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MEN AND WOMEN

AND

SORDELLO

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

*TWO VOLUMES IN ONE*



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MEN AND WOMEN.

YES AND WOMEN

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# MEN AND WOMEN.

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## LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

1.

**WHERE** the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles  
Miles and miles  
On the solitary pastures where our sheep  
Half-asleep  
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop  
As they crop —

2.

Was the site once of a city great and gay,  
(So they say)  
Of our country's very capital, its prince  
Ages since  
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far  
Peace or war.

## 3.

Now — the country does not even boast a tree,  
     As you see,  
 To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills  
     From the hills  
 Intersect and give a name to, (else they run  
     Into one)

## 4

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

## 5.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass  
     Never was !  
 Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads  
     And embeds  
 Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,  
     Stock or stone —

## 6.

Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe  
     Long ago ;  
 Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame  
     Struck them tame ;



And that glory and that shame alike, the gold  
Bought and sold.

## 7.

Now, — the single little turret that remains  
On the plains,  
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd  
Overscored,  
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks  
Through the chinks —

## 8.

Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time  
Sprang sublime,  
And a burning ring all round, the chariots traced  
As they raced,  
And the monarch and his minions and his dames  
Viewed the games.

## 9.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve  
Smiles to leave  
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece  
In such peace,  
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray  
Melt away —

## 10.

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair  
Waits me there



## 14.

Oh heart! oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!  
Earth's returns  
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!  
Shut them in,  
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest.  
Love is best!

## A LOVERS' QUARREL.

### 1.

OH, what a dawn of day !  
How the March sun feels like May !  
    All is blue again  
    After last night's rain,  
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.  
    Only, my Love's away !  
I'd as lief that the blue were gray.

### 2.

Runnels, which rillels swell,  
Must be dancing down the dell  
    With a foamy head  
    On the beryl bed  
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell ;  
    Each with a tale to tell,  
Could my Love but attend as well.

### 3.

Dearest, three months ago !  
When we lived blocked-up with snow, —

When the wind would edge  
In and in his wedge,  
In, as far as the point could go —  
Not to our ingle, though,  
Where we loved each the other so!

## 4.

Laughs with so little cause!  
We devised games out of straws.  
We would try and trace  
One another's face  
In the ash, as an artist draws;  
Free on each other's flaws,  
How we chattered like two church daws!

## 5.

What's in the "Times?" — a scold  
At the emperor deep and cold;  
He has taken a bride  
To his gruesome side,  
That's as fair as himself is bold:  
There they sit ermine-stoled,  
And she powders her hair with gold.

## 6.

Fancy the Pampas sheen!  
Miles and miles of gold and green  
Where the sun-flowers blow  
In a solid glow,

And to break now and then the screen —  
 Black neck and eyeballs keen,  
 Up a wild horse leaps between !

7.

Try, will our table turn?  
 Lay your hands there light, and yearn  
 Till the yearning slips  
 Thro' the finger tips  
 In a fire which a few discern,  
 And a very few feel burn,  
 And the rest, they may live and learn .

8.

Then we would up and pace,  
 For a change, about the place,  
 Each with arm o'er neck  
 'Tis our quarter-deck,  
 We are seamen in woeful case.  
 Help in the ocean-space !  
 Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

9.

See, how she looks now, drest  
 In a sledging-cap and vest.  
 'Tis a huge fur cloak —  
 Like a reindeer's yoke  
 Falls the lappet along the breast  
 Sleeves for her arms to rest,  
 Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

10.

Teach me to flirt a fan  
As the Spanish ladies can,  
Or I tint your lip  
With a burnt stick's tip  
And you turn into such a man!  
Just the two spots that span  
Half the bill of the young male swan.

11.

Dearest, three months ago  
When the mesmeriser Snow  
With his hand's first sweep  
Put the earth to sleep,  
'Twas a time when the heart could show  
All — how was earth to know,  
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro!

12.

Dearest, three months ago  
When we loved each other so,  
Lived and loved the same  
Till an evening came  
When a shaft from the Devil's bow  
Pierced to our ingle-glow,  
And the friends were friend and foe!

13.

Not from the heart beneath —  
'Twas a bubble born of breath,

Neither sneer nor vaunt,  
 Nor reproach nor taunt.  
 See a word, how it severeth !  
 Oh, power of life and death  
 In the tongue, as the Preacher saith !

## 14.

Woman, and will you cast  
 For a word, quite off at last,  
     Me, your own, your you, —  
     Since, as Truth is true,  
 I was you all the happy past —  
     Me do you leave aghast  
 With the memories we amassed ?

## 15.

Love, if you knew the light  
 That your soul casts in my sight,  
     How I look to you  
     For the pure and true,  
 And the beauteous and the right, —  
     Bear with a moment's spite  
 When a mere mote threatens the white !

## 16.

What of a hasty word ?  
 Is the fleshly heart not stirred  
     By a worm's pin-prick  
     Where its roots are quick ?



See the eye, by a fly's-foot blurred —  
 Ear, when a straw is heard  
 Scratch the brain's coat of curd !

## 17.

Foul be the world or fair,  
 More or less, how can I care ?  
 'Tis the world the same  
 For my praise or blame,  
 And endurance is easy there.  
 Wrong in the one thing rare —  
 Oh, it is hard to bear !

## 18.

Here's the spring back or close,  
 When the almond-blossom blows ;  
 We shall have the word  
 In that minor third  
 There is none but the cuckoo knows —  
 Heaps of the guelder-rose !  
 I must bear with it, I suppose.

## 19.

Could but November come,  
 Were the noisy birds struck dumb  
 At the warning slash  
 Of his driver's-lash —  
 I would laugh like the valiant Thumb  
 Facing the castle glum  
 And the giant's fee-faw-fum !

20.

Then, were the world well stript  
 Of the gear wherein equipped  
     We can stand apart,  
     Heart dispense with heart  
 In the sun, with the flowers unnipped, —  
     Oh, the world's hangings ripped,  
 We were both in a bare-walled crypt!

21.

Each in the crypt would cry  
 "But one freezes here! and why?  
     When a heart as chill  
     At my own would thrill  
 Back to life, and its fires out-fly?  
     Heart, shall we live or die?  
 The rest, . . . settle it by and by!"

22.

So, she 'd efface the score,  
 And forgive me as before.  
     Just at twelve o'clock  
     I shall hear her knock  
 In the worst of a storm's uproar —  
     I shall pull her through the door —  
 I shall have her for evermore!

## EVELYN HOPE

### 1.

**BEAUTIFUL** Evelyn Hope is dead !

Sit and watch by her side an hour.

That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;

She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,

Beginning to die too, in the glass.

Little has yet been changed, I think —

The shutters are shut, no light may pass

Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

### 2.

Sixteen years old when she died !

Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name —

It was not her time to love : beside,

Her life had many a hope and aim,

Duties enough and little cares,

And now was quiet, now astir —

Till God's hand beckoned unawares,

And the sweet white brow is all of her.

## 3.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?

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

## 4.

No, indeed ! for God above

Is great to grant, as mighty to make,  
 And creates the love to reward the love, —  
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake !  
 Delayed it may be for more lives yet,  
 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few —  
 Much is to learn and much to forget  
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

## 5.

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

EVELYN HOPE.

6.

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

7.

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

**UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY.**

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY.)

1.

**HAD I** but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,

**The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square.**

**Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there !**

2.

**Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least !**

**There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast ;  
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.**

3.

**Well now, look at our villa ! stuck like the horn of a bull**

Just on a mountain's edge as bare as the creature's  
 skull,  
 Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to  
 pull!  
 — I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's  
 turned wool.

## 4.

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

## 5.

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

## 6.

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

## 7.

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

## 8.

All the year long at the villa, nothing's to see though  
 you linger,  
 Except yon cypress that points like Death's lean list'ed  
 forefinger.



Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix in the corn  
and mingle,  
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem  
a-tingle.

Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is  
shrill,

And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the  
resinous firs on the hill.

Enough of the seasons, — I spare you the months of the  
fever and chill.

## 9.

Ere opening your eyes in the city, the blessed church-  
bells begin :

No sooner the bells leave off, than the diligence rattles  
in :

You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a  
pin.

By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets  
blood, draws teeth ;

Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.  
At the post-office such a scene-picture — the new play-  
piping hot !

And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves  
were shot.

Above it, behold the archbishop's most fatherly of  
rebukes,

And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new  
law of the Duke's !

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don  
 So-and-so  
 Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and  
 Cicero,  
 “ And moreover,” (the sonnet goes rhyming,) “ the skirts  
 of St. Paul has reached,  
 Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more  
 unctuous than ever he preached.”  
 Noon strikes, — here sweeps the procession! our Lady  
 borne smiling and smart  
 With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords  
 stuck in her heart!  
*Bang, whang, whang,* goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;  
 No keeping one’s haunches still: it’s the greatest pleasure  
 in life.

## 10.

But bless you, it’s dear — it’s dear! fowls, wine, at  
 double the rate.  
 They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil  
 pays passing the gate  
 It’s a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not  
 the city!  
 Beggars can scarcely be choosers — but still — ah, the  
 pity, the pity!  
 Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with  
 cowls and sandals,  
 And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the  
 yellow candles.

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

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better  
prevention of scandals.

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

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

**& WOMAN'S LAST WORD.**

1.

**LET'S** contend no more, **Love,**  
Strive nor weep —  
**All** be as before, **Love,**  
— Only sleep !

2.

What so wild as words are ?  
— I and thou  
In debate, as birds are,  
Hawk on bough !

3.

See the creature **stalking**  
While we speak —  
**Hush** and hide the **talking,**  
Check on check !

4.

What so false as truth is,  
False to thee?  
Where the serpent's tooth is,  
Shun the tree —

5

Where the apple reddens  
Never pry —  
Lest we lose our Edens,  
Eve and I!

6.

Be a god and hold me  
With a charm —  
Be a man and fold me  
With thine arm!

7.

Teach me, only teach, Love!  
As I ought  
I will speak thy speech, Love,  
Think thy thought —

8.

Meet, if thou require it,  
Both demands,  
Laying flesh and spirit  
In thy hands!

9.

That shall be to-morrow  
Not to-night :  
I must bury sorrow  
Out of sight.

10.

— Must a little weep, **Love,**  
— Foolish me !  
**And so fall asleep, Love,**  
**Loved by thee.**

### FRA LIPPO LIPPL

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave !  
You need not clap your torches to my face.  
Zooks, what's to blame ? you think you see a monk !  
What, it's past midnight, and you go the rounds,  
And here you catch me at an alley's end  
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar.  
The Carmine's my cloister : hunt it up,  
Do, — harry out, if you must show your zeal,  
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,  
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,  
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company !  
Aha, you know your betters ? Then, you'll take  
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,  
And please to know me likewise. Who am I ?  
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend  
Three streets off — he's a certain . . . how d'ye call ?  
Master — a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,  
In this house that caps the corner. Boh ! you were bea !  
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,

How you affected such a gullet's-gripe !  
 But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves  
 Pick up a manner nor discredit you.  
 Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets  
 And count fair prize what comes into their net ?  
 He's Judas to a tittle, that man is !  
 Just such a face ! why, sir, you make amends.  
 Lord, I'm not angry ! Bid your hangdogs go  
 Drink out this quarter-florin to the health  
 Of the munificent House that harbours me  
 (And many more beside, lads ! more beside !)  
 And all's come square again. I'd like his face —  
 His, elbowing on his comrade in the door  
 With the pike and lantern, — for the slave that holds  
 John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair  
 With one hand (" look you, now," as who should say)  
 And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped !  
 It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,  
 A wood-coal or the like ? or you should see !  
 Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.  
 What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,  
 You know them and they take you ? like enough !  
 I saw the proper twinkle in your eye —  
 Tell you I liked your looks at very first.  
 Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.  
 Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands  
 To roam the town and sing out carnival,  
 And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,  
 A-painting for the great man, saints and saints



**And saints again.** I could not paint all night —  
 Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.  
 There came a hurry of feet and little feet,  
 A sweep of lutestrings, laughs, and whiffs of song, —  
*Flower o' the broom,*  
*Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!*  
*Flower o' the quince,*  
*I let Lisa go, and what good's in life since?*  
*Flower o' the thyme* — and so on. Round they went.  
 Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter,  
 Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight, — three *slim*  
                   shapes —

And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, **flesh and blood,**  
 That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,  
 Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,  
 All the bed furniture — a dozen knots,  
 There was a ladder! down I let myself,  
 Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so **dropped,**  
 And after them. I came up with the fun  
 Hard by St. Laurence, hail fellow, well met, —

*Flower o' the rose,*  
*If I've been merry, what matter who knows?*  
 And so as I was stealing back again  
 To get to bed and have a bit of sleep  
 Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work  
 On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast  
 With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,  
**You snap me of the sudden.** Ah, I see!  
**Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head —**

Mine's shaved, — a monk, you say — the sting's in that  
 If Master Cosimo announced himself,  
 Mum's the word naturally ; but a monk !  
 Come, what am I a beast for ? tell us, now !  
 I was a baby when my mother died  
 And father died and left me in the street.  
 I starved there, God knows how, a year or two  
 On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,  
 Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day  
 My stomach being empty as your hat,  
 The wind doubled me up and down I went.  
 Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,  
 (Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)  
 And so along the wall, over the bridge,  
 By the straight cut to the convent. Six words, there,  
 While I stood munching my first bread that month :  
 " So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father  
 Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time, —  
 " To quit this very miserable world ?  
 Will you renounce " . . . The mouthful of bread !  
                   thought I ;  
 By no means ! Brief, they made a monk of me ;  
 I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,  
 Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,  
 Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici  
 Have given their hearts to — all at eight years old.  
 Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,  
 'Twas not for nothing — the good bellyful,  
 The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,

And day-long blessed idleness beside !  
 "Let's see what the urchin's fit for" — that came next.  
 Not overmuch their way, I must confess.  
 Such a to-do ! they tried me with their books.  
 Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste !  
*Flower o' the clove,*  
*All the Latin I construe is, "amo," I love !*  
 But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets  
 Eight years together, as my fortune was,  
 Watching folk's faces to know who will fling  
 The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,  
 And who will curse or kick him for his pains —  
 Which gentleman processional and fine,  
 Holding a candle to the Sacrament  
 Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch  
 The droppings of the wax to sell again,  
 Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped, —  
 How say I ? — nay, which dog bites, which lets drop  
 His bone from the heap of offal in the street !  
 — The soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,  
 He learns the look of things, and none the less  
 For admonitions from the hunger-pinch.  
 I had a store of such remarks, be sure,  
 Which, after I found leisure, turned to use :  
 I drew men's faces on my copy-books,  
 Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,  
 Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,  
 Found nose and eyes and chin for A.s and B.s,  
**And made a string of pictures of the world**

Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,  
 On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks wore  
 black.

“Nay,” quoth the Prior, “turn him out, d’ye say?”

In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.

What if at last we get our man of parts,  
 We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese  
 And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine  
 And put the front on it that ought to be!”

And hereupon they bade me daub away.

Thank you! my head being crammed, their walls a  
 blank,

Never was such prompt disemburdening.

First, every sort of monk, the black and white,  
 I drew them, fat and lean: then, folks at church,

From good old gossips waiting to confess  
 Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends, —

To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,  
 Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there

With the little children round him in a row  
 Of admiration, half for his beard and half

For that white anger of his victim’s son  
 Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,  
 Signing himself with the other because of Christ

(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this  
 After the passion of a thousand years)

Till some poor girl, her apron o’er her head

Which the intense eyes looked through, came at eve

On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,

Her pair of ear-rings and a bunch of flowers  
 The brute took growling, prayed, and then was gone.  
 I painted all, then cried " 'tis ask and have —  
 Choose, for more 's ready ! " — laid the ladder flat,  
 And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.  
 The monks closed in a circle and praised loud  
 'Till checked, (taught what to see and not to see,  
 Being simple bodies) " that 's the very man !  
 Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog !  
 That woman 's like the Prior's niece who comes  
 To care about his asthma : it 's the life ! "  
 But there my triumph 's straw-fire flared and funk'd —  
 Their betters took their turn to see and say :  
 The Prior and the learned pulled a face  
 And stopped all that in no time. " How ? what 's here !  
 Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all !  
 Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true  
 As much as pea and pea ! it 's devil's-game !  
 Your business is not to catch men with show,  
 With homage to the perishable clay,  
 But lift them over it, ignore it all,  
 Make them forget there 's such a thing as flesh.  
 Your business is to paint the souls of men —  
 Man's soul, and it 's a fire, smoke . . no it 's not . .  
 It 's vapour done up like a new-born babe —  
 (In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)  
 It 's . . well, what matters talking, it 's the soul !  
 Give us no more of body than shows soul.  
 Here 's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God !

That sets you praising, — why not stop with him ?  
 Why put all thoughts of praise out of our heads  
 With wonder at lines, colours, and what not ?  
 Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms !  
 Rub all out, try at it a second time.  
 Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,  
 She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say, —  
 Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off —  
 Have it all out !” Now, is this sense, I ask ?  
 A fine way to paint soul, by painting body  
 So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further  
 And can't fare worse ! Thus, yellow does for white  
 When what you put for yellow's simply black,  
 And any sort of meaning looks intense  
 When all beside itself means and looks nought.  
 Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,  
 Left foot and right foot, go a double step,  
 Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,  
 Both in their order ? Take the prettiest face,  
 The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint — is it so pretty  
 You can't discover if it means hope, fear,  
 Sorrow or joy ? won't beauty go with these ?  
 Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,  
 Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,  
 And then add soul and heighten them threefold ?  
 Or say there's beauty with no soul at all —  
 {I never saw it — put the case the same —}  
 If you get simple beauty and nought else,  
**You** get about the best thing God invents, —

That's somewhat. And you'll find the soul you have  
missed,

Within yourself when you return Him thanks !

"Rub all out!" well, well, there's my life, in short,

And so the thing has gone on ever since.

I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds —

You should not take a fellow eight years old

And make him swear to never kiss the girls —

I'm my own master, paint now as I please —

Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house !

Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front —

Those great rings serve more purposes than just

To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse !

And yet the old schooling sticks — the old grave eyes

Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,

The heads shake still — "It's Art's decline, my son !

You're not of the true painters, great and old :

Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find :

Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer.

Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third !"

*Flower o' the pine,*

*You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine '*

I'm not the third, then : bless us, they must know !

Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,

They, with their Latin? so I swallow my rage,

Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint

To please them — sometimes do, and sometimes don't,

For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come

▲ turn — some warm eve finds me at my saints —

A laugh, a cry, the business of the world —

*(Flower o' the peach,*

*Death for us all, and his own life for each !)*

And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs o'er,  
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,

And I do these wild things in sheer despite,

And play the fooleries you catch me at,

In pure rage ! the old mill-horse, out at grass

After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,

Although the miller does not preach to him

The only good of grass is to make chaff.

What would men have? Do they like grass or no —

May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing

Settled forever one way: as it is,

You tell too many lies and hurt yourself.

You don't like what you only like too much,

You do like what, if given you at your word,

You find abundantly detestable.

For me, I think I speak as I was taught —

I always see the Garden and God there

A-making man's wife — and, my lesson learned,

The value and significance of flesh,

I can't unlearn ten minutes afterward.

You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.

But see, now — why, I see as certainly

As that the morning-star's about to shine,

What will hap some day. We've a youngster here

Comes to our convent, studies what I do,

Blouches and stares and lets no atom drop —



**H**is name is Guidi — he'll not mind the monks —  
 They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk —  
 He picks my practice up — he'll paint apace,  
 I hope so — though I never live so long,  
 I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!  
 You speak no Latin more than I, belike —  
 However, you're my man, you've seen the **world**  
 — The beauty and the wonder and the power,  
 The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,  
 Changes, surprises, — and God made it all!  
 — For what? do you feel thankful, ay or no,  
 For this fair town's face, yonder river's line.  
 The mountain round it and the sky above,  
 Much more the figures of man, woman, child,  
 These are the frame to? What's it all about?  
 To be passed o'er, despised? or dwelt upon,  
 Wondered at? oh, this last of course, you say  
 But why not do as well as say, — paint these  
 Just as they are, careless what comes of it?  
 God's works — paint any one, and count it **crime**  
 To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works  
 Are here already — nature is complete:  
 Suppose you reproduce her — (which you can't)  
 There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."  
 For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love  
 First when we see them painted, things we have passed  
 Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;  
 And so they are better, painted — better to us,  
**Which is the same thing. Art was given for that —**

God uses us to help each other so,  
 Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,  
 Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,  
 And trust me but you should, though! How much **more**,  
 If I drew higher things with the same truth!  
 That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,  
 Interpret God to all of you! oh, oh,  
 It makes me mad to see what men shall do  
 And we in our graves! This world's no blot **for us**,  
 Nor blank — it means intensely, and means good:  
 To find its meaning is my meat and drink.  
 "Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer"  
 Strikes in the Prior! "when your meaning's plain  
 It does not say to folks — remember matins —  
 Or, mind you fast next Friday." Why, for **this**  
 What need of art at all? A skull and bones,  
 Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or, what's **best**,  
 A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.  
 I painted a St. Laurence six months since  
 At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style.  
 "How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"  
 I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns —  
 "Already not one phiz of your three slaves  
 That turn the Deacon off his toasted side,  
 But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,  
 The pious people have so eased their own  
 When coming to say prayers there in a rage.  
 We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.  
**Expect** another job this time next year.

For pity and religion grow i' the crowd —  
Your painting serves its purpose !” Hang the fool!

— That is — you'll not mistake an idle word  
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,  
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns  
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine !  
Oh, the church knows ! don't misreport me, now !  
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds  
Should have his apt word to excuse himself :  
And hearken how I plot to make amends.  
I have bethought me : I shall paint a piece  
. . . There's for you ! Give me six months, then go, see  
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's . . . (bless the nuns !  
They want a cast of my office) I shall paint  
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,  
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,  
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet  
As puff on puff of grated orris-root  
When ladies crowd to church at midsummer.  
And then in the front, of course a saint or two —  
Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,  
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white  
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,  
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,  
The man of Uz, (and Us without the z,  
Painters who need his patience.) Well, all these  
Secured at their devotions, up shall come  
Out of a corner when you least expect,  
As one by a dark stair into a great light

Music and talking, who but Lippo! I! —  
 Mazed, motionless and moon-struck — I'm the man!  
 Back I shrink — what is this I see and hear?  
 I, caught up with my monk's things by mistake,  
 My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,  
 I, in this presence, this pure company!  
 Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?  
 Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing  
 Forward, puts out a soft palm — "Not so fast!"  
 — Addresses the celestial presence, "nay —  
 He made you and devised you, after all,  
 Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there, draw—  
 His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?  
 We come to brother Lippo for all that,  
*Iste perfecit opus!*" So, all smile —  
 I shuffle sideways with my blushing face  
 Under the cover of a hundred wings  
 Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay  
 And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,  
 Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops  
 The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off  
 To some safe bench behind, not letting go  
 The palm of her, the little lily thing  
 That spoke the good word for me in the nick,  
 Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.  
 And so all's saved for me, and for the church  
 A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!  
 Your hand, sir, and good bye: no lights, no lights!  
 The street's hushed, and I know my own way back —  
 Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning. Zooks!

## A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S.

1.

OH, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find !  
I can hardly misconceive you ; it would prove me deaf  
and blind ;  
But although I give you credit, 'tis with such a heavy  
mind !

2.

Here you come with your old music, and here's all the  
good it brings.  
What, they lived once thus at Venice, where the mer-  
chants were the kings,  
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the  
sea with rings ?

3.

Ay, because the sea's the street there ; and 'tis arched  
by . . . what you call  
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept  
the carnival !  
I was never out of England — it's as if I saw it all !

## 4.

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was  
warm in May?

Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-  
day,

When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow,  
do you say?

## 5.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so  
red, —

On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on  
its bed,

O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might  
base his head?

## 6.

Well (and it was graceful of them) they'd break talk  
off and afford

— She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he to finger on  
his sword,

While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the  
clavichord?

## 7.

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths dimin-  
ished, sigh on sigh,

Told them something? Those suspensions, those solu-  
tions — “ Must we die ? ”

Those commiserating sevenths — “Life might last! we  
can but try!”

## 8.

“Were you happy?” — “Yes.” — “And are you still as  
happy?” — “Yes — And you?”  
— “Then more kisses” — “Did *I* stop them, when a  
million seemed so few?”

Hark — the dominant's persistence, till it must be an-  
swered to!

## 9.

So an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you,  
I dare say!

“Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave  
and gay!

I can always leave off talking, when I hear a master  
play.”

## 10.

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time,  
one by one,

Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds  
as well undone,

Death came tacitly and took them where they never see  
the sun.

## 11.

But when I sit down to reason, — think to take my stand  
nor swerve

Till I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close  
 reserve,  
 In you come with your cold music, till I creep thro'  
 every nerve.

## 12.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house  
 was burned —  
 "Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what  
 Venice earned!  
 The soul, doubtless, is immortal — where a soul can be  
 discerned.

## 13.

\* Yours for instance, you know physics, something of  
 geology,  
 Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their  
 degree;  
 Butterflies may dread extinction, — you'll not die, it  
 cannot be!

## 14.

"As for Venice and its people, merely born to bloom and  
 drop,  
 Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly  
 were the crop.  
 What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to  
 stop?



15.

“Dust and ashes!” So you creak it, and I want the  
heart to scold  
Dear dead women, with such hair, too — what’s become  
of all the gold  
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and  
grown old.

BY THE FIRESIDE.

1.

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

2.

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

3.

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

## 4.

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

## 5.

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

## 6.

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

## 7.

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

## 8.

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

## 9.

Does it feed the little lake below ?  
That speck of white just on its marge  
Is Pella ; see, in the evening glow  
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge  
When Alp meets Heaven in snow.

## 10.

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

## 11.

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

## 12.

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

## 13.

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

## 14.

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

## 15.

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

## 16.

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

## 17.

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

## 18.

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

## 19.

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

## 20.

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

## 21.

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

## 22.

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

## 23.

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

## 24.

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

## 25.

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

## 26.

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

## 27.

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



## 28.

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

## 29.

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

## 30.

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

## 31.

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

## 32.

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

## 33.

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

## 34.

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

## 35.

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

## 36.

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

## 37.

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

## 38.

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

## 39.

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

## 40.

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

## 41.

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

## 42.

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

## 43.

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

44.

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

45.

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

46.

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

47.

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

48.

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

49.

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

50.

Be Hate that fruit or Love that fruit,  
 It forwards the General Deed of Man,  
 And each of the Many helps to recruit  
 The life of the race by a general plan,  
 Each living his own, to boot.

51.

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

52.

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

53.

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

## ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

### 1.

MY love, this is the bitterest, that thou  
Who art all truth and who dost love me now  
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say —  
Should'st love so truly and could'st love me still  
A whole long life through, had but love its will,  
Would death that leads me from thee brook delay!

### 2.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand  
Would never let mine go, thy heart withstand  
The beating of my heart to reach its place.  
When should I look for thee and feel thee gone?  
When cry for the old comfort and find none?  
Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

### 3.

Oh, I should fade — 'tis willed so! might I save,  
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave



Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.  
 It is not to be granted. But the soul  
 Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole ;  
 Vainly the flesh fades — soul makes all things new.

## 4.

And 'twould not be because my eye grew dim  
 Thou could'st not find the love there, thanks to **Him**  
 Who never is dishonoured in the spark  
 He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade  
 Remember whence it sprang nor be afraid  
 While that burns on, though all the rest grow **dark.**

## 5.

So, how thou would'st be perfect, white and clean  
 Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne  
 Alike, this body given to show it by !  
 Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,  
 What plaudits from the next world after this,  
 Could'st thou repeat a stroke and gain the **sky !**

## 6.

And is it not the bitterer to think  
 That, disengage our hands and thou wilt sink  
 Although thy love was love in very deed ?  
 I know that nature ! Pass a festive day  
 Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away  
 Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

## 7.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell ;  
 If old things remain old things all is well,  
     For thou art grateful as becomes man best :  
 And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,  
 Or viewed me from a window, not so soon  
     With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

## 8.

I seem to see ! we meet and part : 'tis brief :  
 The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,  
     The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank ;  
 That is a portrait of me on the wall —  
 Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call ;  
     And for all this, one little hour's to thank.

## 9.

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,  
 Because our inmost beings met and mixed,  
     Because thou once hast loved me — wilt thou dare  
 Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,  
 " Therefore she is immortally my bride,  
     Chance cannot change that love, nor time impair.

## 10.

" So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,  
 I, a tired traveller, of my sun bereft,  
     Took from my path when, mimicking the same,

The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone?  
 — Where was it till the sunset? where anon  
 It will be at the sunrise! what's to blame?"

## 11.

Is it so helpful to thee? canst thou take  
 The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,  
 Put gently by such efforts at a beam?  
 Is the remainder of the way so long  
 Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong?  
 Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream

## 12.

"— Ah, but the fresher faces! Is it true,"  
 Thou'lt ask, "some eyes are beautiful and new?  
 Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp such wealth?  
 And if a man would press his lips to lips  
 Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose cup there slips  
 The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth?"

## 13.

"It cannot change the love kept still for Her,  
 Much more than, such a picture to prefer  
 Passing a day with, to a room's bare side.  
 The painted form takes nothing she possessed,  
 Yet while the Titian's Venus lies at rest  
 A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?"

## 14.

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,  
 My own self sell myself, my hand attach  
 Its warrant to the very thefts from me —  
 Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,  
 Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,  
 Thy man's truth I was bold to bid God see !

## 15.

Love so, then, if thou wilt ! Give all thou canst  
 Away to the new faces — disentranced —  
 (Say it and think it) obdurate no more,  
 Reissue looks and words from the old mint —  
 Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print  
 Image and superscription once they bore !

## 16.

Recoin thyself and give it them to spend, —  
 It all comes to the same thing at the end,  
 Since mine thou wast, mine art, and mine shalt be,  
 Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum  
 Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come  
 Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee !

## 17.

Only, why should it be with stain at all ?  
 Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,  
 Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow ?

Why need the other women know so much  
And talk together, "Such the look and such  
The smile he used to love with, then as now!"

## 18.

Might I die last and show thee! Should I find  
Such hardship in the few years left behind,  
If free to take and light my lamp, and go  
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit  
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it  
The better that they are so blank, I know!

## 19.

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er  
Within my mind each look, get more and more  
By heart each word, too much to learn at first,  
And join thee all the fitter for the pause  
'Neath the low door-way's lintel. That were cause  
For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst!

## 20.

And yet thou art the nobler of us two.  
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,  
Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?  
I'll say then, here's a trial and a task —  
Is it to bear? — if easy, I'll not ask —  
Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

## 21.

Pride? — when those eyes forestall the life behind  
The death I have to go through! — when I find,  
    Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!  
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast  
Until the little minute's sleep is past  
    And I wake saved. — And yet, it will not be!

## AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE

**STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE  
ARAB PHYSICIAN.**

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,  
The not-incurious in God's handiwork  
(This man's-flesh He hath admirably made,  
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,  
To coop up and keep down on earth a space  
That puff of vapour from His mouth, man's soul)  
— To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,  
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,  
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks  
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,  
Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip  
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—  
And aptest in contrivance, under God,  
To baffle it by deftly stopping such : —  
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home  
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)  
Three samples of true snake-stone — rarer still,  
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,  
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)  
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho,  
 Thus I resume. Who studious in our art  
 Shall count a little labour unrepaid?  
 I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone  
 On many a flinty furlong of this land.  
 Also the country-side is all on fire  
 With rumours of a marching hitherward —  
 Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.  
 A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear;  
 Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:  
 I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.  
 Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,  
 And once a town declared me for a spy,  
 But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,  
 Since this poor covert where I pass the night,  
 This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence  
 A man with plague-sores at the third degree  
 Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here!  
 'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,  
 To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip  
 And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.  
 A viscid choler is observable  
 In tertians, I was nearly bold to say,  
 And falling-sickness hath a happier cure  
 Than our school wots of: there's a spider here  
 Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,  
 Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-gray back;  
 Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,  
 The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to?



His service payeth me a sublimate  
 Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.  
 Best wait : I reach Jerusalem at morn,  
 There set in order my experiences,  
 Gather what most deserves and give thee all —  
 Or I might add, Judea's gum-tragacanth  
 Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,  
 Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,  
 In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease  
 Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy —  
 Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar —  
 But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay : my Syrian blinketh gratefully,  
 Protesteth his devotion is my price —  
 Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal ?  
 I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,  
 What set me off a-writing first of all.  
 An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang !  
 For, be it this town's barrenness — or else  
 'The Man had something in the look of him —  
 His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth.  
 So, pardon if — (lest presently I lose  
 In the great press of novelty at hand  
 The care and pains this somehow stole from me)  
 I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,  
 Almost in sight — for, wilt thou have the truth ?  
 The very man is gone from me but now,  
 Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.  
 Thus then, and let thy better wit help all.

'Tis but a case of mania — subinduced  
 By epilepsy, at the turning-point  
 Of trance prolonged unduly some three days,  
 When by the exhibition of some drug  
 Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art  
 Unknown to me and which 'twere well to know,  
 The evil thing out-breaking all at once  
 Left the man whole and sound of body indeed, —  
 But, flinging, so to speak, life's gates too wide,  
 Making a clear house of it too suddenly,  
 The first conceit that entered pleased to write  
 Whatever it was minded on the wall  
 So plainly at that vantage, as it were,  
 (First come, first served) that nothing subsequent  
 Attaineth to erase the fancy-scrawls  
 Which the returned and new-established soul  
 Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart  
 That henceforth she will read or these or none.  
 And first — the man's own firm conviction rests  
 That he was dead (in fact they buried him)  
 That he was dead and then restored to life  
 By a Nazarene physician of his tribe :  
 — 'Sayeth, the same bade " Rise," and he did rise.  
 " Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.  
 Not so this figment ! — not, that such a fume,  
 Instead of giving way to time and health,  
 Should eat itself into the life of life,  
 As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all !  
 For see, how he takes up the after-life.  
**The man** — it is one Lazarus a Jew,

Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,  
The body's habit wholly laudable,  
As much, indeed, beyond the common health  
As he were made and put aside to show.  
Think, could we penetrate by any drug  
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,  
And bring it clear and fair, by three days sleep !  
Whence has the man the balm that brightens all ?  
This grown man eyes the world now like a child.  
Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,  
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,  
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,  
Now sharply, now with sorrow, — told the case, —  
He listened not except I spoke to him,  
But folded his two hands and let them talk,  
Watching the flies that buzzed : and yet no fool.  
And that's a sample how his years must go.  
Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,  
Should find a treasure, can he use the same  
With straightened habits and with tastes starved small,  
And take at once to his impoverished brain  
The sudden element that changes things,  
— That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand,  
And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust ?  
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth —  
Warily parsimonious, when's no need,  
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times ?  
All prudent counsel as to what befits  
The golden mean, is lost on such an one.

The man's fantastic will is the man's law.  
 So here — we 'll call the treasure knowledge, **say —**  
 Increased beyond the fleshly faculty —  
 Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,  
 Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing **Heaven.**  
 The man is witless of the size, the sum,  
 The value in proportion of all things,  
 Or whether it be little or be much.  
 Discourse to him of prodigious armaments  
 Assembled to besiege his city now,  
 And of the passing of a mule with gourds —  
 'Tis one! Then take it on the other side,  
 Speak of some trifling fact — he will gaze **rapt**  
 With stupor at its very littleness —  
 (Far as I see) as if in that indeed  
 He caught prodigious import, whole results :  
 And so will turn to us the bystanders  
 In ever the same stupor (note this point)  
 That we too see not with his opened eyes!  
 Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,  
 Preposterously, at cross purposes.  
 Should his child sicken unto death, — why, look  
 For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,  
 Or pretermission of his daily craft —  
 While a word, gesture, glance, from that same **child**  
 At play or in the school or laid asleep,  
 Will start him to an agony of fear,  
 Exasperation, just as like! demand  
 The reason why — “ 'tis but a word,” object —

A gesture" — he regards thee as our lord  
Who lived there in the pyramid alone,  
Looked at us, dost thou mind, when being young  
We both would unadvisedly recite  
Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,  
Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst  
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.  
Thou and the child have each a veil alike  
Thrown o'er your heads from under which ye both  
Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match  
Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!  
He holds on firmly to some thread of life —  
(It is the life to lead perforcedly)  
Which runs across some vast distracting orb  
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,  
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet —  
The spiritual life around the earthly life!  
The law of that is known to him as this —  
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.  
So is the man perplexed with impulses  
Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,  
Proclaiming what is Right and Wrong across —  
And not along — this black thread through the blaze —  
"It should be" balked by "here it cannot be."  
And oft the man's soul springs into his face  
As if he saw again and heard again  
His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise.  
Something — a word, a tick of the blood within  
Admonishes — then back he sinks at once

To ashes, that was very fire before,  
 In sedulous recurrence to his trade  
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread —  
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,  
 Professedly the faultier that he knows  
 God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.  
 Indeed the especial marking of the man  
 Is prone submission to the Heavenly will —  
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.  
 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last  
 For that same death which will restore his being  
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul  
 Divorced even now by premature full growth :  
 He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live  
 So long as God please, and just how God please.  
 He even seeketh not to please God more  
 (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.  
 Hence I perceive not he affects to preach  
 The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be —  
 Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do.  
 How can he give his neighbour the real ground,  
 His own conviction? ardent as he is —  
 Call his great truth a lie, why still the old  
 "Be it as God please" reassureth him.  
 I probed the sore as thy disciple should —  
 "How, beast," said I, "this stolid carelessness  
 Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march  
 To stamp out like a little spark thy town,  
 Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?"  
 He merely looked with his large eyes on me.

The man is apathetic, you deduce?  
 Contrariwise he loves both old and young,  
 Able and weak — affects the very brutes  
 And birds — how say I? flowers of the field —  
 As a wise workman recognizes tools  
 In a master's workshop, loving what they **make**.  
 Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb :  
 Only impatient, let him do his best,  
 At ignorance and carelessness and sin —  
 An indignation which is promptly curbed.  
 As when in certain travels I have feigned  
 To be an ignoramus in our art  
 According to some preconceived design,  
 And happed to hear the land's practitioners  
 Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,  
 Prattle fantastically on disease,  
 Its cause and cure — and I must hold my **peace!**

Thou wilt object — why have I not ere this  
 Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene  
 Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source.  
 Conferring with the frankness that befits?  
 Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech  
 Perished in a tumult many years ago,  
 Accused, — our learning's fate, — of wizardry,  
 Rebellion, to the setting up a rule  
 And creed prodigious as described to me.  
 His death which happened when the earthquake **fell**  
 'Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss  
 To occult learning in our lord the sage

That lived there in the pyramid alone)  
 Was wrought by the mad people — that's their wont —  
 On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,  
 To his tried virtue, for miraculous help —  
 How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way!  
 The other imputations must be lies:  
 But take one — though I loathe to give it thee,  
 In mere respect to any good man's fame!  
 (And after all our patient Lazarus  
 Is stark mad — should we count on what he says?  
 Perhaps not — though in writing to a leech  
 'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)  
 This man so cured regards the curer then,  
 As — God forgive me — who but God himself,  
 Creator and Sustainer of the world,  
 That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!  
 — 'Sayeth that such an One was born and lived,  
 Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house.  
 Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,  
 And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,  
 And must have so avouched himself, in fact,  
 In hearing of this very Lazarus  
 Who saith — but why all this of what he saith?  
 Why write of trivial matters, things of price  
 Calling at every moment for remark?  
 I noticed on the margin of a pool  
 Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,  
 Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,



Which, now that I review it, needs must seem  
 Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth.  
 Nor I myself discern in what is writ  
 Good cause for the peculiar interest  
 And awe indeed this man has touched me with.  
 Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness  
 Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus —  
 I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills  
 Like an old lion's cheek-teeth. Out there **came**  
 A moon made like a face with certain spots  
 Multiform, manifold, and menacing:  
 Then a wind rose behind me. So we met  
 In this old sleepy town at unaware,  
 The man and I. I send thee what is writ.  
 Regard it as a chance, a matter risked  
 To this ambiguous Syrian — he may lose,  
 Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.  
 Jerusalem's repose shall make amends  
 For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine,  
 Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?  
 So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too —  
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice  
 Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!  
 Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself.  
 Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,  
 But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,  
 And thou must love me who have died for thee!"  
 The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

## MESMERISM.

1.

**ALL** I believed is true!  
I am able yet  
All I want to get  
**By** a method as strange as new:  
**Dare** I trust the same to you?

2.

**If** at night, when doors are shut,  
And the wood-worm picks,  
And the death-watch ticks,  
And the bar has a flag of smut,  
**And** a cat's in the water-butt —

3.

**And** the socket floats and flares,  
And the house-beams groan,  
And a foot unknown

Is surmised on the garret-stairs,  
And the locks slip unawares —

## 4.

And the spider, to serve his ends,  
By a sudden thread,  
Arms and legs outspread,  
On the table's midst descends,  
Comes to find, God knows what friends! —

## 5.

If since eve drew in, I say,  
I have sate and brought  
(So to speak) my thought  
To bear on the woman away,  
Till I felt my hair turn gray —

## 6.

Till I seemed to have and hold  
In the vacancy  
'Twixt the wall and me,  
From the hair-plait's chestnut-gold  
To the foot in its muslin fold —

## 7.

Have and hold, then and there,  
Her, from head to foot,  
Breathing and mute,

Passive and yet aware,  
 In the grasp of my steady stare —

## 8.

Hold and have, there and then,  
     All her body and soul  
     That completes my Whole,  
 All that women add to men,  
 In the clutch of my steady ken —

## 9.

Having and holding, till  
     I imprint her fast  
     On the void at last  
 As the sun does whom he will  
 By the calotypist's skill —

## 10.

Then, — if my heart's strength serve,  
     And through all and each  
     Of the veils I reach  
 To her soul and never swerve,  
 Knitting an iron nerve —

## 11.

Commanding that to advance  
     And inform the shape  
     Which has made escape

And before my countenance  
**Answers me glance for glance —**

12.

I, still with a gesture fit  
 Of my hands that best  
 Do my soul's behest,  
 Pointing the power from it,  
**While myself do steadfast sit —**

13.

**Steadfast and still the same**  
 On my object bent  
 While the hands give **vent**  
 To my ardour and my aim  
**And break into very flame —**

14.

Then, I reach, I must believe,  
 Not her soul in vain,  
 For to me again  
 It reaches, and past retrieve  
**Is wound in the toils I weave —**

15.

**And must follow as I require,**  
 As befits a thrall,  
 Bringing flesh and all,

Essence and earth-attire,  
To the source of the tractile fire —

## 16.

Till the house called hers, not mine,  
    With a growing weight  
    Seems to suffocate  
If she break not its leaden line  
And escape from its close confine —

## 17.

Out of doors into the night!  
    On to the maze  
    Of the wild wood-ways,  
Not turning to left or right  
From the pathway, blind with sight —

## 18.

Making thro' rain and wind  
    O'er the broken shrubs,  
    'Twixt the stems and stubs,  
With a still composed strong mind,  
Not a care for the world behind —

## 19.

Swifter and still more swift,  
    As the crowding peace  
    Doth to joy increase  
In the wide blind eyes uplift,  
Thro' the darkness and the drift!

## 20.

While I — to the shape, I too  
 Feel my soul dilate  
 Nor a whit abate  
 And relax not a gesture due  
 As I see my belief come true —

## 21.

For there! have I drawn or no  
 Life to that lip?  
 Do my fingers dip  
 In a flame which again they throw  
 On the cheek that breaks a-glow?

## 22.

Ha! was the hair so first?  
 What, unfileted,  
 Made alive, and spread  
 Through the void with a rich outburst  
 Chestnut gold-interspersed!

## 23.

Like the doors of a casket-shrine,  
 See, on either side,  
 Her two arms divide  
 Till the heart betwixt makes sign,  
 Take me, for I am thine!

## 24.

Now — now — the door is heard  
 Hark! the stairs and near —  
 Nearer — and here —  
 Now! and at call the third  
 She enters without a word.

## 25.

On doth she march and on  
 To the fancied shape —  
 It is past escape  
 Herself, now — the dream is **done**  
 And the shadow and she are **one**.

## 26.

**First** I will pray. Do Thou  
 That ownest the soul,  
 Yet wilt grant controul  
 To another nor disallow  
 For a time. restrain me now!

## 27.

I admonish me while I may,  
 Not to squander guilt,  
 Since require Thou wilt  
 At my hand its price one day!  
 What the price is, who can say?



## A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

1.

THAT was I, you heard last night  
When there rose no moon at all,  
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight  
Tent of heaven, a planet small :  
Life was dead, and so was light.

2.

Not a twinkle from the fly,  
Not a glimmer from the worm.  
When the crickets stopped their cry,  
When the owls forbore a term,  
You heard music ; that was I.

3.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,  
Sultrily suspired for proof :  
In at heaven and out again,  
Lightning' — where it broke the roof,  
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

## 4.

What they could my words expressed,  
 O my love, my all, my one !  
 Singing helped the verses best,  
 And when singing's best was done,  
 To my lute I left the rest.

## 5.

So wore night; the east was gray,  
 White the broad-faced hemlock flowers ;  
 Soon would come another day ;  
 Ere its first of heavy hours  
 Found me, I had past away.

## 6.

What became of all the hopes,  
 Words and song and lute as well ?  
 Say, this struck you — “ When life gropes  
 Feebly for the path where fell  
 Light last on the evening slopes,

## 7.

“ One friend in that path shall be  
 To secure my steps from wrong ;  
 One to count night day for me,  
 Patient through the watches long,  
 Serving most with none to see.”

. 8.

Never say — as something bodes —  
 “ So the worst has yet a worse !  
 When life halts 'neath double loads,  
 Better the task-master's curse  
 Than such music on the roads !

9.

“ When no moon succeeds the sun,  
 Nor can pierce the midnight's tent  
 Any star, the smallest one,  
 While some drops, where lightning went,  
 Show the final storm begun —

10.

“ When the fire-fly hides its spot,  
 When the garden-voices fail  
 In the darkness thick and hot, —  
 Shall another voice avail,  
 That shape be where those are not ?

11.

“ Has some plague a longer lease  
 Proffering its help uncouth ?  
 Can't one even die in peace ?  
 As one shuts one's eyes on youth,  
 Is that face the last one sees ? ”

12.

Oh, how dark your villa was,  
Windows fast and obdurate !  
How the garden grudged me grass  
Where I stood — the iron gate  
Ground its teeth to let me pass !

### MY STAR.

ALL that I know  
Of a certain star,  
Is, it can throw  
(Like the angled spar)  
Now a dart of red,  
Now a dart of blue,  
Till my friends have said  
They would fain see, too,

My star that dartles the red and the blue!

Then it stops like a bird, — like a flower, hangs furl'd;

They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.

What matter to me if their star is a world?

Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

## INSTANS TYRANNUS.

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

2.

**I** struck him, he grovelled of course —  
**For**, what was his force?  
**I** pinned him to earth with my weight  
**And** persistence of hate —  
**And** he lay, would not moan, would not curse,  
**As** if lots might be worse.

3.

**“**Were the object less mean, would he stand  
**At** the swing of my hand!  
**For** obscurity helps him and blots  
**The** hole where he squats.”  
**So** I set my five wits on the stretch  
**To** inveigle the wretch.

All in vain! gold and jewels I threw,  
 Still he couched there perdue.  
 I tempted his blood and his flesh,  
 Hid in roses my mesh,  
 Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilth —  
 Still he kept to his filth!

## 4.

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

## 5.

Then a humor more great took its place  
 At the thought of his face,  
 The droop, the low cares of the mouth,  
 The trouble uncouth  
 'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain  
 To put out of its pain —  
 And, no, I admonished myself,

"Is one mocked by an elf,  
 Is one baffled by toad or by rat?  
 The gravamen 's in that!  
 How the lion, who crouches to suit  
 His back to my foot,  
 Would admire that I stand in debate!  
 But the Small is the Great  
 If it vexes you, — that is the thing!  
 Toad or rat vex the King?  
 Though I waste half my realm to unearth  
 Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!"

## 6.

So I soberly laid my last plan  
 To extinguish the man.  
 Round his creep-hole, — with never a break  
 Ran my fires for his sake;  
 Over-head, did my thunders combine  
 With my under-ground mine:  
 Till I looked from my labor content  
 To enjoy the event.

## 7.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?  
 Did I say "without friend?"  
 Say rather, from marge to blue marge  
 The whole sky grew his targe  
 With the sun's self for visible boss,  
 While an Arm ran across



Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast  
Where the wretch was safe prest !  
Do you see ? just my vengeance complete,  
The man sprang to his feet,  
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed !  
— So, I was afraid !

**A PRETTY WOMAN.**

1.

**THAT** fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,  
And the blue eye  
Dear and dewy,  
And that infantine fresh air of hers !

2.

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,  
And enfold you,  
Ay, and hold you,  
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet !

3.

You like us for a glance, you know —  
For a word's sake,  
Or a sword's sake,  
All 's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

## 4.

And in turn we make you ours, we say —  
 You and youth too,  
 Eyes and mouth too,  
 All the face composed of flowers, we say.

## 5.

All's our own, to make the most of, Sweet —  
 Sing and say for,  
 Watch and pray for,  
 Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet.

## 6.

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,  
 Though we prayed you,  
 Paid you, brayed you  
 In a mortar — for you could not, Sweet.

## 7.

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there —  
 Be its beauty  
 Its sole duty!  
 Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

## 8.

And while the face lies quiet there,  
 Who shall wonder  
 That I ponder  
 A conclusion? I will try it there.

9.

As, — why must one, for the love forgone,  
 Scout mere liking?  
 Thunder-striking  
 Earth, — the heaven, we look above for, gone!

10.

Why with beauty, needs there money be —  
 Love with liking?  
 Crush the fly-king  
 In his gauze, because no honey bee?

11.

May not liking be so simple-sweet,  
 If love grew there  
 'Twould undo there  
 All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

12.

Is the creature too imperfect, say?  
 Would you mend it  
 And so end it?  
 Since not all addition perfects aye!

13.

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,  
 Just perfection —  
 Whence, rejection  
 Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

## 14.

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once  
Into tinder,  
And so hinder  
Sparks from kindling all the place at once ?

## 15.

Or else kiss away one's soul on her ?  
Your love-fancies ! —  
A sick man sees  
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her !

## 16.

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose, —  
Plucks a mould-flower  
For his gold flower,  
Uses fine things that efface the rose.

## 17.

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,  
Precious metals  
Ape the petals, —  
Last, some old king locks it up, morose !

## 18.

Then, how grace a rose ? I know a way !  
Leave it rather.  
Must you gather ?  
Smell, kiss, wear it — at last, throw away !

**“CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER  
CAME.”**

(See Edgar's Song in “**LEAR.**”)

1.

**My** first thought was, he lied in every word,  
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye  
Askance to watch the working of his lie  
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford  
Suppression of the glee that pursed and scored  
Its edge at one more victim gained thereby.

2.

What else should he be set for, with his staff?  
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare  
All travellers that might find him posted there,  
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh  
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph  
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

3.

If at his counsel I should turn aside  
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,

Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly  
I did turn as he pointed; neither pride  
Nor hope rekindling at the end desried,  
So much as gladness that some end should be.

4.

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,  
What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope  
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope  
With that obstreperous joy success would bring, —  
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring  
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

5.

As when a sick man very near to death  
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end  
The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,  
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath  
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er" he saith,  
"And the blow fall'n no grieving can amend")

6.

While some discuss if near the other graves  
Be room enough for this, and when a day  
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,  
With care about the banners, scarves and staves, —  
And still the man hears all, and only craves  
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

## 7.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,  
 Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ  
 So many times among "The Band" — to wit,  
 The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed  
 Their steps — that just to fail as they, seemed best,  
 And all the doubt was now — should I be fit.

## 8.

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,  
 That hateful cripple, out of his highway  
 Into the path he pointed. All the day  
 Had been a dreary one at best, and dim  
 Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim  
 Red leer to see the plain catch its stray.

## 9.

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found  
 Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,  
 Than pausing to throw backward a last view  
 To the safe road, 'twas gone! gray plain all round  
 Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.  
 I might go on; nought else remained to lo

## 10.

So on I went. I think I never saw  
 Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:  
 For flowers — as well expect a cedar grove!



But cockle, spurge, according to their law  
 Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,  
 You 'd think : a burr had been a treasure-trove.

## 11.

No! penury, inertness, and grimace,  
 In some strange sort, were the land's portion. "See  
 Or shut your eyes" — said Nature peevishly —  
 "It nothing skills : I cannot help my case :  
 'The Judgment's fire alone can cure this place,  
 Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

## 12.

'f there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk  
 Above its mates, the head was chopped — the bents  
 Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents  
 In the dock's harsh swarth leaves — bruised as to baulk  
 All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must walk  
 Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

## 13.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair  
 In leprosy — thin dry blades pricked the mud  
 Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood  
 One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,  
 Stood stupefied, however he came there —  
 Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

## 14.

**Alive?** he might be dead for all I know  
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,  
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane.  
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe :  
I never saw a brute I hated so —  
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

## 15.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.  
As a man calls for wine before he fights,  
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights  
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.  
Think first, fight afterwards — the soldier's art :  
One taste of the old times sets all to rights !

## 16.

**Not it!** I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face  
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,  
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold  
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,  
That way he used. Alas ! one night's disgrace !  
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

## 17.

**Giles**, then, the soul of honour — there he stands  
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.

What honest men should dare (he said) he durst.  
 Good — but the scene shifts — faugh ! what hangman's  
 Pin to his breast a parchment ? his own hands [hands  
 Read it Poor traitor, spit upon and curst !

