-90 *Exulting . . . Hall.* A reads:

Waits her to boast their scheme succeeds! — We'll hence —  
And perfect ours! To the Archives and the Hall!

101-104 *But, suffered . . . well.* A reads:

But, suffered rule first by these Kings and Popes  
To serve some devil's-purpose, — now 't is gained,  
To serve some devil's-purpose must withdraw.

Whate'er it was, the rule expires as well.

— Valence, this rapture . . . selfish can it be? 105

Eject it from your heart, her home! — It stays!

Ah, the brave world that opens on us both!

— Do my poor townsmen so esteem it?

Cleves, —

I need not your pale faces! This, reward

For service done to you? Too horrible! 110

I never served you: 't was myself I served —

Nay, served not — rather saved from punishment

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

My life continues yours, and your life, mine.

But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step — 115

Cleves! If I breathe no prayer for it — if she,

*Footsteps without.*

Colombe, that comes now, freely gives herself —

Will Cleves require, that, turning thus to her,

I . . .

*Enter Prince Berthold.*

Pardon, sir! I did not look for you  
Till night, i' the Hall; nor have as yet declared 120  
My judgment to the lady.

*Berthold.*

So I hoped.

107 *on us.* A, to us. 110, 111 *you.* A, them.

116 *If I breathe no prayer.* A, If no prayer I breathe.

119 *I did not look.* A, I had not looked.

*Val.* And yet I scarcely know why that  
should check

The frank disclosure of it first to you —  
What her right seems, and what, in consequence,  
She will decide on.

*Berth.* That I need not ask. 125

*Val.* You need not: I have proved the lady's  
mind:

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

*Berth.* Doubtless she has a very noble mind.

*Val.* Oh, never fear but she'll in each con-  
juncture

Bear herself bravely! She no whit depends 130  
On circumstance; as she adorns a throne,  
She had adorned . . .

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

*Val.* 'T is granted, sir! 135  
My heart instructs me. I have scrutinized  
Your claims . . .

*Berth.* Ah — claims, you mean, at first pre-  
ferred?

122-125 *And yet . . . decide on.* A reads:

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

132 *A cottage.* A, A hovel.

137 *at first.* A, I first.



I come, before the hour appointed me,  
 To pray you let those claims at present rest,  
 In favour of a new and stronger one. 140

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

*Berth.* I offer her my hand.

*Val.* Your hand?

*Berth.* A Duke's, yourself say; and, at no  
 far time, 145

Something here whispers me — an Emperor's.  
 The lady's mind is noble: which induced  
 This seizure of occasion ere my claims  
 Were — settled, let us amicably say!

*Val.* Your hand!

*Berth.* (He will fall down and kiss it  
 next!) 150

Sir, this astonishment's too flattering,  
 Nor must you hold your mistress' worth so cheap.  
 Enhance it, rather, — urge that blood is blood —  
 The daughter of the Burgraves, Landgraves,  
 Markgraves,  
 Remains their daughter! I shall scarce gainsay. 155  
 Elsewhere or here, the lady needs must rule:

138 *I come . . . me.* A, Before our late appointment, sir, I come.

142 *O' the lady.* A, Of the lady.

Like the imperial crown's great chrysoprase,  
They talk of — somewhat out of keeping there,  
And yet no jewel for a meaner cap.

*Val.* You wed the Duchess?

*Berth.* Cry you mercy, friend! 160  
Will the match also influence fortunes here?

A natural solicitude enough.

Be certain, no bad chance it proves for you!

However high you take your present stand,  
There's prospect of a higher still remove — 165

For Juliers will not be my resting-place,

And, when I have to choose a substitute

To rule the little burgh, I'll think of you

Who need not give your mates a character.

And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant 170

The gray smooth Chamberlain: he'd hesitate

A doubt his lady could demean herself

So low as to accept me. Courage, sir!

I like your method better: feeling's play

Is franker much, and flatters me beside. 175

*Val.* I am to say, you love her?

*Berth.* Say that too!  
Love has no great concernment, thinks the  
world,

With a Duke's marriage. How go precedents

158 *talk of.* A, tell me. 161 *Will . . . here.* A, The match  
will influence many fortunes here? 162 *A natural solicitude  
enough.* A, A natural enough solicitude. 168 Not in first edition.

169 *Who.* A, You. 171 *gray.* A, grew; a palpable misprint.

In Juliers' story — how use Juliers' Dukes?  
 I see you have them here in goodly row; 180  
 Yon must be Luitpold — ay, a stalwart sire!  
 Say, I have been arrested suddenly  
 In my ambition's course, its rocky course,  
 By this sweet flower: I fain would gather it  
 And then proceed: so say and speedily 185  
 — (Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's brazen  
 self!)

Enough, sir: you possess my mind, I think.  
 This is my claim, the others being withdrawn,  
 And to this be it that, i' the Hall to-night,  
 Your lady's answer comes; till when, farewell! 190

*He retires.*

*Val.* (after a pause). The heavens and earth  
 stay as they were; my heart  
 Beats as it beat: the truth remains the truth.  
 What falls away, then, if not faith in her?  
 Was it my faith, that she could estimate  
 Love's value, and, such faith still guiding me, 195  
 Dare I now test her? Or grew faith so strong  
 Solely because no power of test was mine?

180 Not in first edition.

183 *course, its rocky.* A, course . . . say rocky.

188 Not in first edition.

189 *And to . . . to-night.* A, To this claim, be it in the Hall at night.

193 *then, if not faith in her?* A, if not my faith in her?

196 *Dare I . . . strong.* A, Dare I to test her now, — or had I faith

*Enter the Duchess.*

*The Duchess.* My fate, sir! Ah, you turn away. All's over.

But you are sorry for me? Be not so!  
 What I might have become, and never was, 200  
 Regret with me! What I have merely been,  
 Rejoice I am no longer! What I seem  
 Beginning now, in my new state, to be,  
 Hope that I am! — for, once my rights proved  
 void,

This heavy roof seems easy to exchange 205  
 For the blue sky outside — my lot henceforth.

*Val.* And what a lot is Berthold's!

*Duch.* How of him?

*Val.* He gathers earth's whole good into his  
 arms;

Standing, as man now, stately, strong and wise,  
 Marching to fortune, not surprised by her. 210

One great aim, like a guiding-star, above —  
 Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift  
 His manhood to the height that takes the prize;

202-204 *What I seem . . . void.* A reads :

What I now  
 Begin, a simple woman now, to be,  
 Hope that I am, for, now my rights are void.

208-223 *He gathers . . . star.* A reads :

He stands, a man, now; stately, strong and wise —  
 One great aim, like a guiding star, before —  
 Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness to follow,  
 As not its substance, but its shine he tracks,  
 Nor dreams of more than, just evolving these  
 To fulness, will suffice him to life's end.  
 After this star, etc.

A prize not near — lest overlooking earth  
 He rashly spring to seize it — nor remote, 215  
 So that he rest upon his path content :  
 But day by day, while shimmering grows shine,  
 And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,  
 He sees so much as, just evolving these,  
 The stateliness, the wisdom and the strength, 220  
 To due completion, will suffice this life,  
 And lead him at his grandest to the grave.  
 After this star, out of a night he springs ;  
 A beggar's cradle for the throne of thrones  
 He quits ; so, mounting, feels each step he  
                   mounts, 225  
 Nor, as from each to each exultingly  
 He passes, overleaps one grade of joy.  
 This, for his own good : — with the world, each  
                   gift  
 Of God and man, — reality, tradition,  
 Fancy and fact — so well environ him, 230  
 That as a mystic panoply they serve —  
 Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind,  
 And work his purpose out with half the world,  
 While he, their master, dexterously slipt  
 From such encumbrance, is meantime employed 235  
 With his own prowess on the other half.  
 Thus shall he prosper, every day's success  
 Adding, to what is he, a solid strength —

236 *on the other.* A, with the other.

237 *Thus shall he prosper.* A, So shall he go on.

An aëry might to what encircles him,  
 Till at the last, so life's routine lends help, 240  
 That as the Emperor only breathes and moves,  
 His shadow shall be watched, his step or stalk  
 Become a comfort or a portent, how  
 He trails his ermine take significance, —  
 Till even his power shall cease to be most power, 245  
 And men shall dread his weakness more, nor  
 dare

Peril their earth its bravest, first and best,  
 Its typified invincibility.

Thus shall he go on, greatening, till he ends —  
 The man of men, the spirit of all flesh, 250  
 The fiery centre of an earthly world!

*Duch.* Some such a fortune I had dreamed  
 should rise

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

*Val.* For you?

*Duch.* It was not I moved there, I think : 255  
 But one I could, — though constantly beside,  
 And aye approaching, — still keep distant from,  
 And so adore. 'T was a man moved there.

239 *aëry.* A, airy. 240 *lends help.* A, shall grow.

245-249 *Till even . . . he ends.* A reads :

Till even his power shall cease his power to be,  
 And most his weakness men shall fear, nor vanquish  
 Their typified invincibility.  
 So shall he go on, so at last shall end.

251 *earthly.* A, earthy.

258 *'T was a man.* A, A man 't was.

*Val.* Who?

*Duch.* I felt the spirit, never saw the face.

*Val.* See it! 'T is Berthold's! He enables  
you 260

To realize your vision.

*Duch.* Berthold?

*Val.* Duke —

Emperor to be: he proffers you his hand.

*Duch.* Generous and princely!

*Val.* He is all of this.

*Duch.* Thanks, Berthold, for my father's  
sake! No hand

Degrades me.

*Val.* You accept the proffered hand? 265

*Duch.* That he should love me!

*Val.* "Loved" I did not say.

Had that been — love might so incline the Prince  
To the world's good, the world that 's at his  
foot, —

I do not know, this moment, I should dare  
Desire that you refused the world — and  
Cleves — 270

The sacrifice he asks.

*Duch.* Not love me, sir?

*Val.* He scarce affirmed it.

*Duch.* May not deeds affirm?

267 *love might so.* A, so might love.

270 *Desire that you refused.* A, Give counsel you refuse.

272 *deeds affirm.* A, deeds say more.

*Val.* What does he? . . . Yes, yes, very much he does!

All the shame saved, he thinks, and sorrow saved —

Immitigable sorrow, so he thinks, — 275

Sorrow that 's deeper than we dream, perchance.

*Duch.* Is not this love?

*Val.* So very much he does!

For look, you can descend now gracefully :

All doubts are banished, that the world might have,

Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-time, 280

May call up of your heart's sincereness now.

To such, reply, "I could have kept my rule —

"Increased it to the utmost of my dreams —

"Yet I abjured it." This, he does for you :

It is munificently much.

*Duch.* Still "much" ! 285

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

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

Had gone with love's presentment of a flower

To the beloved : because bold confidence,

Open superiority, free pride — 290

Love owns not, yet were all that Berthold owned :

282 *I could have kept my rule.* A, My rule I could have kept.

284 *Yet I . . . you.* A, Yet abjured all. This, Berthold does for you. 291 *yet.* A, and.



Because where reason, even, finds no flaw,  
Unerringly a lover's instinct may.

*Duch.* You reason, then, and doubt ?

*Val.* I love, and know.

*Duch.* You love ? How strange ! I never  
cast a thought 295

On that. Just see our selfishness ! You seemed  
So much my own . . . I had no ground — and  
yet,

I never dreamed another might divide  
My power with you, much less exceed it.

*Val.* Lady,

I am yours wholly.

*Duch.* Oh, no, no, not mine ! 300

'T is not the same now, never more can be.

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

What have I lost in you ?

*Val.* My heart replies —

No loss there ! So, to Berthold back again :

This offer of his hand, he bids me make — 305

Its obvious magnitude is well to weigh.

*Duch.* She's . . . yes, she must be very fair  
for you !

*Val.* I am a simple advocate of Cleves.

*Duch.* You ! With the heart and brain that  
so helped me,

304 *So, to Berthold back again.* A, So of Berthold's proposition.

I fancied them exclusively my own, 310  
 Yet find are subject to a stronger sway!  
 She must be . . . tell me, is she very fair?

*Val.* Most fair, beyond conception or belief.

*Duch.* Black eyes? — no matter! Colombe,  
 the world leads

Its life without you, whom your friends professed 315  
 The only woman: see how true they spoke!  
 One lived this while, who never saw your face,  
 Nor heard your voice — unless . . . Is she from  
 Cleves?

*Val.* Cleves knows her well.

*Duch.* Ah — just a fancy, now!  
 When you poured forth the wrongs of Cleves,  
 — I said, 320  
 — Thought, that is, afterward . . .

*Val.* You thought of me?

*Duch.* Of whom else? Only such great  
 cause, I thought,

For such effect: see what true love can do!  
 Cleves is his love. I almost fear to ask  
 . . . And will not. This is idling: to our  
 work! 325

Admit before the Prince, without reserve,  
 My claims misgrounded; then may follow better

310 *them.* A, both.

316 *only.* A, single. *spoke.* A, were.

322 *great cause.* A, a cause.

325 *And will not.* A, Nor will not.

. . . When you poured out Cleves' wrongs  
 impetuously,  
 Was she in your mind?

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

*Duch.* She will be proud at least. 330

*Val.* She?

*Duch.* When you tell her.

*Val.* That will never be.

*Duch.* How — are there sweeter things you  
 hope to tell?

No, sir! You counselled me, — I counsel you  
 In the one point I — any woman — can.

Your worth, the first thing; let her own come  
 next — 335

Say what you did through her, and she through  
 you —

The praises of her beauty afterward!

Will you?

*Val.* I dare not.

*Duch.* Dare not?

*Val.* She I love

Suspects not such a love in me.

*Duch.* You jest.

*Val.* The lady is above me and away. 340

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

*Duch.*

Rank!

Now grant me patience! Here's a man declares  
 Oracularly in another's case — 345  
 Sees the true value and the false, for them —  
 Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do see.  
 You called my court's love worthless — so it  
 turned :

I threw away as dross my heap of wealth,  
 And here you stickle for a piece or two! 350  
 First — has she seen you?

*Val.*

Yes.

*Duch.*

She loves you, then.

*Val.* One flash of hope burst; then succeeded  
 night :

And all's at darkest now. Impossible!

*Duch.* We'll try: you are — so to speak —  
 my subject yet?

*Val.* As ever — to the death.

*Duch.*

Obey me, then! 355

*Val.* I must.

*Duch.* Approach her, and . . . no! first  
 of all

Get more assurance. "My instructress," say,  
 "Was great, descended from a line of kings,  
 "And even fair" — (wait why I say this folly) —  
 "She said, of all men, none for eloquence, 360  
 "Courage, and (what cast even these to shade)

354 *so to speak.* A, somehow.

“ The heart they sprung from, — none deserved  
like him

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

*Val.* Heaven — this hope —

Oh, lady, you are filling me with fire ! 365

*Duch.* Say this ! — nor think I bid you cast  
aside

One touch of all the awe and reverence ;  
Nay, make her proud for once to heart's content  
That all this wealth of heart and soul 's her own !  
Think you are all of this, — and, thinking it, 370  
. . . (Obey !)

*Val.* I cannot choose.

*Duch.* Then, kneel to her !  
*Valence sinks on his knee.*

I dream !

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

*Duch.* Alas, sir, is it to be ever thus ?  
Even with you as with the world ? I know 375  
This morning's service was no vulgar deed  
Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,  
Explains all done and infinitely more,  
So, takes the shelter of a nobler cause.

367 *the awe.* A, that awe.

379, 380 *a nobler cause . . . Your service.* A reads :

a meaner cause,  
Whence rising, its effects may amply show.  
Your service, etc

Your service named its true source, — loyalty! 380  
 The rest 's unsaid again. The Duchess bids you,  
 Rise, sir! The Prince's words were in debate.

*Val. (rising).* Rise? Truth, as ever, lady,  
 comes from you!

I should rise — I who spoke for Cleves, can  
 speak

For Man — yet tremble now, who stood firm  
 then. 385

I laughed — for 't was past tears — that Cleves  
 should starve

With all hearts beating loud the infamy,  
 And no tongue daring trust as much to air:  
 Yet here, where all hearts speak, shall I be mute?

Oh, lady, for your own sake look on me! 390

On all I am, and have, and do — heart, brain,  
 Body and soul, — this Valence and his gifts!

I was proud once: I saw you, and they sank,  
 So that each, magnified a thousand times,

Were nothing to you — but such nothingness, 395

Would a crown gild it, or a sceptre prop,  
 A treasure speed, a laurel-wreath enhance?

What is my own desert? But should your love  
 Have . . . there 's no language helps here . . .  
 singled me, —

Then — oh, that wild word “then!” — be just  
 to love, 400

384, 385 *who.* A, that.

396 *Would a crown gild it.* A, What would a crown gild.

In generosity its attribute!

Love, since you pleased to love! All's cleared

— a stage

For trial of the question kept so long:

Judge you — Is love or vanity the best?

You, solve it for the world's sake — you, speak

first

405

What all will shout one day — you, vindicate

Our earth and be its angel! All is said.

Lady, I offer nothing — I am yours:

But, for the cause' sake, look on me and him,

And speak!

*Duch.* I have received the Prince's message: 410

Say, I prepare my answer!

*Val.* Take me, Cleves! (*He withdraws.*)

*Duch.* Mournful — that nothing's what it

calls itself!

Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty — mere love!

And, love in question, what may Berthold's be?

I did ill to mistrust the world so soon:

415

Already was this Berthold at my side.

The valley-level has its hawks no doubt:

May not the rock-top have its eagles, too?

Yet Valence . . . let me see his rival then!

402 *Love since . . . stage.* A, Love, as you pleased to love!

All is cleared — a stage.

403 A has no pause at end of line.

403-404 *so long: Judge you.* A, so long For you.

405 *speaks.* A, say.

# ACT V.

NIGHT.

SCENE. — *The Hall.*

*Enter Berthold and Melchior.*

*Melchior.* And here you wait the matter's  
issue?

*Berthold.* Here.

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

*Berth.* Oh,  
Turned out no better than the foreheadless — 5  
Was dazzled not so very soon, that's all!  
For my part, this is scarce the hasty showy  
Chivalrous measure you give me credit of.  
Perhaps I had a fancy, — but 't is gone.  
— Let her commence the unfriended innocent 10  
And carry wrongs about from court to court?  
No, truly! The least shake of fortune's sand,  
— My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing fit,  
King-cousin takes a fancy to blue eyes, —  
And wondrously her claims would brighten up; 15

4 *Oh!* A, Oh, — he. 9 Not in first edition.

