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POETICAL WORKS

SELECTIONS
FROM
THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING

SECOND SERIES

New Edition

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A WALL.

I

O THE old wall here ! How I could pass
Life in a long Midsummer day,
My feet confined to a plot of grass,
My eyes from a wall not once away !

II

And lush and lithe do the creepers clothe
Yon wall I watch, with a wealth of green :
Its bald red bricks draped, nothing loth,
In lappets of tangle they laugh between.

III

Now, what is it makes pulsate the robe ?
Why tremble the sprays ? What life o'erbrims
The body,—the house, no eye can probe,—
Divined as, beneath a robe, the limbs ?

IV

And there again ! But my heart may guess
Who tripped behind ; and she sang perhaps :
So, the old wall throbbled, and its life's excess
Died out and away in the leafy wraps.

V

Wall upon wall are between us : life
And song should away from heart to heart !
I—prison-bird, with a ruddy strife
At breast, and a lip whence storm-notes start—

VI

Hold on, hope hard in the subtle thing
 That 's spirit : though cloistered fast, soar free ;
 Account as wood, brick, stone, this ring
 Of the rueful neighbours, and—forth to thee !



APPARITIONS.

I

SUCH a starved bank of moss
 Till, that May-morn,
 Blue ran the flash across :
 Violets were born !

II

Sky—what a scowl of cloud
 Till, near and far,
 Ray on ray split the shroud :
 Splendid, a star !

III

World—how it walled about
 Life with disgrace
 Till God's own smile came out :
 That was thy face !



NATURAL MAGIC.

I

ALL I can say is—I saw it !
 The room was as bare as your hand.
 I locked in the swarth little lady,—I swear,
 From the head to the foot of her—well, quite as bare !

“No Nautch shall cheat me,” said I, “taking my stand
 “At this bolt which I draw !” And this bolt—I with-
 draw it,
 And there laughs the lady, not bare, but embowered
 With—who knows what verdure, o’erfruited, o’erflowered?
 Impossible ! Only—I saw it !

II

All I can sing is—I feel it !
 This life was as blank as that room ;
 I let you pass in here. Precaution, indeed ?
 Walls, ceiling and floor,—not a chance for a weed !
 Wide opens the entrance : where ’s cold now, where ’s
 gloom ?
 No May to sow seed here, no June to reveal
 Behold you enshrined in these blooms of your bringing,
 These fruits of your bearing—nay, birds of your winging !
 A fairy-tale ! Only—I feel it !



MAGICAL NATURE.

I

FLOWER—I never fancied, jewel—I profess you !
 Bright I see and soft I feel the outside of a flower.
 Save but glow inside and—jewel, I should guess you,
 Dim to sight and rough to touch : the glory is the dower.

II

You, forsooth, a flower ? Nay, my love, a jewel—
 Jewel at no mercy of a moment in your prime !
 Time may fray the flower-face : kind be time or cruel,
 Jewel, from each facet, flash your laugh at time !

GARDEN FANCIES.

I. THE FLOWER'S NAME.

I

HERE 's the garden she walked across,
 Arm in my arm, such a short while since :
 Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
 Hinders the hinges and makes them wince !
 She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
 As back with that murmur the wicket swung ;
 For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
 To feed and forget it the leaves among.

II

Down this side of the gravel-walk
 She went while her robe's edge brushed the box :
 And here she paused in her gracious talk
 To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.
 Roses, ranged in valiant row,
 I will never think that she passed you by !
 She loves you noble roses, I know ;
 But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie !

III

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
 Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim ;
 Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
 Its soft meandering Spanish name.
 What a name ! Was it love or praise ?
 Speech half-asleep or song half-awake ?
 I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
 Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV

Roses,—if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase.
But do not detain me now ; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

V

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
Stay as you are and be loved for ever !
Bud, if I kiss you 't is that you blow not,
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never !
For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle ;
Is not the dear mark still to be seen ?

VI

Where I find her not, beauties vanish ;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee ;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June 's twice June since she breathed it with me ?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest footfall !
—Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—
Roses, you are not so fair after all !

II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

I

Plague take all your pedants, say I !
 He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
 Centuries back was so good as to die,
 Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land ;
 This, that was a book in its time,
 Printed on paper and bound in leather,
 Last month in the white of a matin-prime
 Just when the birds sang all together.

II

Into the garden I brought it to read,
 And under the arbute and laurustine
 Read it, so help me grace in my need,
 From title-page to closing line.
 Chapter on chapter did I count,
 As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge ;
 Added up the mortal amount,
 And then proceeded to my revenge.

III

Yonder 's a plum-tree with a crevice
 An owl would build in, were he but sage ;
 For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
 In a castle of the middle age,
 Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;
 When he 'd be private, there might he spend
 Hours alone in his lady's chamber :
 Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

IV

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
 —At the bottom, I knew, rain-drippings stagnate ;

Next, a handful of blossoms I plucked
 To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate ;
 Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
 Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis ;
 Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
 Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

V

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
 And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
 A spider had spun his web across,
 And sat in the midst with arms akimbo :
 So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
 And, *de profundis, accentibus latīs,*
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake ;
 And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
 With all the binding all of a blister,
 And great blue spots where the ink has run,
 And reddish streaks that wink and glisten
 O'er the page so beautifully yellow :
 Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks !
 Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow ?
 Here 's one stuck in his chapter six !

VII

How did he like it when the live creatures
 Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
 And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
 Came in, each one, for his right of trover ?
 —When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
 Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
 And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
 As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet ?

VIII

All that life and fun and romping,
 All that frisking and twisting and coupling,
 While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping
 And clasps were cracking and covers suppling !
 As if you had carried sour John Knox
 To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or Munich,
 Fastened him into a front-row box,
 And danced off the ballet with trousers and tunic.

IX

Come, old martyr ! What, torment enough is it ?
 Back to my room shall you take your sweet self.
 Good-bye, mother-beetle ; husband-eft, *sufficit* !
 See the snug niche I have made on my shelf !
 A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,
 Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be gay,
 And with E. on each side, and F. right over you,
 Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day !



IN THREE DAYS.

I

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 !

II

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 ?

III

O loaded curls, release your store
 Of warmth and scent, as once before
 The tingling hair did, lights and darks
 Outbreaking 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 embrowns the gold !

IV

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 teem with change untried,
 " With chance not easily defied,
 " With an end somewhere undescried."
 No fear !—or, if a fear be born
 This minute, fear 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 !



THE LOST MISTRESS.

I

ALL 's over, then : does truth sound bitter
 As one at first believes?
 Hark, 't is the sparrows' good-night twitter
 About your cottage eaves !

II

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
 I noticed that, to-day ;
 One day more bursts them open fully :
 You know the red turns grey.

III

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?
 May I take your hand in mine?
 Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest
 Keep much that I resign.

IV

Each glance of the eye so bright and black,
 Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—
 Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
 Though it stay in my soul for ever,—

V

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
 Or only a thought stronger ;
 I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
 Or so very little longer !



ONE WAY OF LOVE.

I

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.

II

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!

III

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? 'T is well!
 Lose who may—I still can say,
 Those who win heaven, blest are they!



RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI.

I

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives
 First, when he visits, last, too, when he leaves
 The world; and, vainly favoured, it repays
 The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze

By no change of its large calm front of snow.
 And, underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,
 He cannot have perceived, that changes ever
 At his approach ; and, in the lost endeavour
 To live his life, has parted, one by one,
 With all a flower's true graces, for the grace
 Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
 With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.
 Men nobly call by many a name the Mount
 As over many a land of theirs its large
 Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe
 Is reared, and still with old names, fresh names vie,
 Each to its proper praise and own account :
 Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively.

II

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
 Across the waters to this twilight nook,
 —The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook !

III

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed ?
 Go !—saying ever as thou dost proceed,
 That I, French Rudel, choose for my device
 A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
 Before its idol. See ! These inexpert
 And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
 The woven picture ; 't is a woman's skill
 Indeed ; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
 Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed
 On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees
 On my flower's breast as on a platform broad :
 But, as the flower's concern is not for these
 But solely for the sun, so men applaud
 In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
 But to the East—the East ! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear !

NUMPHOLEPTOS.

STILL you stand, still you listen, still you smile !
 Still melts your moonbeam through me, white awhile,
 Softening, sweetening, till sweet and soft
 Increase so round this heart of mine, that oft
 I could believe your moonbeam-smile has past
 The pallid limit and, transformed at last,
 Lies, sunlight and salvation—warms the soul
 It sweetens, softens ! Would you pass that goal,
 Gain love's birth at the limit's happier verge,
 And, where an iridescence lurks, but urge
 The hesitating pallor on to prime
 Of dawn !—true blood-streaked, sun-warmth, action-time,
 By heart-pulse ripened to a ruddy glow
 Of gold above my clay—I scarce should know
 From gold's self, thus suffused ! For gold means love.
 What means the sad slow silver smile above
 My clay but pity, pardon?—at the best,
 But acquiescence that I take my rest,
 Contented to be clay, while in your heaven
 The sun reserves love for the Spirit-Seven
 Companioning God's throne they lamp before,
 —Leaves earth a mute waste only wandered o'er
 By that pale soft sweet dispassioned moon
 Which smiles me slow forgiveness ! Such, the boon
 I beg ? Nay, dear, submit to this—just this
 Supreme endeavour ! As my lips now kiss
 Your feet, my arms convulse your shrouding robe,
 My eyes acquainted with the dust, dare probe
 Your eyes above for—what, if born, would blind
 Mine with redundant bliss, as flash may find
 The inert nerve, sting awake the palsied limb,
 Bid with life's ecstasy sense overbrim

And such back death in the resurging joy—
So grant me—love, whole, sole, without alloy !

Vainly ! The promise withers ! I employ
Lips, arms, eyes, pray the prayer which finds the word,
Make the appeal which must be felt, not heard,
And none the more is changed your calm regard :
Rather, its sweet and soft grow harsh and hard—
Forbearance, then repulsion, then disdain.
Avert the rest ! I rise, see !—make, again
Once more, the old departure for some track
Untried yet through a world which brings me back
Ever thus fruitlessly to find your feet,
To fix your eyes, to pray the soft and sweet
Which smile there—take from his new pilgrimage
Your outcast, once your inmate, and assuage
With love—not placid pardon now—his thirst
For a mere drop from out the ocean erst
He drank at ! Well, the quest shall be renewed.
Fear nothing ! Though I linger, unembued
With any drop, my lips thus close. I go !
So did I leave you, I have found you so,
And doubtlessly, if fated to return,
So shall my pleading persevere and earn
Pardon—not love—in that same smile, I learn,
And lose the meaning of, to learn once more,
Vainly !

What fairy track do I explore ?
What magic hall return to, like the gem
Centuply-angled o'er a diadem ?
You dwell there, hearted ; from your midmost home
Rays forth—through that fantastic world I roam
Ever—from centre to circumference,
Shaft upon coloured shaft : this crimsons thence,
That purples out its precinct through the waste.
Surely I had your sanction when I faced,

Fared forth upon that untried yellow ray
Whence I retrack my steps? They end to-day
Where they began, before your feet, beneath
Your eyes, your smile : the blade is shut in sheath,
Fire quenched in flint ; irradiation, late
Triumphant through the distance, finds its fate,
Merged in your blank pure soul, alike the source
And tomb of that prismatic glow : divorce
Absolute, all-conclusive ! Forth I fared,
Treading the lambent flamelet : little cared
If now its flickering took the topaz tint,
If now my dull-caked path gave sulphury hint
Of subterranean rage—no stay nor stint
To yellow, since you sanctioned that I bathe,
Burnish me, soul and body, swim and swathe
In yellow licence. Here I reek suffused
With crocus, saffron, orange, as I used
With scarlet, purple, every dye o' the bow
Born of the storm-cloud. As before, you show
Scarce recognition, no approval, some
Mistrust, more wonder at a man become
Monstrous in garb, nay—flesh disguised as well,
Through his adventure. Whatsoe'er befell,
I followed, wheresoe'er it wound, that vein
You authorised should leave your whiteness, stain
Earth's sombre stretch beyond your midmost place
Of vantage,—trode that tinct whereof the trace
On garb and flesh repel you ! Yes, I plead
Your own permission—your command, indeed,
That who would worthily retain the love
Must share the knowledge shrined those eyes above,
Go boldly on adventure, break through bounds
O' the quintessential whiteness that surrounds
Your feet, obtain experience of each tinge
That bickers forth to broaden out, impinge
Plainer his foot its pathway all distinct

From every other. Ah, the wonder, linked
 With fear, as exploration manifests
 What agency it was first tipped the crests
 Of unnamed wildflower, soon protruding grew
 Portentous 'mid the sands, as when his hue
 Betrays him and the burrowing snake gleams through ;
 Till, last . . . but why parade more shame and pain ?
 Are not the proofs upon me ? Here again
 I pass into your presence, I receive
 Your smile of pity, pardon, and I leave . . .
 No, not this last of times I leave you, mute,
 Submitted to my penance, so my foot
 May yet again adventure, tread, from source
 To issue, one more ray of rays which course
 Each other, at your bidding, from the sphere
 Silver and sweet, their birthplace, down that drear
 Dark of the world,—you promise shall return
 Your pilgrim jewelled as with drops o' the urn
 The rainbow paints from, and no smatch at all
 Of ghastliness at edge of some cloud-pall
 Heaven covers before, as earth awaits the fall
 O' the bolt and flash of doom. Who trusts your word
 Tries the adventure : and returns—absurd
 As frightful—in that sulphur-steeped disguise
 Mocking the priestly cloth-of-gold, sole prize
 The arch-heretic was wont to bear away
 Until he reached the burning. No, I say :
 No fresh adventure ! No more seeking love
 At end of toil, and finding, calm above
 My passion, the old statuesque regard,
 The sad petrific smile !

O you—less hard
 And hateful than mistaken and obtuse
 Unreason of a she-intelligence !
 You very woman with the pert pretence

To match the male achievement ! Like enough !
 Ay, you were easy victors, did the rough
 Straightway efface itself to smooth, the gruff
 Grind down and grow a whisper,—did man's truth
 Subdue, for sake of chivalry and ruth,
 Its rapier-edge to suit the bulrush-spear
 Womanly falsehood fights with ! O that ear
 All fact pricks rudely, that thrice-superfine
 Femininity of sense, with right divine
 To waive all process, take result stain-free
 From out the very muck wherein . . .

Ah me !

The true slave's querulous outbreak ! All the rest
 Be resignation ! Forth at your behest
 I fare. Who knows but this—the crimson-quest—
 May deepen to a sunrise, not decay
 To that cold sad sweet smile ?—which I obey.

—♦—

APPEARANCES.

I

AND so you found that poor room dull,
 Dark, hardly to your taste, my Dear ?
 Its features seemed unbeautiful :
 But this I know—'t was there, not here,
 You plighted troth to me, the word
 Which—ask that poor room how it heard !

II

And this rich room obtains your praise
 Unqualified,—so bright, so fair,
 So all whereat perfection stays ?
 Ay, but remember—here, not there,
 The other word was spoken ! Ask
 This rich room how you dropped the mask !

THE WORST OF IT.

I

WOULD it were I had been false, not you !
 I that am nothing, not you that are all :
 I, never the worse for a touch or two
 On my speckled hide ; not you, the pride
 Of the day, my swan, that a first fleck's fall
 On her wonder of white must unswan, undo !

II

I had dipped in life's struggle and, out again,
 Bore specks of it here, there, easy to see,
 When I found my swan and the cure was plain ;
 The dull turned bright as I caught your white
 On my bosom : you saved me—saved in vain
 If you ruined yourself, and all through me !

III

Yes, all through the speckled beast I am,
 Who taught you to stoop ; you gave me yourself,
 And bound your soul by the vows which damn :
 Since on better thought you break, as you ought,
 Vows—words, no angel set down, some elf
 Mistook,—for an oath, an epigram !

IV

Yes, might I judge you, here were my heart,
 And a hundred its like, to treat as you pleased !
 I choose to be yours, for my proper part,
 Yours, leave me or take, or mar or make ;
 If I acquiesce, why should you be teased
 With the conscience-prick and the memory smart ?

V

But what will God say? Oh, my Sweet,
 Think, and be sorry you did this thing!
 Though earth were unworthy to feel your feet,
 There's a heaven above may deserve your love:
 Should you forfeit heaven for a snapt gold ring
 And a promise broke, were it just or meet?

VI

And I to have tempted you! I, who tried
 Your soul, no doubt, till it sank! Unwise,
 I loved and was lowly, loved and aspired,
 Loved, grieving or glad, till I made you mad
 And you meant to have hated and despised—
 Whereas, you deceived me nor inquired!

VII

She, ruined? How? No heaven for her?
 Crowns to give, and none for the brow
 That looked like marble and smelt like myrrh?
 Shall the robe be worn, and the palm-branch borne,
 And she go graceless, she graced now
 Beyond all saints, as themselves aver?

VIII

Hardly! That must be understood!
 The earth is your place of penance, then;
 And what will it prove? I desire your good,
 But, plot as I may, I can find no way
 How a blow should fall, such as falls on men,
 Nor prove too much for your womanhood.

IX

It will come, I suspect, at the end of life,
 When you walk alone, and review the past;
 And I, who so long shall have done with strife,

And journeyed my stage and earned my wage
 And retired as was right,—I am called at last
 When the devil stabs you, to lend the knife.

X

He stabs for the minute of trivial wrong,
 Nor the other hours are able to save,
 The happy, that lasted my whole life long :
 For a promise broke, not for first words spoke,
 The true, the only, that turn my grave
 To a blaze of joy and a crash of song.