## 18.

Better this present than a past like that —  
 Back therefore to my darkening path again.  
 No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.  
 Will the night send a howlet or a bat ?  
 I asked : when something on the dismal flat  
 Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

## 19.

A sudden little river crossed my path  
 As unexpected as a serpent comes.  
 No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms —  
 This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath  
 For the fiend's glowing hoof — to see the wrath  
 Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

## 20.

So, petty yet so spiteful ! all along  
 Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it ;  
 Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit  
 Of mute despair, a suicidal throng :  
 The river which had done them all the wrong,  
 Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

## 21.

Which, while I forded, — good saints, how I feared  
 To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,  
 Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek  
 For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!  
 — It may have been a water-rat I speared,  
 But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

## 22.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.  
 Now for a better country. Vain presage!  
 Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage  
 Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank  
 Soil to a splash? toads in a poisoned tank,  
 Or wild cats in a redhot iron cage —

## 23.

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.  
 What kept them there, with all the plain to choose?  
 No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,  
 None out of it: mad brewage set to work  
 Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk  
 Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

## 24.

And more than that — a furlong on — why, there!  
 What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,  
 Or brake, not wheel — that harrow fit to reel

Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air  
 Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,  
 Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel

## 25.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,  
 Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth  
 Desperate and done with ; (so a fool finds mirth,  
 Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood  
 Changes and off he goes !) within a rood  
 Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

## 26.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,  
 Now patches where some leanness of the soil's  
 Broke into moss or substances like boils ;  
 Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him  
 Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim  
 Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

## 27.

And just as far as ever from the end !  
 Nought in the distance but the evening, nought,  
 To point my footstep further ! At the thought,  
 A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,  
 Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned  
 That brushed my cap — perchance the guide I sought

## 28.

For looking up, aware I somehow grew  
 'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place  
 All round to mountains — with such name to **grace**  
 Mere ugly heights and heaps now stol'n in view.  
 How thus they had surprised me, — solve it, you!  
 How to get from them was no plainer case.

## 29.

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick  
 Of mischief happened to me, God knows when —  
 In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,  
 Progress this way. When, in the very nick  
 Of giving up, one time more, came a click  
 As when a trap shuts — you 're inside the den!

## 30.

Burningly it came on me all at once,  
 This was the place! those two hills on the right  
 Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight —  
 While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,  
 Fool, to be dozing at the very nonce,  
 After a life spent training for the sight!

## 31.

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?  
 The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,  
 Built of brown stone, without a counterpart

In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf  
 Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf  
 He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

## 32.

Not see? because of night perhaps? — Why, day  
 Came back again for that! before it left,  
 The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:  
 The hills like giants at a hunting, lay —  
 Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay, —  
 "Now stab and end the creature — to the heft!"

## 33.

Not hear? when noise was everywhere? it tolled  
 Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,  
 Of all the lost adventurers my peers, —  
 How such an one was strong, and such was bold,  
 And such was fortunate, yet each of old  
 Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

## 34.

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides — met  
 To view the last of me, a living frame  
 For one more picture! in a sheet of flame  
 I saw them and I knew them all. And yet  
 Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set  
 And blew. "*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*"

## RESPECTABILITY.

1.

**DEAR**, had the world in its caprice  
Deigned to proclaim "I know you both,  
Have recognized your plighted troth,  
**Am** sponsor for you — live in peace!" —  
**How** many precious months and years  
Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,  
Before we found it out at last,  
The world, and what it fears?

2.

How much of priceless life were spent  
With men that every virtue decks,  
And women models of their sex,  
Society's true ornament, —  
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,  
Thro' wind and rain, and watch the Seine,  
And feel the Boulevart break again  
To warmth and light and bliss?



## 3.

I know ! the world proscribes not love ;  
    Allows my finger to caress  
    Your lip's contour and downiness,  
Provided it supply a glove.  
The world's good word ! — the Institute !  
    Guizot receives Montalembert !  
    Eh ? down the court three lampions flare —  
**Put forward your best foot !**

## A LIGHT WOMAN.

### 1.

So far as our story approaches the end,  
Which do you pity the most of us three? —  
My friend, or the mistress of my friend  
With her wanton eyes, or me?

### 2.

My friend was already too good to lose,  
And seemed in the way of improvement yet,  
When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose  
And over him drew her net.

### 3.

When I saw him tangled in her toils,  
A shame, said I, if she adds just him  
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,  
The hundredth, for a whim!

### 4.

And before my friend be wholly hers,  
How easy to prove to him, I said,  
An eagle's the game her pride prefers,  
Though she snaps at the wren instead!

## 5.

So I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,  
My hand sought hers as in earnest need,  
And round she turned for my noble sake,  
And gave me herself indeed.

## 6.

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,  
The wren is he, with his maiden face.  
— You look away and your lip is curled?  
Patience, a moment's space!

## 7.

For see — my friend goes shaking and white;  
He eyes me as the basilisk:  
I have turned, it appears, his day to night,  
Eclipsing his sun's disk.

## 8.

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:  
“ Though I love her — that he comprehends —  
One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)  
And be loyal to one's friends ! ”

## 9.

And she, — she lies in my hand as tame  
As a pear hung basking over a wall;  
Just a touch to try and off it came;  
'Tis mine, — can I let it fall?

## 10.

With no mind to eat it, that's the worst !  
 Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist ?  
 'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst  
 When I gave its stalk a twist.

## 11.

And I, — what I seem to my friend, you see —  
 What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess.  
 What I seem to myself, do you ask of me ?  
 No hero, I confess.

## 12.

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,  
 And matter enough to save one's own.  
 Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals  
 He played with for bits of stone !

## 13.

One likes to show the truth for the truth ;  
 That the woman was light is very true :  
 But suppose she says, — never mind that youth —  
 What wrong have I done to you ?

## 14.

Well, any how, here the story stays,  
 So far at least as I understand ;  
 And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,  
 Here's a subject made to your hand !

### THE STATUE AND THE BUST.

THERE'S a palace in Florence, the world knows well,  
And a statue watches it from the square,  
And this story of both do the townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,  
At the furthest window facing the east  
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The brides-maids' prattle around her ceased;  
She leaned forth, one on either hand;  
They saw how the blush of the bride increased —

They felt by its beats her heart expand —  
As one at each ear and both in a breath  
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That selfsame instant, underneath,  
The Duke rode past in his idle way,  
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,  
Till he threw his head back — “ Who is she ? ”  
— “ A Bride the Riccardi brings home to-day.”

Hair in heaps laid heavily  
Over a pale brow spirit-pure —  
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure —  
Which vainly sought to dissemble her eyes  
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise  
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man, —  
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can ;  
She looked at him, as one who awakes, —  
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

As love so ordered for both their sakes,  
A feast was held that selfsame night  
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,  
But the Palace overshadows one,  
Because of a crime which may God requite !

To Florence and God the wrong was done,  
Through the first republic's murder there  
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

(The Duke with the statue's face in the square)  
Turned in the midst of his multitude  
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood  
A single minute and no more,  
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued —

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor —  
For the Duke, on the lady a kiss conferred,  
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?  
If a word did pass, which I do not think,  
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink  
He and his bride were alone at last  
In a bed-chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,  
That the door she had passed was shut on her  
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,  
Through a certain window facing the east  
She might watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,  
And a feast might lead to so much beside,  
He, of many evils, chose the least.

"Freely I choose too," said the bride —  
"Your window and its world suffice."  
So replied the tongue, while the heart replied —

"If I spend the night with that devil twice,  
May his window serve as my loop of hell  
Whence a damned soul looks on Paradise!

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,  
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow  
Ere I count another ave-bell.

'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,  
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,  
And I save my soul — but not to-morrow" —

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim) —  
"My father tarries to bless my state :  
I must keep it one day more for him.



“Is one day more so long to wait?  
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know —  
We shall see each other, sure as fate.”

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!  
So we resolve on a thing and sleep.  
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, “Dear or cheap  
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove  
To body or soul, I will drain it deep.”

And on the morrow, bold with love,  
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,  
As his duty bade, by the Duke’s alcove)

And smiled “’Twas a very funeral  
Your lady will think, this feast of ours, —  
A shame to efface, whate’er befall!

“What if we break from the Arno bowers,  
And let Petraja, cool and green,  
Cure last night’s fault with this morning’s flowers?”

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen  
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,  
Said, “Too much favour for me so mean!

“Alas! my lady leaves the south.  
Each wind that comes from the Apennine  
Is a menace to her tender youth.

“No way exists, the wise opine,  
If she quits her palace twice this year,  
To avert the flower of life’s decline.”

Quoth the Duke, “A sage and a kindly fear.  
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring —  
Be our feast to-night as usual here!”

And then to himself — “Which night shall bring  
Thy bride to her lover’s embraces, fool —  
Or I am the fool, and thou art his king!

“Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool —  
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France,  
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

“I need thee still and might miss perchance.  
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,  
With its hope of my lady’s countenance —

“For I ride — what should I do but ride?  
And passing her palace, if I list,  
May glance at its window — well betide!”

So said, so done : nor the lady missed  
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,  
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,  
No morrow's sun should arise and set  
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,  
With still fresh cause to wait one more  
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,  
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,  
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,  
But not in despite of heaven and earth —  
The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth  
By winter's fruits that supplant the rose :  
The world and its ways have a certain worth

And to press a point while these oppose  
Were a simple policy — best wait,  
And lose no friends and gain no foes.

Meanwhile, worse fates than a lover's fate  
Who daily may ride and lean and look  
Where his lady watches behind the grate !

And she — she watched the square like a book  
Holding one picture and only one,  
Which daily to find she undertook.

When the picture was reached the book was done,  
And she turned from it all night to scheme  
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

Weeks grew months, years — gleam by gleam  
The glory dropped from youth and love,  
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream.

Which hovered as dreams do, still above, —  
But who can take a dream for truth ?  
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove !

One day as the lady saw her youth  
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked  
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked, —  
And wondered who the woman was,  
So hollow-eyed and haggard-checked,

Fronting her silent in the glass —  
“Summon here,” she suddenly said,  
“Before the rest of my old self pass,

“Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,  
Who moulds the clay no love will change,  
And fixes a beauty never to fade.

“Let Robbia’s craft so apt and strange  
Arrest the remains of young and fair,  
And rivet them while the seasons range.

“Make me a face on the window there  
Waiting as ever, mute the while,  
My love to pass below in the square !

“And let me think that it may beguile  
Dreary days which the dead must spend  
Down in their darkness under the aisle —

“To say, — ‘what matters at the end ?  
I did no more while my heart was warm,  
Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.’

“Where is the use of the lip’s red charm,  
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,  
And the blood that blues the inside arm —

Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,  
 The earthly gift to an end divine?  
 A lady of clay is as good, I trow."

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine  
 With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,  
 Was set where now is the empty shrine —

(With, leaning out of a bright blue space,  
 As a ghost might from a chink of sky,  
 The passionate pale lady's face —

Eying ever with earnest eye  
 And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,  
 Some one who ever passes by —)

The Duke sighed like the simplest wretch  
 In Florence, "So, my dream escapes!  
 Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle fashioner of shapes —  
 "Can the soul, the will, die out of a man  
 Ere his body find the grave that gapes?"

"John of Douay shall work my plan,  
 Mould me on horseback here aloft,  
 Alive — (the subtle artisan!)

“ In the very square I cross so oft !  
That men may admire, when future suns  
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft

“ While the mouth and the brow are brave in bronze —  
Admire and say, ‘ When he was alive,  
How he would take his pleasure once !’

“ And it shall go hard but I contrive  
To listen meanwhile and laugh in my tomb  
At indolence which aspires to strive.”

---

So! while these wait the trump of doom,  
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,  
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder  
What a gift life was, ages ago,  
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Surely they see not God, I know,  
Nor all that chivalry of His,  
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss —  
Since, the end of life being manifest,  
He had cut his way thro’ the world to **this**.

I hear your reproach — “ But delay was best,  
 For their end was a crime ! ” — Oh, a crime **will do**  
 As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,  
 Sufficient to vindicate itself  
 And prove its worth at a moment's view.

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf ?  
 Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram  
 To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham.  
 As well the counter as coin, I submit,  
 When your table's a hat, and your prize, a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,  
 Venture as truly, use the same skill,  
 Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play — is my principle !  
 Let a man contend to the uttermost  
 For his life's set prize, be it what it will !

The counter our lovers staked was lost  
 As surely as if it were lawful coin :  
 And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost



Was, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,  
Though the end in sight was a crime, I say.  
You of the virtue, (we issue join)  
How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

## LOVE IN A LIFE.

1.

Room after room,  
I hunt the house through  
We inhabit together.  
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her,  
Next time, herself! — not the trouble behind her  
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!  
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew,—  
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

2.

Yet the day wears,  
And door succeeds door;  
I try the fresh fortune —  
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.  
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.  
Spend my whole day in the quest, — who cares?  
But 'tis twilight, you see, — with such suites to explore,  
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE.

ESCAPE me ?

Never —

Beloved !

While I am I, and you are you,

So long as the world contains us both,

Me the loving and you the loth,

While the one eludes, must the other pursue.

My life is a fault at last, I fear —

It seems too much like a fate, indeed !

Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed —

But what if I fail of my purpose here ?

It is but to keep the nerves at strain,

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

And baffled, get up to begin again, —

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

While, look but once from your furthest bound,

At me so deep in the dust and dark,

No sooner the old hope drops to ground

Than a new one, straight to the selfsame mark,

I shape me —

Ever

Removed

### HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY.

I ONLY knew one poet in my life :  
And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,  
A man of mark, to know next time you saw.  
His very serviceable suit of black  
Was courtly once and conscientious still,  
And many might have worn it, though none did :  
The cloak that somewhat shone and showed the threads  
Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.  
He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane,  
Scenting the world, looking it full in face,  
An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels.  
They turned up, now, the alley by the church,  
That leads no whither ; now, they breathed themselves  
On the main promenade just at the wrong time.  
You'd come upon his scrutinizing hat,  
Making a peaked shade blacker than itself  
Against the single window spared some house  
Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work, —  
Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick  
Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks

Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.  
He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,  
The man who slices lemons into drink,  
The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys  
That volunteer to help him turn its winch.  
He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,  
And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,  
And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.  
He took such cognizance of men and things,  
If any beat a horse, you felt he saw ;  
If any cursed a woman, he took note ;  
Yet stared at nobody, — they stared at him,  
And found, less to their pleasure than surprise,  
He seemed to know them and expect as much.  
So, next time that a neighbour's tongue was loosed,  
It marked the shameful and notorious fact,  
We had among us, not so much a spy,  
As a recording chief-inquisitor,  
The town's true master if the town but knew !  
We merely kept a Governor for form,  
While this man walked about and took account  
Of all thought, said, and acted, then went home,  
And wrote it fully to our Lord the King,  
Who has an itch to know things, He knows why,  
And reads them in His bedroom of a night.  
Oh, you might smile ! there wanted not a touch,  
A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease  
As back into your mind the man's look came —  
Stricken in years a little, — such a brow

His eyes had to live under! — clear as flint  
 On either side the formidable nose  
 Curved, cut, and coloured, like an eagle's claw.  
 Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate?  
 When altogether old B. disappeared  
 And young C. got his mistress, — was 't our friend.  
 His letter to the King, that did it all?  
 What paid the bloodless man for so much pains?  
 Our Lord the King has favourites manifold,  
 And shifts his ministry some once a month;  
 Our city gets new Governors at whiles, —  
 But never word or sign, that I could hear.  
 Notified to this man about the streets  
 The King's approval of those letters conned  
 The last thing duly at the dead of night.  
 Did the man love his office? frowned our Lord,  
 Exhorting when none heard — “Beseech me not!  
 Too far above my people, — beneath Me!  
 I set the watch, — how should the people know?  
 Forget them, keep Me all the more in mind!”  
 Was some such understanding 'twixt the Two?

I found no truth in one report at least —  
 That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes  
 Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,  
 You found he ate his supper in a room  
 Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall,  
 And twenty naked girls to change his plate!  
 Poor man, he lived another kind of life

In that new, stuccoed, third house by the bridge,  
 Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwise !  
 The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat,  
 Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back,  
 Playing a decent cribbage with his maid  
 (Jacynth, you 're sure her name was) o'er the cheese  
 And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears,  
 Or treat of radishes in April! nine —  
 Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he was,  
 Would point him out to me a dozen times,  
 "St — St" he 'd whisper, "the Corregidor!"  
 I had been used to think that personage  
 Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,  
 And feathers like a forest in his hat,  
 Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news,  
 Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn,  
 And memorized the miracle in vogue!  
 He had a great observance from us boys —  
 I was in error; that was not the man.

I'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,  
 To have just looked, when this man came to die,  
 And seen who lined the clean gay garret's sides  
 And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,  
 With the heavenly manner of relieving guard.  
 Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,  
 Thro' a whole campaign of the world's life and death

Doing the King's work all the dim day long,  
In his old coat, and up to his knees in mud,  
Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust, —  
And now the day was won, relieved at once!  
No further show or need for that old coat,  
You are sure, for one thing! Bless us, all the while  
How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I!  
A second, and the angels alter that.  
Well, I could never write a verse, — could you?  
Let's to the Prado and make the most of time.



## THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER.

1.

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

2.

My mistress bent that brow of hers,  
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs  
When pity would be softening through,  
Fixed me a breathing-while or two  
    With life or death in the balance — Right !  
The blood replenished me again :

My last thought was at least not vain.  
 I and my mistress, side by side  
 Shall be together, breathe and ride,  
 So one day more am I deified.

Who knows but the world may end to-night ?

## 3.

Hush ! if you saw some western cloud  
 All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed  
 By many benedictions — sun's  
 And moon's and evening-star's at once —  
 And so, you, looking and loving best,  
 Conscious grew, your passion drew  
 Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too  
 Down on you, near and yet more near,  
 Till flesh must fade for heaven was here ! —  
 Thus leant she and lingered — joy and fear !  
 Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

## 4.

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

What need to strive with a life awry ?  
 Had I said that, had I done this,  
 So might I gain, so might I miss.  
 Might she have loved me ? just as well

She might have hated, — who can tell?  
 Where had I been now if the worst befell?  
 And here we are riding, she and I.

## 5.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?  
 Why, all men strive and who succeeds?  
 We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,  
 Saw other regions, cities new,  
 As the world rushed by on either side.  
 I thought, All labour, yet no less  
 Bear up beneath their unsuccess.  
 Look at the end of work, contrast  
 The petty Done the Undone vast,  
 This present of theirs with the hopeful past!  
 I hoped she would love me. Here we ride.

## 6.

What hand and brain went ever paired?  
 What heart alike conceived and dared?  
 What act proved all its thought had been?  
 What will but felt the fleshly screen?  
 We ride and I see her bosom heave.  
 There's many a crown for who can reach  
 Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!  
 The flag stuck on a heap of bones,  
 A soldier's doing! what atones?  
 They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.  
 My riding is better, by their leave.

## 7.

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

## 8.

And you, great sculptor — so you gave  
 A score of years to art, her slave,  
 And that's your Venus — whence we turn  
 To yonder girl that fords the burn!  
     You acquiesce and shall I repine?  
 What, man of music, you, grown gray  
 With notes and nothing else to say,  
 Is this your sole praise from a friend,  
 “Greatly his opera's strains intend,  
 “But in music we know how fashions end!”  
     I gave my youth — but we ride, in fine.

## 9.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate  
 Proposed bliss here should sublimate

My being ; had I signed the bond —  
 Still one must lead some life beyond,  
     — Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.  
 This foot once planted on the goal,  
 This glory-garland round my soul,  
 Could I descry such? Try and test!  
 I sink back shuddering from the quest —  
 Earth being so good, would Heaven seem best?  
     Now, Heaven and she are beyond this ride.

## 10.

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

## THE PATRIOT.

AN OLD STORY.

1.

It was roses, roses, all the way,  
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad.  
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,  
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,  
A year ago on this very day !

2.

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

3.

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

## 4.

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

## 5.

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

## 6.

Thus I entered Brescia, and thus I go!  
 In such triumphs, people have dropped down dead.  
 "Thou, paid by the World, — what dost thou owe  
 Me?" God might have questioned: but now instead  
 'Tis God shall requite! I am safer so.

**MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA.**

1.

**HIST**, but a word, fair and soft!

Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!

Answer the question I've put you so oft —

What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?  
**See**, we're alone in the loft,

2.

**I**, the poor organist here,

Hugues, the composer of note —

Dead, though, and done with, this many a year —

Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,  
Make the world prick up its ear!

3.

**See**, the church empties a-pace.

Fast they extinguish the lights —

Hallo, there, sacristan! five minutes' grace!



Here's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,  
Baulks one of holding the base.

## 4.

See, our huge house of the sounds  
Hushing its hundreds at once,  
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds  
— Oh, you may challenge them, not a response  
Get the church saints on their rounds!

## 5.

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?  
— March, with the moon to admire,  
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,  
Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,  
Put rats and mice to the rout —

## 6.

Aloys and Jurien and Just —  
Order things back to their place,  
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,  
Rub the church plate, darn the sacrament lace,  
Clear the desk velvet of dust.)

## 7.

Here's your book, younger folks shelve!  
Played I not off-hand and runningly,  
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?

Here's what should strike, — could one handle it  
 Help the axe, give it a helve! [cunningly.]

## 8.

Page after page as I played,  
 Every bar's rest where one wipes  
 Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed  
 O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes  
 Whence you still peeped in the shade.

## 9.

Sure you were wishful to speak,  
 You, with brow ruled like a score,  
 Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek  
 Like two great breves as they wrote them of yore  
 Each side that bar, your straight beak!

## 10.

Sure you said — “ Good, the mere notes !  
 Still, couldst thou take my intent,  
 Know what procured me our Company's votes —  
 Masters being lauded and sciolists shent,  
 Parted the sheep from the goats ! ”

## 11.

Well then, speak up, never flinch !  
 Quick, ere my candle's a snuff  
 — Burnt, do you see ? to its uttermost inch —

*I* believe in you, but that's not enough.  
Give my conviction a clinch.

12.

First you deliver your phrase  
— Nothing propound, that I see,  
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise —  
Answered no less, where no answer needs be :  
Off start the Two on their ways !

13.

Straight must a Third interpose,  
Volunteer needlessly help —  
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,  
So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,  
Argument's hot to the close !

14.

One disertates, he is candid —  
Two must discept, — has distinguished !  
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did :  
Four protests, Five makes a dart at the thing wished —  
Back to One, goes the case bandied !

15.

One says his say with a difference —  
More of expounding explaining !  
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance —

Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-restraining —  
 Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

## 16.

One is incisive, corrosive —  
 Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant —  
 Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive —  
 Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant —  
 Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve !

## 17.

Now, they ply axes and crowbars —  
 Now, they prick pins at a tissue  
 Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's  
 Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?  
 Where is our gain at the Two-bars ?

## 18.

*Est fuga, volvitur rota!*  
 On we drift. Where looms the dim port?  
 One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota —  
 Something is gained, if one caught but the import —  
 Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha !

## 19.

What with affirming, denying,  
 Holding, risposting, subjoining,  
 All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance I'm trying . .

There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining  
Under those spider-webs lying!

20.

So your fugue broadens and thickens,  
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,  
Till one exclaims — “ But where’s music, the dickens?  
Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens,  
Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?”

21.

I for man’s effort am zealous.  
Prove me such censure’s unfounded!  
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous —  
Hopes ’twas for something his organ-pipes sounded,  
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

22.

Is it your moral of Life?  
Such a web, simple and subtle,  
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,  
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,  
Death ending all with a knife?

23.

Over our heads Truth and Nature —  
Still our life’s zigzags and dodges,  
Ins and outs weaving a new legislature —

God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,  
Palled beneath Man's usurpature!

## 24.

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,  
Cherub and trophy and garland.  
Nothings grow something which quietly closes  
Heaven's earnest eye, — not a glimpse of the far land  
Gets through our comments and glozes.

## 25.

Ah, but traditions, inventions,  
(Say we and make up a visage)  
So many men with such various intentions  
Down the past ages must know more than this age!  
Leave the web all its dimensions!

## 26.

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf?  
Proved a mere mountain in labour?  
Better submit — try again — what's the clef?  
'Faith, it's no trifle for pipe and for tabor —  
Four flats — the minor in F.

## 27.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger.  
Learning it once, who would lose it?  
Yet all the while a misgiving will linger —

Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse it —  
Nature, thro' dust-clouds we fling her !

## 28.

Hugues ! I advise *meâ pœnâ*  
(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)  
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena !  
Say the word, straight I unstop the Full-Organ,  
Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

## 29.

While in the roof, if I'm right there —  
... Lo, you, the wick in the socket !  
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there !  
Down it dips, gone like a rocket !  
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,  
Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,  
And find a poor devil at end of his cares  
At the foot of your rotten-planked rat-riddled stairs ?  
Do I carry the moon in my pocket ?

### BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY.

No more wine? then we'll push back chairs and talk  
A final glass for me, tho': cool, i'faith!  
We ought to have our Abbey back, you see.  
It's different, preaching in basilicas,  
And doing duty in some masterpiece  
Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart!  
I doubt if they're half baked, those chalk rosettes,  
Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings everywhere;  
It's just like breathing in a lime-kiln: eh?  
These hot long ceremonies of our church  
Cost us a little — oh, they pay the price,  
You take me — amply pay it! Now, we'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.  
No deprecation, — nay, I beg you, sir!  
Beside 'tis our engagement: don't you know,  
I promised, if you'd watch a dinner out,  
We'd see truth dawn together? — truth that peeps  
Over the glass's edge when dinner's done,  
And body gets its sop and holds its noise



And leaves soul free a little. Now 's the time —  
 'Tis break of day ! You do despise me then.  
 And if I say, "despise me," — never fear —  
 I know you do not in a certain sense —  
 Not in my arm-chair for example : here,  
 I well imagine you respect my place  
 (Status, *entourage*, worldly circumstance)  
 Quite to its value — very much indeed .  
 — Are up to the protesting eyes of you  
 In pride at being seated here for once —  
 You 'll turn it to such capital account !  
 When somebody, through years and years to come,  
 Hints of the bishop, — names me — that 's enough —  
 "Blougram ? I knew him" — (into it you slide)  
 "Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day,  
 All alone, we two — he 's a clever man —  
 And after dinner, — why, the wine you know, —  
 Oh, there was wine, and good ! — what with the wine . .  
 'Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk !  
 He 's no bad fellow, Blougram — he had seen  
 Something of mine he relished — some review —  
 He 's quite above their humbug in his heart,  
 Half-said as much, indeed — the thing 's his trade —  
 I warrant, Blougram 's skeptical at times —  
 How otherwise ? . I liked him, I confess !"  
*Che ch'é*, my dear sir, as we say at Rome,  
 Don't you protest now ! It 's fair give and take ;  
 You have had your turn and spoken your home-truths --  
 The hand 's mine now, and here you follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays —  
You do despise me ; your ideal of life  
Is not the bishop's — you would not be I —  
You would like better to be Goethe, now,  
Or Buonaparte — or, bless me, lower still,  
Count D'Orsay, — so you did what you preferred,  
Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot help,  
Believed or disbelieved, no matter what,  
So long as on that point, whate'er it was,  
You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself.  
— That, my ideal never can include,  
Upon that element of truth and worth  
Never be based ! for say they make me Pope  
(They can't — suppose it for our argument)  
Why, there I'm at my tether's end — I've reached  
My height, and not a height which pleases you.  
An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say.  
It's like those eerie stories nurses tell,  
Of how some actor played Death on a stage  
With pasteboard crown, sham orb, and tinselled dart,  
And called himself the monarch of the world,  
Then going in the tire-room afterward  
Because the play was done, to shift himself,  
Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly  
The moment he had snut the closet door  
By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope  
At unawares, ask what his baubles mean,  
And whose part he presumed to play just now ?  
Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true !

So, drawing comfortable breath again,  
 You weigh and find whatever more or less  
 I boast of my ideal realized  
 Is nothing in the balance when opposed  
 To your ideal, your grand simple life,  
 Of which you will not realize one jot.  
 I am much, you are nothing ; you would be all  
 I would be merely much — you beat me there.

No, friend, you do not beat me, — hearken *why*  
 The common problem, your's, mine, every one's,  
 Is not to fancy what were fair in life  
 Provided it could be, — but, finding first  
 What may be, then find how to make it fair  
 Up to our means — a very different thing !  
 No abstract intellectual plan of life  
 Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws,  
 But one, a man, who is man and nothing more,  
 May lead within a world which (by your leave)  
 Is Rome or London — not Fool's-paradise.  
 Embellish Rome, idealize away,  
 Make Paradise of London if you can,  
 You 're welcome, nay, you 're wise.

A simile !

We mortals cross the ocean of this world  
 Each in his average cabin of a life —  
 The best's not big, the worst yields elbow-room.  
 Now for our six months' voyage — how prepare ?

You come on shipboard with a landsman's list  
Of things he calls convenient — so they are !  
An India screen is pretty furniture,  
A piano-forte is a fine resource,  
All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,  
The new edition fifty volumes long ;  
And little Greek books with the funny type  
They get up well at Leipsic fill the next —  
Go on ! slabbed marble, what a bath it makes !  
And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us add !  
'Twere pleasant could Correggio's fleeting glow  
Hang full in face of one where'er one roams,  
Since he more than the others brings with him  
Italy's self, — the marvellous Modenese !  
Yet 'twas not on your list before, perhaps.  
— Alas ! friend, here 's the agent . . . is't the name ?  
The captain, or whoever 's master here —  
You see him screw his face up ; what 's his cry  
Ere you set foot on shipboard ? “ Six feet square ! ”  
If you won't understand what six feet mean,  
Compute and purchase stores accordingly —  
And if in pique because he overhauls  
Your Jerome, piano and bath, you come on board  
Bare — why you cut a figure at the first,  
While sympathetic landsmen see you off ;  
Not afterwards, when, long ere half seas o'er,  
You peep up from your utterly naked boards  
Into some snug and well-appointed berth  
Like mine, for instance (try the cooler jug —

Put back the other, but don't jog the ice)  
 And mortified you mutter "Well and good —  
 He sits enjoying his sea-furniture —  
 'Tis stout and proper, and there 's store of it,  
 Though I've the better notion, all agree,  
 Of fitting rooms up! hang the carpenter,  
 Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances —  
 I would have brought my Jerome, frame and all!"  
 And meantime you bring nothing: never mind —  
 You've proved your artist-nature: what you don't,  
 You might bring, so despise me, as I say.

Now come, let's backward to the starting place.  
 See my way: we're two college friends, suppose —  
 Prepare together for our voyage, then,  
 Each note and check the other in his work, —  
 Here's mine, a bishop's outfit; criticize!  
 What's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too?

Why, first, you don't believe, you don't and can't,  
 (Not stately, that is, and fixedly  
 And absolutely and exclusively)  
 In any revelation called divine.  
 No dogmas nail your faith — and what remains  
 But say so, like the honest man you are?  
 First, therefore, overhaul theology!  
 Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think,  
 Must find believing every whit as hard,  
 And if I do not frankly say as much,  
 The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now, wait, my friend: well, I do not believe —  
 If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed,  
 Absolute and exclusive, as you say.  
 (You're wrong — I mean to prove it in due time)  
 Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie  
 I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,  
 So give up hope accordingly to solve —  
 (To you, and over the wine.) Our dogmas then  
 With both of us, tho' in unlike degree,  
 Missing full credence — overboard with them!  
 I mean to meet you on your own premise —  
 Good, there go mine in company with yours!

And now what are we? unbelievers both,  
 Calm and complete, determinately fixed  
 To-day, to-morrow, and forever, pray?  
 You'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think.  
 In nowise! all we've gained is, that belief,  
 As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,  
 Confounds us like its predecessor. Where's  
 The gain? how can we guard our unbelief,  
 Make it bear fruit to us? — the problem here.  
 Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,  
 A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,  
 A chorus-ending from Euripides, —  
 And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears  
 As old and new at once as nature's self,  
 To rap and knock and enter in our soul,  
 Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,

Round the ancient idol, on his base again, —  
 The grand Perhaps! we look on helplessly, —  
 There the old misgivings, crooked questions are —  
 This good God, — what he could do, if he would,  
 Would, if he could — then must have done long since.  
 If so, when, where, and how? some way must be, —  
 Once feel about, and soon or late you hit  
 Some sense, in which it might be, after all.  
 Why not, “The Way, the Truth, the Life?”

— That way

Over the mountain, which who stands upon  
 Is apt to doubt if it's indeed a road;  
 While if he views it from the waste itself,  
 Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,  
 Not vague, mistakable! what's a break or two  
 Seen from the unbroken desert either side?  
 And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)  
 What if the breaks themselves should prove at last  
 The most consummate of contrivances  
 To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith, —  
 And so we stumble at truth's very test?  
 What have we gained then by our unbelief  
 But a life of doubt diversified by faith,  
 For one of faith diversified by doubt.  
 We called the chess-board white, — we call it black.

“Well,” you rejoin, “the end's no worse, at least,  
 We've reason for both colours on the board.

Why not confess, then, where I drop the faith  
And you the doubt, that I'm as right as you?"

Because, friend, in the next place, this being so,  
And both things even, — faith and unbelief  
Left to a man's choice, — we'll proceed a step,  
Returning to our image, which I like.

A man's choice, yes — but a cabin-passenger's —  
The man made for the special life of the world —  
Do you forget him? I remember though!  
Consult our ship's conditions and you find  
One and but one choice suitable to all,  
The choice that you unluckily prefer,  
Turning things topsy-turvy — they or it  
Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief  
Bears upon life, determines its whole course,  
Begins at its beginning. See the world  
Such as it is, — you made it not, nor I;  
I mean to take it as it is, — and you  
Not so you'll take it, — though you get nought else.  
I know the special kind of life I like,  
What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,  
Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit  
In power, peace, pleasantness, and length of days.  
I find that positive belief does this  
For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.  
— For you, it does, however — that we'll try!  
Tis clear, I cannot lead my life, at least



Induce the world to let me peaceably,  
Without declaring at the outset, " Friends,  
I absolutely and peremptorily  
Believe ! " — I say faith is my waking life.  
One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,  
We know, but waking 's the main point with us,  
And my provision 's for life's waking part.  
Accordingly, I use heart, head and hands  
All day, I build, scheme, study and make friends ;  
And when night overtakes me, down I lie,  
Sleep, dream a little, and get done with it,  
The sooner the better, to begin afresh.  
What 's midnight's doubt before the dayspring's faith ?  
You, the philosopher, that disbelieve,  
That recognize the night, give dreams their weight —  
To be consistent you should keep your bed,  
Abstain from healthy acts that prove you a man,  
For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares !  
And certainly at night you 'll sleep and dream,  
Live through the day and bustle as you please.  
And so you live to sleep as I to wake,  
To unbelieve as I to still believe ?  
Well, and the common sense of the world calls you  
Bed-ridden, — and its good things come to me.  
Its estimation, which is half the fight,  
That 's the first cabin-comfort I secure —  
The next . . . but you perceive with half an eye !  
Come, come, it 's best believing, if we can —  
You can't but own that.

Next, concede again —

If once we choose belief, on all accounts  
 We can't be too decisive in our faith,  
 Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,  
 To suit the world which gives us the good things.  
 In every man's career are certain points  
 Whereon he dares not be indifferent ;  
 The world detects him clearly, if he is,  
 As baffled at the game, and losing life.  
 He may care little or he may care much  
 For riches, honour, pleasure, work, repose,  
 Since various theories of life and life's  
 Success are extant which might easily  
 Comport with either estimate of these,  
 And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,  
 Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool  
 Because his fellows would choose otherwise.  
 We let him choose upon his own account  
 So long as he's consistent with his choice.  
 But certain points, left wholly to himself,  
 When once a man has arbitrated on,  
 We say he must succeed there or go hang.  
 Thus, he should wed the woman he loves most  
 Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or need —  
 For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch  
 Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,  
 The form of faith his conscience holds the best,  
 Whate'er the process of conviction was.  
 For nothing can compensate his mistake

On such a point, the man himself being judge —  
 He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul.

Well now — there 's one great form of Christian faith  
 I happened to be born in — which to teach  
 Was given me as I grew up, on all hands,  
 As best and readiest means of living by ;  
 The same on examination being proved  
 The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise  
 And absolute form of faith in the whole world —  
 Accordingly, most potent of all forms  
 For working on the world. Observe, my friend,  
 Such as you know me, I am free to say,  
 In these hard latter days which hamper one,  
 Myself, by no immoderate exercise  
 Of intellect and learning, and the tact  
 To let external forces work for me,  
 Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread,  
 Bid Peter's creed, or, rather, Hildebrand's,  
 Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world  
 And make my life an ease and joy and pride,  
 It does so, — which for me 's a great point gained,  
 Who have a soul and body that exact  
 A comfortable care in many ways.  
 There 's power in me and will to dominate  
 Which I must exercise, they hurt me else :  
 In many ways I need mankind's respect,  
 Obedience, and the love that 's born of fear :  
 While at the same time, there 's a taste I have,

A toy of soul, a titillating thing,  
 Refuses to digest these dainties crude.  
 The naked life is gross till clothed upon :  
 I must take what men offer, with a grace  
 As though I would not, could I help it, take !  
 An uniform to wear though over-rich —  
 Something imposed on me, no choice of mine ;  
 No fancy-dress worn for pure fashion's sake  
 And despicable therefore ! now men kneel  
 And kiss my hand — of course the Church's hand.  
 Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,  
 And thus that it should be I have procured ;  
 And thus it could not be another way,  
 I venture to imagine.

You 'll reply —

So far my choice, no doubt, is a success ;  
 But were I made of better elements,  
 With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you,  
 I hardly would account the thing success  
 Though it do all for me I say.

But, friend,

We speak of what is — not of what might be,  
 And how 'twere better if 'twere otherwise.  
 I am the man you see here plain enough —  
 Grant I'm a beast, why beasts must lead beasts' lives !  
 Suppose I own at once to tail and claws —  
 The tailless man exceeds me ; but being tailed

I'll lash out lion-fashion, and leave apes  
To dock their stump and dress their haunches up.  
My business is not to remake myself  
But make the absolute best of what God made.  
Or — our first simile — though you proved me doomed  
To a viler berth still, to the steerage-hole,  
The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should strive  
To make what use of each were possible ;  
And as this cabin gets upholstery,  
That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast  
I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes  
Enumerated so complacently,  
On the mere ground that you forsooth can find  
In this particular life I choose to lead  
No fit provision for them. Can you not ?  
Say you, my fault is I address myself  
To grosser estimators than I need,  
And that's no way of holding up the soul —  
Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows  
One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools', —  
Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that ?  
I pine among my million imbeciles  
{You think} aware some dozen men of sense  
Eye me and know me, whether I believe  
In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,  
And am a fool, or disbelieve in her  
And am a knave, — approve in neither case,

Withhold their voices though I look their way  
 Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end  
 (The thing they gave at Florence, — what's its name?)  
 While the mad houseful's plaudits near out-bang  
 His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,  
 He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths  
 Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here —  
 For even your prime men who appraise their kind  
 Are men still, catch a thing within a thing,  
 See more in a truth than the truth's simple self,  
 Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street  
 Sixty the minute; what's to note in that?  
 You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack;  
 Him you must watch — he's sure to fall, yet stands!  
 Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things.  
 The honest thief, the tender murderer,  
 The superstitious atheist, demireps  
 That love and save their souls in new French books —  
 We watch while these in equilibrium keep  
 The giddy line midway: one step aside,  
 They're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line  
 Before your sages, — just the men to shrink  
 From the gross weights, coarse scales, and labels broad  
 You offer their refinement. Fool or knave?  
 Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave  
 When there's a thousand diamond weights between?  
 So I enlist them. Your picked Twelve, you'll find,

Profess themselves indignant, scandalized  
 At thus being held unable to explain  
 How a superior man who disbelieves  
 May not believe as well: that's Schelling's way!  
 It's through my coming in the tail of time,  
 Nicking the minute with a happy tact.  
 Had I been born three hundred years ago  
 They'd say, "What's strange? Blougram of course  
     believes;"

And, seventy years since, "disbelieves of course."  
 But now, "He may believe; and yet, and yet  
 How can he?" — All eyes turn with interest.  
 Whereas, step off the line on either side —  
 You, for example, clever to a fault,  
 The rough and ready man that write apace,  
 Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less —  
 You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares?  
 Lord So-and-So — his coat bedropt with wax,  
 All Peter's chains about his waist, his back  
 Brave with the needlework of Noodledom,  
 Believes! Again, who wonders and who cares?  
 But I, the man of sense and learning too,  
 The able to think yet act, the this, the that,  
 I, to believe at this late time of day!  
 Enough; you see, I need not fear contempt.

— Except it's yours! admire me as these may,  
 You don't. But what at least do you admire?  
 Present your own perfections, your ideal,

Your pattern man for a minute — oh, make haste !  
 Is it Napoleon you would have us grow ?  
 Concede the means ; allow his head and hand,  
 (A large concession, clever as you are)  
 Good ! — In our common primal element  
 Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know —  
 We 're still at that admission, recollect)  
 Where do you find — apart from, towering-o'er  
 The secondary temporary aims  
 Which satisfy the gross tastes you despise —  
 Where do you find his star ? — his crazy trust  
 God knows through what or in what ? it 's alive  
 And shines and leads him and that 's all we want.  
 Have we aught in our sober night shall point  
 Such ends as his were, and direct the means  
 Of working out our purpose straight as his,  
 Nor bring a moment's trouble on success  
 With after-care to justify the same ?  
 — Be a Napoleon and yet disbelieve !  
 Why, the man 's mad, friend, take his light away.  
 What 's the vague good of the world for which you 'd  
     dare  
 With comfort to yourself blow millions up ?  
 We neither of us see it ! we do see  
 The blown-up millions — spatter of their brains  
 And writhing of their bowels and so forth,  
 In that bewildering entanglement  
 Of horrible eventualities  
 Past calculation to the end of time !



**Jan** I mistake for some clear word of God  
 (Which were my ample warrant for it all)  
 His puff of hazy instincts, idle talk,  
 "The state, that 's I," quack-nonsense about kings,  
 And (when one beats the man to his last hold)  
 The vague idea of setting things to rights,  
 Policing people efficaciously,  
 More to their profit, most of all to his own ;  
 The whole to end that dismallest of ends  
 By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the church,  
 And resurrection of the old *régime*.  
 Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,  
 Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such ?  
 No: for, concede me but the merest chance  
 Doubt may be wrong — there 's judgment, life to come !  
 With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt proves right ?  
 This present life is all ? you offer me  
 Its dozen noisy years with not a chance  
 That wedding an Arch-Duchess, wearing lace,  
 And getting called by divers new-coined names,  
 Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine,  
 Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like !  
 Therefore, I will not.

Take another case ;

Fit up the cabin yet another way.  
 What say you to the poet's ? shall we write  
 Hamlets, Othellos — make the world our own,  
 Without a risk to run of either sort ?

I can't! — to put the strongest reason first.  
‘But try,’ you urge, “the trying shall suffice :  
The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life.  
Try to be Shakspeare, leave the rest to fate !”  
Spare my self-knowledge — there 's no fooling me !  
If I prefer remaining my poor self,  
I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.  
If I'm a Shakspeare, let the well alone —  
Why should I try to be what now I am ?  
If I'm no Shakspeare, as too probable, —  
His power and consciousness and self-delight  
And all we want in common, shall I find —  
Trying forever? while on points of taste  
Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and I  
Are dowered alike — I'll ask you, I or he,  
Which in our two lives realizes most ?  
Much, he imagined — somewhat, I possess.  
He had the imagination ; stick to that !  
Let him say “In the face of my soul's works  
Your world is worthless and I touch it not  
Lest I should wrong them ” — I withdraw my plea.  
But does he say so? look upon his life !  
Himself, who only can, gives judgment there.  
He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces  
To build the trimmest house in Stratford town ;  
Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things,  
Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's lute ;  
Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too,  
And none more, had he seen its entry once,

Than "Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal."  
Why then should I who play that personage,  
The very Pandulph Shakspeare's fancy made,  
Be told that had the poet chanced to start  
From where I stand now (some degree like mine  
Being just the goal he ran his race to reach)  
He would have run the whole race back, forsooth,  
And left being Pandulph, to begin write plays?  
Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's best!  
Did Shakspeare live, he could but sit at home  
And get himself in dreams the Vatican,  
Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls,  
And English books, none equal to his own,  
Which I read, bound in gold, (he never did.)  
— Terni and Naples' bay and Gothard's top —  
Eh, friend? I could not fancy one of these —  
But, as I pour this claret, there they are —  
I've gained them — crossed St. Gothard last July  
With ten mules to the carriage and a bed  
Slung inside; is my hap the worse for that?  
We want the same things, Shakspeare and myself,  
And what I want, I have: he, gifted more,  
Could fancy he too had it when he liked,  
But not so thoroughly that if fate allowed  
He would not have it also in my sense.  
We play one game. I send the ball aloft  
No less adroitly that of fifty strokes  
Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high  
Which sends them back to me: I wish and get.

He struck balls higher and with better skill,  
 But at a poor fence level with his head,  
 And hit — his Stratford house, a coat of arms,  
 Successful dealings in his grain and wool,—  
 While I receive heaven's incense in my nose  
 And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess.  
 Ask him, if this life's all, who wins the game?

Believe — and our whole argument breaks up.  
 Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat;  
 Only, we can't command it; fire and life  
 Are all, dead matter's nothing, we agree:  
 And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,  
 The fact's the same, — belief's fire once in us,  
 Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself.  
 We penetrate our life with such a glow  
 As fire lends wood and iron — this turns steel,  
 That burns to ash — all's one, fire proves its power  
 For good or ill, since men call flare success.  
 But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn.  
 Light one in me, I'll find it food enough!  
 Why, to be Luther — that's a life to lead,  
 Incomparably better than my own.  
 He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says,  
 Sets up God's rule again by simple means,  
 Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.  
 He flared out in the flaring of mankind;  
 Such Luther's luck was — how shall such be mine?  
 If he succeeded, nothing's left to do:

And if he did not altogether — well,  
 Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be  
 I might be also. But to what result?  
 He looks upon no future: Luther did.  
 What can I gain on the denying side?  
 Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts,  
 Read the text right, emancipate the world —  
 The emancipated world enjoys itself  
 With scarce a thank-you — Blougram told it first  
 It could not owe a farthing, — not to him  
 More than St. Paul! 'twould press its pay, you think  
 Then add there's still that plaguey hundredth chance  
 Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run —  
 For what gain? not for Luther's, who secured  
 A real heaven in his heart throughout his life,  
 Supposing death a little altered things!

“Ay, but since really I lack faith,” you cry,  
 “I run the same risk really on all sides,  
 In cool indifference as bold unbelief.  
 As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.  
 It's not worth having, such imperfect faith,  
 Nor more available to do faith's work  
 Than unbelief like yours. Whole faith, or none!”

Softly, my friend! I must dispute that point.  
 Once own the use of faith, I'll find you faith.  
 We're back on Christian ground. You call for faith:  
 I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.

The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,  
 If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does?  
 By life and man's free will, God gave for that!  
 To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice:  
 That's our one act, the previous work's His own.  
 You criticize the soil? it reared this tree—  
 This broad life and whatever fruit it bears!  
 What matter though I doubt at every pore,  
 Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,  
 Doubts in the trivial work of every day,  
 Doubts at the very bases of my soul  
 In the grand moments when she probes herself—  
 If finally I have a life to show,  
 The thing I did, brought out in evidence  
 Against the thing done to me underground  
 By Hell and all its brood, for aught I know?  
 I say, whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt?  
 All's doubt in me; where's break of faith in this?  
 It is the idea, the feeling and the love  
 God means mankind should strive for and show forth,  
 Whatever be the process to that end,—  
 And not historic knowledge, logic sound,  
 And metaphysical acumen, sure!  
 'What think ye of Christ,' friend? when all's done  
 and said,  
 You like this Christianity or not?  
 It may be false, but will you wish it true?  
 Has it your vote to be so if it can?  
 Trust you an instinct silenced long ago

That will break silence and enjoin you love  
 What mortified philosophy is hoarse,  
 And all in vain, with bidding you despise?  
 If you desire faith — then you 've faith enough.  
 What else seeks God — nay, what else seek ourselves?  
 You form a notion of me, we 'll suppose,  
 On hearsay; it's a favourable one:  
 "But still," (you add,) "there was no such good man,  
 Because of contradictions in the facts.  
 One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome,  
 This Blougram — yet throughout the tales of him  
 I see he figures as an Englishman."  
 Well, the two things are reconcilable  
 But would I rather you discovered that,  
 Subjoining — "Still, what matter though they be?  
 Blougram concerns me nought, born here or there."

Pure faith indeed — you know not what you ask!  
 Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,  
 Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much  
 The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.  
 It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare.  
 Some think, Creation's meant to show him forth:  
 I say, it's meant to hide him all it can,  
 And that's what all the blessed Evil's for.  
 Its use in time is to environ us,  
 Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough  
 Against that sight till we can bear its stress.  
 Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain

And lidless eye and disimprisoned heart  
 Less certainly would wither up at once  
 Than mind, confronted with the truth of **Him**.  
 But time and earth case-harden us to live ;  
 The feeblest sense is trusted most ; the child  
 Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place,  
 Plays on and grows to be a man like us.  
 With me, faith means perpetual unbelief  
 Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot  
 Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.  
 Or, if that 's too ambitious, — here 's my box —  
 I need the excitation of a pinch  
 Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose  
 Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes.  
 " Leave it in peace " advise the simple folk —  
 Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,  
 Say I — let doubt occasion still more faith !

You 'll say, once all believed, man, woman, child,  
 In that dear middle-age these noodles praise.  
 How you 'd exult if I could put you back  
 Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,  
 Geology, ethnology, what not,  
 (Greek endings with the little passing-bell  
 That signifies some faith 's about to die)  
 And set you square with Genesis again, —  
 When such a traveller told you his last news,  
 He saw the ark a-top of Ararat  
 But did not climb there since 'twas getting dusk



And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot !  
 How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,  
 How act ? As other people felt and did ;  
 With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,  
 Believe — and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate  
 Full in belief's face, like the beast you 'd be !

No, when the fight begins within himself,  
 A man 's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,  
 Satan looks up between his feet — both tug —  
 He 's left, himself, in the middle : the soul wakes  
 And grows. Prolong that battle through his life !  
 Never leave growing till the life to come !  
 Here, we 've got callous to the Virgin's winks  
 That used to puzzle people wholesomely —  
 Men have outgrown the shame of being fools.  
 What are the laws of Nature not to bend  
 If the Church bid them, brother Newman asks.  
 Up with the Immaculate Conception, then —  
 On to the rack with faith — is my advice !  
 Will not that hurry us upon our knees  
 Knocking our breasts, " It can't be — yet it shall !  
 Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope ?  
 Low things confound the high things ! " and so forth.  
 That 's better than acquitting God with grace .  
 As some folks do. He 's tried — no case is proved,  
 Philosophy is lenient — He may go !

You 'll say — the old system 's not so obsolete

But men believe still : ay, but who and where ?  
 King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet  
 The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes ;  
 But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint  
 Believes God watches him continually,  
 As he believes in fire that it will burn,  
 Or rain that it will drench him ? Break fire's law,  
 Sin against rain, although the penalty  
 Be just a singe or soaking ? No, he smiles ;  
 Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves.

The sum of all is — yes, my doubt is great,  
 My faith's the greater — then my faith's enough.  
 I have read much, thought much, experienced **much**,  
 Yet would die rather than avow my fear  
 The Naples' liquefaction may be false,  
 When set to happen by the palace-clock  
 According to the clouds or dinner-time.  
 I hear you recommend, I might at least  
 Eliminate, decrassify my faith  
 Since I adopt it ; keeping what I must  
 And leaving what I can — such points as **this** !  
 I won't — that is, I can't throw one away.  
 Supposing there's no truth in what I said  
 About the need of trials to man's faith,  
 Still, when you bid me purify the same,  
 To such a process I discern no end,  
 Clearing off one excrescence to see two ;  
 There's ever a next in size, now grown as **big**,

That meets the knife — I cut and cut again !  
 First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last  
 But Fichte's clever cut at God himself ?  
 Experimentalize on sacred things :  
 I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain  
 To stop betimes : they all get drunk alike.  
 The first step, I am master not to take.

You 'd find the cutting-process to your taste  
 As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,  
 Nor see more danger in it, you retort.  
 Your taste's worth mine ; but my taste proves **more wise**  
 When we consider that the steadfast hold  
 On the extreme end of the chain of faith  
 Gives all the advantage, makes the difference,  
 With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule  
 We are their lords, or they are free of us  
 Just as we tighten or relax that hold.  
 So, other matters equal, we'll revert  
 To the first problem — which if solved my way  
 And thrown into the balance turns the scale —  
 How we may lead a comfortable life,  
 How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.

Of course you are remarking all this time  
 How narrowly and grossly I view life,  
 Respect the creature-comforts, care to rule  
 The masses, and regard complacently  
 "The cabin," in our old phrase ! Well, I do.

I act for, talk for, live for this world now,  
 As this world calls for action, life and talk —  
 No prejudice to what next world may prove, \*  
 Whose new laws and requirements my best pledge  
 To observe then, is that I observe these now,  
 Doing hereafter what I do meanwhile.  
 Let us concede (gratuitously though)  
 Next life relieves the soul of body, yields  
 Pure spiritual enjoyments: well, my friend,  
 Why lose this life in the mean time, since its use  
 May be to make the next life more intense?

Do you know, I have often had a dream  
 (Work it up in your next month's article)  
 Of man's poor spirit in its progress still  
 Losing true life forever and a day  
 Through ever trying to be and ever being  
 In the evolution of successive spheres,  
 Before its actual sphere and place of life,  
 Half-way into the next, which having reached,  
 It shoots with corresponding foolery  
 Half-way into the next still, on and off!  
 As when a traveller, bound from north to south,  
 Scouts fur in Russia — what's its use in France?  
 In France spurns flannel — where's its need in Spain?  
 In Spain drops cloth — too cumbrous for Algiers!  
 Linen goes next, and last the skin itself,  
 A superfluity at Timbuctoo.  
 When, through his journey, was the fool at ease?

I'm at ease now, friend — worldly in this world  
 I take and like its way of life ; I think  
 My brothers who administer the means  
 Live better for my comfort — that's good too ;  
 And God, if he pronounce upon it all,  
 Approves my service, which is better still.  
 If He keep silence, — why for you or me  
 Or that brute-beast pulled-up in to-day's " Times."  
 What odds is 't, save to ourselves, what life we lead ?