10 *the unfriended.* A, unfriended.

13 *My uncle-Pope . . . fit.* A, My uncle chokes in his next  
coughing-fit. 14 *King-cousin.* A, King Philip.



Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient law,  
 O'er-looked provisoes, o'er-past premises,  
 Follow in plenty. No: 't is the safe step.  
 The hour beneath the convent-wall is lost :  
 Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine. 20

*Melch.* Which is to say, you, losing heart  
 already,

Elude the adventure.

*Berth.* Not so — or, if so —

Why not confess at once that I advise  
 None of our kingly craft and guild just now  
 To lay, one moment, down their privilege 25  
 With the notion they can any time at pleasure  
 Retake it : that may turn out hazardous.

We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end  
 O' the night, with our great masque : those  
 favoured few

Who keep the chamber's top, and honour's chance 30  
 Of the early evening, may retain their place  
 And figure as they list till out of breath.

But it is growing late : and I observe  
 A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the doorway  
 Not only bar new-comers entering now, 35  
 But caution those who left, for any cause,  
 And would return, that morning draws too near ;  
 The ball must die off, shut itself up. We —

17 *o'er-past*. A, past o'er. 18 *safe*. A, safer.

19 Not in first edition.

I think, may dance lights out and sunshine in,  
 And sleep off headache on our frippery : 40  
 But friend the other, who cunningly stole out,  
 And, after breathing the fresh air outside,  
 Means to re-enter with a new costume,  
 Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.  
 I stick to privilege, on second thoughts. 45

*Melch.* Yes — you evade the adventure : and,  
 beside,

Give yourself out for colder than you are.  
 King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes ?  
 Don't they come in for somewhat of the motive  
 With you too ?

*Berth.* Yes — no : I am past that now. 50  
 Gone 't is : I cannot shut my soul to fact.  
 Of course, I might by forethought and con-  
 trivance

Reason myself into a rapture. Gone :  
 And something better come instead, no doubt.

*Melch.* So be it ! Yet, all the same, proceed  
 my way, 55

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

42 Not in first edition. 43 *Means to.* A, And thinks. *new.*  
 A, fresh. 49 *for somewhat.* A, somewhat. 51 *soul.* A, eyes.  
 54 *better.* A, better's. 55 *Yet, all . . . way.* A, Yet, proceed  
 my way, the same. 56 *ends.* A, end.

*Berth.* Won easier ?

*Melch.* Will not she ?

*Berth.* There I profess humility without  
bound : 60

Ill cannot speed — not I — the Emperor.

*Melch.* And I should think the Emperor best  
waived,

From your description of her mood and way.  
You could look, if it pleased you, into hearts ;  
But are too indolent and fond of watching 65  
Your own — you know that, for you study it.

*Berth.* Had you but seen the orator her friend,  
So bold and voluble an hour before,  
Abashed to earth at aspect of the change !  
Make her an Empress ? Ah, that changed the  
case ! 70

Oh, I read hearts ! 'T is for my own behoof,  
I court her with my true worth : wait the event !  
I learned my final lesson on that head  
When years ago, — my first and last essay —  
Before the priest my uncle could by help 75  
Of his superior, raise me from the dirt —  
Priscilla left me for a Brabant lord  
Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb.  
I am past illusion on that score.

68, 70 Not in first edition. 71 'T is. A, And. 72 wait.  
A, see. 75 Before . . . help. A, Before my uncle could obtain  
the ear. 76 raise me. A, help me. 77 lord. A, Duke.

*Melch.* Here comes  
The lady —

*Berth.* — And there you go. But do not!  
Give me  
Another chance to please you! Hear me plead!

*Melch.* You'll keep, then, to the lover, to the  
man?

*Enter the Duchess — followed by Adolf and Sabyne  
and, after an interval, by the Courtiers.*

*Berth.* Good auspice to our meeting!

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

*Berth.* (Ay, that's the point!) I may be  
Emperor.

*Duch.* 'Tis not for my sake only, I am  
proud

Of this you offer: I am prouder far  
That from the highest state should duly spring  
The highest, since most generous, of deeds.

*Berth.* (Generous — still that!) You under-  
rate yourself.

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

*Duch.* — Such, rather, would some warrior-  
woman be —

82 *lover.* A, gallant.

80

85

90

95

One dowered with lands and gold, or rich in  
friends —

One like yourself.

*Berth.* Lady, I am myself,  
And have all these: I want what 's not myself,  
Nor has all these. Why give one hand two  
swords?

Here 's one already: be a friend's next gift 100  
A silk glove, if you will — I have a sword.

*Duch.* You love me, then?

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

*Duch.* But, for love — 105

*Berth.* A further love I do not understand.  
Our best course is to say these hideous truths,  
And see them, once said, grow endurable:  
Like waters shuddering from their central bed,  
Black with the midnight bowels of the earth, 110  
That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's throe,  
A portent and a terror — soon subside,  
Freshen apace, take gold and rainbow hues  
In sunshine, sleep in shadow, and at last  
Grow common to the earth as hills or trees — 115  
Accepted by all things they came to scare.

104 to your intellect. A, to intelligence. 105 your peerless.  
A, a peerless. 114 In sunshine . . . last. A, Under the sun  
and in the air, — at last.

*Duch.* You cannot love, then ?

*Berth.* Charlemagne, perhaps !

Are you not over-curious in love-lore ?

*Duch.* I have become so, very recently,  
It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem, 120  
Respect, and all your candour promises,  
By putting on a calculating mood —  
Asking the terms of my becoming yours ?

*Berth.* Let me not do myself injustice, neither.  
Because I will not condescend to fictions 125  
That promise what my soul can ne'er acquit,  
It does not follow that my guarded phrase  
May not include far more of what you seek  
Than wide profession of less scrupulous men.  
You will be Empress, once for all : with me 130  
The Pope disputes supremacy — you stand,  
And none gainsays, the earth's first woman.

*Duch.* That —  
Or simple Lady of Ravestein again ?

*Berth.* The matter's not in my arbitrament :  
Now I have made my claims — which I regret — 135  
Cede one, cede all.

*Duch.* This claim then, you enforce ?

*Berth.* The world looks on.

*Duch.* And when must I decide ?

*Berth.* When, lady ? Have I said thus much  
so promptly

129 *profession.* A, professions.

138 *so promptly.* A, at first.

For nothing? — Poured out, with such pains, at  
once

What I might else have suffered to ooze forth 140  
Droplet by droplet in a lifetime long —

For aught less than as prompt an answer, too?  
All's fairly told now: who can teach you more?

*Duch.* I do not see him.

*Berth.* I shall ne'er deceive.

This offer should be made befittingly 145

Did time allow the better setting forth

The good of it, with what is not so good,

Advantage, and disparagement as well:

But as it is, the sum of both must serve.

I am already weary of this place; 150

My thoughts are next stage on to Rome. De-  
cide!

The Empire — or, — not even Juliers now!

Hail to the Empress — farewell to the Duchess!

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

*Gaucelme.* — “Farewell,” Prince? when we  
break in at our risk —

*Clugnet.* Almost upon court-license trespass-  
ing — 155

145 *should be made befittingly.* A, had been made more leisurely.

146 *Did.* A, Would. *forth.* A, off. 147 Not in first edition.

151-153 *Decide!* . . . *the Duchess!* A reads:

Now either

Hail to the Empress — farewell to the Lady.

154 *Gaucelme.* A, Courtiers.

*Gauc.* — To point out how your claims are  
valid yet!

You know not, by the Duke her father's will,  
The lady, if she weds beneath her rank,  
Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's favour —  
So 't is expressly stipulate. And if 160  
It can be shown 't is her intent to wed  
A subject, then yourself, next heir, by right  
Succeed to Juliers.

*Berth.* What insanity? —

*Guibert.* Sir, there's one Valence, the pale  
fiery man

You saw and heard this morning — thought, no  
doubt, 165

Was of considerable standing here :

I put it to your penetration, Prince,

If aught save love, the truest love for her

Could make him serve the lady as he did!

He's simply a poor advocate of Cleves 170

— Creeps here with difficulty, finds a place

With danger, gets in by a miracle,

And for the first time meets the lady's face —

So runs the story : is that credible?

For, first — no sooner in, than he's apprised 175

156 *Gauc.* A, Courtiers. 162, 163 *A subject . . . insanity!* A reads:

*Berth.* A subject then yourself . . . What insolence!

169 *Could make.* A, Had made.



Fortunes have changed ; you are all-powerful  
here,

The lady as powerless : he stands fast by her !

*Duch. (aside).* And do such deeds spring up  
from love alone ?

*Guib.* But here occurs the question, does the  
lady

Love him again ? I say, how else can she ? 180

Can she forget how he stood singly forth

In her defence, dared outrage all of us,

Insult yourself — for what, save love's reward ?

*Duch. (aside).* And is love then the sole  
reward of love ?

*Guib.* But, love him as she may and must —  
you ask, 185

Means she to wed him ? “ Yes,” both natures  
answer !

Both, in their pride, point out the sole result ;

Nought less would he accept nor she propose.

For each conjuncture was she great enough

— Will be, for this.

*Clugn.* Though, now that this is known, 190  
Policy, doubtless, urges she deny . . .

*Duch.* — What, sir, and wherefore ? — since  
I am not sure

That all is any other than you say !

You take this Valence, hold him close to me,

Him with his actions : can I choose but look ? 195

I am not sure, love trulier shows itself  
 Than in this man, you hate and would degrade,  
 Yet, with your worst abatement, show me thus.  
 Nor am I — (thus made look within myself,  
 Ere I had dared) — now that the look is dared — 200  
 Sure that I do not love him!

*Guib.* Hear you, Prince?

*Berth.* And what, sirs, please you, may this  
 prattle mean

Unless to prove with what alacrity  
 You give your lady's secrets to the world?  
 How much indebted, for discovering 205  
 That quality, you make me, will be found  
 When there's a keeper for my own to seek.

*Courtiers.* "Our lady?"

*Berth.* — She assuredly remains.

*Duch.* Ah, Prince — and you too can be  
 generous?

You could renounce your power, if this were so, 210  
 And let me, as these phrase it, wed my love  
 Yet keep my Duchy? You perhaps exceed  
 Him, even, in disinterestedness!

*Berth.* How, lady, should all this affect my  
 purpose?

Your will and choice are still as ever, free. 215

205 *How much.* A, But how.

207 *When there's . . . seek.* A, When next a keeper for my  
 own's to seek. 211 *phrase it.* A, argue. 212 *Yet.* A, And.

Say, you have known a worthier than myself  
 In mind and heart, of happier form and face —  
 Others must have their birthright : I have gifts,  
 To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight.  
 Against a hundred alien qualities, 220  
 I lay the prize I offer. I am nothing :  
 Wed you the Empire ?

*Duch.* And my heart away ?

*Berth.* When have I made pretension to your  
 heart ?

I give none. I shall keep your honour safe ;  
 With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts 225  
 Yon marble woman with the marble rose,  
 Loose on her hand, she never will let fall,  
 In graceful, slight, silent security.  
 You will be proud of my world-wide career,  
 And I content in you the fair and good. 230  
 What were the use of planting a few seeds  
 The thankless climate never would mature —  
 Affections all repelled by circumstance ?  
 Enough : to these no credit I attach, —  
 To what you own, find nothing to object. 235  
 Write simply on my requisition's face  
 What shall content my friends — that you admit,  
 As Colombe of Ravestein, the claims therein,  
 Or never need admit them, as my wife —  
 And either way, all's ended !

*Duch.* Let all end! 240

*Berth.* The requisition!

*Guib.* — Valence holds, of course!

*Berth.* Desire his presence! *Adolf goes out.*

*Courtiers (to each other).* Out it all comes  
yet;

He'll have his word against the bargain yet;

He's not the man to tamely acquiesce.

One passionate appeal — upbraiding even, 245

May turn the tide again. Despair not yet!

*They retire a little.*

*Berth. (to Melchior).* The Empire has its old  
success, my friend!

*Melch.* You've had your way: before the  
spokesman speaks,

Let me, but this once, work a problem out,

And evermore be dumb! The Empire wins? 250

To better purpose have I read my books!

*Enter Valence.*

*Melch. (to the Courtiers).* Apart, my masters!

*(To Valence.)* Sir, one word with you!

I am a poor dependent of the Prince's —

Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence.

You are no higher, I find: in other words, 255

We two, as probably the wisest here,

Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools.

241 *Valence holds, of course.* Given in A to Courtiers.

243 *yet.* A, still. 246 *May.* A, Might. 248 *speaks.* A, comes.

251 *have I read.* A, I have read. 253 *Prince's.* A, Prince.

Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact  
 Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for them ?  
 Do you reply so, and what trouble saved ! 260  
 The Prince, then — an embroiled strange heap  
 of news

This moment reaches him — if true or false,  
 All dignity forbids he should inquire  
 In person, or by worthier deputy ;  
 Yet somehow must inquire, lest slander come : 265  
 And so, 't is I am pitched on. You have heard  
 His offer to your lady ?

*Valence.* Yes.

*Melch.* — Conceive

Her joy thereat ?

*Val.* I cannot.

*Melch.* No one can.

All draws to a conclusion, therefore.

*Val. (aside).* So !

No after-judgment — no first thought revised — 270  
 Her first and last decision ! — me, she leaves,  
 Takes him ; a simple heart is flung aside,  
 The ermine o'er a heartless breast embraced.  
 Oh Heaven, this mockery has been played too  
 oft !

Once, to surprise the angels — twice, that fiends 275  
 Recording, might be proud they chose not so —

258 *Suppose I speak.* A, So, I shall speak.

260 *trouble.* A, trouble's. 276 *Recording . . . so.* A, Might  
 record, hug themselves they chose not so.

Thrice, many thousand times, to teach the world  
All men should pause, misdoubt their strength,  
since men

Can have such chance yet fail so signally,  
— But ever, ever this farewell to Heaven, 280  
Welcome to earth — this taking death for life —  
This spurning love and kneeling to the world —  
Oh Heaven, it is too often and too old!

*Melch.* Well, on this point, what but an  
absurd rumour

Arises — these, its source — its subject, you! 285  
Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,  
They say, your service claims the lady's hand!  
Of course, nor Prince nor lady can respond:  
Yet something must be said: for, were it true  
You made such claim, the Prince would . . .

*Val.* Well, sir, — would? 290

*Melch.* — Not only probably withdraw his  
suit,

But, very like, the lady might be forced  
Accept your own. Oh, there are reasons why!  
But you'll excuse at present all save one, —  
I think so. What we want is, your own wit-  
ness, 295

For, or against — her good, or yours: decide!

279 *Can have such.* A, Could have the.

287 *They say, . . . hand.* A, The lady's hand your service  
claims, they say.

294 *one.* A, this.

*Val. (aside).* Be it her good if she accounts  
it so!

*(After a contest.)* For what am I but hers, to  
choose as she?

Who knows how far, beside, the light from  
her

May reach, and dwell with, what she looks  
upon? 300

*Melch. (to the Prince).* Now to him, you!

*Berth. (to Valence).* My friend acquaints  
you, sir,

The noise runs . . .

*Val.* — Prince, how fortunate are you,  
Wedding her as you will, in spite of noise,  
To show belief in love! Let her but love you,  
All else you disregard! What else can be? 305  
You know how love is incompatible  
With falsehood — purifies, assimilates  
All other passions to itself.

*Melch.* Ay, sir:

But softly! Where, in the object we select,  
Such love is, perchance, wanting?

*Val.* Then indeed, 310

What is it you can take?

*Melch.* Nay, ask the world!

Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,  
An influence o'er mankind.

303 *noise.* A, it.

313 *mankind.* A, the world.

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

*Duch.* Speak for yourself!

*Val.* May I? — no, I have spoken,<sup>315</sup>  
And time's gone by. Had I seen such an  
one,  
As I loved her — weighing thoroughly that  
word —

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

*Berth.* Heroic truly! And your sole re-  
ward, — 320

The secret pride in yielding up love's right?

*Val.* Who thought upon reward? And yet  
how much

Comes after — oh, what amplest recompense!  
Is the knowledge of her, nought? the memory,  
nought?

— Lady, should such an one have looked on  
you, 325

Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world  
And say, love can go unrequited here!

You will have blessed him to his whole life's  
end —

Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,  
All goodness cherished where you dwelt — and  
dwell. 330

321 *love's right.* A, your own.



What would he have? He holds you — you,  
both form

And mind, in his, — where self-love makes  
such room

For love of you, he would not serve you now  
The vulgar way, — repulse your enemies,  
Win you new realms, or best, to save the old 335

Die blissfully — that 's past so long ago!

He wishes you no need, thought, care of him —  
Your good, by any means, himself unseen,

Away, forgotten! — He gives that life's task up,

As it were . . . but this charge which I return — 340

*Offers the requisition, which she takes.*

Wishing your good.

*Duch.* (*having subscribed it*). And oppor-  
tunely, sir —

Since at a birthday's close, like this of mine,

Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.

Most on a wedding-day, as mine is too,

Should gifts be thought of: yours comes first by  
right. 345

Ask of me!

*Berth.* He shall have whate'er he asks,  
For your sake and his own.

331-332 *He holds . . . room.* A reads:

He has you — you, the form,  
And you, the mind, where self-love made such room.

335 *to save the old.* A, in saving you.

345 *be thought of.* A, go forward.

347 *For your sake and his own.* A, For his sake and for yours.





Meantime, — go copy me the precedents  
Of every installation, proper styles  
And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes — 385  
While I prepare to plod on my old way,  
And somewhat wearily, I must confess!

*Duch.* (with a light joyous laugh as she turns  
from them). Come, Valence, to our  
friends, God's earth . . .

*Val.* (as she falls into his arms). — And thee!

386 plod. A, go.

## Notes to Colombe's Birthday

*Colombe's Birthday* was published in No. VI of *Bells and Pomegranates*. It was written under the direct impulse given by the admiration expressed for *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*. It was not put upon the stage until April 25, 1853, when Miss Helen Faucit produced it at the Haymarket Theatre, London. *The Athenæum* in its notice of the play said :

"Its movements, for the most part, occur in the chambers of the mind. Such themes . . . will fail of attention to all who insist on the ordinary dramatic motion and action. To the worn-out and wearied playgoer, who can turn for a moment out of the beaten path, nothing could well be more delicious."

The play was produced at the Howard Athenæum, Boston, Feb. 16, 1854, with Miss Jean Davenport as Colombe.