XI

Witness beforehand ! Off I trip
 On a safe path gay through the flowers you flung :
 My very name made great by your lip,
 And my heart a-glow with the good I know
 Of a perfect year when we both were young,
 And I tasted the angels' fellowship.

XII

And witness, moreover . . . Ah, but wait
 I spy the loop whence an arrow shoots !
 It may be for yourself, when you meditate,
 That you grieve—for slain ruth, murdered truth :
 " Though falsehood escape in the end, what boots ?
 " How truth would have triumphed ! "—you sigh too
 late.

XIII

Ay, who would have triumphed like you, I say !
 Well, it is lost now ; well, you must bear,
 Abide and grow fit for a better day.
 You should hardly grudge, could I be your judge !
 But hush ! For you, can be no despair :
 There 's amends : 't is a secret : hope and pray !

XIV

For I was true at least—oh, true enough !
 And, Dear, truth is not as good as it seems !
 Commend me to conscience ! Idle stuff !
 Much help is in mine, as I mope and pine,
 And skulk through day, and scowl in my dreams
 At my swan's obtaining the crow's rebuff.

XV

Men tell me of truth now—" False ! " I cry :
 Of beauty—" A mask, friend ! Look beneath !"
 We take our own method, the devil and I,
 With pleasant and fair and wise and rare :
 And the best we wish to what lives, is—death ;
 Which even in wishing, perhaps we lie !

XVI

Far better commit a fault and have done—
 As you, Dear !—for ever ; and choose the pure,
 And look where the healing waters run,
 And strive and strain to be good again,
 And a place in the other world ensure,
 All glass and gold, with God for its sun.

XVII

Misery ! What shall I say or do ?
 I cannot advise, or, at least, persuade.
 Most like, you are glad you deceived me—rue
 No whit of the wrong : you endured too long,
 Have done no evil and want no aid,
 Will live the old life out and chance the new.

XVIII

And your sentence is written all the same,
 And I can do nothing,—pray, perhaps :
 But somehow the world pursues its game,—

If I pray, if I curse,—for better or worse :
 And my faith is torn to a thousand scraps,
 And my heart feels ice while my words breathe flame.

XIX

Dear, I look from my hiding-place.
 Are you still so fair? Have you still the eyes?
 Be happy! Add but the other grace,
 Be good! Why want what the angels vaunt?
 I knew you once: but in Paradise,
 If we meet, I will pass nor turn my face.



TOO LATE.

I

HERE was I with my arm and heart
 And brain, all yours for a word, a want
 Put into a look—just a look, your part,—
 While mine, to repay it . . . vainest vaunt,
 Were the woman, that 's dead, alive to hear,
 Had her lover, that 's lost, love's proof to show!
 But I cannot show it; you cannot speak
 From the churchyard neither, miles removed,
 Though I feel by a pulse within my cheek,
 Which stabs and stops, that the woman I loved
 Needs help in her grave and finds none near,
 Wants warmth from the heart which sends it—so!

II

Did I speak once angrily, all the drear days
 You lived, you woman I loved so well,
 Who married the other? Blame or praise,
 Where was the use then? Time would tell,
 And the end declare what man for you,
 What woman for me was the choice of God.

But, Edith dead ! no doubting more !
 I used to sit and look at my life
 As it rippled and ran till, right before,
 A great stone stopped it : oh, the strife
 Of waves at the stone some devil threw
 In my life's midcurrent, thwarting God

III

But either I thought, " They may churn and chide
 " Awhile,—my waves which came for their joy
 " And found this horrible stone full-tide :
 " Yet I see just a thread escape, deploy
 " Through the evening-country, silent and safe,
 " And it suffers no more till it finds the sea."
 Or else I would think, " Perhaps some night
 " When new things happen, a meteor-ball
 " May slip through the sky in a line of light,
 " And earth breathe hard, and landmarks fall,
 " And my waves no longer champ nor chafe,
 " Since a stone will have rolled from its place : let
 be !"

IV

But, dead ! All 's done with : wait who may,
 Watch and wear and wonder who will.
 Oh, my whole life that ends to-day !
 Oh, my soul's sentence, sounding still,
 " The woman is dead, that was none of his ;
 " And the man, that was none of hers, may go !"
 There 's only the past left : worry that !
 Wreak, like a bull, on the empty coat,
 Rage, its late wearer is laughing at !
 Tear the collar to rags, having missed his throat ;
 Strike stupidly on—" This, this and this,
 " Where I would that a bosom received the blow !"

V

I ought to have done more : once my speech,
 And once your answer, and there, the end,
 And Edith was henceforth out of reach !
 Why, men do more to deserve a friend,
 Be rid of a foe, get rich, grow wise,
 Nor, folding their arms, stare fate in the face.
 Why, better even have burst like a thief
 And borne you away to a rock for us two,
 In a moment's horror, bright, bloody and brief,
 Then changed to myself again—" I slew
 " Myself in that moment ; a ruffian lies
 " Somewhere : your slave, see, born in his place ! "

VI

What did the other do ? You be judge !
 Look at us, Edith ! Here are we both !
 Give him his six whole years : I grudge
 None of the life with you, nay, I loathe
 Myself that I grudged his start in advance
 Of me who could overtake and pass.
 But, as if he loved you ! No, not he,
 Nor anyone else in the world, 't is plain :
 Who ever heard that another, free
 As I, young, prosperous, sound and sane,
 Poured life out, proffered it—" Half a glance
 " Of those eyes of yours and I drop the glass ! "

VII

Handsome, were you ? 'T is more than they held,
 More than they said ; I was 'ware and watched :
 I was the 'scapegrace, this rat belled
 The cat, this fool got his whiskers scratched :
 The others ? No head that was turned, no heart
 Broken, my lady, assure yourself !
 Each soon made his mind up ; so and so
 Married a dancer, such and such

Stole his friend's wife, stagnated slow,
 Or maundered, unable to do as much,
 And muttered of peace where he had no part :
 While, hid in the closet, laid on the shelf,—

VIII

On the whole, you were let alone, I think !
 So, you looked to the other, who acquiesced,
 My rival, the proud man,—prize your pink
 Of poets ! A poet he was ! I've guessed :
 He rhymed you his rubbish nobody read,
 Loved you and doved you—did not I laugh !
 There was a prize ! But we both were tried.
 Oh, heart of mine, marked broad with her mark,
Tekel, found wanting, set aside,
 Scorned ! See, I bleed these tears in the dark
 Till comfort come and the last be bled :
 He ? He is tagging your epitaph.

IX

If it would only come over again !
 —Time to be patient with me, and probe
 This heart till you punctured the proper vein,
 Just to learn what blood is : twitch the robe
 From that blank lay-figure your fancy draped,
 Prick the leathern heart till the—verses spirt !
 And late it was easy ; late, you walked
 Where a friend might meet you ; Edith's name
 Arose to one's lip if one laughed or talked ;
 If I heard good news, you heard the same ;
 When I woke, I knew that your breath escaped ;
 I could bide my time, keep alive, alert.

X

And alive I shall keep and long, you will see !
 I knew a man, was kicked like a dog
 From gutter to cesspool ; what cared he
 So long as he picked from the filth his prog ?

He saw youth, beauty and genius die,
 And jollily lived to his hundredth year.
 But I will live otherwise : none of such life !
 At once I begin as I mean to end.
 Go on with the world, get gold in its strife,
 Give your spouse the slip and betray your friend !
 There are two who decline, a woman and I,
 And enjoy our death in the darkness here.

XI

I liked that way you had with your curls
 Wound to a ball in a net behind :
 Your cheek was chaste as a quaker-girl's
 And your mouth—there was never, to my mind,
 Such a funny mouth, for it would not shut ;
 And the dented chin too—what a chin !
 There were certain ways when you spoke, some words
 That you know you never could pronounce :
 You were thin, however ; like a bird's
 Your hand seemed—some would say, the pounce
 Of a scaly-footed hawk—all but !
 The world was right when it called you thin.

XII

But I turn my back on the world : I take
 Your hand, and kneel, and lay to my lips.
 Bid me live, Edith ! Let me slake
 Thirst at your presence ! Fear no slips !
 'Tis your slave shall pay, while his soul endures,
 Full due, love's whole debt, *summum jus*.
 My queen shall have high observance, planned
 Courtship made perfect, no least line
 Crossed without warrant. There you stand,
 Warm too, and white too : would this wine
 Had washed all over that body of yours,
 Ere I drank it, and you down with it, thus !

BIFURCATION.

WE were two lovers ; let me lie by her,
 My tomb beside her tomb. On hers inscribe—
 “ I loved him ; but my reason bade prefer
 “ Duty to love, reject the tempter’s bribe
 “ Of rose and lily when each path diverged,
 “ And either I must pace to life’s far end
 “ As love should lead me, or, as duty urged,
 “ Plod the worn causeway arm in arm with friend.
 “ So, truth turned falsehood : ‘ How I loathe a flower,
 “ ‘ How prize the pavement ! ’ still caressed his ear—
 “ The deafish friend’s—through life’s day, hour by hour,
 “ As he laughed (coughing) ‘ Ay, it would appear ! ’
 “ But deep within my heart of hearts there hid
 “ Ever the confidence, amends for all,
 “ That heaven repairs what wrong earth’s journey did,
 “ When love from life-long exile comes at call.
 “ Duty and love, one Broadway, were the best—
 “ Who doubts ? But one or other was to choose.
 “ I chose the darkling half, and wait the rest
 “ In that new world where light and darkness fuse.”

Inscribe on mine—“ I loved her : love’s track lay
 “ O’er sand and pebble, as all travellers know.
 “ Duty led through a smiling country, gay
 “ With greensward where the rose and lily blow.
 “ ‘ Our roads are diverse : farewell, love ! ’ said she :
 “ ‘ T is duty I abide by : homely sward
 “ ‘ And not the rock-rough picturesque for me !
 “ ‘ Above, where both roads join, I wait reward.
 “ ‘ Be you as constant to the path whereon
 “ ‘ I leave you planted ! ’ But man needs must move,
 “ Keep moving—whither, when the star is gone
 “ Whereby he steps secure nor strays from love ?

"No stone but I was tripped by, stumbling-block
 "But brought me to confusion. Where I fell,
 "There I lay flat, if moss disguised the rock :
 "Thence, if flint pierced, I rose and cried ' All 's well !
 "'Duty be mine to tread in that high sphere
 "'Where love from duty ne'er disparts, I trust,
 "'And two halves make that whole, whereof—since
 here
 "'One must suffice a man—why, this one must !'"

Inscribe each tomb thus : then, some sage acquaint
 The simple—which holds sinner, which holds saint !



A LIKENESS.

SOME people hang portraits up
 In a room where they dine or sup :
 And the wife clinks tea-things under,
 And her cousin, he stirs his cup,
 Asks, "Who was the lady, I wonder ?"
 "'T is a daub John bought at a sale,"
 Quoth the wife,—looks black as thunder.
 "What a shade beneath her nose !
 "Snuff-taking, I suppose,—"
 Adds the cousin, while John's corns ail.

 Or else, there 's no wife in the case,
 But the portrait 's queen of the place,
 Alone 'mid the other spoils
 Of youth,—masks, gloves and foils,
 And pipe-sticks, rose, cherry-tree, jasmine,
 And the long whip, the tandem-lasher,
 And the cast from a fist, ("not, alas ! mine,
 "But my master's, the Tipton Slasher")
 And the cards where pistol-balls mark ace,
 And a satin shoe used for cigar-case,

And the chamois-horns ("shot in the Chablais")
 And prints—Rarey drumming on Cruiser,
 And Sayers, our champion, the bruiser,
 And the little edition of Rabelais :
 Where a friend, with both hands in his pockets
 May saunter up close to examine it,
 And remark a good deal of Jane Lamb in it,
 "But the eyes are half out of their sockets ;
 "That hair's not so bad, where the gloss is,
 "But they've made the girl's nose a proboscis :
 "Jane Lamb, that we danced with at Vichy !
 "What, is not she Jane ? Then, who is she ?"

All that I own is a print,
 An etching, a mezzotint ;
 'T is a study, a fancy, a fiction,
 Yet a fact (take my conviction)
 Because it has more than a hint
 Of a certain face, I never
 Saw elsewhere touch or trace of
 In women I've seen the face of :
 Just an etching, and, so far, clever.

I keep my prints an imbroglio,
 Fifty in one portfolio.
 When somebody tries my claret,
 We turn round chairs to the fire,
 Chirp over days in a garret,
 Chuckle o'er increase of salary,
 Taste the good fruits of our leisure,
 Talk about pencil and lyre,
 And the National Portrait Gallery :
 Then I exhibit my treasure.
 After we've turned over twenty,
 And the debt of wonder my crony owes
 Is paid to my Marc Antonios,
 He stops me—" *Festina. lentè !*

“What’s that sweet thing there, the etching?”
 How my waistcoat-strings want stretching,
 How my cheeks grow red as tomatos,
 How my heart leaps ! But hearts, after leaps, ache.

“By the by, you must take, for a keepsake,
 “That other, you praised, of Volpato’s.”
 The fool ! would he try a flight further and say—
 He never saw, never before to-day,
 What was able to take his breath away,
 A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
 With the dream of, meet death with,—why, I’ll not
 engage
 But that, half in a rapture and half in a rage,
 I should toss him the thing’s self—“’T is only a
 duplicate,
 “A thing of no value ! Take it, I supplicate !”



MAY AND DEATH.

I

I WISH that when you died last May,
 Charles, there had died along with you
 Three parts of spring’s delightful things ;
 Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

II

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps !
 There must be many a pair of friends
 Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
 Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

III

So, for their sake, be May still May !
 Let their new time, as mine of old,
 Do all it did for me : I bid
 Sweet sights and sounds throng manifold.

IV

Only, one little sight, one plant,
 Woods have in May, that starts up green
 Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
 Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves between,—

V

That, they might spare ; a certain wood
 Might miss the plant ; their loss were small :
 But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,
 Its drop comes from my heart, that 's all.

*A FORGIVENESS.*

I AM indeed the personage you know.
 As for my wife,—what happened long ago—
 You have a right to question me, as I
 Am bound to answer.

(“ Son, a fit reply ! ”

The monk half spoke, half ground through his clenched
 teeth,
 At the confession-grate I knelt beneath.)

Thus then all happened, Father ! Power and place
 I had as still I have. I ran life's race,
 With the whole world to see, as only strains
 His strength some athlete whose prodigious gains
 Of good appal him : happy to excess,—
 Work freely done should balance happiness
 Fully enjoyed ; and, since beneath my roof
 Housed she who made home heaven, in heaven's behoof
 I went forth every day, and all day long
 Worked for the world. Look, how the labourer's song
 Cheers him ! Thus sang my soul, at each sharp throe
 Of labouring flesh and blood—“ She loves me so ! ”

One day, perhaps such song so knit the nerve
 That work grew play and vanished. "I deserve
 "Haply my heaven an hour before the time!"
 I laughed, as silverly the clockhouse-chime
 Surprised me passing through the postern-gate
 —Not the main entry where the menials wait
 And wonder why the world's affairs allow
 The master sudden leisure. That was how
 I took the private garden-way for once.

Forth from the alcove, I saw start, ensconce
 Himself behind the porphyry vase, a man.

My fancies in the natural order ran :
 "A spy,—perhaps a foe in ambushade,—
 "A thief,—more like, a sweetheart of some maid
 "Who pitched on the alcove for tryst perhaps."

"Stand there!" I bid.

Whereat my man but wraps

His face the closelier with uplifted arm
 Whereon the cloak lies, strikes in blind alarm
 This and that pedestal as,—stretch and stoop,—
 Now in, now out of sight, he thrids the group
 Of statues, marble god and goddess ranged
 Each side the pathway, till the gate's exchanged
 For safety: one step thence, the street, you know!

Thus far I followed with my gaze. Then, slow,
 Near on admiringly, I breathed again,
 And—back to that last fancy of the train—
 "A danger risked for hope of just a word
 "With—which of all my nest may be the bird
 "This poacher covets for her plumage, pray?
 "Carmen? Juana? Carmen seems too gay
 "For such adventure, while Juana's grave
 "—Would scorn the folly. I applaud the knave!

“ He had the eye, could single from my brood
 “ His proper fledgeling !”

As I turned, there stood
 In face of me, my wife stone-still stone-white.
 Whether one bound had brought her,—at first sight
 Of what she judged the encounter, sure to be
 Next moment, of the venturous man and me,—
 Brought her to clutch and keep me from my prey :
 Whether impelled because her death no day
 Could come so absolutely opportune
 As now at joy’s height, like a year in June
 Stayed at the fall of its first ripened rose ;
 Or whether hungry for my hate—who knows ?—
 Eager to end an irksome lie, and taste
 Our tingling true relation, hate embraced
 By hate one naked moment :—anyhow
 There stone-still stone-white stood my wife, but now
 The woman who made heaven within my house.
 Ay, she who faced me was my very spouse
 As well as love—you are to recollect !

“ Stay !” she said. “ Keep at least one soul unspecked
 “ With crime, that’s spotless hitherto—your own !
 “ Kill me who court the blessing, who alone
 “ Was, am and shall be guilty, first to last !
 “ The man lay helpless in the toils I cast
 “ About him, helpless as the statue there
 “ Against that strangling bell-flower’s bondage : tear
 “ Away and tread to dust the parasite,
 “ But do the passive marble no despite !
 “ I love him as I hate you. Kill me ! Strike
 “ At one blow both infinitudes alike
 “ Out of existence—hate and love ! Whence love ?
 “ That’s safe inside my heart, nor will remove
 “ For any searching of your steel, I think.
 “ Whence hate ? The secret lay on lip, at brink

"Of speech, in one fierce tremble to escape,
 "At every form wherein your love took shape,
 "At each new provocation of your kiss,
 "Kill me!"