You meet me at this issue — you declare,  
 All special-pleading done with, truth is truth,  
 And justifies itself by undreamed ways.  
 You don't fear but it's better, if we doubt,  
 To say so, acting up to our truth perceived  
 However feebly. Do then, — act away !  
 'Tis there I'm on the watch for you ! How one acts  
 Is, both of us agree, our chief concern :  
 And how you'll act is what I fain would see  
 If, like the candid person you appear,  
 You dare to make the most of your life's scheme  
 As I of mine, live up to its full law  
 Since there's no higher law that counterchecks.  
 Put natural religion to the test  
 You've just demolished the revealed with — quick,  
 Down to the root of all that checks your will,  
 All prohibition to lie, kill, and thief  
 Or even to be an atheistic priest !  
 Suppose a pricking to incontinence —

Philosophers deduce you chastity  
 Or shame, from just the fact that at the first  
 Whoso embraced a woman in the plain,  
 Threw club down, and forewent his brains beside,  
 So stood a ready victim in the reach  
 Of any brother-savage club in hand —  
 Hence saw the use of going out of sight  
 In wood or cave to prosecute his loves —  
 I read this in a French book t'other day.  
 Does law so analyzed coerce you much?  
 Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where matters end,  
 But you who reach where the first thread begins,  
 You 'll soon cut that! — which means you can, but won't  
 Through certain instincts, blind, unreasoned-out,  
 You dare not set aside, you can't tell why,  
 But there they are, and so you let them rule.  
 Then, friend, you seem as much a slave as I,  
 A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite,  
 Without the good the slave expects to get,  
 Suppose he has a master after all!  
 You own your instincts — why what else do I,  
 Who want, am made for, and must have a God  
 ere I can be aught, do aught? — no mere name  
 Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth,  
 To wit, a relation from that thing to me,  
 Touching from head to foot — which touch I feel,  
 And with it take the rest, this life of ours!  
 I live my life here; yours you dare not live.

Not as I state it, who (you please subjoin)

Disfigure such a life and call it names,  
 While, in your mind, remains another way  
 For simple men : knowledge and power have rights,  
 But ignorance and weakness have rights too.  
 There needs no crucial effort to find truth  
 If here or there or anywhere about —  
 We ought to turn each side, try hard and see,  
 And if we can't, be glad we 've earned at least  
 The right, by one laborious proof the more,  
 To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage.  
 Men are not gods, but, properly, are brutes.  
 Something we may see, all we cannot see —  
 What need of lying? I say, I see all,  
 And swear to each detail the most minute  
 In what I think a man's face — you, mere cloud :  
 I swear I hear him speak and see him wink,  
 For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,  
 Mankind may doubt if there 's a cloud at all.  
 You take the simpler life — ready to see,  
 Willing to see — for no cloud 's worth a face —  
 And leaving quiet what no strength can move,  
 And which, who bids you move? who has the right?  
 I bid you ; but you are God's sheep, not mine —  
 "*Pastor est tui Dominus.*" You find  
 In these the pleasant pastures of this life  
 Much you may eat without the least offence,  
 Much you don't eat because your maw objects,  
 Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock  
 Open great eyes at you and even butt,

And thereupon you like your friends so much  
 You cannot please yourself, offending them —  
 Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,  
 You weigh your pleasure with their butts and kicks  
 And strike the balance. Sometimes certain fears  
 Restrain you — real checks since you find them so —  
 Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks ;  
 And thus you graze through life with not one lie,  
 And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name ?

If so, you beat — which means — you are not I —  
 Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill  
 Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with,  
 But motioned to the velvet of the sward  
 By those obsequious whethers' very selves.  
 Look at me, sir ; my age is double yours.  
 At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed,  
 What now I should be — as, permit the word,  
 I pretty well imagine your whole range  
 And stretch of tether twenty years to come.  
 We both have minds and bodies much alike.  
 In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric,  
 My daily bread, my influence and my state ?  
 You're young, I'm old, you must be old one day ;  
 Will you find then, as I do hour by hour,  
 Women their lovers kneel to, that cut curls  
 From your fat lapdog's ears to grace a brooch —  
 Dukes, that petition just to kiss your ring —



With much beside you know or may conceive?  
Suppose we die to-night: well, here am I,  
Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me,  
While writing all the same my articles  
On music, poetry, the fictile vase  
Found at Albano, or Anacreon's Greck.  
But you — the highest honour in your life,  
The thing you 'll crown yourself with, all your **days**,  
Is — dining here and drinking this last glass  
I pour you out in sign of amity  
Before we part forever. Of your power  
And social influence, worldly worth in short,  
Judge what 's my estimation by the fact —  
I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,  
Hint secrecy on one of all these words!  
You 're shrewd and know that should you publish it  
The world would brand the lie — my enemies first,  
"Who 'd sneer — the bishop 's an arch-hypocrite,  
And knave perhaps, but not so frank a fool."  
Whereas I should not dare for both my ears  
Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile,  
Before my chaplain who reflects myself —  
My shade 's so much more potent than your flesh.  
What 's your reward, self-abnegating friend?  
Stood you confessed of those exceptiona'  
And privileged great natures that dwarf mine —  
A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,  
A poet just about to print his ode,  
A statesman with a scheme to stop this war,

An artist whose religion is his art,  
 I should have nothing to object! such men  
 Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,  
 Their drugget's worth my purple, they beat me.  
 But you, — you're just as little those as I —  
 You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,  
 Write stately for Blackwood's Magazine,  
 Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul  
 Unseized by the Germans yet — which view you'll print —  
 Meantime the best you have to show being still  
 That lively lightsome article we took  
 Almost for the true Dickens, — what's the name?  
 "The Slum and Cellar — or Whitechapel life  
 Limned after dark!" it made me laugh, I know,  
 And pleased a month and brought you in ten pounds  
 — Success I recognize and compliment,  
 And therefore give you, if you please, three words  
 (The card and pencil-scratch is quite enough)  
 Which whether here, in Dublin, or New York,  
 Will get you, prompt as at my eyebrow's wink,  
 Such terms as never you aspired to get  
 In all our own reviews and some not ours.  
 Go write your lively sketches — be the first  
 "Blougram, or The Eccentric Confidence" —  
 Or better simply say, "The Outward-bound."  
 Why, men as soon would throw it in my teeth  
 As copy and quote the infamy chalked broad  
 About me on the church-door opposite.  
 You will not wait for that experience though,

I fancy, howsoever you decide,  
 To discontinue — not detesting, not  
 Defaming, but at least — despising me !

---

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour  
 Sylvester Blougram, styled *in partibus*  
*Episcopus, nec non* — (the deuce knows what  
 It's changed to by our novel hierarchy)  
 With Gigadibs the literary man,  
 Who played with spoons, explored his plate's design  
 And ranged the olive stones about its edge,  
 While the great bishop rolled him out his mind.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke.  
 The other portion, as he shaped it thus  
 For argumentatory purposes,  
 He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.  
 Some arbitrary accidental thoughts  
 That crossed his mind, amusing because new,  
 He chose to represent as fixtures there,  
 Invariable convictions (such they seemed  
 Beside his interlocutor's loose cards  
 Flung daily down, and not the same way twice)  
 While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue  
 Is never bold to utter in their truth  
 Because styled hell-deep (it is an old mistake  
 To place hell at the bottom of the earth)  
 He ignored these, — not having in readiness

Their nomenclature and philosophy :

He said true things, but called them by wrong names.

“ On the whole,” he thought, “ I justify myself

On every point where cavillers like this

Oppugn my life : he tries one kind of fence —

I close — he 's worsted, that 's enough for him ;

He 's on the ground ! if the ground should break away

I take my stand on, there 's a firmer yet

Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.

His ground was over mine and broke the first.

So let him sit with me this many a year ! ”

He did not sit five minutes. Just a week

Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.

(Something had struck him in the “ Outward-bound ”

Another way than Blougram's purpose was)

And having bought, not cabin-furniture

But settler's-implements (enough for three)

And started for Australia — there, I hope,

By this time he has tested his first plough,

And studied his last chapter of St. John.

## MEMORABILIA.

1.

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

2.

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

3.

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

4.

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

## ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

**BUT** do not let us quarrel any more,  
No, my Lucrezia ; bear with me for once :  
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.  
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart ?  
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,  
Treat his own subject after his own way,  
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,  
And shut the money into this small hand  
When next it takes mine. Will it ? tenderly ?  
Oh, I'll content him, — but to-morrow, Love !  
I often am much wearier than you think,  
This evening more than usual, and it seems  
As if — forgive now — should you let me sit  
Here by the window with your hand in mine  
And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,  
Both of one mind, as married people use,  
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,  
I might get up to-morrow to my work  
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.  
To-morrow how you shall be glad for this !

Your soft hand is a woman of itself,  
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.  
Don't count the time lost, either ; you must serve  
For each of the five pictures we require —  
It saves a model. So ! keep looking so —  
My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds !  
— How could you ever prick those perfect ears,  
Even to put the pearl there ! oh, so sweet —  
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,  
Which everybody looks on and calls his,  
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,  
While she looks — no one's : very dear, no less !  
You smile ? why, there's my picture ready made.  
There's what we painters call our harmony !  
A common grayness silvers every thing, —  
All in a twilight, you and I alike  
— You, at the point of your first pride in me  
(That's gone you know,) — but I, at every point ;  
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down  
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.  
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top ;  
That length of convent-wall across the way  
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;  
The last monk leaves the garden ; days decrease  
And autumn grows, autumn in every thing.  
Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a shape  
As if I saw alike my work and self  
And all that I was born to be and do,  
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.

How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead !  
 So free we seem, so fettered fast we are :  
 I feel he laid the fetter : let it lie !  
 This chamber for example — turn your head —  
 All that's behind us ! you don't understand  
 Nor care to understand about my art,  
 But you can hear at least when people speak ;  
 And that cartoon, the second from the door  
 — It is the thing, Love ! so such things should be --  
 Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.  
 I can do with my pencil what I know,  
 What I see, what at bottom of my heart  
 I wish for, if I ever wish so deep —  
 Do easily, too — when I say perfectly  
 I do not boast, perhaps : yourself are judge  
 Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,  
 And just as much they used to say in France.  
 At any rate 'tis easy, all of it,  
 No sketches first, no studies, that's long past —  
 I do what many dream of all their lives  
 — Dream ? strive to do, and agonize to do,  
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such  
 On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,  
 Who strive — you don't know how the others **strive**  
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared  
 Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,  
 Yet do much less, so much less, some one says,  
 (I know his name, no matter) so much less !  
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia ! I am judged.



There burns a truer light of God in them,  
 In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,  
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt  
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.  
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,  
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,  
 Enter and take their place there sure enough,  
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.  
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.  
 The sudden blood of these men! at a word —  
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.  
 I, painting from myself and to myself,  
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame  
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks  
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,  
 His hue mistaken — what of that? or else,  
 Rightly traced and well ordered — what of that?  
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
 Or what's a Heaven for? all is silver-gray  
 Placid and perfect with my art — the worse!  
 I know both what I want and what might gain —  
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh  
 "Had I been two, another and myself,  
 Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No  
 doubt.

Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth  
 The Urbinate who died five years ago.  
 ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)  
 Well, I can fancy how he did it all.

Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,  
Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish him,  
Above and through his art — for it gives way ;  
That arm is wrongly put — and there again —  
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,  
Its body, so to speak ! its soul is right,  
He means right — that, a child may understand.  
Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it.  
But all the play, the insight and the stretch —  
Out of me ! out of me ! And wherefore out ?  
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,  
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.  
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think —  
More than I merit, yes, by many times.  
But had you — oh, with the same perfect brow,  
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,  
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird  
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare —  
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind  
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged  
“ God and the glory ! never care for gain.  
The present by the future, what is that ?  
Live for fame, side by side with Angelo —  
Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three ! ”  
I might have done it for you. So it seems —  
Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.  
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self ;  
The rest avail not. Why do I need you ?  
What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo ?

In this world, who can do a thing, will not —  
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :  
Yet the will's somewhat — somewhat, too, the power —  
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,  
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.  
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,  
That I am something underrated here,  
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.  
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,  
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.  
The best is when they pass and look aside ;  
But they speak sometimes ; I must bear it all.  
Well may they speak ! That Francis, that first time,  
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau !  
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,  
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,  
In that humane great monarch's golden look, —  
One finger on his beard, or twisted eurl  
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,  
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,  
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,  
You painting proudly with his breath on me,  
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,  
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls  
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts; —  
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,  
This in the background, waiting on my work,  
To crown the issue with a last reward !  
A good time, was it not, my kingly days ?

And had you not grown restless — but I know —  
 'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;  
 Too live the life grew, golden and not gray —  
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt  
 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.  
 How could it end in any other way?

You called me, and I came home to your heart.  
 The triumph was to have ended there — then if  
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?  
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,  
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!

“Rafael did this, Andrea painted that —  
 The Roman's is the better when you pray,  
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife —”  
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge  
 Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows  
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.

For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,  
 Said one day Angelo, his very self,  
 To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .

(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts  
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,  
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)

“Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub  
 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,  
 Who, were he set to plan and execute  
 As you are pricked on by your popes and kings,  
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!”  
 To Rafael's! — And indeed the arm is wrong.

I hardly dare — yet, only you to see,  
Give the chalk here — quick, thus the line should go!  
Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!  
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,  
(What he? why, who but Michael Angelo?  
Do you forget already words like those?)  
If really there was such a chance, so lost,  
Is, whether you're — not grateful — but more pleased.  
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!  
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?  
If you would sit thus by me every night  
I should work better, do you comprehend?  
I mean that I should earn more, give you more  
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;  
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,  
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.  
Come from the window, Love, — come in, at last,  
Inside the melancholy little house  
We built to be so gay with. God is just.  
King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights  
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,  
The walls become illumined, brick from brick  
Distinct, instead of mortar fierce bright gold,  
That gold of his I did cement them with!  
Let us but love each other. Must you go?  
'That Cousin here again? he waits outside?  
Must see you — you, and not with me? Those loans!  
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?  
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?

While hand and eye and something of a heart  
 Are left me, work 's my ware, and what 's it worth?  
 I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit  
 The gray remainder of the evening out,  
 Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly  
 How I could paint were I but back in France,  
 One picture, just one more — the Virgin's face,  
 Not your's this time! I want you at my side  
 To hear them — that is, Michael Angelo —  
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.  
 Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.  
 I take the subjects for his corridor,  
 Finish the portrait out of hand — there, there,  
 And throw him in another thing or two  
 If he demurs; the whole should prove enough  
 To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,  
 What's better and what's all I care about,  
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.  
 Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he  
 The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.  
 A regret little, I would change still less.  
 Since there my past life lies, why alter it?  
 The very wrong to Francis! it is true  
 I took his coin, was tempted and complied,  
 And built this house and sinned, and all is said.  
 My father and my mother died of want.  
 Well, had I riches of my own? you see

How one gets rich ! Let each one bear his lot.  
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died :  
And I have laboured somewhat in my time  
And not been paid profusely. Some good son  
Paint my two hundred pictures — let him try !  
No doubt, there 's something strikes a balance. Yes,  
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.  
This must suffice me here. What would one have ?  
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance —  
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem  
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,  
For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me  
To cover — the three first without a wife,  
While I have mine ! So — still they overcome  
Because there 's still Lucrezia, — as I choose.

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

## BEFORE.

1.

LET them fight it out, friend! things have gone too far  
God must judge the couple! leave them as they are  
— Whichever one's the guiltless, to his glory,  
And whichever one the guilt's with, to my story.

2.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,  
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,  
Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,  
Heaven with snaky Hell, in torture and entoilment?

3.

Which of them's the culprit, how must he conceive  
God's the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve!  
'Tis but decent to profess one's self beneath her.  
Still, one must not be too much in earnest either.

4.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes,  
Then go live his life out! life will try his nerves,  
When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure  
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.



## 5.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,  
 Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes  
 For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,  
 With the sly mute thing beside there for a warden.

## 6.

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant to his side,  
 A leer and lie in every eye on its obsequious hide?  
 When will come an end of all the mock obeisance,  
 And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

## 7.

So much for the culprit. Who's the martyred man?  
 Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can.  
 He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,  
 Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven.

## 8.

All or nothing, stake it! trusts he God or no?  
 Thus far and no further? further? be it so.  
 Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,  
 Sage provisos, sub-intents, and saving-clauses.

## 9.

Ah, "forgive" you bid him? While God's champion  
 lives,  
 Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why he forgives.  
 But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;  
 Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him

## 10.

Once more — Will the wronger, at this last of all,  
Dare to say "I did wrong," rising in his fall?  
No? — Let go, then — both the fighters to their places —  
While I count three, step you back as many paces.

ACT III.

**TAKE** the cloak from his face, and at first  
Let the corpse do its worst.

How he lies in his rights of a man !  
Death has done all death can.  
And absorbed in the new life he leads,  
He recks not, he heeds  
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance — both strike  
On his senses alike,  
And are lost in the solemn and strange  
Surprise of the change.  
Ha, what avails death to erase  
His offence, my disgrace ?  
I would we were boys as of old  
In the field, by the fold —  
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn  
Were so easily borne.

I stand here now, he lies in his place —  
Cover the face.

## IN THREE DAYS.

### 1.

So, I shall see her in three days  
And just one night, but nights are short,  
Then two long hours, and that is morn.  
See how I come, unchanged, unworn —  
Feel, where my life broke off from thine,  
How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—  
Only a touch and we combine !

### 2.

Too long, this time of year, the days !  
But nights — at least the nights are short.  
As night shows where her one moon is,  
A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,  
So, life's night gives my lady birth  
And my eyes hold her ! what is worth  
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth ?

### 3.

O loaded curls, release your store  
Of warmth and scent as once before

The tingling hair did, lights and darks  
Out-breaking into fairy sparks  
When under curl and curl I pried  
After the warmth and scent inside  
Thro' lights and darks how manifold —  
The dark inspired, the light controlled !  
As early Art embrowned the gold.

4.

What great fear — should one say, “ Three days  
That change the world, might change as well  
Your fortune ; and if joy delays,  
Be happy that no worse befell.”  
What small fear — if another says,  
“ Three days and one short night beside  
May throw no shadow on your ways ;  
But years must tēem with change untried,  
With chance not easily defied,  
With an end somewhere undescried.”  
No fear ! — or if a fear be born  
This minute, it dies out in scorn.  
Fear ? I shall see her in three days  
And one night, now the nights are short,  
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

**IN A YEAR.**

1.

**NEVER** any more  
While I live,  
Need I hope to see his **face**  
As before.  
Once his love grown chill,  
Mine may strive —  
Bitterly we re-embrace,  
Single still.

2.

Was it something said,  
Something done,  
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,  
Turn of head?  
Strange! that very way  
Love begun.  
I as little understand  
Love's decay.

## 3.

When I sewed or drew,  
I recall  
How he looked as if I sang,  
— Sweetly too.  
If I spoke a word,  
First of all  
Up his cheek the color sprang,  
Then he heard.

## 4.

Sitting by my side,  
At my feet,  
So he breathed the air I breathed,  
Satisfied!  
I, too, at love's brim  
Touched the sweet:  
I would die if death bequeathed  
Sweet to him.

## 5.

“Speak, I love thee best!”  
He exclaimed.  
“Let thy love my own foretell, —”  
I confessed:  
“Clasp my heart on thine  
Now unblamed,  
Since upon thy soul as well  
Hangeth mine!”

## 6.

Was it wrong to own,  
 Being truth?  
 Why should all the giving prove  
 His alone?  
 I had wealth and ease,  
 Beauty, youth —  
 Since my lover gave me love,  
 I gave these.

## 7.

That was all I meant,  
 — To be just,  
 And the passion I had raised  
 To content.  
 Since he chose to change  
 Gold for dust,  
 If I gave him what he praised  
 Was it strange?

## 8.

Would he loved me yet,  
 On and on,  
 While I found some way undreamed  
 — Paid my debt!  
 Gave more life and more,  
 'Till, all gone,  
 He should smile " She never seemed  
 Mine before.



## 9.

“ What — she felt the while,  
Must I think ?  
Love ’s so different with us men,”  
He should smile.  
“ Dying for my sake —  
White and pink !  
Can’t we touch these bubbles then  
But they break ? ”

## 10.

Dear, the pang is brief.  
Do thy part,  
Have thy pleasure. How perplex  
Grows belief !  
Well, this cold clay clod  
Was man’s heart.  
Crumble it — and what comes next ?  
Is it God ?

## OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE.

### 1.

**THE** morn when first it thunders in March,  
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say.  
**As I** leaned and looked over the aloed arch  
Of the villa-gate, this warm March day,  
No flash snapt, no dum thunder rolled  
In the valley beneath, where, white and wide,  
**Washed** by the morning's water-gold,  
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

### 2.

**River** and bridge and street and square  
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,  
Through the live translucent bath of air,  
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.  
**And of all I saw and of all I praised,**  
The most to praise and the best to see,  
**Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised :**  
But why did it more than startle me ?

## 3.

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,  
 Could you play me false who loved you so?  
 Some slights if a certain heart endures  
 It feels, I would have your fellows know!  
 'Faith — I perceive not why I should care  
 To break a silence that suits them best,  
 But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear  
 When I find a Giotto join the rest.

## 4.

On the arch where olives overhead  
 Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,  
 (That sharp-curved leaf they never shed)  
 'Twixt the aloes I used to lean in chief,  
 And mark through the winter afternoons,  
 By a gift God grants me now and then,  
 In the mild decline of those suns like moons,  
 Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

## 5.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go  
 For pleasure or profit, her men alive —  
 My business was hardly with them, I trow,  
 But with empty cells of the human hive;  
 — With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,  
 The church's apsis, aisle or nave,  
 Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch —  
 Its face, set full for the sun to shave.

## 6.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,  
 Wherever an outline weakens and wanes  
 Till the latest life in the painting stops,  
 Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains !  
 One, wishful each scrap should clutch its brick,  
 Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,  
 — A lion who dies of an ass's kick,  
 The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

## 7.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does !  
 They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,  
 The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz  
 Round the works of, you of the little wit ;  
 Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,  
 Now that they see God face to face,  
 And have all attained to be poets, I hope ?  
 'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

## 8.

Much they reckon of your praise and you !  
 But the wronged great souls — can they be quit  
 Of a world where all their work is to do,  
 Where you style them, you of the little wit,  
 Old Master this and Early the other,  
 Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows,  
 That a younger succeeds to an elder brother,  
 Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

## 9.

And here where your praise would yield returns

And a handsome word or two give help,

Here, after your kind, the mastiff gins

And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.

What, not a word for Stefano there

— Of brow once prominent and starry,

Called Nature's ape and the world's despair

For his peerless painting (see Vasari ?

## 10.

There he stands now. Study, my friends,

What a man's work comes to! so he plans it,

Performs it, perfects it, makes amends

For the toiling and moiling, and there 's its transit!

Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,

With upturned eye while the hand is busy,

Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour!

'Tis looking downward makes one dizzy.

## 11.

If you knew their work you would deal your dole.

May I take upon me to instruct you?

When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,

Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu* —

The truth of Man, as by God first spoken

Which the actual generations garble

Was re-uttered, — and Soul (which Limbs betoken)

And Limbs (Soul informs) were made new in marble.

## 12.

So you saw yourself as you wished you were,  
 As you might have been, as you cannot be ;  
 And bringing your own shortcomings there,  
 You grew content in your poor degree  
 With your little power, by those statues' godhead,  
 And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,  
 And your little grace, by their grace embodied,  
 And your little date, by their forms that stay.

## 13.

You would fain be kinglier, say than I am ?  
 Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.  
 You'd fain be a model? the Son of Priam  
 Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.  
 You're wroth — can you slay your snake like Apollo  
 You're grieved — still Niobe's the grander !  
 You live — there's the Racers' frieze to follow —  
 You die — there's the dying Alexander.

## 14.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,  
 Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,  
 Measured by Art in your breadth and length,  
 You learn — to submit is the worsted's duty.  
 — When I say "you" 'tis the common soul,  
 The collective, I mean — the race of Man  
 That receives life in parts to live in a whole,  
 And grow here according to God's own plan.

15.

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,  
 You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day,  
 And cried with a start — What if we so small  
 Are greater, ay, greater the while than they!  
 Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?  
 In both, of such lower types are we  
 Precisely because of our wider nature!  
 For time, theirs — ours, for eternity.

16.

To-day's brief passion limits their range,  
 It seethes with the morrow for us and more.  
 They are perfect — how else? they shall never change:  
 We are faulty — why not? we have time in store.  
 The Artificer's hand is not arrested  
 With us — we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:  
 They stand for our copy, and, once invested  
 With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished

17.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven —  
 The better! what's come to perfection perishes.  
 Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven.  
 Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.  
 Thyself shall afford the example, Giotto!  
 Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,  
 Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) "O!"  
 Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

## 18.

Is it true, we are now, and shall be hereafter,  
 And what — is depending on life's one minute?  
 Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter  
 Our first step out of the gulf or in it?  
 And Man, this step within his endeavour,  
 His face, have no more play and action  
 Than joy which is crystallized forever,  
 Or grief, an eternal petrification !

## 19.

On which I conclude, that the early painters,  
 To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"—  
 Replied, "Become now self-acquainters,  
 And paint man, man, — whatever the issue !  
 Make the hopes shine through the flesh they fray,  
 New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters.  
 So bring the invisible full into play,  
 Let the visible go to the dogs — what matters ?"

## 20.

Give these, I say, full honour and glory  
 For daring so much, before they well did it.  
 The first of the new, in our race's story,  
 Beats the last of the old, 'tis no idle quiddit.  
 The worthies began a revolution  
 Which if on the earth we intend to acknowledge  
 Honour them now — (ends my allocution)  
 Nor confer our degree when the folks leave college



21.

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate —  
 That, when this life is ended, begins  
 New work for the soul in another state,  
 Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins —  
 Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,  
 Repeat in large what they practised in small,  
 Through life after life in unlimited series ;  
 Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

22.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen  
 By the means of Evil that Good is best, [serene,—  
 And through earth and its noise, what is heaven's  
 When its faith in the same has stood the test —  
 Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,  
 The uses of labour are surely done.  
 There remaineth a rest for the people of God,  
 And I have had troubles enough for one.

23.

But at any rate I have loved the season  
 Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy,  
 My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan ;  
 My painter — who but Cimabue ?  
 Nor ever was man of them all indeed,  
 From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,  
 Could say that he missed my critic-meed.  
 So now to my special grievance — heigh ho !

## 24.

Their ghosts now stand, as I said before,  
 Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,  
 Blocked out, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er  
 — No getting again what the church has grasped !  
 The works on the wall must take their chance,  
 “ Works never conceded to England's thick clime !  
 (I hope they prefer their inheritance  
 Of a bucketful of Italian quicklime.)

## 25.

When they go at length, with such a shaking  
 Of heads o'er the old delusions, sadly  
 Each master liſt way through the black streets taking  
 Where many a lost work breathes though badly —  
 Why don't they bethink them of who has merited ?  
 Why not reveal, while their pictures dree  
 Such doom, that a captive's to be out-ferreted ?  
 Why do they never remember me ?

## 26.

Not that I expect the great Bigordi  
 Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose ;  
 Nor wronged Lippino — and not a word I  
 Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's.  
 But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,  
 To grant me a taste of your intonaco —  
 Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye ?  
 No churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco ?

## 27.

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,  
 My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,  
 Save me a sample, give me the hap  
 Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman?  
 No Virgin by him, the somewhat petty,  
 Of finical touch and tempera crumbly —  
 Could not Alesso Baldovinetti  
 Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

## 28.

Margheritone of Arezzo,  
 With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret,  
 (Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,  
 You bald, saturnine, poll-clawed parrot?)  
 No poor glimmering Crucifixion,  
 Where in the foreground kneels the donor?  
 If such remain, as is my conviction,  
 The hoarding does you but little honour.

## 29.

They pass : for them the panels may thrill,  
 The tempera grow alive and tinglish —  
 Rot or are left to the mercies still  
 Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English!  
 Seeing mere money's worth in their prize,  
 Who sell it to some one calm as Zeno  
 At naked Art, and in ecstasies  
 Before some clay-cold, vile Carlino !

## 30.

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,  
 Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble it,  
 Never! it shall not be counted true —  
 That a certain precious little tablet  
 Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover, —  
 Buried so long in oblivion's womb,  
 Was left for another than I to discover, —  
 Turns up at last, and to whom? — to whom?

## 31.

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,  
 (Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)  
 Stood on the altar-steps, patient and weary too!  
 Nay, I shall have it yet, *detur amanti!*  
 My Koh-i-noor — or (if that's a platitude)  
 Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye!  
 So, in anticipative gratitude,  
 What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

## 32.

When the hour is ripe, and a certain dotard  
 Pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,  
 To the worse side of the Mont St. Gothard,  
 Have, to begin by way of rejoicing,  
 None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge)  
 No civic guards, all plumes and lacquer,  
 Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge  
 Over Morello with squib and cracker.

## 33.

We'll shoot this time better game and bag 'em hot —  
 No display at the stone of Dante,  
 But a kind of Witan-agemot  
 ("Casa Guidi," quod videas ante)  
 To ponder Freedom restored to Florence,  
 How Art may return that departed with her.  
 Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's!  
 And bring us the days of Orgagna hither.

## 34.

How we shall prologuize, how we shall perorate,  
 Say fit things upon art and history —  
 Set truth at blood-heat and the false at a zero rate,  
 Make of the want of the age no mystery!  
 Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,  
 Show, monarchy its uncouth cub licks  
 Out of the bear's shape to the chimæra's —  
 Pure Art's birth being still the republic's!

## 35.

Then one shall propose (in a speech, curt Tuscan,  
 Sober, expurgate, spare of an "*issimo*,")  
 Ending our half-told tale of Cambuscan,  
 Turning the Bell-tower's *altaltissimo*.  
 And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia  
 The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,  
 Soars up in gold its full fifty braccia,  
 Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

36.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold  
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire  
Like the golden hope of the world unbaffled  
Ssprings from its sleep, and up goes the spire —  
As, “ God and the People ” plain for its motto,  
Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky ?  
Foreseeing the day that vindicates Giotto  
And Florence together, the first **am I!**

**IN A BALCONY.**

**FIRST PART.**

**CONSTANCE and NORBERT.**

**NORBERT.**

**Now.**

**CONSTANCE.**

**Not now.**

**NORBERT.**

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 !

CONSTANCE.

Do, and ruin us.

NORBERT.

Let it be now, Love ! All my soul breaks forth.  
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,  
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.

CONSTANCE.

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  
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  
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,  
 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 —  
 The man predestined to the heap of crowns !  
 There goes his chance of winning one, at least."

NORBERT.

The world!

CONSTANCE.

You love it. Love me quite as well,  
 And see if I shall pray for this in vain !  
 Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks ?

NORBERT.

You pray for — what, in vain ?

CONSTANCE.

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  
 And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,  
 You love me — so you do, thank God

NORBERT

Thank God

## CONSTANCE.

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,  
 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,  
 That 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  
 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  
 And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,  
 Possess yourself supremely of her life,  
 You choose the single thing she will not grant —  
 The very declaration of which choice  
 Will turn the scale and neutralize your work.  
 At best she will forgive you, if she can.  
 You think I'll let you choose — her cousin's hand?

## NORBERT.

Wait. First, do you retain your old belief  
 The Queen is generous — nay, is just?

CONSTANCE.

There, there !

So men make women love them, while they know  
 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 and hold my hands —  
 Why ? do you know why ? I'll instruct you, then —  
 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.  
 "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.  
 You give my labours here abundant praise :  
 'Faith, labour, while she overlooked, grew play.  
 How shall your gratitude discharge itself?  
 Give me her hand !"

NORBERT.

And still I urge the same.

Is the Queen just ? just — generous or no !

CONSTANCE.

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:  
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;  
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,  
Chaces 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  
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?"  
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,

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  
 Into what kindness, friendship, love should be ;  
 All better, all more grandiose than life,  
 Only no life ; mere cloth and surface-paint  
 You feel while you admire. How should she feel ?  
 And now that she has stood thus fifty years  
 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 its value at a glance,  
 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 ! ”  
 And life slips back — you lose her at the word —  
 You do not even for amends gain me.  
 He will not understand oh, Norbert, Norbert,  
 Do you not understand ?

•  
 NORBERT.

The Queen 's the Queen,  
 I am myself — no picture, but alive  
 In every nerve and every muscle. here  
 At the palace-window or in 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  
 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 here;  
 Only, obtain her!" — How was it to be?  
 I found she was the cousin of the Queen;  
 I must then serve the Queen to get to her —  
 No other way. Suppose there had been one,  
 And I by saying prayers to some white star  
 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,  
 And did what other servants failed to do.  
 Neither she sought nor I declared my end.  
 Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,  
 And let me name you as that recompense.  
 She dreamed that such a thing could never be?  
 Let her wake now. She thinks there was some cause —  
 The love of power, of fame, pure loyalty?  
 — 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.

## CONSTANCE.

Had I not loved you from the very first,

Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus  
So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,  
You might be thus impatient. What's conceived  
Of us without here, by the folks within?  
Where are you now? immersed in cares of state —  
Where am I now? — intent on festal robes —  
We two, embracing under death's spread hand!  
What was this thought for, what this scruple of yours  
Which broke the council up, to bring about  
One minute's meeting in the corridor?  
And then the sudden sleights, long secresies,  
The plots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,  
Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look,  
"Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?"  
A year of this compassion's ecstasy  
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,  
That you're ashamed of ours? The best you'll get  
Will be, the Queen grants all that you require,  
Concedes the cousin, and gets rid of you  
And her at once, and gives us ample leave  
To live as our five hundred happy friends.  
The world will show us with officious hand  
Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,  
When we so oft have stolen across her traps!  
Get the world's warrant, ring the falcon's foot,  
And make it duty to be bold and swift,

When long ago 'twas nature. Have it so!  
 He never hawked by rights till flung from fist?  
 Oh, the man's thought! — no woman's such a fool.

## NORBERT.

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,  
 Though hampered by restrictions, barred against  
 By set forms, blinded by forced secresies.  
 Set free my love, and see what love will do  
 Shown in my life — what work will spring from that  
 The world is used to have its business done  
 On other grounds, find great effects produced  
 For power's sake, fame's sake, motives you have named  
 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!  
 I choose to have 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  
 In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off—  
 Permit this, Constance! Love has been so long  
 Subdued in me, eating me through and through,  
 That now it's all of me and must have way.  
 Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,  
 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  
After such long unlovely labouring days)  
And liberate to beauty life's great need  
Of the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,  
Suppress itself erewhile. This eve's the time —  
This eve intense with yon first trembling star  
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,  
No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat:  
All under God, each measured by itself!  
These statues round us, each abrupt, distinct,  
The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,  
The Muse forever wedded to her lyre,  
The Nymph to her fawn, the Silence to her rose,  
And 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.  
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!

## CONSTANCE.

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,  
 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 all healthy food. Look to the soul —  
 Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin  
 (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  
 Whose business is to sit thro' summer-months  
 And dole out children's 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 —  
 We wonder such an one 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  
 If she'll not coldly do its warmest deed !  
 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  
 Would do on greater argument. For me,  
 I have no equivalent of that cold kind  
 To pay her with ; my love alone to give  
 If I give any thing. I give her love.  
 I feel I ought to help her, and I will.  
 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 —  
 Would lay the whole I did to love's account,  
 Nor yet be very false as courtiers go —  
 Declare that my success was recompense ;  
 It would be so, in fact : what were it else ?  
 And then, once loosed her generosity  
 As you will mark it — then, — were I but you  
 To turn it, let it seem to move itself,  
 And make it give the thing I really take,  
 Accepting so, in the poor cousin's hand,  
 All value as the next thing to the queen —  
 Since none loves her directly, none dares that !  
 A shadow of a thing, a name's mere echo  
 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)  
 And 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,  
Disertate on the Queen's ingratitude!

NORBERT.

Then, if I turn it that way, you consent?  
'Tis not my way; I have more hope in truth.  
Still, if you won't have truth — why, this indeed,  
Is scarcely false, I 'll so express the sense.  
Will you remain here?

CONSTANCE.

O best heart of mine,  
How I have loved you! then, you take my way?  
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 every thing —  
Life, fortune, you, remember! Take my part —  
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.

NORBERT.

Remain here. How you know me!

CONSTANCE.

Ah, but still ——

*[He breaks from her: she remains. Dance-music  
from within.]*

**SECOND PART.**

*Enter the QUEEN.*

QUEEN.

Constance! — She is here as he said. Speak! quick!  
Is it so? is it true — or false? One word!

CONSTANCE.

True.

QUEEN.

Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee!

CONSTANCE.

Madam!

QUEEN

I love you, Constance, from my soul.  
Now say once more, with any words you will,  
Tis true — all true — as true as that I speak.

CONSTANCE.

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  
 That if we had but faith — wherein we fail —  
 Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us;  
 Howbeit we let our whims prescribe despair,  
 Our very fancies thwart and cramp our will,  
 And so accepting life, abjure ourselves!  
 Constance, I had abjured the hope of love  
 And of being loved, as truly as you palm  
 The hope of seeing Egypt from that turf.

CONSTANCE.

Heaven!

QUEEN.

But it was so, Constance, it was so.  
 Men say — or do men say it? fancies say —  
 “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.

✓ Oh, love, true, never think of love again !  
 I am a queen — I rule, not love, indeed.”  
 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 !

CONSTANCE.

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 —  
 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 !

CONSTANCE.

I love you.

QUEEN.

I do believe that all is come through you.  
 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!

CONSTANCE.

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.

CONSTANCE.

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!  
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 —  
We two those dear extremes that long to touch.  
It seemed still harder when he first began  
Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs



The old way for the old end, interest.  
 Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts  
 Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,  
 Professing they 've no care but for your cause,  
 Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,  
 And you the marble statue all the time  
 They praise and point at as preferred to life,  
 Yet leave for the first breathing woman's cheek,  
 First dancer's, gypsy's, or street baladine's !  
 Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men't speck  
 Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,  
 Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,  
 Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,  
 Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,  
 While not a man of these broke rank and spoke,  
 Or wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,  
 Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand.  
 There have been moments, if the sentinel  
 Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,  
 Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,  
 I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

CONSTANCE.

Who could have comprehended !

QUEEN.

Ay, who — who ?

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.

CONSTANCE

I wait to tell it.

QUEEN.

Well, you see, he came,  
Outfaced the others, did a work this year  
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  
Like his was done for work's ignoble sake —  
It must have finer aims to spur it on !  
I felt, I saw he loved — loved somebody.  
And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,  
I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.

CONSTANCE.

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 the love,  
And that you both were in intelligence.  
You could not loiter in the 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  
 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)  
 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.”  
 Yes — yes —

CONSTANCE.

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  
 In payment of his labour. When, O Heaven,  
 How can I tell you? cloud was on my eyes  
 And thunder in my ears at that first word  
 Which told ’twas love of me, of me, did all —  
 He loved me — from the first step to the last,  
 Loved me!

CONSTANCE.

You did not hear . . . you thought he spoke  
 Of love? what if you should mistake?

QUEEN.

No, no —

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 thê ribbon I had worn,  
 He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,  
 And love, love was the 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,  
 But teach me how to keep what I have won.  
 Am I so old? this hair was early gray;  
 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,  
 Beautiful — for the last French painter did!  
 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:  
 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?  
 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 --  
 You know, I cannot give him up -- ah God.  
 Not up now, even to you !

CONSTANCE.

Then calm yourself.

QUEEN.

See, I am old — look here, you happy girl,  
 I will not play the fool, deceive myself ;  
 'Tis all gone — put your cheek beside my cheek --  
 Ah, 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 —  
 Young beauties love old poets who can love —  
 Why should not he the poems in my soul,  
 The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice,  
 The constancy? I throw them at his feet.  
 Who cares to see the fountain's very shape  
 And 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?  
 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:  
 And yet the best of them confide to friends  
 That 'tis 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  
 Horrible though it be — that prejudice,  
 Prescription . . . Curses! they will love a queen.  
 They will — they do. And will not, does not — he?

CONSTANCE.

How can he? You are wedded — 'tis a name  
 We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,  
 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?  
 See all it does 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.  
 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.

CONSTANCE.

You will do — dare do — Pause on what you say !

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,  
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 ;  
And were it for my subjects' good, no more,  
'Twere 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.  
Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate !  
How strong I am ! could Norbert see me now !

CONSTANCE.

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,  
 You will have many lovers, and love one —  
 Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours,  
 And taller than he is, for you are tall.  
 Love him like me ! give all away to him ;  
 Think never of yourself ; throw by your pride,  
 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.

CONSTANCE.

He shall.

QUEEN.

You, step inside my inmost heart.  
 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.  
 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.



— 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,  
 With my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms,  
 And then come back and tell you how it feels.  
 How soon a smile of God can change the world!  
 How we are all made for happiness — how work  
 Grows play, adversity a winning fight!  
 True, I have lost so many years. What then?  
 Many remain — God has been very good.  
 You, stay here. 'Tis 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!

*[She goes out. Dance-music from within*

**PART THIRD.**

**NORBERT enters.**

**NORBERT.**

**Well! we have but one minute and one word —**

**CONSTANCE.**

**I am yours, Norbert!**

**NORBERT.**

**Yes, mine.**

**CONSTANCE.**

**Not till now**

**You were mine. Now I give myself to you.**

**NORBERT.**

**Constance!**

**CONSTANCE.**

**Your own! I know the thriftier way  
Of giving — haply, 'tis the wiser way.**

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, reserve  
 Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,  
 My giving and your taking, both our joys  
 Dying together. Is it the wiser way?  
 I choose the simpler; I give all at once.  
 Know what you have to trust to, trade upon.  
 Use it, abuse it, — any thing but say  
 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.

NORBERT.

I take you and thank God.

CONSTANCE.

Look on through years!  
 We cannot kiss a second day like this,  
 Else were this earth, no earth.

NORBERT.

With this day's heat  
 We shall go on through years of cold.

CONSTANCE.

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  
 Forever brooding on a day like this  
 While seeing the embers whiten and love die.  
 Yes, love lives best in its effect ; and mine,  
 Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

NORBERT.

Just so. I take and know you all at once.  
 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  
 The minute out in which you condense yours —  
 The whole slow circle round you I must move,  
 To be just you. I look to a long life  
 To decompose this minute, prove its worth.  
 'Tis the sparks' long succession one by one  
 Shall show you in the end what fire was crammed  
 In that mere stone you struck : you could not know,  
 If it lay ever unproved in your sight,  
 As now my heart lies ? your own warmth would hide  
 Its coldness, were it cold.

CONSTANCE.

But how prove, how ?

NORBERT.

Prove in my life, you ask ?

CONSTANCE.

Quick, Norbert — how ?

NORBERT.

That's easy told. I count life just a stuff  
 To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.  
 Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.  
 As with the body — he who hurls a lance  
 Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength alike,  
 So I will seize and use all means to prove  
 And show this soul of mine you crown as yours,  
 And justify us both.

CONSTANCE.

Could you write books,  
 Paint pictures ! one sits down in poverty  
 And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.

NORBERT.

And loves one's painting and one's writing too,  
 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  
 To overlook the farther Let us be  
 The thing they look at ! I might take that 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

With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life  
 She makes despised forever? You are mine,  
 Made for me, not for others in the world,  
 Nor yet for that which I should call my art,  
 That cold calm power to see how fair you look.  
 I come to you — I leave you not, to write  
 Or paint. You are, I am. Let Rubens there  
 Paint us.

CONSTANCE.

So best!

NORBERT.

I understand your soul.  
 You live, and rightly sympathize with life,  
 With action, power, success : this way is straight.  
 And days were short beside, to let me change  
 The craft my childhood learnt ; my craft shall serve  
 Men set me here to subjugate, inclose,  
 Manure their barren lives and force the fruit  
 First for themselves, and afterward for me  
 In the due tithe ; the task of some one man,  
 By ways of work appointed by themselves.  
 I am not bid create, they see no star  
 Transfiguring my brow to warrant that —  
 But bind in one and carry out their wills.  
 So I began : to-night sees how I end.  
 What if it see, too, my first outbreak here  
 Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,

**The instincts of the heart that teach the head ?**  
 What if the people have discerned in me  
 The dawn of the next nature, the new man  
 Whose will they venture in the place of theirs  
 And whom they trust to find them out new ways  
 To the new heights which yet he only sees ?  
 I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen,  
 This people — in our phrase, this mass of men —  
 See how the mass lies passive to my hand  
 And how my hand is plastic, and you by  
 To make the muscles iron ! Oh, an end  
 Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first.  
 My will be on this people ! then, the strain,  
 The grappling of the potter with his clay,  
 The long uncertain struggle, — the success  
 In that uprising of the spirit-work,  
 The vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,  
 While rounded fair for lower men to see  
 The Graces in a dance they recognize  
 With turbulent applause and laughs of heart !  
 So triumph ever shall renew itself ;  
 Ever to end in efforts higher yet,  
 Ever begun —

CONSTANCE.

I ever helping ?

NORBERT.

Thus !

[As he embraces her, enter the QUEEN.]

CONSTANCE.

Hist, madam — so I have performed my part.  
 You see your gratitude's true decency,  
 Norbert? a little slow in seeing it!  
 Begun to end the sooner. What's a kiss?

NORBERT.

Constance!

CONSTANCE.

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,  
 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  
 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 understand?)  
 When she, he dares not face, has loved him first,  
 — 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,  
 I do say that the merest gentleman  
 Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse,  
 Dismiss it with a "There, enough of you!"  
 Forget it, show his back unmannerly;  
 But like a liberal heart will rather turn  
 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,  
 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 — thankful kiss."

NORBERT.

— Constance? it is a dream — ah see you smile!

CONSTANCE.

So, now his part being properly performed,  
 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 —  
 He could not hope to tell you so — 'twas I  
 Who served to prove your soul accessible.  
 I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place,  
 When oft they had wandered out into despair.

And kept love constant toward its natural aim.  
 Enough — my part is played; you stoop half-way  
 And meet us royally and spare our fears —  
 'Tis like yourself — he thanks you, so do I  
 Take him — with my full heart! my work is praised  
 By what comes of it. Be you happy, both!  
 Yourself — the only one on earth who can —  
 Do all for him, much more than a mere heart  
 Which though warm is not useful in its warmth  
 As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that  
 Around him gently, tenderly. For him —  
 For him, — he knows his own part.

NORBERT.

Have you done?

I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?  
 Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child,  
 Or did you but accept it? Well — at least,  
 You lose by it.

CONSTANCE.

Now madam, 'tis your turn.

Restrain him still from speech a little more  
 And make him happier and more confident!  
 Pity him, madam, he is timid yet.  
 Mark, Norbert! do not shrink now! Here I yield  
 My whole right in you to the Queen, observe!  
 With her go put in practice the great schemes  
 You teem with, follow the career else closed —

Be all you cannot be except by her !  
Behold her. — Madam, say for pity's sake  
Any thing — frankly say you love him. Else  
He 'll not believe it : there 's more earnest in  
His fear than you conceive — I know the man.

## NORBERT.

I know the woman somewhat, and confess  
I thought she had jested better — she begins  
To overcharge her part. I gravely wait  
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  
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 but now of love,  
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 'tis said,  
Your courage helps mine you did well to speak  
To-night, the night that crowns your twelvemonths' 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  
 Which opened out the truth. 'Tis very strange,  
 But takes a happy ending — in your love  
 Which mine meets : be it so — as you choose me,  
 So I choose you.

NORBERT.

And worthily you choose !

I will not be unworthy your esteem,  
 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,  
 Less confident of finding it in me.  
 I like that thus you test me ere you grant  
 The dearest, richest, beauteousest and best  
 Of women to my arms ! 'tis like yourself !  
 So — back again into my part's set words —  
 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 —  
 Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent  
 Invites a certain insect — that 's myself —  
 But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground :  
 I take this lady !

CONSTANCE.

Stay — not her's, the trap —  
 Stay, Norbert — that mistake were worst of all.  
 (He is too cunning, madam!) it was I,  
 I, Norbert, who . . .

NORBERT.

You, was it, Constance? Then,  
 But for the grace of this divinest hour  
 Which gives me you, I should not pardon here.  
 I am the Queen's: she only knows my brain —  
 She may experiment therefore on my heart  
 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!

CONSTANCE.

Tush! I have said it, did I not say it all?  
 The life, for her — the heart-beats, for her sake!

NORBERT.

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, did love prove itself,  
 I dared insult as you insult me now.  
 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,  
 And, please you, give it to some friend of mine,  
 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,  
 I would not dare insult a woman so,  
 Where she the meanest woman in the world,  
 And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

CONSTANCE.

Norbert!

NORBERT.

I love once as I live but once.  
 What case is this to think or talk about?  
 I love you. Would it mend the case at all  
 Should such a step as this kill 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 pleased to designate  
 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.

CONSTANCE.

See the Queen! Norbert — this one more last word —

If thus you have taken jest for earnest — thus  
Loved me in earnest . . .

NOBERT.

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 ?  
Have I done ill ? Have I not spoken the truth ?  
How could I other ? Was it not your test,  
To try me, and what my love for Constance meant ?  
Madam, your royal soul itself approves,  
The first, that I should choose thus ! so one takes  
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.  
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 — 'tis easy to believe in you.  
Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop  
Mine by this vain self-sacrifice ? well, still —  
Though I should curse, I love you. I am love  
And cannot change ! love's self is at your feet.

[QUEEN goes out.]

CONSTANCE.

Feel my heart ; let it die against your own.

NOBERT.

Against my own ! explain not ; let this be.  
This is life's height.

CONSTANCE.

Yours ! Yours ! Yours !

NOBERT.

You and I —

Why care by what meanders we are here  
In the centre of the labyrinth ? men have died  
Trying to find this place out, which we have found.

CONSTANCE.

Found, found !

NOBERT.

Sweet, never fear what she can do —  
We are past harm now.

CONSTANCE.

On the breast of God.  
I thought of men — as if you were a man.  
Tempting him with a crown !

NOBERT.

This must end here —  
It is too perfect !



CONSTANCE.

There 's the music stopped.  
What measured heavy tread ? it is one blaze  
About me and within me.

NOBERT.

Oh, some death  
Will run its sudden finger round this spark,  
And sever us from the rest ---

CONSTANCE.

And so do well  
Now the doors open —

NOBERT.

'Tis the guard comes.

CONSTANCE.

**Kiss**



And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back  
upon life.

## 2.

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

## 3.

Then I, as was meet,  
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my  
feet,  
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was  
unlooped;  
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I  
stooped;  
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all  
withered and gone,  
That extends to the second inclosure, I groped my  
way on  
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once  
more I prayed,  
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not  
afraid,

But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no  
voice replied.

At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon I  
descried

A something more black than the blackness — the vast,  
the upright

Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into  
sight

Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all;—  
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof, — showed  
Saul.

## 4.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop; both arms stretched  
out wide

On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to  
each side:

He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there, — as, caught  
in his pangs

And waiting his change the king-serpent all heavily  
hangs,

Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance  
come

With the spring-time, — so agonized Saul, drear and  
stark, blind and dumb.

## 5.

Then I tuned my harp, — took off the lilies we twine  
round its chords



## 7.

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

## 8.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and  
 listened apart ;



And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bull-  
rushes 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 em-  
ploy  
All the heart and the soul and the senses, forever in  
joy!  
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword  
thou didst guard  
When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious  
reward?  
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as  
men sung  
The low song of the nearly-departed, and heard her faint  
tongue  
Joining in while it could to the witness, "Let one more  
attest,  
I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all  
was for best . . ."  
Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not  
much,— but the rest.  
And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working  
whence grew  
Such result as from seething grape-bundles, the spirit  
strained true!  
And the friends of thy boyhood — that boyhood of won-  
der and hope,  
Present promise, and wealth of the future beyond the  
eye's scope,—











## 13.

“ Yea, my king,”

I began — “thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts  
that spring

From the mere mortal life held in common by man and  
by brute :

In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it  
bears fruit.

Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree, — how its  
stem trembled first

Till it passed the kid’s lip, the stag’s antler ; then safely  
outburst

The fan-branches all round ; and thou mindedst when  
these too, in turn

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

Ev’n the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our  
dates shall we slight,

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

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

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

Every wound of man’s spirit in winter. I pour thee  
such wine.

Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for ! the spirit be thine

By the spirit, when age shall o’ercome thee, thou still  
shalt enjoy

More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life of a  
boy.

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

Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as  
the sun

Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him,  
though tempests efface,

Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must every-  
where trace

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

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

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

A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the south and  
the north

With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse  
in the past.

But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last.

As the lion when age dims his eye-ball, the rose at her  
height,

So with man — so his power and his beauty forever  
take flight.

No! again a long draught of my soul-wine! look forth  
o'er the years —

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

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

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

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

Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record  
shall go

In great characters cut by the scribe, — Such was Saul,  
so he did ;

With the sages directing the work, by the populace  
chid, —

For not half, they 'll affirm, is comprised there! Which  
fault to amend,

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

(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and  
record

With the gold of the graver, Saul's story, — the states-  
man's great word

Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's  
a-wave

With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when  
prophet winds rave :

So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their  
part

In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God  
that thou art."









I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages  
 hence,  
 As this moment, — had love but the warrant, love's  
 heart to dispense!"

## 16.

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

## 17.

"I have gone the whole round of Creation: I saw and I  
 spoke!  
 I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in  
 my brain  
 And pronounced on the rest of his handwork — returned  
 him again  
 His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw.  
 I report, as a man may of God's work — all's love, yet  
 all's law!  
 Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each  
 faculty tasked  
 To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dew-drop  
 was asked.  
 Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at wisdom  
 laid bare.  
 Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the  
 Infinite care!  
 Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?  
 ' but open my eyes, — and perfection, no more and no less



In the least things, have faith, yet distrust in the greatest  
of all ?

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,  
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? here,  
the parts shift ?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the end, what  
Began? —

Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this  
man,

And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet  
alone can ?

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

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous  
dower

Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such  
a soul,

Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the  
whole ?

And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears  
attest)

These good things being given, to go on, and give one  
more, the best ?

Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at  
the height

This perfection, — succeed with life's dayspring, death's  
minute of night ?

Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mis-  
take,



Think but lightly of such impuissance? what stops my  
despair?

This; — 'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but  
what man Would do!

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

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to  
enrich,

To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would — know-  
ing which,

I know that my service is perfect. — Oh, speak through  
me now!

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wilt Thou — so  
wilt Thou!

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost  
Crown —

And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor  
down

One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no  
breath,

Turn of eye, wave of hand, that Salvation joins issue  
with death!

As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved  
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of Being be-  
loved!

He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall  
stand the most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh,  
that I seek





Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to  
rest.

Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from  
earth —

Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender  
birth ;

In the gathered intensity brought to the gray of the  
hills ;

In the shuddering forests' new awe ; in the sudden wind  
thrills ;

In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye  
sidling still

Tho' averted, in wonder and dread ; and the birds stiff  
and chill

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

E'en the serpent that slid away silent, — he felt the new  
Law.

The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by  
the flowers ;

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

And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent  
and low,

With their obstinate, all but hushed voices — E'en so !  
it is so.

“DE GUSTIBUS —”

1.

**YOUR** ghost will walk, you lover of trees,  
    (If loves remain)  
    In an English lane,  
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.  
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice —  
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,  
    Making love, say, —  
    The happier they !  
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,  
And let them pass, as they will too soon,  
    With the beanflowers' boon,  
    And the blackbird's tune,  
    And May, and June !

2.

What I love best in all the world,  
Is, a castle, precipice-encurled,  
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.  
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,

(If I get my head from out the mouth  
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,  
 And come again to the land of lands) —  
 In a sea-side house to the farther south,  
 Where the baked cicalas die of drouth,  
 And one sharp tree ('tis a cypress) stands,  
 By the many hundred years red-rusted,  
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,  
 My sentinel to guard the sands  
 To the water's edge. For, what expands  
 Without the house, but the great opaque  
 Blue breadth of sea, and not a break ?  
 While, in the house, forever crumbles  
 Some fragment of the frescoed walls,  
 From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.  
 A girl bare-footed brings and tumbles  
 Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,  
 And says there 's news to-day — the king  
 Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,  
 Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling.  
 — She hopes they have not caught the felons.

Italy, my Italy !

Queen Mary's saying serves for me —

(When fortune's malice

Lost her, Calais.)

Open my heart and you will see

Graved inside of it, “ Italy.”

Such lovers old are I and she ;

So it always was, so it still shall be !

## WOMEN AND ROSES.

1.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.  
And which of its roses three  
Is the dearest rose to me ?

2.

Round and round, like a dance of snow  
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go  
Floating the women faded for ages,  
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.  
Then follow the women fresh and gay,  
Living and loving and loved to-day.  
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,  
Beauties unborn. And all, to one cadence,  
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

3.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,  
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached :  
Bees pass it unimpeached.

4.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,  
You, great shapes of the antique time !

How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,  
 Break my heart at your feet to please you?  
 Oh! to possess, and be possessed!  
 Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!  
 But once of love, the poesy, the passion,  
 Drink once and die! — In vain, the same **fashion,**  
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

b.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed;  
 Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,  
 Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

6.

Deep as drops from a statue's plinth  
 The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,  
 So will I bury me while burning,  
 Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,  
 Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips!  
 Fold me fast where the cincture slips,  
 Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure!  
 Girdle me once! But no — in their old **measure**  
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

7.

Dear rose without a thorn,  
 Thy bud's the babe unborn,  
 First streak of a new morn

## 8.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear !  
What's far conquers what is near.  
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,  
Sprung from the dust where our own flesh moulders.  
What shall arrive with the cycle's change ?  
A novel grace and a beauty strange.  
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,  
Shaped her to his mind ! — Alas ! in like manner  
**They circle their rose on my rose tree.**

### PROTUS.

AMONG these latter busts we count by scores,  
Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,  
Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest,  
Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast.  
One loves a baby face, with violets there,  
Violets instead of laurel in the hair,  
As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. "Protus ends a period  
Of empery beginning with a god :  
Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant ;  
Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant.  
And if he quickened breath there, 'twould like fire  
Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.  
A fame that he was missing, spread afar —  
The world, from its four corners, rose in war,  
Till he was borne out on a balcony  
To pacify the world when it should see.  
The captains ranged before him, one, his hand  
Made baby points at, gained the chief command.

And day by day more beautiful he grew  
 In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,  
 While young Greek sculptors gazing on the child  
 Were, so, with old Greek sculpture, reconciled.  
 Already sages laboured to condense  
 In easy tones a life's experience :  
 And artists took grave counsel to impart  
 In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art —  
 To make his graces prompt as blossoming  
 Of plentifully-watered palms in spring :  
 Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne,  
 For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,  
 And mortals love the letters of his name."

— Stop ! Have you turned two pages ? Still the same  
 New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say  
 How that same year, on such a month and day.  
 " John the Pannonian, groundedly believed  
 A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprieved  
 The Empire from its fate the year before, —  
 Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore  
 The same for six years, (during which the Huns  
 Kept off their fingers from us) till his sons  
 Put something in his liquor " — and so forth.  
 Then a new reign. Stay — " Take at its just worth  
 (Subjoins an annotator) " what I give  
 As hearsay. Some think John let Protus live  
 And slip away. 'Tis said, he reached man's age  
 At some blind northern court : made first a page,



Then, tutor to the children — last, of use  
 About the hunting-stables. I deduce  
 He wrote the little tract ‘On worming dogs,’  
 Whereof the name in sundry catalogues  
 Is extant yet. A Protus of the Race  
 Is rumoured to have died a monk in Thrace, —  
 And if the same, he reached senility.”

Here’s John the Smith’s rough-hammered head. **Great**  
 eye  
 Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can  
 To give you the crown-grasper. **What a man!**

## HOLY-CROSS DAY.

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL  
CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME.

[“ Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews : as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome, should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted, blind, restive, and ready-to-perish Hebrews ! now paternally brought — nay, (for He saith, ‘ Compel them to come in, ’) haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience ! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion ; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him : though not to my lord be altogether the glory.” — *Diary by the Bishop’s Secretary, 1600.*]

Though what the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect :

1.

FEE, faw, fum ! bubble and squeak !

Blessedest Thursday’s the fat of the week.

Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,

Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,  
 Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime  
 Gives us the summons — 'tis sermon-time.

## 2.

Boh, here's Barnabas! Job, that's you?  
 Up stumps Solomon — bustling too?  
 Shame, man! greedy beyond your years  
 To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?  
 Fair play's a jewel! leave friends in the lurch?  
 Stand on a line ere you start for the church

## 3.

Higgledy piggedy, packed we lie,  
 Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,  
 Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,  
 Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.  
 Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs  
 And buzz for the bishop — here he comes.

## 4.

Bow, wow, wow — a bone for the dog!  
 I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.  
 What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,  
 To help and handle my lord's hour-glass!  
 Didst ever behold so lithe a chine?  
 His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

## 5.

Aaron's asleep — shove hip to haunch,  
 Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch!  
 Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,  
 And the gown with the angel and thingumbob.  
 What's he at, quotha? reading his text!  
 Now you've his curtsey — and what comes next?

## 6.

See to our converts — you doomed black dozen —  
 No stealing away — nor cog nor cozen!  
 You five that were thieves, deserve it fairly;  
 You seven that were beggars, will live less sparely.  
 You took your turn and dipped in the hat,  
 Got fortune — and fortune gets you; mind that!

## 7.

Give your first groan — compunction's at work;  
 And soft! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.  
 Lo, Micah, — the selfsame beard on chin  
 He was four times already converted in!  
 Here's a knife, clip quick — it's a sign of grace —  
 Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

## 8.

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at?  
 I know a point where his text falls pat.

I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now  
 Went to my heart and made me vow  
 I meddle no more with the worst of trades —  
 Let somebody else pay his serenades.

## 9.

Groan all together now, whee — hee — hee !  
 It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me !  
 It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,  
 Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist  
 Jew-brutes, with sweat and blood well spent  
 To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

## 10.

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,  
 Yelled, pricked us out to this church like hounds.  
 It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed  
 Which gutted my purse, would throttle my creed.  
 And it overflows, when, to even the odd,  
 Men I helped to their sins, help me to their God.

## 11.

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,  
 And the rest sit silent and count the clock,  
 Since forced to muse the appointed time  
 On these precious facts and truths sublime, —  
 Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,  
 In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death

## 12.

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,  
 Called sons and sons' sons to his side,  
 And spoke, "This world has been harsh and strange,  
 Something is wrong, there needeth a change.  
 But what, or where? at the last, or first?  
 In one point only we sinned, at worst.

## 13.

"The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,  
 And again in his border see Israel set.  
 When Judah beholds Jerusalem,  
 The stranger-seed shall be joined to them :  
 To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.  
 So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

## 14.

"Ay, the children of the chosen race  
 Shall carry and bring them to their place :  
 In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,  
 Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,  
 When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er  
 The oppressor triumph for evermore ?

## 15.

"God spoke, and gave us the word to keep :  
 Bade never fold the hands nor sleep  
 'Mid a faithless world, — at watch and ward,

Till the Christ at the end relieve our guard.  
 By his servant Moses the watch was set:  
 Though near upon cock-crow — we keep it yet.

## 16.

“Thou! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,  
 By the starlight naming a dubious Name!  
 And if we were too heavy with sleep — too rash  
 With fear — O Thou, if that martyr-gash  
 Fell on thee coming to take thine own,  
 And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne —

## 17.

“Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.  
 But, the judgment over, join sides with us!  
 Thine too is the cause! and not more thine  
 Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,  
 Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,  
 Who maintain thee in word, and defy thee in deed!

## 18.

“We withstood Christ then? be mindful how  
 At least we withstand Barabbas now!  
 Was our outrage sore? but the worst we spared,  
 To have called these — Christians, — had we dared!  
 Let defiance to them, pay mistrust of thee,  
 And Rome make amends for Calvary!

19.

“ By the torture, prolonged from age to age,  
By the infamy, Israel’s heritage,  
By the Ghetto’s plague, by the garb’s disgrace,  
By the badge of shame, by the felon’s place,  
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,  
And the summons to Christian fellowship,

20.

“ We boast our proofs, that at least the Jew  
Would wrest Christ’s name from the Devil’s crew.  
Thy face took never so deep a shade  
But we fought them in it, God our aid!  
A trophy to bear, as we march, a band  
South, east, and on to the Pleasant Land ! ”

[*The present Pope abolished this bad business of the  
sermon. - - R. B.*]



## THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL:

A PICTURE AT FANO.

1

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave  
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!  
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve  
Shall find performed thy special ministry  
And time come for departure, thou, suspending  
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,  
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

2.

'Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,  
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,  
And suddenly my head be covered o'er  
With those wings, white above the child who prays  
Now on that tomb — and I shall feel thee guarding  
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding  
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door!

3.

I would not look up thither past thy head  
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,

For I should have thy gracious face instead,  
 Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend me low  
 Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,  
 And lift them up to pray, and gently tether  
 Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread ?

## 4.

If this was ever granted, I would rest  
 My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands  
 Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,  
 Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands  
 Back to its proper size again, and smoothing  
 Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,  
 And all lay quiet, happy and supprest.

## 5.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired !  
 I think how I should view the earth and skies  
 And sea, when once again my brow was bared  
 After thy healing, with such different eyes.  
 O, world, as God has made it ! all is beauty :  
 And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.  
 What further may be sought for or declared ?

## 6.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach  
 (Alfred, dear friend) — that little child to pray,  
 Holding the little hands up, each to each  
 Pressed gently. — with his own head turned away

Over the earth where so much lay before him  
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,  
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

## 7

We were at Fano, and three times we went  
To sit and see him in his chapel there,  
And drink his beauty to our soul's content  
— My angel with me too : and since I care  
For dear Guercino's fame, (to which in power  
And glory comes this picture for a dower,  
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)

## 8.

And since he did not work so earnestly  
At all times, and has else endured some wrong, —  
I took one thought his picture struck from me,  
And spread it out, translating it to song.  
My Love is here. Where are you, dear old friend ?  
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end ?  
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

CLEON.

“As certain also of your own poets have said” —

CLEON the poet, (from the sprinkled isles,  
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,  
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps  
“Greece”) —

To Protos in his Tyranny : much health !

They give thy letter to me, even now :  
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.  
The master of thy galley still unlades  
Gift after gift ; they block my court at last  
And pile themselves along its portico  
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee :  
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed  
Of black and white slaves, (like the chequer-work  
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,  
Now covered with this settle-down of doves)  
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest  
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands  
Commends to me the strainer and the cup  
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence !  
 For so shall men remark, in such an act  
 Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,  
 Thy recognition of the use of life ;  
 Nor call thy spirit barely adequate  
 To help on life in straight ways, broad enough  
 For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.  
 Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,  
 Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,  
 Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,  
 Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim  
 Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,  
 Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake --  
 Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope  
 Of some eventual rest a-top of it,  
 Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,  
 Thou first of men mightst look out to the east.  
 The vulgar saw thy tower ; thou sawest the sun.  
 For this, I promise on thy festival  
 To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,  
 Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak  
 Thy great words, and describe thy royal face --  
 Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most  
 Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.  
 It is as thou hast heard : in one short life  
 I, Cleon, have effected all those things  
 Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.

That epos on thy hundred plates of gold  
Is mine, — and also mine the little chaunt,  
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark  
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their nets.  
The image of the sun-god on the phare  
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine ;  
The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,  
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.  
I know the true proportions of a man  
And woman also, not observed before ;  
And I have written three books on the soul,  
Proving absurd all written hitherto,  
And putting us to ignorance again.  
For music, — why, I have combined the moods,  
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine ;  
Thus much the people know and recognize,  
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.  
We of these latter days, with greater mind  
Than our forerunners, since more composite,  
Look not so great (beside their simple way)  
To a judge who only sees one way at once,  
One mind-point, and no other at a time, —  
Compares the small part of a man of us  
With some whole man of the heroic age,  
Great in his way, — not ours, nor meant for ours,  
And ours is greater, had we skill to know.  
Yet, what we call this life of men on earth,  
This sequence of the soul's achievements here,  
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,

Intended to be viewed eventually  
 As a great whole, not analyzed to parts,  
 But each part having reference to all, —  
 How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,  
 Endure effacement by another part?  
 Was the thing done? — Then what's to do **again?**  
 See, in the chequered pavement opposite,  
 Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,  
 And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid —  
 He did not overlay them, superimpose  
 The new upon the old and blot it out,  
 But laid them on a level in his work,  
 Making at last a picture; there it lies.  
 So, first the perfect separate forms were **made,**  
 The portions of mankind — and after, so,  
 Occurred the combination of the same.  
 Or where had been a progress, otherwise?  
 Mankind, made up of all the single men, —  
 In such a synthesis the labour ends.  
 Now, mark me — those divine men of old time  
 Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point  
 The outside verge that rounds our faculty;  
 And where they reached, who can do more than **reach!**  
 It takes but little water just to touch  
 At some one point the inside of a sphere,  
 And, as we turn the sphere, touch **all the rest**  
 In due succession: but the finer air  
 Which not so palpably nor obviously,  
 Though no less universally, can touch

The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,  
Fills it more fully than the water did ;  
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself  
Resolved into a subtler element.

And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full  
Up to the visible height — and after, void ;  
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.  
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus  
To vindicate his purpose in its life —

Why stay we on the earth unless to grow ?  
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,  
That he or other God, descended here  
And, once for all, showed simultaneously  
What, in its nature, never can be shown  
Piecemeal or in succession ; — showed, I say,  
The worth both absolute and relative  
Of all His children from the birth of time,  
His instruments for all appointed work.

I now go on to image, — might we hear  
The judgment which should give the due to each,  
Show where the labour lay and where the ease,  
And prove Zeus' self, the latent, everywhere !  
This is a dream. But no dream, let us hope,  
That years and days, the summers and the springs  
Follow each other with unwaning powers —  
The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer far  
Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock ;  
The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe ;  
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet ;



The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers ;  
 That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave,  
 Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,  
 Refines upon the women of my youth.  
 What, and the soul alone deteriorates?  
 I have not chanted verse like Homer's, no —  
 Nor swept string like Terpander, no — nor carved  
 And painted men like Phidias and his friend :  
 I am not great as they are, point by point :  
 But I have entered into sympathy  
 With these four, running these into one soul,  
 Who, separate, ignored each others' arts.  
 Say, is it nothing that I know them all?  
 The wild flower was the larger — I have dashed  
 Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's  
 Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,  
 And show a better flower if not so large.  
 I stand, myself. Refer this to the gods  
 Whose gift alone it is ! which, shall I dare  
 (All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext  
 That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,  
 Discourse of lightly or depreciate?  
 It might have fallen to another's hand — what then ?  
 I pass too surely — let at least truth stay !

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.  
 This being with me as I declare, O king,  
 My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,  
 So done by me, accepted so by men —

Thou askest if (my soul thus in men's hearts)  
 I must not be accounted to attain  
 The very crown and proper end of life.  
 Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,  
 I face death with success in my right hand :  
 Whether I fear death less than dost thyself  
 The fortunate of men. " For " (writest thou)  
 " Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought :  
 Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,  
 The pictures men shall study ; while my life,  
 Complete and whole now in its power and joy,  
 Dies altogether with my brain and arm,  
 Is lost indeed ; since, — what survives myself ?  
 The brazen statue that o'erlooks my grave,  
 Set on the promontory which I named.  
 And that — some supple courtier of my heir  
 Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,  
 To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.  
 I go, then : triumph thou, who dost not go ! "

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.  
 Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse  
 Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,  
 That admiration grows as knowledge grows ?  
 That imperfection means perfection hid,  
 Reserved in part, to grace the after-time ?  
 If, in the morning of philosophy,  
 Ere aught had been recorded, aught perceived,  
 Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked

On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,  
 Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage —  
 Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced  
 The perfectness of others yet unseen.  
 Conceding which, — had Zeus then questioned thee  
 " Wilt thou go on a step, improve on this,  
 Do more for visible creatures than is done ? "

Thou wouldst have answered, " Ay, by making each  
 Grow conscious in himself — by that alone.  
 All's perfect else : the shell sucks fast the rock,  
 The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims  
 And slides ; the birds take flight, forth range the beasts  
 Till life's mechanics can no further go —  
 And all this joy in natural life, is put,  
 Like fire from off Thy finger into each,  
 So exquisitely perfect is the same.

But 'tis pure fire — and they mere matter are ;  
 It has them, not they it : and so I choose,  
 For man, Thy last premeditated work  
 (If I might add a glory to this scheme)  
 That a third thing should stand apart from both,  
 A quality arise within the soul,  
 Which, intro-active, made to supervise  
 And feel the force it has, may view itself,  
 And so be happy." Man might live at first  
 The animal life : but is there nothing more ?  
 In due time, let him critically learn  
 How he lives ; and, the more he gets to know  
 Of his own life's adaptabilities,

The more joy-giving will his life become.  
The man who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said :  
" Let progress end at once, — man make no step  
Beyond the natural man, the better beast,  
Using his senses, not the sense of sense."  
In man there's failure, only since he left  
The lower and unconscious forms of life.  
We called it an advance, the rendering plain  
A spirit might grow conscious of that life,  
And, by new lore so added to the old,  
Take each step higher over the brute's head.  
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,  
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,  
Which whole surrounding flats of natural life  
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to ;  
A tower that crowns a country. But alas!  
The soul now climbs it just to perish there,  
For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream —  
We know this, which we had not else perceived)  
That there's a world of capability  
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,  
Inviting us ; and still the soul craves all,  
And still the flesh replies, " Take no jot more  
Than ere you climbed the tower to look abroad !  
Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has brought  
Deduction to it." We struggle — fain to enlarge  
Our bounded physical recipiency,

Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,  
 Repair the waste of age and sickness. No,  
 It skills not: life's inadequate to joy,  
 As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.  
 They praise a fountain in my garden here  
 Wherein a Naiad sends the water-spurt  
 Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise.  
 What if I told her, it is just a thread  
 From that great river which the hills shut up,  
 And mock her with my leave to take the same?  
 The artificer has given her one small tube  
 Past power to widen or exchange — what boots  
 To know she might spout oceans if she could?  
 She cannot lift beyond her first straight thread.  
 And so a man can use but a man's joy  
 While he sees God's. Is it, for Zeus to boast  
 "See, man, how happy I live, and despair —  
 That I may be still happier — for thy use!"  
 If this were so, we could not thank our Lord,  
 As hearts beat on to doing: 'tis not so —  
 Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?  
 Still, no. If care — where is the sign, I ask —  
 And get no answer: and agree in sum,  
 O king, with thy profound discouragement,  
 Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.  
 Most progress is most failure! thou sayest well.

The last point now: — thou dost accept a case —  
 Holding joy not impossible to one

With artist-gifts — to such a man as I —  
 Who leave behind me living works indeed ;  
 For, such a poem, such a painting lives.  
 What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,  
 Confound the accurate view of what joy is  
 (Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)  
 With feeling joy? confound the knowing how  
 And showing how to live (my faculty)  
 With actually living? — Otherwise  
 Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?  
 Because in my great epos I display  
 How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act —  
 Is this as though I acted? if I paint,  
 Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young?  
 Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself  
 The many years of pain that taught me art!  
 Indeed, to know is something, and to prove  
 How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:  
 But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.  
 Yon rower with the moulded muscles there  
 Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.  
 I can write love-odes — thy fair slave's an ode.  
 I get to sing of love, when grown too gray  
 For being beloved: she turns to that young man  
 The muscles all a-ripple on his back.  
 I know the joy of kingship: well — thou art king!

“But.” sayest thou — (and I marvel, I repeat,  
 To find thee tripping on a mere word) “wha

Thou writest, paintest, stays : that does not die :  
 Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,  
 And Æschylus, because we read his plays !”  
 Why, if they live still, let them come and take  
 Thy slave in my despite — drink from thy cup —  
 Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive ?  
 Say rather that my fate is deadlier still, —  
 In this, that every day my sense of joy  
 Grows more acute, my soul (intensified  
 In power and insight) more enlarged, more keen ;  
 While every day my hairs fall more and more,  
 My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase —  
 The horror quickening still from year to year,  
 The consummation coming past escape  
 When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy —  
 When all my works wherein I prove my worth,  
 Being present still to mock me in men’s mouths,  
 Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,  
 I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,  
 The man who loved his life so over much,  
 Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,  
 I dare at times imagine to my need  
 Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,  
 Unlimited in capability  
 For joy, as this is in desire for joy,  
 To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us.  
 That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait  
 On purpose to make sweet the life at large —  
 Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death

We burst there as the worm into the fly,  
 Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But, no  
 Zeus has not yet revealed it ; and, alas !  
 He must have done so — were it possible !

Live long and happy, and in that thought die,  
 Glad for what was. Farewell. And for the rest,  
 I cannot tell thy messenger aright  
 Where to deliver what he bears of thine  
 To one called Paulus — we have heard his fame  
 Indeed, if Christus be not one with him —  
 I know not, nor am troubled much to know.  
 Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,  
 As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,  
 Hath access to a secret shut from us ?  
 Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,  
 In stooping to inquire of such an one,  
 As if his answer could impose at all.  
 He writeth, doth he ? well, and he may write.  
 Oh, the Jew findeth scholars ! certain slaves  
 Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ,  
 And (as I gathered from a bystander)  
 Their doctrines could be held by no sane man.



### THE TWINS.

“Give” and “It-shall-be-given-unto-you.”

1.

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

2.

A beggar asked an alms  
One day at an abbey-door,  
Said Luther ; but, seized with qualms,  
The Abbot replied, “ We ’re poor ! ”

3.

“ Poor, who had plenty once,  
“ When gifts fell thick as rain :  
“ But they give us nought, for the nonce,  
“ And how should we give again ? ”

4.

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

5.

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

6.

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

7.

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

## POPULARITY.

### 1.

**STAND** still, true poet that you are,  
I know you ; let me try and draw you.  
Some night you 'll fail us. When afar  
You rise, remember one man saw you,  
Knew you, and named a star.

### 2.

My star, God's glow-worm ! Why extend  
That loving hand of His which leads you,  
Yet locks you safe from end to end  
Of this dark world, unless He needs you —  
Just saves your light to spend ?

### 3.

His clenched Hand shall uncloset at last  
I know, and let out all the beauty.  
My poet holds the future fast,  
Accepts the coming ages' duty,  
Their present for this past.

## 4.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow  
 Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;  
 "Others give best at first, but Thou  
 Forever set'st our table praising, —  
 Keep'st the good wine till now."

## 5.

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,  
 With few or none to watch and wonder.  
 I'll say — a fisher (on the sand  
 By Tyre the Old) his ocean-plunder,  
 A netful, brought to land.

## 6.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells  
 Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes  
 Whereof one drop worked miracles,  
 And coloured like Astarte's eyes  
 Raw silk the merchant sells?

## 7.

And each bystander of them all  
 Could criticize, and quote tradition;  
 How depths of blue sublimed some pall,  
 To get which, pricked a king's ambition;  
 Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

## 8.

Yet there's the dye, — in that rough mesh,  
 The sea has only just o'er-whispered !  
 Live whelks, the lip's-beard dripping fresh,  
 As if they still the water's lisp heard  
 Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

## 9.

Enough to furnish Solomon  
 Such hangings for his cedar-house,  
 That when gold-robed he took the throne  
 In that abyss of blue, the Spouse  
 Might swear his presence shone

## 10.

Most like the centre-spike of gold  
 Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,  
 What time, with ardours manifold,  
 The bee goes singing to her groom,  
 Drunken and overbold.

## 11.

Mere conchs ! not fit for warp or woof !  
 Till art comes, — comes to pound and squeeze  
 And clarify, — refines to proof  
 The liquor filtered by degrees,  
 While the world stands aloof.

## 12.

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,  
And priced, and salable at last!  
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine  
To paint the future from the past,  
Put blue into their line.

## 13.

Hobbs hints blue, — straight he turtle eats.  
Nobbs prints blue, — claret crowns his cup.  
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats, —  
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?  
What porridge had John Keats?

## THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY.

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE.

*(In the original)* ROSA MUNDI ; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. ▲  
CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF  
SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE,  
*Virgilius*. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE  
AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du  
Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A. D. 1314 ; as distorted by the refraction  
from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of cen-  
turies. — R. B.)

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1.

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

THE Lord, we look to once for all,  
Is the Lord we should look at, all at once :  
He knows not to vary, saith St. Paul,  
Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.  
See Him no other than as he is ;  
Give both the Infinites their due --

Infinite mercy, but, I wis,  
As infinite a justice too.

[*Organ: plagal-cadence*

As infinite a justice too.

## 2.

ONE SINGETH.

John, Master of the Temple of God,  
Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,  
What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,  
He sold it to Sultan Saladin —  
Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,  
Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,  
And clipt of his wings in Paris square,  
They bring him now to be burned alive.

[*And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern, y<sup>e</sup>  
shall say to confirm him who singeth —*

We bring John now to be burned alive.

## 3.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built ;  
'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck ;  
But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,  
Make a trench all round with the city muck ;  
Inside they pile log upon log, good store ;  
Fagots not few, blocks great and small,  
Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more, —  
For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.



## CHORUS.

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

## 4.

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith ;  
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow ;  
 Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith ;  
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow :  
 Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,  
 Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,  
 Spit in his face, then leap back safe,  
 Sing " Laudes " and bid clap-to the torch.

## CHORUS.

*Laus Deo* — who bids clap-to the torch.

## 5.

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,  
 Is burning alive in Paris square !  
 How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged ?  
 Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there ?  
 Or heave his chest, while a band goes round ?  
 Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced ?  
 Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound ?  
 — Thinks John — I will call upon Jesus Christ.

[*Here one crosseth himself.*]

## 6.

Jesus Christ — John had bought and sold,  
 Jesus Christ — John had eaten and drunk ;

To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.

(*Salvá reverentiá.*)

Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,

I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast me.

See thy servant, the plight wherein I am!

Art thou a Saviour? Save thou me!"

CHORUS.

'Tis John the mocker cries, Save thou me!

7.

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?

— Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,

Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird? —

For she too prattles of ugly names.

— Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what he knows?

That God is good and the rest is breath;

Why else is the same styled, Sharon's rose?

Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS.

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

8.

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!

Some honied of taste like your leman's tongue.

Some, bitter — for why? (roast gayly on!)

Their tree struck root in devil's dung!

When Paul once reasoned of righteousness

And of temperance and of judgment to come,

Good Felix trembled, he could no less —  
 John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb.

CHORUS.

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb?

9.

Ha ha, John plucks now at his rose  
 To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!  
 Lo, — petal on petal, fierce rays uncloset;  
 Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;  
 And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;  
 And a gust of sulphur is all its smell;  
 And lo, he is horribly in the toils  
 Of a coal-black giant flower of Hell!

CHORUS.

What maketh Heaven, that maketh Hell.

10.

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,  
 On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life —  
 To the Person, he bought and sold again —  
 For the Face, with his daily buffets rife —  
 Feature by feature It took its place!  
 And his voice like a mad dog's choking bark  
 At the steady Whole of the Judge's Face —  
 Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark!

## TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

1.

I WONDER do you feel to-day  
As I have felt, since, hand in hand,  
We sat down on the grass, to stray  
In spirit better through the land,  
This morn of Rome and May ?

2.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,  
Has tantalized me many times,  
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw  
Mocking across our path) for rhymes  
To catch at and let go.

3.

Help me to hold it : first it left  
The yellowing fennel, run to seed  
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,  
Some old tomb's ruin : yonder weed  
Took up the floating weft,

## 4.

Where one small orange cup amassed  
 Five beetles, — blind and green they grope  
 Among the honey-meal, — and last  
 Everywhere on the grassy slope  
 I traced it. Hold it fast!

## 5.

The champaign with its endless fleece  
 Of feathery grasses everywhere!  
 Silence and passion, joy and peace,  
 An everlasting wash of air —  
 Rome's ghost since her decease.

## 6.

Such life there, through such lengths of hours,  
 Such miracles performed in play,  
 Such primal naked forms of flowers,  
 Such letting Nature have her way  
 While Heaven looks from its towers.

## 7.

How say you? Let us, O my dove,  
 Let us be unashamed of soul,  
 As earth lies bare to heaven above,  
 How is it under our control  
 To love or not to love?

## 8.

I would that you were all to me,  
 You that are just so much, no more —  
 Nor yours, nor mine, — nor slave nor free !  
 Where does the fault lie ? what the core  
 Of the wound, since wound must be ?

## 9.

I would I could adopt your will,  
 See with your eyes, and set my heart  
 Beating by yours, and drink my fill  
 At your soul's springs, — your part, my part  
 In life, for good and ill.

## 10.

No. I yearn upward — touch you close,  
 Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,  
 Catch your soul's warmth, — I pluck the rose  
 And love it more than tongue can speak —  
 Then the good minute goes.

## 11.

Already how am I so far  
 Out of that minute ? Must I go  
 Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,  
 Onward, whenever light winds blow,  
 Fixed by no friendly star ?

## 12.

Just when I seemed about to learn!

Where is the thread now? Off again!

The old trick! Only I discern —

*p* Infinite passion and the pain

Of finite hearts that yearn.

### A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL.

[*Time* — Shortly after the revival of learning in Europe.]

**LET** us begin and carry up this corpse,  
Singing together.  
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,  
Each in its tether  
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain.  
Cared-for till cock-crow.  
Look out if yonder 's not the day again  
Rimming the rock-row !  
That 's the appropriate country — there, man's thought,  
Rarer, intenser,  
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,  
Chafes in the censer !  
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop ,  
Seek we sepulture  
On a tall mountain, citted to the top,  
Crowded with culture !  
**All** the peaks soar, but one the rest excels ;  
Clouds overcome it ;



**No**, yonder sparkle is the citadel's  
 Circling its summit !  
**Thither** our path lies — wind we up the heights —  
 Wait ye the warning ?  
**Our** low life was the level's and the night's ;  
 He 's for the morning !  
**Step** to a tune, square chests, erect the head,  
 'Ware the beholders !  
**This** is our master, famous, calm, and dead,  
 Borne on our shoulders.  
  
**Sleep**, crop and herd ! Sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,  
 Safe from the weather !  
**He**, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,  
 Singing together,  
**He** was a man born with thy face and throat,  
 Lyric Apollo !  
**Long** he lived nameless : how should spring take note  
 Winter would follow ?  
**Till** lo, the little touch, and youth was gone !  
 Cramped and diminished,  
**Moaned** he, " New measures, other feet anon !  
 My dance is finished ? "  
**No**, that 's the world's way ! (keep the mountain-side,  
 Make for the city.)  
**He** knew the signal, and stepped on with pride  
 Over men's pity ;  
**Left** play for work, and grappled with the world  
 Bent on escaping :

"What 's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled?  
 Show me their shaping,  
 Theirs, who most studied man, the bard and sage,—  
 Give!" — So he gowned him,  
 Straight got by heart that book to its last page:  
 Learned, we found him!  
 Yea, but we found him bald too — eyes like lead,  
 Accents uncertain:  
 "Time to taste life," another would have said,  
 "Up with the curtain!"  
 This man said rather, "Actual life comes next?  
 Patience a moment!  
 Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,  
 Still there — the comment.  
 Let me know all. Prate not of most or least,  
 Painful or easy:  
 Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,  
 Ay, nor feel queasy!"  
 Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,  
 When he had learned it,  
 When he had gathered all books had to give;  
 Sooner, he spurned it!  
 Image the whole, then execute the parts —  
 Fancy the fabric  
 Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,  
 Ere mortar dab brick!  
 Here 's the town-gate reached: there 's the market-place  
 Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace  
 (Hearten our chorus)  
 Still before living he 'd learn how to live —  
 No end to learning.  
 Earn the means first — God surely will contrive  
 Use for our earning.  
 Others mistrust and say — “ But time escapes, —  
 “ Live now or never ! ”  
 He said, “ What 's Time ? leave Now for dogs and apes !  
 Man has Forever. ”  
 Back to his book then : deeper drooped his head ;  
*Calculus* racked him :  
 Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead ;  
*Tussis* attacked him  
 “ Now, Master, take a little rest ! ” — not he !  
 (Caution redoubled !  
 Step two a-breast, the way winds narrowly.)  
 Not a whit troubled,  
 Back to his studies, fresher than at first,  
 Fierce as a dragon  
 He, (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)  
 Sucked at the flagon.  
 Oh, if we draw a circle premature,  
 Heedless of far gain,  
 Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,  
 Bad is our bargain !  
 Was it not great ? did he not throw on God,  
 (He loves the burthen) —  
 God's task to make the heavenly period  
 Perfect the earthen ?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear  
     Just what it all meant?  
 He would not discount life, as fools do here,  
     Paid by instalment!  
 He ventured neck or nothing — heaven's success  
     Found, or earth's failure:  
 "Wilt thou trust death or not?" he answered "Yes.  
     "Hence with life's pale lure!"  
 That low man seeks a little thing to do,  
     Sees it and does it:  
 This high man, with a great thing to pursue,  
     Dies ere he knows it.  
 That low man goes on adding one to one,  
     His hundred's soon hit:  
 This high man, aiming at a million,  
     Misses an unit.  
 That, has the world here — should he need the next,  
     Let the world mind him!  
 This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed  
     Seeking shall find Him.  
 So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife,  
     Ground he at grammar;  
 Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife.  
     While he could stammer  
 He settled *Hoti's* business — let it be! —  
     Properly based *Oun* —  
 Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,  
     Dead from the waist down.  
 Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.  
     Hail to your purlieus

All ye highfliers of the feathered race,  
Swallows and eurlaws !  
Here's the top-peak ! the multitude below  
Live, for they can there.  
This man decided not to Live but Know —  
Bury this man there ?  
Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,  
Lightnings are loosened,  
Stars come and go ! let joy break with the storm —  
Peace let the dew send !  
Lofty designs must elose in like effects :  
Loftily lying,  
Leave him — still loftier than the world suspects,  
Living and dying.

## ONE WAY OF LOVE.

### 1.

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.  
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves,  
And strew them where Pauline may pass.  
She will not turn aside? Alas!  
Let them lie. Suppose they die?  
The chance was they might take her eye.

### 2.

How many a month I strove to suit  
These stubborn fingers to the lute!  
To-day I venture all I know.  
She will not hear my music? So!  
Break the string — fold music's wing.  
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

### 3.

My whole life long I learned to love.  
This hour my utmost art I prove  
And speak my passion. — Heaven or hell?  
She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!  
Lose who may — I still can say,  
Those who win heaven, blest are they

## ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

### 1.

**JUNE** was not over,  
Though past the full,  
And the best of her roses  
Had yet to blow,  
When a man I know  
(But shall not discover,  
Since ears are dull,  
And time discloses)  
Turned him and said with a man's true air,  
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere, —  
If I tire of your June, will she greatly care?\*

### 2.

Well, Dear, in-doors with you!  
True, serene deadness  
Tries a man's temper.  
What's in the blossom  
June wears on her bosom?  
Can it clear scores with you?  
Sweetness and redness,  
*Eadem semper!*  
**Go,** let me care for it greatly or slightly!

If June mends her bowers now, your hand left unsightly  
By plucking their roses, — my June will do rightly.

## 3.

And after for pastime,

If June be refulgent

With flowers in completeness,

All petals, no prickles,

Delicious as trickles

Of wine poured at mass-time, —

And choose One indulgent

To redness and sweetness :

Or if, with experience of man and of spider,

She use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,

To stop the fresh spinning, — why, June will consider.



“TRANSCENDENTALISM:”

A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS.

STOP playing, poet! may a brother speak?  
’Tis you speak, that’s your error. Song’s our art:  
Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts  
Instead of draping them in sights and sounds.  
— True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure  
up!

But why such long prolusion and display,  
Such turning and adjustment of the harp,  
And taking it upon your breast at length,  
Only to speak dry words across its strings?  
Stark-naked thought is in request enough —  
Speak prose and holloa it till Europe hears!  
The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,  
Which helps the hunter’s voice from Alp to Alp —  
Exchange our harp for that, — who hinders you?

But here’s your fault; grown men want thought, you  
think;  
Thought’s what they mean by verse, and seek in verse.

Boys seek for images and melody,  
Men must have reason — so you aim at men.  
Quite otherwise! Objects throng our youth, 'tis true,  
We see and hear and do not wonder much.  
If you could tell us what they mean, indeed!  
As Swedish Bøhme never cared for plants  
Until it happed, a-walking in the fields,  
He noticed all at once that plants could speak,  
Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him.  
That day the daisy had an eye indeed —  
Colloquised with the cowslip on such themes!  
We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose.  
But by the time youth slips a stage or two  
While reading prose in that tough book he wrote,  
(Collating, and emendating the same  
And settling on the sense most to our mind)  
We shut the clasps and find life's summer past.  
Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our loss —  
Another Bøhme with a tougher book  
And subtler meanings of what roses say, —  
Or some stout Mage like him of Halberstadt,  
John, who made things Bøhme wrote thoughts about?  
He with a "look you!" vents a brace of rhymes,  
And in there breaks the sudden rose herself,  
Over us, under, round us every side,  
Nay, in and out the tables and the chairs  
And musty volumes, Bøhme's book and all, —  
Buries us with a glory, young once more,  
Pouring heaven into this shut house of life.

So come, the harp back to your heart again!  
You are a poem, though your poem's naught.  
The best of all you did before, believe,  
Was your own boy's-face o'er the finer chords  
Bent, following the cherub at the top  
That points to God with his paired half-moon wings

## MISCONCEPTIONS.

1.

**T**HIS is a spray the Bird clung to,  
Making it blossom with pleasure,  
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,  
Fit for her nest and her treasure.  
Oh, what a hope beyond measure  
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—  
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

2.

**T**HIS is a heart the Queen leant on,  
Thrilled in a minute erratic,  
Ere the true bosom she bent on,  
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.  
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic  
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on —  
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

## ONE WORD MORE.

TO E. B. B.

1.

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

2.

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

## 3.

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

## 4.

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

## 5.

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

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

## 6.

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

## 7.

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

## 8.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture ?

## 9.

This : no artist lives and loves that longs not  
 Once, and only once, and for One only,  
 (Ah, the prize ! ) to find his love a language  
 Fit and fair and simple and sufficient —

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

## 10.

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!  
 He who smites the rock and spreads the water,  
 Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,  
 Even he, the minute makes immortal,  
 Proves, perchance, his mortal in the minute,  
 Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.  
 While he smites, how can he but remember,  
 So he smote before, in such a peril,  
 When they stood and mocked — "Shall smiting help  
 us?"  
 When they drank and sneered — "A stroke is easy!"  
 When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,  
 Throwing him for thanks — "But drought was pleasant."  
 Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;  
 Thus the doing savours of disrelish;  
 Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;  
 O'er-impertuned brows becloud the mandate.



Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture.  
 For he bears an ancient wrong about him,  
 Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,  
 Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude —  
 "How should'st thou, of all men, smite, and save us?"  
 Guesses what is like to prove the sequel —  
 "Egypt's flesh-pots — nay, the drought was better"

## 11.

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

## 12.

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

## 13.

I shall never, in the years remaining,  
 Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues.  
 Make you music that should all-express me:

So it seems : I stand on my attainment.  
 This of verse alone, one life allows me ;  
 Verse and nothing else have I to give you.  
 Other heights in other lives, God willing —  
 All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love !

## 14.

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

## 15.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,  
 Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,  
 Enter each and all, and use their service,  
 Speak from every mouth, — the speech, a poem.  
 Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,  
 Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving :  
 I am mine and yours — the rest be all men's,  
 Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.

Let me speak this orce in my true person,  
 Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,  
 Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence —  
 Pray you, look on these my men and women,  
 Take and keep my fifty poems finished ;  
 Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also !  
 Poor the speech ; be how I speak, for all things.

## 16.

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

## 17.

What, there's nothing in the moon note-worthy ?  
 Nay — for if that moon could love a mortal,  
 Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy)  
 All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos)

She would turn a new side to her mortal,  
 Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman -  
 Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,  
 Blind to Galileo on his turret,  
 Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats — him, even !  
 Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal —  
 When she turns round, comes again in heaven,  
 Opens out anew for worse or better ?  
 Proves she like some portent of an ice-berg  
 Swimming full upon the ship it founders,  
 Hungry with huge teeth of splintered chrystals !  
 Proves she as the paved-work of a sapphire  
 Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain ?  
 Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu  
 Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,  
 Stand upon the paved-work of a sapphire.  
 Like the bodied heaven in his clearness  
 Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved-work,  
 When they ate and drank and saw God also !

## 18.

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

## 19.

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

## 20.

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



**SORDELLO.**

1840.

TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON.

DEAR FRIEND:—

Let this poem be introduced by your name, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me. I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might—instead of what the few must—like: but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so,—you, with many known and unknown to me, think so,—others may one day think so: and whether my attempt remain for them or not, I trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours,

R. B.

LONDON, June 9, 1863.



# SORDELLO.



## BOOK THE FIRST.

### A QUIXOTIC ATTEMPT.

WHO will, may hear Sordello's story told:  
His story? Who believes me shall behold  
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end,  
Like me: for as the friendless-people's friend  
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din  
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin  
Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out  
Sordello, compassed murkily about  
With ravage of six long sad hundred years.  
Only believe me. Ye believe?

Appears

Verona . . . Never, I should warn you first,  
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst  
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell  
A story I could body forth so well  
By making speak, myself kept out of view,  
The very man as he was wont to do,

And leaving you to say the rest for him.  
Since, though I might be proud to see the dim  
Abysmal Past divide its hateful surge,  
Letting of all men this one man emerge  
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,  
I should delight in watching first to last  
His progress as you watch it, not a whit  
More in the secret than yourselves who sit  
Fresh-chapleted to listen. But it seems  
Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,  
Makers of quite new men, producing them,  
Would best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem,  
The wearer's quality ; or take their stand,  
Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand,  
Beside him. So, for once I face ye, friends,  
Summoned together from the world's four ends,  
Dropped down from heaven or cast up from hell,  
To hear the story I propose to tell.  
Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick,  
Catching the dead, if fate denies the quick,  
And shaming her ; 't is not for fate to choose  
Silence or song because she can refuse  
Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache  
Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake :  
I have experienced something of her spite ;  
But there 's a realm wherein she has no right  
And I have many lovers. Say, but few  
Friends fate accords me ? Here they are . now view  
The host I muster ! Many a lighted face

Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace ;  
 What else should tempt them back to taste our air  
 Except to see how their successors fare ?  
 My audience ! and they sit, each ghostly man  
 Striving to look as living as he can,  
 Brother by breathing brother ; thou art set,  
 Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I'll not fret  
 A wondrous soul of them, nor move death's spleen  
 Who loves not to unlock them. Friends ! I mean  
 The living in good earnest — ye elect  
 Chiefly for love — suppose not I reject  
 Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep,  
 Some fit occasion, forth, for fear ye sleep,  
 To glean your bland approvals. Then, appear,  
 Verona ! stay — thou, spirit, come not near  
 Now — not this time desert thy cloudy place  
 To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face !  
 I need not fear this audience, I make free  
 With them, but then this is no place for thee !  
 The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown  
 Up out of memories of Marathon,  
 Would echo like his own sword's griding screech  
 Braying a Persian shield, — the silver speech  
 Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,  
 Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in  
 The knights to tilt, — wert thou to hear ! What heart  
 Have I to play my puppets, bear my part  
 Before these worthies ?

Lo, the Past is hurled

In twain : up-thrust, out-staggering on the world,  
Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears  
Its outline, kindles at the core, appears  
Verona. 'Tis six hundred years and more  
Since an event. The Second Friedrich wore  
The purple, and the Third Honorius filled  
The holy chair. That autumn eve was stilled :  
A last remains of sunset dimly burned  
O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame turned  
By the wind back upon its bearer's hand  
In one long flare of crimson ; as a brand,  
The woods beneath lay black. A single eye  
From all Verona cared for the soft sky.  
But, gathering in its ancient market-place,  
Talked group with restless group ; and not a face  
But wrath made livid, for among them were  
Death's stanch purveyors, such as have in care  
To feast him. Fear had long since taken root  
In every breast, and now these crushed its fruit,  
The ripe hate, like a wine : to note the way  
It worked while each grew drunk ! men grave and gray  
Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro,  
Letting the silent luxury trickle slow  
About the hollows where a heart should be ;  
But the young gulped with a delirious glee  
Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood  
At the fierce news : for, be it understood,  
Envoys apprised Verona that her prince  
Count Richard of Saint Boniface. joined since

A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust  
 Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust  
 With Ecelin Romano, from his seat  
 Ferrara, — over zealous in the feat  
 And stumbling on a peril unaware,  
 Was captive, trammelled in his proper snare,  
 They phrase it, taken by his own intrigue.  
 Immediate succor from the Lombard League  
 Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,  
 For Azzo, therefore, and his fellow-hope  
 Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast !  
 Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast.  
 " Prone is the purple pavis ; Este makes  
 Mirth for the devil when he undertakes  
 To play the Ecelin ; as if it cost  
 Merely your pushing-by to gain a post  
 Like his ! The patron tells ye, once for all,  
 There be sound reasons that preferment fall  
 On our beloved " . . .

" Duke o' the Rood, why not ? "

Shouted an Estian, " grudge ye such a lot ?  
 The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own,  
 Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown, —  
 That quick with prey enough her hunger blunts,  
 And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts."

" Taurello," quoth an envoy, " as in wane  
 Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain  
 To fly but forced the earth his couch to make  
 Far inland, till his friend the tempest wake,

Waits he the Kaiser's coming; and as yet  
 'That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps: but let  
 Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs  
 The aroused hurricane ere it enrougths  
 The sea it means to cross because of him.  
 Sinketh the breeze? His hope-sick eye grows dim;  
 Creep closer on the creature! Every day  
 Strengthens the Pontiff; Ecelin, they say,  
 Dozes now at Oliero, with dry lips  
 Telling upon his perished finger-tips  
 How many ancestors are to depose  
 Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze  
 Deposits him in hell. So, Guelfs rebuilt  
 Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt  
 When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet  
 Buccio Virtù — God's wafer, and the street  
 Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm  
 With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm!  
 This could not last. Off Salinguerra went  
 To Padua, Podestà, 'with pure intent,'  
 Said he, 'my presence, judged the single bar  
 To permanent tranquillity, may jar  
 No longer' — so! his back is fairly turned?  
 The pair of goodly palaces are burned,  
 The gardens ravaged, and our Guelfs laugh, drunk  
 A week with joy. The next, their laughter sunk  
 In sobs of blood, for they found, some strange way,  
 Old Salinguerra back again — I say,  
 Old Salinguerra in the town once more

Uprooting, overturning, flame before,  
 Blood fetlock-high beneath him. Azzo fled ;  
 Who scaped the carnage followed ; then the dead  
 Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,  
 He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone.  
 Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce  
 Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,  
 On the gorged bird. The burghers ground their teeth  
 To see troop after troop encamp beneath  
 I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch  
 It took so many patient months to snatch  
 Out of the marsh ; while just within their walls  
 Men fed on men. At length Taurello calls  
 A parley : ' let the Count wind up the war !'  
 Richard, light-hearted as a plunging-star,  
 Agrees to enter for the kindest ends  
 Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,  
 No horse-boy more, for fear your timid sort  
 Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.  
 Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog ;  
 ' Ten, twenty, thirty, — curse the catalogue  
 Of burnt Guelf houses ! Strange, Taurello shows  
 Not the least sign of life ' — whereat arose  
 A general growl : ' How ? With his victors by ?  
 I and my Veronese ? My troops and I ?  
 Receive us, was your word ?' So jogged they on,  
 Nor laughed their host too openly : once gone  
 Into the trap ! —

Six hundred years ago !

Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe  
 (Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,  
 Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills  
 His sprawling path through letters anciently  
 Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye)  
 When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask,  
 Flung John of Brienne's favor from his casque,  
 Forswore crusading, had no mind to leave  
 Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve  
 Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,  
 Or make the Alps less easy to recross ;  
 And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,  
 Was excommunicate that very year.

“ The triple-bearded Teuton come to life ! ”

Groaned the Great League ; and, arming for the strife,  
 Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,  
 Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,  
 Its cry ; what cry ?

“ The Emperor to come ! ”

His crowd of feudatories, all and some,  
 That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears, shields,  
 One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,  
 Scattered anon, took station here and there,  
 And carried it, till now, with little care —  
 Cannot but cry for him ; how else rebut  
 Us longer ? Cliffs, an earthquake suffered jut  
 In the mid-sea, each domineering crest,  
 Nothing save such another throe can wrest  
 From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown



Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown  
 Too thick, too fast accumulating round,  
 Too sure to over-riot and confound  
 Ere long each brilliant islet with itself  
 Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf,  
 Whirling the sea-drift wide : alas, the bruised  
 And sullen wreck ! Sunlight to be diffused  
 For that ! Sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at first,  
 The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst  
 Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled main,  
 And, shattered by those rocks, took hold again,  
 So kindly blazed it — that same blaze to brood  
 O'er every cluster of the multitude  
 Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments,  
 An emulous exchange of pulses, vents  
 Of nature into nature ; till some growth  
 Unfancied yet, exuberantly clothe  
 A surface solid now, continuous, one :  
 "The Pope, for us the People, who begun  
 The People, carries on the People thus,  
 To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us !"  
 See you ?

Or say, Two Principles that live  
 Each fitly by its Representative.  
 'Hill-cat' — who called him so ? — the gracefulest  
 Adventurer, the ambiguous stranger-guest  
 Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,  
 Those talons to their sheath !) whose velvet purr  
 Soothes jealous neighbors when a Saxon scout

— Arpo or Yoland, is it? — one without  
 A country or a name, presumes to couch  
 Beside their noblest ; until men avouch  
 That, of all Houses in the Trevisan,  
 Conrad descries no fitter, rear or van,  
 Than Ecelo ! They laughed as they enrolled  
 That name at Milan on the page of gold,  
 Godego's lord, — Ramon, Marostica,  
 Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria,  
 And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief !  
 No laughter when his son, " the Lombard Chief"  
 Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent  
 To Italy along the Vale of Trent,  
 Welcomed him at Roncaglia ! Sadness now —  
 The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,  
 The Asolan and Euganean hills,  
 The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills  
 Them all, for Ecelin vouchsafes to stay  
 Among and care about them ; day by day  
 Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,  
 A castle building to defend a cot,  
 A cot built for a castle to defend,  
 Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end  
 To boasts how mountain ridge may join with ridge  
 By sunken gallery and soaring bridge.  
 He takes, in brief, a figure that beseems  
 The griesliest nightmare of the Church's dreams,  
 — A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged  
 From its old interests, and nowise changed

By its new neighborhood ; perehance the vaunt  
 Of Otho, " my own Este shall supplant  
 Your Este," come to pass. The sire led in  
 A son as eruel ; and this Ecelin  
 Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall,  
 And eurling and eompliant ; but for all  
 Romano (so they styled him) throve, that neck  
 Of his so pinehed and white, that hungry cheek  
 Proved 't was some fiend, not him, the man's-flesh went  
 To feed : whereas Romano's instrument,  
 Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole  
 I' the world, a tree whose boughs were slipt the bole  
 Successively, why should not he shed blood  
 To further a design ? Men understood  
 Living was pleasant to him as he wore  
 His careless surecoat, glaneed some missive o'er,  
 Propped on his truncheon in the public way,  
 While his lord lifted writhen hands to pray,  
 Lost at Oliero's convent.

Hill-cats, face

With Azzo, our Guelf Lion ! — nor disgrace  
 A worthiness conspieuous near and far  
 (Atii at Rome while free and consular,  
 Este at Padua who repulsed the Hun)  
 By trumpeting the Chureh's princely son  
 Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,  
 Aneona's March, Ferrara's . . . ask, in fine,  
 Our chronicles, commeneed when some old monk  
 Found it intolerable to be sunk

(Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)  
 Quite out of summer while alive and well :  
 Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,  
 'Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,  
 Striving to coax from his decrepit brains  
 The reason Father Porphyry took pains  
 To blot those ten lines out which used to stand  
 First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.