A performance was given at St. George's Hall, London, Nov. 19, 1895, under the auspices of the London Browning Society. Miss A. Mary F. Robinson (afterward Mdm. Darmesteter) wrote at that time :

"*Colombe's Birthday* is charming on the boards, clearer, more direct in action, more picturesque, more full of delicate surprises than one imagines in print."

85, 40. **This to present.** The first edition, to insure the correct emphasis, italicizes 'this.' On the stage, the holding up of the missive before it is cast to the floor would bring out the point.

86, 60. **services ask recompense.** The self-seeking heartlessness of Clugnet, who is willing to undertake the painful task if anything is to be gained by it, is in good dramatic contrast with the delicacy of Guibert and Maufroy.

87, 70-73. **So . . . time.** Vivid as is this picture of the rafts coming down the river Meuse in autumn, it has greater dramatic value because it so clearly brings out the contrast between Colombe's condition as reigning Duchess and what may await her.

87, 84. **Salic law.** This excluded females from sovereignty.

87-88, 81-104. **Where's there . . . be carried.** This speech of Gaucelme's serves excellently as an exposition of the situation. It is less evidently in harmony with the character of the speaker.

91, 163. **pill and poll.** An Elizabethan phrase signifying to strip. Both words are in this sense used in the King James Bible: Jacob pilled white stripes in his rods (Gen. xxx, 37) and men polled (cut off) their hair (Ezek. xliv, 20).

94, 208-209. **My horse . . . somebody.** Gaucelme shows his character and temper by boasting that his horse bespattered the stranger and by declaring that the man looks like the devil.

94, 220. **Close . . . on me.** Adolph means to rush out to grapple with Valence, and wishes the door closed behind him.

95, 235. **no listener for their wrongs.** "I having found here no one to hear and help."

95-96, 243-245. **Proud . . . wrongs.** "Glad to remember your recklessness and levity, since this allows them to attribute your indifference to forgetfulness."

101, 342. **sursum corda.** Guibert quotes this phrase from the mass — "lift up your hearts" — in a cynical flout at himself for yielding to the suggestion to make a cat's-paw of Valence and perhaps at his feeling of relief at having escaped the disagreeable office himself.

103, 2. **scarcely audience-hour.** Sabyne, like Guibert, endeavors to postpone the audience which will show how few are assembled.

107-108, 88-94. **Well, Heaven's gifts . . . she turns.** This passage is confused, and very likely intentionally so, that it may indicate the confusion of Valence at sight of the Duchess. Apparently its meaning is: 'The people caught my gaze, they being for the moment lifted to her level, and as they were hers, they must henceforward be mine for her sake; but who can say that I could have made them mine fully had not her inspiration raised my soul before she left them — to my thinking — to my care.' This is of course a somewhat free paraphrase, but it seems to give the spirit of the passage.

**109, 122. insuppressive**, a rare Elizabethan word. Although the scene is laid in the seventeenth century, Browning makes very little effort to give an archaic flavor by his diction.

**114, 207. A lion crests him.** A lion is the crest of his coat-of-arms.

**114, 223. Would not . . . worst of me.** In allusion to act i, l. 363. Guibert defies Gaucelme, his enemy, to tell Berthold, when he comes, this protestation of devotion to the Duchess.

**115, 237. A nameless . . . gentleman.** The quickness with which the Duchess comes to the defense of Valence shows that he has already made a deep impression upon her; it is a touch of femininity that she is not able really to forgive Guibert.

**115, 240. Now . . . reckon with.** This touch is obviously to impress the audience with the self-respect and dignity of Valence.

**118, 287-292. Either . . . form.** It would appear that Guibert, Gaucelme, and Clugnet held the offices of Marshal, Chancellor, and Chamberlain, and surrender their badges at l. 294; but in act iv, l. 37, etc., another courtier speaks as Chancellor.

**118, 302. Tho' . . . think.** The audience is likely to agree with him.

**122, 4. Aix . . . Rome.** Berthold's ambition and hope is to be Emperor of the so-called Roman Empire, and the cities named represent so many steps toward the realization of his desire. The Diet assembled at Frankfort-on-the-Main, there the emperor was elected, and there, or at Aix-la-Chapelle, he received the crown of Germany; at Milan he was given the crown of Italy; at Rome, the crown of the whole Roman Empire.

**123, 27-28. the other a poor priest:** but now Pope. The assumption on the part of the speaker of the knowledge which is in the mind of his companion but has not been told on the stage is likely to be confusing to the audience.

**123, 33. day-dream . . . not mine.** It cannot have been much over a year since the death of the Duke, and apparently it was not until just before his death that the existence of the concealed heiress was known — at least to the courtiers. It is therefore not evident how Berthold should have recognized her claim

when he "was a boy," although of course the words are not to be taken literally. As the time in which he has, apparently at least, known of her existence has been so short, his language has a good deal the air of a slip on the part of the poet. The only explanation would be that the existence of Colombe was known, but that her father had for some reason not apparent kept her in concealment.

**125, 66-67. yesterday . . . day before.** The time is of course figurative. See l. 133.

**126, 76-92. Ah, . . . talk and talk.** "Our dramatic credulity is somewhat taxed in allowing [*sic*] Berthold an argument and a soliloquy after the entrance of the courtiers before he makes the slightest sign of observing their presence." — Prof. Rolfe and Miss Hersey. It is possible that Browning deliberately introduced this effect to mark the contempt with which the Prince regards the courtiers. Whether the passage was so intended or not, it could certainly be effectively so treated on the stage.

**126, 83-85. for . . . little aim.** In this world, quantity; in the world to come, quality.

**129, 139-140. I tread . . . advocate!** I come near to matching him in devotion to the cause of the Duchess. This, like ll. 113, 114, is of course an aside.

**130, 159-160. Were not . . . mind with.** Admiration for the daring of Colombe brings to mind the suggestion that it might be well to make her his wife, and the thought of marriage in turn rouses the reflection that he is done with love in failing of Priscilla, and may now match for policy.

**132, 205. mine, you urge.** What you say will be my thought.

**133, 210. Your frank indignation.** The misunderstanding here is excellent from a dramatic point of view, although not handled with complete mastery of stagecraft. The hesitation of the Duchess from reluctance to face Berthold and to submit to the humiliation of giving up her power is believed by the Prince, who is misled by the declaration of Guibert, to be a measure of somewhat the same scorn he showed on the entrance of the courtiers.

**133, 222. Which . . . forgot.** The relationship you ignored in assuming the crown.



**135, 261. pillared flame** was probably suggested by the "pillar of fire" of Exod. xiii, 21, and Numb. xiv, 14; but the figure loses rather than gains by a recalling of the Biblical sign.

**137, 285. And now . . . simple knight again.** Out of the mood in which he apologized to Valence, Guibert is stung by the favor with which the Duchess treats her new servant and perhaps by the insinuations of the courtiers.

**138, 298. Do you so?** This bit of misconception on the part of Clugnet, who supposes Guibert to have asked the influence of Valence to help him back to favor, is meant of course to emphasize the difference between Valence and the ex-Chamberlain, but it is probably too subtle to be readily effective on the stage.

**143, 1. this mine.** Maufroy refers, of course, to the declaration of Gaucelme, iii, 317.

**146, 53. Selfish, friend.** Gaucelme flatters to gain his end.

**147, 68. I wonder you see that.** "Gaucelme and Guibert are never willing to allow a virtue or a delicacy to each other. This line has a scornful emphasis on *you*." — Prof. Rolfe and Miss Hersey.

**151, 150. He . . . next!** An aside, like l. 186.

**152, 157. chrysoprase.** Somewhat out of place in the imperial diadem, as chrysoprase stands in the second rank of precious stones, but so splendid a specimen of its kind as to be too fine for anything meaner than a crown. So Colombe, her claim being disallowed, could not be Duchess in her own right, but was too noble to be allowed to descend to common life.

**153, 179. how use Juliers' Dukes?** What is the use (custom) of Dukes in Juliers?

**153, 180. you have them here.** Their statues decorate the hall. That of Luitpold, the father of Colombe, is in bronze. In his bewilderment at the turn affairs have taken, Valence stands as motionless as the statue (l. 186).

**155, 229-231. reality, tradition, fancy, and fact** make in the eyes of the world a "mystic panoply" which even with no knight within it — "untenanted" — is of force enough to awe mankind. The idea is that kingship in itself inspires awe, and this Berthold means to wear as an armor, out of which he can at will slip to follow out his purposes. The passage is too indirect to

be effective on the stage, nor does it entirely commend itself as a figure. It savors too much of the conceit.

**154-156, 208-251. He gathers . . . earthly world.** In the first form of the play this speech of Valence was of little more than half its present length. Edmund Gosse in his *Personalia* records that in a copy of this play marked by Browning, "The stage directions are numerous and minute. . . . Some of the suggestions are characteristic enough. For instance, 'unless a very good Valence' is found, this extremely fine speech, perhaps the jewel of the play, is to be left out."

**156, 242. his step or stalk.** Whether he walks naturally or stalks in anger.

**156, 245. Till . . . most power.** The seeming obscurity here is rather in the subtilty of the thought than in the expression. The leader comes to stand for so much, his dependants so rest upon what he represents as the "typified invincibility" of political order that more than by his power are they moved by the fear lest harm come to him; his weakness and the possibility that he should be in peril effect more than even his power.

**157, 264. for my father's sake.** She thanks Berthold for offering her a marriage which will allow her to hold the place it was her father's wish that she have. Accepting him, she does not take a hand in marriage which under the terms of her father's will would degrade her rank.

**157, 267-71. Had that been . . . he asks.** If the Prince loved her it is so possible he might be subject to her will and her desire for the good of the world under them — of which Cleves was a part — that Valence would not dare to hope that she would refuse him; although he assumes that Colombe could not return such love, but must make the marriage only as a sacrifice.

**158, 273. What does he?** A beautifully human but subtle touch. Colombe asserts that the deeds of the Prince prove his love; Valence seizes the idea that deeds which prove love must involve sacrifice; to have proposed marriage to Colombe cannot be looked upon as self-denial; and he involuntarily asks what Bertold has done. Instantly, of course, he perceives the absurdity of his position, and adds the second half of the line.

**158, 276. Sorrow . . . dream.** Absorbed in his passion,

Valence has unconsciously assumed that to Colombe as to him rank and power are of little consequence in comparison to love, but now it occurs to him that the Duchess may be more deeply grieved to lose her place than he had realized.

**158-159, 287-293. Because . . . may.** Valence perhaps here loses the sympathy of the reader a little. It is obviously his duty to present the offer of Berthold without prejudice, and his insistence upon the Duke's lack of love, while we may attribute it to his own passion, has the effect of self-interest. The weakness of the passage is undoubtedly due to the poet's lack of stagecraft, and is an interesting example of the way in which he was hampered by dramatic necessities. He is so intent upon preparing for the love scene which is to follow that he fails to appreciate the danger of making his hero appear more weak and less noble than he has thus far been represented.

**159, 302-303. Well . . . in you?** "The performance of Miss Davenport was an excellent analysis of the play. In [this] line . . . her voice sank to the tone of plaintive bewilderment, it being, 'Well, what's gone from me?' spoken to herself; then it is raised as she turns directly to Valence, and says, 'What have I lost in you?'" — Moncure D. Conway.

**161, 329. All done was done for her.** There is an equivocal in the words of Valence. All done was done for the woman I loved, not only what I did but the honor which was given to my humble self — 'to me humble' — was for you, Duchess.

**161, 332. Are there sweeter things.** Colombe feels that were she the other woman nothing could be sweeter than to know that when Valence was speaking at Cleves so that he moved the Duchess he did all for the sake of her love. In no other scene in Browning's plays is the favorite stage device of misconception — equivocal — so effectively used as here. Its only drawback is that it is in parts too subtle to be readily followed by an audience.

**161, 340. above me and away.** Above and away both in a figurative sense.

**163, 371. (Obey!)** It is not always easy to follow the intonation of Browning's punctuation, especially in its inconsistencies. A parenthesis is in general used for a remark meant to be an aside. Here is shown an interpolation. After "thinking it . . ." Co-

lombe, perhaps carried away by a sense of all she thinks Valence to be, breaks off suddenly; then to cover her disturbance of mind, she interjects the command, "Obey!" which would seem almost to need to be given with some faint shade of archness. The dramatic situation in reading seems to be injured by the words "Then kneel to her!" but delivered as a continuation of the preceding speech they would when spoken have their proper value and effect.

165, 419. **Yet . . . rival then!** "I remember well to have seen a vast miscellaneous crowd in an American theatre hanging with breathless attention upon every word of this interview, down to the splendid climax where, in obedience to the Duchess's direction to Valence how he should reveal his love to the lady she so little suspects herself to be, he kneels, — every heart evidently feeling each word as an electric touch, and all giving vent at last to their emotion in round after round of hearty applause. Indeed, during the entire performance I took occasion, at passages that might have been thought by some readers abstruse, to look around and see if I could discover a flickering intelligence in any face, but was convinced that the whole was thoroughly comprehended and felt by the entire audience." — Moncure D. Conway. This was written in comment upon the performance in Boston, 1854.

166, 2. **Amelius.** Which he was studying. See iii, 71.

166, 3. **this grand disclosure.** The declaration to Valence by Berthold of his willingness to marry Colombe.

166, 10. **Let her commence.** Berthold naturally supposes that Colombe, if dethroned, will follow his own policy.

167, 19. **The hour beneath the convent-wall.** The effect of the repetition of the allusion to this episode in Berthold's past is the opposite of what he would persuade himself. The Prince would convince himself that he has cast sentiment aside, but to the audience he gives the impression that a mind in which a lost love could be so constantly present must be very far from insensitive. It makes more probable, also, his touch of sentiment at the close of the play.

167, 22. **Elude the adventure.** Melchior has more of the Shakespearean touch than any other character in Browning's plays. A scholar and not a man of action himself, he longs for that strenuousness in Berthold which he is fully aware can come into his own studious life only vicariously. He was disappointed that Juliers

seemed to be gained without a struggle (iii, 9) ; and he evidently feels that Berthold would be more firmly established on a throne which he had achieved by strength rather than completely by intrigue. His own life one of thought and shadows, Melchior is by reason and by instinct eager that the Prince shall be developed through action, and he is not satisfied that Berthold shall show for less emotional than he is by nature. Of course dramatically it is Melchior's part here to emphasize Colombe's coming demand for love.

**167, 28. We seem . . . at end.** This passage has been commended, but it seems rather of the nineteenth century than the seventeenth. The figure of the masque is in any case far too elaborate. Whether it is in keeping with the character of the speaker each reader may decide for himself.

**169, 61. Ill cannot speed — not I — the Emperor.** The inversion is awkward, and is made doubly so by the extra negative.

**169, 72. my true worth.** That is, my rank. The cynicism of Berthold here comes to a climax.

**172, 117. Charlemagne, perhaps.** "I could perhaps love a man who realized my dream of glory as did Charlemagne."

**177, 226-227. Yon marble . . . will let fall.** It is perhaps interesting to compare these lines with the passage in the poem which is so associated with the first acquaintance of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett, *Lady Geraldine's Courtship* ;

"Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping! (Lough the sculptor wrought her.)

So asleep she is forgetting to say Hush — a fancy quaint.

Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream between them lingers.  
And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek ;  
While the right hand — with the symbol rose held slack between the fingers —

Has fallen backward in the basin. . . .

'Nay, your Silence,' said I, 'truly holds her symbol rose but slackly,  
Yet she holds it — or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken.'

**184, 358. know you through your Popes and Kings.** Melchior calls upon the true manhood which he knows to exist in Berthold. He pierces through the worldly the Prince seem to be in his dealings with Popes and Kings.

**185, 380. Dietrich the black Barnabite.** A monk of the order of St. Barnabas, and presumably one who will prove a stern master.



In a Balcony

PERSONS.



NORBERT.  
CONSTANCE.  
THE QUEEN.

*Persons.* Not in A. The 1888 ed. is followed here.



# In a Balcony

1853

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*Constance and Norbert.*

*Norbert.* Now!

*Constance.* Not now!

*Norb.* Give me them again, those hands :  
Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs !  
Press them before my eyes, the fire comes  
through !

You cruellest, you dearest in the world,  
Let me ! The Queen must grant whate'er I  
ask —

How can I gain you and not ask the Queen ?  
There she stays waiting for me, here stand  
you ;

Some time or other this was to be asked ;  
Now is the one time — what I ask, I gain :  
Let me ask now, Love !

*Const.* Do, and ruin us. 10

*Norb.* Let it be now, Love ! All my soul  
breaks forth.

In A the play was divided into three parts ; the words *First Part* standing between the title and *Constance and Norbert.*

How I do love you ! Give my love its way !  
 A man can have but one life and one death,  
 One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate —  
 Grant me my heaven now ! Let me know you  
                   mine,

15

Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,  
 Hold you and have you, and then die away,  
 If God please, with completion in my soul !

*Const.* I am not yours then ? How content  
                   this man !

I am not his — who change into himself,  
 Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,  
 Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,  
 Give all that was of me away to him —

20

So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,  
 Takes part with him against the woman here,  
 Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw

25

As caring that the world be cognizant  
 How he loves her and how she worships him.  
 You have this woman, not as yet that world.

Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me  
 By saving what I cease to care about,

30

The courtly name and pride of circumstance —  
 The name you 'll pick up and be cumbered with  
 Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more ;

Just that the world may slip from under you —  
 Just that the world may cry " So much for  
                   him —

35

“ The man predestined to the heap of crowns :  
 “ There goes his chance of winning one, at  
 least ! ”

*Norb.* The world !

*Const.* You love it. Love me quite as well,  
 And see if I shall pray for this in vain ! 40  
 Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks ?

*Norb.* You pray for — what, in vain ?

*Const.* Oh my heart's heart,  
 How I do love you, Norbert ! That is right :  
 But listen, or I take my hands away !  
 You say, “ let it be now ” : you would go now 45  
 And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,  
 You love me — so you do, thank God !

*Norb.* Thank God !

*Const.* Yes, Norbert, — but you fain would  
 tell your love,  
 And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her  
 My hand. Now take this rose and look at it, 50  
 Listening to me. You are the minister,  
 The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.  
 To-night completes your wonderful year's-work  
 (This palace-feast is held to celebrate)  
 Made memorable by her life's success, 55  
 The junction of two crowns, on her sole head,  
 Her house had only dreamed of anciently :  
 That this mere dream is grown a stable truth,  
 To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the  
 praise ?

Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved 60  
 What turned the many heads and broke the  
 hearts ?