We went in.

Next day after this,
 I felt as if the speech might come. I spoke—
 Easily, after all.

"The lifted cloak
 "Was screen sufficient: I concern myself
 "Hardly with laying hands on who for self—
 "Whate'er the ignoble kind—may prowl and brave
 "Cuffing and kicking proper to a knave
 "Detected by my household's vigilance.
 "Enough of such! As for my love-romance—
 "I, like our good Hidalgo, rub my eyes
 "And wake and wonder how the film could rise
 "Which changed for me a barber's basin straight
 "Into—Mambrino's helm? I hesitate
 "Nowise to say—God's sacramental cup!
 "Why should I blame the brass which, burnished up,
 "Will blaze, to all but me, as good as gold?
 "To me—a warning I was overbold
 "In judging metals. The Hidalgo waked
 "Only to die, if I remember,—staked
 "His life upon the basin's worth, and lost:
 "While I confess torpidity at most
 "In here and there a limb; but, lame and halt,
 "Still should I work on, still repair my fault
 "Ere I took rest in death,—no fear at all!
 "Now, work—no word before the curtain fall!"

The "curtain"? That of death on life, I meant:
 My "word" permissible in death's event,

Would be—truth, soul to soul ; for, otherwise,
 Day by day, three years long, there had to rise
 And, night by night, to fall upon our stage—
 Ours, doomed to public play by heritage—
 Another curtain, when the world, perforce
 Our critical assembly, in due course
 Came and went, witnessing, gave praise or blame
 To art-mimetic. It had spoiled the game
 If, suffered to set foot behind our scene,
 The world had witnessed how stage-king and queen,
 Gallant and lady, but a minute since
 Enarming each the other, would evince
 No sign of recognition as they took
 His way and her way to whatever nook
 Waited them in the darkness either side
 Of that bright stage where lately groom and bride
 Had fired the audience to a frenzy-fit
 Of sympathetic rapture—every whit
 Earned as the curtain fell on her and me,
 —Actors. Three whole years, nothing was to see
 But calm and concord : where a speech was due
 There came the speech ; when smiles were wanted too
 Smiles were as ready. In a place like mine,
 Where foreign and domestic cares combine,
 There's audience every day and all day long ;
 But finally the last of the whole throng
 Who linger lets one see his back. For her—
 Why, liberty and liking : I aver,
 Liking and liberty ! For me—I breathed,
 Let my face rest from every wrinkle wreathed
 Smile-like about the mouth, unlearned my task
 Of personation till next day bade mask,
 And quietly betook me from that world
 To the real world, not pageant : there unfurled
 In work, its wings, my soul, the fretted power.
 Three years I worked, each minute of each hour

Not claimed by acting :—work I may dispense
 With talk about, since work in evidence,
 Perhaps in history ; who knows or cares ?

After three years, this way, all unawares,
 Our acting ended. She and I, at close
 Of a loud night-feast, led, between two rows
 Of bending male and female loyalty,
 Our lord the king down staircase, while, held high
 At arm's length did the twisted tapers' flare
 Herald his passage from our palace where
 Such visiting left glory evermore.
 Again the ascent in public, till at door
 As we two stood by the saloon—now blank
 And disencumbered of its guests—there sank
 A whisper in my ear, so low and yet
 So unmistakable !

“ I half forget

“ The chamber you repair to, and I want
 “ Occasion for one short word—if you grant
 “ That grace—within a certain room you called
 “ Our ‘ *Study*,’ for you wrote there while I scrawled
 “ Some paper full of faces for my sport.
 “ That room I can remember. Just one short
 “ Word with you there, for the remembrance’ sake !”

“ Follow me thither !” I replied.

We break

The gloom a little, as with guiding lamp
 I lead the way, leave warmth and cheer, by damp
 Blind disused serpentining ways afar
 From where the habitable chambers are,—
 Ascend, descend stairs tunneled through the stone,—
 Always in silence,—till I reach the lone
 Chamber sepulchred for my very own

Out of the palace-quarry. When a boy,
 Here was my fortress, stronghold from annoy
 Proof-positive of ownership ; in youth
 I garnered up my gleanings here—uncouth
 But precious relics of vain hopes, vain fears ;
 Finally, this became in after years
 My closet of entrenchment to withstand
 Invasion of the foe on every hand—
 The multifarious herd in bower and hall,
 State-room,—rooms whatsoever the style, which call
 On masters to be mindful that, before
 Men, they must look like men and something more.
 Here,—when our lord the king's bestowment ceased
 To deck me on the day that, golden-fleeced,
 I touched ambition's height,—'t was here, released
 From glory (always symbolized by a chain !)
 No sooner was I privileged to gain
 My secret domicile than glad I flung
 That last toy on the table—gazed where hung
 On hook my father's gift, the arquebuss—
 And asked myself " Shall I envisage thus
 " The new prize and the old prize, when I reach
 " Another year's experience ?—own that each
 " Equaled advantage—sportsman's—statesman's tool ?
 " That brought me down on eagle, this—a fool ! "

Into which room on entry, I set down
 The lamp, and turning saw whose rustled gown
 Had told me my wife followed, pace for pace.
 Each of us looked the other in the face.
 She spoke. " Since I could die now . . ."

(To explain

Why that first struck me, know—not once again
 Since the adventure at the porphyry's edge
 Three years before, which sundered like a wedge

Her soul from mine,—though daily, smile to smile,
 We stood before the public,—all the while
 Not once had I distinguished, in that face
 I paid observance to, the faintest trace
 Of feature more than requisite for eyes
 To do their duty by and recognize :
 So did I force mine to obey my will
 And pry no further. There exists such skill,—
 Those know who need it. What physician shrinks
 From needful contact with a corpse? He drinks
 No plague so long as thirst for knowledge,—not
 An idler impulse,—prompts inquiry. What,
 And will you disbelieve in power to bid
 Our spirit back to bounds, as though we chid
 A child from scrutiny that's just and right
 In manhood? Sense, not soul, accomplished sight,
 Reported daily she it was—not how
 Nor why a change had come to cheek and brow.)

“ Since I could die now of the truth concealed,
 “ Yet dare not, must not die,—so seems revealed
 “ The Virgin's mind to me,—for death means peace,
 “ Wherein no lawful part have I, whose lease
 “ Of life and punishment the truth avowed
 “ May haply lengthen,—let me push the shroud
 “ Away, that steals to muffle ere is just
 “ My penance-fire in snow! I dare—I must
 “ Live, by avowal of the truth—this truth—
 “ I loved you! Thanks for the fresh serpent's tooth
 “ That, by a prompt new pang more exquisite
 “ Than all preceding torture, proves me right!
 “ I loved you yet I lost you! May I go
 “ Burn to the ashes, now my shame you know?”

I think there never was such—how express?—
 Horror coquetting with voluptuousness,

As in those arms of Eastern workmanship—
Yataghan, kandjar, things that rend and rip,
Gash rough, slash smooth, help hate so many ways,
Yet ever keep a beauty that betrays
Love still at work with the artificer
Throughout his quaint devising. Why prefer,
Except for love's sake, that a blade should writhe
And bicker like a flame?—now play the scythe
As if some broad neck tempted,—now contract
And needle off into a fineness lacked
For just that puncture which the heart demands?
Then, such adornment! Wherefore need our hands
Enclose not ivory alone, nor gold
Roughened for use, but jewels? Nay, behold!
Fancy my favorite—which I seem to grasp
While I describe the luxury. No asp
Is diapered more delicate round throat
Than this below the handle! These denote
—These mazy lines meandering, to end
Only in flesh they open—what intend
They else but water-purlings—pale contrast
With the life-crimson where they blend at last?
And mark the handle's dim pellucid green,
Carved, the hard jadestone, as you pinch a bean,
Into a sort of parrot-bird! He pecks
A grape-bunch; his two eyes are ruby-specks
Pure from the mine: seen this way,—glassy blank,
But turn them,—lo the inmost fire, that shrank
From sparkling, sends a red dart right to aim!
Why did I choose such toys? Perhaps the game
Of peaceful men is warlike, just as men
War-wearied get amusement from that pen
And paper we grow sick of—statesfolk tired
Of merely (when such measures are required)
Dealing out doom to people by three words,
A signature and seal: we play with swords

Suggestive of quick process. That is how
 I came to like the toys described you now,
 Store of which glittered on the walls and strewed
 The table, even, while my wife pursued
 Her purpose to its ending. "Now you know
 "This shame, my three years' torture, let me go,—
 "Burn to the very ashes! You—I lost,
 "Yet you—I loved!"

The thing I pity most
 In men is—action prompted by surprise
 Of anger: men? nay, bulls—whose onset lies
 At instance of the firework and the goad!
 Once the foe prostrate,—trampling once bestowed,—
 Prompt follows placability, regret,
 Atonement. Trust me, blood-warmth never yet
 Betokened strong will! As no leap of pulse
 Pricked me, that first time, so did none convulse
 My veins at this occasion for resolve.
 Had that devolved which did not then devolve
 Upon me, I had done—what now to do
 Was quietly apparent.

"Tell me who
 "The man was, crouching by the porphyry vase!"

"No, never! All was folly in his case,
 "All guilt in mine. I tempted, he complied."

"And yet you loved me?"

"Loved you. Double-dyed
 "In folly and in guilt, I thought you gave
 "Your heart and soul away from me to slave
 "At statecraft. Since my right in you seemed lost,
 "I stung myself to teach you, to your cost,
 "What you rejected could be prized beyond
 "Life, heaven, by the first fool I threw a fond
 "Look on, a fatal word to."

“And you still

“Love me? Do I conjecture well or ill?”

“Conjecture—well or ill! I had three years

“To spend in learning you.”

“We both are peers

“In knowledge, therefore: since three years are spent

“Ere thus much of yourself I learn—who went

“Back to the house, that day, and brought my mind

“To bear upon your action: uncombined

“Motive from motive, till the dross, deprived

“Of every purer particle, survived

“At last in native simple hideousness,

“Utter contemptibility, nor less

“Nor more. Contemptibility—exempt

“How could I, from its proper due—contempt?

“I have too much despised you to divert

“My life from its set course by help or hurt

“Of your all-despicable life—perturb

“The calm I work in, by—men’s mouths to curb,

“Which at such news were clamorous enough—

“Men’s eyes to shut before my broidered stuff

“With the huge hole there, my emblazoned wall

“Blank where a scutcheon hung,—by, worse than all,

“Each day’s procession, my paraded life

“Robbed and impoverished through the wanting wife

“—Now that my life (which means—my work) was grown

“Riches indeed! Once, just this worth alone

“Seemed work to have, that profit gained thereby

“Of good and praise would—how rewardingly!—

“Fall at your feet,—a crown I hoped to cast

“Before your love, my love should crown at last.

“No love remaining to cast crown before,

“My love stopped work now: but contempt the more

“Impelled me task as ever head and hand,

“Because the very fiends weave ropes of sand

" Rather than taste pure hell in idleness.
 " Therefore I kept my memory down by stress
 " Of daily work I had no mind to stay
 " For the world's wonder at the wife away.
 " Oh, it was easy all of it, believe,
 " For I despised you ! But your words retrieve
 " Importantly the past. No hate assumed
 " The mask of love at any time ! There gloomed
 " A moment when love took hate's semblance, urged
 " By causes you declare ; but love's self purged
 " Away a fancied wrong I did both loves
 " —Yours and my own ; by no hate's help, it proves
 " Purgation was attempted. Then, you rise
 " High by how many a grade ! I did despise—
 " I do but hate you. Let hate's punishment
 " Replace contempt's ! First step to which ascent—
 " Write down your own words I re-utter you !
 " *' I loved my husband and I hated—who*
 " *' He was, I took up as my first chance, mere*
 " *' Mud-ball to fling and make love foul with !'* Here
 " Lies paper !"

" Would my blood for ink suffice !"

" It may : this minion from a land of spice,
 " Silk, feather—every bird of jewelled breast—
 " This poignard's beauty, ne'er so lightly prest
 " Above your heart there." . .

" Thus ?"

" It flows, I see.

" Dip there the point and write !"

" Dictate to me !

" Nay, I remember."

And she wrote the words.

I read them. Then—" Since love, in you, affords

"License for hate, in me, to quench (I say)
 "Contempt—why, hate itself has passed away
 "In vengeance—foreign to contempt. Depart
 "Peacefully to that death which Eastern art
 "Imbued this weapon with, if tales be true !
 "Love will succeed to hate. I pardon you—
 "Dead in our chamber !”

True as truth the tale.

She died ere morning ; then, I saw how pale
 Her cheek was ere it wore day's paint-disguise,
 And what a hollow darkened 'neath her eyes,
 Now that I used my own. She sleeps, as erst
 Beloved, in this your church : ay, yours !

Immersed

In thought so deeply, Father ? Sad, perhaps ?
 For whose sake, hers or mine or his who wraps
 —Still plain I seem to see !—about his head
 The idle cloak,—about his heart (instead
 Of cuirass) some fond hope he may elude
 My vengeance in the cloister's solitude ?
 Hardly, I think ! As little helped his brow
 The cloak then, Father—as your grate helps now !



CENCIAȚA.

Ogni cencio vuol entrare in bucato.—Italian Proverb.

MAY I print, Shelley, how it came to pass
 That when your Beatrice seemed—by lapse
 Of many a long month since her sentence fell—
 Assured of pardon for the parricide,—
 By intercession of staunch friends, or say,
 By certain pricks of conscience in the Pope
 Conniver at Francesco Cenci's guilt,—

Suddenly all things changed and Clement grew
 "Stern," as you state, "nor to be moved nor bent,
 "But said these three words coldly '*She must die;*'
 "Subjoining '*Pardon? Paolo Santa Croce*
 "'*Murdered his mother also yestereve,*
 "'*And he is fled: she shall not flee, at least!*'"
 —So, to the letter, sentence was fulfilled?
 Shelley, may I condense verbosity
 That lies before me, into some few words
 Of English, and illustrate your superb
 Achievement by a rescued anecdote,
 No great things, only new and true beside?
 As if some mere familiar of a house
 Should venture to accost the group at gaze
 Before its Titian, famed the wide world through,
 And supplement such pictured masterpiece
 By whisper "Searching in the archives here,
 "I found the reason of the Lady's fate,
 "And how by accident it came to pass
 "She wears the halo and displays the palm:
 "Who, haply, else had never suffered—no,
 "Nor graced our gallery, by consequence."
 Who loved the work would like the little news:
 Who lauds your poem lends an ear to me
 Relating how the penalty was paid
 By one Marchese dell' Oriolo, called
 Onofrio Santa Croce otherwise,
 For his complicity in matricide
 With Paolo his own brother,—he whose crime
 And flight induced "those three words—*She must die.*"
 Thus I unroll you then the manuscript.

"God's justice"—(of the multiplicity
 Of such communications extant still,
 Recording, each, injustice done by God
 In person of his Vicar-upon-earth,

Scarce one but leads off to the self-same tune)—
 “ God’s justice, tardy though it prove perchance,
 “ Rests never on the track until it reach
 “ Delinquency. In proof I cite the case
 “ Of Paolo Santa Croce.”

Many times

The youngster,—having been importunate
 That Marchesine Costanza, who remained
 His widowed mother, should supplant the heir
 Her elder son, and substitute himself
 In sole possession of her faculty,—
 And meeting just as often with rebuff,—
 Blinded by so exorbitant a lust
 Of gold, the youngster straightway tasked his wits,
 Casting about to kill the lady—thus.

He first, to cover his iniquity,
 Writes to Onofrio Santa Croce, then
 Authoritative lord, acquainting him
 Their mother was contamination—wrought
 Like hell-fire in the beauty of their House
 By dissoluteness and abandonment
 Of soul and body to impure delight.
 Moreover, since she suffered from disease,
 Those symptoms which her death made manifest
 Hydroptic, he affirmed were fruits of sin
 About to bring confusion and disgrace
 Upon the ancient lineage and high fame
 O’ the family, when published. Duty-bound,
 He asked his brother—what a son should do ?

Which when Marchese dell’ Oriolo heard
 By letter, being absent at his land
 Oriolo, he made answer, this, no more :
 “ It must behove a son,—things haply so,—
 “ To act as honour prompts a cavalier

“ And son, perform his duty to all three,
 “ Mother and brothers ”—here advice broke off.

By which advice informed and fortified
 As he professed himself—as bound by birth
 To hear God's voice in primogeniture—
 Paolo, who kept his mother company
 In her domain Subiaco, straightway dared
 His whole enormity of enterprise
 And, falling on her, stabbed the lady dead ;
 Whose death demonstrated her innocence,
 And happened,—by the way,—since Jesus Christ
 Died to save man, just sixteen hundred years.
 Costanza was of aspect beautiful
 Exceedingly, and seemed, although in age
 Sixty about, to far surpass her peers
 The coëtaneous dames, in youth and grace.