The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore  
 Was vested in a certain Twenty-four ;  
 And while within his palace these debate  
 Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,  
 Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare  
 Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care  
 For aught that 's seen or heard until we shut  
 The smother in, the lights, all noises but  
 The carroch's booming : safe at last ! Why strange  
 Such a recess should lurk behind a range  
 Of banquet-rooms ? Your finger — thus — you push  
 A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush  
 Upon the banqueters, select your prey,  
 Waiting, the slaughter-weapons in the way  
 Strewing this very bench, with sharpened ear  
 A preconcerted signal to appear ;  
 Or if you simply crouch with beating heart,  
 Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part  
 To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now ;  
 Nor any . . . does that one man sleep whose brow  
 The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er ?

What woman stood beside him? not the more  
Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes  
Because that arras fell between? Her wise  
And lulling words are yet about the room,  
Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom  
Down even to her vesture's creeping stir.  
And so reclines he, saturate with her,  
Until an outcry from the square beneath  
Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to breathe  
Above the cunning element, and shakes  
The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks  
On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,  
'The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit  
Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away  
Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying-day,  
In his wool wedding-robe. For he — for he,  
Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy,  
(If I should falter now) — for he is Thine!  
Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!  
A herald-star I know thou didst absorb  
Relentless into the consummate orb  
That scared it from its right to roll along  
A sempiternal path with dance and song  
Fulfilling its allotted period,  
Serenest of the progeny of God!  
Who yet resigns it not; His darling stoops  
With no quenched lights, desponds with no blank troops  
Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent  
Utterly with thee, its shy element

Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear.  
 Still, what if I approach the august sphere  
 Named now with only one name, disentwine  
 That under-current soft and argentine  
 From its fierce mate in the majestic mass  
 Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass  
 In John's transcendent vision, — launch once more  
 That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore  
 Where glutted hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,  
 Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume —  
 Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope  
 Into a darkness quieted by hope ;  
 Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye  
 In gracious twilights where His chosen lie,  
 I would do this ! if I should falter now !

In Mantua-territory half is slough  
 Half pine-tree forest ; maples, scarlet-oaks  
 Breed o'er the river-beds ; even Mincio chokes  
 With sand the summer through ; but 't is morass  
 In winter up to Mantua walls. There was,  
 Some thirty years before this evening's coil,  
 One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil,  
 Goito ; just a castle built amid  
 A few low mountains ; firs and larches hid  
 Their main defiles, and rings of vineyard bound  
 The rest. Some captured creature in a pound,  
 Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress,  
 Secure beside in its own loveliness,  
 So peered with airy head, below, above,

The castle at its toils, the lapwings love  
 To glean among at grape-time. Pass within.  
 A maze of corridors contrived for sin,  
 Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past,  
 You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last  
 A maple-panelled room : that haze which seems  
 Floating about the panel, if there gleams  
 A sunbeam over it, will turn to gold  
 And in light-graven characters unfold  
 The Arab's wisdom everywhere ; what shade  
 Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made,  
 Cut like a company of palms to prop  
 The roof, each kissing top entwined with top,  
 Leaning together ; in the carver's mind  
 Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek combined  
 With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair  
 Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear  
 A vintage ; graceful sister-palms ! But quick  
 To the main wonder, now. A vault, see ; thick  
 Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits  
 Across the buttress suffer light by fits  
 Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay, stoop —  
 A dullish gray-streaked cumbrous font, a group  
 Round it, each side of it, where'er one sees,  
 Upholds it — shrinking Caryatides  
 Of just-tinged marble like Eve's liliated flesh  
 Beneath her Maker's finger when the fresh  
 First pulse of life shot brightening the snow.  
 The font's edge burdens every shoulder, so

They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed ;  
 Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed.  
 Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil  
 Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,  
 Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length  
 Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength  
 Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.  
 So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,  
 Like priestesses because of sin impure  
 Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,  
 Having *that* once drunk sweetness to the *aregs*.  
 And every eve, Sordello's visit begs  
 Pardon for them : constant as eve he came  
 To sit beside each in her turn, the same  
 As one *c'* them, a certain space : and awe  
 Made a great indistinctness till he saw  
 Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress-chinks,  
 Gold seven times globed ; surely our maiden *shrinks*  
 And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain  
 Her load were lightened, one shade less the stain  
 Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead slipt  
 From off the rosary whereby the crypt  
 Keeps count of the contritions of its charge ?  
 Then with a step more light, a heart more large,  
 He may depart, leave her and every one  
 To linger out the penance in mute stone.  
 Ah, but Sordello ? 'T is the tale I mean  
 To tell you. In this castle may be seen,  
 On the hill-tops, or underneath the vines,



Or eastward by the mound of firs and pines  
 That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,  
 A slender boy in a loose page's dress,  
 Sordello : do but look on him awhile  
 Watching ('t is autumn) with an earnest smile  
 The noisy flock of thievish birds at work  
 Among the yellowing vineyards ; see him lurk  
 ('T is winter with its sullenest of storms)  
 Beside that arras-length of broidered forms,  
 On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light  
 Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter bright  
 — Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,  
 And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed,  
 Auria, and their Child, with all his wives  
 From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives,  
 Lady of the castle, Adelaide. His face  
 — Look, now he turns away ! Yourselves shall trace  
 (The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,  
 A sharp and restless lip, so well combine  
 With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive  
 Delight at every sense ; you can believe  
 Sordello foremost in the regal class  
 Nature has broadly severed from her mass  
 Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames  
 Some happy lands, that have luxurious names,  
 For loose fertility ; a footfall there  
 Suffices to upturn to the warm air  
 Half-germinating spices ; mere decay  
 Produces richer life ; and day by day

New pollen on the lily-petal grows,  
And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.  
You recognize at once the finer dress  
Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness  
At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled  
(As though she would not trust them with her world)  
A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,  
And lets but half the sun look fervid through.  
How can such love? — like souls on each full-fraught  
Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught  
Beyond its beauty, till exceeding love  
Becomes an aching weight; and, to remove  
A curse that haunts such natures — to preclude  
Their finding out themselves can work no good  
To what they love nor make it very blest  
By their endeavor, — they are fain invest  
The lifeless thing with life from their own soul,  
Availing it to purpose, to control,  
To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy  
And separate interests that may employ  
That beauty fitly, for its proper sake.  
Nor rest they here; fresh births of beauty wake  
Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,  
With every mode of loveliness: then cast  
Inferior idols off their borrowed crown  
Before a coming glory. Up and down  
Runs arrow fire, while earthly forms combine  
To throb the secret forth; a touch divine —  
And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod:

Visibly through His garden walketh God.  
 So fare they. Now revert. One character  
 Denotes them through the progress and the stir, —  
 A need to blend with each external charm,  
 Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm,  
 In something not themselves ; they would belong  
 To what they worship — stronger and more strong  
 Thus prodigally fed — which gathers shape  
 And feature, soon imprisons past escape  
 The votary framed to love and to submit  
 Nor ask, as passionately he kneels to it,  
 Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs  
 A legend : light had birth ere moons and suns,  
 Flowing through space a river and alone,  
 Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were strown  
 Hither and thither, foundering and blind,  
 When into each of them rushed light — to find  
 Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance.  
 Let such forego their just inheritance !  
 For there 's a class that eagerly looks, too,  
 On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,  
 Proclaims each new revelation born a twin  
 With a distinctest consciousness within  
 Referring still the quality, now first  
 Revealed, to their own soul — its instinct nursed  
 In silence, now remembered better, shown  
 More thoroughly, but not the less their own ;  
 A dream come true ; the special exercise  
 Of special function that implies

The being fair, or good, or wise, or strong,  
 'Dormant within their nature all along —  
 Whose fault? So, homage, other souls direct  
 Without, turns inward; "How should this deject  
 Thee, soul?" they murmur; "wherefore strength  
     quelled  
 Because, its trivial accidents withheld,  
 Organs are missed that clog the world, inert,  
 Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,  
 Like thine—existence cannot satiate,  
 Cannot surprise? laugh thou at envious fate,  
 Who, from earth's simplest combination stamp  
 With individuality—uncrampt  
 By living its faint elemental life,  
 Dost soar to heaven's completest essence, rife  
 With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,  
 Equal to being all!"

In truth? Thou hast

Life, then—wilt challenge life for us: our race  
 Is vindicated so, obtains its place  
 In thy ascent, the first of us; whom we  
 May follow, to the meanest, finally,  
 With our more bounded wills?

Ah, but to find

A certain mood enervate such a mind,  
 Counsel it slumber in the solitude  
 Thus reached nor, stooping, task for mankind's good  
 Its nature just as life and time accord  
 "— Too narrow an arena to reward

Emprize — the world's occasion worthless since  
 Not absolutely fitted to evince  
 Its mastery!" Or if yet worse befall,  
 And a desire possess it to put all  
 That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere  
 Contain it, — to display completely here  
 The mastery another life should learn,  
 Thrusting in time eternity's concern, —  
 So that Sordello . . . Fool, who spied the mark  
 Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark  
 Already as he loiters? Born just now,  
 With the new century, beside the glow  
 And efflorescence out of barbarism;  
 Witness a Greek or two from the abysm  
 That stray through Florence-town with studious air,  
 Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair:  
 If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet!  
 While at Siena is Guidone set,  
 Forehead on hand; a painful birth must be  
 Matured ere Saint Eufemia's sacristy  
 Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze  
 At the moon: look you! The same orange haze, —  
 The same blue stripe round that — and, i' the midst,  
 Thy spectral whiteness, Mother-maid, who didst  
 Pursue the dizzy painter!

Woe, then, worth

Any officious babble letting forth  
 The leprosy confirmed and ruinous  
 To spirit lodged in a contracted house!

Go back to the beginning, rather ; blend  
It gently with Sordello's life ; the end  
Is piteous, you may see, but much between  
Pleasant enough. Meantime, some pyx to screen  
The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon  
The goblin ! So they found at Babylon,  
(Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage Antonine)  
Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine,  
In rummaging among the rarities,  
A certain coffer ; he who made the prize  
Opened it greedily ; and out there curled  
Just such another plague, for half the world  
Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and couch asquat,  
Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot  
Until your time is ripe ! The coffer-lid  
Is fastened, and the coffer safely hid  
Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of gold.

Who will may hear Sordello's story told,  
And how he never could remember when  
He dwelt not at Goito. Calmly, then,  
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's  
Glided his youth away ; beyond the glades  
On the fir-forest's border, and the rim  
Of the low range of mountain, was for him  
No other world : but this appeared his own  
To wander through at pleasure and alone.  
The castle too seemed empty ; far and wide  
Might he disport ; only the northern side  
Lay under a mysterious interdict —

Slight, just enough remembered to restrict  
 His roaming to the corridors, the vault  
 Where those font-bearers expiate their fault,  
 The maple-chamber, and the little nooks  
 And nests, and breezy parapet that looks  
 Over the woods to Mantua: there he strolled.  
 Some foreign women-servants, very old,  
 Tended and crept about him — all his clew  
 To the world's business and embroiled ado  
 Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most.

And first a simple sense of life engrossed  
 Sordello in his drowsy Paradise;  
 The day's adventures for the day suffice —  
 Its constant tribute of perceptions strange,  
 With sleep and stir in healthy interchange,  
 Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease  
 Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees,  
 Eats the life out of every luscious plant,  
 And, when September finds them sere or scant,  
 Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite,  
 And hies him after unforeseen delight.  
 So fed Sordello, not a shard disheathed;  
 As ever, round each new discovery, wreathed  
 Luxuriantly the fancies infantine  
 His admiration, bent on making fine  
 Its novel friend at any risk, would fling  
 In gay profusion forth: a ficklest king,  
 Confessed those minions! Eager to dispense  
 So much from his own stock of thought and sense

As might enable each to stand alone  
 And serve him for a fellow ; with his own,  
 Joining the qualities that just before  
 Had graced some older favorite. Thus they wore  
 A fluctuating halo, yesterday  
 Set flicker and to-morrow filched away, —  
 Those upland objects each of separate name,  
 Each with an aspect never twice the same,  
 Waxing and waning as the new-born host  
 Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,  
 Gave to familiar things a face grotesque ;  
 Only, preserving through the mad burlesque  
 A grave regard. Conceive ! the orpine-patch  
 Blossoming earliest on the log-house-thatch  
 The day those archers wound along the vines —  
 Related to the Chief that left their lines  
 To climb with clinking step the northern stair  
 Up to the solitary chambers where  
 Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall ;  
 He o'er-festooning every interval,  
 As the adventurous spider, making light  
 Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,  
 From barbican to battlement ; so flung  
 Fantasies forth and in their centre swung  
 Our architect, — the breezy morning fresh  
 Above, and merry, — all his waving mesh  
 Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged.  
 This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged  
 To laying such a spangled fabric low



Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow.  
 But its abundant will was balked here : doubt  
 Rose tardily in one so fenced about  
 From most that nurtures judgment, care and pain :  
 Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,  
 Less favored, to adopt betimes and force  
 Stead us, diverted from our natural course  
 Of joys, — contrive some yet amid the dearth,  
 Vary and render them, it may be, worth  
 Most we forego. Suppose Sordello hence  
 Selfish enough, without a moral sense  
 However feeble ; what informed the boy  
 Others desired a portion in his joy ?  
 Or say a ruthless chance broke woof and warp —  
 A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp,  
 A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,  
 A bird with unsoiled breast and filmless eyes  
 Warm in the brake — could these undo the trance  
 Lapping Sordello ? Not a circumstance  
 That makes for you, friend Naddo ! Eat fern-seed  
 And peer beside us and report indeed  
 If (your word) "genius" dawned with throes and  
                   stings

And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs  
 Summers and winters quietly came and went.

Time put at length that period to content,  
 By right the world should have imposed : bereft  
 Of its good offices, Sordello, left  
 To study his companions, managed rip

Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,  
 Core with its crust, their natures with his own :  
 Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone.  
 As if the poppy felt with him ! Though he  
 Partook the poppy's red effrontery  
 Till Autumn spoiled their fleering quite with rain,  
 And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling crane  
 Lay bare. That's gone ! Yet why renounce, for  
     that,

His disenchanting tributaries — flat  
 Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn,  
 Their simple presence might not well be borne  
 Whose parley was a transport once : recall  
 The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all,  
 A poppy : why distrust the evidence  
 Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense ?  
 The new-born judgment answered : “ little boots  
 Beholding other creatures' attributes  
 And having none ! ” or, say that it sufficed,  
 “ Yet, could one but possess, one's self, ” (enticed  
 Judgment) “ some special office ! ” Naught beside  
 Serves you ? “ Well, then, be somehow justified  
 For this ignoble wish to circumscribe  
 And concentrate, rather than swell, the tribe  
 Of actual pleasures : what, now, from without  
 Effects it ? — proves, despite a lurking doubt,  
 Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared ?  
 That tasting joys by proxy thus, you fared  
 The better for them ? ” Thus much craved his soul.

Alas, from the beginning love is whole  
 And true ; if sure of naught beside, most sure  
 Of its own truth at least ; nor may endure  
 A crowd to see its face, that cannot know  
 How hot the pulses throb its heart below.  
 While its own helplessness and utter want  
 Of means to worthily be ministrant  
 To what it worships, do but fan the more  
 Its flame, exalt the idol far before  
 Itself as it would have it ever be.  
 Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,  
 Coerced and put to shame, retaining will,  
 Care little, take mysterious comfort still,  
 But look forth tremblingly to ascertain  
 If others judge their claims not urged **in vain**,  
 And say for them their stifled thoughts **aloud**.  
 So, they must ever live before a crowd :  
 — “Vanity,” Naddo tells you.

Whence contrive

A crowd, now ? From these women just alive,  
 That archer-troop ? Forth glided — not alone  
 Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,  
 Nor Adelaide (bent double o'er a scroll,  
 One maiden at her knees, that eve, his soul  
 Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd glooms  
 On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird perfumes,  
 Started the meagre Tuscan up, — her eyes,  
 The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise)  
 — But the entire out-world : whatever, scraps

And snatches, song and story, dreams perhaps,  
Conceited the world's offices, and he  
Had hitherto transferred to flower or tree,  
Nor counted a befitting heritage  
Each, of its own right, singly to engage  
Some man, no other, — such now dared to stand  
Alone. Strength, wisdom, grace on every hand  
Soon disengaged themselves, and he discerned  
A sort of human life . at least, was turned  
A stream of lifelike figures through his brain.  
Lord, liegeman, valvassor and suzerain,  
Ere he could choose, surrounded him ; a stuff  
To work his pleasure on ; there, sure enough :  
But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze ?  
Are they to simply testify the ways  
He who convoked them sends his soul along  
With the cloud's thunder or a dove's brood-song ?  
— While they live each his life, boast each his own  
Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone  
In some one point where something dearest loved  
Is easiest gained — far worthier to be proved  
Than aught he envies in the forest-wights !  
No simple and self-evident delights,  
But mixed desires of unimagined range,  
Contrasts or combinations, new and strange,  
Irksome perhaps, yet plainly recognized  
By this, the sudden company — loves prized  
By those who are to prize his own amount  
Of loves. Once care because such make account,

Allow a foreign recognition stamp  
 The current value, and his crowd shall vamp  
 Him counterfeits enough; and so their print  
 Be on the piece, 't is gold, attests the mint,  
 And "good," pronounce they whom his new appeal  
 Is made to: if their casual print conceal —  
 'This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss  
 What he have lived without, nor felt the loss —  
 Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,  
 — What matter? so must speech expand the dumb  
 Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sordello, late  
 No foolish woodland-sights could satiate,  
 Betakes himself to study hungrily  
 Just what the puppets his crude fantasy  
 Supposes notablest, popes, kings, priests, knights,  
 May please to promulgate for appetites;  
 Accepting all their artificial joys  
 Not as he views them, but as he employs  
 Each shape to estimate the other's stock  
 Of attributes, that on a marshalled flock  
 Of authorized enjoyments he may spend  
 Himself, be men, now, as he used to blend  
 With tree and flower — nay more entirely, else  
 'T were mockery: for instance, "how excels  
 My life that chieftain's?" (who apprised the young  
 Ecelin, here, becomes this month, in truth,  
 Imperial Vicar?) "Turns he in his tent  
 Renasly? Be it so — my head is bent  
 Deliciously amid my girls to sleep.

What if he stalks the Trentine-pass? Yon steep  
I climbed an hour ago with little toil —  
We are alike there. But can I, too, foil  
The Guelfs' paid stabber, carelessly afford  
Saint Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o' the sword  
Baffling their project in a moment?" Here  
No rescue! Poppy he is none, but peer  
To Ecelin, assuredly: his hand,  
Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand  
With Ecelin's success — try, now! He soon  
Was satisfied, returned as to the moon  
From earth; left each abortive boy's-attempt  
For feats, from failure happily exempt,  
In fancy at his beck. "One day I will  
Accomplish it! Are they not older still  
— Not grown up men and women? 'T is beside  
Only a dream; and though I must abide  
With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent  
For all myself, acquire an instrument  
For acting what these people act; my soul  
Hunting a body out, may gain its whole  
Desire some day!" How else express chagrin  
And resignation, show the hope steal in  
With which he let sink from an aching wrist  
The rough-hewn ash bow? straight, a gold shaft hissed  
Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down  
Superbly! "Crosses to the breach! God's Town  
Is gained Him back!" Why bend rough ash-bows  
more?'

Thus lives he: if not careless as before,  
 Comforted: for one may anticipate,  
 Rehearse the Future, be prepared when fate  
 Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names  
 Startle, real places of enormous fames,  
 Este abroad and Ecelin at home  
 To worship him, — Mantua, Verona, Rome  
 To witness it. Who grudges time so spent?  
 Rather test qualities to heart's content —  
 Summon them, thrice selected, near and far —  
 Compress the starriest into one star,  
 And grasp the whole at once!

The pageant thinned

Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind  
 His spirit passed to winnow and divide;  
 Back fell the simpler phantasms; every side  
 The strong clave to the wise; with either classed  
 The beauteous; so, till two or three amassed  
 Mankind's beseemingnesses, and reduced  
 Themselves eventually, graces loosed,  
 And lavished strengths, to heighten up One Shape  
 Whose potency no creature should escape.  
 Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk?  
 Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk,  
 Is some gray scorching Saracenic wine  
 The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline —  
 'Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed and chapped,'  
 Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped,  
 Are dates plucked from the bough John Brienne sent,

To keep in mind his sluggish armament  
 Of Canaan. — Friedrich's, all the pomp and fierce  
 Demeanor ! But harsh sounds and sights transpire  
 So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells,  
 Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells  
 On the obdurate ! That right arm indeed  
 Has thunder for its slave ; but where 's the need  
 Of thunder if the stricken multitude  
 Harkens, arrested in its angriest mood,  
 While songs go up exulting, then dispread,  
 Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead  
 Like an escape of angels ? 'T is the tune,  
 Nor much unlike the words the women croon  
 Smilingly, colorless and faint-designed  
 Each, as a worn-out queen's face some remind  
 Of her extreme youth's love-tales. " Eglamor  
 Made that ! " Half minstrel and half emperor,  
 What but ill objects vexed him ? Such he slew.  
 The kinder sort were easy to subdue  
 By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones ;  
 And these a gracious hand advanced to thrones  
 Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture this,  
 Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,  
 Instead of saying, neither less nor more,  
 He had discovered, as our world before,  
 Apollo ? That shall be the name ; nor bid  
 Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid  
 The youth — what thefts of every clime and day  
 Contributed to purfle the array



He climbed with (June at deep) some close ravine  
 'Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,  
 Over which, singing soft, the runnel slipt  
 Elate with rains: into whose streamlet dipt  
 He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet sock —  
 Though really on the stubs of living rock  
 Ages ago it crenneled; vines for roof,  
 Lindens for wall; before him, aye aloof,  
 Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,  
 Born of the simmering quiet, there to die.  
 Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied  
 Mighty descents of forest; multiplied  
 Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees,  
 There gendered the grave maple-stocks at ease.  
 And, proud of its observer, strait the wood  
 Tried old surprises on him; black it stood  
 A sudden barrier ('t was a cloud passed o'er)  
 So dead and dense, the tiniest brute no more  
 Must pass; yet presently (the cloud despatched)  
 Each clump, behold, was glistering detached  
 A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems!  
 Yet could not he denounce the stratagems  
 He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would hang  
 White summer-lightnings; as it sank and sprang  
 To measure, that whole palpitating breast  
 Of heaven, 't was Apollo, nature prest  
 At eve to worship.

Time stole: by degrees

The Pythons perish off; his votaries

Sink to respectful distance ; songs redeem  
 Their pains, but briefer ; their dismissals seem  
 Emphatic ; only girls are very slow  
 To disappear — his Delians ! Some that glow  
 O' the instant, more with earlier loves to wrench  
 Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench ;  
 Alike in one material circumstance —  
 All soon or late adore Apollo ! Glance  
 The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,  
 His Daphne ! “ We secure Count Richard's voice  
 In Este's counsels, good for Este's ends  
 As our Taurello,” say his faded friends,  
 “ By granting him our Palma !” — The sole child,  
 They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled  
 Ecelin, years before this Adelaide  
 Wedded and turned him wicked : “ but the maid  
 Rejects his suit,” those sleepy women boast.  
 She, scorning all beside, deserves the most  
 Sordello : so, conspicuous in his world  
 Of dreams sat Palma. How the tresses curled  
 Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound  
 About her like a glory ! even the ground  
 Was bright as with spilt sunbeams ; breathe not, breathe  
 Not ! — poised, see, one leg doubled underneath.  
 Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,  
 Rests, but the other, listlessly below,  
 O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air,  
 The vein-streaks swoln a richer violet where  
 The languid blood lies heavil ; yet calm

On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm,  
 As but suspended in the act to rise  
 By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes  
 Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets  
 Apollo's gaze in the pine-glooms.

Time fleets :

That's worst ! Because the pre-appointed age  
 Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage  
 And crowd she promised. Lean he grows and pale,  
 Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail  
 Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet alone  
 He tarries here ! The earnest smile is gone.  
 How long this might continue, matters not ;  
 — For ever, possibly ; since to the spot  
 None come : our lingering Taurello quits  
 Mantua at last, and light our lady flits  
 Back to her place disburdened of a care.  
 Strange — to be constant here if he is there !  
 Is it distrust ? O, never ! for they both  
 Goad Ecelin alike — Romano's growth  
 So daily manifest, that Azzo's dumb  
 And Richard wavers : let but Friedrich come !  
 — Find matter for the minstrelsy's report,  
 Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's court  
 To sing us a Messina morning up,  
 And, double rillet of a drinking-cup,  
 Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,  
 Northwa'd to Provence that, and thus far south  
 The other What a method to apprise

Neighbors of births, espousals, obsequies !  
Which in their very tongue the Troubadour  
Records ; and his performance makes a tour,  
For Trouveres bear the miracle about,  
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,  
Until the Formidable House is famed  
Over the country — as Taurello aimed,  
Who introduced, although the rest adopt,  
The novelty. Such games, her absence stopped,  
Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse  
No longer, in the light of day pursues  
Her plans at Mantua : whence an accident  
Which, breaking on Sordello's mixed content,  
Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,  
The veritable business of mankind.

## BOOK THE SECOND.

### THIS BUBBLE OF FANCY,

THE woods were long austere with snow: at last  
Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast  
Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,  
Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' the woods  
Our buried year, a witch, grew young again  
To placid incantations, and that stain  
About were from her cauldron, green smoke blent  
With those black pines" — so Eglamor gave vent  
To a chance fancy. Whence a just rebuke  
From his companion; brother Naddo shook  
The solemnest of brows; "Beware," he said,  
"Of setting up conceits in nature's stead!"  
Forth wandered our Sordello. Naught so sure  
As that to-day's adventure will secure  
Palma, the visioned lady — only pass  
O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted grass,  
Under that brake where sundawn feeds the stalks  
Of withered fern with gold, into those walks  
Of pine, and take her! Buoyantly he went.  
Again his stooping forehead was besprent  
With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Then wide  
Opened the great morass, shot every side  
With flashing water through and through; a-shine,

Thick-steaming, all alive. Whose shape divine  
 Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour, glanced  
 Athwart the flying herons? He advanced,  
 But warily ; though Mincio leaped no more,  
 Each footfall burst up in the marish-floor  
 A diamond jet : and if he stopped to pick  
 Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick,  
 And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or loach,  
 A sudden pond would silently encroach  
 This way and that. On Palma passed. The verge  
 Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge  
 Flushed, now, and panting, — crowds to see, — will own  
 She loves him — Boniface to hear, to groan,  
 To leave his suit ! One screen of pine-trees still  
 Opposes ; but — the startling spectacle —  
 Mantua, this time ! Under the walls — a crowd  
 Indeed, real men and women, gay and loud  
 Round a pavilion. How he stood !

In truth

No prophecy had come to pass : his youth  
 In its prime now — and where was homage poured  
 Upon Sordello? — born to be adored,  
 And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made  
 To cope with any, cast into the shade  
 By this and this. Yet something seemed to prick  
 And tingle in his blood ; a sleight — a trick —  
 And much would be explained. It went for naught —  
 The best of their endowments were ill bought  
 With his identity ; nay, the conceit,

That this day's roving led to Palma's feet  
 Was not so vain — list! The word, "Palma!" Steal  
 Aside, and die, Sordello; this is real,  
 And this — abjure!

What next? The curtains, see,  
 Dividing! She is there; and presently  
 He will be there — the proper You, at length —  
 In your own cherished dress of grace and strength:  
 Most like, the very Boniface!

Not so.

It was a showy man advanced; but though  
 A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound  
 Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around,  
 — "This is not he," Sordello felt; while, "Place  
 For the best Troubadour of Boniface!"  
 Hollaed the Jongleurs, — "Eglamor, whose lay  
 Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-day!"  
 Obsequious Naddo strung the master's lute  
 With the new lute-string, "Elys," named to suit  
 The song: he stealthily at watch, the while,  
 Biting his lip to keep down a great smile  
 Of pride: then up he struck. Sordello's brain  
 Swam; for he knew a sometime deed again;  
 So, could supply each foolish gap and chasm  
 The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,  
 Mistaking its true version — was the tale  
 Not of Apollo? Only, what avail  
 Luring her down, that Elys an he pleased,  
 If the man dared no further? Has he ceased?

And, lo, the people's frank applause half done,  
 Sordello was beside him, had begun  
 (Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend  
 The Trouvère) the true lay with the true end,  
 Taking the other's names and time and place  
 For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,  
 After the flying story; word made leap  
 Out word, rhyme — rhyme; the lay could barely keep  
 Pace with the action visibly rushing past:  
 Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast  
 Than some Egyptian from the harassed bull  
 That wheeled abrupt and, bellowing, fronted full  
 His plague, who spied a scarab 'neath his tongue,  
 And found 't was Apis' flank his hasty prong  
 Insulted. But the people — but the cries,  
 The crowding round, and proffering the prize!  
 (For he had gained some prize) — He seemed to shrink  
 Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink  
 One sight withheld him. There sat Adelaide,  
 Silent; but at her knees the very maid  
 Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich,  
 The same pure fleecy hair; one weft of which,  
 Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er  
 She leant, speaking some six words and no more.  
 He answered something, anything; and she  
 Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily  
 Upon him, her neck's warmth and all. Again  
 Moved the arrested magic; in his brain  
 Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,



And greater glare, until the intense flare  
Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense.  
And when he woke 't was many a furlong thence,  
At home; the sun shining his ruddy wont;  
The customary birds'-chirp; but his front  
Was crowned — was crowned! Her scented scarf around  
His neck! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps the ground?  
A prize? He turned, and peeringly on him  
Brooded the women-faces, kind and dim,  
Ready to talk. — "The Jongleurs in a troop  
Had brought him back, Naddo and Squarcialupe  
And Tagliafer; how strange! a childhood spent  
In taking, well for him, so brave a bent!  
Since Eglamor," they heard, "was dead with spite,  
And Palma chose him for her minstrel."

## Light

Sordello rose — to think, now; hitherto  
He had perceived. Sure, a discovery grew  
Out of it all! Best live from first to last  
The transport o'er again. A week he passed,  
Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,  
From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance  
Bounding his own achievement. Strange! A man  
Recounted an adventure, but began  
Imperfectly; his own task was to fill  
The framework up, sing well what he sang ill,  
Supply the necessary points, set loose  
As many incidents of little use  
— More imbecile the other, not to see

Their relative importance clear as he !  
 But, for a special pleasure in the act  
 Of singing — had he ever turned, in fact,  
 From Elys, to sing Elys ? — from each fit  
 Of rapture, to contrive a song of it ?  
 True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind  
 Into a treasure, helped himself to find  
 A beauty in himself ; for, see, he soared  
 By means of that mere snatch to many a hoard  
 Of fancies ; as some falling cone bears soft  
 The eye, along the fir-tree-spire, aloft  
 To a dove's nest. Then, how divine the cause  
 Such a performance might exact applause  
 From men, if they had fancies too ? Could fate  
 Decree they found a beauty separate  
 In the poor snatch itself ? — “ Take Elys, there,  
 — ‘ Her head that's sharp and perfect like a pear,  
 So close and smooth are laid the few fine locks  
 Colored like honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sun-blanced the livelong summer ’ — if they heard  
 Just those two rhymes, assented at my word,  
 And loved them as I love them who have run  
 These fingers through those pale locks, let the sun  
 Into the white cool skin — who first could clutch,  
 Then praise — I needs must be a God to such.  
 Or if some few, above themselves, and yet  
 Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set  
 An impress on our gift ? So, men believe  
 And worship what they know not, nor receive

Delight from. Have they fancies — slow, perchance,  
 Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance  
 Until, by song, each floating part be linked  
 To each, and all grow palpable, distinct?"  
 He pondered this.

Meanwhile, sounds low and drear  
 Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near  
 And nearer, and the underwood was pushed  
 Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed  
 At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid;  
 Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade  
 Came o'er the sky although 't was midday yet:  
 You saw each half-shut downcast floweret  
 Flutter — "a Roman bride, when they'd dispart  
 Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,  
 Holding that famous rape in memory still,  
 Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,  
 And looked thus," Eglamor would say — indeed  
 'T is Eglamor, no other, these precede  
 Home hither in the woods. "'T were surely sweet  
 Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat  
 To sleep!" judged Naddo, who in person led  
 Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,  
 A scanty company; for, sooth to say,  
 Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day.  
 Old worshippers were something shamed, old friends  
 Nigh weary; still the death proposed amends.  
 "Let us but get them safely through my song  
 And home again!" quoth Naddo.

All along,

This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)  
 — This calm corpse with the loose flowers in his hand,  
 Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite.  
 For him indeed was Naddo's notion right,  
 And verse a temple-worship vague and vast,  
 A ceremony that withdrew the last  
 Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil  
 Which hid the holy place — should one so frail  
 Stand there without such effort? or repine  
 That much was blank, uncertain at the shrine  
 He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,  
 The Power responded, and some sound or sight  
 Grew up, his own forever, to be fixed  
 In rhyme, the beautiful, forever! mixed  
 With his own life, unloosed when he should please,  
 Having it safe at hand, ready to ease  
 All pain, remove all trouble; every time  
 He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,  
 Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love,  
 Faltering; so distinct and far above  
 Himself, these fancies! He, no genius rare,  
 Transfiguring in fire or wave or air  
 At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up  
 In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,  
 His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few  
 And their arrangement finds enough to do  
 For his best art. Then, how he loved that art!  
 The calling marking him a man apart

From men — one not to care, take counsel for  
Cold hearts, comfortless faces — (Eglamor  
Was neediest of his tribe) — since verse, the gift,  
Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift  
Without it, e'en content themselves with wealth  
And pomp and power, snatching a life by stealth.  
So, Eglamor was not without his pride !  
The sorriest bat which cowers through noontide  
While other birds are jocund, has one time  
When moon and stars are blinded, and the prime  
Of earth is his to claim, nor find a peer ;  
And Eglamor was noblest poet here  
He knew that, 'mid the April woods, he cast  
Conceits upon in plenty as he past,  
That Naddo might suppose him not to think  
Entirely on the coming triumph : wink  
At the one weakness ! 'T was a fervid child,  
That song of his — no brother of the guild  
Had e'er conceived its like. The rest you know,  
The exaltation and the overthrow :  
Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,  
His life — to that it came. Yet envy sank  
Within him, as he heard Sordello out,  
And, for the first time, shouted — tried to shout  
Like others, not from any zeal to show  
Pleasure that way : the common sort did so,  
And what was Eglamor ? who, bending down  
The same, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,  
Printed a kiss on his successor's hand.

Left one great tear on it, then joined his band  
 — In time ; for some were watching at the door  
 Who knows what envy may effect? “ Give o’er,  
 Nor charm his lips, nor craze him ! ” ( here one spied  
 And disengaged the withered crown ) — “ Beside  
 His crown ! How prompt and clear those verses rung  
 To answer yours ! nay, sing them ! ” And he sung  
 Them calmly. Home he went ; friends used to wait  
 His coming, zealous to congratulate,  
 But, to a man, so quickly runs report,  
 Could do no less than leave him, and escort  
 His rival. That eve, then, bred many a thought :  
 What must his future life be ? was he brought  
 So low, who was so lofty this Spring morn ?  
 At length he said, “ Best sleep now with my scorn,  
 And by to-morrow I devise some plain  
 Expedient ! ” So, he slept, nor woke again.  
 They found as much, those friends, when they returned  
 O’erflowing with the marvels they had learned  
 About Sordello’s paradise, his roves  
 Among the hills and valleys, plains and groves,  
 Wherein, no doubt, this lay was roughly cast,  
 Polished by slow degrees, completed last  
 To Eglamor’s discomfiture and death.

Such form the chanters now, and, out of breath,  
 They lay the beaten man in his abode,  
 Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,  
 Doleful to hear. Sordello could explore  
 By means of it, however, one step more

In joy; and, mastering the round at length,  
 Learnt how to live in weakness as in strength,  
 When from his covert forth he stood, addressed  
 Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,  
 Primæval pines o'er canopy his couch,  
 And, most of all, his fame — (shall I avouch  
 Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look,  
 And laughed as from his brow Sordello took  
 The crown, and laid it on his breast, and said  
 It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head?)

— Continue. Nor the prayer quite fruitless fell.  
 A plant they have yielding a three-leaved bell  
 Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails  
 Till evening; evening gives it to her gales  
 To clear away with such forgotten things  
 As are an eyesore to the morn: this brings  
 Him to their mind, and bears his very name.

So much for Eglamor. My own month came;  
 'T was a sunrise of blossoming and May.  
 Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay  
 Sordello; each new sprinkle of white stars  
 That smell fainter of wine than Massic jars  
 Dug up at Baiæ, when the south wind shed  
 The ripest, made him happier; filleted  
 And robed the same, only a lute beside  
 Lay on the turf. Before him far and wide  
 The country stretched: Goito slept behind  
 — The castle and its covert, which confined  
 Him with his hopes and fears; so fain of old

To leave the story of his birth untold.  
 At intervals, 'spite the fantastic glow  
 Of his Apollo-life, a certain low  
 And wretched whisper, winding through the bliss,  
 Admonished, no such fortune could be his,  
 All was quite false and sure to fade one day :  
 The closelier drew he round him his array  
 Of brilliance to expel the truth. But when  
 A reason for his difference from men  
 Surprised him at the grave, he took no rest  
 While aught of that old life, superbly drest  
 Down to its meanest incident, remained  
 A mystery — alas, they soon explained  
 Away Apollo ! and the tale amounts  
 To this : when at Vicenza both her Counts  
 Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,  
 Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,  
 Reviled him as he followed ; he for spite  
 Must fire their quarter, though that self-same night  
 Among the flames young Ecelin was born  
 Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn  
 From the roused populace hard on the rear,  
 By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear  
 Grew high ; into the thick Elcorte leapt,  
 Saved her, and died ; no creature left except  
 His child to thank. And when the full escape  
 Was known — how men impaled from chine to nape  
 Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned  
 Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned



Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,  
 Missing the sweeter prey — such courage well  
 Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,  
 Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince  
 Within a blind retreat where Adelaide —  
 (For, once this notable discovery made,  
 The Past at every point was understood)  
 — Might harbor easily when times were rude,  
 When Azzo schemed for Palma, to retrieve  
 That pledge of Agnes Este — loath to leave  
 Mantua unguarded with a vigilant eye,  
 Taurello biding there ambiguously —  
 He who could have no motive now to moil  
 For his own fortunes since their utter spoil —  
 As it were worth while yet (went the report)  
 To disengage himself from her. In short,  
 Apollo vanished; a mean youth, just named  
 His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed  
 — How shall I phrase it? — Monarch of the World!  
 For, on the morning that array was furled  
 Forever, and in place of one a slave  
 To longings, wild indeed, but longings save  
 In dreams as wild, suppressed — one daring not  
 Assume the mastery such dreams allot,  
 Until a magical equipment, strength  
 Grace, wisdom, decked him too, — he chose at length,  
 Content with unproved wits and failing frame,  
 In virtue of his simple will, to claim  
 That mastery, no less — to do his best

With means so limited, and let the rest  
 Go by, — the seal was set: never again  
 Sordello could in his own sight remain  
 One of the many, one with hopes and cares  
 And interests nowise distinct from theirs,  
 Only peculiar in a thriveless store  
 Of fancies, which were fancies and no more;  
 Never again for him and for the crowd  
 A common law was challenged and allowed  
 If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied  
 By a mad impulse nothing justified  
 Short of Apollo's presence. The divorce  
 Is clear: why needs Sordello square his course  
 By any known example? Men no more  
 Compete with him than tree and flower before;  
 Himself, inactive, yet is greater far  
 Than such as act, each stooping to his star,  
 Acquiring thence his function; he has gained  
 The same result with meaner mortals trained  
 To strength or beauty, moulded to express  
 Each the idea that rules him; since no less  
 He comprehends that function, but can still  
 Embrace the others, take of might his fill  
 With Richard as of grace with Palma, mix  
 Their qualities, or for a moment fix  
 On one; abiding free meantime, uncramped  
 By any partial organ, never stamped  
 Strong, and to strength turning all energies —  
 Wise, and restricted to becoming wise —

That is, he loves not, nor possesses One  
 Idea that, star-like over, lures him on  
 To its exclusive purpose. "Fortunate!  
 This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate  
 A soul so various — took no casual mould  
 Of the first fancy and, contracted, cold,  
 Lay clogged forever thence, averse to change  
 As that: whereas it left her free to range,  
 Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,  
 Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.  
 So, range, my soul! — who, by self-consciousness,  
 The last drop of all beauty dost express —  
 The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence  
 For thee: but for the world, that can dispense  
 Wonder on men who, themselves, wonder — **make**  
 A shift to love at second-hand, and take  
 Those for its idols who but idolize,  
 Themselves, — world that loves souls as strong or wise,  
 Who, themselves, love strength, wisdom, — it shall bow  
 Surely in unexampled worship now,  
 Discerning me!" —

(Dear monarch, I beseech,

Notice how lamentably wide a breach  
 Is here! discovering this, discover too  
 What our poor world has possibly to do  
 With it! As pygmy natures as you please —  
 So much the better for you; take your ease;  
 Look on, and laugh; style yourself God alone;  
**Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone:**

All that is right enough : but why want us  
 To know that you yourself know thus and thus ?  
 " The world shall bow to me conceiving all  
 Man's life, who sees its blisses, great and small,  
 Afar — not tasting any ; no machine  
 To exercise my utmost will is mine :  
 Be mine mere consciousness ! Let them perceive  
 What I could do, a mastery believe,  
 Asserted and established to the throng  
 By their selected evidence of song  
 Which now shall prove, whate'er they are, or seek  
 To be, I am — who take no pains to speak,  
 Change no old standards of perfection, vex  
 With no strange forms created to perplex,  
 But will perform their bidding and no more,  
 At their own satiating-point give o'er,  
 While each shall love in me the love that leads  
 His soul to its perfection." Song, not deeds,  
 (For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would brook  
 Mankind no other organ ; he would look  
 For not another channel to dispense  
 His own volition, and receive their sense  
 Of its existing ; but would be content,  
 Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent.  
 Nor should, for instance, strength an outlet seek  
 And, striving, be admired, nor grace bespeak  
 Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes ;  
 Nor wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly moods :  
 But he would give and take on song's one point.

Like some huge throbbing-stone that, poised a-joint,  
 Sounds, to affect on its basaltic bed,  
 Must sue in just one accent; tempests shed  
 Thunder, and raves the landstorm: only let  
 That key by any little noise be set —  
 The far benighted hunter's halloo pitch  
 On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch  
 Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,  
 However loud, however low — all lift  
 The groaning monster, stricken to the heart.

Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its part,  
 And this, for his, will hardly interfere!  
 Its businesses in blood and blaze this year  
 But wile the hour away — a pastime slight  
 Till he shall step upon the platform: right!  
 And, now thus much is settled, cast in rough,  
 Proved feasible, be counselled! thought enough, —  
 Slumber, Sordello! any day will serve:  
 Were it a less digested plan! how swerve  
 To-morrow? Meanwhile eat these sun-dried grapes,  
 And watch the soaring hawk there! Life escapes  
 Merrily thus.

He thoroughly read o'er  
 His truchman Naddo's missive six times more,  
 Praying him visit Mantua and supply  
 A famished world.

The evening star was high  
 When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived  
 Before him: friends applauded, foes connived,

And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest  
 Angels, and all these angels would be blest  
 Supremely by a song — the thrice-renowned  
 Goito manufacture. Then he found  
 (Casting about to satisfy the crowd)  
 That happy vehicle, so late allowed,  
 A sore annoyance: 't was the song's effect  
 He cared for, scarce the song itself: reflect!  
 In the past life, what might be singing's use?  
 Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse  
 Praise, not the toilsome process which procured  
 That praise, enticed Apollo: dreams abjured,  
 No over-leaping means for ends — take both  
 For granted or take neither! I am loath  
 To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's;  
 But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors  
 Go pine; "the master certes meant to waste  
 No effort, cautiously had probed the taste  
 He'd please anon: true bard, in short, disturb  
 His title if they could; nor spur nor curb,  
 Fancy nor reason, wanting in him; whence  
 The staple of his verses, common sense:  
 He built on man's broad nature — gift of gifts,  
 That power to build! The world contented shifts  
 With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort  
 Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort  
 Its poet-soul — that's, after all, a freak  
 (The having eyes to see and tongue to speak)  
 With our herd's stupid sterling happiness

So plainly incompatible that — yes —  
 Yes — should a son of his improve the breed  
 And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed !”  
 “ Well, there ’s Goito and its woods anon,  
 If the worst happen ; best go stoutly on  
 Now !” thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet !

You pother with your glossaries to get  
 A notion of the Troubadour’s intent  
 In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent —  
 Much as you study arras how to twirl  
 His angelot, plaything of page and girl,  
 Once ; but you surely reach, at last, — or, no !  
 Never quite reach what struck the people so,  
 As from the welter of their time he drew  
 Its elements successively to view,  
 Followed all actions backward on their course,  
 And catching up, unmingled at the source,  
 Such a strength, such a weakness, added then  
 A touch or two, and turned them into men.  
 Virtue took form, nor vice refused a shape ;  
 Here heaven opened, there was hell agape,  
 As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,  
 Sinner the other flared portentous by  
 A greedy people. Then why stop, surprised  
 At his success ? The scheme was realized  
 Too suddenly in one respect : a crowd  
 Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud  
 To speak, delicious homage to receive,

The woman's breath to feel upon his sleeve,  
 Who said, "But Anafest — why asks he less  
 Than Lucio, in your verses? how confess,  
 It seemed too much but yestereve!" — the youth,  
 Who bade him earnestly, "Avow the truth!  
 You love Bianca, surely, from your song;  
 I knew I was unworthy!" — soft or strong,  
 In poured such tributes ere he had arranged  
 Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed,  
 Digested. Courted thus at unawares,  
 In spite of his pretensions and his cares,  
 He caught himself shamefully hankering  
 After the obvious petty joys that spring  
 From real life, fain relinquish pedestal  
 And condescend with pleasures — one and all  
 To be renounced, no doubt; for, thus to chain  
 Himself to single joys and so refrain  
 From tasting their quintessence, frustrated, sure,  
 His prime design; each joy must he abjure  
 Even for love of it.

He laughed: what sage  
 But perishes if from his magic page  
 He looked because, at the first line, a proof  
 'T was heard salutes him from the cavern-roof?  
 "On! Give yourself, excluding aught beside,  
 To the day's task; compel your slave provide  
 Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf  
 Thoroughly conned. These lays of yours, in brief —  
 Cannot men bear, now, something better? — fly



A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry  
Of essences? the period sure has ceased  
For such: present us with ourselves, at least,  
Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and hates  
Made flesh: wait not!"

Awhile the poet waits

However. The first trial was enough:  
He left imagining, to try the stuff  
That held the imaged thing, and, let it writhe  
Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe  
To reach the light — his Language. How he sought  
The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-wrought  
That Language, — welding words into the crude  
Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude  
Armor was hammered out, in time to be  
Approved beyond the Roman panoply  
Melted to make it, — boots not. This obtained  
With some ado, no obstacle remained  
To using it; accordingly he took  
An action with its actors, quite forsook  
Himself to live in each, returned anon  
With the result — a creature, and, by one  
And one, proceeded leisurely to equip  
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.  
"Accomplished! Listen, Mantuans!" Fond essay!  
Piece after piece that armor broke away,  
Because perceptions whole, like that he sought  
To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought  
As language: thought may take perception's place

But hardly coexist in any case,  
 Being its mere presentment — of the whole  
 By parts, the simultaneous and the sole  
 By the successive and the many. Lacks  
 The crowd perception? painfully it tacks  
 Thought to thought, which Sordello, needing such,  
 Has rent perception into: it's to clutch  
 And reconstruct — his office to diffuse,  
 Destroy: as hard, then, to obtain a Muse  
 As to become Apollo. "For the rest,  
 E'en if some wondrous vehicle exprest  
 The whole dream, what impertinence in me  
 So to express it, who myself can be  
 The dream! nor, on the other hand, are those  
 I sing to, over-likely to suppose  
 A higher than the highest I present  
 Now, which they praise already: be content  
 Both parties, rather — they with the old verse,  
 And I with the old praise — far go, fare worse!"  
 A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings  
 The angel, sparkles off his mail, and rings  
 Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps,  
 As might Apollo from the sudden corpse  
 Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits.  
 He set to celebrating the exploits  
 Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.

Then came

The world's revenge: their pleasure, now his aim  
 Merely, — what was it? "Not to play the fool

So much as learn our lesson in your school!"  
 Replied the world. He found that, every time  
 He gained applause by any ballad-rhyme,  
 His auditory recognized no jot  
 As he intended, and, mistaking not  
 Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was dunce  
 Sufficient to believe him — all, at once.  
 His will . . . conceive it caring for his will!  
 — Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still  
 How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,  
 Had Montfort at completely (so to speak)  
 His fingers' ends; while past the praise-tide swept  
 To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept:  
 The true meed for true merit! — his abates  
 Into a sort he most repudiates,  
 And on them angrily he turns. Who were  
 The Mantuans, after all, that he should care  
 About their recognition, ay or no?  
 In spite of the convention months ago,  
 (Why blink the truth?) was not he forced to help  
 This same ungrateful audience, every whelp  
 Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers  
 With the bright band of old Goito years,  
 As erst he toiled for flower or tree? Why, there  
 Sat Palma! Adelaide's funereal hair  
 Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed  
 A fairy dust upon that multitude,  
 Although he feigned to take them by themselves;  
 His giants dignified those puny elves,

Sublimed their faint applause. In short, he found  
 Himself still footing a delusive round,  
 Remote as ever from the self-display  
 He meant to compass, hampered every way  
 By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then  
 Continue, make believe to find in men  
 A use he found not?

Weeks, months, years went by;

And, lo, Sordello vanished utterly,  
 Sundered in twain; each spectral part at strife  
 With each; one jarred against another life;  
 The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man  
 Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran  
 Here, there; let slip no opportunities  
 As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize  
 To drop on him some no-time and acquit  
 His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit—  
 That waiving any compromise between  
 No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen  
 Beyond most methods) — of incurring scoff  
 From the Man-portion not to be put off  
 With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme,  
 Though ne'er so bright; that sauntered forth in dream,  
 Drest any how, nor waited mystic frames,  
 Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,  
 But just his sorry self — who yet might be  
 Sorrier for aught he in reality  
 Achieved, so pinioned That the Poet-part,  
 Fondling, in turn of fancy, verse; the Art

Developing his soul a thousand ways —  
 Potent, by its assistance, to amaze  
 The multitude with majesties, convince  
 Each-sort of nature, that same nature's prince  
 Accosted it. Language, the makeshift, grew  
 Into a bravest of expedients, too ;  
 Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown  
 Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone  
 Sufficed. While, out of dream, his day's work went  
 To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent —  
 So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge  
 Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge  
 A minute's toil that missed its due reward !  
 But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard,  
 John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,  
 That on the sea, with open in his hand  
 A bitter-sweetling of a book — was gone.

And if internal struggles to be one  
 That frittered him incessantly piecemeal,  
 Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real  
 Mantuans ! intruding ever with some call  
 To action while he pondered, once for all,  
 Which looked the easier effort — to pursue  
 This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn through  
 The present ill-appreciated stage  
 Of self-revelment, and compel the age  
 Know him ; or else, forswearing bard-craft, wake  
 From out his lethargy and nobly shake  
 Off timid habits of denial, mix

With men, enjoy like men. Ere he could fix  
 On aught, in rushed the Mantuans ; much they cared  
 For his perplexity ! Thus unprepared,  
 The obvious if not only shelter lay  
 In deeds, the dull conventions of his day  
 Prescribed the like of him : why not be glād  
 'T is settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad,  
 Submits to this and that established rule ?  
 Let Vidal change, or any other fool,  
 His murrey-colored robe for philamot,  
 And crop his hair ; too skin-deep, is it not,  
 Such vigor ? Then, a sorrow to the heart,  
 His talk ! Whatever topics they might start,  
 Had to be groped for in his consciousness  
 Straight, and as straight delivered them by guess.  
 Only obliged to ask himself, " What was,"  
 A speedy answer followed ; but, alas,  
 One of God's large ones, tardy to condense  
 Itself into a period ; answers whence  
 A tangle of conclusions must be stripped  
 At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipped,  
 They matched rare specimens the Mantuan flock  
 Regaled him with, each talker from his stock  
 Of sorted-o'er opinions, every stage,  
 Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,  
 Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe, rotten-rich,  
 Sweet-sour, all tastes to take : a practice which  
 He too had not impossibly attained,  
 Once either of those fancy-flights restrained ;

For, at conjecture how might words appear  
 To others, playing there what happened here,  
 And occupied abroad by what he spurned  
 At home, 't was slipt, the occasion he returned  
 To seize : he'd strike that lyre adroitly — speech,  
 Would but a twenty-cubit plectre reach ;  
 A clever hand, consummate instrument,  
 Were both brought close ; each excellency went  
 For nothing else. The question Naddo asked,  
 Had just a lifetime moderately tasked  
 To answer, Naddo's fashion. More disgust  
 And more ! why move his soul, since move it **must**  
 At a minute's notice or as good it failed  
 To move at all ? The end was, he retailed  
 Some ready-made opinion, put to use  
 This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce  
 Gestures and tones — at any folly caught  
 Serving to finish with, nor too much sought  
 If false or true 't was spoken ; praise and blame  
 Of what he said grew pretty well the same  
 — Meantime awards to meantime acts : his soul,  
 Unequal to the compassing a whole,  
 Saw, in a tenth part, less and less to strive  
 About. And as for men in turn . . . contrive  
 Who could to take eternal interest  
 In them, so hate the worst, so love the best !  
 Though, in pursuance of his passive plan,  
 He hailed, decried the proper way.