You are the fate, your minute's in the heaven.  
 Next comes the Queen's turn. "Name your  
 own reward!"

With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come,  
 Put out an arm and touch and take the sun 65

And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,  
 Possess yourself supremely of her life, —

You choose the single thing she will not grant ;  
 Nay, very declaration of which choice

Will turn the scale and neutralize your work : 70  
 At best she will forgive you, if she can.

You think I'll let you choose — her cousin's  
 hand ?

*Norb.* Wait. First, do you retain your old  
 belief

The Queen is generous, — nay, is just ?

*Const.* There, there !

So men make women love them, while they know 75  
 No more of women's hearts than . . . look you

here,

You that are just and generous beside,

Make it your own case ! For example now,

I'll say — I let you kiss me, hold my hands —

Why ? do you know why ? I'll instruct you,  
 then — 80

The kiss, because you have a name at court ;  
 This hand and this, that you may shut in each  
 A jewel, if you please to pick up such.

That 's horrible ? Apply it to the Queen —  
 Suppose I am the Queen to whom you speak : 85

“ I was a nameless man ; you needed me :

“ Why did I proffer you my aid ? there stood

“ A certain pretty cousin at your side.

“ Why did I make such common cause with you ?

“ Access to her had not been easy else. 90

“ You give my labour here abundant praise ?

“ 'Faith, labour, which she overlooked, grew play.

“ How shall your gratitude discharge itself ?

“ Give me her hand ! ”

*Norb.* And still I urge the same.

Is the Queen just ? just — generous or no ! 95

*Const.* Yes, just. You love a rose ; no harm  
 in that :

But was it for the rose's sake or mine

You put it in your bosom ? mine, you said —

Then, mine you still must say or else be false.

You told the Queen you served her for herself ; 100

If so, to serve her was to serve yourself,

She thinks, for all your unbelieving face !

I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,

One sees the twenty pictures ; there 's a life

Better than life, and yet no life at all. 105

91 *labour.* A, labours.

92 *which.* A, while.

Conceive her born in such a magic dome,  
 Pictures all round her ! why, she sees the world,  
 Can recognize its given things and facts,  
 The fight of giants or the feast of gods,  
 Sages in senate, beauties at the bath, 110  
 Chases and battles, the whole earth's display,  
 Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and  
 fruit —

And who shall question that she knows them  
 all,

In better semblance than the things outside ?  
 Yet bring into the silent gallery 115

Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,  
 Some lion, with the painted lion there —

You think she 'll understand composedly ?  
 — Say, “ that 's his fellow in the hunting-piece  
 “ Yonder, I 've turned to praise a hundred  
 times ? ” 120

Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth,  
 Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,  
 Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.

The real exists for us outside, not her :  
 How should it, with that life in these four  
 walls — 125

That father and that mother, first to last  
 No father and no mother — friends, a heap,  
 Lovers, no lack — a husband in due time,  
 And every one of them alike a lie !

Things painted by a Rubens out of nought 130  
 Into what kindness, friendship, love should be ;  
 All better, all more grandiose than the life,  
 Only no life ; mere cloth and surface-paint,  
 You feel, while you admire. How should she  
 feel ?

Yet now that she has stood thus fifty years 135  
 The sole spectator in that gallery,  
 You think to bring this warm real struggling  
 love

In to her of a sudden, and suppose  
 She'll keep her state untroubled ? Here 's the  
 truth —

She'll apprehend truth's value at a glance, 140  
 Prefer it to the pictured loyalty ?

You only have to say, " so men are made,  
 " For this they act ; the thing has many names,  
 " But this the right one : and now, Queen, be  
 just ! "

Your life slips back ; you lose her at the word : 145  
 You do not even for amends gain me.

He will not understand ; oh, Norbert, Norbert,  
 Do you not understand ?

*Norb.* The Queen's the Queen :  
 I am myself — no picture, but alive  
 In every nerve and every muscle, here 150

132 *than the life.* A, than life.

135 *Yet.* A, And.

140 *truth's value.* A, its value.

145 *Your life.* A, And life.

At the palace-window o'er the people's street,  
 As she in the gallery where the pictures glow :  
 The good of life is precious to us both.  
 She cannot love ; what do I want with rule ?  
 When first I saw your face a year ago 155  
 I knew my life's good, my soul heard one  
 voice —

“ The woman yonder, there's no use of life  
 “ But just to obtain her ! heap earth's woes in  
 one

“ And bear them — make a pile of all earth's  
 joys

“ And spurn them, as they help or help not this ; 160

“ Only, obtain her ! ” How was it to be ?

I found you were the cousin of the Queen ;

I must then serve the Queen to get to you.

No other way. Suppose there had been one,

And I, by saying prayers to some white star 165

With promise of my body and my soul,

Might gain you, — should I pray the star or no ?

Instead, there was the Queen to serve ! I served,

Helped, did what other servants failed to do.

Neither she sought nor I declared my end. 170

Her good is hers, my recompense be mine, —

I therefore name you as that recompense.

151 *o'er the*. A, or in the. 160 *this*. A, here. 162 *you were*. A, she was. 163 *you*. A, her. 169 *Helped, did*. A, And did. 172 *I therefore name*. A, And let me name.



She dreamed that such a thing could never be?  
 Let her wake now. She thinks there was more  
     cause

In love of power, high fame, pure loyalty? 175

Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives  
 Chasing such shades. Then, I've a fancy too;  
 I worked because I want you with my soul:  
 I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now!

*Const.* Had I not loved you from the very  
     first, 180

Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus  
 So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,  
 You might become impatient. What's conceived  
 Of us without here, by the folk within?

Where are you now? immersed in cares of  
     state — 185

Where am I now? intent on festal robes —  
 We two, embracing under death's spread hand!  
 What was this thought for, what that scruple of  
     yours

Which broke the council up? — to bring about  
 One minute's meeting in the corridor! 190

And then the sudden sleights, strange secrecies,  
 Complots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,

174 *more cause.* A, some cause. 175 *high fame.* A, of fame.

183 *become.* A, be thus. 184 *folk.* A, folks.

188 *that scruple.* A, this scruple.

191 *strange secrecies.* A, long secrecies.

192 *Complots.* A, The plots.

Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a  
look,

“ Does she know ? does she not know ? saved  
or lost ? ”

A year of this compression's ecstasy 195

All goes for nothing ! you would give this up  
For the old way, the open way, the world's,  
His way who beats, and his who sells his wife !  
What tempts you ? — their notorious happiness  
Makes you ashamed of ours ? The best you'll  
gain 200

Will be — the Queen grants all that you require,  
Concedes the cousin, rids herself of you

And me at once, and gives us ample leave  
To live like our five hundred happy friends.

The world will show us with officious hand 205

Our chamber-entry, and stand sentinel

Where we so oft have stolen across its traps !

Get the world's warrant, ring the falcons' feet,

And make it duty to be bold and swift,

Which long ago was nature. Have it so ! 210

We never hawked by rights till flung from fist ?

Oh, the man's thought ! no woman's such a  
fool.

200 *Makes you.* A, That you're. *you'll gain.* A, you'll get.

202 *rids herself of you.* A, and gets rid of you.

203 *And me.* A, And her. 204 *like.* A, as.

207 *its traps.* A, her traps. 208 *falcons' feet.* A, falcon's foot.

210 *Which long ago was nature.* A, When long ago 't was  
nature. 211 *We.* A, He.

*Norb.* Yes, the man's thought and my thought,  
which is more —

One made to love you, let the world take note!  
Have I done worthy work? be love's the praise, 215  
Though hampered by restrictions, barred against  
By set forms, blinded by forced secrecies!  
Set free my love, and see what love can do  
Shown in my life — what work will spring from  
that!

The world is used to have its business done 220  
On other grounds, find great effects produced  
For power's sake, fame's sake, motives in men's  
mouth.

So, good: but let my low ground shame their  
high!

Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be  
true!

And love's the truth of mine. Time prove the  
rest! 225

I choose to wear you stamped all over me,  
Your name upon my forehead and my breast,  
You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's  
edge,

That men may see, all over, you in me —  
That pale loves may die out of their pretence 230  
In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off.

218 *can do.* A, will do.  
A, motives you have named.

222 *motives in men's mouth.*  
226 *to wear.* A, to have.

Permit this, Constance ! Love has been so long  
 Subdued in me, eating me through and through,  
 That now 't is all of me and must have way.  
 Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues, 235  
 Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,  
 That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow,  
 Trembling at last to its assured result :  
 Then think of this revulsion ! I resume  
 Life after death, (it is no less than life, 240  
 After such long unlovely labouring days)  
 And liberate to beauty life's great need  
 O' the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,  
 Suppressed itself erewhile. This eve's the time,  
 This eve intense with yon first trembling star 245  
 We seem to pant and reach ; scarce aught  
 between

The earth that rises and the heaven that bends ;  
 All nature self-abandoned, every tree  
 Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts  
 And fixed so, every flower and every weed, 250  
 No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat ;  
 All under God, each measured by itself.  
 These statues round us stand abrupt, distinct,  
 The strong in strength, the weak in weakness  
 fixed,  
 The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre, 255

234 'tis. A, it's.

243 O' the. A, Of the.

253 stand abrupt. A, each abrupt.

Nymph to her fawn, and Silence to her rose :  
 See God's approval on his universe !  
 Let us do so — aspire to live as these  
 In harmony with truth, ourselves being true !  
 Take the first way, and let the second come ! 260  
 My first is to possess myself of you ;  
 The music sets the march-step — forward, then !  
 And there's the Queen, I go to claim you of,  
 The world to witness, wonder and applaud.  
 Our flower of life breaks open. No delay ! 265

*Const.* And so shall we be ruined, both of us.  
 Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone :  
 You do not know her, were not born to it,  
 To feel what she can see or cannot see.  
 Love, she is generous, — ay, despite your smile, 270  
 Generous as you are : for, in that thin frame  
 Pain-twisted, punctured through and through  
 with cares,  
 There lived a lavish soul until it starved,  
 Debarred of healthy food. Look to the soul —  
 Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin 275  
 (The true man's-way) on justice and your rights,  
 Exactions and acquittance of the past !  
 Begin so — see what justice she will deal !  
 We women hate a debt as men a gift.  
 Suppose her some poor keeper of a school 280

256 *Nymph.* A, The nymph. *and.* A, the.

257 *Sec.* A, And. 274 *of.* A, all.

Whose business is to sit thro' summer months  
 And dole out children leave to go and play,  
 Herself superior to such lightness — she  
 In the arm-chair's state and pædagogic pomp —  
 To the life, the laughter, sun and youth outside : 285  
 We wonder such a face looks black on us ?  
 I do not bid you wake her tenderness,  
 (That were vain truly — none is left to wake)  
 But let her think her justice is engaged  
 To take the shape of tenderness, and mark 290  
 If she'll not coldly pay its warmest debt !  
 Does she love me, I ask you ? not a whit :  
 Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged  
 To help a kinswoman, she took me up —  
 Did more on that bare ground than other loves 295  
 Would do on greater argument. For me,  
 I have no equivalent of such cold kind  
 To pay her with, but love alone to give  
 If I give anything. I give her love :  
 I feel I ought to help her, and I will. 300  
 So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice  
 That women hate a debt as men a gift.  
 If I were you, I could obtain this grace —  
 Could lay the whole I did to love's account,

282 *children*. A, children's.      286 *a face*. A, an one.

291 *pay its warmest debt*. A, do its warmest deed.

297 *such*. A, that.

298 *but love*. A, my love.

304 *Could lay*. A, Would lay.

Nor yet be very false as courtiers go — 305  
 Declaring my success was recompense ;  
 It would be so, in fact : what were it else ?  
 And then, once loose her generosity, —  
 Oh, how I see it ! — then, were I but you,  
 To turn it, let it seem to move itself, 310  
 And make it offer what I really take,  
 Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,  
 Her value as the next thing to the Queen's —  
 Since none love Queens directly, none dare that,  
 And a thing's shadow or a name's mere echo 315  
 Suffices those who miss the name and thing !  
 You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,  
 To keep in proof how near her breath you came.  
 Say, I'm so near I seem a piece of her —  
 Ask for me that way — (oh, you understand) 320  
 You'd find the same gift yielded with a grace,  
 Which, if you make the least show to extort . . .  
 — You'll see ! and when you have ruined both  
 of us,

Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude !

*Norb.* Then, if I turn it that way, you consent ? 325

306 *Declaring.* A, Declare that. 308 *loose.* A, loosed.

309 *Oh, how I see it !* A, As you will mark it —.

311 *offer what.* A, give the thing. 312 *just.* A, so.

313 *Her.* A, All. *Queen's.* A, Queen.

314 *love Queens.* A, loves her. *dare,* A, dares.

315 *And . . . echo.* A, A shadow of a thing, a name's mere echo. 321 *You'd.* A, And.

'T is not my way ; I have more hope in truth :  
 Still, if you won't have truth — why, this indeed,  
 Were scarcely false, as I'd express the sense.  
 Will you remain here ?

*Const.* O best heart of mine,  
 How I have loved you ! then, you take my way ? 330  
 Are mine as you have been her minister,  
 Work out my thought, give it effect for me,  
 Paint plain my poor conceit and make it serve ?  
 I owe that withered woman everything —  
 Life, fortune, you, remember ! Take my part — 335  
 Help me to pay her ! Stand upon your rights ?  
 You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on you ?  
 Your rights are mine — you have no rights but  
 mine.

*Norb.* Remain here. How you know me !

*Const.* Ah, but still ——

*He breaks from her : she remains.*

*Dance-music from within.*

*Enter the Queen.*

*Queen.* Constance ? She is here as he said.

Speak quick !

340

Is it so ? Is it true or false ? One word !

*Const.* True.

328 as I'd. A, I'll so.

*He . . . within.* A places *Second Part* between this and *Enter the Queen.* 340 *Speak quick ! A, Speak ! Quick !*



*Queen.* Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee!

*Const.* Madam?

*Queen.* I love you, Constance, from my soul.

Now say once more, with any words you will,  
'T is true, all true, as true as that I speak. 345

*Const.* Why should you doubt it?

*Queen.* Ah, why doubt? why doubt?  
Dear, make me see it! Do you see it so?  
None see themselves; another sees them best.  
You say "why doubt it?" — you see him and me.

It is because the Mother has such grace 350

That if we had but faith — wherein we fail —  
Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us;  
Yet still we let our whims prescribe despair,  
Our fancies thwart and cramp our will and power,

And while, accepting life, abjure its use. 355

Constance, I had abjured the hope of love

And being loved, as truly as yon palm

The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.

*Const.* Heaven!

353 *Yet still.* A, Howbeit. 354 *Our fancies.* A, Our very fancies. *our will and power.* A, our will. 355 *And while . . . use.* A, And so accepting life, abjure ourselves. 357 *And being.* A, And of being. 358 *plot.* A, turf.

*Queen.* But it was so, Constance, it was so!  
 Men say — or do men say it? fancies say — 360  
 “Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.  
 “Too late — no love for you, too late for love —  
 “Leave love to girls. Be queen: let Constance  
 love.”

One takes the hint — half meets it like a child,  
 Ashamed at any feelings that oppose. 365

“Oh love, true, never think of love again!

“I am a queen: I rule, not love forsooth.”

So it goes on; so a face grows like this,  
 Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,  
 Till, — nay, it does not end so, I thank God! 370

*Const.* I cannot understand —

*Queen.* The happier you!

Constance, I know not how it is with men:

For women (I am a woman now like you)

There is no good of life but love — but love!

What else looks good, is some shade flung from  
 love; 375

Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,

Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,

Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!

O Constance, how I love you!

*Const.* I love you.

*Queen.* I do believe that all is come through  
 you. 380

I took you to my heart to keep it warm  
 When the last chance of love seemed dead in  
 me ;

I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered  
 heart.

Oh, I am very old now, am I not ?

Not so ! it is true and it shall be true ! 385

*Const.* Tell it me : let me judge if true or  
 false.

*Queen.* Ah, but I fear you ! you will look at  
 me

And say, “ she ’s old, she ’s grown unlovely  
 quite

“ Who ne’er was beauteous : men want beauty  
 still.”

Well, so I feared — the curse ! so I felt sure ! 390

*Const.* Be calm. And now you feel not sure,  
 you say ?

*Queen.* Constance, he came, — the coming  
 was not strange —

Do not I stand and see men come and go ?

I turned a half-look from my pedestal

Where I grow marble — “ one young man the  
 more ! 395

“ He will love some one ; that is nought to me :

“ What would he with my marble stateliness ? ”

Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore ;

The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,

And I still older, with less flesh to change — 400  
 We two those dear extremes that long to touch.  
 It seemed still harder when he first began  
 To labour at those state-affairs, absorbed  
 The old way for the old end — interest.  
 Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts 405  
 Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,  
 Professing they've no care but for your cause,  
 Thought but to help you, love but for your-  
 self, —

And you the marble statue all the time  
 They praise and point at as preferred to life, 410  
 Yet leave for the first breathing woman's smile,  
 First dancer's, gipsy's or street baladine's!  
 Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's  
 speech

Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,  
 Their gait subdued lest step should startle me, 415  
 Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,  
 Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,  
 While not a man of them broke rank and spoke,  
 Wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,  
 Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand! 420  
 There have been moments, if the sentinel  
 Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,  
 Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,

403 *To labour . . . absorbed.* A, Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs. 411 *woman's smile.* A, woman's cheek.

418 *of them.* A, of these. 419 *Wrote.* A, Or wrote.

I would have stooped and kissed him with my  
soul.

*Const.* Who could have comprehended ?

*Queen.* Ay, who — who ? 425

Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.  
Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps  
It comes too late — would you but tell the truth.

*Const.* I wait to tell it.

*Queen.* Well, you see, he came,

Outfaced the others, did a work this year 430

Exceeds in value all was ever done,

You know — it is not I who say it — all

Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)

I grew aware not only of what he did,

But why so wondrously. Oh, never work 435

Like his was done for work's ignoble sake —

Souls need a finer aim to light and lure !

I felt, I saw, he loved — loved somebody.

And Constance, my dear Constance, do you  
know,

I did believe this while 't was you he loved. 440

*Const.* Me, madam ?

*Queen.* It did seem to me, your face

Met him where'er he looked : and whom but you

Was such a man to love ? It seemed to me,

You saw he loved you, and approved his love,

437 *Souls need . . . lure.* A, It must have finer aims to spur it  
on. 444 *his love.* A, the love.