Done the misdeed, its author takes to flight,
 Foiling thereby the justice of the world :
 Not God's however,—God, be sure, knows well
 The way to clutch a culprit. Witness here !
 The present sinner, when he least expects,
 Snug-cornered somewhere i' the Basilicate,
 Stumbles upon his death by violence.
 A man of blood assaults the man of blood
 And slays him somehow. This was afterward :
 Enough, he promptly met with his deserts,
 And, ending thus, permits we end with him,
 And push forthwith to this important point—
 His matricide fell out, of all the days,
 Precisely when the law-procedure closed
 Respecting Count Francesco Cenci's death
 Chargeable on his daughter, sons and wife.
 “ Thus patricide was matched with matricide,”
 A poet not inelegantly rhymed :

Nay, fratricide—those Princes Massimi !—
 Which so disturbed the spirit of the Pope
 That all the likelihood Rome entertained
 Of Beatrice's pardon vanished straight,
 And she endured the piteous death.

Now see

The sequel—what effect commandment had
 For strict inquiry into this last case,
 When Cardinal Aldobrandini (great
 His efficacy—nephew to the Pope !)
 Was bidden crush—ay, though his very hand
 Got soiled i' the act—crime spawning everywhere !
 Because, when all endeavour had been used
 To catch the aforesaid Paolo, all in vain—
 “ Make perquisition ” quoth our Eminence,
 “ Throughout his now deserted domicile !
 “ Ransack the palace, roof and floor, to find
 “ If haply any scrap of writing, hid
 “ In nook or corner, may convict—who knows ?—
 “ Brother Onofrio of intelligence
 “ With brother Paolo, as in brotherhood
 “ Is but too likely : crime spawns everywhere !”

And, every cranny searched accordingly,
 There comes to light—O lynx-eyed Cardinal !—
 Onofrio's unconsidered writing-scrap,
 The letter in reply to Paolo's prayer,
 The word of counsel that—things proving so,
 Paolo should act the proper knightly part,
 And do as was incumbent on a son,
 A brother—and a man of birth, be sure !

Whereat immediately the officers
 Proceeded to arrest Onofrio—found
 At football, child's play, unaware of harm,

Safe with his friends, the Orsini, at their seat
 Monte Giordano ; as he left the house
 He came upon the watch in wait for him
 Set by the Barigel,—was caught and caged.

News of which capture being, that same hour,
 Conveyed to Rome, forthwith our Eminence
 Commands Taverna, Governor and Judge,
 To have the process in especial care,
 Be, first to last, not only president
 In person, but inquisitor as well,
 Nor trust the bye-work to a substitute :
 Bids him not, squeamish, keep the bench, but scrub
 The floor of Justice, so to speak,—go try
 His best in prison with the criminal ;
 Promising, as reward for bye-work done
 Fairly on all-fours, that, success obtained
 And crime avowed, or such connivency
 With crime as should procure a decent death—
 Himself will humbly beg—which means, procure—
 The Hat and Purple from his relative
 The Pope, and so repay a diligence
 Which, meritorious in the Cenci-case,
 Mounts plainly here to Purple and the Hat !

Whereupon did my lord the Governor
 So masterfully exercise the task
 Enjoined him, that he, day by day, and week
 By week, and month by month, from first to last
 Deserved the prize : now, punctual at his place,
 Played Judge, and now, assiduous at his post,
 Inquisitor—pressed cushion and scoured plank,
 Early and late. Noon's fervor and night's chill,
 Nought moved whom morn would, purpling, make
 amends !
 So that observers laughed as, many a day,

He left home, in July when day is flame,
 Posted to Tordinona-prison, plunged
 Into the vault where daylong night is ice,
 There passed his eight hours on a stretch, content,
 Examining Onofrio : all the stress
 Of all examination steadily
 Converging into one pin-point,—he pushed
 Tentative now of head and now of heart.
 As when the nuthatch taps and tries the nut
 This side and that side till the kernel sounds,—
 So did he press the sole and single point
 —What was the very meaning of the phrase
 “ *Do what beseems an honored cavalier?* ”

Which one persistent question-torture,—plied
 Day by day, week by week, and month by month,
 Morn, noon and night,—fatigued away a mind
 Grown imbecile by darkness, solitude,
 And one vivacious memory gnawing there
 As when a corpse is confined with a snake :
 —Fatigued Onofrio into what might seem
 Admission that perchance his judgment groped
 So blindly, feeling for an issue—aught
 With semblance of an issue from the toils
 Cast of a sudden round feet late so free,—
 He possibly might have envisaged, scarce
 Recoiled from—even were the issue death
 —Even her death whose life was death and worse !
 Always provided that the charge of crime,
 Each jot and tittle of the charge were true.
 In such a sense, belike, he might advise
 His brother to expurgate crime with . . . well,
 With blood, if blood must follow on “ *the course* ”
 “ *Taken as might beseem a cavalier.* ”

Whereupon process ended, and report
 Was made without a minute of delay

To Clement, who, because of those two crimes
 O' the Massimi and Cenci flagrant late,
 Must needs impatiently desire result.

Result obtained, he bade the Governor
 Summon the Congregation and despatch.
 Summons made, sentence passed accordingly
 —Death by beheading. When his death-decree
 Was intimated to Onofrio, all
 Man could do—that did he to save himself.
 'T was much, the having gained for his defence
 The Advocate o' the Poor, with natural help
 Of many noble friendly persons fain
 To disengage a man of family,
 So young too, from his grim entanglement.
 But Cardinal Aldobrandini ruled
 There must be no diversion of the law.
 Justice is justice, and the magistrate
 Bears not the sword in vain. Who sins must die.

So, the Marchese had his head cut off
 In Place Saint Angelo beside the Bridge,
 With Rome to see, a concourse infinite ;
 Where, magnanimity demonstrating
 Adequate to his birth and breed,—poor boy !—
 He made the people the accustomed speech,
 Exhorted them to true faith, honest works,
 And special good behaviour as regards
 A parent of no matter what the sex,
 Bidding each son take warning from himself.
 Truly, it was considered in the boy
 Stark staring lunacy, no less, to snap,
 So plain a bait, be hooked and hauled a-shore
 By such an angler as the Cardinal !
 Why make confession of his privity
 To Paolo's enterprise ? Mere sealing lips—
 Or, better, saying “When I counselled him

“‘ *To do as might beseem a cavalier,*
 “What could I mean but ‘*Hide our parent’s shame*
 “‘ *As Christian ought, by aid of Holy Church!*
 “‘ *Bury it in a convent—ay, beneath*
 “‘ *Enough dotation to prevent its ghost*
 “‘ *From troubling earth!*’” Mere saying thus,—’t is
 plain,

Not only were his life the recompense,
 But he had manifestly proved himself
 True Christian, and in lieu of punishment
 Been praised of all men!—So the populace.

Anyhow, when the Pope made promise good
 (That of Aldobrandini, near and dear)
 And gave Taverna, who had toiled so much,
 A Cardinal’s equipment, some such word
 As this from mouth to ear went saucily :
 “Taverna’s cap is dyed in what he drew
 “From Santa Croce’s veins!” So joked the world.

I add : Onofrio left one child behind,
 A daughter named Valeria, dowered with grace
 Abundantly of soul and body, doomed
 To life the shorter for her father’s fate.
 By death of her, the Marquisate returned
 To that Orsini House from whence it came :
 Oriolo having passed as donative
 To Santa Croce from their ancestors.

And no word more ? By all means ! Would you know
 The authoritative answer, when folks urged
 “What made Aldobrandini, hound-like staunch,
 “Hunt out of life a harmless simpleton ?”
 The answer was—“Hatred implacable,
 “By reason they were rivals in their love.”
 The Cardinal’s desire was to a dame
 Whose favour was Onofrio’s. Pricked with pride,
 The simpleton must ostentatiously

Display a ring, the Cardinal's love-gift,
 Given to Onofrio as the lady's gage ;
 Which ring on finger, as he put forth hand
 To draw a tapestry, the Cardinal
 Saw and knew, gift and owner, old and young ;
 Whereon a fury entered him—the fire
 He quenched with what could quench fire only—blood
 Nay, more : “ there want not who affirm to boot,
 “ The unwise boy, a certain festal eve,
 “ Feigned ignorance of who the wight might be
 “ That pressed too closely on him with a crowd.
 “ He struck the Cardinal a blow : and then,
 “ To put a face upon the incident,
 “ Dared next day, smug as ever, go pay court
 “ I' the Cardinal's antechamber. Mark and mend,
 “ Ye youth, by this example how may greed
 “ Vainglorious operate in worldly souls ! ”

So ends the chronicler, beginning with
 “ God's justice, tardy though it prove perchance,
 “ Rests never till it reach delinquency.”
 Ay, or how otherwise had come to pass
 That Victor rules, this present year, in Rome ?



PORPHYRIA'S LOVER.

I

THE rain set early in to-night,
 The sullen wind was soon awake,
 It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
 And did its worst to vex the lake,
 I listened with heart fit to break.

II

When glided in Porphyria ; straight
 She shut the cold out and the storm,
 And kneeled and made the cheerless grate

Blaze up, and all the cottage warm ;
Which done, she rose, and from her form

III

Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,

IV

She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,—

V

Murmuring how she loved me—she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever.

VI

But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain :
So, she was come through wind and rain.

VII

Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud ; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me ; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.

VIII

That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
 Perfectly pure and good : I found
 A thing to do, and all her hair
 In one long yellow string I wound
 Three times her little throat around,

IX

And strangled her. No pain felt she ;
 I am quite sure she felt no pain.
 As a shut bud that holds a bee,
 I warily oped her lids : again
 Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.

X

And I untightened next the tress
 About her neck ; her cheek once more
 Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss :
 I propped her head up as before.
 Only, this time my shoulder bore

XI

Her head, which droops upon it still :
 The smiling rosy little head,
 So glad it has its utmost will,
 That all it scorned at once is fled,
 And I, its love, am gained instead !

XII

Porphyria's love : she guessed not how
 Her darling one wish would be heard.
 And thus we sit together now.
 And all night long we have not stirred,
 And yet God has not said a word !



*FILIPPO BALDINUCCI ON THE PRIVILEGE
OF BURIAL.*

A Reminiscence of A.D. 1676.

I

No, boy, we must not (so began
My Uncle—he 's with God long since—
A-petting me, the good old man !)
We must not (and he seemed to wince,
And lose that laugh whereto had grown
His chuckle at my piece of news,
How cleverly I aimed my stone)
I fear we must not pelt the Jews !

II

When I was young, indeed,—ah, faith
Was young and strong in Florence too !
We Christians never dreamed of scathe
Because we cursed or kicked the crew.
But now—well, well ! The olive-crops
Weighed double then, and Arno's pranks
Would always spare religious shops
Whenever he o'erflowed his banks !

III

I 'll tell you (and his eye regained
Its twinkle) tell you something choice !
Something may help you keep unstained
Your honest zeal to stop the voice
Of unbelief with stone-throw—spite
Of laws, which modern fools enact,
That we must suffer Jews in sight
Go wholly unmolested ! Fact !

IV

There was, then, in my youth, and yet
 Is, hard by San Frediano, just
 Below the Blessed Olivet,
 A wayside ground wherein they thrust
 Their dead,—these Jews,—the more our shame !
 Except that, so they will but die,
 We may perchance incur no blame
 In giving hogs a hoist to stye.

V

There, anyhow, Jews stow away
 Their dead ; and,—such their insolence,—
 Slink at odd times to sing and pray
 As Christians do—all make-pretence !—
 Which wickedness they perpetrate
 Because they think no Christians see.
 They reckoned here, at any rate,
 Without their host : ha, ha, he, he !

VI

For, what should join their plot of ground
 But a good Farmer's Christian field ?
 The Jews had hedged their corner round
 With bramble-bush to keep concealed
 Their doings : for the public road
 Ran betwixt this their ground and that
 The Farmer's, where he ploughed and sowed
 Grew corn for barn and grapes for vat.

VII

So, properly to guard his store
 And gall the unbelievers too,
 He builds a shrine and, what is more,
 Procures a painter whom I knew,

One Buti (he 's with God) to paint
 A holy picture there—no less
 Than Virgin Mary free from taint
 Borne to the sky by angels : yes !

VIII

Which shrine he fixed,—who says him nay?—
 A-facing with its picture-side
 Not as you 'd think, the public way,
 But just where sought these hounds to hide
 Their carrion from that very truth
 Of Mary's triumph : not a hound
 Could act his mummeries uncouth
 But Mary shamed the pack all round !

IX

Now, if it was amusing, judge !
 —To see the company arrive,
 Each Jew intent to end his trudge
 And take his pleasure (though alive)
 With all his Jewish kith and kin
 Below ground, have his venom out,
 Sharpen his wits for next day's sin,
 Curse Christians, and so home, no doubt !

X

Whereas, each phyz upturned beholds
 Mary, I warrant, soaring brave !
 And in a trice, beneath the folds
 Of filthy garb which gowns each knave,
 Down drops it—there to hide grimace,
 Contortion of the mouth and nose
 At finding Mary in the place
 They 'd keep for Pilate, I suppose !

XI

At last, they will not brook—not they !—
 Longer such outrage on their tribe :
 So, in some hole and corner, lay
 Their heads together—how to bribe
 The meritorious Farmer's self
 To straight undo his work, restore
 Their chance to meet, and muse on self—
 Pretending sorrow, as before !

XII

Forthwith, a posse, if you please,
 Of Rabbi This and Rabbi That
 Almost go down upon their knees
 To get him lay the picture flat.
 The spokesman, eighty years of age,
 Grey as a badger, with a goat's
 —Not only beard but bleat, 'gins wage
 War with our Mary. Thus he dotes :—

XIII

“ Friends, grant a grace ! How Hebrews toil
 “ Through life in Florence—why relate
 “ To those who lay the burden, spoil
 “ Our paths of peace ? We bear our fate.
 “ But when with life the long toil ends,
 “ Why must you—the expression craves
 “ Pardon, but truth compels me, friends !—
 “ Why must you plague us in our graves ?

XIV

“ Thoughtlessly plague, I would believe !
 “ For how can you—the lords of ease
 “ By nurture, birthright—e'en conceive
 “ Our luxury to lie with trees

- “ And turf,—the cricket and the bird
“ Left for our last companionship :
“ No harsh deed, no unkindly word,
“ No frowning brow nor scornful lip !

XV

- “ Death’s luxury, we now rehearse
“ While, living, through your streets we fare
“ And take your hatred : nothing worse
“ Have we, once dead and safe, to bear !
“ So we refresh our souls, fulfil
“ Our works, our daily tasks ; and thus
“ Gather you grain—earth’s harvest—still
“ The wheat for you, the straw for us.

XVI

- “ ‘ What flouting in a face, what harm,
“ ‘ In just a lady borne from bier
“ ‘ By boys’ heads, wings for leg and arm ?’
“ You question. Friends, the harm is here—
“ That just when our last sigh is heaved,
“ And we would fain thank God and you
“ For labour done and peace achieved,
“ Back comes the Past in full review !

XVII

- “ At sight of just that simple flag,
“ Starts the foe-feeling serpent-like
“ From slumber. Leave it lulled, nor drag—
“ Though fangless—forth, what needs must strike
“ When stricken sore, though stroke be vain
“ Against the mailed oppressor ! Give
“ Play to our fancy that we gain
“ Life’s rights when once we cease to live !

XVIII

"Thus much to courtesy, to kind,
 "To conscience! Now to Florence folk!
 "There 's core beneath this apple-rind,
 "Beneath this white-of-egg there 's yolk!
 "Beneath this prayer to courtesy,
 "Kind, conscience—there 's a sum to pouch!
 "How many ducats down will buy
 "Our shame's removal, sirs? Avouch!

XIX

"Removal, not destruction, sirs!
 "Just turn your picture! Let it front
 "The public path! Or memory errs,
 "Or that same public path is wont
 "To witness many a chance befall
 "Of lust, theft, bloodshed—sins enough,
 "Wherein our Hebrew part is small.
 "Convert yourselves!"—he cut up rough.

XX

Look you, how soon a service paid
 Religion yields the servant fruit!
 A prompt reply our Farmer made
 So following: "Sirs, to grant your suit
 "Involves much danger! How? Transpose
 "Our Lady? Stop the chastisement,
 "All for your good, herself bestows?
 "What wonder if I grudge consent?

XXI

"—Yet grant it: since, what cash I take
 "Is so much saved from wicked use.
 "We know you! And, for Mary's sake,
 "A hundred ducats shall induce

"Concession to your prayer. One day
 "Suffices : Master Buti's brush
 "Turns Mary round the other way,
 "And deluges your side with slush.

XXII

"Down with the ducats therefore !" Dump,
 Dump, dump it falls, each counted piece,
 Hard gold. Then out of door they stump,
 These dogs, each brisk as with new lease
 Of life, I warrant,—glad he 'll die
 Henceforward just as he may choose,
 Be buried and in clover lie !
 Well said Esaias—"stiff-necked Jews !"

XXIII

Off posts without a minute's loss
 Our Farmer, once the cash in poke,
 And summons Buti—ere its gloss
 Have time to fade from off the joke—
 To chop and change his work, undo
 The done side, make the side, now blank,
 Recipient of our Lady—who,
 Displaced thus, had these dogs to thank !

XXIV

Now, you 're no boy I need instruct
 In technicalities of Art !
 My nephew's childhood sure has sucked
 Along with mother's-milk some part
 Of painter's-practice —learned, at least,
 How expeditiously is plied
 A work in fresco—never ceased
 When once begun—a day, each side.

XXV

So, Buti—he 's with God—begins :
 First covers up the shrine all round
 With hoarding ; then, as like as twins,
 Paints, t' other side the burial-ground,
 New Mary, every point the same ;
 Next, sluices over, as agreed,
 The old ; and last—but, spoil the game
 By telling you ? Not I, indeed !