As Man

So figured he; and how as Poet? Verse  
 Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,  
 That his poor piece of daily work to do  
 Was, not sink under any rivals; who  
 Loudly and loud enough, without these qualms,  
 Tuned, from Bocacoli's stark-naked psalms,  
 To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,  
 "As knots that stud some almug to the pith  
 Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and crinklèd worse  
 Than pursèd eyelids of a river-horse  
 Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the  
 breeze" —

*Gad-fly*, that is. He might compete with these!  
 But — but —

“Observe a pompion-twine afloat;  
 Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat!  
 Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root,  
 The entire surface of the pool to boot.  
 So could I pluck a cup, put in one song  
 A single sight, did not my hand, too strong,  
 Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.  
 How should externals satisfy my soul?”  
 “Why that's precise the error Squarcialupe”  
 (Hazardèd Naddo) “finds; ‘the man can't stoop  
 To sing us out,’ quoth he, ‘a mere romance;  
 He'd fain do better than the best, enhance  
 The subjects' rarity, work problems out  
 Therewith': now, you're a bard, a bard past doubt,  
 And no philosopher; why introduce



Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but no use  
In poetry — which still must be, to strike,  
Based upon common sense; there's nothing like  
Appealing to our nature! what beside  
Was your first poetry? No tricks were tried  
In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes!  
'The man,' said we, 'tells his own joys and woes —  
We'll trust him.' Would you have your songs endure?  
Build on the human heart! — Why, to be sure  
Yours is one sort of heart — but I mean theirs,  
Ours, every one's, the healthy heart one cares  
To build on! Central peace, mother of strength,  
That's father of . . . nay, go yourself that length,  
Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do  
When they have got their calm! And is it true,  
Fire rankles at the heart of every globe?  
Perhaps! But these are matters one may probe  
Too deeply for poetic purposes:  
Rather select a theory that . . . yes,  
Laugh! what does that prove? — stations you midway  
And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay,  
That's rank injustice done me! I restrict  
The poet? Don't I hold the poet picked  
Out of a host of warriors, statesman . . . did  
I tell you? Very like! As well you hid  
'That sense of power, you have! True bards believe  
All able to achieve what they achieve —  
That is, just nothing — in one point abide  
Profounder simpletons than all beside.

Oh, ay! The knowledge that you are a bard  
 Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward!"  
 So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe  
 Of genius-haunters — how shall I describe  
 What grubs or nips, or rubs, or rips — your louse  
 For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,  
 Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer,  
 Picking a sustenance from wear and tear  
 By implements it sedulous employs  
 To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-toise  
 Sordello? Fifty creepers to elude  
 At once! They settled stanchly; shame ensued:  
 Behold the monarch of mankind succumb  
 To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,  
 As Naddo styled it! 'T was not worth oppose  
 The matter of a moment, gainsay those  
 He aimed at getting rid of; better think  
 Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to slink  
 Back expeditiously to his safe place,  
 And chew the cud — what he and what his race  
 Were really, each of them. Yet even this  
 Conformity was partial. He would miss  
 Some point, brought into contact with them ere  
 Assured in what small segment of the sphere  
 Of his existence they attended him;  
 Whence blunders — falsehoods rectify — a grim  
 List — slur it over! How? If dreams were tried,  
 His will swayed sicklily from side to side,  
 Nor merely neutralized his waking act

But tended e'en in fancy to distract  
 The intermediate will, the choice of means.  
 He lost the art of dreaming: Mantuan scenes  
 Supplied a baron, say, he sung before,  
 Handsomely reckless, full to running o'er  
 Of gallantries; "abjure the soul, content  
 With body, therefore!" Scarcely had he bent  
 Himself in dream thus low, when matter fast  
 Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast  
 And task it duly; by advances slight,  
 The simple stuff becoming composite,  
 Count Lori grew Apollo — best recall  
 His fancy! Then would some rough peasant-Paul,  
 Like those old Ecelin confers with, glance  
 His gay apparel o'er; that countenance  
 Gathered his shattered fancy into one,  
 And, body clean abolished, soul alone  
 Sufficed the gray Paulician: by and by,  
 To balance the ethereality,  
 Passions were needed; foiled he sunk again.

Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('t is time explain)  
 Because a sudden sickness set it free  
 From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee,  
 Her mountain-hive Romano swarmed; at once  
 A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons  
 Blackened the valley. "I am sick too old,  
 Half crazed I think; what good's the Kaiser's gold  
 To such an one? God help me! for I catch  
 My children's greedy sparkling eyes at watch —

He bears that double breastplate on, they say,  
 So many minutes less than yesterday !  
 Beside, Monk Hilary is on his knees  
 Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please  
 Exact a punishment for many things  
 You know, and some you never knew ; which brings  
 To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix  
 And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's  
 And Ecelin's betrothed ; the Count himself  
 Must get my Palma : Ghibellin and Guelf  
 Mean to embrace each other." So began  
 Romano's missive to his fighting-man  
 Taurello — on the Tuscan's death, away  
 With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay  
 Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap  
 Out of Vesuvius' throat, like this mishap  
 Startled him. "That accursed Vicenza ! I  
 Absent, and she selects this time to die !  
 Ho, fellows, for Vicenza !" Half a score  
 Of horses ridden dead, he stood before  
 Romano in his reeking spurs : too late —  
 "Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,"  
 The chieftain stammered ; "let me die in peace —  
 Forget me ! Was it I e'er craved increase  
 Of rule ? Do you and Friedrich plot your worst  
 Against the Father : as you found me first  
 So leave me now. Forgive me ! Palma, sure,  
 Is at Goito still. Retain that lure —  
 Only be pacified !"

The country rung

With such a piece of news: on every tongue,  
 How Ecelin's great servant, congeed off,  
 Had done a long day's service, so, might doff  
 The green and yellow, and recover breath  
 At Mantua, whither, — since Retrude's death,  
 (The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride  
 From Otho's House, he carried to reside  
 At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile  
 A structure worthy her imperial style,  
 The gardens raise, the statues there enshrine,  
 She never lived to see) — although his line  
 Was ancient in her archives and she took  
 A pride in him, that city, nor forsook  
 Her child when he forsook himself and spent  
 A prowess on Romano surely meant  
 For his own growth — whither he ne'er resorts  
 If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)  
 With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice  
 Were shows to greet him. "Take a friend's advice,"  
 Quoth Naddo to Sordello, "nor be rash  
 Because your rivals (nothing can abash  
 Some folks) demur that we pronounced you best  
 To sound the great man's welcome; 't is a test,  
 Remember! Strojavacca looks asquint,  
 The rough fat sloven; and there's plenty hint  
 Your pinions have received of late a shock —  
 Out-soar them, cobswan of the silver flock!  
 Sing well!" A signal wonder, song's no whit  
 Facilitated.

Fast the minutes flit;  
 Another day, Sordello finds, will bring  
 The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing;  
 So, a last shift, quits Mantua — slow, alone:  
 Out of that aching brain, a very stone,  
 Song must be struck. What occupies that front?  
 Just how he was more awkward than his wont  
 The night before, when Naddo, who had seen  
 Taurello on his progress, praised the mien  
 For dignity no crosses could affect —  
 Such was a joy, and might not he detect  
 A satisfaction if established joys  
 Were proved imposture? Poetry annoys  
 Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses may come  
 Or keep away! And thus he wandered, dumb  
 Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent,  
 On a blind hill-top: down the gorge he went,  
 Yielding himself up as to an embrace.  
 The moon came out; like features of a face  
 A querulous fraternity of pines,  
 Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling vines  
 Also came out, made gradually up  
 The picture; 't was Goito's mountain-cup  
 And castle. He had dropped through one defile  
 He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile  
 Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, enwrapped  
 Him wholly. 'T was Apollo now they lapped,  
 Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant  
 To wear his soul away in discontent,

Brooding on fortune's malice. Heart and brain  
Swelled; he expanded to himself again,  
As some thin seedling spice-tree starved and frail,  
Pushing between cat's head and ibis' tail  
Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth,  
— Suffered remain just as it sprung, to soothe  
The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet  
Well in her chilly green-glazed minaret, —  
When rooted up, the sunny day she died,  
And flung into the common court beside  
Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello! Soon  
Was he low muttering, beneath the moon,  
Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore, —  
Since from the purpose, he maintained before,  
Only resulted wailing and hot tears.  
Ah, the slim castle! dwindled of late years,  
But more mysterious; gone to ruin — trails  
Of vine through every loop-hole. Naught avails  
The night as, torch in hand, he must explore  
The maple chamber — did I say, its floor  
Was made of intersecting cedar beams?  
Worn now with gaps so large, there blew cold streams  
Of air quite from the dungeon; lay your ear  
Close and 't is like, one after one, you hear  
In the blind darkness water drop. The nests  
And nooks retained their long ranged vesture-chests  
Empty and smelling of the iris-root  
The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit  
Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day,

Said the remaining women.    Last, he lay  
Beside the Carian group reserved and still.

The Body, the Machine for Acting Will,  
Had been at the commencement proved unfit ;  
That for Reflecting, Demonstrating it,  
Mankind — no fitter : was the Will Itself  
In fault ?

His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf  
Beside the youngest marble maid awhile ;  
Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile,  
“ I shall be king again ! ” as he withdrew  
The envied scarf ; into the font he threw  
His crown.

Next day, no poet !    “ Wherefore ? ” asked  
Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs, masked  
As devils, ended ; “ don’t a song come next ? ”  
The master of the pageant looked perplext  
Till Naddo’s whisper came to his relief.  
“ His Highness knew what poets were : in brief,  
Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right  
To peevishness, caprice ? or, call it spite,  
One must receive their nature in its length  
And breadth, expect the weakness with the strength ! ”  
— So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,  
The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,  
Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin,  
And nodded that the bull-bait might begin.



## BOOK THE THIRD.

### NATURE MAY TRIUMPH THEREFORE;

AND the font took them : let our laurels lie !  
Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly  
Because once more Goito gets, once more,  
Sordello to itself ! A dream is o'er,  
And the suspended life begins anew ;  
Quiet those throbbing temples, then, subdue  
That cheek's distortion ! Nature's strict embrace,  
Putting aside the Past, shall soon efface  
Its print as well — factitious humors grown  
Over the true — loves, hatreds not his own —  
And turn him pure as some forgotten vest  
Woven of painted byssus, silkiest  
Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip,  
Left welter where a trireme let it slip  
I' the sea, and vexed a satrap ; so the stain  
O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its pain,  
Its pleasure : how the tinct loosening escapes,  
Cloud after cloud ! Mantua's familiar shapes  
Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit,  
Men, women, and the pathos and the wit,  
Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh  
For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die.  
The last face glances through the eglantines,

The last voice murmurs 'twixt the blossomed vines  
 Of Men, of that machine supplied by thought  
 To compass self-perception with, he sought  
 By forcing half himself — an insane pulse  
 Of a god's blood, on clay it could convulse,  
 Never transmute — on human sights and sounds,  
 To watch the other half with ; irksome bounds  
 It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed  
 Forever. Better sure be unrevealed  
 Than part-revealed : Sordello well or ill  
 Is finished : then what further use of Will,  
 A point in the prime idea not realized,  
 An oversight? inordinately prized,  
 No less, and pampered with enough of each  
 Delight to prove the whole above its reach.  
 "To need become all natures, yet retain  
 The law of my own nature — to remain  
 Myself, yet yearn . . . as if that chestnut, think,  
 Should yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp and pink,  
 Or those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs stanch  
 March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch!  
 Will and the means to show will, great and small,  
 Material, spiritual, — abjure them all  
 Save any so distinct, they may be left  
 To amuse, not tempt become ! and, thus bereft,  
 Just as I first was fashioned would I be !  
 Nor, Moon, is it Apollo now, but me  
 'Thou visitest to comfort and befriend !  
 Swim thou into my heart, and there an end,

Since I possess thee!—nay, thus shut mine eyes  
 And know, quite know, by this heart's fall and rise,  
 When thou dost bury thee in clouds, and when  
 Out-standest: wherefore practise upon men  
 To make that plainer to myself?"

Slide here

Over a sweet and solitary year  
 Wasted: or simply notice change in him —  
 How eyes, bright with exploring once, grew **dim**  
 And satiate with receiving. Some distress  
 Was caused, too, by a sort of consciousness  
 Under the imbecility, — naught kept  
 That down; he slept, but was aware he slept,  
 So, frustrated: as who brainsick made pact  
 Erst with the overhanging cataract  
 To deafen him, yet still distinguished slow  
 His own blood's measured clicking at his **brow**.

To finish. One declining Autumn day —  
 Few birds about the heaven chill and gray,  
 No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods —  
 He sauntered home complacently, their moods  
 According, his and Nature's. Every spark  
 Of Mantua life was trodden out; so dark  
 The embers, that the Troubadour, who sung  
 Hundreds of songs, forgot, its trick his tongue,  
 Its craft his brain, how either brought to pass  
 Singing at all; that faculty might class  
 With any of Apollo's now. The year  
 Began to find its early promise sere

As well. Thus beauty vanishes ; thus stone  
 Outlingers flesh : Nature's and his youth gone,  
 They left the world to you, and wished you joy.  
 When, stopping his benevolent employ,  
 A presage shuddered through the welkin ; harsh  
 The earth's remonstrance followed. 'T was the marsh  
 Gone of a sudden. Mincio, in its place,  
 Laughed, a broad water, in next morning's face,  
 And, where the mists broke up immense and white  
 I' the steady wind, burned like a spilth of light  
 Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.  
 And here was Nature, bound by the same bars  
 Of fate with him !

“No! youth once gone is gone :

Deeds let escape are never to be done.  
 Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year ; for us —  
 Oh forfeit I unalterably thus  
 My chance ? nor two lives wait me, this to spend  
 Learning save that ? Nature has time to mend  
 Mistake, she knows occasion will recur —  
 Landslip or seabreach, how affects it her  
 With her magnificent resources ? — I  
 Must perish once and perish utterly !  
 Not any strollings now at even-close  
 Down the field-path, Sordello ! by thorn-rows  
 Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire  
 And dew, outlining the black cypress' spire  
 She waits you at, Elys, who heard you first  
 Woo her, the snow-month through, but ere she durst

Answer 't was April! Linden-flower-time-long  
Her eyes were on the ground; 't is July, strong  
Now; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm  
The woodside, here or by the village elm  
That holds the moon, she meets you, somewhat pale,  
But letting you lift up her coarse flax veil  
And whisper (the damp little hand in yours)  
Of love, heart's love, your heart's love that endures  
Till death. Tush! No mad mixing with the rout  
Of haggard ribalds wandering about  
The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house  
Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse,  
Parading, — to the gay Palermitans,  
Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans  
Nuocera holds, — those tall grave dazzling Norse,  
High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the morse,  
Queens of the caves of jet stalactites,  
He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,  
The blind night seas without a saving star,  
And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,  
Sordello! — here, mollitious alcoves gilt  
Superb as Byzant domes that devils built!  
— Ah, Byzant, there again! no chance to go  
Ever like august pleasant Dandolo,  
Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,  
Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all,  
Through vanquished Byzant where friends note for him  
What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim,  
T were fittest he transport to Venice' Square —

Flattered and promised life to touch them there  
 Soon, by his fervid sons of senators!  
 No more lifes, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces, wars —  
 Ah, fragments of a whole ordained to be!  
 Points in the life I waited! what are ye  
 But roundels of a ladder which appeared  
 Awhile the very platform it was reared  
 To lift me on? — that happiness I find  
 Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind  
 Instinct which bade forego you all unless  
 Ye led me past yourselves. Ay, happiness  
 Awaited me; the way life should be used  
 Was to acquire, and deeds like you conduced  
 To teach it by a self-revelment, deemed  
 The very use, so long! Whatever seemed  
 Progress to that, was pleasure; aught that stayed  
 My reaching it — no pleasure. I have laid  
 The ladder down; I climb not; still, aloft  
 The platform stretches! Bliss strong and soft,  
 I dared not entertain, elude me; yet  
 Never of what they promised could I get  
 A glimpse till now! The common sort, the crowd  
 Exist, perceive; with Being are endowed,  
 However slight, distinct from what they See,  
 However bounded: Happiness must be,  
 To feed the first by gleanings from the last,  
 Attain its qualities, and slow or fast  
 Become what they behold; such peace-in-strife  
 By transmutation, is the Use of Life,  
 The Alien turning Native to the soul

Or body — which instructs me ; I am whole  
 There and demand a Palma ; had the world  
 Been from my soul to a like distance hurled,  
 'T were Happiness to make it one with me —  
 Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,  
 Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend  
 In spirit now ; and this done, what 's to blend  
 With ? Naught is Alien in the world — my Will  
 Owns all already ; yet can turn it still  
 Less Native, since my Means to correspond  
 With Will are so unworthy, 't was my bond  
 To tread the very joys that tantalize  
 Most now, into a grave, never to rise.  
 I die then ! Will the rest agree to die ?  
 Next Age or no ? Shall its Sordello try  
 Clew after clew, and catch at last the clew  
 I miss ? — that 's underneath my finger too,  
 Twice, thrice a day, perhaps, — some yearning traced  
 Deeper, some petty consequence embraced  
 Closer ! Why fled I Mantua, then ? — complained  
 So much my Will was fettered, yet remained  
 Content within a tether half the range  
 I could assign it ? — able to exchange  
 My ignorance (I felt) for knowledge, and  
 Idle because I could thus understand —  
 Could e'en have penetrated to its core  
 Our mortal mystery, and yet forbore,  
 Preferred elaborating in the dark  
 My casual stuff by any wretched spark

Born of my predecessors, though one stroke  
 Of mine had brought the flame forth! Mantua's yoke,  
 My minstrel's-trade, was to behold mankind, —  
 My own concernment — just to bring my mind  
 Behold, just extricate, for my acquist,  
 Each object suffered stifle in the mist  
 Which hazard, use and blindness could impose  
 In their relation to myself."

He rose.

The level wind carried above the firs  
 Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,  
 Onward.

"Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,  
 Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops  
 Under a humid finger; while there fleets,  
 Outside the screen, a pageant time repeats  
 Never again! To be deposed — immured  
 Clandestinely — still petted, still assured  
 To govern were fatiguing work — the Sight  
 Fleeting meanwhile! 'T is noontide: wreak ere night  
 Somehow my will upon it, rather! Slake  
 This thirst somehow, the poorest impress take  
 That serves! A blasted bud displays you, torn,  
 Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn;  
 But who divines what glory coats o'erclasp  
 Of the bulb dormant in the mummy's grasp  
 Taurello sent" . . .

"Taurello? Palma sent  
 Your Trouvere," (Naudo interposing lean)



Over the lost bard's shoulder) — "and, believe,  
 You cannot more reluctantly receive  
 Than I pronounce her message: we depart  
 Together. What avail a poet's heart  
 Verona's pomps and gauds? five blades of grass  
 Suffice him. News? Why, where your marish was,  
 On its mud-banks smoke fast rises after smoke  
 I' the valley, like a spout of hell new-broke.  
 O, the world's tidings! small your thanks, I guess,  
 For them. The father of our Patroness,  
 Has played Taurello an astounding trick,  
 Parts between Ecelin and Alberic  
 His wealth and goes into a convent: both  
 Wed Guelfs: the Count and Palma plighted troth  
 A week since at Verona: and they want  
 You doubtless to contrive the marriage-chant  
 Ere Richard storms Ferrara." Here was told  
 The tale from the beginning — how, made bold  
 By Salinguerra's absence, Guelfs had burned  
 And pillaged till he unawares returned  
 To take revenge: how Azzo and his friend  
 Were doing their endeavor, how the end  
 Of the siege was nigh, and how the Count, released  
 From further care, would with his marriage-feast  
 Inaugurate a new and better rule,  
 Absorbing thus Romano.

" Shall I school

My master," added Naddo, "and suggest  
 How you may clothe in a poetic rest

These doings, at Verona? Your response  
 To Palma! Wherefore jest? 'Depart at once?'  
 A good resolve! In truth, I hardly hoped  
 So prompt an acquiescence. Have you groped  
 Out wisdom in the wilds here? — Thoughts may be  
 Over-poetical for poetry.  
 Pearl-white, you poets liken Palma's neck;  
 And yet what spoils an orient like some speck  
 Of genuine white, turning its own white gray?  
 You take me? Curse the cicale!"

One more day.

One eve — appears Verona! Many a group,  
 (You mind) instructed of the osprey's swoop  
 On lynx and ounce, was gathering — Christendom  
 Sure to receive, whate'er the end was, from  
 The evening's purpose cheer or detriment,  
 Since Friedrich only waited some event  
 Like this, of Ghibellins establishing  
 Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King  
 Of Lombardy, he'd glad descend there, wage  
 Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage  
 His barons from the burghers, and restore  
 The rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore  
 By Hildebrand.

In the palace, each by each,  
 Sordello sat and Palma: little speech  
 At first in that dim closet, face with face  
 (Despite the tumult in the market-place)  
 Exchanging quick low laughers: now would rush

Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,  
 A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise —  
 But for the most part their two histories  
 Ran best thro' the locked fingers and linked arms.  
 And so the night flew on with its alarms  
 Till in burst one of Palma's retinue ;  
 " Now, Lady ! " gasped he. Then arose the two  
 And leaned into Verona's air, dead-still.  
 A balcony lay black beneath until  
 Out, 'mid a gush of torchfire, gray-haired men  
 Came on it and harangued the people : then  
 Sea-like that people surging to and fro  
 Shouted, " Hale forth the Carroch — trumpets, ho,  
 A flourish ! run it in the ancient grooves —  
 Back from the bell ! Hammer ! that whom behooves  
 May hear the League is up ! Peal ! learn who list,  
 Verona means not be the first break tryst  
 To-morrow with the League ! "

Enough. Now turn —

Over the eastern cypresses : discern —  
 Is any beacon set a-glimmer ?

Rang

The air with shouts that overpowered the clang  
 Of the incessant carroch, even : " Haste —  
 The Candle's at the gateway ! ere it waste,  
 Each soldier stand beside it, armed to march  
 With Tiso Sampier through the eastern arch ! "  
 Ferrara's succored, Palma !

Once again

They sat together ; some strange thing in train  
 To say, so difficult was Palma's place  
 In taking, with a coy fastidious grace  
 Like the bird's flutter ere it fix and feed.  
 But when she felt she held her friend indeed  
 Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant  
 Her lessons ; telling of another want  
 Gcito's quiet nourished than his own ;  
 Palma — to serve, as him — be served, alone  
 Importing ; Agnes' milk so neutralized  
 The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised  
 If, while Sordello fain had captive led  
 Nature, in dream was Palma wholly subjected  
 To some out-soul, which dawned not though she pined  
 Delaying till its advent, heart and mind,  
 Their life. " How dared I let expand the force  
 Within me, till some out-soul, whose resource  
 It grew for, should direct it? Every law  
 Of life, its every fitness, every flaw,  
 Must One determine whose corporeal shape  
 Would be no other than the prime escape  
 And revelation to me of a Will  
 Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable  
 Above, save at the point which, I should know,  
 Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow  
 So far, so much ; as now it signified  
 Which earthly shape it henceforth chose my guide,  
 Whose mortal lip selected to declare  
 Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear ;

— The first of intimations, whom to love ;  
The next, how love him. Seemed that orb, above  
The castle-covert and the mountain-close,  
Slow in appearing, — if beneath it rose  
Cravings, aversions, — did our green precinct  
Take pride in me, at unawares distinct  
With this or that endowment, — how, repress  
At once, such jetting power shrunk to the rest !  
Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave  
My spirit thence unfitted to receive  
The consummating spell ? — that spell so near  
Moreover ! ‘ Waits he not the waking year ?  
His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe  
By this ; to welcome him, fresh runnels stripe  
The thawed ravines ; because of him, the wind  
Walks like a herald. I shall surely find  
Him now !’

And chief, that earnest April morn  
Of Richard’s Love-court, was it time, so worn  
And white my cheek, so idly my blood beat,  
Sitting that morn beside the Lady’s feet  
And saying as she prompted ; till outburst  
One face from all the faces — not then first  
I knew it ; where in maple chamber glooms,  
Crowned with what sanguine-heart pomegranate blooms  
Advanced it ever ? Men’s acknowledgment  
Sanctioned my own : ’t was taken, Palma’s bent, —  
Sordello, accepted.

And the Tuscan dumb

Sat scheming, scheming. Ecelin would come  
 Gaunt, scared, ' Cesano baffles me,' he'd say :  
 Better I fought it out, my father's way !  
 Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats,  
 And you and your Taurello yonder — what's  
 Romano's business there?' An hour's concern  
 To cure the froward Chief! — induced return  
 Much heartened from those overmeaning eyes,  
 Wound up to persevere, — his enterprise  
 Marked out anew, its exigent of wit  
 Apportioned, — she at liberty to sit  
 And scheme against the next emergence, I —  
 To covet her Taurello-sprite, made fly  
 Or fold the wing — to con your horoscope  
 For leave command those steely shafts shoot ope,  
 Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness  
 To blank smooth snow. What semblance of success  
 To any of my plans for making you  
 Mine and Romano's? Break the first wall through,  
 Tread o'er the ruins of the Chief, supplant  
 His sons beside, still, vainest were the vaunt :  
 There, Salinguerra would obstruct me sheer,  
 And the insuperable Tuscan, here,  
 Stayed me! But one wild eve that Lady died  
 In her lone chamber: only I beside :  
 Taurello far at Naples, and my sire  
 At Padua, Ecelin away in ire  
 With Alberic. She held me thus — a clutch  
 To make our spirits as our bodies touch —

And so began flinging the Past up, heaps  
 Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps  
 Within her soul; deeds rose along with dreams,  
 Fragments of many miserable schemes,  
 Secrets, more secrets, then — no, not the last —  
 'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the Past,  
 How . . . ay, she told me, gathering up her face  
 — All left of it, into one arch-grimace  
 To die with . . .

Friend, 't is gone ! but not the fear  
 Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear.  
 Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart grow weak,  
 When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to speak  
 — Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark ! — for in  
 Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin  
 (How summoned, who divines ?) — looking as if  
 He understood why Adelaide lay stiff  
 Already in my arms ; for, ' Girl, how must  
 I manage Este in the matter thrust  
 Upon me, how unravel your bad coil ? —  
 Since ' (he declared) 't is on your brow — a soil  
 Like hers, there ! ' then in the same breath, ' he lacked  
 No counsel after all, had signed no pact  
 With devils, nor was treason here or there,  
 Goito or Vicenza, his affair :  
 He buried it in Adelaide's deep grave,  
 Would begin life afresh, now, — would not slave  
 For any Friedrich's nor Taurello's sake !  
 What bootéd him to meddle or to make

In Lombardy?' And afterward I knew  
 The meaning of his promise to undo  
 All she had done — why marriages were made,  
 New friendships entered on, old followers paid  
 With curses for their pains, — new friends' amaze  
 At height, when, passing out by Gate St. Blaise,  
 He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head  
 Over a friar's neck, — 'had vowed,' he said,  
 'Long since, nigh thirty years, because his wife  
 And child were saved there, to bestow his life  
 On God, his gettings on the Church.'

Exiled

Within Goito, still one dream beguiled  
 My days and nights; 't was found, the orb I sought  
 To serve, those glimpses came of Fomalhaut,  
 No other: but how serve it? — authorize  
 You and Romano mingle destinies?  
 And straight Romano's angel stood beside  
 Me who had else been Boniface's bride,  
 For Salinguerra 't was, with neck low bent,  
 And voice lightened to music, (as he meant  
 To learn not teach me,) who withdrew the pall  
 From the dead Past and straight revived it all,  
 Making me see how first Romano waxed,  
 Wherefore he waned now, why, if I relaxed  
 My grasp (even I!) would drop a thing effete,  
 Frayed by itself, unequal to complete  
 Its course, and counting every step astray  
 A gain so much. Romano, every way



Stable, a Lombard House now — why start back  
 Into the very outset of its track?  
 This patching-principle which late allied  
 Our House with other Houses — what beside  
 Concerned the apparition, the first Knight  
 Who followed Conrad hither in such plight  
 His utmost wealth was summed in his one steed?  
 For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed  
 A task, in the beginning hazardous  
 To him as ever task can be to us;  
 But did the weather-beaten thief despair  
 When first our crystal cincture of warm air, —  
 That binds the Trevisan, — as its spice-belt  
 (Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus dwelt, —  
 Furtive he pierced, and Este was to face —  
 Despaired Saponian strength of Lombard grace?  
 Tried he at making surer aught made sure,  
 Maturing what already was mature?  
 No; his heart prompted Ecelo, 'Confront  
 Este, inspect yourself. What's nature? Wont.  
 Discard three-parts your nature, and adopt  
 The rest as an advantage!' Old strength propped  
 The man who first grew Podestà among  
 The Vincentines, no less than, while there sprung  
 His palace up in Padua like a threat,  
 Their noblest spied a grace, unnoticed yet  
 In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object gained,  
 Romano was established — has remained —  
 For are you not Italian, truly peers

With Este? 'Azzo' better soothes our ears  
 Than 'Alberic?' or is this lion's-crine  
 From over-mounts' (this yellow hair of mine)  
 'So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock?'  
 (Thus went he on with something of a mock)  
 'Wherefore recoil, then, from the very fate  
 Conceded you, refuse to imitate  
 Your model farther? Este long since left  
 Being mere Este: as a blade its heft,  
 Este required the Pope to further him:  
 And you, the Kaiser — whom your father's whim  
 Foregoes or, better, never shall forego  
 If Palma dare pursue what Ecelo  
 Commenced, but Ecelin desists from: just  
 As Adelaide of Susa could intrust  
 Her donative, — her Piedmont given the Pope,  
 Her Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope  
 'Twixt France and Italy, — to the superb  
 Matilda's perfecting, — so, lest aught curb  
 Our Adelaide's great counter-project for  
 Giving her Trentine to the Emperor  
 With passage here from Germany, — shall you  
 Take it, — my slender plodding talent, too!'  
 — Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.

**He**

As Patron of the scattered family  
 Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit  
 Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit  
 Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,

Nothing remains,' Taurello said, 'but wait  
 Some rash procedure: Palma was the link,  
 As Agnes' child, between us, and they shrink  
 From losing Palma: judge if we advance,  
 Your father's method, your inheritance!'  
 That day I was betrothed to Boniface  
 At Padua by Taurello's self, took place  
 The outrage of the Ferrarese: again,  
 That day I sought Verona with the train  
 Agreed for, — by Taurello's policy  
 Convicting Richard of the fault, since we  
 Were present to annul or to confirm, —  
 Richard, whose patience had outstayed its term,  
 Quitted Verona for the siege.

And now

What glory may engird Sordello's brow  
 Through this? A month since at Oliero slunk  
 All that was Ecelin into a monk;  
 But how could Salinguerra so forget  
 His liege of thirty years as grudge even yet  
 One effort to recover him? He sent  
 Forthwith the tidings of this last event  
 To Ecelin — declared that he, despite  
 The recent folly, recognized his right  
 To order Salinguerra: 'Should he wring  
 Its uttermost advantage out, or fling  
 This chance away? Or were his sons now Head  
 Of the House?' Through me Taurello's missive sped;  
 My father's answer will by me return.

Behold! 'For him,' he writes, 'no more concern  
 With strife than, for his children, with fresh plots  
 Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he blots  
 For aye: Taurello shall no more subserve,  
 Nor Ecelin impose.' Lest this unnerve  
 Taurello at this juncture, slack his grip  
 Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip, —  
 I, in his sons' default (who, mating with  
 Este, forsake Romano as the frith  
 Its mainsea for the firmland, sea makes head  
 Against) I stand, Romano, — in their stead  
 Assume the station they desert, and give  
 Still, as the Kaiser's representative,  
 Taurello license he demands. Midnight —  
 Morning — by noon to-morrow, making light  
 Of the League's issue, we, in some gay weed  
 Like yours, disguised together, may precede  
 The arbitrators to Ferrara: reach  
 Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach  
 The rest! then say if I have misconceived  
 Your destiny, too readily believed  
 The Kaiser's cause your own!"

And Palma's fled

Though no affirmative disturbs the head,  
 A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er,  
 Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,  
 Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be  
 Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy,  
 Soul of this body — to wield this aggregate

Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate  
 Though he should live — a centre of disgust  
 Even — apart, core of the outward crust  
 He vivified, assimilated. Thus  
 I bring Sordello to the rapturous  
 Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one round  
 Of life was quite accomplished; and he found  
 Not only that a soul, whate'er its might,  
 Is insufficient to its own delight,  
 Both in corporeal organs and in skill  
 By means of such to body forth its Will —  
 And, after, insufficient to apprise  
 Men of that Will, oblige them recognize  
 The Hid by the Revealed — but that, the last  
 Nor lightest of the struggles overpast,  
 His Will, bade abdicate, which would not void  
 The throne, might sit there, suffer be enjoyed  
 Mankind, a varied and divine array  
 Incapable of homage, the first way,  
 Nor fit to render incidentally  
 Tribute connived at, taken by the by,  
 In joys. If thus with warrant to rescind  
 The ignominious exile of mankind —  
 Whose proper service, ascertained intact  
 As yet, (to be by him themselves made act,  
 Not watch Sordello acting each of them)  
 Was to secure — if the true diadem  
 Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank  
 The wisdom of that golden Palma, — thank

Verona's Lady in her Citadel

Founded by Gaulish Brennus, legends tell :

And truly when she left him, the sun reared

A head like the first clamberer's that peered

A-top the Capitol, his face on flame

With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came.

Nor slight too much my rhymes — that spring, dispread

Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead

Like an escape of angels! Rather say,

My transcendental platan! mounting gay

(An archimage so courts a novice-queen)

With tremulous silvered trunk, whence branches sheen

Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver soon

With colored buds, then glowing like the moon

One mild flame, — last a pause, a burst, and all

Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,

Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-dust,

Ending the weird work prosecuted just

For her amusement; he decrepit, stark,

Dozes; her uncontrolled delight may mark

Apart —

• Yet not so, surely never so!

Only, as good my soul were suffered go

O'er the lagune: forth fare thee, put aside

Entrance thy synod, as a god may glide

Out of the world he fills, and leave it mute

For myriad ages as we men compute,

Returning into it without a break

O' the consciousness! They sleep, and I awake

O'er the lagune.

Sordello said once, " Note,  
 In just such songs as Eglamor (say) wrote  
 With heart and soul and strength, for he believed  
 Himself achieving all to be achieved  
 By singer — in such songs you find alone  
 Completeness, judge the song and singer one,  
 And either's purpose answered, his in it  
 Or its in him: while from true works (to wit  
 Sordello's dream-performances that will  
 Be never more than dreamed) escapes there still  
 Some proof, the singer's proper life was 'neath  
 The life his song exhibits, this a sheath  
 To that; a passion and a knowledge far  
 Transcending these, majestic as they are,  
 Smouldered; his lay was but an episode  
 In the bard's life: which evidence you owed  
 To some slight weariness, some looking-off  
 Or start-away. The childish skit or scoff  
 In " Charlemagne," (his poem, dreamed divine  
 In every point except one silly line  
 About the restiff daughters!) — what may lurk  
 In that? 'My life commenced before that work,  
 (Thus I interpret the significance  
 Of the bard's start aside and look askance)  
 'My life continues after: on I fare  
 With no more stopping, possibly, no care  
 To note the undercurrent, the why and how,  
 Where, when, of the deeper life, as thus just now.  
 But, silent, shall I cease to live? Alas

For you! who sigh, 'When shall it come to pass  
 We read that story? How will he compress  
 The future gains, his life's true business,  
 Into the better lay which — that one flout,  
 Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out —  
 Engrosses him already, though professed  
 To meditate with us eternal rest,  
 And partnership in all his life has found?  
 'T is but a sailor's promise, weather-bound:  
 'Strike sail, slip cable, here the bark be moored  
 For once, the awning stretched, the poles assured!  
 Noontide above; except the wave's crisp dash,  
 Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash,  
 The margin's silent: out with every spoil  
 Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,  
 This serpent of a river to his head  
 I' the midst! Admire each treasure, as we spread  
 The bank, to help us tell our history  
 Aright: give ear, endeavor to descry  
 The groves of giant rushes, how they grew  
 Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed through,  
 What mountains yawned, forests to give us vent  
 Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went  
 Till . . . may that beetle (shake your cap) attest  
 The springing of a land-wind from the West!  
 — 'Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day!  
 To-morrow, and the pageant's moved away  
 Down to the poorest tent-pole: we and you  
 Part company: no other may pursue



Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate  
Intends, if triumph or decline await  
The tempter of the everlasting steppe.'

I muse this on a ruined palace-step  
At Venice: why should I break off, nor sit  
Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit  
England gave birth to? Who's adorable  
Enough reclaim a —— no Sordello's Will  
Alack! — be queen to me? That Bassanese  
Busied among her smoking fruit-boats? These  
Perhaps from our delicious Asolo  
Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico  
Not prettier, bind June lilies into sheaves  
To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves  
Soiled by their own loose gold-meal? Ah, beneath  
The cool arch stoops she, brownest-cheek! Her wreath  
Endures a month — a half-month — if I make  
A queen of her, continue for her sake  
Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan girl  
Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl  
In the dead black Giudecca proves sea-weed  
Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed  
Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned post  
For gondolas.

You sad dishevelled ghost  
That pluck at me and point, are you advised  
I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised  
— Jewels in the locks that love no crownlet like  
Their native field-buds and the green wheat spike,

So fair! — who left this end of June's turmoil,  
 Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,  
 Pomp; save a foolish gem or two, and free  
 In dream, came join the peasants o'er the sea.)  
 Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess  
 There is such niggard stock of happiness  
 To share, that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch,  
 One labors ineffectually to stretch  
 It o'er you so that mother and children, both  
 May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth!  
 Divide the robe yet farther: be content  
 With seeing just a score pre-eminent  
 Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights,  
 Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights —  
 For, these in evidence, you clearer claim  
 A like garb for the rest, — grace all, the same  
 As these my peasants. I ask youth and strength  
 And health for each of you, not more — at length  
 Grown wise, who asked at home that the whole race  
 Might add the spirit's to the body's grace,  
 And all be dizen'd out as chiefs and bards.  
 But in this magic weather one discards  
 Much old requirement — Venice seems a type  
 Of Life, — 'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,  
 As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt naught and naught,  
 'T is Venice, and 't is Life — as good you sought  
 To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone,  
 Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,  
 As hinder Life the evil with the good

Which make up Living, rightly understood.  
Only, do finish something! Peasants or queens,  
Take them, made happy by whatever means,  
Parade them for the common credit, vouch  
That a luckless residue, we send to crouch  
In corners out of sight, was just as framed  
For happiness, its portion might have claimed  
As well, and so, obtaining it, had stalked  
Fastuous as any! — such my project, balked  
Already; I hardly venture to adjust  
The first rags, when you find me. **To mistrust**  
**Me!** — nor unreasonably. You, no doubt,  
Have the true knack of tiring suitors out  
With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes  
Inveterately tear-shot — there, be wise  
Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant  
You insult! Shall your friend (not slave) be **shent**  
For speaking home? Beside, care-bit, erased,  
Broken-up beauties ever took my taste  
Supremely, and I love you more, far more  
Than her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor.  
Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where  
A whisper came, "Let others seek! — thy care  
Is found, thy life's provision; if thy race  
Should be thy mistress, and into one face  
The many faces crowd?" Ah, had I, judge,  
Or no, your secret? Rough apparel — **grudge**  
All ornaments save tag or tassel worn  
**To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn —**

Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go  
 Alone (that's saddest but it must be so)  
 Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside,  
 Aught desultory or undignified, —  
 Then, ravishingest lady, will you pass  
 Or not each formidable group, the mass  
 Before the Basilic (that feast gone by,  
 God's great day of the Corpus Domini)  
 And, wistfully foregoing proper men,  
 Come timid up to me for alms? And then  
 The luxury to hesitate, feign do  
 Some unexampled grace! — when, whom but you  
 Dare I bestow your own upon? And here  
 Further before you say, it is to sneer  
 I call you ravishing; for I regret  
 Little that she, whose early foot was set  
 Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal,  
 Now, i' the silent city, seems to fall  
 — Toward me — no wreath, only a lip's unrest  
 'To quiet, surecharged eyelids to be pressed  
 Dry of their tears upon my bosom. Strange  
 Such sad chance should produce in thee such change,  
 My love! warped souls and bodies! yet God spoke  
 Of right-hand, foot and eye — selects our yoke,  
 Sordello, as your poetship may find!  
 So, sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind  
 Their foolish talk; we'll manage reinstate  
 Your old worth; ask moreover, when they prate  
 Of evil men past hope, "don't each contrive,

Despite the evil you abuse, to live? —  
 Keeping, each losel, through a maze of lies,  
 His own conceit of truth? to which he hies  
 By obscure windings, tortuous, if you will,  
 But to himself not inaccessible ;  
 He sees truth, and his lies are for the crowd  
 Who cannot see ; some fancied right allowed  
 His vilest wrong, empowered the fellow clutch  
 One pleasure from a multitude of such  
 Denied him." Then assert, " all men appear  
 To think all better than themselves, by here  
 Trusting a crowd they wrong ; but really," say,  
 " All men think all men stupider than they,  
 Since, save themselves, no other comprehends  
 The complicated scheme to make amends  
 — Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance,  
 Good labors to exist." A slight advance, —  
 Merely to find the sickness you die through,  
 And naught beside ! but if one can't eschew  
 One's portion in the common lot, at least  
 One can avoid an ignorance increased  
 Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint  
 How naught were like dispensing without stint  
 The water of life — so easy to dispense  
 Beside, when one has probed the centre whence  
 Commotion's born — could tell you of it all !  
 " — Meantime, just meditate my madrigal  
 O' the mugwort that conceals a dew-drop safe !"  
 What, dullard? we and you in smothery chafe.

Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin  
 The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,  
 A hungry sun above us, sands that bung  
 Our throats, — each dromedary lolls a tongue,  
 Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,  
 And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap,  
 And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,  
 — Remark, you wonder any one needs choke  
 With founts about! Potsherd him, Gibeonites!  
 While awkwardly enough your Moses smites  
 The rock, though he forego his Promised Land,  
 Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and  
 Figure as Metaphysic Poet . . . ah  
 Mark ye the dim first ooziings? Meribah!  
 Then, quaffing at the fount my courage gained,  
 Recall — not that I prompt ye — who explained . . .  
 "Presumptuous!" interrupts one. You, not I  
 'T is, brother, marvel at and magnify  
 Such office: "office," quotha? can we get  
 To the beginning of the office yet?  
 What do we here? simply experiment  
 Each on the other's power and its intent  
 When elsewhere tasked, — if this of mine were trucked  
 For yours to either's good, — we watch construct,  
 In short, an engine: with a finished one,  
 What it can do, is all, — naught, how 't is done.  
 But this of ours yet in probation, dusk  
 A kernel of strange wheelwork through its husk  
 Grows into shape by quarters and by halves;

Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's  
 Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,  
 Make out each other more or less precise —  
 The scope of the whole engine's to be proved;  
 We die : which means to say, the whole's removed,  
 Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex gin, —  
 To be set up anew elsewhere, begin  
 A task indeed, but with a clearer clime  
 Than the murk lodgment of our building-time.  
 And then, I grant you, it behooves forget  
 How 't is done — all that must amuse us yet  
 So long : and, while you turn upon your heel,  
 Pray that I be not busy slitting steel  
 Or shredding brass, camped on some virgin shore  
 Under a cluster of fresh stars, before  
 I name a tithe o' the wheels I trust to do !  
 So occupied, then, are we : hitherto,  
 At present, and a weary while to come,  
 The office of ourselves, — nor blind nor dumb,  
 And seeing somewhat of man's state, — has been,  
 For the worst of us, to say they so have seen ;  
 For the better, what it was they saw ; the best  
 Impart the gift of seeing to the rest :  
 " So that I glance," says such an one, " around,  
 And there's no face but I can read profound  
 Disclosures in ; this stands for hope, that — fear,  
 And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here !  
 ' Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts  
 O'erarch, will blind thee ! said I not ? she shuts

Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet !  
 Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat  
 Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,  
 Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore  
 Thy sweet shape, Zanze ! therefore stoop !'

‘ That's truth !

(Adjudge you) ‘ the incarcerated youth  
 Would say that !’

‘ Youth ? Plara the bard ? Set down

That Plara spent his youth in a grim town  
 Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about  
 The minster for protection, never out  
 Of its black belfry's shade and its bells' roar.  
 The brighter shone the suburb, — all the more  
 Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof  
 Of any chance escape of joy, — some roof,  
 Taller than they, allowed the rest detect  
 Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect  
 Who could, 't was meant for laughter, that ploughed cheek's  
 Repulsive gleam !) when the sun stopped both peaks  
 Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,  
 Then sunk, a hugh flame on its socket's edge,  
 With leavings on the gray glass oriel-pane  
 Ghastly some minutes more. No fear of rain —  
 The minster minded that ! in heaps the dust  
 Lay everywhere. This town, the minster's trust,  
 Held Plara ; who, its denizen, bade hail  
 In twice twelve sonnets, Tempe's dewy vale.'

‘ Exact the town, the minster and the street !’



‘As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat:  
 Lust triumphs and is gay, Love’s triumphed o’er  
 And sad: but Lucio’s sad. I said before,  
 Love’s sad, not Lucio; one who loves may be  
 As gay his love has leave to hope, as he  
 Downcast that lusts’ desire escapes the springe:  
 ’T is of the mood itself I speak, what tinge  
 Determines it, else colorless, — or mirth,  
 Or melancholy, as from heaven or earth.’

‘Ay, that’s the variation’s gist!’ Indeed?  
 Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed!  
 And having seen too what I saw, be bold  
 And next encounter what I do behold  
 (That’s sure) but bid you take on trust! **Attack**  
 The use and purpose of such sights? **Alack,**  
 Not so unwisely does the crowd dispense  
 On Salinguerras praise in preference  
 To the Sordellos: men of action, these!  
 Who, seeing just as little as you please,  
 Yet turn that little to account, — engage  
 With, do not gaze at, — carry on, a stage,  
 The work o’ the world, not merely make report  
 The work existed ere their day! In short,  
 When at some future no-time a brave band  
 Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand  
 In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile where’s the hurt  
 Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert,  
 At whose defection mortals stare aghast  
 As though heaven’s bounteous windows were slammed fast

Incontinent? whereas all you, beneath,  
 Should scowl at, curse them, bruise lips, break their teeth  
 Who ply the pullies, for neglecting you :  
 And therefore have I moulded, made anew  
 A Man, and give him to be turned and tried,  
 Be angry with or pleased at. On your side,  
 Have ye times, places, actors of your own ?  
 Try them upon Sordello when full-grown,  
 And then — ah then ! If Hercules first parched  
 His foot in Egypt only to be marched  
 A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,  
 What chance have I ? The demigod was mute  
 Till, at the altar, where time out of mind  
 Such guests became oblations, chaplets twined  
 His forehead long enough, and he began  
 Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man.  
 Take not affront, my gentle audience ! whom  
 No Hercules shall make his hecatomb,  
 Believe, nor from his brows your chaplet rend —  
 That's your kind suffrage, yours, my patron-friend,  
 Whose great verse blares unintermittent on  
 Like your own trumpeter at Marathon, —  
 You who, Plataeas and Salamis being scant,  
 Put up with Ætna for a stimulant —  
 And did well, I acknowledged, as he loomed  
 Over the midland sea last month, presumed  
 Long, lay demolished in the blazing West  
 At eve, while towards him tilting cloudlets prest  
 Like Persian ships at Salamis. Friend, wear

A crest proud as desert while I declare  
 Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring  
 Tears of its color from that painted king  
 Who lost it, I would, for that smile which went  
 To my heart, fling it in the sea, content,  
 Wearing your verse in place, an amulet  
 Sovereign against all passion, wear and fret!  
 My English Eyebright, if you are not glad  
 That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad  
 Disheveled form, wherein I put mankind  
 To come at times and keep my pact in mind,  
 Renewed me, — hear no crickets in the hedge,  
 Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge  
 At home, and may the summer showers gush  
 Without a warning from the missel thrush!  
 So, to our business, now — the fate of such  
 As find our common nature — overmuch  
 Despised because restricted and unfit  
 To bear the burden they impose on it —  
 Cling when they would discard it; craving strength  
 To leap from the allotted world, at length  
 They do leap, — flounder on without a term,  
 Each a god's germ, doomed to remain a germ  
 In unexpanded infancy, unless . . .  
 But that's the story — dull enough, confess!  
 There might be fitter subjects to allure;  
 Still, neither misconceive my portraiture  
 Nor undervalue its adornments quaint:  
**What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint.**

Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,  
 Then say if you condemn me or acquit.  
 John the Beloved, banished Antioch  
 For Patmos, bade collectively his flock  
 Farewell, but set apart the closing eve  
 To comfort those his exile most would grieve,  
 He knew: a touching spectacle, that house  
 In motion to receive him! Xanthus' spouse  
 You missed, made panther's meat a month since; but  
 Xanthus himself (his nephew 't was, they shut  
 'Twixt boards and sawed asunder) Polycarp,  
 Soft Charicle, next year no wheel could warp  
 To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the rest  
 Were ranged; thro' whom the gray disciple prest,  
 Busily blessing right and left, just stopt  
 To pat one infant's curls, the hangman cropt  
 Soon after, reached the portal — on its hinge  
 The door turns and he enters — what quick twinge  
 Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix  
 Whereon, why like some spectral candlestick's  
 Branch the disciple's arms? Dead swooned he, woke  
 Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp, heart-broke,  
 "Get thee behind me, Satan! have I toiled  
 To no more purpose? is the gospel foiled  
 Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus' hearth,  
 Portrayed with sooty garb and features swarth —  
 Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled  
 To see the — the — the Devil domiciled?"  
 Whereto sobbed Xanthus, "Father, 't is yourself

Installed, a limning which our utmost pelf  
Went to procure against to-morrow's loss ;  
And that's no twy-prong, but a pastoral cross,  
You're painted with!" His puckered brows unfold —  
And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

## BOOK THE FOURTH.

MEN SUFFERED MUCH,

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case ;  
The lady-city, for whose sole embrace  
Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms  
A brawny mischief to the fragile charms  
They tugged for — one discovering that to twist  
Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist  
Secured a point of vantage — one, how best  
He'd parry that by planting in her breast  
His elbow-spike — each party too intent  
For noticing, howe'er the battle went,  
The conqueror would but have a corpse to kiss.  
“ May Boniface be duly damned for this ! ”  
— Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned,  
From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned  
His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth :  
“ A boon, sweet Christ — let Salinguerra seethe  
In hell forever, Christ, and let myself  
Be there to laugh at him ! ” — moaned some young Guelf  
Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast  
To the charred lintel of the doorway, last  
His father stood within to bid him speed.  
The thoroughfares were overrun with weed  
— Docks, quitchgrass, loathly mallows no man plants.

The stranger, none of its inhabitants  
 Crept out of doors to taste fresh air **again,**  
 And ask the purpose of a sumptuous **train**  
 Admitted on a morning; every town  
 Of the East League was come by **envoy down**  
 To treat for Richard's ransom: here you saw  
 The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw  
 The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross  
 On its white field. A-tiptoe o'er the fosse  
 Looked Legate Montelungo' wistfully  
 After the flock of steeples he might spy  
 In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago  
 To mend the ramparts — sure the laggards know  
 The Pope's as good as here! They paced the streets  
 More soberly. At last, "Taurello greets  
 The League," announced a pursuivant, — "will match  
 Its courtesy, and labors to despatch  
 At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent  
 On pressing matters from his post at Trent,  
 With Mainard Count of Tyrol, — simply waits  
 Their going to receive the delegates."  
 "Tito!" Our delegates exchanged a glance,  
 And, keeping the main way, admired askance  
 The lazy engines of outlandish birth,  
 Couched like a king each on its bank of earth —  
 Arbalist, manganel, and catapult;  
 While stationed by, as waiting a result,  
 Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased  
 Working to watch the strangers. "This, at least,

Were better spared ; he scarce presumes gainsay  
 The League's decision ! Get our friend away  
 And profit for the future : how else teach  
 Fools 't is not safe to stray within claw's reach  
 Ere Salinguerra's final gasp be blown ?  
 Those mere convulsive scratches find the bone.  
 Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's nare ? ”

The carrochs halted in the public square.  
 Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,  
 Men prattled, freelier that the crested gaunt  
 White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak  
 Was missing, and whoever chose might speak  
*Ecelin* boldly out : so, — “ *Ecelin*  
 Needed his wife to swallow half the sin  
 And sickens by himself : the Devil's whelp,  
 He styles his son, dwindles away, no help  
 From conserves, your fine triple-curved froth  
 Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-broth —  
 Eh ? Jubilate ! Peace ! no little word  
 You utter here that 's not distinctly heard  
 Up at Oliero : he was absent sick  
 When we besieged Bassano — who, i' the thick  
 O' the work, perceived the progress Azzo made,  
 Like *Ecelin*, through his witch *Adelaide* ?  
 She managed it so well that, night by night,  
 At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite  
 First fresh, pale by and by without a wound,  
 And, when it came with eyes filmed as in swound,  
 They knew the place was taken. Ominous



That Ghibellins should get what cautious  
 Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench  
 Vainly; Saint George contrived his town a trench  
 O' the marshes, an impermeable bar.  
 Young Ecelin is meant the tutelary  
 Of Padua, rather; veins embrace upon  
 His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglione.  
 What now? The founts! God's bread, touch not a  
 A crawling hell of carrion — every tank [plank.  
 Choke full! — found out just now to Cino's cost —  
 The same who gave Taurello up for lost,  
 And, making no account of fortune's freaks,  
 Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks  
 Back now with Concorezzi — 'faith! they drag  
 Their carroch to San Vital, plant the flag  
 On his own palace so adroitly razed  
 He knew it not; a sort of Guelf folk gazed  
 And laughed apart; Cino disliked their air —  
 Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care —  
 Seats himself on the tank's edge — will begin  
 To hum, *za, za, Cavalier Ecelin* —  
 A silence; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,  
 Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each time,  
 At last, *za, za*, and up with a fierce kick  
 Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick  
 Gray hair about his spur!"