And both of you were in intelligence. 445  
 You could not loiter in that garden, step  
 Into this balcony, but I straight was stung  
 And forced to understand. It seemed so true,  
 So right, so beautiful, so like you both,  
 That all this work should have been done by him 450  
 Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,  
 But that at last — suppose, some night like  
 this —

Borne on to claim his due reward of me,  
 He might say “ Give her hand and pay me so.”  
 And I (O Constance, you shall love me now ! ) 455  
 I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,  
 — “ And he shall have it. I will make her blest,  
 “ My flower of youth, my woman’s self that was,  
 “ My happiest woman’s self that might have  
 been !  
 “ These two shall have their joy and leave me  
 here.” 460

Yes — yes !

*Const.* Thanks !

*Queen.* And the word was on my lips  
 When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear  
 A mere calm statement of his just desire  
 For payment of his labour. When — O heaven,  
 How can I tell you ? lightning on my eyes 465

445 *And both of you.* A, And that you both. 446 *that.*  
 A, the. 465 *lightning.* A, cloud was.

And thunder in my ears proved that first word  
Which told 't was love of me, of me, did all —  
He loved me — from the first step to the last,  
Loved me!

*Const.* You hardly saw, scarce heard him  
speak

Of love : what if you should mistake ?

*Queen.* No, no — 470

No mistake ! Ha, there shall be no mistake !  
He had not dared to hint the love he felt —  
You were my reflex — (how I understood !)  
He said you were the ribbon I had worn,  
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes, 475  
And love, love came at end of every phrase.

Love is begun ; this much is come to pass :

The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours !

I will learn, I will place my life on you,  
Teach me but how to keep what I have won ! 480

Am I so old ? This hair was early grey ;  
But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,  
And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel.

I could sing once too ; that was in my youth.

Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . .

yes, 485

Beautiful — for the last French painter did !

466 *proved that.* A, at that. 469 *You hardly . . . speak.*  
A, You did not hear . . . you thought he spoke. 476 *came at*  
*end.* A, was the end. 480 *Teach me but.* A, But teach me.

I know they flatter somewhat ; you are frank —  
 I trust you. How I loved you from the first !  
 Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out  
 And set her by their side to take the eye : 490  
 I must have felt that good would come from you.  
 I am not generous — like him — like you !  
 But he is not your lover after all :  
 It was not you he looked at. Saw you him ?  
 You have not been mistaking words or looks ? 495  
 He said you were the reflex of myself.  
 And yet he is not such a paragon  
 To you, to younger women who may choose  
 Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth !  
 You know you never named his name to me : 500  
 You know, I cannot give him up — ah God,  
 Not up now, even to you !

*Const.* Then calm yourself.

*Queen.* See, I am old — look here, you happy  
 girl !

I will not play the fool, deceive — ah, whom ?  
 'T is all gone : put your cheek beside my cheek 505  
 And what a contrast does the moon behold !  
 But then I set my life upon one chance,  
 The last chance and the best — am *I* not left,  
 My soul, myself ? All women love great men  
 If young or old ; it is in all the tales : 510  
 Young beauties love old poets who can love —

504 *ah, whom.* A, myself.

506 *And what.* A, Ah, what.



Why should not he, the poems in my soul,  
 The passionate faith, the pride of sacrifice,  
 Life-long, death-long? I throw them at his feet.  
 Who cares to see the fountain's very shape, 515  
 Whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's  
 That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around?  
 You could not praise indeed the empty conch;  
 But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself.  
 How I will love him! Cannot men love love? 520  
 Who was a queen and loved a poet once  
 Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can do that!  
 Well, but men too; at least, they tell you so.  
 They love so many women in their youth,  
 And even in age they all love whom they please; 525  
 And yet the best of them confide to friends  
 That 't is not beauty makes the lasting love —  
 They spend a day with such and tire the next:  
 They like soul, — well then, they like phantasy,  
 Novelty even. Let us confess the truth, 530  
 Horrible though it be, that prejudice,  
 Prescription . . . curses! they will love a queen.  
 They will, they do: and will not, does not —  
 he?

*Const.* How can he? You are wedded: 't is  
 a name

513-514 *The passionate . . . death-long* A reads:

The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice,  
 The constancy?

516 *Whether.* A, And whether.

We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains, 535  
 His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled  
 As you believe and I incline to think,  
 Aspire to be your favourite, shame and all ?

*Queen.* Hear her ! There, there now — could  
 she love like me ?

What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and  
 grace ? 540

See all it does<sup>e</sup> or could do ! so youth loves !  
 Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do  
 What I will — you, it was not born in ! I  
 Will drive these difficulties far and fast  
 As yonder mists curdling before the moon. 545  
 I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve  
 My youth from its enforced calamity,  
 Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,  
 His own in the eyes alike of God and man.

*Const.* You will do — dare do . . . pause on  
 what you say ! 550

*Queen.* Hear her ! I thank you, sweet, for  
 that surprise.

You have the fair face ; for the soul, see mine !  
 I have the strong soul : let me teach you, here.  
 I think I have borne enough and long enough,  
 And patiently enough, the world remarks, 555  
 To have my own way now, unblamed by all.  
 It does so happen (I rejoice for it)  
 This most unhopèd-for issue cuts the knot.

There's not a better way of settling claims  
 Than this; God sends the accident express: 560  
 And were it for my subjects' good, no more,  
 'T were best thus ordered. I am thankful now,  
 Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,  
 And bless God simply, or should almost fear  
 To walk so smoothly to my ends at last. 565

Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate!  
 How strong I am! Could Norbert see me now!

*Const.* Let me consider. It is all too strange.

*Queen.* You, Constance, learn of me; do you,  
 like me!

You are young, beautiful: my own, best girl, 570  
 You will have many lovers, and love one —  
 Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours:  
 Taller than he is, since yourself are tall.  
 Love him, like me! Give all away to him;  
 Think never of yourself; throw by your pride, 575  
 Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw it  
 once,

And love him simply for his very self.  
 Remember, I (and what am I to you?)  
 Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose  
 life,

Do all but just unlove him! He loves me. 580

*Const.* He shall.

*Queen.* You, step inside my inmost heart!

573 *Taller.* A, And taller. *since yourself.* A, for you.

Give me your own heart : let us have one heart !  
 I'll come to you for counsel ; “ this he says,  
 “ This he does ; what should this amount to,  
     pray ?

“ Beseech you, change it into current coin !      585  
 “ Is that worth kisses ? Shall I please him  
     there ? ”

And then we'll speak in turn of you — what  
     else ?

Your love, according to your beauty's worth,  
 For you shall have some noble love, all gold :  
 Whom choose you ? we will get him at your  
     choice.      590

— Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since,  
 I felt as I must die or be alone

Breathing my soul into an ear like yours :  
 Now, I would face the world with my new life,  
 Wear my new crown. I'll walk around the  
     rooms,      595

And then come back and tell you how it feels.  
 How soon a smile of God can change the world !  
 How we are made for happiness — how work  
 Grows play, adversity a winning fight !

True, I have lost so many years : what then ?      600  
 Many remain : God has been very good.

You, stay here ! 'T is as different from dreams,  
 From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,

As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.  
The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's  
moon!

605

*She goes out, leaving Constance. Dance-  
music from within.*

*Norbert enters.*

*Norb.* Well? we have but one minute and  
one word!

*Const.* I am yours, Norbert!

*Norb.* Yes, mine.

*Const.* Not till now!

You were mine. Now I give myself to you.

*Norb.* Constance?

*Const.* Your own! I know the thriftier  
way

Of giving — haply, 't is the wiser way.

610

Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole  
Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,  
With a new largess still at each despair)

And force you keep in sight the deed, pre-  
serve

Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,

615

My giving and your taking; both our joys  
Dying together. Is it the wiser way?

I choose the simpler; I give all at once.

*She . . . within. In A, Part Third is placed between this and  
Norbert enters. 614 preserve. A, reserve.*

Know what you have to trust to, trade upon !  
 Use it, abuse it, — anything but think 620  
 Hereafter, “ Had I known she loved me so,  
 “ And what my means, I might have thriven with  
 it.”

This is your means. I give you all myself.

*Norb.* I take you and thank God.

*Const.* Look on through years !

We cannot kiss, a second day like this ; 625  
 Else were this earth no earth.

*Norb.* With this day’s heat  
 We shall go on through years of cold.

*Const.* So, best !

— I try to see those years — I think I see.

You walk quick and new warmth comes ; you  
 look back

And lay all to the first glow — not sit down 630

Forever brooding on a day like this

While seeing embers whiten and love die.

Yes, love lives best in its effect ; and mine,

Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

*Norb.* Just so. I take and know you all at  
 once. 635

Your soul is disengaged so easily,

Your face is there, I know you ; give me time,

Let me be proud and think you shall know me.

My soul is slower : in a life I roll

620 *think.* A, say. 632 *seeing embers.* A, seeing the embers.



Paint pictures ! One sits down in poverty  
And writes or paints, with pity for the rich. 660

*Norb.* And loves one's painting and one's writing,  
then,

And not one's mistress ! All is best, believe,  
And we best as no other than we are.

We live, and they experiment on life —  
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof 665

To overlook the farther. Let us be  
The thing they look at ! I might take your face  
And write of it and paint it — to what end ?

For whom ? what pale dictatress in the air  
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form 670  
With earth's real blood and breath, the beautiful  
life

She makes despised for ever ? You are mine,  
Made for me, not for others in the world,  
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,  
The cold calm power to see how fair you look. 675  
I come to you ; I leave you not, to write  
Or paint. You are, I am : let Rubens there  
Paint us !

*Const.* So, best !

*Norb.* I understand your soul.  
You live, and rightly sympathize with life,  
With action, power, success. This way is  
straight ; 680

661 *then.* A, too.

667 *your face.* A, that face.



And time were short beside, to let me change  
 The craft my childhood learnt : my craft shall  
     serve.

Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,  
 Manure their barren lives, and force thence fruit  
 First for themselves, and afterward for me      685  
 In the due tithe ; the task of some one soul,  
 Through ways of work appointed by the world.  
 I am not bid create — men see no star  
 Transfiguring my brow to warrant that —  
 But find and bind and bring to bear their wills. 690  
 So I began : to-night sees how I end.

What if it see, too, power's first outbreak here  
 Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,  
 And instincts of the heart that teach the head ?  
 What if the people have discerned at length      695  
 The dawn of the next nature, novel brain  
 Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,  
 Whose work, they trust, shall find them as novel  
     ways

To untried heights which yet he only sees ?  
 I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen, 700

681 *time*. A, days. 684 *thence*. A, the. 687 *Through*.  
 A, By. *the world*. A, themselves. 688 *men*. A, they. 690 *But*  
*find* . . . *wills*. A, But bind in one and carry out their wills.

692 *power's*. A, my. 695 *at length*. A, in me. 696 *novel*  
*brain*. A, the new man. 698-699 *Whose work* . . . *heights*.  
 A reads :

And whom they trust to find them out new ways  
 To the new heights.

This people — in our phrase, this mass of men —  
 See how the mass lies passive to my hand  
 Now that my hand is plastic, with you by  
 To make the muscles iron ! Oh, an end  
 Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first ! 705  
 My will be on this people ! then, the strain,  
 The grappling of the potter with his clay,  
 The long uncertain struggle, — the success  
 And consummation of the spirit-work,  
 Some vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip, 710  
 While rounded fair for human sense to see  
 The Graces in a dance men recognize  
 With turbulent applause and laughs of heart !  
 So triumph ever shall renew itself ;  
 Ever shall end in efforts higher yet, 715  
 Ever begin . . .

*Const.* I ever helping ?

*Norb.* Thus !

*As he embraces her, the Queen enters.*

*Const.* Hist, madam ! So have I performed my  
 part.

You see your gratitude's true decency,  
 Norbert ? A little slow in seeing it !

703 *Now that.* A, And how. *with you.* A, and you.

709-710 *And consummation . . . vase.* A reads :

In that uprising of the spirit-work  
 The vase, etc.

711 *human sense.* A, lower men. 712 *men.* A, they.

715 *shall.* A, to. 716 *begin.* A, begun. 717 *have I.* A, I  
 have.

Begin, to end the sooner! What 's a kiss? 720

*Norb.* Constance?

*Const.* Why, must I teach it you again?

You want a witness to your dulness, sir?

What was I saying these ten minutes long?

Then I repeat — when some young handsome  
man

Like you has acted out a part like yours, 725

Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,

So very far beyond him, as he says —

So hopelessly in love that but to speak

Would prove him mad, — he thinks judiciously,

And makes some insignificant good soul, 730

Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant,

And very stalking-horse to cover him

In following after what he dares not face.

When his end 's gained — (sir, do you under-  
stand?)

When she, he dares not face, has loved him first, 735

— May I not say so, madam? — tops his hope,

And overpasses so his wildest dream,

With glad consent of all, and most of her

The confidant who brought the same about —

Why, in the moment when such joy explodes, 740

I do hold that the merest gentleman

Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse,

733 At the end of this line A has a dash, which would seem to  
be correct. 741 *hold.* A, say.

Dismiss it with a "There, enough of you!"  
 Forget it, show his back unmannerly:  
 But like a liberal heart will rather turn 745  
 And say, "A tingling time of hope was ours;  
 "Betwixt the fears and falterings, we two lived  
 "A chanceful time in waiting for the prize:  
 "The confidant, the Constance, served not ill.  
 "And though I shall forget her in due time, 750  
 "Her use being answered now, as reason bids,  
 "Nay as herself bids from her heart of hearts, —  
 "Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to her,  
 "The first good praise goes to the prosperous  
 tool,  
 "And the first — which is the last — rewarding  
 kiss." 755

*Norb.* Constance, it is a dream — ah, see, you  
 smile!

*Const.* So, now his part being properly per-  
 formed,

Madam, I turn to you and finish mine  
 As duly; I do justice in my turn.  
 Yes, madam, he has loved you — long and well; 760  
 He could not hope to tell you so — 't was I  
 Who served to prove your soul accessible,  
 I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place  
 When they had wandered else into despair,

755 *rewarding.* A, thankful.

764 *When they.* A, When oft they. *else.* A, out.



You teem with, follow the career else closed —  
 Be all you cannot be except by her!  
 Behold her! — Madam, say for pity's sake  
 Anything — frankly say you love him! Else 790  
 He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in  
 His fear than you conceive: I know the man!

*Norb.* I know the woman somewhat, and confess

I thought she had jested better: she begins  
 To overcharge her part. I gravely wait 795  
 Your pleasure, madam: where is my reward?

*Queen.* Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognize

Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,  
 Eccentric speech and variable mirth,  
 Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold, 800  
 Yet suitable, the whole night's work being  
 strange)

— May still be right: I may do well to speak  
 And make authentic what appears a dream  
 To even myself. For, what she says, is true:  
 Yes, Norbert — what you spoke just now of love, 805  
 Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,  
 But justified a warmth felt long before.  
 Yes, from the first — I loved you, I shall say:  
 Strange! but I do grow stronger, now't is said.  
 Your courage helps mine: you did well to speak 810

805 *just.* A, but.

To-night, the night that crowns your twelve-  
months' toil :

But still I had not waited to discern  
Your heart so long, believe me ! From the first  
The source of so much zeal was almost plain,  
In absence even of your own words just now 815  
Which hazarded the truth. 'T is very strange,  
But takes a happy ending — in your love  
Which mine meets : be it so ! as you chose me,  
So I choose you.

*Norb.* And worthily you choose.  
I will not be unworthy your esteem, 820  
No, madam. I do love you ; I will meet  
Your nature, now I know it. This was well :  
I see, — you dare and you are justified :  
But none had ventured such experiment,  
Less versed than you in nobleness of heart, 825  
Less confident of finding such in me.  
I joy that thus you test me ere you grant  
The dearest richest beauteousest and best  
Of women to my arms : 't is like yourself.  
So — back again into my part's set words — 830  
Devotion to the uttermost is yours,  
But no, you cannot, madam, even you,  
Create in me the love our Constance does.  
Or — something truer to the tragic phrase —

816 *hazarded*. A, opened out.

826 *such*. A, it.

818 *chose*. A, choose.

827 *joy*. A, like.

Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent 835  
 Invites a certain insect — that 's myself —  
 But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground.  
 I take this lady.

*Const.* Stay — not hers, the trap —  
 Stay, Norbert — that mistake were worst of all !  
 He is too cunning, madam ! It was I, 840  
 I, Norbert, who . . .

*Norb.* You, was it, Constance ? Then,  
 But for the grace of this divinest hour  
 Which gives me you, I might not pardon here !  
 I am the Queen's ; she only knows my brain :  
 She may experiment upon my heart 845  
 And I instruct her too by the result.

But you, sweet, you who know me, who so long  
 Have told my heart-beats over, held my life  
 In those white hands of yours, — it is not well !

*Const.* Tush ! I have said it, did I not say it  
 all ? 850

The life, for her — the heart-beats, for her sake !

*Norb.* Enough ! my cheek grows red, I think.  
 Your test ?

There 's not the meanest woman in the world,  
 Not she I least could love in all the world,  
 Whom, did she love me, had love proved itself, 855  
 I dare insult as you insult me now.

843 *might not.* A, should not. 845 *upon my heart.* A, there-  
 fore on my heart. 855 *had.* A, did. *proved.* A, prove.

856 *dare.* A, dared.



Constance, I could say, if it must be said,  
 "Take back the soul you offer, I keep mine!"  
 But — "Take the soul still quivering on your  
 hand,

"The soul so offered, which I cannot use, 860  
 "And, please you, give it to some playful friend,  
 "For — what's the trifle he requites me with?"

I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,  
 That two may mock her heart if it succumb?  
 No: fearing God and standing 'neath his heaven, 865  
 I would not dare insult a woman so,  
 Were she the meanest woman in the world,  
 And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

*Const.* Norbert!

*Norb.* I love once as I live but once.  
 What case is this to think or talk about? 870  
 I love you. Would it mend the case at all  
 If such a step as this killed love in me?  
 Your part were done: account to God for it!  
 But mine — could murdered love get up again,  
 And kneel to whom you please to designate, 875  
 And make you mirth? It is too horrible.  
 You did not know this, Constance? now you  
 know

That body and soul have each one life, but one:  
 And here's my love, here, living, at your feet.

861 *playful friend.* A, friend of mine.

872 *If.* A, Should. *killed.* A, kill.

*Const.* See the Queen! Norbert — this one  
more last word —

880

If thus you have taken jest for earnest — thus  
Loved me in earnest . . .

*Norb.*

Ah, no jest holds here!

Where is the laughter in which jests break up,  
And what this horror that grows palpable?