XXVI

Well, ere the week was half at end,
 Out came the object of this zeal,
 This fine alacrity to spend
 Hard money for mere dead men's weal !
 How think you ? That old spokesman Jew
 Was High Priest, and he had a wife
 As old, and she was dying too,
 And wished to end in peace her life !

XXVII

And he must humour dying whims,
 And soothe her with the idle hope
 They 'd say their prayers and sing their hymns
 As if her husband were the Pope !
 And she did die—believing just
 This privilege was purchased ! Dead
 In comfort through her foolish trust !
 “Stiff-necked ones,” well Esaias said !

XXVIII

So, Sabbath morning, out of gate
 And on to way, what sees our arch
 Good Farmer ? Why, they hoist their freight—
 The corpse—on shoulder, and so, march !

“Now for it, Buti !” In the nick
 Of time ’t is pully-hauly, hence
 With hoarding ! O’er the wayside quick
 There ’s Mary plain in evidence !

XXIX

And here ’s the convoy halting : right !
 O they are bent on howling psalms
 And growling prayers, when opposite !
 And yet they glance, for all their qualms,
 Approve that promptitude of his,
 The Farmer’s—duly at his post
 To take due thanks from every phyz,
 Sour smirk—nay, surly smile almost !

XXX

Then earthward drops each brow again ;
 The solemn task ’s resumed ; they reach
 Their holy field—the unholy train :
 Enter its precinct, all and each,
 Wrapt somehow in their godless rites ;
 Till, rites at end, up-waking, lo
 They lift their faces ! What delights
 The mourners as they turn to go ?

XXXI

Ha, ha, he, he ! On just the side
 They drew their purse-strings to make quit
 Of Mary,—Christ the Crucified
 Fronted them now—these biters bit !
 Never was such a hiss and snort,
 Such screwing nose and shooting lip !
 Their purchase—honey in report—
 Proved gall and verjuice at first sip !

XXXII

Out they break, on they bustle, where,
 A-top of wall, the Farmer waits
 With Buti : never fun so rare !
 The Farmer has the best : he rates
 The rascal, as the old High Priest
 Takes on himself to sermonize—
 Nay, sneer “ We Jews supposed, at least,
 “ Theft was a crime in Christian eyes ! ”

XXXIII

“ Theft ? ” cries the Farmer, “ Eat your words !
 “ Show me what constitutes a breach
 “ Of faith in aught was said or heard !
 “ I promised you in plainest speech
 “ I ’d take the thing you count disgrace
 “ And put it here—and here ’t is put !
 “ Did you suppose I ’d leave the place
 “ Blank therefore, just your rage to glut ?

XXXIV

“ I guess you dared not stipulate
 “ For such a damned impertinence !
 “ So, quick, my greybeard, out of gate
 “ And in at Ghetto ! Haste you hence !
 “ As long as I have house and land,
 “ To spite you irreligious chaps
 “ Here shall the Crucifixion stand—
 “ Unless you down with cash, perhaps ! ”

XXXV

So snickered he and Buti both.
 The Jews said nothing, interchanged
 A glance or two, renewed their oath
 To keep ears stopped and hearts estranged

From grace, for all our Church can do.
 Then off they scuttle : sullen jog
 Homewards, against our Church to brew
 Fresh mischief in their synagogue.

XXXVI

But next day—see what happened, boy !
 See why I bid you have a care
 How you pelt Jews ! The knaves employ
 Such methods of revenge, forbear
 No outrage on our faith, when free
 To wreak their malice ! Here they took
 So base a method—plague o' me
 If I record it in my Book !

XXXVII

For, next day, while the Farmer sat
 Laughing with Buti, in his shop,
 At their successful joke,—rat-tat,—
 Door opens, and they 're like to drop
 Down to the floor as in there stalks
 A six-feet-high herculean-built
 Young he-Jew with a beard that baulks
 Description. “ Help ere blood be spilt !”

XXXVIII

—Screamed Buti : for he recognized
 Whom but the son, no less no more,
 Of that High Priest his work surprised
 So pleasantly the day before !
 Son of the mother, then, whereof
 The bier he lent a shoulder to,
 And made the moans about, dared scoff
 At sober Christian grief—the Jew !

XXXIX

“Sirs, I salute you! Never rise!
 “No apprehension!” (Buti, white
 And trembling like a tub of size,
 Had tried to smuggle out of sight
 The picture’s self—the thing in oils,
 You know, from which a fresco’s dashed
 Which courage speeds while caution spoils)
 “Stay and be praised sir, unabashed!”

XL

“Praised,—ay, and paid too: for I come
 “To buy that very work of yours.
 “My poor abode, which boasts—well, some
 “Few specimens of Art, secures
 “Haply, a masterpiece indeed
 “If I should find my humble means
 “Suffice the outlay. So, proceed!
 “Propose—ere prudence intervenes!”

XLI

On Buti, cowering like a child,
 These words descended from aloft,
 In tones so ominously mild,
 With smile terrifically soft
 To that degree—could Buti dare
 (Poor fellow) use his brains, think twice?
 He asked, thus taken unaware,
 No more than just the proper price!

XLII

“Done!” cries the monster. “I disburse
 “Forthwith your moderate demand.
 “Count on my custom—if no worse
 “Your future work be, understand,

“Than this I carry off! No aid!
 “My arm, sir, lacks nor bone nor thews:
 “The burden ’s easy, and we ’re made,
 “Easy or hard, to bear—we Jews!”

XLIII

Crossing himself at such escape,
 Buti by turns the money eyes
 And, timidly, the stalwart shape
 Now moving doorwards; but, more wise,
 The Farmer,—who, though dumb, this while
 Had watched advantage—straight conceived
 A reason for that tone and smile
 So mild and soft! The Jew—believed!

XLIV

Mary in triumph borne to deck
 A Hebrew household! Pictured where
 No one was used to bend the neck
 In praise or bow the knee in prayer!
 Borne to that domicile by whom?
 The son of the High Priest! Through what?
 An insult done his mother’s tomb!
 Saul changed to Paul—the case came pat!

XLV

“Stay, dog-Jew . . . gentle sir, that is!
 “Resolve me! Can it be, she crowned—
 “Mary, by miracle—Oh bliss!—
 “My present to your burial-ground?
 “Certain, a ray of light has burst
 “Your veil of darkness! Had you else,
 “Only for Mary’s sake, unpursed
 “So much hard money? Tell—oh, tell ’s!”

XLVI

Round—like a serpent that we took
 For worm and trod on—turns his bulk
 About the Jew. First dreadful look
 Sends Buti in a trice to skulk
 Out of sight somewhere, safe—alack !
 But our good Farmer faith made bold :
 And firm (with Florence at his back)
 He stood, while gruff the gutturals rolled—

XLVII

“ Ay, sir, a miracle was worked,
 “ By quite another power, I trow,
 “ Than ever yet in canvas lurked,
 “ Or you would scarcely face me now !
 “ A certain impulse did suggest
 “ A certain grasp with this right-hand,
 “ Which probably had put to rest
 “ Our quarrel,—thus your throat once spanned !

XLVIII

“ But I remembered me, subdued
 “ That impulse, and you face me still !
 “ And soon a philosophic mood
 “ Succeeding (hear it, if you will !)
 “ Has altogether changed my views
 “ Concerning Art. Blind prejudice !
 “ Well may you Christians tax us Jews
 “ With scrupulosity too nice !

XLIX

“ For, don't I see,—let 's issue join !—
 “ Whenever I 'm allowed pollute
 “ (I—and my little bag of coin)
 “ Some Christian palace of repute,—

" Don 't I see stuck up everywhere
 " Abundant proof that cultured taste
 " Has Beauty for its only care,
 " And upon Truth no thought to waste?

L

" ' Jew, since it must be, take in pledge
 " ' Of payment '—so a Cardinal
 " Has sighed to me as if a wedge
 " Entered his heart—' this best of all
 " ' My treasures ! ' Leda, Ganymede
 " Or Antiope : swan, eagle, ape,
 " (Or what 's the beast of what 's the breed)
 " And Jupiter in every shape !

LI

" Whereat if I presume to ask
 " ' But, Eminence, though Titian's whisk
 " ' Of brush have well performed its task,
 " ' How comes it these false godships frisk
 " ' In presence of—what yonder frame
 " ' Pretends to image? Surely, odd
 " ' It seems, you let confront The Name
 " ' Each beast the heathen called his god !

LII

" Benignant smiles me pity straight
 " The Cardinal. ' 'T is Truth, we prize !
 " ' Art 's the sole question in debate !
 " ' These subjects are so many lies.
 " ' We treat them with a proper scorn
 " ' When we turn lies—called gods forsooth—
 " ' To lies' fit use, now Christ is born.
 " ' Drawing and colouring are Truth.

LIII

“ Think you I honor lies so much
 “ As scruple to parade the charms
 “ Of Leda—Titian, every touch—
 “ Because the thing within her arms
 “ Means Jupiter who had the praise
 “ And prayer of a benighted world ?
 “ Benighted I too, if, in days
 “ Of light, I kept the canvas furled !”

LIV

“ So ending, with some easy gibe.
 “ What power has logic ! I, at once,
 “ Acknowledged error in our tribe
 “ So squeamish that, when friends ensconce
 “ A pretty picture in its niche
 “ To do us honor, deck our graves,
 “ We fret and fume and have an itch
 “ To strangle folk—ungrateful knaves !

LV

“ No, sir ! Be sure that—what’s its style,
 “ Your picture ?—shall possess ungrudged
 “ A place among my rank and file
 “ Of Ledas and what not—be judged
 “ Just as a picture !—and (because
 “ I fear me much I scarce have bought
 “ A Titian) Master Buti’s flaws
 “ Found there, will have the laugh flaws ought !”

LVI

So, with a scowl, it darkens door—
 This bulk—no longer ! Buti makes
 Prompt glad re-entry ; there’s a score
 Of oaths, as the good Farmer wakes

From what must needs have been a trance,
 Or he had struck (he swears) to ground
 The bold bad mouth that dared advance
 Such doctrine the reverse of sound !

LVII.

Was magic here ? Most like ! For, since,
 Somehow our city's faith grows still
 More and more lukewarm, and our Prince
 Or loses heart or wants the will
 To check increase of cold. 'T is " Live
 " And let live ! Languidly repress
 " The Dissident ! In short,—contrive
 " Christians must bear with Jews : no less ! "

LVIII

The end seems, any Israelite
 Wants any picture,—pishes, poohs,
 Purchases, hangs it full in sight
 In any chamber he may choose !
 In Christ's crown, one more thorn we rue !
 In Mary's bosom, one more sword !
 No, boy, you must not pelt a Jew !
 O Lord, how long ? How long, O Lord ?

*SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER.*

I

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhorrence !
 Water your damned flower-pots, do !
 If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
 God's blood, would not mine kill you !

What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
 Oh, that rose has prior claims—
 Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
 Hell dry you up with its flames!

II

At the meal we sit together :
Salve tibi! I must hear
 Wise talk of the kind of weather,
 Sort of season, time of year :
Not a plenteous cork-crop : scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt :
What's the Latin name for "parsley" ?
 What 's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

III

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
 Laid with care on our own shelf!
 With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
 And a goblet for ourself,
 Rinsed like something sacrificial
 Ere 't is fit to touch our chaps—
 Marked with L. for our initial!
 (He-he! There his lily snaps!)

IV

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
 Squats outside the Convent bank
 With Sanchicha, telling stories,
 Steeping tresses in the tank,
 Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horse hairs,
 —Can't I see his dead eye glow,
 Bright as't were a Barbary corsair's?
 (That is, if he'd let it show!)

V

When he finishes refection,
Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
As do I, in Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
Drinking watered orange-pulp—
In three sips the Arian frustrate ;
While he drains his at one gulp.

VI

Oh, those melons? If he's able
We're to have a feast : so nice !
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble
Keep them close-nipped on the sly !

VII

There's a great text in Galatians
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations
One sure, if another fails :
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to hell, a Manichee?

VIII

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On grey paper with blunt type !
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe :

If I double down its pages
 At the woeful sixteenth print,
 When he gathers his greengages,
 Ope a sieve and slip it in 't?

IX

Or, there 's Satan!—one might venture
 Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
 Such a flaw in the indenture
 As he 'd miss till, past retrieve,
 Blasted lay that rose-acacia
 We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine . . .*
 'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratiâ*
Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r—you swine!



THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY.

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE.

ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A 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 centuries.)

I

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 infinitudes their due—

Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
As infinite a justice too.
[*Organ : plagal-cadence.*]
As infinite a justice too.

II

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,
ye shall say to confirm him who singeth--*
We bring John now to be burned alive.

III

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 ;
Faggots 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.

IV

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.

V

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.]

VI

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,
 Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk ;
 To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.
(Salvâ reverentiâ.)
 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.

'T is John the mocker cries, " Save thou me ! "

VII

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!

VIII

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!
 Some, honied of taste like your leman's tongue:
 Some, bitter; for why? (roast gaily 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?

IX

Ha ha, John plucketh 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

X

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 !



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 restif and ready-to-perish Hebrews ! now maternally 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.*]

What the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect :—

I

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—'t is sermon-time !

II

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 !

III

Higgledy piggledy, 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.

IV

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.

V

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 curtesy—and what comes next ?

VI

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 !

VII

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.

VIII

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
 To meddle no more with the worst of trades :
 Let somebody else pay his serenades !

IX

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.

X

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,
 Yelled, pricked us out to his 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.

XI

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.

XII

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.

XIII

" 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.

XIV

" 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 !

XV

" 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 Christ at the end relieve our guard.
 " By his servant Moses the watch was set :
 " Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet.

XVI

" Thou ! if thou wast he, who at mid-watch came,
 " By the starlight, naming a dubious name !
 " And if, 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—

XVII

" 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 !

XVIII

" 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 !

XIX

" 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,—

XX

“ We boast our proof 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, thy band
 “ South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land !”

[*The late Pope abolished this bad business of the
 Sermon.—R. B.*]



AMPHIBIAN.

I

THE fancy I had to-day,
 Fancy which turned a fear !
 I swam far out in the bay,
 Since waves laughed warm and clear.

II

I lay and looked at the sun,
 The noon-sun looked at me :
 Between us two, no one
 Live creature, that I could see.

III

Yes ! There came floating by
 Me, who lay floating too,
 Such a strange butterfly !
 Creature as dear as new :

IV

Because the membraned wings
So wonderful, so wide,
So sun-suffused, were things
Like soul and nought beside.

V

A handbreadth over head !
All of the sea my own,
It owned the sky instead ;
Both of us were alone.

VI

I never shall join its flight,
For, nought buoys flesh in air.
If it touch the sea—good night !
Death sure and swift waits there.

VII

Can the insect feel the better
For watching the uncouth play
Of limbs that slip the fetter,
Pretend as they were not clay ?

VIII

Undoubtedly I rejoice
That the air comports so well
With a creature which had the choice
Of the land once. Who can tell ?

IX

What if a certain soul
Which early slipped its sheath,
And has for its home the whole
Of heaven, thus look beneath,

X

Thus watch one who, in the world,
Both lives and likes life's way,
Nor wishes the wings unfurled
That sleep in the worm, they say?

XI

But sometimes when the weather
Is blue, and warm waves tempt
To free oneself of tether,
And try a life exempt

XII

From worldly noise and dust,
In the sphere which overbrims
With passion and thought,—why, just
Unable to fly, one swims!

XIII

By passion and thought upborne,
One smiles to oneself—“ They fare
“ Scarce better, they need not scorn
“ Our sea, who live in the air !”

XIV

Emancipate through passion
And thought, with sea for sky,
We substitute, in a fashion,
For heaven—poetry :

XV

Which sea, to all intent,
Gives flesh such noon-disport
As a finer element
Affords the spirit-sort.

XVI

Whatever they are, we seem :
 Imagine the thing they know ;
 All deeds they do, we dream ;
 Can heaven be else but so ?

XVII

And meantime, yonder streak
 Meets the horizon's verge ;
 That is the land, to seek
 If we tire or dread the surge ;

XVIII

Land the solid and safe—
 To welcome again (confess !)
 When, high and dry, we chafe
 The body, and don the dress.

XIX

Does she look, pity, wonder
 At one who mimics flight,
 Swims—heaven above, sea under
 Yet always earth in sight ?

*ST. MARTIN'S SUMMER.*

I

No, protesting dearest !
 Hardly kisses even !
 Don't we both know how it ends ?
 How the greenest leaf turns serest ?
 Bluest outbreak—blankest heaven ?
 Lovers—friends ?

II

You would build a mansion,
 I would weave a bower
 —Want the heart for enterprise.
 Walls admit of no expansion:
 Trellis-work may haply flower
 Twice the size.

III

What makes glad Life's Winter?
 New buds, old blooms after.
 Sad the sighing "How suspect
 Beams would ere mid-Autumn splinter,
 "Roof-tree scarce support a rafter,
 "Walls lie wrecked?"

IV

You are young, my princess!
 I am hardly older:
 Yet—I steal a glance behind!
 Dare I tell you what convinces
 Timid me that you, if bolder,
 Bold—are blind?

V

Where we plan our dwelling
 Grooms a graveyard surely!
 Headstone, footstone moss may drape,—
 Name, date, violets hide from spelling,—
 But, though corpses rot obscurely,
 Ghosts escape.

VI

Ghosts! O breathing Beauty,
 Give my frank word pardon!
 What if I—somehow, somewhere—

Pledged my soul to endless duty
 Many a time and oft? Be hard on
 Love—laid there?