Which means, they lift

The covering, Salinguerra made a shift  
 To stretch upon the truth; as well avoid

Further disclosures ; leave them thus employed.  
 Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,  
 And poor Ferrara puts a softened face  
 On her misfortunes. Let us scale this tall  
 Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall  
 Bastioned within by trees of every sort  
 On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short,  
 — Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,  
 The fig-tree reared itself, — but stark and cramped,  
 Made fools of, like tamed lions ; whence, on the edge,  
 Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge  
 Of shade, were shrubs inserted, warp and woof,  
 Which smothered up that variance. Scale the roof  
 Of solid tops, and o'er the slope you slide  
 Down to a grassy space level and wide,  
 Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees  
 Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,  
 Set by itself : and in the centre spreads,  
 Born upon three uneasy leopards' heads,  
 A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt  
 Of water bubbles in. The walls begirt  
 With trees leave off on either hand ; pursue  
 Your path along a wondrous avenue  
 Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone,  
 With aloes leering everywhere, gray-grown  
 From many a Moorish summer : how they wind  
 Out of the fissures ! likelier to bind  
 The building than those rusted cramps which drop  
 Already in the eating sunshine. Stop,

You fleeting shapes above there! Ah, the pride  
 Or else despair of the whole country-side —  
 A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps,  
 God, goddess, woman, man, the Greek rough-rasps  
 In crumbling Naples marble! meant to look  
 Like those Messina marbles Constance took  
 Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed  
 To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide,  
 A certain font with caryatides  
 Since cloistered at Goito; only, these  
 Are up and doing; not abashed, a troop  
 Able to right themselves — who see you, stoop  
 O' the instant after you their arms! Unplucked  
 By this or that, you pass, for they conduct  
 To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,  
 Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien  
 Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle  
 No doubt. Here, left a sullen breathing-while,  
 Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood  
 For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood  
 Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath  
 Those shading fingers in their iron sheath,  
 Steadied his strengths amid the buzz and stir  
 Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre  
 At the announcement of his over-match  
 To wind the day's diversion up, despatch  
 The pertinacious Gaul: while, limbs one heap,  
 The Slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched leap  
 Dart after dart forth, as her hero's car

Clove dizzily the solid of the war  
 — Let coil about his knees for pride in him.  
 We reach the farthest terrace, and the grim  
 San Pietro Palace stops us.

Such the state

Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate  
 Sicilian marvels, that his girlish wife  
 Retrude still might lead her ancient life  
 In her new home — whereat enlarged so much  
 Neighbors upon the novel princely touch  
 He took, — who here imprisons Boniface.  
 Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace ;  
 And here, emerging from the labyrinth  
 Below, Sordello paused beside the plinth  
 Of the door-pillar.

He had really left.

Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft  
 From the morass) where Este's camp was made ;  
 The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade —  
 All had been seen by him, but scarce as when,  
 Eager for cause to stand aloof from men  
 At every point save the fantastic tie  
 Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry,  
 He made account of such. A crowd, — he meant  
 To task the whole of it ; each part's intent  
 Concerned him therefore : and, the more he pried,  
 The less became Sordello satisfied  
 With his own figure at the moment. Sought  
 He respite from his task ? descried he aught

Novel in the anticipated sight  
 Of all these livers upon all delight?  
 This phalanx, as of myriad points combined,  
 Whereby he still had imaged that mankind  
 His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,  
 His age — in plans to prove at least such thing  
 Had been so dreamed, — which now he must impress  
 With his own will, effect a happiness  
 By theirs, — supply a body to his soul  
 Thence, and become eventually whole  
 With them as he had hoped to be without —  
 Made these the mankind he once raved about?  
 Because a few of them were notable,  
 Should all be figured worthy note? As well  
 Expect to find Taurello's triple line  
 Of trees a single and prodigious pine.  
 Real pines rose here and there; but, close among,  
 Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a throng  
 Of shrubs, he saw, — a nameless common sort  
 O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report  
 And hurried into corners, or at best  
 Admitted to be fancied like the rest.  
 Reckon that morning's proper chiefs — how few!  
 And yet the people grew, the people grew,  
 Grew ever, as if the many there indeed,  
 More left behind and most who should succeed, —  
 Simply in virtue of their mouths and eyes,  
 Petty enjoyments and huge miseries, —  
 Mingled with, and made veritably great

Those chiefs: he overlooked not Mainard's state  
 Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead  
 Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head  
 Of infinite and absent Tyrolese  
 Or Paduans; startling all the more, that these  
 Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for,  
 "Yet doubtless on the whole" (quoth Eglamor)  
 "Smiling — for if a wealthy man decays  
 And out of store of robes must wear, all days,  
 One tattered suit, alike in sun and shade,  
 'T is commonly some tarnished gay brocade  
 Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more:  
 Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store  
 Of looks is fain to upgather, keep unfurled  
 For common wear as she goes through the world,  
 The faint remainder of some worn-out smile  
 Meant for a feast-night's service merely." While  
 Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus, —  
 (Crowds no way interfering to discuss,  
 Much less dispute, life's joys with one employed  
 In envying them, — or, if they aught enjoyed,  
 Where lingered something indefinable  
 In every look and tone, the mirth as well  
 As woe, that fixed at once his estimate  
 Of the result, their good or bad estate) —  
 Old memories returned with new effect:  
 And the new body, ere he could suspect,  
 Cohered, mankind and he were really fused,  
 The new self seemed impatient to be used

By him, but utterly another way  
 To that anticipated: strange to say,  
 They were too much below him, more in thrall  
 Than he, the adjunct than the principal.  
 What bootéd scattered units? — here a mind  
 And there, which might repay his own to find,  
 And stamp, and use? — a few, howe'er august,  
 If all the rest were grovelling in the dust?  
 No: first a mighty equilibrium, sure,  
 Should he establish, privilege procure  
 For all, the few had long possessed! he felt  
 An error, an exceeding error melt —  
 While he was occupied with Mantuan chants,  
 Behooved him think of men, and take their wants,  
 Such as he now distinguished every side,  
 As his own want which might be satisfied, —  
 And, after that, think of rare qualities  
 Of his own soul demanding exercise.  
 It followed naturally, through no claim  
 On their part, which made virtue of the aim  
 At serving them, on his, — that, past retrieve,  
 He felt now in their toils, theirs — nor could leave  
 Wonder how, in the eagerness to rule,  
 Impress his will on mankind, he (the fool!)  
 Had never even entertained the thought  
 That this his last arrangement might be fraught  
 With incidental good to them as well,  
 And that mankind's delight would help to swell  
 His own. So, if he sighed, as formerly

Because the merry time of life must fleet,  
 'T was deeper now, — for could the crowds repeat  
 Their poor experiences? His hand that shook  
 Was twice to be deplored. “The Legate, look!  
 With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs on a thread,  
 Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head,  
 Large tongue, moist open mouth; and this long while  
 That owner of the idiotic smile  
 Serves them!” He fortunately saw in time  
 His fault however, and since the office **prime**  
 Includes the secondary — best accept  
 Both offices; Taurello, its adept,  
 Could teach him the preparatory **one**,  
 And how to do what he had fancied **done**  
 Long previously, ere take the greater task.  
 How render first these people happy? ask  
 The people's friends: for there must be one good;  
 One way to it — the Cause! — he understood  
 The meaning now of Palma; why the jar  
 Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far  
 Of Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard's hope  
 And Rome's despair? — 'twixt Emperor and Pope  
 The confused shifting sort of Eden tale —  
 Still hardihood recurring, still to fail —  
 That foreign interloping fiend, this free  
 And native overbrooding deity —  
 Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms  
 The Kaiser ruined, troubling even the **calms**  
 Of Paradise — or, on the other hand,



The Pontiff, as the Kaisers understand,  
 One snake-like cursed of God to love the ground,  
 Whose heavy length breaks in the noon profound  
 Some saving tree — which needs the Kaiser, drest  
 As the dislodging angel of that pest,  
 Then — yet that pest bedropt, flat head, full fold,  
 With coruscating dower of dyes. “Behold  
 The secret, so to speak, and master-spring  
 Of the contest! which of the two Powers shall bring  
 Men good — perchance the most good — ay, it may  
 Be that! the question, which best knows the way.”

And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past  
 Out of San Pietro; never seemed the last  
 Of archers, slingers: and our friend began  
 To recollect strange modes of serving man —  
 Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,  
 And more. “This way of theirs may, — who can tell? —  
 Need perfecting,” said he: “let all be solved  
 At once! Taurello ’t is, the task devolved  
 On late — confront Taurello!”

And at last

He did confront him. Scarcely an hour past  
 When forth Sordello came, older by years  
 Than at his entry. Unexampled fears  
 Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute  
 And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,  
 Into Ferrara — not the empty town  
 That morning witnessed: he went up and down  
 Streets whence the veil had been stripped shred by shred

So that, in place of huddling with their dead  
 Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,  
 Its folk made shift to crawl forth, sit like friends  
 With any one. A woman gave him choice  
 Of her two daughters, the infantile voice  
 Or the dimpled knee, for half a chain, his throat  
 Was clasped with; but an archer knew the coat —  
 Its blue cross and eight lilies, — bade beware  
 One dogging him in concert with the pair  
 Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his knife.  
 Night set in early, autumn dews were rife,  
 They kindled great fires while the Leaguer's mass  
 Began at every carroch — he must pass  
 Between the kneeling people. Presently  
 The carroch of Verona caught his eye  
 With purple trappings; silently he bent  
 Over its fire, when voices violent  
 Began, "Affirm not whom the youth was like  
 That, striking from the porch, I did not strike  
 Again; I too have chestnut hair; my kin  
 Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin.  
 Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away! sing! take  
 My glove for guerdon!" and for that man's sake  
 He turned: "A song of Eglamor's!" — scarce named,  
 When, "Our Sordello's, rather!" all exclaimed;  
 "Is not Sordello famous for rhyme?"  
 He had been happy to deny, this time, —  
 Profess as heretofore the aching head  
 And failing heart, — suspect that in his stead

Some true Apollo had the charge of them,  
 Was champion to reward or to condemn,  
 So his intolerable risk might shift  
 Or share itself; but Naddo's precious gift  
 Of gifts, he owned, be certain! At the close —  
 "I made that," said he to a youth who rose  
 As if to hear: 't was Palma through the band  
 Conducted him in silence by her hand.

Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent  
 Gave place to Palma and her friend; who went  
 In turn at Montelungo's visit — one  
 After the other were they come and gone, —  
 These spokesmen for the Kaiser and the Pope,  
 This incarnation of the People's hope,  
 Sordello, — all the say of each was said,  
 And Salinguerra sat, himself instead  
 Of these to talk with, lingered musing yet.  
 'T was a drear vast presence-chamber roughly set  
 In order for the morning's use; full face,  
 The Kaiser's ominous sign-mark had first place,  
 The crowned grim twy-necked eagle, coarsely blacked  
 With ochre on the naked wall; nor lacked  
 Romano's green and yellow either side;  
 But the new token Tito brought had tried  
 The Legate's patience — nay, if Palma knew  
 What Salinguerra almost meant to do  
 Until the sight of her restored his lip  
 A certain half-smile, three months' chieftainship  
 Had banished! Afterward, the Legate found

No change in him, nor asked what badge he wound  
 And unwound carelessly. Now sat the Chief  
 Silent as when our couple left, whose brief  
 Encounter wrought so opportune effect  
 In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject.  
 Though time 't was now if ever, to pause — fix  
 On any sort of ending: wiles and tricks  
 Exhausted, judge! his charge, the crazy town,  
 Just managed to be hindered crashing down —  
 His last sound troops ranged — care observed to post  
 His best of the maimed soldiers innermost —  
 So much was plain enough, but somehow struck  
 Him not before. And now with this strange luck  
 Of Tito's news, rewarding his address  
 So well, what thought he of? — how the success  
 With Friedrich's rescript there, would either hush  
 Old Ecelin's scruples, bring the manly flush  
 To his young son's white cheek, or, last, exempt  
 Himself from telling what there was to tempt?  
 No: that this minstrel was Romano's last  
 Servant — himself the first! Could he contrast  
 The whole! that minstrel's thirty years just spent  
 In doing naught, their notablest event  
 This morning's journey hither, as I told —  
 Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,  
 A stammering awkward man that scarce dared raise  
 His eye before the magisterial gaze —  
 And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes  
 Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,

Cares and contrivances, yet, you would say,  
T was a youth nonchalantly looked away  
Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick  
Expostulating trees — so agile. quick  
And graceful turned the head on the broad chest  
Encased in phant steel, his constant vest.  
Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire  
Across the room ; and, loosened of its tire  
Of steel, that head let breathe the comely brown  
Large massive locks discolored as if a crown  
Encircled them, so frayed the basnet where  
A sharp white line divided clean the hair ;  
Glossy above, glossy below, it swept  
Curling and fine about a brow thus kept  
Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound :  
This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,  
Mused of, turned over books about. Square-faced,  
No lion more ; two vivid eyes, enchased  
In hollows filled with many a shade and streak  
Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek ;  
Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed  
A lip supremely perfect else — unwarmed,  
Unwidened, less or more ; indifferent  
Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent,  
Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train —  
As now a period was fulfilled again ;  
Of such, a series made his life, compressed  
In each, one story serving for the rest —  
How his life-streams rolling arrived at last

At the barrier, whence, were it once overpast,  
 They would emerge, a river to the end, —  
 Gathered themselves up, paused, bade fate befriend,  
 Took the leap, hung a minute at the height,  
 Then fell back to oblivion infinite :  
 Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched garden-grounds  
 Where late the adversary, breaking bounds,  
 Had gained him an occasion, That above,  
 That eagle, testified he could improve  
 Effectually. The Kaiser's symbol lay  
 Beside his rescript, a new badge by way  
 Of baldric ; while, — another thing that marred  
 Alike emprise, achievement and reward, —  
 Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.

What past life did those flying thoughts pursue?  
 As his, few names in Mantua half so old ;  
 But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled  
 It latterly, the Adelardi spared  
 No pains to rival them : both factions shared  
 Ferrara, so that, counted out, 't would yield  
 A product very like the city's shield,  
 Half black and white, or Ghibellin and Guelf,  
 As after Salinguerra styled himself  
 And Este who, till Marchesalla died,  
 (Last of the Adelardi) — never tried  
 His fortune there : with Marchesalla's child  
 Would pass, — could Blacks and Whites be reconciled  
 And young Taurello wed Linguetta, — wealth  
 And sway to a sole grasp. Each treats by stealth

Already: when the Guelfs, the Ravennese  
 Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize  
 Linguetta, and are gone! Men's first dismay  
 Abated somewhat, hurries down, to lay  
 The after indignation, Boniface,  
 This Richard's father. "Learn the full disgrace  
 Averted, ere you blame us Guelfs, who rate  
 Your Salinguerra, your sole potentate  
 That might have been, 'mongst Este's valvassors —  
 Ay, Azzo's — who, not privy to, abhors  
 Our step — but we were zealous." Azzo's then  
 To do with! Straight a meeting of old men:  
 "Old Salinguerra dead, his heir a boy,  
 What if we change our ruler and decoy  
 The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere,  
 With Italy to build in, fix him here,  
 Settle the city's troubles in a trice?  
 For private wrong, let public good suffice!"  
 In fine, young Salinguerra's stanchest friends  
 Talked of the townsmen making him amends,  
 Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was  
 Rare sport, one morning, over the green grass  
 A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain,  
 Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again  
 In time for Azzo's entry with the bride;  
 Count Boniface rode smirking at their side:  
 "She brings him half Ferrara," whispers flew,  
 "And all Ancona! If the stripling knew!"  
 Anon the stripling was in Sicily

Where Heinrich ruled in right of Constance; he  
 Was gracious nor his guest incapable;  
 Each understood the other. So it fell,  
 One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at ease,  
 Had near forgotten by what precise degrees  
 He crept at first to such a downy seat,  
 The Count trudged over in a special heat  
 To bid him of God's love dislodge from each  
 Of Salinguerra's palaces, — a breach  
 Might yawn else, not so readily to shut,  
 For who was just arrived at Mantua but  
 The youngster, sword on thigh, and tuft on chin,  
 With tokens for Celano, Ecelin,  
 Pistore and the like! Next news, — no whit  
 Do any of Ferrara's domes befit  
 His wife of Heinrich's very blood: a band  
 Of foreigners assemble, understand  
 Garden-constructing, level and surround,  
 Build up and bury in. A last news crowned  
 The consternation: since his infant's birth,  
 He only waits they end his wondrous girth  
 Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà,  
 To visit Mantua. When the Podestà  
 Ecelin, at Vicenza, called his friend  
 Taurello thither, what could be their end  
 But to restore the Ghibellins' late Head,  
 The Kaiser helping? He with most to dread  
 From vengeance and reprisal, Azzo, there  
 With Boniface beforehand, as aware



Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled  
 Both plotters: but the Guelfs in triumph yelled  
 Too hastily. The burning and the flight,  
 And how Taurello, occupied that night  
 With Ecelin, lost wife and son, I told:  
 — Not how he bore the blow, retained his hold,  
 Got friends safe through, left enemies the worst  
 O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at first —  
 But afterward men heard not constantly  
 Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be!  
 Though Azzo simply gained by the event  
 A shifting of his plagues — the first, content  
 To fall behind the second and estrange  
 So far his nature, suffer such a change  
 That in Romano sought he wife and child,  
 And for Romano's sake seemed reconciled  
 To losing individual life, which shrunk  
 As the other prospered — mortised in his trunk;  
 Like a dwarf palm which wanton Arabs foil  
 Of bearing its own proper wine and oil,  
 By grafting into it the stranger-vine,  
 Which sucks its heart out, sly and serpentine,  
 Till forth one vine-palm feathers to the root,  
 And red drops moisten the insipid fruit.  
 Once Adelaide set on, — the subtle mate  
 Of the weak soldier, urged to emulate  
 The Church's valiant women deed for deed,  
 And paragon her namesake, win the meed  
 Of the great Matilda, — soon they overbore



Your Greek eludes you, leave the least of flaws  
 In contracts with him ; while, since Arab lore  
 Holds the stars' secret — take one trouble more  
 And master it ! 'T is done, and now deter  
 Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined for her,  
 From Friedrich's path ! — Friedrich, whose **pilgrimage**  
 The same man puts aside, whom he 'll engage  
 To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch,  
 Come to Bassano, see Saint Francis' church  
 And judge of Guido the Bolognau's piece  
 Which, lend Taurello credit, rivals Greece —  
 Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits  
 Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's exploits.  
 For elegance, he strung the angelot,  
 Made rhymes thereto ; for prowess, clove he **not**  
 Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper ? Why  
 Detail you thus a varied mastery  
 But to show how Taurello, on the watch  
 For men, to read their hearts and thereby **catch**  
 Their capabilities and purposes,  
 Displayed himself so far as displayed these :  
 While our Sordello only cared to know  
 About men as a means whereby he 'd show  
 Himself, and men had much or little worth  
 According as they kept in or drew forth  
 That self ; Taurello's choicest instruments  
 Surmised him shallow.

Meantime, malecontents  
 Dropped off, town after town grew wiser. “ How

Change the world's face?" asked people; "as 't is now  
 It has been, will be ever: very fine  
 Subjecting things profane to things divine,  
 In talk! this contumacy will fatigue  
 The vigilance of Este and the League!  
 The Ghibellins gain on us!" — as it happened.  
 Old Azzo and old Boniface, entrapped  
 By Ponte Alto, both in one month's space  
 Slept at Verona: either left a brace  
 Of sons — but, three years after, either's pair  
 Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir:  
 Azzo remained and Richard — all the stay  
 Of Este and Saint Boniface, at bay  
 As 't were. Then, either Ecelin grew old  
 Or his brain altered — not of the proper mould  
 For new appliances — his old palm-stock  
 Endured no influx of strange strengths. He'd rock  
 As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low  
 As proud of the completeness of his woe,  
 Then weep real tears; — now make some mad onslaught  
 On Este, heedless of the lesson taught  
 So painfully, — now cringe for peace, sue peace  
 At price of past gain, — much more, fresh increase  
 To the fortunes of Romano. Up at last  
 Rose Este, down Romano sank as fast.  
 And men remarked these freaks of peace and war  
 Happened while Salinguerra was afar:  
 Whence every friend besought him, all in vain,  
 To use his old adherent's wits again.

Not he! — “who had advisers in his sons,  
 Could plot himself, nor needed any one’s  
 Advice.” ’T was Adelaide’s remaining stanch  
 Prevented his destruction root and branch  
 Forthwith; but when she died, doom fell, for gay  
 He made alliances, gave lands away  
 To whom it pleased accept them, and withdrew  
 Forever from the world. Taurello, who  
 Was summoned to the convent, then refused  
 A word at the wicket, patience thus abused,  
 Promptly threw off alike his imbecile  
 Ally’s yoke, and his own frank, foolish smile.  
 Soon a few movements of the happier sort  
 Changed matters, put himself in men’s report  
 As heretofore; he had to fight, beside,  
 And that became him ever. So, in pride  
 And flushing of this kind of second youth,  
 He dealt a good-will blow. Este in truth  
 Lay prone — and men remembered, somewhat late,  
 A laughing old outrageous stifled hate  
 He bore to Este — how it would outbreak  
 At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake  
 In sunny weather — as that noted day  
 When with his hundred friends he tried to slay  
 Azzo before the Kaiser’s face: and how,  
 On Azzo’s calm refusal to allow  
 A liegeman’s challenge, straight he too was calmed  
 As if his hate could bear to lie embalmed,  
 Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, and survive

All intermediate crumbings, and arrive  
 At earth's catastrophe — 't was Este's crash  
 Not Azzo's he demanded, so, no rash  
 Procedure! Este's true antagonist  
 Rose out of Ecelin: all voices whist,  
 All eyes were sharpened, wits predicted. He  
 'T was, leaned in the embrasure absently,  
 Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace  
 With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face  
 P the dust: but as the trees waved sere, his smile  
 Deepened, and words expressed its thought erewhile.

“ Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer?  
 That we should stick together, all the year,  
 I kept Verona! — How old Boniface,  
 Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,  
 He by that pillar, I at this, — caught each  
 In mid swing, more than fury of his speech,  
 Egging the rabble on to disavow  
 Allegiance to their Marquis — Bacchus, how  
 They boasted! Ecelin must turn their drudge,  
 Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge  
 Paying arrears of tribute due long since —  
 Bacchus! My man, could promise then, nor wince,  
 The bones-and-muscles! sound of wind and limb,  
 Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him:  
 And now he sits me, slavering and mute,  
 Intent on chafing each starved purple foot  
 Benumbed past aching with the altar slab —  
 Will no vein thro' there when some monk shall blab

Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps,  
 'Friedrich's affirmed to be our side the Alps'  
 — Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet?  
 Sworn to abjure the world, its fume and fret,  
 God's own now? Drop the dormitory bar,  
 Enfold the scanty gray serge scapular  
 Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out —  
 So! but the midnight whisper turns a shout,  
 Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate  
 In the stone walls: the Past, the world you hate  
 Is with you, ambush, open field — or see  
 The surging flame — we fire Vicenza — glee!  
 Follow, let Pilio and Bernardo chafe —  
 Bring up the Mantuans — through San Biagio — safe!  
 Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they writhe  
 And reach us? if they block the gate — no tithe  
 Can pass — keep back, you Bassanese! the edge,  
 Use the edge — shear, thrust, hew, melt down the  
     wedge,  
 Let out the black of those black upturned eyes!  
 Hell — are they sprinkling fire too? the blood fries  
 And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear  
 Those upturned faces choking with despair.  
 Brave! Slidder through the reeking gate — 'how now?  
 You six had charge of her?' And then the vow  
 Comes, and the foam spirts, hair's plucked, till one  
     shriek  
 (I hear it) and you fling — you cannot speak —  
 Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who haled

The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled  
 This morn, naked across the fire: how crown  
 The archer that exhausted lays you down  
 Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies?  
 While one, while mine . . .

Bacchus! I think there lies  
 More than one corpse there" (and he paced the room)  
 "— Another cinder somewhere — 't was my doom  
 Beside, my doom! If Adelaide is dead  
 I am the same, this Azzo lives instead  
 Of that to me, and we pull, any how,  
 Este into a heap — the matter's now  
 At the true juncture slipping us so oft.  
 Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed  
 His crown at such a juncture! still, if hold  
 Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain enfold  
 The neck of . . . who but this same Ecelin  
 That must recoil when the best days begin!  
 Recoil? that's naught; if the recoiler leaves  
 His name for me to fight with, no one grieves!  
 But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock  
 His cloister to become my stumbling-block  
 Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 't is again —  
 The land's inevitable Head — explain  
 The reverences that subject us! Count  
 These Ecelins now! not to say as fount,  
 Originating power of thought, — from twelve  
 That drop i' the trenches they joined hands to delve,  
 Six shall surpass him, but . . . why, men must twine



Somehow with something! *Ecelin*'s a fine  
Clear name! 'T were simpler, doubtless, twine with me  
At once: our cloistered friend's capacity  
Was of a sort! I had to share myself  
In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf  
That's forced illume in fifty points the vast  
Rare vapor he's environed by. At last  
My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en converge  
And crown . . . no, Bacchus, they have yet to urge  
The man be crowned!

That aloe, an he durst,  
Would climb! just such a bloated sprawler first  
I noted in Messina's castle-court  
The day I came, when Heinrich asked in sport  
If I would pledge my faith to win him back  
His right in Lombardy: 'for, once bid pack  
Marauders,' he continued, 'in my stead  
You rule, Taurello!' and upon this head  
Laid the silk glove of Constance — I see her  
Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,  
Retrude following!

I am absolved  
From further toil: the empery devolved  
On me, 't was Tito's word: I have to lay  
For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,  
Prompt nobody, and render an account  
Taurello to Taurello! nay, I mount  
To Friedrich — he conceives the post I kept,  
Who did true service, able or inept,

Who's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I.  
 Me guerdoned, counsel follows; would he vie  
 With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface  
 Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race  
 Must break ere govern Lombardy. I point  
 How easy 't were to twist, once out of joint,  
 The socket from the bone:— my Azzo's stare  
 Meanwhile! for I, this idle strap to wear,  
 Shall — fret myself abundantly, what end  
 To serve? There's left me twenty years to spend  
 — How better than my old way? Had I one  
 Who labored overthrow my work — a son  
 Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,  
 To root my pines up and then poison me,  
 Suppose — 't were worth while frustrate that! Beside,  
 Another life's ordained me: the world's tide  
 Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press  
 Of waves, a single wave through weariness  
 Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore?  
 My life must be lived out in foam and roar,  
 No question. Fifty years the province held  
 Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,  
 He in the midst — who leaves this quaint stone place,  
 These trees a year or two, then, not a trace  
 Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues  
 Like this poor minstrel with the foolish songs —  
 To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?  
 — Flowers one may tease, that never grow extinct.  
 Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where

I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair,  
To overawe the aloes; and we trod  
Those flowers, how call you such? — into the sod;  
A stately foreigner — a world of pain  
To make it thrive, arrest rough winds — all vain!  
It would decline; these would not be destroyed:  
And now, where is it? where can you avoid  
The flowers? I frighten children twenty years  
Longer! — which way, too, Ecelin appears  
To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth  
Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth:  
They feel it at Vicenza! Fate, fate, fate,  
My fine Taurello! go you, promulgate  
Friedrich's decree, and here's shall aggrandize  
Young Ecelin — your Prefect's badge! a prize  
Too precious, certainly.

How now? Compete  
With my old comrade? shuffle from their seat  
His children? Paltry dealing! Don't I know  
Ecelin? now, I think, and years ago!  
What's changed — the weakness? did not I compound  
For that, and undertake to keep him sound  
Despite it? Here's Taurello hankering  
After a boy's preferment — this plaything  
To carry, Bacchus!" And he laughed.

Remark

Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark  
Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort  
Fail: while these last are ever stopping short —

(So much they should — so little they can do!)  
 The careless tribe see nothing to pursue  
 If they desist; meantime their scheme succeeds.

Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds  
 Methodic with Taurello; so, he turned,  
 Enough amused by fancies fairly earned  
 Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,  
 And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck, —  
 To his own petty but immediate doubt  
 If he could pacify the League without  
 Conceding Richard; just to this was brought  
 That interval of vain discursive thought!  
 As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit  
 Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot  
 Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black  
 Enormous watercourse which guides him back  
 To his own tribe again, where he is king;  
 And laughs because he guesses, numbering  
 The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch  
 Of the first lizard wrested from its couch  
 Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips  
 To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,  
 And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert blast)  
 That he has reached its boundary, at last  
 May breathe; — thinks o'er enchantments of the South  
 Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth,  
 Eyes, nails, and hair; but, these enchantments tried  
 In fancy, puts them soberly aside  
 For truth, projects a cool return with friends,

The likelihood of winning mere amends  
 Erelong; thinks that, takes comfort silently,  
 Then, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he,  
 Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon  
 Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon.

Midnight: the watcher nodded on his spear,  
 Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear,  
 For any meagre and discolored moon  
 To venture forth; and such was peering soon  
 Above the harassed city — her close lanes  
 Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,  
 As though she shrunk into herself to keep  
 What little life was saved, more safely. Heap  
 By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside  
 The blackest spoke Sordello and replied  
 Palma with none to listen. " 'T is your Cause:  
 What makes a Ghibellin? There should be laws —  
 (Remember how my youth escaped! I trust  
 To you for manhood, Palma; tell me just  
 As any child) — there must be laws at work  
 Explaining this. Assure me, good may lurk  
 Under the bad, — my multitude has part  
 In your designs, their welfare is at heart  
 With Salinguerra, to their interest  
 Refer the deeds he dwelt on, — so divest  
 Our conference of much that scared me. Why  
 Affect that heartless tone to Tito? I  
 Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind  
 This morn, a recreant to my race — mankind

O'erlooked till now : why boast my spirit's force,  
 — Such force denied its object? why divorce  
 These, then admire my spirit's flight the same  
 As though it bore up, helped some half-orbed flame  
 Else quenched in the dead void, to living space?  
 — That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace,  
 Why vaunt so much my unincumbered dance,  
 Making a feat's facilities enhance  
 Its marvel? But I front Taurello, one  
 Of happier fate, and all I should have done,  
 He does ; the people's good being paramount  
 With him, their progress may perhaps account  
 For his abiding still : whereas you heard  
 The talk with Tito — the excuse preferred  
 For burning those five hostages, — and broached  
 By way of blind, as you and I approached,  
 I do believe."

She spoke : then he, " My thought  
 Plainlier expressed ! All to your profit — naught  
 Meantime of these, of conquests to achieve  
 For them, of wretchedness he might relieve  
 While profiting your party. Azzo, too,  
 Supports a cause : what cause? Do Guelfs pursue  
 Their ends by means like yours, or better? "

When  
 The Guelfs were proved alike, men weighed with men,  
 And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with blood and blaze.  
 Morn broke : " Once more, Sordello, meet its gaze  
 Proudly — the people's charge against thee fails

In every point, while either party quails!  
 These are the busy ones — be silent thou!  
 Two parties take the world up, and allow  
 No third, yet have one principle, subsist  
 By the same injustice; whoso shall enlist  
 With either, ranks with man's inveterate foes.  
 So there is one less quarrel to compose:  
 The Guelf, the Ghibellin may be to curse —  
 I have done nothing, but both sides do worse  
 Than nothing. Nay, to me, forgotten, reft  
 Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left  
 The notion of a service — ha? What lured  
 Me here, what mighty aim was I assured  
 Must move Taurello? What if there remained  
 A Cause, intact, distinct from these, ordained,  
 For me, its true discoverer?"

Some one pressed

Before them here, a watcher, to suggest  
 The subject for a ballad: "They must know  
 The tale of the dead worthy, long ago  
 Consul of Rome — that's long ago for us,  
 Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus  
 In the world's corner — but too late, no doubt,  
 For the brave time he sought to bring about.  
 — Not know Crescentius Nomentanus?" **Then**  
 He cast about for terms to tell him, when  
 Sordello disavowed it, how they used  
 Whenever their Superior introduced  
 A novice to the Brotherhood — ("for I

Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily  
 Appointed too," quoth he, "till Innocent  
 Bade me relinquish, to my small content,  
 My wife or my brown sleeves") — some brother spoke  
 Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke  
 The edict issued, after his demise,  
 Which blotted fame alike and effigies,  
 All out except a floating power, a name  
 Including, tending to produce the same  
 Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least  
 Within that brain, though to a vulgar priest  
 And a vile stranger, — two not worth a slave  
 Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho, — fortune gave  
 The rule there: so, Crescentius, haply drest  
 In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,  
 Taking the people at their word, forth stept  
 As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept  
 Rome waiting, — stood erect, and from his brain  
 Gave Rome out on its ancient place again,  
 Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome, kings styled  
 Themselves mere citizens of, and, beguiled  
 Into great thoughts thereby, would choose the gem  
 Out of a lapful, spoil their diadem  
 — The Senate's cipher was so hard to scratch!  
 He flashes like a phanal, all men catch  
 The flame, Rome's just accomplished! when returned  
 Otho, with John, the Consul's step had spurned,  
 And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress  
 The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress



Of adverse fortune bent. "They crucified  
 Their Consul in the Forum, and abide  
 E'er since such slaves at Rome, that I — (for I  
 Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily  
 Appointed) — I had option to keep wife  
 Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife  
 Lose both. A song of Rome!"

And Rome, indeed,

Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,  
 The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,  
 Looked an established point of light whence rays  
 Traversed the world; for, all the clustered homes  
 Beside of men, seemed bent on being Romes  
 In their degree; the question was, how each  
 Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach.  
 Nor, of the great Two, either principle,  
 Struggled to change — but to possess — Rome, still,  
 Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.

Let Rome advance!

Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignorance —  
 How could he doubt one moment? Rome's the Cause!  
 Rome of the Pandects, all the world's new laws —  
 Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo;  
 New structures, that inordinately glow,  
 Subdued, brought back to harmony, made ripe  
 By many a relic of the archetype  
 Extant for wonder; every upstart church  
 That hoped to leave old temples in the lurch,  
 Corrected by the Theatre forlorn

That, — as a mundane shell, its world late born, —  
Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints combined,  
Rome typifies the scheme to put mankind  
Once more in full possession of their rights.  
“ Let us have Rome again! On me it lights  
To build up Rome — on me, the first and last:  
For such a Future was endured the Past!”  
And thus, in the gray twilight, forth he sprung  
To give his thought consistency among  
The very People — let their facts avail  
**Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.**

## BOOK THE FIFTH.

### MANKIND TRIUMPH OF A SUDDEN!

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk  
As at the dawn? — merely a perished husk  
Now, that arose a power fit to build  
Up Rome again? The proud conception chilled  
So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of **thine**  
— A Rome indebted to no Palatine,  
Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art possess  
Of thy wish now — rewarded for thy quest  
To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons —  
Are this and this and this the shining ones  
Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say,  
Your favored tenantry pursue their way  
After a fashion! This companion slips  
On the smooth causey, t' other blinkard trips  
At his mooned sandal. "Leave to lead the brawls  
Here i' the atria?" No, friend! He that sprawls  
On aught but a stibadium . . . what his dues  
Who puts the lustral vase to such an use?  
O, huddle up the day's disasters! March,  
Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch,  
Rome!

Yet before they quite disband — a whim —  
Study mere shelter, now, for him, and him,

Nay, even the worst, — just house them! Any cave  
 Suffices: throw out earth! A loophole? Brave!  
 They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass  
 Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas,  
 And I am dead! But here 's our son excels  
 At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells  
 Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes  
 His dream into a door-post, just escapes  
 The mystery of hinges. Lie we both  
 Perdue another age. The goodly growth  
 Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt was rough,  
 But that descendant's garb suits well enough  
 A portico-contriver. Speed the years —  
 What 's time to us? at last, a city rears  
 Itself! nay, enter — what 's the grave to us?  
 Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus  
 The head! Successively sewer, forum, cirque —  
 Last age, an aqueduct was counted work,  
 But now they tire the artificer upon  
 Blank alabaster, black obsidian,  
 — Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgorant,  
 And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples pant  
 Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed  
 Above the baths. What difference betwixt  
 This Rome and ours — resemblance what, between  
 That scurvy dumb-show and this pageant sheen —  
 These Romans and our rabble? Use thy wit!  
 The work marched: step by step, — a workman fit  
 Took each, nor too fit, — to one task, one time, —

No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,  
 When just the substituting osier lithe  
 For brittle bulrush, sound wood for soft withe,  
 To further loam-and-rougheast-work a stage, —  
 Exacts an architect, exacts an age:  
 No tables of the Mauritanian tree  
 For men whose maple-log's their luxury!  
 That way was Rome built. "Better" (say you)  
 "merge

At once all workmen in the demiurge,  
 All epochs in a lifetime, every task  
 In one!" So should the sudden city bask  
 I' the day — while those we'd feast there, want the **knack**  
 Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck and brack,  
 Distinguish not rare peacock from vile swan,  
 Nor Mareotic juice from Cæcuban.  
 "Enough of Rome! 'T was happy to conceive  
 Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave  
 Me of that credit: for the rest, her spite  
 Is an old story — serves my folly right  
 By adding yet another to the dull  
 List of abortions — things proved beautiful  
 Could they be done, Sordello cannot do."

He sat upon the terrace, plucked and threw  
 The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift  
 Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch, and drift  
 Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,  
 Mounds of all majesty. "Thou archetype,  
 Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!"

And then a low voice wound into his heart :  
 " Sordello ! " ( low as some old Pythoness  
 Conceding to a Lydian King's distress  
 The cause of his long error — one mistake  
 Of her past oracle ) " Sordello, wake !  
 God has conceded two sights to a man —  
 One, of men's whole work, time's completed plan,  
 The other, of the minute's work, man's first  
 Step to the plan's completeness : what 's dispersed  
 Save hope of that supreme step which, descried  
 Earliest, was meant still to remain untried  
 Only to give you heart to take your own  
 Step, and there stay — leaving the rest alone ?  
 Where is the vanity ? Why count as one  
 The first step, with the last step ? What is gone  
 Except Rome's aëry magnificence,  
 That last step you 'd take first ? — an evidence  
 You were God : be man now ! Let those glances fall !  
 The basis, the beginning step of all,  
 Which proves you just a man — is that gone too ?  
 Pity to disconcert one versed as you  
 In fate's ill-nature ! but its full extent  
 Eludes Sordello, even : the veil rent,  
 Read the black writing — that collective man  
 Outstrips the individual ! Who began  
 The acknowledged greatnesses ? Ay, your own art  
 Shall serve us : put the poet's mimes apart —  
 Close with the poet's self, and lo, a dim  
 Yet too plain form divides itself from him !

Alcamo's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,  
 Woven into the echoes left erewhile  
 By Nina, one soft web of song: no more  
 Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er and o'er!  
 An elder poet in the younger's place —  
 Nina's the strength — but Alcamo's the grace:  
 Each neutralizes each then!. Search your fill;  
 You get no whole and perfect Poet — still  
 New Ninas, Alcamos, till time's midnight  
 Shrouds all — or better say, the shutting light  
 Of a forgotten yesterday. Dissect  
 Every ideal workman — (to reject  
 In favor of your fearful ignorance  
 The thousand phantasms eager to advance,  
 And point you but to those within your reach) —  
 Were you the first who brought — (in modern speech)  
 The Multitude to be materialized?  
 That loose eternal unrest — who devised  
 An apparition i' the midst? The rout  
 Was checked, a breathless ring was formed about  
 That sudden flower: get round at any risk  
 The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk  
 O' the lily! Swords across it! Reign thy reign  
 And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne!  
 — The very child of over-joyousness,  
 Unfeeling thence, strong therefore: Strength by stress  
 Of Strength comes of that forehead confident,  
 Those widened eyes expecting heart's content,  
 A calm as out of just-quelled noise; nor swerves

For doubt, the ample cheek in gracious curves  
 Abutting on the upthrust nether lip:  
 He wills, how should he doubt then? Ages slip:  
 Was it Sordello pried into the work  
 So far accomplished, and discovered lurk  
 A company amid the other clans,  
 Only distinct in priests for castellans  
 And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed  
 Its rule, their interest its interest,  
 Living for sake of living — there an end, —  
 Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend  
 In making adversaries or allies), —  
 Dived you into its capabilities  
 And dared create, out of that sect, a soul  
 Should turn the multitude, already whole,  
 Into its body? Speak plainer! Is 't so sure  
 God's church lives by a King's investiture?  
 Look to last step! a staggering — a shock —  
 What's mere sand is demolished, while the rock  
 Endures: a column of black fiery dust  
 Blots heaven — that help was prematurely thrust  
 Aside, perchance! — but the air clears, naught's erased  
 Of the true outline! Thus much being firm based,  
 The other was a scaffold. See him stand  
 Buttressed upon his mattock, Hildebrand  
 Of the hugh brain-mask welded ply o'er ply  
 As in a forge; it buries either eye  
 White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth clenched,  
 The neck tight-corded, too, the chin deep-trenched,



As if a cloud enveloped him while fought  
 Under its shade, grim prizers, thought with thought  
 At dead-lock, agonizing he, until  
 The victor thought leapt radiant up, and Will,  
 The slave with folded arms and drooping lids  
 They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids.  
 Call him no flower — a mandrake of the earth,  
 Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth,  
 Rather, a fruit of suffering's excess,  
 Thence feeling, therefore stronger : still by stress  
 Of Strength, work Knowledge ! Full three hundred years  
 Have men to wear away in smiles and tears  
 Between the two that nearly seem to touch,  
 Observe you ! quit one workman and you clutch  
 Another, letting both their trains go by —  
 The actors-out of either's policy,  
 Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,  
 Carry the three Imperial crowns across,  
 Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold —  
 While Alexander, Innocent uphold  
 On that, each Papal key — but, link on link,  
 Why is it neither chain betrays a chink ?  
 How coalesce the small and great ? Alack,  
 For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back !  
 Do the popes coupled there help Gregory  
 Alone ? Hark — from the hermit Peter's cry  
 At Claremont, down to the first serf that says  
 Friedrich's no liege of his while he delays  
 Getting the Pope's curse off him ! The Crusade —

Or trick of breeding strength by other aid  
 Than strength, is safe. Hark — from the wild harangue  
 Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang  
 Yonder! The League — or trick of turning strength  
 Against pernicious strength, is safe at length.  
 Yet hark — from Mantuan Albert making cease  
 The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace  
 Yonder! God's Truce — or trick to supersede  
 The very use of strength, is safe. Indeed  
 We trench upon the Future! Who is found  
 To take next step, next age — trail o'er the ground —  
 Shall I say, gourd-like? — not the flower's display  
 Nor the root's prowess, but the plenteous way  
 O' the plant — produced by joy and sorrow, whence  
 Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence?  
 Knowledge by stress of merely Knowledge? No —  
 E'en were Sordello ready to forego  
 His life for this, 't were overleaping work  
 Some one has first to do, howe'er it irk,  
 Nor stray a foot's breadth from the beaten road.  
 Who means to help must still support the load  
 Hildebrand lifted — 'why hast Thou,' he groaned,  
 'Imposed on me a burden, Paul had moaned,  
 And Moses dropped beneath?' Much done — and yet  
 Doubtless, that grandest task God ever set  
 On man, left much to do: at his arm's wrench,  
 Charlemagne's scaffold fell; but pillars blench  
 Merely, start back again — perchance have been  
 Taken for buttresses: crash every screen,

Hammer the tenons better, and engage  
 A gang about your work, for the next age  
 Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part  
 By Knowledge! Then, indeed, perchance may start  
 Sordello on his race — would time divulge  
 Such secrets! If one step's awry, one bulge  
 Calls for correction by a step we thought  
 Got over long since, why, till that is wrought,  
 No progress! and the scaffold in its turn  
 Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn.  
 Meanwhile, if your half-dozen years of life  
 In store, dispose you to forego the strife,  
 Who takes exception? Only bear in mind,  
 Ferrara's reached, Goito's left behind:  
 As you then were, as half yourself, desist!  
 — The warrior-part of you may, an it list,  
 Winding real faulchions difficult to poise,  
 Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys  
 By wielding such in fancy, — what is bard  
 Of you, may spurn the vehicle that marred  
 Elys so much, and in free fancy glut  
 His sense, yet write no verses — you have but  
 To please yourself for law, and once could please  
 What once appeared yourself, by dreaming these  
 Rather than doing these, in days gone by.  
 But all is changed the moment you descry  
 Mankind as half yourself, — then, fancy's trade  
 Ends once and always: how may half evade  
 The other half? men are found half of you.

Out of a thousand helps, just one or two  
 Can be accomplished presently : but flinch  
 From these (as from the faulchion, raised an *inch*,  
 Elys, described a couplet) and make proof  
 Of fancy, — then, while one half lolls aloof  
 I' the vines, completing Rome to the tip-top —  
 See if, for that, your other half will stop  
 A tear, begin a smile ! The rabble's woes,  
 Ludicrous in their patience as they chose  
 To sit about their town and quietly  
 Be slaughtered, — the poor reckless soldiery,  
 With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how  
 'Polt-foot,' sang they, 'was in a pitfall now,'  
 Cheering each other from the engine-mounts, —  
 That crippled spawling idiot who recounts  
 How, lopt of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,  
 Till the pains crept from out him one by one,  
 And wriggles round the archers on his head  
 To earn a morsel of their chestnut bread, —  
 And Cino, always in the selfsame place  
 Weeping ; beside that other wretch's case,  
 Eyepits to ear, one gangrene since he plied  
 The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide  
 A double watch in the noon sun ; and see  
 Lucchino, beauty, with the favors free,  
 Trim hacqueton, spruce beard and scented hair,  
 Campaigning it for the first time — cut there  
 In two already, boy enough to crawl  
 For latter orpine round the southern wall,

Tomà, where Richard's kept, because that whore  
 Marfisa, the fool never saw before,  
 Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege:  
 And Tiso's wife — men liked their pretty liege,  
 Care'd for her least of whims once, — Berta, wed  
 A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso's dead,  
 Delivering herself of his first child  
 On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled  
 To fifty gazers!" — (Here a wind below  
 Made moody music augural of woe  
 From the pine barrier) — "What if, now the scene  
 Draws to a close, yourself have really been  
 — You, plucking purples in Goito's moss  
 Like edges of a trabea (not to cross  
 Your consul-humor) or dry aloe-shafts  
 For fasces, at Ferrara — he, fate wafts,  
 This very age, her whole inheritance  
 Of opportunities? Yet you advance  
 Upon the last! Since talking is your trade,  
 There's Salinguerra left you to persuade:  
 Fail! then" —

"No — no — which latest chance secure!"

Leapt up and cried Sordello: "this made sure,  
 The Past were yet redeemable; its work  
 Was — help the Guelfs, whom I, how'er it irk,  
 Thus help!" He shook the foolish aloe-haulm  
 Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm  
 To the appointed presence. The large head  
 Turned on its socket; "And your spokesman," said

The large voice, "is Elcorte's happy sprout?  
 Few such" — (so finishing a speech no doubt  
 Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)  
 — "My sober councils have diversified.  
 Elcorte's son! good: forward as you may,  
 Our lady's minstrel with so much to say!"  
 The hesitating sunset floated back,  
 Rosily traversed in the wonted track  
 The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth  
 Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in earth  
 Opposite, — outlined sudden, spur to crest,  
 That solid Salinguerra, and caressed  
 Palma's contour; 't was Day looped back Night's pall  
 Sordello had a chance left spite of all.

And much he made of the convincing speech  
 He meant should compensate the Past and reach  
 Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit, quite  
 To his noon's labor, so proceed till night  
 Leisurely! The great argument to bind  
 Taurello with the Guelf Cause, body and mind,  
 — Came the consummate rhetoric to that?  
 Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat  
 Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke,  
 Disjoining him who felt from him who spoke.  
 Was 't not a touching incident — so prompt  
 A rendering the world its just accompt,  
 Once proved its debtor? Who 'd suppose, before  
 This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore,  
 At duty's instance could demean himself

So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf?  
 Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,  
 His inmost self at the out-portion peeped  
 Thus occupied; then stole a glance at those  
 Appealed to, curious if her color rose  
 Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged  
 The need of Lombardy's becoming purged  
 At soonest of her barons; the poor part  
 Abandoned thus, missing the blood at heart  
 And spirit in brain, unseasonably off  
 Elsewhere! But, though his speech was worthy scoff,  
 Good-humored Salinguerra, famed for tact  
 And tongue, who, careless of his phrase, ne'er lacked  
 The right phrase, and harangued Honorius dumb  
 At his accession, — looked as all fell plumb  
 To purpose and himself found interest  
 In every point his new instructor pressed  
 — Left playing with the rescript's white wax seal  
 To scrutinize Sordello head and heel.  
 Then means he yield assent sure? No, alas!  
 All he replied was, "What, it comes to pass  
 That poesy, sooner than politics,  
 Makes fade young hair?" To think such speech could fix  
 Taurello!

Then a flash of bitter truth:  
 So fantasies could break and fritter youth  
 That he had long ago lost earnestness,  
 Lost will to work, lost power to even express  
 The need of working! Earth was turned a grave:

No more occasions now, though he should crave  
 Just one, in right of superhuman toil,  
 To do what was undone, repair such spoil,  
 Alter the Past — nothing would give the chance!  
 Not that he was to die: he saw askance  
 Protract the ignominious years beyond  
 To dream in — time to hope and time despond,  
 Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice  
 As saved a trouble; he might, at his choice,  
 One way or other, idle life out, drop  
 No few smooth verses by the way — for prop,  
 A thyrsus, these sad people, all the same,  
 Should pick up, and set store by, — far from blame,  
 Plant o'er his hearse, convinced his better part  
 Survived him. “Rather tear men out the heart  
 Of the truth!” — Sordello muttered, and renewed  
 His propositions for the Multitude.

But Salinguerra, who at this attack  
 Had thrown great breast and ruffling corslet back  
 To hear the better, smilingly resumed  
 His task; beneath, the carroch's warning boomed;  
 He must decide with Tito; courteously  
 He turned then, even seeming to agree  
 With his admonisher — “Assist the Pope,  
 Extend Guelf domination, fill the scope  
 Of the Church, thus based on All, by All, for All —  
 Change Secular to Evangelical” —  
 Echoing his very sentence: all seemed lost,  
 When sudden he looked up, laughingly almost,



To Palma: "This opinion of your friend's —  
 For instance, would it answer Palma's ends?  
 Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our Strength" —  
 (Here he drew out his baldric to its length)  
 — "To the Pope's Knowledge — let our captive slip,  
 Wide to the walls throw ope our gates, equip  
 Azzo with . . . what I hold here? Who'll subscribe  
 To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe  
 Henceforward? or pronounce, as Heinrich used,  
 'Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for the joust!'  
 — When Constance, for his couplets, would promote  
 Alcamo, from a parti-colored coat,  
 To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.  
 Not that I see where couplet-making jars  
 With common sense: at Mantua I had borne  
 This chanted, better than their most forlorn  
 Of bull-baits, — that's indisputable!"

Brave!

Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save!  
 All's at an end: a Troubadour suppose  
 Mankind will class him with their friends or foes?  
 A puny uncouth ailing vassal think  
 The world and him bound in some special link?  
 Abrupt the visionary tether burst —  
 What were rewarded here, or what amerced  
 If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream  
 Deservingly, got tangled by his theme  
 So far as to conceit the knack or gift  
 Or whatsoe'er it be, of verse, might lift

The globe, a lever like the hand and head  
 Of—“Men of Action,” as the Jongleurs said,  
 —“The Great Men,” in the people’s dialect?

And not a moment did this scorn affect  
 Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,  
 Asking “what was,” obtained a full response.  
 Bid Naddo think at Mantua, he had but  
 To look into his promptuary, put  
 Finger on a set thought in a set speech:  
 But was Sordello fitted thus for each  
 Conjecture? Nowise; since, within his soul,  
 Perception brooded unexpressed and whole.  
 A healthy spirit like a healthy frame  
 Craves aliment in plenty — all the same,  
 Changes, assimilates its aliment.  
 Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent?  
 Next day no formularies more you saw  
 Than figs or olives in a sated maw.  
 \*T is Knowledge, whither such perceptions tend;  
 They lose themselves in that, means to an end,  
 The many old producing some one new,  
 A last unlike the first. If lies are true,  
 The Caliph’s wheel-work man of brass receives  
 A meal, munched millet grains and lettuce leaves  
 Together in his stomach rattle loose —  
 You find them perfect next day to produce;  
 But ne’er expect the man, on strength of that,  
 Can roll an iron camel-collar flat  
 Like Haroun’s self! I tell you, what was stored

Bit by bit through Sordello's life, outpoured  
 That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing :  
 And round those three the people formed a **ring**,  
 Of visionary judges whose award .  
 He recognized in full — faces that barred  
 Henceforth return to the old careless life,  
 In whose great presence, therefore, his first strife  
 For their sake must not be ignobly fought.  
 All these, for once, approved of him, he thought,  
 Suspended their own vengeance, chose await  
 The issue of this strife to reinstate  
 Them in the right of taking it — in fact  
 He must be proved king ere they could exact  
 Vengeance for such king's defalcation. **Last**,  
 A reason why the phrases flowed so fast  
 Was in his quite forgetting for a time  
 Himself in his amazement that the rhyme  
 Disguised the royalty so much : he there —  
 And Salinguerra — and yet unaware  
 Who was the lord, who liegeman !