Madam — why grasp you thus the balcony? 885

Have I done ill? Have I not spoken truth?

How could I other? Was it not your test,  
To try me, what my love for Constance meant?

Madam, your royal soul itself approves,  
The first, that I should choose thus! so one  
takes

890

A beggar, — asks him, what would buy his  
child?

And then approves the expected laugh of scorn  
Returned as something noble from the rags.

Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha, what's  
this?

You two glare each at each like panthers now. 895

Constance, the world fades; only you stand  
there!

You did not, in to-night's wild whirl of things,  
Sell me — your soul of souls, for any price?

No — no — 't is easy to believe in you!

Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop 900

886 *truth.* A, the truth.      888 *what.* A, and what.

Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still —  
 Though I might curse, I love you. I am love  
 And cannot change: love's self is at your feet!

*The Queen goes out.*

*Const.* Feel my heart; let it die against your  
 own!

*Norb.* Against my own. Explain not: let this  
 be!

905

This is life's height.

*Const.* Yours, yours, yours!

*Norb.* You and I —

Why care by what meanders we are here  
 I' the centre of the labyrinth? Men have died  
 Trying to find this place, which we have found.

*Const.* Found, found!

*Norb.* Sweet, never fear what she can do! 910

We are past harm now.

*Const.* On the breast of God.

I thought of men — as if you were a man.

Tempting him with a crown!

*Norb.* This must end here:

It is too perfect.

*Const.* There's the music stopped.

What measured heavy tread? It is one blaze 915

About me and within me.

*Norb.* Oh, some death

902 *might.* A, should. 908 *I the.* A, In the.

909 *place.* A, place out.

## In a Balcony

Will run its sudden finger round this spark  
And sever us from the rest!

*Const.*

And so do well.

Now the doors open.

*Norb.*

'T is the guard comes.

*Const.*

Kiss!

## Notes to *In A Balcony*

*For the meaning of single words see the Glossary.*

*In a Balcony* was written at Bagni di Lucca in the summer of 1853, and revised during the following winter at Rome. It was published in *Men and Women* in 1855. It was produced by the London Browning Society in 1884, at Prince's Hall. Mr. Fredrick Wedmore commented on the performance in the *Academy* for Dec. 6: "*In a Balcony*, on the stage as in the study, is for the few, not for the many." It has been privately given by the Boston Browning Society, and was brought out in New York and Boston by Mrs. Le Moyne in 1901.

200, 25. **Takes part . . . here.** Thinks of his interest against this woman myself.

201, 39-40. **You love . . . vain.** It is love of the world that makes you care for the formal, outward acknowledgment of our love; whereas my love asks further concealment. If you love me as well as you do the world, I shall not ask in vain.

201, 50. **Now take this rose.** It is no slight drawback to *In a Balcony* as an acting play that the exposition of the situation hardly begins before this point.

202, 62. **your . . . heaven.** It is the moment when the stars are absolutely favorable to you. A figure borrowed from astrology.

203, 100. **You told the Queen you served her for herself.** So completely does the logic of Constance rest upon this statement that one is tempted to think it strange Norbert lets it go unchallenged, or, if he accepts it, that both he and Constance so completely ignore it later.

208, 205-207. **The world . . . traps.** These lines have been interpreted by some to mean that Constance was the mistress of Norbert. They are certainly open to that construction, but it does not in the least seem necessary to put it upon them. Browning was often intense in phrasing, and both the nature of Norbert

and the relations of the lovers throughout the play seem to contradict the supposition that their passion had led them so far. See p. 210, ll. 232-233, and p. 228, ll. 625-627.

**209, 223. let my low ground shame their high!** Because my common, natural motive will produce effects greater than follow from their grandiose ambitions.

**216, 371. The happier you!** Here, and throughout the interview, Browning with much skill shows how the preoccupation of the Queen's mind makes her so interpret the broken exclamations of Constance as to miss completely the clue to the situation.

**218-219, 421-424. There have . . . soul.** The boldness of this passage is characteristically Browningsque. It is important dramatically in that it goes far to justify the fear which Constance had of the Queen. Constance might not understand the strenuousness of passion of which her cousin was capable, but being a woman she felt instinctively the force of the revengeful jealousy of which the Queen was capable.

**227, 608. Now I give myself to you.** As has been said in the Introduction this is one of the crucial lines of the drama.

**229-230, 650-660. Quick, Norbert . . . the rich.** This might be a groping on the part of Constance after something which would satisfy the vigorous nature of Norbert if he lost his hold on the reins of government. If he were but an artist he might be content even in obscurity and poverty. Norbert answers unconsciously that this is impossible. She gives up the hope and acquiesces in the simple but pregnant words, "So, best!" It is more consistent with her character to understand it as her means of satisfying herself that she is right in her belief that his life would be unsatisfied if his high ambitions were balked.

**240, 895. You two . . . now.** This scene is really of tremendous dramatic intensity, as those who saw the performance given under the auspices of the Boston Browning Society, or the perhaps less satisfactory performance of Mrs. Le Moyne and her company, can abundantly testify. Mr. F. J. Furnivall has given it as his opinion: "The Queen's part seems to me the intensest in Browning's dramatic work."

**242, 919. 'T is the guard comes.** See Introduction, p. xxx.

**A Soul's Tragedy**

## PERSONS.

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LUITOLFO *and* EULALIA, *betrothed lovers.*  
CHIAPPINO, *their friend.*  
OGNIBEN, *the Pope's Legate.*  
*Citizens of Faenza.*

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TIME, 15—. PLACE, *Faenza.*

*Persons.* Not in A. Instead, the note as to the meaning of *Bells and Pomegranates* (see Notes to *A Soul's Tragedy*, page 296) faced page 1 of the play.



# A Soul's Tragedy

ACT FIRST, BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE  
POETRY OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE : AND ACT  
SECOND, ITS PROSE.

1846.



## ACT I.

SCENE. — *Inside Luitolfo's house.*

*Chiappino, Eulalia.*

*Eulalia.* What is it keeps Luitolfo ? Night's  
fast falling,  
And 't was scarce sunset . . . had the ave-bell  
Sounded before he sought the Provost's house ?  
I think not : all he had to say would take  
Few minutes, such a very few, to say !  
How do you think, Chiappino ? If our lord  
The Provost were less friendly to your friend  
Than everybody here professes him,

5

*Act . . . Prose.* In A these words stand as here, but in the  
1849 ed. and thereafter they are on the half-title.

*Act First. A, Part First. Act Second. A, Part Second.*

*Act I. A, Part I. Scene . . . Eulalia.* A omits scene, read-  
ing : Inside Luitolfo's house at Faenza. Chiappino, Eulalia.

I should begin to tremble — should not you?  
 Why are you silent when so many times 10  
 I turn and speak to you?

*Chiappino.* That's good!

*Eula.* You laugh!

*Chiap.* Yes. I had fancied nothing that bears  
 price

In the whole world was left to call my own;  
 And, may be, felt a little pride thereat.  
 Up to a single man's or woman's love, 15  
 Down to the right in my own flesh and blood,  
 There's nothing mine, I fancied, — till you  
 spoke:

— Counting, you see, as “nothing” the permis-  
 sion

To study this peculiar lot of mine  
 In silence: well, go silence with the rest 20  
 Of the world's good! What can I say, shall  
 serve?

*Eula.* This, — lest you, even more than  
 needs, embitter

Our parting: say your wrongs have cast, for  
 once,

A cloud across your spirit!

*Chiap.* How a cloud?

*Eula.* No man nor woman loves you, did you  
 say? 25

*Chiap.* My God, were't not for thee!

*Eula.* Ay, God remains,  
Even did men forsake you.

*Chiap.* Oh, not so!  
Were 't not for God, I mean, what hope of  
truth —  
Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with  
man ?

I, now — the homeless friendless penniless 30  
Proscribed and exiled wretch who speak to  
you, —

Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for my death,  
(The thing that tempts me most) help speaking  
lies

About your friendship and Luitolfo's courage  
And all our townsfolk's equanimity — 35  
Through sheer incompetence to rid myself  
Of the old miserable lying trick

Caught from the liars I have lived with, — God,  
Did I not turn to thee ! It is thy prompting  
I dare to be ashamed of, and thy counsel 40  
Would die along my coward lip, I know.

But I do turn to thee. This craven tongue,  
These features which refuse the soul its way,  
Reclaim thou ! Give me truth — truth, power  
to speak —

And after be sole present to approve 45  
The spoken truth ! Or, stay, that spoken truth,  
Who knows but you, too, may approve ?

*Eula.* Ah, well —  
Keep silence then, Chiappino!

*Chiap.* You would hear,  
You shall now, — why the thing we please to  
style

My gratitude to you and all your friends 50  
For service done me, is just gratitude  
So much as yours was service : no whit more.  
I was born here, so was Luitolfo ; both  
At one time, much with the same circumstance  
Of rank and wealth ; and both, up to this night 55  
Of parting company, have side by side  
Still fared, he in the sunshine — I, the shadow.  
“ Why ? ” asks the world. “ Because,” replies  
the world

To its complacent self, “ these playfellows,  
“ Who took at church the holy-water drop 60  
“ Each from the other's finger, and so forth, —  
“ Were of two moods : Luitolfo was the proper  
“ Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,  
“ Fit for the sunshine, so, it followed him.  
“ A happy-tempered bringer of the best 65  
“ Out of the worst ; who bears with what's past  
cure,

“ And puts so good a face on 't — wisely passive  
“ Where action's fruitless, while he remedies

49 *we please.* A, we're pleased.

52 *no whit more.* A, and no more. 61 *Each.* A, One.

" In silence what the foolish rail against ;  
 " A man to smooth such natures as parade 70  
 " Of opposition must exasperate ;  
 " No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak  
 " Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous  
 " At lucky junctures ; one who won't forego  
 " The after-battle work of binding wounds, 75  
 " Because, forsooth he 'd have to bring himself  
 " To side with wound-inflictors for their  
 leave ! "

— Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat  
 What comes so glibly from the common mouth,  
 About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend ? 80

*Eula.* Because that friend's sense is obscured . . .

*Chiap.* I thought  
 You would be readier with the other half  
 Of the world's story, my half ! Yet, 't is true.  
 For all the world does say it. Say your worst !  
 True, I thank God, I ever said " you sin," 85  
 When a man did sin : if I could not say it,  
 I glared it at him ; if I could not glare it,  
 I prayed against him ; then my part seemed over.  
 God's may begin yet : so it will, I trust.

*Eula.* If the world outraged you, did we ?

76 *forsooth.* The comma after this word given in A is probably inadvertently omitted in the 1888-94 ed.

77 *wound-inflictors.* A, their inflictors.

*Chiap.*

What's "me" 90

That you use well or ill? It's man, in me,  
 All your successes are an outrage to,  
 You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say!  
 Here's our Faenza birthplace; they send here  
 A provost from Ravenna: how he rules, 95  
 You can at times be eloquent about.

"Then, end his rule!" — "Ah yes, one stroke  
 does that!

"But patience under wrong works slow and  
 sure.

"Must violence still bring peace forth? He,  
 beside,

"Returns so blandly one's obeisance! ah — 100

"Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,

"Some human sympathy which, once excite,

"And all the lump were leavened quietly:

"So, no more talk of striking, for this time!"

But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear 105

These pretty takings-up and layings-down

Our cause, just as you think occasion suits.

Enough of earnest, is there? You'll play, will  
 you?

Diversify your tactics, give submission,

Obsequiousness and flattery a turn, 110

While we die in our misery patient deaths?

We all are outraged then, and I the first:

I, for mankind, resent each shrug and smirk,

Each beck and bend, each . . . all you do and  
are,

I hate!

*Eula.* We share a common censure, then. 115  
'T is well you have not poor Luitolfo's part  
Nor mine to point out in the wide offence.

*Chiap.* Oh, shall I let you so escape me, lady?  
Come, on your own ground, lady, — from your-  
self,

(Leaving the people's wrong, which most is  
mine) 120

What have I got to be so grateful for?  
These three last fines, no doubt, one on the  
other

Paid by Luitolfo?

*Eula.* Shame, Chiappino!

*Chiap.* Shame

Fall presently on who deserves it most!  
— Which is to see. He paid my fines — my  
friend, 125

Your prosperous smooth lover presently,  
Then, scarce your wooer, — soon, your hus-  
band: well —

I loved you.

*Eula.* Hold!

117 *Nor mine.* A, Or mine.

126-127 *Your prosperous . . . well.* A reads:

Your prosperous smooth husband presently,  
Then, scarce your wooer — now, your lover: well —







Gave his tongue scope to say whate'er he would  
 — Must have him load me with his benefits  
 — For fortune's fiercest stroke ?

*Eula.* Justice to him  
 That's now entreating, at his risk perhaps,  
 Justice for you ! Did he once call those acts 175  
 Of simple friendship — bounties, benefits ?

*Chiap.* No : the straight course had been to  
 call them thus.

Then, I had flung them back, and kept myself  
 Unhampered, free as he to win the prize  
 We both sought. But " the gold was dross," he  
 said : 180

" He loved me, and I loved him not : why spurn  
 " A trifle out of superfluity ?

" He had forgotten he had done as much."  
 So had not I ! Henceforth, try as I could  
 To take him at his word, there stood by you 185  
 My benefactor ; who might speak and laugh  
 And urge his nothings, even banter me  
 Before you — but my tongue was tied. A  
 dream !

Let's wake : your husband . . . how you shake  
 at that !

Good — my revenge !

*Eula.* Why should I shake ? What forced 190  
 Or forces me to be Luitolfo's bride ?

177 thus. A, so.

181 why spurn. A, to spurn.

*Chiap.* There's my revenge, that nothing  
forces you.

No gratitude, no liking of the eye  
Nor longing of the heart, but the poor bond  
Of habit — here so many times he came, 195  
So much he spoke, — all these compose the tie  
That pulls you from me. Well, he paid my fines,  
Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe, dish from  
table ;

He spoke a good word to the Provost here,  
Held me up when my fortunes fell away 200  
— It had not looked so well to let me drop —  
Men take pains to preserve a tree-stump, even,  
Whose boughs they played beneath — much  
more a friend.

But one grows tired of seeing, after the first,  
Pains spent upon impracticable stuff 205  
Like me. I could not change : you know the  
rest.

I've spoke my mind too fully out, by chance,  
This morning to our Provost ; so, ere night  
I leave the city on pain of death. And now  
On my account there's gallant intercession 210  
Goes forward — that's so graceful ! — and anon  
He'll noisily come back ; “ the intercession  
“ Was made and fails ; all's over for us both ;  
“ 'T is vain contending ; I would better go.”

207 *by chance.* A, for once.

214 *I would better.* A, I had better.



You loved me. Love like mine must have return,<sup>235</sup>  
I thought: no river starts but to some sea.  
And had you loved me, I could soon devise  
Some specious reason why you stifled love,  
Some fancied self-denial on your part,  
Which made you choose Luitolfo; so, excepting<sup>240</sup>  
From the wide condemnation of all here,  
One woman. Well, the other dream may break!  
If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,  
Loved me, though in the vilest breast 't were  
lodged,  
I should, I think, be forced to love again: <sup>245</sup>  
Else there's no right nor reason in the world.

*Eula.* "If you knew," say you,— but I did  
not know.

That's where you're blind, Chiappino! — a  
disease

Which if I may remove, I'll not repent  
The listening to. You cannot, will not, see <sup>250</sup>  
How, place you but in every circumstance  
Of us, you are just now indignant at,  
You'd be as we.

*Chiap.* I should be? . . . that; again!  
I, to my friend, my country and my love,  
Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines? <sup>255</sup>

*Eula.* As we.

*Chiap.* Now, I'll say something to re-  
member.

I trust in nature for the stable laws  
 Of beauty and utility. — Spring shall plant,  
 And Autumn garner to the end of time :  
 I trust in God — the right shall be the right 260  
 And other than the wrong, while he endures :  
 I trust in my own soul, that can perceive  
 The outward and the inward, nature's good  
 And God's : so, seeing these men and myself,  
 Having a right to speak, thus do I speak. 265  
 I'll not curse — God bears with them, well  
 may I —

But I — protest against their claiming me.  
 I simply say, if that 's allowable,  
 I would not (broadly) do as they have done.  
 — God curse this townful of born slaves, bred  
 slaves, 270  
 Branded into the blood and bone, slaves ! Curse  
 Whoever loves, above his liberty,  
 House, land or life ! and . . .

*A knocking without.*

— bless my hero-friend,

Luitolfo !

*Eula.* How he knocks !

*Chiap.* The peril, lady !

“ Chiappino, I have run a risk — a risk ! 275

“ For when I prayed the Provost (he's my  
 friend)

272 *loves.* A, loved. 275 *I have run . . . risk.* A, I have  
 run a risk ! My God ! 276 *For.* A, How.

" To grant you a week's respite of the sentence  
 " That confiscates your goods, exiles yourself,  
 " He shrugged his shoulder — I say, shrugged  
     it! Yes,  
 " And fright of that drove all else from my head. 280  
 " Here 's a good purse of *scudi* : off with you,  
 " Lest of that shrug come what God only knows!  
 " The *scudi* — friend, they 're trash — no thanks,  
     I beg!  
 " Take the north gate, — for San Vitale's suburb,  
 " Whose double taxes you appealed against,      285  
 " In discomposure at your ill-success  
 " Is apt to stone you : there, there — only go!  
 " Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily.  
 " Shake . . . oh, you hurt me, so you squeeze  
     my wrist!"  
 — Is it not thus you 'll speak, adventurous  
     friend?      290

*As he opens the door, Luitolfo rushes in,  
 his garments disordered.*

*Eula.* Luitolfo! Blood?

*Luitolfo.* There 's more — and more of it!  
 Eulalia — take the garment! No — you, friend!  
 You take it and the blood from me — you dare!

*Eula.* Oh, who has hurt you? where 's the  
 wound?

277 *the sentence.* A, his sentence.

278 *exiles yourself.* A, and exiles you.