VII

Nay, blame grief that 's fickle,
 Time that proves a traitor,
 Chance, change, all that purpose warps,—
 Death who spares to thrust the sickle,
 Which laid Love low, through flowers which later
 Shroud the corpse!

VIII

And you, my winsome lady,
 Whisper me with like frankness!
 Lies nothing buried long ago?
 Are you—which shimmer 'mid what 's shady
 Where moss and violet run to rankness—
 Tombs or no?

IX

Who taxes you with murder?
 My hands are clean—or nearly!
 Love being mortal needs must pass.
 Repentance? Nothing were absurder.
 Enough: we felt Love's loss severely;
 Though now—alas!

X

Love's corpse lies quiet therefore,
 Only Love's ghost plays truant,
 And warns us have in wholesome awe
 Durable mansionry; that 's wherefore
 I weave but trellis-work, pursuant
 —Life, to law.

XI

The solid, not the fragile,
 Tempt rain and hail and thunder.
 If bower stand firm at Autumn's close,
Beyond my hope,—why, boughs were agile ;
 If bower fall flat, we scarce need wonder
 Wreathing—rose !

XII

So, truce to the protesting,
 So, muffled be the kisses !
 For, would we but avow the truth,
Sober is genuine joy. No jesting !
 Ask else Penelope, Ulysses—
 Old in youth !

XIII

For why should ghosts feel angered ?
 Let all their interference
 Be faint march-music in the air !
“ Up ! Join the rear of us the vanguard !
 “ Up, lovers, dead to all appearance,
 “ Laggard pair ! ”

XIV

The while you clasp me closer,
 The while I press you deeper,
 As safe we chuckle,—under breath,
Yet all the slyer, the jocosier,—
 “ So, life can boast its day, like leap-year,
 “ Stolen from death ! ”

XV

Ah me—the sudden terror !
 Hence quick—avaunt, avoid me,
 You cheat, the ghostly flesh-disguised !

Nay, all the ghosts in one ! Strange error !
 So, 't was Death's self that clipped and coyed me,
 Loved—and lied !

XVI

Ay, dead loves are the potent !
 Like any cloud they used you,
 Mere semblance you, but substance they !
 Build we no mansion, weave we no tent !
 Mere flesh—their spirit interfused you !
 Hence, I say !

XVII

All theirs, none yours the glamour !
 Theirs each low word that won me,
 Soft look that found me Love's, and left
 What else but you—the tears and clamour
 That 's all your very own ! Undone me—
 Ghost bereft !

*JAMES LEE'S WIFE.*

I

JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE WINDOW

I

AH, Love, but a day,
 And the world has changed !
 The sun 's away,
 And the bird estranged ;
 The wind has dropped,
 And the sky 's deranged :
 Summer has stopped.

II

Look in my eyes !
Wilt thou change too ?
Should I fear surprise ?
Shall I find aught new
In the old and dear,
In the good and true,
With the changing year ?

III

Thou art a man,
But I am thy love.
For the lake, its swan ;
For the dell, its dove ;
And for thee—(oh, haste !)
Me, to bend above,
Me, to hold embraced.

II

BY THE FIRESIDE.

I

Is all our fire of shipwreck wood,
Oak and pine ?
Oh, for the ills half-understood,
The dim dead woe
Long ago
Befallen this bitter coast of France !
Well, poor sailors took their chance ;
I take mine.

II

A ruddy shaft our fire must shoot
O'er the sea ;

Do sailors eye the casement—mute
 Drenched and stark,
 From their bark—
 And envy, gnash their teeth for hate
 O' the warm safe house and happy freight
 —Thee and me ?

III

God help you, sailors, at your need !
 Spare the curse !
 For some ships, safe in port indeed,
 Rot and rust,
 Run to dust,
 All through worms i' the wood, which crept,
 Gnawed our hearts out while we slept :
 That is worse.

IV

Who lived here before us two ?
 Old-world pairs.
 Did a woman ever—would I knew !—
 Watch the man
 With whom began
 Love's voyage full-sail,—(now, gnash your teeth !)
 When planks start, open hell beneath
 Unawares ?

III

IN THE DOORWAY.

I

THE swallow has set her six young on the rail,
 And looks sea-ward :
 The water 's in stripes like a snake, olive-pale
 To the leeward,—

On the weather-side, black, spotted white with the wind.
“ Good fortune departs, and disaster ’s behind,”—
Hark, the wind with its wans and its infinite wail !

II

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the saltness, has furled
Her five fingers,
Each leaf like a hand opened wide to the world
Where there lingers
No glint of the gold, Summer sent for her sake :
How the vines writhe in rows, each impaled on its stake !
My heart shrivels up and my spirit shrinks curled.

III

Yet here are we two ; we have love, house enough,
With the field there,
This house of four rooms, that field red and rough,
Though it yield there,
For the rabbit that robs, scarce a blade or a bent ;
If a magpie alight now, it seems an event ;
And they both will be gone at November’s rebuff.

IV

But why must cold spread ? but wherefore bring change
To the spirit,
God meant should mate his with an infinite range,
And inherit
His power to put life in the darkness and cold ?
Oh, live and love worthily, bear and be bold !
Whom Summer made friends of, let Winter estrange !

IV

ALONG THE BEACH.

I

I WILL be quiet and talk with you,
 And reason why you are wrong.
 You wanted my love—is that much true?
 And so I did love, so I do :
 What has come of it all along?

II

I took you—how could I otherwise?
 For a world to me, and more ;
 For all, love greatens and glorifies
 Till God 's a-glow, to the loving eyes,
 In what was mere earth before.

III

Yes, earth—yes, mere ignoble earth !
 Now do I mis-state, mistake ?
 Do I wrong your weakness and call it worth ?
 Expect all harvest, dread no dearth,
 Seal my sense up for your sake ?

IV

Oh, Love, Love, no, Love ! not so indeed !
 You were just weak earth, I knew :
 With much in you waste, with many a weed
 And plenty of passions run to seed,
 But a little good grain too.

V

And such as you were, I took you for mine :
 Did not you find me yours,
 To watch the olive and wait the vine,

And wonder when rivers of oil and wine
Would flow, as the Book assures?

VI

Well, and if none of these good things came,
What did the failure prove?
The man was my whole world, all the same,
With his flowers to praise or his weeds to blame,
And, either or both, to love.

VII

Yet this turns now to a fault—there! there!
That I do love, watch too long,
And wait too well, and weary and wear;
And 't is all an old story, and my despair
Fit subject for some new song:

VIII

“How the light, light love, he has wings to fly
“At suspicion of a bond:
“My wisdom has bidden your pleasure good-bye,
“Which will turn up next in a laughing eye,
“And why should you look beyond?”

V

ON THE CLIFF.

I

I LEANED on the turf,
I looked at a rock
Left dry by the surf;
For the turf, to call it grass were to mock:
Dead to the roots, so deep was done
The work of the summer sun.

II

And the rock lay flat
As an anvil's face :
No iron like that !
Baked dry : of a weed, of a shell, no trace :
Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,
Death's altar by the lone shore.

III

On the turf, sprang gay
With his films of blue,
No cricket, I 'll say,
But a war-horse, barded and chanfroned too,
The gift of a quixote-mage to his knight,
Real fairy, with wings all right.

IV

On the rock, they scorch
Like a drop of fire
From a brandished torch,
Fall two red fans of a butterfly :
No turf, no rock,—in their ugly stead,
See, wonderful blue and red !

V

Is it not so
With the minds of men ?
The level and low,
The burnt and bare, in themselves ; but then
With such a blue and red grace, not theirs,
Love settling unawares !

VI

READING A BOOK, UNDER THE CLIFF.

I

- “ STILL ailing, Wind? Wilt be appeased or no?
 “ Which needs the other’s office, thou or I?
 “ Dost want to be disburthened of a woe,
 “ And can, in truth, my voice untie
 “ Its links, and let it go?

II

- “ Art thou a dumb wronged thing that would be righted,
 “ Entrusting thus thy cause to me? Forbear!
 “ No tongue can mend such pleadings; faith, requited
 “ With falsehood,—love, at last aware
 “ Of scorn,—hopes, early blighted,—

III

- “ We have them; but I know not any tone
 “ So fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow:
 “ Dost think men would go mad without a moan,
 “ If they knew any way to borrow
 “ A pathos like thy own?

IV

- “ Which sigh wouldst mock, of all the sighs? The one
 “ So long escaping from lips starved and blue,
 “ That lasts while on her pallet-bed the nun
 “ Stretches her length; her foot comes through
 “ The straw she shivers on;

V

- “ You had not thought she was so tall: and spent,
 “ Her shrunk lids open, her lean fingers shut
 “ Close, close, their sharp and livid nails indent
 “ The clammy palm; then all is mute:
 “ That way, the spirit went.

VI

“ Or wouldst thou rather that I understand
 “ Thy will to help me?—like the dog I found
 “ Once, pacing sad this solitary strand,
 “ Who would not take my food, poor hound,
 “ But whined and licked my hand.”

VII

All this, and more, comes from some young man's pride
 Of power to see,—in failure and mistake,
 Relinquishment, disgrace, on every side,—
 Merely examples for his sake,
 Helps to his path untried :

VIII

Instances he must—simply recognize?
 Oh, more than so!—must, with a learner's zeal,
 Make doubly prominent, twice emphasize,
 By added touches that reveal
 The god in babe's disguise.

IX

Oh, he knows what defeat means, and the rest!
 Himself the undefeated that shall be :
 Failure, disgrace, he flings them you to test,—
 His triumph, in eternity
 Too plainly manifest !

X

Whence, judge if he learn forthwith what the wind
 Means in its moaning—by the happy prompt
 Instinctive way of youth, I mean ; for kind
 Calm years, exacting their accout
 Of pain, mature the mind :

XI

And some midsummer morning, at the lull
Just about daybreak, as he looks across
A sparkling foreign country, wonderful
To the sea's edge for gloom and gloss,
Next minute must annul,—

XII

Then, when the wind begins among the vines,
So low, so low, what shall it say but this?
“ Here is the change beginning, here the lines
“ Circumscribe beauty, set to bliss
“ The limit time assigns.”

XIII

Nothing can be as it has been before ;
Better, so call it, only not the same.
To draw one beauty into our hearts' core
And keep it changeless ! such our claim ;
So answered,—Never more !

XIV

Simple? Why this is the old woe o' the world ;
Tune, to whose rise and fall we live and die.
Rise with it, then ! Rejoice that man is hurled
From change to change unceasingly,
His soul's wings never furred !

XV

That 's a new question ; still replies the fact,
Nothing endures : the wind moans, saying so ;
We moan in acquiescence : there 's life's pact,
Perhaps probation—do *I* know ?
God does : endure his act !

XVI

Only, for man, how bitter not to grave
 On his soul's hands' palms one fair good wise thing
 Just as he grasped it ! For himself, death's wave ;
 While time first washes—ah, the sting !—
 O'er all he 'd sink to save.

VII

AMONG THE ROCKS.

I

OH, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
 This autumn morning ! How he sets his bones
 To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet
 For the ripple to run over in its mirth ;
 Listening the while, where on the heap of stones
 The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

II

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true ;
 Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.
 If you loved only what were worth your love,
 Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you :
 Make the low nature better by your throes !
 Give earth yourself, go up for gain above !

VIII

BESIDE THE DRAWING-BOARD.

I

“ As like as a Hand to another Hand ! ”
 Whoever said that foolish thing,

Could not have studied to understand
 The counsels of God in fashioning,
 Out of the infinite love of his heart,
 This Hand, whose beauty I praise, apart
 From the world of wonder left to praise,
 If I tried to learn the other ways
 Of love, in its skill, or love, in its power.

“As like as a Hand to another Hand :”

Who said that, never took his stand,
 Found and followed, like me, an hour,
 The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
 To fear, almost,—of the limit-line !
 As I looked at this, and learned and drew,
 Drew and learned, and looked again,
 While fast the happy minutes flew,
 Its beauty mounted into my brain,
 And a fancy seized me ; I was fain
 To efface my work, begin anew,
 Kiss what before I only drew ;
 Ay, laying the red chalk 'twixt my lips,
 With soul to help if the mere lips failed,
 I kissed all right where the drawing ailed,
 Kissed fast the grace that somehow slips
 Still from one's soulless finger-tips.

II

'T is a clay cast, the perfect thing,
 From Hand live once, dead long ago :
 Princess-like it wears the ring
 To fancy's eye, by which we know
 That here at length a master found
 His match, a proud lone soul its mate,
 As soaring genius sank to ground
 And pencil could not emulate
 The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
 To fear almost !—of the limit-line.

Long ago the god, like me
 The worm, learned, each in our degree :
 Looked and loved, learned and drew,
 Drew and learned and loved again,
 While fast the happy minutes flew,
 Till beauty mounted into his brain
 And on the finger which outvied
 His art he placed the ring that 's there,
 Still by fancy's eye descried,
 In token of a marriage rare :
 For him on earth, his art's despair,
 For him in heaven, his soul's fit bride.

III

Little girl with the poor coarse hand
 I turned from to a cold clay cast—
 I have my lesson, understand
 The worth of flesh and blood at last !
 Nothing but beauty in a Hand ?
 Because he could not change the hue,
 Mend the lines and make them true
 To this which met his soul's demand,—
 Would Da Vinci turn from you ?
 I hear him laugh my woes to scorn—
 “ The fool forsooth is all forlorn
 “ Because the beauty, she thinks best,
 “ Lived long ago or was never born,—
 “ Because no beauty bears the test
 “ In this rough peasant Hand ! Confessed
 “ ‘ Art is null and study void ! ’
 “ So sayest thou ? So said not I,
 “ Who thréw the faulty pencil by,
 “ And years instead of hours employed,
 “ Learning the veritable use
 “ Of flesh and bone and nerve beneath
 “ Lines and hue of the outer sheath,

" If haply I might reproduce
 " Pure light unbroken by the prism—
 " One motive of the mechanism
 " Flesh and bone and nerve that make
 " The poorest coarsest human hand
 " An object worthy to be scanned
 " A whole life long for their sole sake.
 " Shall earth and the cramped moment-space
 " Yield the heavenly crowning grace ?
 " Now the parts and then the whole !
 " Who art thou, with stunted soul
 " And stunted body, thus to cry
 " ' I love,—shall that be life's strait dole ?
 " ' I must live beloved or die !'
 " This peasant hand that spins the wool
 " And bakes the bread, why lives it on,
 " Poor and coarse with beauty gone,—
 " What use survives the beauty? Fool !"

Go, little girl with the poor coarse hand !
 I have my lesson, shall understand.

 IX

ON DECK.

I

THERE is nothing to remember in me,
 Nothing I ever said with a grace,
 Nothing I did that you care to see,
 Nothing I was that deserves a place
 In your mind, now I leave you, set you free.

II

Conceded ! In turn, concede to me,
 Such things have been as a mutual flame.

Your soul 's locked fast ; but, love for a key,
 You might let it loose, till I grew the same
 In your eyes, as in mine you stand : strange plea !

III

For then, then, what would it matter to me
 That I was the harsh, ill-favoured one ?
 We both should be like as pea and pea ;
 It was ever so since the world begun :
 So, let me proceed with my reverie.

IV

How strange it were if you had all me,
 As I have all you in my heart and brain,
 You, whose least word brought gloom or glee,
 Who never lifted the hand in vain
 Will hold mine yet, from over the sea !

V

Strange, if a face, when you thought of me,
 Rose like your own face present now,
 With eyes as dear in their due degree,
 Much such a mouth, and as bright a brow,
 Till you saw yourself, while you cried " 'T is She ! "

VI

Well, you may, you must, set down to me
 Love that was life, life that was love ;
 A tenure of breath at your lips' decree,
 A passion to stand as your thoughts approve,
 A rapture to fall where your foot might be.

VII

But did one touch of such love for me
 Come in a word or a look of yours,

Whose words and looks will, circling, flee
Round me and round while life endures,—
Could I fancy “As I feel, thus feels He;”

VIII

Why, fade you might to a thing like me,
And your hair grow these coarse hanks of hair,
Your skin, this bark of a gnarled tree,—
You might turn myself!—should I know or care,
When I should be dead of joy, James Lee?

*RESPECTABILITY.*

I

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?

II

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?

III

I know ! the world proscribes not love ;
 Allows my finger to caress
 Your lips' 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 !



*DÛS ALITER VISUM ; OR, LE BYRON
 DE NOS JOURS.*

I

STOP, let me have the truth of that !
 Is that all true ? I say, the day
 Ten years ago when both of us
 Met on a morning, friends—as thus
 We meet this evening, friends or what ?—

II

Did you—because I took your arm
 And sillily smiled, “ A mass of brass
 “ That sea looks, blazing underneath ! ”
 While up the cliff-road edged with heath,
 We took the turns nor came to harm —

III

Did you consider “ Now makes twice
 “ That I have seen her, walked and talked
 “ With this poor pretty thoughtful thing,
 “ Whose worth I weigh : she tries to sing ;
 “ Draws, hopes in time the eye grows nice ;

IV

“ Reads verse and thinks she understands ;
“ Loves all, at any rate, that ’s great,
“ Good, beautiful ; but much as we
“ Down at the bath-house love the sea,
“ Who breathe its salt and bruise its sands :

V

“ While . . do but follow the fishing-gull
“ That flaps and floats from wave to cave !
“ There ’s the sea-lover, fair my friend !
“ What then ? Be patient, mark and mend !
“ Had you the making of your skull ?”