“ Thus I lay

On thine my spirit and compel obey  
 His lord, — my liegeman, — impotent to build  
 Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled  
 In what such builder should have been, as brook  
 One shame beyond the charge that I forsook  
 His function ! Free me from that shame, I bend  
 A brow before, suppose new years to spend,  
 Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly recur —

Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, demur  
 At any crown he claims! That I must cede  
 Shamed now, my right to my especial meed —  
 Confess thee fitter help the world than I  
 Ordained its champion from eternity,  
 Is much: but to behold thee scorn the post  
 I quit in thy behalf — to hear thee boast  
 What makes my own despair!" And while he rung  
 The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung,  
 The sad walls of the presence-chamber died  
 Into the distance, or embowering vied  
 With far-away Goito's vine-frontier;  
 And crowds of faces — (only keeping clear  
 The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground  
 To fight their battle from) — deep clustered round  
 Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,  
 Kind prayers for him no vapor, since, come death,  
 Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint,  
 Each bone new-marrowsed as whom Gods anoint  
 Though mortal to their rescue: now let sprawl  
 The snaky volumes hither! Is Typhon all  
 For Hercules to trample — good report  
 From Salinguerra only to extort?  
 "So was I" (closed he his inculcating,  
 A poet must be earth's essential king)  
 "So was I, royal so, and if I fail,  
 'T is not the royalty, ye witness quail,  
 But one deposed who, caring not exert  
 Its proper essence, trifled malapert

With accidents instead — good things assigned  
 As heralds of a better thing behind —  
 And, worthy through display of these, put forth  
 Never the inmost all-surpassing worth  
 That constitutes him King precisely since  
 As yet no other spirit may evince  
 Its like: the power he took most pride to test,  
 Whereby all forms of life had been professed  
 At pleasure, forms already on the earth,  
 Was but a means to power beyond, whose birth  
 Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof.  
 Now, whether he came near or kept aloof  
 The several forms he longed to imitate,  
 Not there the kingship lay, he sees too late.  
 Those forms, unalterable first as last,  
 Proved him her copier, not the protoplast  
 Of nature: what could come of being free  
 By action to exhibit tree for tree,  
 Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or prove earth bore  
 One veritable man or woman more?  
 Means to an end, such proofs are: what the end?  
 Let essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend —  
 Never contract! Already you include  
 The multitude; then let the multitude  
 Include yourself; and the result were new:  
 Themselves before, the multitude turn you.  
 This were to live and move and have, in them,  
 Your being, and secure a diadem  
 You should transmit (because no cycle years

Beyond itself, but on itself returns)

When, the full sphere in wane, the world o'erlaid  
 Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed  
 Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still  
 More potent than the last, of human will,  
 And some new King depose the old. Of such  
 Am I — whom pride of this elates too much?  
 Safe, rather say, 'mid troops of peers again;  
 I, with my words, hailed brother of the train  
 Deeds once sufficed: for, let the world roll back,  
 Who fails, through deeds howe'er diverse, re-track  
 My purpose still, my task? A teeming crust —  
 Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict! Then, needs must  
 Emerge some Calm embodied, these refer  
 The brawl to; — yellow-bearded Jupiter?  
 No! Saturn; some existence like a pact  
 And protest against Chaos, some first fact  
 P' the faint of time. My deep of life, I know,  
 Is unavailing e'en to poorly show" . . .

(For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)

. . . "Deeds in their due gradation till Song dawned —  
 The fullest effluence of the finest mind,  
 All in degree, no way diverse in kind  
 From minds about it, minds which, more or less  
 Lofty or low, move seeking to impress  
 Themselves on somewhat; but one mind has climbed  
 Step after step, by just ascent sublimed.  
 Thought is the soul of act, and, stage by stage,  
 Its soul from body still to disengage

As tending to a freedom which rejects  
 Such help and incorporeally affects  
 The world, producing deeds but not by deeds,  
 Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,  
 Assigning them the simpler tasks it used  
 To patiently perform till Song produced  
 Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind: divest  
 Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's unexpressed  
 Will dawns above us! All then is to win  
 Save that! How much for me, then? where **begin**  
 My work? About me, faces! and they flock,  
 The earnest faces! What shall I unlock  
 By song? behold me prompt, whate'er it be,  
 To minister: how much can mortals see  
 Of Life? No more than so? I take the task  
 And marshal you Life's elemental masque,  
 Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress,  
 This light, this shade make prominent, suppress  
 All ordinary hues that softening blend  
 Such natures with the level. Apprehend  
 Which sinner is, which saint, if I allot  
 Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, a blaze or blot,  
 To those you doubt concerning! I enwomb  
 Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot **tomb**;  
 Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph  
 With the black chastening river I engulph;  
 Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine  
 With languors of the planet of decline —  
 These, fail to recognize, to arbitrate

Between henceforth, to rightly estimate  
 Thus marshalled in the masque! Myself, the while,  
 As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile  
 At my own showing! Next age — what 's to do?  
 The men and women stationed hitherto  
 Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct  
 Each nature to its farthest, or obstruct  
 At soonest, in the world: light, thwarted, breaks  
 A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,  
 Or shadow, massed, freezes to gloom: behold  
 How such, with fit assistance to unfold,  
 Or obstacles to crush them, disengage  
 Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make, war wage,  
 In presence of you all! Myself, implied  
 Superior now, as, by the platform's side,  
 I bade them do and suffer, — would last content  
 The world . . . no — that 's too far! I circumvent  
 A few, my masque contented, and to these  
 Offer unveil the last of mysteries —  
 Man's inmost life shall have yet freer play:  
 Once more I cast external things away,  
 And natures composite, so decompose  
 That " . . . Why, he writes *Sordello!*

" How I rose,

And how have you advanced! since evermore  
 Yourselves effect what I was fain before  
 Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,  
 What I leave bare yourselves can now invest.  
 How we attain to talk as brothers talk,



In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk  
 From discontinuing old aids. To-day  
 Takes in account the work of Yesterday :  
 Has not the world a Past now, its adept  
 Consults ere he dispense with or accept  
 New aids? a single touch more may enhance,  
 A touch less turn to insignificance  
 Those structures' symmetry the Past has strewed  
 The world with, once so bare. Leave the mere rude  
 Explicit details! 't is but brother's speech  
 We need, speech where an accent's change gives each  
 The other's soul — no speech to understand  
 By former audience: need was then to expand,  
 Expatiate — hardly were we brothers! true —  
 Nor I lament my small remove from you,  
 Nor reconstruct what stands already. Ends  
 Accomplished turn to means: my art intends  
 New structure from the ancient: as they changed  
 The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged  
 The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright  
 As in his desert, by some simple bright  
 Clay cinerary pitcher — Thebes as Rome,  
 Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome  
 From earth's reputed consummations razed  
 A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed  
 Above. Ah, whose that fortune? ne'ertheless  
 E'en he must stoop contented to express  
 No tithe of what 's to say — the vehicle  
 Never sufficient: but his work is still

For faces like the faces that select  
 The single service I am bound effect,  
 And bid me cast aside such fancies, bow  
 Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow  
 The Kaiser's coming — which with heart, soul, strength,  
 I labor for, this eve, who feel at length  
 My past career's outrageous vanity,  
 And would, as it amends, die, even die  
 Now I first estimate the boon of life,  
 If death might win compliance — sure, this strife  
 Is right for once — the People my support."

My poor Sordello! what may we extort  
 By this, I wonder? Palma's lighted eyes  
 Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise,  
 Began, "You love him — what you'd say at large  
 Let me say briefly. First, your father's charge  
 To me, his friend, peruse: I guessed indeed  
 You were no stranger to the course decreed.  
 He bids me leave his children to the saints:  
 As for a certain project, he acquaints  
 The Pope with that, and offers him the best  
 Of your possessions to permit the rest  
 Go peaceably — to Ecelin, a stripe  
 Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,  
 — To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan  
 Clutches already; extricate, who can,  
 Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,  
 Cartiglione, Loria! — all go,  
 And with them go my hopes. 'T is lost, then! Lost

**This** eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost  
 Procuring; thirty years — as good I'd spent  
 Like our admonisher! But each his bent  
 Pursues: no question, one might live absurd  
 One's self this while, by deed as he by word,  
 Persisting to obtrude an influence where  
 'T is made account of, much as . . . nay, you fare  
 With twice the fortune, youngster! — I submit,  
 Happy to parallel my waste of wit  
 With the renowned Sordello's: you decide  
 A course for me. Romano may abide  
 Romano, — Bacchus! After all, what dearth  
 Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth?  
 Say there's a prize in prospect, must disgrace  
 Betide competitors, unless they style  
 Themselves Romano? were it worth my while  
 To try my own luck! But an obscure place  
 Suits me — there wants a youth to bustle, stalk  
 And attitudinize — some fight, more talk,  
 Most flaunting badges — how, I might make clear,  
 Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here  
 — Here, pity they are like to lie! For me,  
 With station fixed unceremoniously  
 Long since, small use contesting; I am but  
 The liegeman, you are born the lieges — shut  
 That gentle mouth now! or resume your kin  
 In your sweet self; were Palma Ecelin  
 For me to work with! Could that neck endure  
 This bauble for a cumbrous garniture,

She should . . . or might one bear it for her? Stay —  
 I have not been so flattered many a day  
 As by your pale friend — Bacchus! The least help  
 Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's whelp —  
 His neck is broad enough — a ready tongue  
 Beside — too writhled — but, the main thing, young —  
 I could . . . why, look ye!"

And the badge was thrown  
 Across Sordello's neck: "This badge alone  
 Makes you Romano's Head — becomes superb  
 On your bare neck, which would, on mine, disturb  
 The pauldron," said Taurello. A mad act,  
 Not even dreamed about before — in fact,  
 Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce —  
 But he had dallied overmuch, this once,  
 With power: the thing was done, and he, aware  
 The thing was done, proceeded to declare —  
 (So like a nature made to serve, excel  
 In serving, only feel by service well!)  
 — That he would make Sordello that and more.  
 "As good a scheme as any! What's to pore  
 At in my face?" he asked — ponder instead  
 This piece of news; you are Romano's Head!  
 One cannot slacken pace so near the goal,  
 Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole  
 This time! For you there's Palma to espouse —  
 For me, one crowning trouble ere I house  
 Like my compeer."

On which ensued a strange

And solemn visitation ; there came change  
U'er every one of them ; each looked on each :  
Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech.  
And when the giddiness sank and the haze  
Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,  
Sordello with the baldric on, his sire  
Silent, though his proportions seemed aspire  
Momently ; and, interpreting the thrill  
Nigh at its ebb, Palma was found there still  
Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed  
A year ago, while dying on her breast, —  
Of a contrivance that Vicenza night,  
When Ecelin had birth. “ Their convoy's flight,  
Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame  
That wallowed like a dragon at his game  
The toppling city through — San Biagio rocks  
And wounded lies in her delicious locks  
Retrude, the frail mother, on her face,  
None of her wasted, just in one embrace  
Covering her child : when, as they lifted her,  
Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier  
And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke,  
Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke,  
Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward — drown  
His colleague Ecelin's clamor, up and down  
The disarray : failed Adelaide see then  
Who was the natural chief, the man of men ?  
Outstripping time, her infant there burst swathe,  
Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the scathe

From wandering after his heritage  
 Lost once and lost for aye — and why that rage.  
 That deprecating glance? A new shape leant  
 On a familiar shape — gloatingly bent  
 O'er his discomfiture; 'mid wreaths it wore,  
 Still one outflamed the rest — her child's before  
 'T was Salinguerra's for his child: scorn, hate  
 Rage, startled her from Ecelin — too late!  
 Then was the moment! rival's foot had spurned  
 Never that brow to earth! Ere sense returned —  
 The act conceived, adventured, and complete,  
 They bore away to an obscure retreat  
 Mother and child — Retrude's self not slain"  
 (Nor even here Taurello moved) "though pain  
 Was fled; and what assured them most 't was fled,  
 All pain, was, if they raised the pale hushed head  
 'T would turn this way and that, waver awhile,  
 And only settle into its old smile —  
 (Graceful as the disquieted water-flag  
 Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag  
 On either side their path) — when suffered look  
 Down on her child. They marched: no sign once shook  
 The company's close litter of crossed spears  
 Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears  
 Slipt in the sunset from her long black lash,  
 And she was gone. So far the action rash —  
 No crime. They laid Retrude in the font,  
 Taurello's very gift, ner child was wont  
 To sit beneath — constant as eve he came

To sit by its attendant girls the same  
 As one of them. For Palma, she would blend  
 With this magnific spirit to the end,  
 That ruled her first — but scarcely had she dared  
 To disobey the Adelaide who scared  
 Her into vowing never to disclose  
 A secret to her husband, which so froze  
 His blood at half recital, she contrived  
 To hide from him Taurello's infant lived,  
 Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar  
 Romano's fortunes. And, a crime so far,  
 Palma received that action: she was told  
 Of Salinguerra's nature, of his cold  
 Calm acquiescence in his lot! But free  
 To impart the secret to Romano, she  
 Engaged to repossess Sordello of  
 His heritage, and hers, and that way doff  
 The mask, but after years, long years! — while now,  
 Was not Romano's sign-mark on that brow?"

Across Taurello's heart his arms were locked:  
 And when he did speak 't was as if he mocked  
 The minstrel, "who had not to move," he said,  
 "Not stir — should Fate defraud him of a shred  
 Of his son's infancy? much less of his youth!"  
 (Laughingly all this) — "which to aid, in truth,  
 Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown  
 Old, not too old — 't was best they kept alone  
 Till now, and never idly met till now";  
 — Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how

All intimations of this eve's event  
 Were lies, for Friedrich must advance to Trent,  
 Thence to Verona, then to Rome, there stop,  
 Tumble the Church down, institute a-top  
 The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy:  
 — "That's now! — no prophesying what may be  
 Anon, with a new monarch of the clime,  
 Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime  
 At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide  
 On whom . . ."

"Embrace him, madman!" Palma cried,  
 Who through the laugh saw sweatdrops burst apace,  
 And his lips' blanching: he did not embrace  
 Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand  
 On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.

Understand,

This while Sordello was becoming flushed  
 Out of his whiteness: thoughts rushed, fancies rushed;  
 He pressed his hand upon his head and signed  
 Both-should forbear him. "Nay, the best's behind!"  
 Taurello laughed, — not quite with the same laugh:  
 "The truth is, thus we scatter, ay, like chaff  
 These Guelfs, a despicable monk recoils  
 From: nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils  
 Our triumph! — Friedrich? Think you, I intend  
 Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I spend  
 And brain I waste? Think you, the people clap  
 Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap  
 For any Friedrich to fill up? 'T is mine —



That's yours: I tell you, towards some such design  
Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,  
And for another, yes — but worked no less  
With instinct at my heart; I else had swerved,  
While now — look round! My cunning has preserved  
Samminiato — that's a central place  
Secures us Florence, boy, — in Pisa's case,  
By land as she by sea; with Pisa ours,  
And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours  
The land at leisure! Gloriously dispersed —  
Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first  
That flanked us (ah, you know not!) in the **March**;  
On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,  
Romagna and Bologna, whose first span  
Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan;  
Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure!" . . .  
So he proceeded: half of all this, pure  
Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,  
But what was undone he felt sure to do,  
As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away  
The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm play —  
Need of the sword now! That would soon adjust  
Aught wrong at present; to the sword intrust  
Sordello's whiteness, undersize: 't was plain  
He hardly rendered right to his own brain —  
Like a brave hound, men educate to pride  
Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,  
As though he could not, gift by gift, match men!  
Palma had listened patiently: but when

'T was time expostulate, attempt withdraw  
 Taurello from his child, she, without awe  
 Took off his iron arms from, one by one,  
 Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done,  
 Made him avert his visage and relieve  
 Sordello (you might see his corselet heave  
 The while) who, loose, rose — tried to speak, then **sank**  
 They left him in the chamber. All was blank.

And even reeling down the narrow stair  
 Taurello kept up, as though unaware  
 Palma was by to guide him, the old device  
 — Something of Milan — “how we muster thrice  
 The Torriani's strength there — all along  
 Our own Visconti cowed them” — thus the song  
 Continued even while she bade him stoop,  
 Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop,  
 The turnings to the gallery below,  
 Where he stopped short as Palma let him go.  
 When he had sat in silence long enough  
 Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff  
 She stopt the truncheon; only to commence  
 One of Sordello's poems, a pretence  
 For speaking, some poor rhyme of “Elys' hair  
 And head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear,  
 So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks  
 Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sun-blanced the livelong Summer” — from his worst  
 Performance, the Goito, as his first:  
**And that at end, conceiving from the brow**

And open mouth no silence would serve now,  
 Went on to say the whole world loved that man  
 And, for that matter, thought his face, tho' wan,  
 Eclipsed the Count's — he sucking in each phrase  
 As if an angel spoke. The foolish praise  
 Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made  
 Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,  
 A crown, an aureole : there must she remain  
 (Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain  
 As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)  
 To get the best look at, in fittest niche  
 Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed her brow,  
 — "Lauded her father for his treason now,"  
 He told her, "only, how could one suspect  
 The wit in him? — whose clansman, recollect,  
 Was ever Salinguerra — she, the same,  
 Romano and his lady — so, might claim  
 To know all, as she should" — and thus begun  
 Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes, "not one  
 Fit to be told that foolish boy," he said,  
 "But only let Sordello Palma wed,  
 — Then!"

'T was a dim long narrow place at best :  
 Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West,  
 As shows its corpse the world's end some split tomb —  
 A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom,  
 Faced Palma — but at length Taurello set  
 Her free ; the grating held one ragged jet  
 Of fierce gold fire : he lifted her within

The hollow underneath — how else begin  
 Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew  
 The ages than with Palma plain in view ?  
 Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head erect,  
 Pursuing his discourse ; a grand unchecked  
 Monotony made out from his quick talk  
 And the recurring noises of his walk ;  
 — Somewhat too much like the o'ercharged assent  
 Of two resolved friends in one danger blent,  
 Who hearten each the other against heart —  
 Boasting there 's naught to care for, when, apart  
 The boaster, all 's to care for. He, beside  
 Some shape not visible, in power and pride  
 Approached, out of the dark, ginglyly near,  
 Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear  
 Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-fraught,  
 Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,  
 And on he strode into the opposite dark  
 Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark  
 I' the stone, and whirl of some loose embossed thong  
 That crashed against the angle eye so long  
 After the last, punctual to an amount  
 Of mailed great paces you could not but count, —  
 Prepared you for the pacing back again  
 And by the snatches you might ascertain  
 That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left  
 By this alone in Italy, they cleft  
 Asunder, crushed together, at command  
 Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,

Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne —  
 But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, “if we deign  
 Accept that compromise and stoop to give  
 Rome law, the Cæsars’ Representative.”  
 — Enough that the illimitable flood  
 Of triumphs after triumphs, understood  
 In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed  
 Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed  
 Him on till, these long quiet in their graves,  
 He found ’t was looked for that a whole life’s braves  
 Should somehow be made good — so, weak and worn,  
 Must stagger up at Milan, one gray morn  
 Of the To-Come, and fight his latest fight.  
 But, Salinguerra’s prophecy at height —  
 He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,  
 A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if  
 He had our very Italy to keep  
 Or cast away, or gather in a heap  
 To garrison the better — ay, his word  
 Was, “run the cucumber into a gourd,  
 Drive Trent upon Apulia” — at their pitch  
 Who spied the continents and islands which  
 Grew mulberry-leaves and sickles, in the map —  
 (Strange that three such confessions so should hap  
 To Palma, Dante spoke with in the clear  
 Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere, —  
*Cunizza*, as he called her! Never ask  
 Of Palma more! She sat, knowing her task  
 Was done, the labor of it — for, success,

Concerned not Palma, passion's votaries)  
 Triumph at height, and thus Sordello crowned —  
 Above the passage suddenly a sound  
 Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks Taurello, bids  
 With large involuntary asking lids,  
 Palma interpret. "'T is his own foot-stamp —  
 Your hand! His summons! Nay, this idle damp  
 Befits not!" Out they two reeled dizzily.  
 "Visconti's strong at Milan," resumed he,  
 In the old, somewhat insignificant way —  
 (Was Palma wont, years afterward, to say)  
 As though the spirit's flight, sustained thus far,  
 Dropped at that very instant. Gone they are —  
 Palma, Taurello; Eglamor anon,  
 Ecelin, — only Naddo's never gone!  
 — Labors, this moonrise, what the Master meant  
 "Is Squarcialupo speckled? — purulent,  
 I'd say, but when was Providence put out?  
 He carries somehow handily about  
 His spite nor fouls himself!" Goito's vines  
 Stand like a cheat detected — stark rough lines,  
 The moon breaks through, a gray mean scale against  
 The vault where, this eve's Maiden, thou remain'st  
 Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed — who can tell?  
 As Heaven, now all's at end, did not so well,  
 Spite of the faith and victory, to leave  
 Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve.  
 While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha! wait  
 No longer — these in compass, forward fate!

## BOOK THE SIXTH.

AT THE CLOSE OF A DAY OR A LIFE,

THE thought of Eglamor's least like a thought,  
And yet a false one, was, "Man shrinks to naught  
If matched with symbols of immensity —  
Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky  
Or sea, too little for their quietude":  
And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood  
Confirmed its speciousness, while eve slow sank  
Down the near terrace to the farther bank,  
And only one spot left out of the night  
Glimmered upon the river opposite —  
A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,  
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray,  
And star for star, one richness where they **mixed**  
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,  
Tumultuary splendors folded in  
To die. Nor turned he till Ferrara's din  
(Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip  
Who lets some first and eager purpose slip  
In a new fancy's birth; the speech keeps on  
Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone)  
— Aroused him, — surely offered succor. Fate  
Paused with this eve; ere she precipitate  
Herself, — put off strange after-thoughts awhile,  
That voice, those large hands, that portentous smile, —

What help to pierce the Future as the Past,  
Lay in the plaining city ?

And at last

The main discovery and prime concern,  
All that just now imported him to learn,  
His truth, like yonder slow moon to complete  
Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his feet,  
Lighted his old life's every shift and change,  
Effort with counter-effort ; nor the range  
Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked,  
Some other — which of these could he suspect,  
Prying into them by the sudden blaze ?  
The real way seemed made up of all the ways —  
Mood after mood of the one mind in him ;  
Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,  
Of a transcendent all-embracing sense  
Demanding only outward influence,  
A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,  
Power to uplift his power, — this moon's control,  
Over the sea-depths, — and their mass had swept  
Onward from the beginning and still kept  
Its course : but years and years the sky above  
Held none, and so, untasked of any love,  
His sensitiveness idled, now amort,  
Alive now, and to sullenness or sport  
Given wholly up, disposed itself anew  
At every passing instigation, grew  
And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers spilt,  
Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt



Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race  
 Of whitest ripples o'er the reef— found place  
 For much display ; not gathered up and, hurled  
 Right from its heart, encompassing the world.  
 So had Sordello been, by consequence,  
 Without a function : others made pretence  
 To strength not half his own, yet had some core  
 Within, submitted to some moon, before  
 Them still, superior still whate'er their force, —  
 Were able therefore to fulfil a course,  
 Nor missed life's crown, authentic attribute.  
 To each who lives must be a certain fruit  
 Of having lived in his degree, — a stage,  
 Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,  
 To stop at ; and to this the spirits tend  
 Who, still discovering beauty without end,  
 Amass the scintillations, make one star  
 — Something unlike them, self-sustained, afar, —  
 And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest  
 By winning it to notice and invest  
 Their souls with alien glory, some one day  
 Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape away,  
 Round to the perfect circle — soon or late,  
 According as themselves are formed to wait ;  
 Whether mere human beauty will suffice  
 — The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,  
 Or human intellect seem best, or each  
 Combine in some ideal form past reach  
 On earth, or else some shade of these, some **aim,**

Some love, hate even, take their place, the same,  
 And may be served — all this they do not lose,  
 Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose  
 What must be Hell — a progress thus pursued  
 Through all existence, still above the food  
 That's offered them, still towering beyond  
 The widened range, in virtue of their bond  
 Of sovereignty. Not that a Palma's Love,  
 A Salinguerra's Hate, would equal prove  
 To swaying all Sordello: wherefore doubt,  
 That Love meet for such Strength, some moon without  
 Would match his sea? — or fear, Good manifest,  
 Only the Best breaks faith? — Ah, but the Best  
 Somehow eludes us ever, still might be  
 And is not! crave we gems? no penury  
 Of their material round us! pliant earth,  
 The plastic flame — what balks the mage his birth  
 — Jacynth in balls, or lodestone by the block?  
 Flinders enrich the strand, and veins the rock —  
 Naught more! Ask creatures? Life's i' the tempest.

## Thought

Clothes the keen hill-top, midday woods are fraught  
 With fervors: ah, these forms are well enough!  
 But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff  
 Profuse at Nature's pleasure, men beyond  
 These men! and thus, perchance, are over-fond  
 In arguing, from Good the Best, from force  
 Divided — force combined, an ocean's course  
 From this our sea whose mere intestine pants

Might seem at times sufficient to our wants.  
 — External Power? If none be adequate  
 And he stand forth ordained (a prouder fate)  
 A law to his own sphere? — need to remove  
 All incompleteness, for that law, that love?  
 Nay, if all other laws be such, though veiled  
 In mercy to each vision that had failed  
 If unassisted by its want, — for lure,  
 Embodied? Stronger vision could endure  
 The unbodied want: no bauble for a truth!  
 The People were himself; and, by the ruth  
 At their condition, was he less impelled  
 To alter the discrepancy beheld,  
 Than if, from the sound Whole, a sickly Part  
 Subtracted were transformed, decked out with art,  
 Then palmed on him as alien woe — the Guef  
 To succor, proud that he forsook himself?  
 No! All's himself; all service, therefore, rates  
 Alike, nor serving one part, immolates  
 The rest: but all in time! “That lance of yours  
 Makes havoc soon with Malek and his Moors,  
 That buckler's lined with many a giant's beard  
 Ere long, O champion, be the lance upreared,  
 The buckler wielded handsomely as now!  
 But view your escort, bear in mind your vow,  
 Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere that,  
 And, if you hope we struggle through the flat,  
 Put lance and buckler by! Next half-month lacks  
 Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe

To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-pear  
 Which bristling holds Cydippe by the hair,  
 Lames barefoot Agathon: this felled, we'll try  
 The picturesque achievements by and by —  
 Next life!"

Ay, rally, mock, O People, urge  
 Your claims! — for thus he ventured, to the verge,  
 Push a vain mummery which perchance distrust  
 Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust  
 Likewise: accordingly the Crowd — as yet  
 He had unconsciously contrived forget  
 I' the whole, to dwell o' the points . . . one night  
 assuage

The signal horrors easier than engage  
 With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief  
 Not to be fancied off, nor gained relief  
 In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,  
 But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work  
 To correspond . . . this Crowd then, forth they stood.  
 "And now content thy stronger vision, brood  
 On thy bare want; uncovered, turf by turf,  
 Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-worms' scurf!"

Down sank the People's Then; uprose their Now.  
 These sad ones render service to! And how  
 Piteously little must that service prove  
 — Had surely proved in any case! for, move  
 Each other obstacle away, let youth  
 Have been aware it had surprised a truth  
 T were service to impart — can truth be seized,

Settled forthwith, and, of the captive eased,  
 Its captor find fresh prey, since this alit  
 So happily, no gesture luring it,  
 The earnest of a flock to follow? **Vain,**  
 Most vain! a life's to spend ere this he chain,  
 To the poor crowd's complacence; ere the crowd  
 Pronounce it captured, he descries a cloud  
 Its kin of twice the plume — which he, in turn,  
 If he shall live as many lives, may learn  
 How to secure — not else. Then Mantua called  
 Back to his mind how certain bards were thrall'd  
 — Buds blasted, but of breath more like perfume  
 Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion bloom :  
 Some insane rose that burnt heart out in sweets,  
 A spendthrift in the Spring, no Summer greets —  
 Some Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,  
 Grown bestial, dreaming how become divine.  
 “ Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence  
 With the commencement, merits crowning! Hence  
 Must truth be casual truth, elicited  
 In sparks so mean, at intervals dispread  
 So rarely, that 't is like at no one time  
 Of the world's story has not truth, the prime  
 Of truth, the very truth which, loosed, had hurled  
 The world's course right, been really in the world  
 — Content the while with some mean spark by dint  
 Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint  
 Of buried fire, which, rip its breast, would stream  
 Sky-ward!”

Sordello's miserable gleam  
 Was looked for at the moment : he would dash  
 This badge, and all it brought, to earth, — abash  
 Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest  
 The Kaiser from his purpose, — would attest  
 His own belief, in any case. Before  
 He dashes it, however, think once more !  
 For, were that little, truly service ? “ Ay —  
 I' the end, no doubt ; but meantime ? Plain you spy  
 Its ultimate effect, but many flaws  
 Of vision blur each intervening cause.  
 Were the day's fraction clear as the life's sum  
 Of service, Now as filled as the To-come  
 With evidence of good — nor too minute  
 A share to vie with evil ! No dispute,  
 'T were fittest maintain the Guelfs in rule :  
 That makes your life's work : but you have to school  
 Your day's work on these natures circumstanced  
 Thus variously, which yet, as each advanced  
 Or might impede the Guelf rule, must be moved  
 Now, for the Then's sake, — hating what you loved,  
 Loving old hatreds ! nor if one man bore  
 Brand upon temples while his fellow wore  
 The aureole, would it task you to decide —  
 But, portioned duly out, the Future vied  
 Never with the unparcelled Present ! Smite  
 Or spare so much on warrant all so slight ?  
 The Present's complete sympathies to break,  
 Aversions bear with, for a Future's sake

So feeble? Tito ruined through one speck,  
 The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck?  
 This were work, true — but work performed at cost  
 Of other work — aught gained here, elsewhere lost.  
 For a new segment spoil an orb half done?  
 Rise with the People one step, and sink — one?  
 Were it but one step — less than the whole face  
 Of things, your novel duty bids erase!  
 Harms to abolish! what? the prophet saith,  
 The minstrel singeth vainly then? Old faith,  
 Old courage, only born because of harms,  
 Were not, from highest to the lowest, charms?  
 Flame may persist but is not glare as stanch?  
 Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals branch —  
 Blood dries to crimson — Evil's beautified  
 In every shape. Thrust Beauty then aside  
 And banish Evil! wherefore? After all,  
 Is Evil a result less natural  
 Than Good? For, overlook the seasons' strife  
 With tree and flower, — the hideous animal life,  
 (Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt  
 For his solution, and endure the vaunt  
 Of nature's angel, as a child that knows  
 Himself befooled, unable to propose  
 Aught better than the fooling) — and but care  
 For Men, for the mere People then and there, —  
 In these, could you but see that Good and Ill  
 Claimed you alike! Whence rose their claim but still  
 From Ill, as fruit of Ill — what else could knit

You theirs but Sorrow? Any free from it  
 Were also free from you! Whose happiness  
 Could be distinguished in this morning's press  
 Of miseries? — the fool's who passed a gibe  
 'On thee,' jeered he, 'so wedded to thy tribe,  
 Thou carriest green and yellow tokens in  
 Thy very face that thou art Ghibellin!' —  
 Much hold on you that fool obtained! Nay mount  
 Yet higher — and upon men's own account  
 Must Evil stay: for, what is Joy? — to heave  
 Up one obstruction more, and common leave  
 What was peculiar — by such act destroy  
 Itself; a partial death is every joy;  
 The sensible escape, enfranchisement  
 Of a sphere's essence: once the vexed — content,  
 The cramped — at large, the growing circle — round,  
 All's to begin again — some novel bound  
 To break, some new enlargement to entreat,  
 The sphere though larger is not more complete.  
 Now for Mankind's experience: who alone  
 Might style the unobstructed world his own?  
 Whom palled Goito with its perfect things?  
 Sordello's self! whereas for mankind springs  
 Salvation by each hindrance interposed;  
 They climb, life's view is not at once disclosed  
 To creatures caught up, on its summit left,  
 Heaven plain above them, yet of wings bereft —  
 But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot,  
 While, range on range, the girdling forests shoot



Twixt your plain prospect and the throngs who scale  
Height after height, and pierce mists, veil by veil,  
Heartened with each discovery ; in their soul,  
The Whole they seek by Parts — but, found that Who  
Could they revert, enjoy past gains ? The space  
Of time you judge so meagre to embrace  
The Parts, were more than plenty, once attained  
The Whole, to quite exhaust it : naught were gained  
But leave to look — not leave to do : Beneath  
Soon sates the looker — look Above, and Death  
Tempters ere a tithe of Life be tasted. Live  
First, and die soon enough, Sordello ! Give  
Body and spirit the first right they claim,  
And pasture thee on a voluptuous shame  
That thou, a pageant-city's denizen,  
Art neither vilely lodged midst Lombard men —  
Canst force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck  
Thine attributes away for sordid muck,  
Yet manage from that very muck educe  
Gold ; then subject, nor scruple, to thy cruce  
The world's discardings ! Though real ingots pay  
Thy pains, the clods that yielded them are clay  
To all save thee, — would clay remain, though quenched  
Thy purging-fire ; who 's robbed then ? Had you  
wrenched  
An ampler treasure forth ! — As 't is, they crave  
A share that ruins you and will not save  
Them. Why should sympathy command you quit  
The course that makes your joy, nor will remit.

Their woe? Would all arrive at joy? Reverse  
 The order (time instructs you) nor coerce  
 Each unit till, some predetermined mode,  
 The total be emancipate; men's road  
 Is one, men's times of travel many; thwart  
 No enterprising soul's precocious start  
 Before the general march! if slow or fast  
 All straggle up to the same point at last,  
 Why grudge your having gained, a month ago,  
 The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in blow,  
 While they were landlocked? Speed there Then, but how  
 This badge would suffer you improve your Now!"

His time of action for, against, or with  
 Our world (I labor to extract the pith  
 Of this his problem) grew, that even-tide,  
 Gigantic with its power of joy, beside  
 The world's eternity of impotence  
 To profit though at his whole joy's expense.  
 "Make nothing of my day because so brief?  
 Rather make more — instead of joy, use grief  
 Before its novelty have time subside!  
 Wait not for the late savour — leave untried  
 Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick squeeze  
 Vice like a biting spirit from the lees  
 Of life! — together let wrath, hatred, lust,  
 All tyrannies in every shape, be thrust  
 Upon this Now, which time may reason out  
 As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt —  
 But long ere then Sordello will have slipt

Away — you teach him at Goito's crypt,  
 There's a blank issue to that fiery thrill!  
 Stirring, the few cope with the many, still:  
 So much of sand as, quiet, makes a mass  
 Unable to produce three tufts of grass,  
 Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void  
 The whole calm glebe's endeavor: be employed!  
 And e'en though somewhat smart the Crowd for **this**,  
 Contribute each his pang to make your bliss,  
 'T is but one pang — one blood-drop to the bowl  
 Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl  
 At last, stains ruddily the dull red cape,  
 And, kindling orbs gray as the unripe grape  
 Before, avails forthwith to disentrance  
 The portent — soon to lead a mystic dance  
 Among you! For, who sits alone in Rome?  
 Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home,  
 And set me there to live? O life, life-breath,  
 Life-blood, — ere sleep, come travail, life ere death!  
 This life stream on my soul, direct, oblique,  
 But always streaming! Hindrances? They pique —  
 Helps? such . . . but why repeat, my soul o'ertops  
 Each height, than every depth profoundlier drops?  
 Enough that I can live, and would live! Wait  
 For some transcendent life reserved by Fate  
 To follow this? O, never! Fate, I trust  
 The same, my soul to; for, as who flings dust,  
 Perchance — so facile was the deed, she checked  
 The void with these materials to affect

My soul diversely — these consigned anew  
 To naught by death, what marvel if she threw  
 A second and superber spectacle  
 Before it? What may serve for sun — what still  
 Wander a moon above me — what else wind  
 About me like the pleasures left behind,  
 And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh  
 Cling to me? what's new laughter — soothes the fresh  
 Sleep like sleep? Fate's exhaustless for my sake  
 In brave resource, but whether bids she slake  
 My thirst at this first rivulet, or count  
 No draught worth lip save from the rocky fount  
 Above i' the clouds, while here she's provident  
 Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft tree-tent  
 Guards, with its face of reate and sedge, nor fail  
 The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail  
 At bottom. O, 't were too absurd to slight  
 For the hereafter the to-day's delight!  
 Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-spring — wear  
 Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair!  
 Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart  
 Offer to serve, contented for my part  
 To give life up in service, — only grant  
 That I do serve; if otherwise, why want  
 Aught further of me? If men cannot choose  
 But set aside life, why should I refuse  
 The gift? I take it — I, for one, engage  
 Never to falter through my pilgrimage —  
 Nor end it howling that the stock or stone

Were enviable, truly: I, for one,  
 Will praise the world, you style mere anteroom  
 To the palace — be it so! shall I assume  
 — My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the trope,  
 My mouth the smirk, before the doors fly ope  
 One moment? What — with guarders row on row,  
 Gay swarms of varletry that come and go,  
 Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace  
 The plackets of, pert claimants help displace,  
 Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for, — laugh  
 At yon sleek parasite, break his own staff  
 'Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder, — why,  
 Admitted to the presence by and by,  
 Should thought of having lost these make me grieve  
 Among new joys I reach, for joys I leave?  
 — Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone,  
 Are floor-work here! — But did I let alone  
 That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule  
 Once and forever? — Floor-work? No such fool!  
 Rather, were heaven to forestall earth, I'd say  
 I, is it, must be blessed? Then, my own way  
 Bless me! give firmer arm and fleeter foot,  
 I'll thank you: but to no mad wings transmute  
 These limbs of mine — our greensward was so soft!  
 Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft:  
 We feel the bliss distinctlier, having thus  
 Engines subservient, not mixed up with us.  
 Better move palpably through heaven — nor, freed  
 Of flesh, forsooth, from space to space proceed

Mid flying synods of worlds! No! In heaven's marge  
 Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe  
 Solid with stars — the Centaur at his game,  
 Made tremulously out in hoary flame!

Life! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull  
 Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full,  
 Aside so oft; the death I fly, revealed  
 So oft a better life this life concealed,  
 And which sage, champion, martyr, through each path  
 Have hunted fearlessly — the horrid bath,  
 The crippling-irons and the fiery chair.  
 — 'T was well for them; let me become aware  
 As they, and I relinquish life, too! Let  
 What masters life disclose itself! Forget  
 Vain ordinances, I have one appeal —  
 I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel  
 — So much is truth to me. What Is, then? Since  
 One object, viewed diversely, may evince  
 Beauty and ugliness — this way attract,  
 That way repel, why gloze upon the fact?  
 Why must a single of the sides be right?  
 What bids choose this and leave the opposite?  
 Where's abstract Right for me? — in youth endued  
 With Right still present, still to be pursued,  
 Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife  
 Each with its proper law and mode of life,  
 Each to be dwelt at ease in: where, to sway  
 Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey  
 Implicit with his serf of fluttering heart,

Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start  
 Up, Brutus in the presence, then go shout  
 That some should pick the unstrung jewels out —  
 Each, well!"

And, as in moments when the Past  
 Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast  
 Himself quite through mere secondary states  
 Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,  
 Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid  
 By these; as who should pierce hill, plain, grove,  
                   glade,  
 And on into the very nucleus probe  
 That first determined there exist a globe.  
 As that were easiest, half the globe dissolved,  
 So seemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved  
 By his flesh-half's break up — the sudden swell  
 Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,  
 Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,  
 Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,  
 All qualities, in fine, recorded here,  
 Might be but modes of Time and this one sphere,  
 Urgent on these, but not of force to bind  
 Eternity, as Time — as Matter — Mind,  
 If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert  
 Their attributes within a Life: thus girt  
 With circumstance, next change beholds them cinct  
 Quite otherwise — with Good and Ill distinct,  
 Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result —  
 Contrived to render easy, difficult,

This or the other course of . . . what new bond  
 In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond  
 Its new sphere, as that course does harm or good  
 To its arrangements. Once this understood,  
 As suddenly he felt himself alone,  
 Quite out of Time and this world: all was known.  
 What made the secret of his past despair?  
 — Most imminent when he seemed most aware  
 Of his own self-sufficiency; made mad  
 By craving to expand the power he had,  
 And not new power to be expanded? — just  
 This made it; Soul on Matter being thrust,  
 Joy comes when so much Soul is wrecked in Time  
 On Matter, — let the Soul's attempt sublime  
 Matter beyond the scheme and so prevent  
 By more or less that deed's accomplishment,  
 And Sorrow follows: Sorrow how avoid?  
 Let the employer match the thing employed,  
 Fit to the finite his infinity,  
 And thus proceed forever, in degree  
 Changed but in kind the same, still limited  
 To the appointed circumstance and dead  
 To all beyond. A sphere is but a sphere —  
 Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here —  
 Since to the spirit's absoluteness all  
 Are like: now, of the present sphere we call  
 Life, are conditions — take but this among  
 Many; the body was to be so long  
 Youthful, no longer — but, since no control



Tied to that body's purposes his soul,  
 She chose to understand the body's trade  
 More than the body's self — had fain conveyed  
 Her boundless, to the body's bounded lot:  
 Hence, the soul permanent, the body not, —  
 Scarce the one minute for enjoying here,  
 The soul must needs instruct her weak compeer,  
 Run o'er its capabilities and wring  
 A joy thence, the held worth experiencing —  
 Which, far from half discovered even, — lo,  
 The minute gone, the body's power let go  
 That 's portioned to that joy's acquirement! **Broke**  
 Morning o'er earth, he yearned for all it woke —  
 From the volcano's vapor-flag, winds hoist  
 Black o'er the spread of sea, — down to the moist  
 Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,  
 Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again —  
 (The Small, a sphere as perfect as the Great  
 To the soul's absoluteness) — meditate  
 Too long on such a morning's cluster-chord  
 And the whole music it was framed afford, —  
 The chord's might half discovered, what should **pluck**  
 One string, his finger, was found palsy-struck.  
 And then no marvel if the spirit, shone  
 A saddest sight — the body lost alone  
 Through her officious proffered help, deprived  
 Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived,  
 Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip hence, —  
 Vain-gloriously were fain, for recompense,

To stem the ruin even yet, protract  
 The body's term, supply the power it lacked  
 From her infinity, compel it learn  
 These qualities were only Time's concern,  
 And body may, with spirit helping, barred —  
 Advance the same, vanquished — obtain reward,  
 Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,  
 Of Wrong make Right, and turn Ill Good below.  
 And the result is, the poor body soon  
 Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon,  
 Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.

So much was plain then, proper in the Past;  
 To be complete for, satisfy the whole  
 Series of spheres — Eternity, his soul  
 Exceeded, so was incomplete for, each  
 Single sphere — Time. But does our knowledge reach  
 No farther? Is the cloud of hindrance broke  
 But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,  
 Its loves and hates, as now when death lets soar  
 Sordello, self-sufficient as before,  
 Though during the mere space that shall elapse  
 'Twixt his enthrallment in new bonds, perhaps?  
 Must life be ever just escaped, which should  
 Have been enjoyed? — nay, might have been and would,  
 Each purpose ordered right — the soul's no whit  
 Beyond the body's purpose under it —  
 Like yonder breadth of watery heaven, a bay,  
 And that sky-space of water, ray for ray  
 And star for star, one richness where they mixed

As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,  
 Tumultuary splendors folded in  
 To die — would soul, proportioned thus, begin  
 Exciting discontent, or surelier quell  
 The body if, aspiring, it rebel?  
 But how so order life? Still brutalize  
 The soul, the sad world's way, with muffled eyes  
 To all that was before, all that shall be  
 After this sphere — and every quality  
 Save some sole and immutable Great and Good  
 And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood  
 To follow? Never may some soul see All  
 — The Great Before and After, and the Small  
 Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,  
 And take the single course prescribed before;  
 As the king-bird with ages on his plumes  
 Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?  
 But where descry the Love that shall select  
 That course? Here is a soul whom, to affect,  
 Nature has plied with all her means — from trees  
 And flowers — e'en to the Multitude! — and these  
 Decides he save or no? One word to end!"

Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend  
 And speak for you. Of a Power above you still  
 Which, utterly incomprehensible,  
 Is out of rivalry, which thus you can  
 Love, tho' unloving all conceived by man —  
 What need! And of — none the minutest duct  
 To that out-nature, naught that would instruct

And so let rivalry begin to live —  
 But of a Power its representative  
 Who, being for authority the same,  
 Communication different, should claim  
 A course, the first chose and this last revealed —  
 This Human clear, as that Divine concealed —  
 What utter need !

What has Sordello found ?

Or can his spirit go the mighty round,  
 End where poor Eglamor begun? as says  
 Old fable, the two eagles went two ways  
 About the world : where, in the midst, they met,  
 Though on a shifting waste of sand, men set  
 Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sordello found?  
 For they approach — approach — that foot's rebound .  
 Palma? No, Salinguerra though in mail ;  
 They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the veil  
 Aside — and you divine who sat there dead,  
 Under his foot the badge : still, Palma said,  
 A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,  
 Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies  
 Help from above in his extreme despair,  
 And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there  
 With short, quick, passionate cry : as Palma prest  
 In one great kiss her lips upon his breast  
 It beat. By this, the hermit-bee has stopped  
 His day's toil at Goito : the new-cropped  
 Dead vine-leaf answers, now 't is eve, he bit,  
 Twirled so, and filed all day : the mansion's fit,

God counselled for. As easy guess the word  
 That passed betwixt them and become the third  
 To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax  
 Him with one fault — so, no remembrance racks  
 Of the stone maidens and the font of stone  
 He, creeping through the crevice, leaves alone.  
 Alas, my friend — alas Sordello, whom  
 Anon they laid within that old font-tomb—  
 And, yet again, alas !

And now is 't worth

Our while bring back to mind, much less set forth  
 How Salinguerra extricates himself  
 Without Sordello? Ghibellin and Guelf  
 May fight their fiercest out? If Richard sulked  
 In durance or the Marquis paid his mulct,  
 Who cares, Sordello gone? The upshot, sure,  
 Was peace; our chief made some frank overture  
 That prospered; compliment fell thick and fast  
 On its disposer, and Taurello passed  
 With foe and friend for an outstripping soul,  
 Nine days at least. Then, — fairly reached the goal, —  
 He, by one effort, blotted the great hope  
 Out of his mind, nor further tried to cope  
 With Este, that mad evening's style, but sent  
 Away the Legate and the League, content  
 No blame at least the brothers had incurred,  
 — Despatched a message to the Monk, he heard  
 Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,  
 Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat

And ne'er spoke more, — informed the Ferrarese  
 He but retained their rule so long as these  
 Lingered in pupilage, — and last, no mode  
 Apparent else of keeping safe the road  
 From Germany direct to Lombardy  
 For Friedrich, — none, that is, to guarantee  
 The faith and promptitude of who should next  
 Obtain Sofia's dowry, — sore perplexed —  
 (Sofia being youngest of the tribe  
 Of daughters, Ecelin was wont to bribe  
 The envious magnates with — nor, since he sent  
 Henry of Egna this fair child, had Trent  
 Once failed the Kaiser's purposes — “ we lost  
 Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post —  
 Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich knock ? ”)  
 Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock  
 In pure necessity, and so destroyed  
 His slender last of chances, quite made void  
 Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes  
 Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's dreams,  
 Was sucked into Romano. And so hushed  
 He up this evening's work that, when 't was brushed  
 Somehow against by a blind chronicle  
 Which, chronicling whatever woe befell  
 Ferrara, noted this the obscure woe  
 Of “ Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo  
 Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his sire,”  
 The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could but admire  
 Which of Sofia's five was meant.

## The chaps

Of earth's dead hope were tardy to collapse,  
 Obliterated not the beautiful  
 Distinctive features at a crash — but dull  
 And duller, next year, as Guelf chiefs withdrew  
 Each to his stronghold. Then (securely too  
 Ecelin at Campese slept — close by,  
 Who likes may see him in Solagna lie  
 With cushioned head and gloved hand to denote  
 The cavalier he was) — then his heart smote  
 Young Ecelin at last! — long since adult,  
 And, save Vicenza's business, what result  
 In blood and blaze? ('t was hard to intercept  
 Sordello till his plain withdrawal.) Stept,  
 Then, its new lord on Lombardy. I' the nick  
 Of time when Ecelin and Alberic  
 Closed with Taurello, come precisely news  
 That in Verona half the souls refuse  
 Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count —  
 Have cast them from a throne they bid him mount,  
 Their Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth.  
 Ecelin flew there, and the town henceforth  
 Was wholly his — Taurello sinking back  
 From temporary station to a track  
 That suited. News received of this acquist,  
 Friedrich did come to Lombardy: who missed  
 Taurello then? Another year: they took  
 Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook  
 For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three

Of Guelfs conspired to call themselves "the Free,"  
 Opposing Alberic, — vile Bassanese, —  
 (Without Sordello!) — Ecelin at ease  
 Slaughtered them so observably, that oft  
 A little Salinguerra looked with soft  
 Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age  
 To get appointed his proud uncle's page.  
 More years passed, and that sire had dwindled down  
 To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown  
 Better through age, his parts still in repute,  
 Subtle — how else? — but hardly so astute  
 As his contemporaneous friends professed;  
 Undoubtedly a brawler: for the rest,  
 Known by each neighbor, and allowed for; let  
 Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret  
 Men who had missed their boyhood's bugbear — "trap  
 The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap  
 A battered pinion" — was the word. In fine,  
 One flap too much and Venice's marine  
 Was meddled with; no overlooking that!  
 She captured him in his Ferrara, fat  
 And florid at a banquet, more by fraud  
 Than force, to speak the truth; there's slender laud  
 Ascribed you for assisting eighty years  
 To pull his death on such a man — fate shears  
 The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine threads  
 You fritter: so, presiding his board-head,  
 The old smile, your assurance all went well  
 With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell!)



In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,  
 Made some pretence at fighting, some amends  
 For the shame done his eighty years — (apart  
 The principle, none found it in his heart  
 To be much angry with Taurello) — gained  
 Their galleys with the prize, and what remained  
 But carry him to Venice for a show?  
 — Set him, as 't were, down gently — free to go  
 His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe  
 The swallows soaring their eternal curve  
 'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens  
 Gathered importunately, fives and tens,  
 To point their children the Magnifico,  
 All but a monarch once in firm-land, go  
 His gait among them now — “it took, indeed,  
 Fully this Ecelin to supersede  
 That man,” remarked the seniors. Singular!  
 Sordello's inability to bar  
 Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought  
 About by his strange disbelief that aught  
 Was ever to be done, — this thrust the Twain  
 Under Taurello's tutelage, — whom, brain  
 And heart and hand, he forthwith in one rod  
 Indissolubly bound to baffle God  
 Who loves the world — and thus allowed the thin  
 Gray wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,  
 And massy-musclcd big-boned Alberic  
 (Mere man, alas!) to put his problem quick  
 To demonstration — prove wherever 's will

To do, there's plenty to be done, or ill  
 Or good. Anointed, then, to rend and rip —  
 Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip,  
 They plagued the world: a touch of Hildebrand  
 (So far from obsolete!) made Lombards band  
 Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,  
 And saving Milan win the world's applause.  
 Ecelin perished: and I think grass grew  
 Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù  
 By San Zenon where Alberic in turn  
 Saw his exasperated captors burn  
 Seven children and their mother; then, regaled  
 So far, tied on to a wild horse, was traile'd  
 To death through rounce and bramble-bush. **I take**  
 God's part and testify that mid the brake  
 Wild o'er his castle on the pleasant knoll,  
 You hear its oue tower left, a belfry, toll —  
 The earthquake spared it last year, laying flat  
 The modern church beneath, — no harm in that!  
 Cherups the contumacious grasshopper,  
 Rustles the lizzard and the cushats chirre  
 Above the ravage: there, at deep of day  
 A week since, heard I the old Canon say  
 He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst  
 And Alberic's huge skeleton unheard  
 Only five years' ago. He added, "June's  
 The month for carding off our first cocoons  
 The silkworms fabricate" — a double news,  
 Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. **Choose!**

And Naddo gone, all's gone; not Eglamor!  
 Believe, I knew the face I waited for,  
 A guest my spirit of the golden courts!  
 O strange to see how, despite ill-reports,  
 Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained  
 Its joyous look of love! Suns waxed and waned,  
 And still my spirit held an upward flight,  
 Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light  
 More and more gorgeous — ever that face there  
 The last admitted! crossed, too, with some care  
 As perfect triumph were not sure for all,  
 But, on a few, enduring damp must fall,  
 — A transient struggle, haply a painful sense  
 Of the inferior nature's clinging — whence  
 Slight starting tears easily wiped away,  
 Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play  
 Of irrepressible admiration — not  
 Aspiring, all considered, to their lot  
 Who ever, just as they prepare ascend  
 Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend  
 Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,  
 That upturned fervid face and hair put back!

Is there no more to say? He of the rhymes —  
 Many a tale, of this retreat betimes,  
 Was born: Sordello die at once for men?  
 The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen  
 Telling how *Sordello Prince Visconti* saved  
 Mantua, and elsewhere notably behaved —  
 Who thus, by fortune's ordering events.

Passed with posterity, to all intents,  
 For just the God he never could become.  
 As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never dumb  
 In praise of him: while what he should have been,  
 Could be, and was not — the one step too mean  
 For him to take, — we suffer at this day  
 Because of: Ecelin had pushed away  
 Its chance ere Dante could arrive and take  
 That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake:  
 He did much — but Sordello's chance was gone.  
 Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,  
 Apollo had been compassed — 't was a fit  
 He wished should go to him, not he to it  
 — As one content to merely be supposed  
 Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed  
 Really at home — one who was chiefly glad  
 To have achieved the few real deeds he had,  
 Because that way assured they were not worth  
 Doing, so spared from doing them henceforth —  
 A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes  
 Never itself, itself: had he embraced  
 Their cause then, men had plucked Hesperian fruit  
 And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot  
 All he was anxious to appear, but scarce  
 Solicitous to be. A sorry farce  
 Such life is, after all! cannot I say  
 He lived for some one better thing? this way. —  
 Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill  
 By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,

Morning just up, higher and higher runs  
 A child barefoot and rosy. She! the sun's  
 On the square castle's inner-court's low wall  
 Like the chine of some extinct animal  
 Half turned to earth and flowers; and through the  
     haze

(Save where some slender patches of gray maize  
 Are to be overleaped) that boy has crost  
 The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost  
 Matting the balm and mountain camomile.  
 Up and up goes he, singing all the while  
 Some unintelligible words to beat  
 The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet,  
 So worsted is he at "the few fine locks  
 Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sunblanched the livelong summer," — all that's left  
 Of the Goito lay! And thus bereft,  
 Sleep and forget, Sordello! In effect  
 He sleeps, the feverish poet — I suspect  
 Not utterly companionless; but, friends,  
 Wake up; the ghost's gone, and the story ends  
 I'd fain hope, sweetly — seeing, peri or ghoul,  
 That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,  
 Evil or good, judicious authors think,  
 According as they vanish in a stink  
 Or in a perfume. Friends, be frank! ye snuff  
 Civet, I warrant. Really? Like enough!  
 Merely the savour's rareness; any nose  
 May ravage with impunity a rose:

Rife a musk-pod and 't will ache like yours;  
I'd tell you that same pungency insures  
An after-gust — but that were overbold.  
Who would has heard Sordello's story told.







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