*Chiap.* "Who," say you?  
 The man with many a touch of virtue yet! 295  
 The Provost's friend has proved too frank of  
     speech,  
 And this comes of it. Miserable hound!  
 This comes of temporizing, as I said!  
 Here's fruit of your smooth speeches and soft  
     looks!  
 Now see my way! As God lives, I go straight 300  
 To the palace and do justice, once for all!  
*Luit.* What says he?  
*Chiap.* I'll do justice on him.  
*Luit.* Him?  
*Chiap.* The Provost.  
*Luit.* I've just killed him.  
*Eula.* Oh, my God!  
*Luit.* My friend, they're on my trace; they'll  
     have me — now!  
 They're round him, busy with him: soon they'll  
     find 305  
 He's past their help, and then they'll be on me!  
 Chiappino, save Eulalia! I forget . . .  
 Were you not bound for . . .  
*Chiap.* Lugo?  
*Luit.* Ah — yes — yes!  
 That was the point I prayed of him to change.  
 Well, go — be happy! Is Eulalia safe? 310  
 They're on me!



*Chiap.* 'Tis through me they reach you,  
then!

Friend, seem the man you are! Lock arms —  
that's right!

Now tell me what you've done; explain how  
you

That still professed forbearance, still preached  
peace,

Could bring yourself . . .

*Luit.* What was peace for, Chiappino? 315  
I tried peace: did that promise, when peace  
failed,

Strife should not follow? All my peaceful days  
Were just the prelude to a day like this.

I cried "You call me 'friend': save my true  
friend!

"Save him, or lose me!"

*Chiap.* But you never said 320  
You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus.

*Luit.* Why should I say it? What else did I  
mean?

*Chiap.* Well? He persisted?

*Luit.* — "Would so order it  
"You should not trouble him too soon again."

I saw a meaning in his eye and lip; 325

I poured my heart's store of indignant words  
Out on him: then — I know not! He retorted,

316 *promise.* A, say that.

And I . . . some staff lay there to hand — I  
think

He bade his servants thrust me out — I struck . . .

Ah, they come! Fly you, save yourselves, you  
two!

330

The dead back-weight of the beheading axe!

The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the  
gadge!

*Eula.* They do come! Torches in the Place!  
Farewell,

Chiappino! You can work no good to us —

Much to yourself; believe not, all the world

335

Must needs be cursed henceforth!

*Chiap.*

And you?

*Eula.*

I stay.

*Chiap.* Ha, ha! Now, listen! I am master  
here!

This was my coarse disguise; this paper shows

My path of flight and place of refuge — see —

Lugo, Argenta, past San Nicolo,

340

Ferrara, then to Venice, and all 's safe!

Put on the cloak! His people have to fetch

A compass round about. There 's time enough

Ere they can reach us, so you straightway make

For Lugo . . . nay, he hears not! On with it —

345

The cloak, Luitolfo, do you hear me? See —

He obeys he knows not how. Then, if I

must —

Answer me! Do you know the Lugo gate?

*Eula.* The north-west gate, over the bridge ?

*Luit.* I know.

*Chiap.* Well, there — you are not frightened ?  
all my route

350

Is traced in that : at Venice you escape

Their power. *Eulalia*, I am master here !

*Shouts from without. He pushes out*

*Luitolfo, who complies mechanically.*

In time ! Nay, help me with him — so ! He's  
gone.

*Eula.* What have you done ? On you, per-  
chance, all know

The Provost's hater, will men's vengeance fall 355

As our accomplice.

*Chiap.* Mere accomplice ? See !

*Putting on Luitolfo's vest.*

Now, lady, am I true to my profession,

Or one of these ?

*Eula.* You take *Luitolfo's* place ?

*Chiap.* Die for him.

*Eula.* Well done !

*Shouts increase.*

*Chiap.* How the people tarry !

I can't be silent ; I must speak : or sing — 360

How natural to sing now !

*Eula.* Hush and pray !

We are to die ; but even I perceive

351 *you escape.* A, you 'll escape.

'T is not a very hard thing so to die.  
 My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes,  
 Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's life 365  
 With the stern husband; Tisbe's heart goes forth  
 Each evening after that wild son of hers,  
 To track his thoughtless footstep through the  
 streets :

How easy for them both to die like this!  
 I am not sure that I could live as they. 370

*Chiap.* Here they come, crowds! They  
 pass the gate? Yes! — No! —  
 One torch is in the courtyard. Here flock all.

*Eula.* At least Luitolfo has escaped. What  
 cries!

*Chiap.* If they would drag one to the market-  
 place,  
 One might speak there!

*Eula.* List! list!

*Chiap.* They mount the steps. 375

*Enter the Populace.*

I killed the Provost!

*The Populace (speaking together).* 'T was Chiap-  
 pino, friends!

Our saviour! The best man at last as first!  
 He who first made us feel what chains we wore,  
 He also strikes the blow that shatters them,  
 He at last saves us — our best citizen! 380

378 *feel.* A, see.

— Oh, have you only courage to speak now?  
 My eldest son was christened a year since  
 “Cino” to keep Chiappino’s name in mind —  
 Cino, for shortness merely, you observe!  
 The city’s in our hands. The guards are fled. 385  
 Do you, the cause of all, come down — come  
 up —

Come out to counsel us, our chief, our king,  
 Whate’er rewards you! Choose your own  
 reward!

The peril over, its reward begins!  
 Come and harangue us in the market-place! 390

*Eula.* Chiappino?

*Chiap.* Yes — I understand your eyes!  
 You think I should have promptlier disowned  
 This deed with its strange unforeseen success,  
 In favour of Luitolfo. But the peril,  
 So far from ended, hardly seems begun. 395

To-morrow, rather, when a calm succeeds,  
 We easily shall make him full amends:  
 And meantime — if we save them as they pray,  
 And justify the deed by its effects?

*Eula.* You would, for worlds, you had denied  
 at once. 400

*Chiap.* I know my own intention, be assured!  
 All’s well. Precede us, fellow-citizens!

386 *come up.* A, come down.

387 *Come out.* A, Come forth.

## ACT II.

SCENE. — *The market-place. Luitolfo in disguise mingling with the Populace assembled opposite the Provost's Palace.*

*1st Bystander (to Luitolfo).* You, a friend of Luitolfo's? Then, your friend is vanished,— in all probability killed on the night that his patron the tyrannical Provost was loyally suppressed here, exactly a month ago, by our illustrious fellow-citizen, thrice-noble saviour, and new Provost that is like to be, this very morning, — Chiappino!

*Luitolfo.* He the new Provost?

*2nd Byst.* Up those steps will he go, and beneath yonder pillar stand, while Ogniben, the Pope's Legate from Ravenna, reads the new dignitary's title to the people, according to established custom: for which reason, there is the assemblage you inquire about.

*Luit.* Chiappino — the late Provost's successor? Impossible! But tell me of that presently. What I would know first of all is,

*Act II.* A, Part II.

9 *He.* Italicized in A.

16 *late.* A, old.

*Scene.* A omits this word.

14 *custom.* A, usage.

wherefore Luitolfo must so necessarily have been killed on that memorable night? 20

*3rd Byst.* You were Luitolfo's friend? So was I. Never, if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a milksop. He, with all the opportunities in the world, furnished by daily converse with our oppressor, would not stir a finger to help us: and, when Chiappino rose in solitary majesty and . . . how does one go on saying? dealt the godlike blow,—this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing the indignation of an aroused and liberated people, fled precipitately. He may have got trodden to death in the press at the south-east gate, when the Provost's guards fled through it to Ravenna, with their wounded master,—if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge. 35

*Luit.* Or why not simply have lain *perdue* in some quiet corner,—such as San Cassiano, where his estate was,—receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here—how, for instance, the Provost was not dead, after all, only wounded—or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost—and thus Luit- 40

26 *and, when.* A, so when.

36 *perdue.* Italicized in A.

tolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning? Might it not have been so? 45

*3rd Byst.* Why, he may have taken that care of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock. I'll tell you how his uncle, just such another gingerly treader on tiptoes with finger on lip, — how he met his death in the great plague-year: *dico vobis!* Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house; then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger. — And so did he begin; but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say, — thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague, this exhausted so much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent, — consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of a stone — Ha, ha! 50 55 60 65

*Luit. (aside).* (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me.) Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude? 70

*3rd Byst.* Why, he had a house here, and a



woman to whom he was affianced ; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir . . .

75

*Luit.* Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me with your pleasantry ! I know Chiappino better.

*Ist Byst.* (Our friend has the bile ! After all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities.) Pray, how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night ?

80

*Luit.* It is most to the purpose, that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him with proposing to accept.

85

*Ist Byst.* Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable. Up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children ; out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant ; we were to defy the world : but, next gray morning, "What will Rome say ?" began everybody. You know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome. And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of Pontifical Legate ; trots briskly through the streets humming a "*Cur fremuere gentes,*" and makes

90

100

directly for the Provost's Palace — there it faces you. "One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!" (laughing gently to himself) — "Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar — So! And now, my 105  
revolters and good friends, what do you want? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost; and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come 110  
and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method: 't is I come, and not another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this un- 115  
heard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile: I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves. And now, pray, what does please you? To live without any government at all? Or having decided 120  
for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a justice anterior to all institutions, — and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world 125  
must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has

just taken place, — once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him; and this so earnestly, that one may be sure <sup>130</sup> he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him late last evening. I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next." And thus he ran on, on, easily <sup>135</sup> and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of law, order, and paternal government by somebody from rather a distance. All our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser; but that <sup>140</sup> Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again.

*Luit.* Do you see? I recognize him there!

*3rd Byst.* Ay but, mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure <sup>145</sup> republic, — "And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?" — returns the Legate: thereupon speaking for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate gov- <sup>150</sup> ernment by the best and wisest. And it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and

132-133 *late last.* A, so late that. 135-136 *And thus . . .*  
*volubly.* A, And thus ran he on, easily and volubly.

Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light. "Oh, are you there?" quoth Chiappino: 155  
 "Ay, in that, I agree," returns Chiappino: and so on.

*Luit.* But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

*1st Byst.* Why, not altogether at once. For instance, he said that the difference between him 160 and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way, — "whereas what right," asked he, "has any man to wish to be superior to another?" — whereat, "Ah, sir," answers the Legate, "this is the death 165 of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers — this — that your right-hand (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it displayed so ostentatiously, not 170 to destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand: yourself set about attacking yourself. For see now! Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the 175 soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, which are apt to waylay us, the weaker ones, in the road of life. 180

156 *Ay.* A omits. 179 *which are apt.* A, that are apt.

And when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left-hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same, for you are found delivering an opinion <sup>185</sup> like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one's fellows, — all that you so disclaim, — but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose <sup>190</sup> to it, — only in a lower stage of manifestation? You don't want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion — to have me hold solemnly up your gown's tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, <sup>195</sup> with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while: but neither does our gaping friend, the burgess yonder, want the other kind of kingship, that consists in understanding better than his fellows this and similar points of <sup>200</sup> human nature, nor to roll under his tongue this sweeter morsel still, — the feeling that, through immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above you and me!" And so chatting, they glided off arm-in-arm. 205

*Luit.* And the result is . . .

*1st Byst.* Why that, a month having gone by,

185 *for.* A omits.

201 *his.* A, the.

the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love — at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's wealth — becomes the first inhabitant of <sup>210</sup> Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship; which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently.

*Luit.* (*withdrawing a little*). I understand the <sup>215</sup> drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever. Yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger: wherefore, disregarding her injunction to continue in my retreat and await the result of — what she called, some <sup>220</sup> experiment yet in process — I hastened here without her leave or knowledge: how could I else? But if this they say be true — if it were for such a purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh, no, no! I must confront him <sup>225</sup> and her before I believe this of them. And at the word, see!

*Enter Chiappino and Eulalia.*

*Eulalia.* We part here, then? The change in your principles would seem to be complete.

*Chiappino.* Now, why refuse to see that in my <sup>230</sup> present course I change no principles, only re-

<sup>210</sup> *wealth.* A, goods.      <sup>219</sup> *injunction.* A, injunctions.

<sup>220</sup> *await.* A, wait.      <sup>222</sup> *how could.* A, what could

<sup>223</sup> *But if this.* A, Yet if what.

adapt them and more adroitly? I had despaired of, what you may call the material instrumentality of life; of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind through such a deranged machinery<sup>235</sup> as the existing modes of government: but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to, the soul I<sup>240</sup> am about to bestow on them — do you see? Why should one desire to invent, as long as it remains possible to renew and transform? When all further hope of the old organization shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it may be time to try<sup>245</sup> and create another.

*Eula.* And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system of absolute government by a Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavouring to realize<sup>250</sup> those visions of a perfect State, we once heard of?

*Chiap.* Say, I would fain realize my conception of a palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one<sup>255</sup> perfectly. Here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground; here I stand without a stone to lay, or a labourer to help me, — stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which

the night comes. On the other hand, circum-<sup>260</sup>stances suddenly offer me (turn and see it!) the old Provost's house to experiment upon — ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now. But materials abound, a crowd of workmen offer their<sup>265</sup> services; here, exists yet a Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough: and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these to heart's content. Ought I not make the best of such an<sup>270</sup> opportunity, rather than continue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down, never to rise again? Since you cannot understand this nor me, it is better we should part as you desire.<sup>275</sup>

*Eula.* So, the love breaks away too!

*Chiap.* No, rather my soul's capacity for love widens — needs more than one object to content it, — and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in<sup>280</sup> what is only a single part, — nor in finding that so many and so various loves are all united in the love of a woman, — manifold uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, staff, sceptre

<sup>270</sup> *Ought I not make.* A, Ought I not rather make.

<sup>271</sup> *rather than.* A, than.      <sup>274</sup> *Since you.* A, But you.

<sup>281-283</sup> *nor in . . . uses.* A, nor in finding the so many and so various loves, united in the love of a woman — finding all uses.

<sup>284-285</sup> *sword . . . idol.* A, sword, sceptre and idol.



and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very <sup>285</sup>  
 compound thing. The intellectual part of my  
 love I shall give to men, the mighty dead or the  
 illustrious living; and determine to call a mere  
 sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible.  
 What do I lose? 290

*Eula.* Nay, I only think, what do I lose? and,  
 one more word — which shall complete my in-  
 struction — does friendship go too? What of  
 Luitolfo, the author of your present prosperity?

*Chiap.* How the author? 295

*Eula.* That blow now called yours . . .

*Chiap.* Struck without principle or purpose, as  
 by a blind natural operation: yet to which all my  
 thought and life directly and advisedly tended. I  
 would have struck it, and could not: he would <sup>300</sup>  
 have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did  
 so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine — a final  
 action with him, from the first effect of which he  
 fled away, — a mere first step with me, on which  
 I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to <sup>305</sup>  
 follow. Could he get good from it?

*Eula.* So we profess, so we perform!

*Enter Ogniben. Eulalia stands apart.*

*Ogniben.* I have seen three-and-twenty leaders

<sup>286-288</sup> *The intellectual . . . living.* A, I shall give the intellec-  
 tual part of my love to Men, the mighty dead, or illustrious living.

<sup>291</sup> *lose.* A, love. <sup>1849</sup>, *lose.* <sup>299</sup> *thought.* A, thoughts.

of revolts. By your leave, sir! Perform? What does the lady say of performing? 310

*Chiap.* Only the trite saying, that we must not trust profession, only performance.

*Ogni.* She'll not say that, sir, when she knows you longer; you'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men by their professions! For though 315 the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust it and know the man by it, I say — not by his performance; which is half the world's work, interfere 320 as the world needs must, with its accidents and circumstances: the profession was purely the man's own. I judge people by what they might be, — not are, nor will be.

*Chiap.* But have there not been found, too, 325 performing natures, not merely promising?

*Ogni.* Plenty. Little Bindo of our town, for instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio, once, "I will repay you!" — for a favour done him. So, when his father came to die, and 330 Bindo succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway for Masaccio and shares all with him — gives him half the land, half the money, half the kegs of wine in the cellar. "Good," say you: and it is good. But had little Bindo found 335 himself possessor of all this wealth some five years

before — on the happy night when Masaccio procured him that interview in the garden with his pretty cousin Lisa — instead of being the beggar he then was, — I am bound to believe<sup>340</sup> that in the warm moment of promise he would have given away all the wine-kegs and all the money and all the land, and only reserved to himself some hut on a hill-top hard by, whence he might spend his life in looking and seeing his<sup>345</sup> friend enjoy himself: he meant fully that much, but the world interfered. — To our business! Did I understand you just now within-doors? You are not going to marry your old friend's love, after all? 350

*Chiap.* I must have a woman that can sympathize with, and appreciate me, I told you.

*Ogni.* Oh, I remember! you, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one (— avowedly lesser — contest with you on that score would<sup>355</sup> never do) — such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward. Why, that were being not merely as great as yourself, but greater considerably! Meantime, might not<sup>360</sup> the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather? — on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together,

and then going on by yourself as far as you please? Thus God serves us.

365

*Chiap.* And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness —

*Ogni.* Ah, my friend, wish for nothing so foolish! Worship your love, give her the best 370 of you to see; be to her like the western lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court; send her only your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like birds, and fruits and gems! So shall you, what is unseen 375 of you, be supposed altogether a paradise by her, — as these western lands by Spain: though I warrant there is filth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as possible. Do you want your 380 mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to kiss: don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips! You understand my humour by this time? I help men to carry out their own principles: if they please to say 385 two and two make five, I assent, so they will but go on and say, four and four make ten.

*Chiap.* But these are my private affairs; what I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my

365 *Thus.* A, So. 385 *principles.* A, principle.  
386 *so.* A, if.

public appearance presently : for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, though you and I may thoroughly discern — and easily, too — the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged (and heretofore by myself) incompatible with its existence, — when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one . . .

*Ogni.* Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say — New truths, old truths ! sirs, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world ; we know all we shall ever know : and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we do know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms ; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard-thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others : and he restates it, to the confusion of somebody else

402 *sirs.* A, why.

in good time. As for adding to the original stock of truths, — impossible! Thus, you see the expression of them is the grand business: — you have got a truth in your head about the right<sup>420</sup> way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it which now you confess to be imperfect. But what then? There is truth in falsehood, falsehood in truth. No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without the help of a<sup>425</sup> good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones. And as when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was, — do not conclude that he saw nothing in the<sup>430</sup> sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says, — so, through the contradictory expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at bottom.<sup>435</sup> Ah, what an answer is there! to what will it not prove applicable? — “Contradictions? Of course there were,” say you!

*Chiap.* Still, the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I urge in reply? <sup>440</sup>

*Ogni.* Why, look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer

418 *Thus.* A, So. 422 *of.* 1888–94 omits. Supplied from A.  
440 *urge.* A, say.