VI

And did you, when we faced the church
With spire and sad slate roof, aloof
From human fellowship so far,
Where a few graveyard crosses are,
And garlands for the swallows’ perch,—

VII

Did you determine, as we stepped
O’er the lone stone fence, “ Let me get
“ Her for myself, and what ’s the earth
“ With all its art, verse, music, worth—
“ Compared with love, found, gained, and kept ?

VIII

“ Schumann ’s our music-maker now ;
“ Has his march-movement youth and mouth ?
“ Ingres ’s the modern man that paints ;
“ Which will lean on me, of his saints ?
“ Heine for songs ; for kisses how ?”

IX

And did you, when we entered, reached
 The votive frigate, soft aloft
 Riding on air this hundred years,
 Safe-smiling at old hopes and fears.—
 Did you draw profit while she preached?

X

Resolving, " Fools we wise men grow :
 " Yes, I could easily blurt out curt
 " Some question that might find reply
 " As prompt in her stopped lips, dropped eye
 " And rush of red to cheek and brow :

XI

" Thus were a match made, sure and fast,
 " 'Mid the blue weed-flowers round the mound
 " Where, issuing, we shall stand and stay
 " For one more look at baths and bay,
 " Sands, sea-gulls, and the old church last—

XII

" A match 'twixt me, bent, wigged and lamed,
 " Famous, however, for verse and worse,
 " Sure of the Fortieth spare Arm-chair
 " When gout and glory seat me there,
 " So, one whose love-freaks pass unblamed,—

XIII

" And this young beauty, round and sound
 " As a mountain-apple, youth and truth
 " With loves and doves, at all events
 " With money in the Three per Cents ;
 " Whose choice of me would seem profound :—

XIV

- “ She might take me as I take her.
 “ Perfect the hour would pass, alas !
 “ Climb high, love high, what matter? Still,
 “ Feet, feelings, must descend the hill :
 “ An hour’s perfection can’t recur.

XV

- “ Then follows Paris and full time
 “ For both to reason : ‘ Thus with us
 “ She ’ll sigh, ‘ Thus girls give body and soul
 “ ‘ At first word, think they gain the goal,
 “ ‘ When ’t is the starting-place they climb !

XVI

- “ ‘ My friend makes verse and gets renown ;
 “ ‘ Have they all fifty years, his peers ?
 “ ‘ He knows the world, firm, quiet and gay ;
 “ ‘ Boys will become as much one day :
 “ ‘ They ’re fools ; he cheats, with beard less brown.

XVII

- “ ‘ For boys say, *Love me or I die!*
 “ ‘ He did not say, *The truth is, youth*
 “ ‘ *I want, who am old and know too much ;*
 “ ‘ *I’d catch youth: lend me sight and touch!*
 “ ‘ *Drop heart’s blood where life’s wheels grate dry!*’

XVIII

- “ While I should make rejoinder”—(then
 It was, no doubt, you ceased that least
 Light pressure of my arm in yours)
 “ ‘ I can conceive of cheaper cures
 “ ‘ For a yawning-fit o’er books and men.

XIX

“ ‘What? All I am, was, and might be,
 “ ‘All, books taught, art brought, life’s whole strife,
 “ ‘Painful results since precious, just
 “ ‘Were fitly exchanged, in wise disgust,
 “ ‘For two cheeks freshened by youth and sea?

XX

“ ‘All for a nosegay!—what came first;
 “ ‘With fields in flower, untried each side;
 “ ‘I rally, need my books and men,
 “ ‘And find a nosegay:’ drop it, then,
 “ ‘No match yet made for best or worst!’”

XXI

That ended me. You judged the porch
 We left by, Norman; took our look
 At sea and sky; wondered so few
 Find out the place for air and view;
 Remarked the sun began to scorch;

XXII

Descended, soon regained the baths,
 And then, good-bye! Years ten since then:
 Ten years! We meet: you tell me, now,
 By a window-seat for that cliff-brow,
 On carpet-stripes for those sand-paths.

XXIII

Now I may speak: you fool, for all
 Your lore! WHO made things plain in vain?
 What was the sea for? What, the grey
 Sad church, that solitary day,
 Crosses and graves and swallows’ call?

XXIV

Was there nought better than to enjoy ?
No feat which, done, would make time break
And let us pent-up creatures through
Into eternity, our due ?
No forcing earth teach heaven's employ ?

XXV

No wise beginning, here and now,
What cannot grow complete (earth's feat)
And heaven must finish, there and then ?
No tasting earth's true food for men,
Its sweet in sad, its sad in sweet ?

XXVI

No grasping at love, gaining a share
O' the sole spark from God's life at strife
With death, so, sure of range above
The limits here ? For us and love,
Failure ; but, when God fails, despair.

XXVII

This you call wisdom ? Thus you add
Good unto good again, in vain ?
You loved, with body worn and weak ;
I loved, with faculties to seek :
Were both loves worthless since ill-clad ?

XXVIII

Let the mere star-fish in his vault
Crawl in a wash of weed, indeed,
Rose-jacynth to the finger-tips :
He, whole in body and soul, outstrips
Man, found with either in default.

XXIX

But what 's whole, can increase no more,
 Is dwarfed and dies, since here 's its sphere.
 The devil laughed at you in his sleeve !
 You knew not ? That I well believe ;
 Or you had saved two souls : nay, four.

XXX

For Stephanie sprained last night her wrist,
 Ankle or something. " Pooh," cry you ?
 At any rate she danced, all say,
 Vilely ; her vogue has had its day.
 Here comes my husband from his whist.

*CONFESSIONS.*

I

WHAT is he buzzing in my ears ?
 " Now that I come to die,
 " Do I view the world as a vale of tears ?"
 Ah, reverend sir, not I !

II

What I viewed there once, what I view again
 Where the physic bottles stand
 On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,
 With a wall to my bedside hand.

III

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
 From a house you could descry
 O'er the garden-wall : is the curtain blue
 Or green to a healthy eye ?

IV

To mine, it serves for the old June weather
 Blue above lane and wall ;
 And that farthest bottle labelled " Ether "
 Is the house o'er-topping all.

V

At a terrace, somewhat near the stopper,
 There watched for me, one June,
 A girl : I know, sir, it 's improper,
 My poor mind 's out of tune.

VI

Only, there was a way . . . you crept
 Close by the side, to dodge
 Eyes in the house, two eyes except :
 They styled their house " The Lodge."

VII

What right had a lounge up their lane ?
 But, by creeping very close,
 With the good wall's help,—their eyes might strain
 And stretch themselves to Oes,

VIII

Yet never catch her and me together,
 As she left the attic, there,
 By the rim of the bottle labelled " Ether,"
 And stole from stair to stair,

IX

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,
 We loved, sir—used to meet :
 How sad and bad and mad it was—
 But then, how it was sweet !

THE HOUSEHOLDER.

I

SAVAGE I was sitting in my house, late, lone :

Dreary, weary with the long day's work :

Head of me, heart of me, stupid as a stone :

Tongue-tied now, now blaspheming like a Turk ;

When, in a moment, just a knock, call, cry,

Half a pang and all a rapture, there again were we !—

“ What, and is it really you again ? ” quoth I :

“ I again, what else did you expect ? ” quoth She.

II

“ Never mind, hie away from this old house—

“ Every crumbling brick embrowned with sin and
shame !

“ Quick, in its corners ere certain shapes arouse !

“ Let them—every devil of the night—lay claim,

“ Make and mend, or rap and rend, for me ! Goodbye ;

“ God be their guard from disturbance at their glee,

“ Till, crash, comes down the carcass in a heap ! ” quoth I :

“ Nay, but there 's a decency required ! ” quoth She.

III

“ Ah, but if you knew how time has dragged, days,
nights !

“ All the neighbour-talk with man and maid—such
men !

“ All the fuss and trouble of street-sounds, window-sights :

“ All the worry of flapping door and echoing roof : and
then,

“ All the fancies . . . Who were they had leave, dared
try

“ Darker arts that almost struck despair in me ?

“ If you knew but how I dwelt down here ! ” quoth I :

“ And was I so better off up there ? ” quoth She.

IV

“ Help and get it over ! *Re-united to his wife*

“ (How draw up the paper lets the parish-people know ?)

“ *Lies M. or N., departed from this life,*

“ *Day the this or that, month and year the so and so,*

“ What i’ the way of final flourish ? Prose, verse ? Try !

“ *Affliction sore, long time he bore, or, what is it to be ?*

“ *Till God did please to grant him ease.* Do end ! ” quoth I :

“ I end with—Love is all and Death is nought ! ” quoth
She.



TRAY.

SING me a hero ! Quench my thirst

Of soul, ye bards !

Quoth Bard the first :

“ Sir Olaf, the good knight, did don

“ His helm and eke his habergeon . . . ”

Sir Olaf and his bard——!

“ That sin-scathed brow ” (quoth Bard the second),

“ That eye wide ope as though Fate beckoned

“ My hero to some steep, beneath

“ Which precipice smiled tempting Death . . . ”

You too without your host have reckoned !

“ A beggar-child ” (let ’s hear this third !)

“ Sat on a quay’s edge : like a bird

“ Sang to herself at careless play,

“ And fell into the stream. ‘ Dismay !

“ ‘ Help, you the standers-by ! ’ None stirred.

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

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

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

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

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

" ' John, go and catch—or, if needs be,
 " ' Purchase that animal for me !
 " ' By vivisection, at expense
 " ' Of half-an-hour and eighteen pence,
 " ' How brain secretes dog's soul, we 'll see !"

CAVALIER TUNES.

I

MARCHING ALONG.

I

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

II

God for King Charles ! Pym and such carles
 To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles !
 Cavaliers, up ! Lips from the cup,
 Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
 Till you 're—

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

III

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell
 Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well !
 England, good cheer ! Rupert is near !
 Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

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

IV

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

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

II

GIVE A ROUSE.

I

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

II

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

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

III

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

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

III

BOOT AND SADDLE.

I

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

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

II

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

III

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

IV

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



BEFORE.

I

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 !

II

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 ?

III

Who 's the culprit of them ? How must he conceive
 God—the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve,

“ ’T is but decent to profess oneself beneath her :
 “ Still, one must not be too much in earnest, either ! ”

IV

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.

V

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.

VI

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

VII

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 !

VIII

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

IX

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.

X

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 !



AFTER.

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 !



HERVÉ RIEL.

I

ON the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,

Did the English fight the French,—woe to France !
And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter thro' the blue,
Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks
pursue,

Came crowding ship on ship to St. Malo on the Rance,
With the English fleet in view.

II

'T was the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full
chase ;

First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship,
Damfreville ;

Close on him fled, great and small,

Twenty-two good ships in all ;

And they signalled to the place

“ Help the winners of a race !

“ Get us guidance, give us harbour, take us quick—or,
quicker still,

“ Here 's the English can and will !”

III

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on
board ;

“ Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to
pass ?” laughed they :

“ Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage
scarred and scored,

“ Shall the '*Formidable*' here with her twelve and eighty
guns

“ Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow
way,

“ Trust to enter where ’t is ticklish for a craft of twenty
 tons,
 “ And with flow at full beside ?
 “ Now, ’t is slackest ebb of tide.
 “ Reach the mooring ? Rather say,
 “ While rock stands or water runs,
 “ Not a ship will leave the bay !”

IV

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

V

“ Give the word !” But no such word
 Was ever spoke or heard ;
 For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all
 these
 —A Captain ? A Lieutenant ? A Mate—first, second,
 third ?
 No such man of mark, and meet
 With his betters to compete !
 But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for the
 fleet,
 A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

VI

And, "What mockery or malice have we here?" cries

Hervé Riel :

"Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards,
fools, or rogues?"

"Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the
soundings, tell

"On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell

"'Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river
disembogues?"

"Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the
lying 's for?"

"Morn and eve, night and day,

"Have I piloted your bay,

"Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.

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

"Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe
me there 's a way!"

"Only let me lead the line,

"Have the biggest ship to steer,

"Get this '*Formidable*' clear,

"Make the others follow mine,

"And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know
well,

"Right to Solidor past Grève,

"And there lay them safe and sound ;

"And if one ship misbehave,

"—Keel so much as grate the ground,

"Why, I 've nothing but my life,—here 's my head!"
cries Hervé Riel.

VII

Not a minute more to wait.

"Steer us in, then, small and great!"

“ Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron !”
cried its chief.

Captains, give the sailor place !

He is Admiral, in brief.

Still the north-wind, by God's grace !

See the noble fellow's face

As the big ship, with a bound,

Clears the entry like a hound,

Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide sea's
profound !

See, safe thro' shoal and rock,

How they follow in a flock,

Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the
ground,

Not a spar that comes to grief !

The peril, see, is past,

All are harboured to the last,

And just as Hervé Riel hollas “ Anchor !”—sure as fate

Up the English come, too late !

VIII

So, the storm subsides to calm :

They see the green trees wave

On the heights o'erlooking Grève.

Hearts that bled are stanch'd with balm.

“ Just our rapture to enhance,

“ Let the English rake the bay,

“ Gnash their teeth and glare askance

“ As they cannonade away !

“'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance !”

How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's counte-
nance !

Out burst all with one accord,

“ This is Paradise for Hell !

“ Let France, let France's King

“ Thank the man that did the thing !”

What a shout, and all one word,
 "Hervé Riel!"
 As he stepped in front once more,
 Not a symptom of surprise
 In the frank blue Breton eyes,
 Just the same man as before.

IX

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

X

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

XI

Name and deed alike are lost :

Not a pillar nor a post

In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell ;

Not a head in white and black

On a single fishing smack,

In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack

All that France saved from the fight whence England
bore the bell.

Go to Paris : rank on rank

Search the heroes flung pell-mell

On the Louvre, face and flank !

You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé
Riel.

So, for better and for worse,

Hervé Riel, accept my verse !

In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more

Save the squadron, honour France, love thy wife the
Belle Aurore !



IN A BALCONY.

CONSTANCE *and* NORBERT.

Nor. Now !

Con. Not now !

Nor. Give me them again, those hands—

Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs !

Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through !

You cruelest, 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 !

Con. Do, and ruin us !

Nor. 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

Con. 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 cognisant
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 ! ”
Nor. The world !

Con. 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 ?

Nor. You pray for—what, in vain ?

Con. 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 !

Nor. Thank God !

Con. 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,
 The junction of two crowns, on her sole head,
 Her house had only dreamed of anciently :
 That this mere dream is grown a stable truth,
 To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise ?
 Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved
 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 ;
 Nay, very declaration of which choice
 Will turn the scale and neutralise your work :
 At best she will forgive you, if she can.
 You think I 'll let you choose—her cousin's hand ?

Nor. Wait. First, do you retain your old belief
 The Queen is generous,—nay, is just ?

Con. 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, 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, which she overlooked, grew play.
 “ How shall your gratitude discharge itself?
 “ Give me her hand !”

Nor.

And still I urge the same.

Is the Queen just? just—generous or no !

Con. 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 recognise its given things and facts,
 The fight of giants or the feast of gods,
 Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,
 Chases and battles, the whole earth's display,

Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit—
 And who shall question that she knows them all,
 In better semblance than the things outside?
 Yet bring into the silent gallery
 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?
 Yet 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 truth's 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!”
 Your 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 ?

Nor. The Queen 's the Queen,
I am myself—no picture, but alive
In every nerve and every muscle, here
At the palace-window o'er the people's street,
As she in the gallery where the pictures glow :
The good of life is precious to us both.
She cannot love ; what do I want with rule ?
When first I saw your face a year ago
I knew my life's good, my soul heard one voice—
“ The woman yonder, there 's no use of life
“ But just to obtain her ! heap earth's woes in one
“ And bear them—make a pile of all earth's joys
“ And spurn them, as they help or help not this ;
“ Only, obtain her ! ”—how was it to be ?
I found you were the cousin of the Queen ;
I must then serve the Queen to get to you.
No other way. Suppose there had been one,
And I, by saying prayers to some white star
With promise of my body and my soul,
Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no ?
Instead, there was the Queen to serve ! I served,
Helped, did what other servants failed to do.
Neither she sought nor I declared my end.
Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,
I therefore name you as that recompense.
She dreamed that such a thing could never be ?
Let her wake now. She thinks there was more cause
In love of power, high fame, pure loyalty ?
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 !

Con. 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 become 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 that scruple of yours
 Which broke the council up?—to bring about
 One minute's meeting in the corridor!
 And then the sudden sleights, strange secrecies,
 Complots 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 compression'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 are ashamed of ours? The best you 'll gain
 Will be—the Queen grants all that you require,
 Concedes the cousin, rids herself of you
 And me at once, and gives us ample leave
 To live like our five hundred happy friends.
 The world will show us with officious hand
 Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,
 Where we so oft have stolen across its traps!
 Get the world's warrant, ring the falcon's feet,
 And make it duty to be bold and swift,
 Which long ago was nature. Have it so!
 Hawk never hawked by rights till flung from fist?
 Oh, the man's thought; no woman 's such a fool.

Nor. 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 secrecies!

Set free my love, and see what love can do
Shown in my life—what work will spring from that !
The world is used to have its business done
On other grounds, find great effects produced
For power's sake, fame's sake, motives in men's mouth.
So, good : but let my low ground shame their high !
Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true !
And love 's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest !
I choose to wear you stamped all over me,
Your name upon my forehead and my breast,
You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge,
That men may see, all over, you in me—
That pale loves may die out of their pretence
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 't is 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
O' the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,
Suppressed 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 stand abrupt, distinct,

The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,
 The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre,
 The Nymph to her fawn, the Silence to her rose :
 See God's approval on his universe !
 Let us do so—aspire to live as these
 In harmony with truth, ourselves being true !
 Take the first way, and let the second come !
 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 !