— you begin to perceive that, when all's done and said, both great parties in the State, the advocates of change in the present system of things,<sup>445</sup> and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good; and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances: to which result they contribute<sup>450</sup> in equal proportions, those who spend their life in pushing it onward, as those who give theirs to the business of pulling it back. Now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you:<sup>455</sup> but it steadily advances, you rejoice to see! By the side of such a rejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet, and says, "Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle! I, for one, shall win in the end by the<sup>460</sup> blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving" — even he seems graceful in his avowal, when one considers that he might say, "I shall win quite as much by the blows our antagonist gives him, blows from which he saves me — I thank<sup>465</sup> the antagonist equally!" Moreover, you may enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosity with age and experience . . .

451 *spend.* A, spent. 452 *give.* A, gave.

465 *blows.* A, and. 466-467 *may enlarge.* A, must enlarge.

*Chiap.* And naturally time must wear off such asperities: the bitterest adversaries get to discover<sup>470</sup> certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies — do they not ?

*Ogni.* Ay, had the young David but sat first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such com-<sup>475</sup>mon sympathies. He of Gath, it is recorded, was born of a father and mother, had brothers and sisters like another man, — they, no more than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other. But, for the sake of one broad antipathy<sup>480</sup> that had existed from the beginning, David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on dis-<sup>485</sup>covering much good on the worse side, remember that the same process should proportionably magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side ! And when I profess no sympathy for the Goliaths of our time, and<sup>490</sup> you object that a large nature should sympathize with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, however limited — I answer, “So I do; but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finelier or widelier I may extend its<sup>495</sup>



action." I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only; but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already everybody sees <sup>500</sup> no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts; else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has his archangels and consorts with them: though he <sup>505</sup> made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm. Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and, so, ought to speak: I do justice to your own principles, that is all.

*Chiap.* But you very well know that the two <sup>510</sup> parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics. What more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution, which pressed soreliest on <sup>515</sup> himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from? Do the classes, hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it? there follows a confederacy immediately, from which — exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to <sup>520</sup> you!

499-500 *higher forms of matter.* A, higher forms.

518 *there follows.* A, there is.

*Ogni.* And a journey over the sea to you ! That is the generous way. Cry — “Emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go !” The first time a poor devil, who has been bastina-<sup>525</sup> doed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so, begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles, “Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick this way !” — you, rather than give up the very <sup>530</sup> innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with, — you go away, to everybody’s sorrow. Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as “Let <sup>535</sup> no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise our slaves, if need require !” Well, there are preordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether ; yet I am <sup>540</sup> rather sorry you should see it so clearly : for, do you know what is to — all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all you men of genius ? It is this : that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life, <sup>545</sup> in one effort at setting up your own genius in his place, — still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the

experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably — would one think it? — that the rest 550  
of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever could stand, just on a level and equality with yourselves. That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe.

555

*Chiap.* Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think, with doing just the reverse; and at once acknowledging the natural inequality of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the 560  
civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank.

*Ogni.* Not I (always on your own ground and showing, be it noted!) Who doubts that, 565  
with a weapon to brandish, a man is the more formidable? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully. We could pin lions with it moreover, while in its present owner's hands it hardly prods 570  
rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining rod that may serve us in undreamed-of ways. Beauty, strength, intellect — men often have none of these, and yet conceive pretty ac- 575

552 stood. A, was. stand. A, be.

573 us. A, you.

curately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor. We know at least what it is we make up our mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in our power. Wanting beauty, we cultivate good humour; <sup>580</sup> missing wit, we get riches: but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid little peevish Cecco of our town into natural lord of the best of us—a Duke, <sup>585</sup> he is now—there indeed is a virtue to be revered!

*Chiap.* Ay, by the vulgar: not by Messere Stiatta the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than anybody. 590

*Ogni.* What else should Stiatta pay court to? He has talent, not honour and riches: men naturally covet what they have not.

*Chiap.* No, or Cecco would covet talent, which he has not, whereas he covets more <sup>595</sup> riches, of which he has plenty, already.

*Ogni.* Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich: but just such another talent as Stiatta's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the <sup>600</sup> talent a purse indeed, to do something with!

577-585 *We . . . of us.* A has you for *we* and *us*, your for *our* throughout.

But lo, how we keep the good people waiting! I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main <sup>605</sup> business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people; they know your antecedents, and will accept you with a joyful unanimity: whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up! Are you nerving <sup>610</sup> yourself to an effort? Beware the disaster of Messere Stiatta we were talking of! who, determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new poem with our townsmen, heard too <sup>615</sup> plainly "hiss, hiss, hiss," increase every moment. Till at last the man fell senseless: not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by <sup>620</sup> resolve.

*Chiap.* Do you begin to throw off the mask? — to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap?

*Ogni.* Where is the trap, my friend? You <sup>625</sup> hear what I engage to do, for my part: you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedi-

<sup>610</sup> *Are you.* A, You are.

<sup>615</sup> *poem.* A, tragedy.

ence to Rome's authority in my person. And I shall authorize no more than the simple re-estab-<sup>630</sup>lishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself: the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

*Chiap.* And that stipulation? 635

*Ogni.* Just the obvious one—that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost . . .

*Chiap.* Ha!

*Ogni.* Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty,<sup>640</sup> of course; what did you expect?

*Chiap.* Who heard of this?

*Ogni.* Rather, who needed to hear of this?

*Chiap.* Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you . . . 645

*Ogni.* Many more such rumours reach me, friend, than I choose to receive; those which wait longest have best chance. Has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time for entry with effect. See the good people crowding<sup>650</sup> about yonder palace-steps — which we may not have to ascend, after all. My good friends! (nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose) — who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost? His successor de-<sup>655</sup>

636 *Just.* A, Oh.

650 *crowding.* A, crowded.

sires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt bare justice we all anticipate. Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know?

*Luit.* (*coming forward*). I!

660

*All.* Luitolfo!

*Luit.* I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now, to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility. Having taken thought, I am grown stronger: I shall shrink from no-665 thing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino — we are friends still: I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seemed at first. So, they tell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow 670 in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience. 675

*Eula.* I was determined to justify my choice, Chiappino, — to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

*Ogni.* Now, in these last ten minutes of 680 silence, what have I been doing, deem you? Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine,

669 *seemed.* A, seems.

I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text, "Let whoso thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." To your house, Luitolfo! 685  
 Still silent, my patriotic friend? Well, that is a good sign however. And you will go aside for a time? That is better still. I understand: it would be easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot and shock us all, but you mean to live 690  
 and grow worthy of coming back to us one day. There, I will tell every body; and you only do right to believe you must get better as you get older. All men do so: they are worst in childhood, improve in manhood, and get ready in old 695  
 age for another world. Youth, with its beauty and grace, would seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid; when they leave us. The 700  
 sweetest child we all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in it — would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those angelic infantine desires 705  
 when he had grown six feet high, black and bearded. But, little by little, he sees fit to forego

690 *you mean to live.* A, you will live.

693 *you must get better.* A, you will get better.

697 *would seem.* A, would really seem.

704 *would be.* A, he would be.



claim after claim on the world, puts up with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion; and when the octogenarian asks barely <sup>710</sup> a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks you as for his full allowance and right in the common good of life, — hoping nobody may murder him, — he who began by asking and expecting the whole of us to bow down in wor- <sup>715</sup> ship to him, — why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly out of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder. And now — (ay, good-bye to you! He turns round the north-west gate: going to Lugo again? Good-bye!) <sup>720</sup> — and now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home! I have known *Four-and-twenty* leaders of revolts.

<sup>711</sup> *thanks.* A, will thank.

# Notes to A Soul's Tragedy

*For the meaning of single words see the Glossary.*

No. VIII of *Bells and Pomegranates*, published in April, 1846, contained *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*. The number bore the dedication, afterward made the dedication of the former play alone: "I dedicate these last attempts for the present at dramatic poetry to a great dramatic poet; 'Wishing what I write may be read by his light'; — if a phrase originally addressed, by not the least worthy of his contemporaries, to Shakespeare, may be applied here, by one whose sole privilege is in a grateful admiration, to Walter Savage Landor. Mch. 29, 1846."

The phrase "last attempts for the present at dramatic poetry" is of interest both as related to what had gone before and to the fact that afterward Browning did not again, except with *In a Balcony*, attempt the strictly dramatic form. The dramas which had preceded these two "last attempts" show deliberate and painstaking effort to achieve stage-effectiveness. In *Luria*, however, one feels that the poet hardly expects that the play will be acted; and in *A Soul's Tragedy* all thought of stage presentation seems to have been frankly abandoned. Yet *A Soul's Tragedy* was performed under the auspices of the London Stage Society on March 13 and 14, 1904. A couple of extracts will be sufficient to show the tone of the critics in regard to its effect.

"Whatever claims to psychology Browning's *A Soul's Tragedy* may possess, its lack of brightness and lucidity disqualifies it for stage exposition. Not the slightest illumination is cast upon it by the species of interpretation that is afforded. . . . There is, however, satisfaction of a sort in ascertaining how incapable of stage treatment are some, at least, of Browning's psychological abstractions." — *The Athenæum*.

"Its poetry and its philosophy do not 'carry across the foot-lights.' It is not a drama of action or of the emotions, it is a study

in souls and therefore a study for the fireside, not for the garish glare of the footlights. The vacillating Chiappino does not fascinate us in the theatre as he does in the book, and Ogniben's cynicism when spoken becomes wearisome." — *The Academy and Literature*.

No. VIII of *Bells and Pomegranates* contained opposite the first page of *A Soul's Tragedy* the following note: —

“ Here ends my first series of ‘ Bells and Pomegranates ’ : and I take the opportunity of explaining in reply to inquiries, that I only meant by that title to indicate an endeavour towards something like an alternation, or mixture, of music with discoursing, sound with sense, poetry with thought ; which looks too ambitious, thus expressed, so the symbol was preferred. It is little to the purpose, that such is actually one of the most familiar of the many Rabbinical (and Patristic) acceptations of the phrase ; because I confess that, letting authority alone, I supposed the bare words, in such juxtaposition, would sufficiently convey the desired meaning. ‘ Faith and good works ’ is another fancy, for instance, and perhaps no easier to arrive at : yet Giotto placed a pomegranate fruit in the hand of Dante, and Rafaele crowned his Theology (in the *Camera della Segnatura*) with blossoms of the same ; as if the Bellari and Vasari would be sure to come after, and explain that it was merely ‘ *simbolo delle buone opere — il qual Pomo granato fu però usato nelle vesti del Pontefice appresso gli Ebrei.* ’ <sup>1</sup>

R. B.”

252, 92. All your successes are an outrage to. The line is a key-note to the character of Chiappino. His inordinate vanity and self-love rage against any success that is not his own.

254, 133-134. My eye . . . bear. The gross egotism of Chiappino is so offensive that one wonders how Eulalia and Luitolfo have been able to have or to preserve any feeling for him other than pity for one so morbidly soul-sick.

258, 230. Your Luitolfo. Having thrown aside his mask, Chiappino indulges his spleen by sneeringly referring to Luitolfo as “ your.”

262, 303. I've just killed him. This is one of the comparatively few speeches in the play which have genuine dramatic effectiveness.

<sup>1</sup> “ *A symbol of good works — which Pomegranate was therefore used in the robes of the High Priest among the Hebrews.* ”

264, 332. **trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge.** Instruments of torture which might be used in the punishment of one who had murdered the Prefect. **Trip-hook** and **gadge** are apparently terms invented by Browning. They are at least not to be found in the dictionaries.

264, 341. **Venice, and all's safe.** Venice was an independent republic, and there the fugitive would be safe from pursuit.

265, 351. **Is traced in that.** The paper, mentioned l. 338, which he gives her.

266, 374-375. **If they . . . speak there!** It is subtly characteristic that at this supreme moment Chiappino, the man of words, should flatter his vanity with the thought that he might make a most effective harangue before his execution in the market-place.

269, 43. **Brutus the Elder.** Lucius Junius Brutus roused the people and expelled the Tarquins from Rome; but—in contrast to Chiappino—he did not make himself ruler.

270, 52. **dico vobis.** I tell you.

271-275, 97-205. **comes on muleback . . . arm in arm.** W. L. Courtney, commenting upon Browning's temptation to speak in his own person under the guise of one of his characters, cites this passage, and remarks:—

“Let us take another instance, how a bystander—one of the populace, be it remembered—is able to describe Ogniben's demeanor and language . . . ‘Roll under his tongue this sweeter morsel still!’ Fancy a bystander, one of the populace, calling such talk as this ‘chatting’!”—*Studies New and Old*.

All this talk of the bystanders, while it explains clearly the situation, is impossible from the point of view of dramatic propriety. It is an excellent illustration of Browning's habit of neglecting accidental details so long as the essential thought or emotion is clearly brought out.

271, 100. **Cur fremuere gentes.** Why do the people rage? Ps. ii.

276, 218. **urgent danger.** Luitolfo understands the message as meaning bodily danger, whereas Eulalia had meant moral peril.

279, 307. **So . . . perform.** Eulalia in this act is made a

mere puppet for working out the idea of the poet. Were she as real as in the first act, it might be possible to have doubts in regard to the motives which lead her to play double with Chiappino while keeping Luitolfo informed of the course of events and ultimately sending for him. Her declaration, ll. 674-77, of her reason does not have a ring entirely convincing. Taken as a simple algebraic quantity used in solving the equation, the bringing out of Chiappino's genuine self, — she serves her use well.

**282, 371. western lands.** America, in the sixteenth century newly discovered.

**285, 444. advocators of change.** The meaning of the word in the fifteenth century was intercessor, patron. Dr. Rolfe notes that the obvious meaning here is Browning's innovation.

**286, 474. dine . . . Philistine.** David's father, Jesse, sent him with ten cheeses to the captain of the thousand in which were his oldest three brothers. He found the Philistine of Gath, Goliath, challenging the Israelites. Ultimately he was allowed to fight the giant, whom he slew. I Samuel xvii, 12-54.

**288, 539. profane vulgar.** The expression is that of Horace, Ode iii.

**294, 684-685. "Let . . . fall."** I Corinthians x, 12.

**295, 717-718. nearly out of sight like our friend Chiappino.** "The vital importance of critical moments is Browning's favorite theme. The character must be prepared by long, patient training for the 'stress and strain' of an unforeseen and half recognized occasion. The power to judge of the real ethical value of any given act is strengthened if not positively created by years of careful study of the relations of conduct and of people. This observation must be unselfish as well as keen. No better example can be found of all these general considerations than the character of Chiappino. . . . He is equal to one lofty choice. He takes upon himself the act of Luitolfo when he supposes to do so is to meet death in one of its most hideous forms. He bears the test of torturing adversity. But at the next step he falters. The importance of truth — where an instant before a lie had been the truest heroism — he does not see. . . . Chiappino slinks out of sight, the victim of his own treachery, and we realize that for him there is no hope." — Professor Rolfe and Miss Hersey.

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*The place of publication is London unless otherwise indicated.*

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## Glossary

- Amelius.** An Italian Neo-Platonist of the third century. *C. B.* III, i, 71.
- Argenta.** About midway between Ferrara and Ravenna. *S. T.* I, i, 340.
- ave-bell.** This was rung half an hour after sunset as the signal for repeating an *Ave Maria*. *S. T.* I, i, 2.
- bower.** In the sense so common in the old ballads, chamber. *B. in S.* I, iii, 203.
- Brutus.** *S. T.* II, 43. See note, p. 298, on 269, 43.
- cappings.** Taking off the cap in honor of royalty. *C. B.* I, i, 177.
- church-flowers.** Flowers plucked to adorn the altar, and to perish, as the Duchess must perish thrown down from her estate. *C. B.* II, i, 165.
- Cleves.** Ancient capital of the Duchy of Cleves. It is the scene of the legend of Lohengrin and the swan. *C. B.* I, i, 222.
- crysoprase.** A kind of chalcodony, usually translucent apple-green in color. *C. B.* IV, i, 157. See note, p. 191, on 152, 157.
- diamond scales.** Scales to weigh gems, and of extreme sensitiveness. *B. in S.* I, iii, 187.
- emprise.** Adventurousness. *C. B.* III, i, 363.
- expressless.** Browning's coinage for "inexpressible." *B. in S.* I, iii, 116.
- eyass.** A young hawk. *B. in S.* I, ii, 60.
- Faenza.** A small city, anciently the Faventia of the Romans, twenty miles southwest of Ravenna. It had at the time of this play been annexed to the Papal States and was governed by Rome through Ravenna. *S. T.* I, i, 94.
- fight-mark.** An awkward expression, apparently the poet's own, for a token worn by a knight in the tourney, usually his lady's glove or sleeve or scarf on his helm. *B. in S.* I, iii, 217.

- gadge.** *S. T.* 1, i, 332. See note, p. 298, on 264, 332.
- gauntlet-gatherer.** One who takes up the gauntlet thrown down in challenge and hence a champion. *S. T.* 1, i, 72.
- gules.** In heraldry, the color red. *B. in S.* III, 2, 150.
- Juliers.** A fortified town of Rhenish Prussia, about a score of miles northeast of Aix-la-Chapelle. *C. B.* 1, i, 17.
- losels.** Worthless fellows. *B. in S.* II, i, 303.
- Lugo.** A town ten miles from Faenza. *S. T.* 1, i, 340.
- marcasite.** A crystalized form of iron pyrites. *C. B.* 1, i, 353.
- masque.** The company of players; hence those whom Tresham leaves to go on with the play of life after he has dropped out. *B. in S.* III, ii, 139.
- mercy-stroke.** The term applied to the stroke by which in punishments like breaking on the wheel the executioner ended the torture by a blow mercifully mortal. *B. in S.* 1, ii, 128.
- Nepomucene.** The patron saint of Bohemia. *S. T.* II, i, 61.
- poursuivant.** A herald or advance messenger. *B. in S.* 1, i, 4.
- proper.** In the old English sense of *comely* as used by the Elizabethan dramatists and within the last half century — perhaps still — in New England. *B. in S.* 1, i, 59.
- Ravestein.** A small town thirty miles west of Cleves in North Brabant. *C. B.* 1, i, 14.
- San Nicolo.** The castle of, at Ferrara? *S. T.* 1, i, 340.
- surcoat.** A garment worn over armor. *B. in S.* III, i, 23.
- thicks.** Elizabethan form of thicket. *B. in S.* 1, ii, 59.
- trip-hook.** *S. T.* 1, i, 332. See Notes to *S. T.*, p. 298.
- wimple.** A sort of hood covering the head and the neck to the chin. *B. in S.* III, i, 24.





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