Con. 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 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 a face looks black on us ?
 I do not bid you wake her tenderness,
 (That were vain truly—none is left to wake)
 But, let her think her justice is engaged

To take the shape of tenderness, and mark
 If she'll not coldly pay its warmest debt !
 Does she love me, I ask you ? not a whit :
 Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged
 To help a kinswoman, she took me up—
 Did more on that bare ground than other loves
 Would do on greater argument. For me,
 I have no equivalent of such cold kind
 To pay her with, but love alone to give
 If I give anything. I give her love :
 I feel I ought to help her, and I will.
 So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice
 That women hate a debt as men a gift.
 If I were you, I could obtain this grace—
 Could lay the whole I did to love's account
 Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—
 Declaring her success my recompense ;
 It would be so, in fact : what were it else ?
 And then, once, loose her generosity,—
 Oh, how I see it ! Oh, were I but you
 To turn it, let it seem to move itself,
 And make it offer what I really take,
 Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,
 Her value as the next thing to the Queen's—
 Since none love Queens directly, none dare that,
 And a thing's shadow or a name's mere echo
 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)
 You'd find the same gift yielded with a grace,
 Which, if you make the least show to extort . . .
 —You'll see ! and when you have ruined both of us,
 Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude !

Nor. Then, if I turn it that way, you consent ?

'T is not my way ; I have more hope in truth :
 Still, if you won't have truth—why, this indeed,
 Were scarcely false, as I 'd express the sense.
 Will you remain here ?

Con. 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 everything—
 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.

Nor. Remain here. How you know me !

Con. Ah, but still——

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

Enter the QUEEN.

Queen. Constance ? She is here as he said. Speak quick !

Is it so ? Is it true or false ? One word ?

Con. True.

Queen. Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee !

Con. Madam ?

Queen. I love you, Constance, from my soul.
 Now say once more, with any words you will,
 'T is true, all true, as true as that I speak.

Con. 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 being loved, as truly as yon palm
 The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.

Con. 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 !

Con. 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 !

Con. 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 !

Con. 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.

Con. 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, gipsy's or street baladine's !

Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech

Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,

Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,

Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,

Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,

While not a man of them 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 sentinei
 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.

Con. Who could have comprehended ?

Queen. Ay, who—who ?

Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.
 Nor they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps
 It comes too late—would you but tell the truth.

Con. 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 lure it on !
 I felt, I saw, he loved—loved somebody.
 And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,
 I did believe this while 't was you he loved.

Con. 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 so 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 !

Con. Thanks !

Queen. And the word was on my lips
 When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear
 A mere calm statement of his just desire
 For payment of his labour. When—O heaven,
 How can I tell you ? cloud was on my eyes
 And thunder in my ears at that first word
 Which told ’t was love of me, of me, did all—
 He loved me—from the first step to the last,
 Loved me !

Con. 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 the 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 grey ;
 But joy ere now has brought hair brown again
 And joy will bring the cheek’s red back, I feel.

I could sing once too ; that was in my youth.
 Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,
 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 !

Con.

Then calm yourself.

Queen. See, I am old—look here, you happy girl !
 I will not play the fool, deceive myself ;
 'T is 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 't is not beauty makes the lasting love—
 They spend a day with such and tire the next :
 They like soul,—well then, they like phantasy,
 Novelty even. Let us confess the truth,
 Horrible though it be, that prejudice,
 Prescription . . . curses ! they will love a queen
 They will, they do : and will not, does not—he ?

Con. How can he ? You are wedded ; 't is 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.

Con. 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,
 'T were best thus ordered. I am thankful now,
 Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
 And bless God simply, or should almost fear
 To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.
 Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate !
 How strong I am ! Could Norbert see me now !

Con. 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 yourself 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.

Con. 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 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 ! 'T is as different from dreams,
 From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,
 As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.
 The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon !
 [*She goes out, leaving CONSTANCE. Dance-music
 from within.*]

NORBERT *enters.*

Nor. Well? we have but one minute and one word !

Con. I am yours, Norbert !

Nor. Yes, mine.

Con. Not till now !

You were mine. Now I give myself to you.

Nor. Constance?

Con. Your own ! I know the thriftier way
 Of giving—haply, 't is 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, preserve
 Exhaustless to 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,—anything but think
 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.

Nor. I take you and thank God.

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

Nor. With this day's heat
 We shall go on through years of cold

Con. 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
 For ever 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.

Nor. 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 whereto 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.
 'T is the sparks' long succession one by one
 Shall show you, in the end, what fire was crammed
 In that mere stone you struck: how could you know,
 If it lay ever unproved in your sight,
 As now my heart lies? your own warmth would hide
 Its coldness, were it cold.

Con. But how prove, how ?

Nor. Prove in my life, you ask ?

Con. Quick, Norbert—how ?

Nor. 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.

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

Nor. And loves one's painting, and one's writing, then,
And not one's mistress ! All is best, believe,
And we best as no other than we are.
We live, and they experiment on life—
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof
To overlook the farther. Let us be
The thing they look at ! I might take your face
And write of it and paint it—to what end ?
For whom ? what pale dictatress in the air
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form
With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life
She makes despised for ever ? You are mine,
Made for me, not for others in the world,
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,
The cold calm power to see how fair you look.
I come to you ; I leave you not, to write
Or paint. You are, I am : let Rubens there
Paint us !

Con. So, best !

Nor. I understand your soul.
You live, and rightly sympathize with life,
With action, power, success. This way is straight ;

And time were short beside, to let me change
The craft my childhood learnt : my craft shall serve.
Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
Manure their barren lives, and force the fruit
First for themselves, and afterward for me
In the due tithe ; the task of some one man,
Through 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,
And instincts of the heart that teach the head?
What if the people have discerned at length
The dawn of the next nature, the new man
Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,
And who, they trust, shall find them out new ways
To heights as new 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
And consummation of the spirit-work,
Some vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,
While rounded fair for lower men to see
The Graces in a dance all recognize
With turbulent applause and laughs of heart !
So triumph ever shall renew itself ;
Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,
Ever begin . . .

Con. I ever helping?

Nor. Thus!

[*As he embraces her, the QUEEN enters.*]

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

Nor. Constance?

Con. 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 hold 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—rewarding kiss.

Nor. Constance, it is a dream—ah, see, you smile !

Con. 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—'t was I
 Who served to prove your soul accessible,
 I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place
 When else 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 :
 'T is 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 !

Nor. 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.

Con. Nay, madam, 't is 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
 Anything—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 !

Nor. 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)
 —She may be right : I may do well to speak
 And make authentic what appears a dream
 To even myself. For, what she says, is truth.
 Yes, Norbert—what you spoke just 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 't is 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. 'T is very strange,
 But takes a happy ending—in your love

Which mine meets : be it so ! as you choose me,
So I choose you.

Nor. 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 such in me.

I joy that thus you test me ere you grant
The dearest richest beauteousest and best
Of women to my arms : 't is like yourself.

So—back again into my part's set words—

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.

Con. Stay—not hers, the trap—

Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst of all !

He is too cunning, madam ! It was I,

I Norbert, who . . .

Nor. You, was it, Constance ? Then,

But for the grace of this divinest hour

Which gives me you, I might not pardon here !

I am the Queen's ; she only knows my brain :

She may experiment 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 !

Con. Tush ! I have said it, did I not say it all ?

The life, for her—the heart-beats, for her sake !

Nor. 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 dare 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 playful friend,

“For—what 's the trifle he requites me with?”

—I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,

That two may mock her heart if it succumb?

No: fearing God and standing 'neath His heaven,

I would not dare insult a woman so,

Were she the meanest woman in the world,

And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

Con. Norbert!

Nor.

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 please 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.

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

If thus you have taken jest for earnest—thus

Loved me in earnest. . . .

Nor.

Ah, no jest holds here!

Where is the laughter in which jest breaks up,

And what this horror that grows palpable?

Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony?
 Have I done ill? Have I not spoken truth?
 How could I other? Was it not your test,
 To try me, what my love for Constance meant?
 Madam, your royal soul itself approves,
 The first, that I should choose thus! so one takes
 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—'t is 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!

[*The QUEEN goes out.*]

Con. Feel my heart; let it die against your own!

Nor. Against my own. Explain not; let this be!
 This is life's height.

Con. Yours, yours, yours!

Nor. You and I—

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

Con. Found, found!

Nor. Sweet, never fear what she can do!

We are past harm now.

Con. On the breast of God.

I thought of men—as if you were a man.

Tempting him with a crown!

Nor. This must end here:

It is too perfect.

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

Nor. Oh, some death
Will run its sudden finger round this spark
And sever us from the rest !

Con. And so do well.
Now the doors open.

Nor. 'T is the guard comes.

Con. Kiss !



OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE.

I

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 snapped, no dumb thunder rolled
In the valley beneath where, white and wide
And washed by the morning water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

II

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 ?

III

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
 Could you play me false who loved you so ?
 Some slights if a certain heart endures
 Yet it feels, I would have your fellows know !
 I' 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.

IV

On the arch where olives overhead
 Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
 (That sharp-curved leaf which 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.

V

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.

VI

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 the 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.

VII

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 ?
'T is their holiday now, in any case.

VIII

Much they reckon of your praise and you !
But the wronged great souls—can they be quit
Of a world where their work is all 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 :
A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

IX

And here where your praise might yield returns,
And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
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.)

X

There stands the Master. 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 then, *sic 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 ?
 'T is looking downward makes one dizzy.

XI

" 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) made new in marble.

XII

So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,
 As you might have been, as you cannot be ;
 Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there :
 And 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.

XIII

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am ?
 Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
 You would prove 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.

XIV

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
 Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,
 Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
 You learned—to submit is a mortal's duty.
 —When I say “you” 't is 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 clear plan.

XV

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
 Be greater and grander 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.

XVI.

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, no-wise polished.
 They stand for our copy, and, once invested
 With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

XVII

'T is 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 less rapidly, Art most cherishes.
 Thyself shalt 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.

XVIII

Is it true that we are now, and shall be hereafter,
 But what and where depend on life's minute ?
 Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
 Our first step out of the gulf or in it ?
 Shall Man, such step within his endeavour,
 Man's face, have no more play and action
 Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
 Or grief, an eternal petrification ?

XIX

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

XX

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon 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 ; 't is no idle quiddit.

The worthies began a revolution,
 Which if on earth you intend to acknowledge,
 Why, honour them now ! (ends my allocution)
 Nor confer your degree when the folks leave college.

XXI

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.

XXII

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
 By the means of Evil that Good is best,
 And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven's
 serene,—
 When our 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.

XXIII

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 !

XXIV

Their ghosts still stand, as I said before,
 Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
 Blocked up, 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 quick-lime.)

XXV

When they go at length, with such a shaking
 Of heads o'er the old delusion, sadly
 Each master his 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, how a captive might be out-ferreted ?
 Why is it they never remember me ?

XXVI

Not that I expect the great Bigordi,
 Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose ;
 Nor the wronged Lippino ; and not a word I
 Say of a scrap of Frà 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 ?
 Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco ?

XXVII

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 ?

XXXVIII

Margheritone of Arezzo,
 With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret
 (Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
 You bald old saturnine poll-clawed parrot ?)
 Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
 Where in the foreground kneels the donor ?
 If such remain, as is my conviction,
 The hoarding it does you but little honour.

XXIX

They pass ; for them the panels may thrill,
 The tempera grow alive and tinglish ;
 Their pictures are left to the mercies still
 Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English
 Who, seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
 Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno
 At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
 Before some clay-cold vile Carlino !

XXX

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

XXXI

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
 (Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
 Patient on altar-step planting a weary toe !
 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 ?

XXXII

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain dotard
 Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
 To the worst side of the Mont St. Gothard,
 We shall begin by way of rejoicing ;
 None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
 Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer,
 Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
 Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII

This time we 'll shoot better game and bag 'em hot
 No mere display at the stone of Dante,
 But a kind of sober Witanagemot
 (Ex : " Casa Guidi," *quod videas ante*)
 Shall ponder, once 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

XXXIV

How we shall prologuize, how we shall perorate,
 Utter fit things upon art and history,
 Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood at zero rate,
 Make of the want of the age no mystery ;

Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
 Show—monarchy ever its uncouth cub licks
 Out of the bear's shape into Chimæra's,
 While Pure Art's birth is still the republic's !

XXXV

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt Tuscan,
 Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an " *issimo* ;'
 To end now our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
 And turn the bell-tower's *alt* to *altissimo* :
 And, fine as the beak of a young beccaccia,
 The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
 Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
 Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

XXXVI

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
 Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,
 Like the golden hope of the world, un baffled
 Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire
 While, " God and the People " plain for its motto,
 Thence the new tricolour flaps at the sky ?
 At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
 And Florence together, the first am I !

NOTE.—The space left here tempts to a word on the line about Apollo the snake-slayer, which my friend Professor Colvin condemns, believing that the God of the Belvedere grasps no bow, but the Ægis, as described in the 15th Iliad. Surely the text represents that portentous object (θούριν, δεινήν, ἀμφιδάσειαν, ἀριπρεπέ'—μαρμαρέην) as " shaken violently " or " held immovably " by both hands, not a single one and that the left hand :

ἀλλὰ σύ γ' ἐν χεῖρεσσι λάβ' αἰγίδα θυσανόεσσαν
 τὴν μάλ' ἐπισσεύων φοβέειν ἥρωας Ἀχαιοῦς,

and so on, τὴν ἄρ' ὃ γ' ἐν χεῖρεσσι ἐλων—χερσὶν ἔχ' ἀτρέμα κ. τ. λ. More-over, while he shook it he "shouted enormously," σείσ', ἐπὶ δ' αὐτὸς αὔσε μάλα μέγα, which the statue does not. Presently when Teukros, on the other side, plies the bow, it is τόξον ἔχων ἐν χειρὶ παλίντονον. Besides, by the act of discharging an arrow, the right arm and hand are thrown back as we see : a quite gratuitous and theatrical display in the case supposed. The

conjecture of Flaxman that the statue was suggested by the bronze Apollon Alexikakos of Kalamis, mentioned by Pausanias, remains probable,—though the “hardness” which Cicero considers to distinguish the artist’s workmanship from that of Muron is not by any means apparent in our marble copy, if it be one.—Feb. 16, 1880.



BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY.

No more wine? then we 'll push back chairs and talk.
 A final glass for me, though : 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 't is 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 :
 'T is 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 sceptical at times :
 “ How otherwise ? I like him, I confess ! ”
Che che, 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 shut 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 : harken why !
 The common problem, yours, 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 !
'T were 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 was 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 afterward, when long ere half seas over,
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 ;
 "'T is 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 statedly, 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, though 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 for ever, pray?
 You 'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think!
 In no wise! 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 be indeed a road;

While if he views it from the waste itself,
 Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,
 Not vague, mistakeable ! 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 !
 All we have gained then by our unbelief
 Is 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 o' 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 !
 'T is 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 hand
 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 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 o' 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 may ;
 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 dare,
 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 fellow 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, but 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 I wear though over-rich—
Something imposed on me, no choice of mine ;
No fancy-dress worn for pure fancy's sake
And despicable therefore ! now folks 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 did all for me I say.

But, friend,
We speak of what is ; not of what might be,
And how't were better if 't were 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 prove 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,
Or 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 should judge ?
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—
 That even your prime men who appraise their kind
 Are men still, catch a wheel within a wheel,
 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, demirep
 That loves and saves her soul 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 who write apace,
 Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less—
 You disbelieve ! Who wonders and who cares ?
 Lord So-and so—his coat bedropped 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 whom at least do you admire ?
 Present your own perfection, 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 taste 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 o' the world, for which you
 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 !
 Can I mistake for some clear word of God
 (Which were my ample warrant for it all)
 His puff of hazy instinct, idle talk,
 "The State, that 's I," quack-nonsense about crowns,
 And (when one beats the man to his last hold)
 A 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 dimmest 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, without 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
 Hamlet, Othello—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 Shakespeare, 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 Shakespeare, let the well alone !
 Why should I try to be what now I am ?
 If I 'm no Shakespeare, as too probable,—
 His power and consciousness and self-delight
 And all we want in common, shall I find—
 Trying for ever ? 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 ’ll 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 Shakespeare’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 Shakespeare 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’s fall, 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, Shakespeare 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 Saint Paul ! 't would press its pay, you
 think ?

Then add there 's still that plaguy 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 you lack faith,” you cry,
 “ You 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,
 “ No more available to do faith's work
 “ Than unbelief like mine. 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,
 Like you 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 contradiction 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 disemprisoned 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, each 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 't was 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, i' 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 still 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, declassifify 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 hold
 About the need of trial 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 our 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 prizes 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,
 Shall do hereafter what I do meanwhile.
 Let us concede (gratuitously though)
 Next life relieves the soul of body, yields
 Pure spiritual enjoyment : well, my friend,
 Why lose this life i' the meantime, 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 for ever 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,
 Halfway into the next, which having reached,

It shoots with corresponding foolery
 Halfway 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 such life,
 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, act up to our truth perceived
 However feebly. Do then,—act away !
 'T is 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 thieve

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 field
 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 analysed 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,
 In case 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, to 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 angels, neither are they 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 Pan'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 there 's any cloud at all.
 You take the simple 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 this the pleasant pasture of our 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 mates so well
 You cannot please yourself, offending them ;
 Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,
 You weigh your pleasure with their butts and bleats
 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 wethers' 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 have both 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, who cut curls
From your fat lap-dog's ear to grace a brooch—
Dukes, who 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, chess, Anacreon's Greek.
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 for ever. 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 one
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 the 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 exceptional

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 druggot '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 its 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 choose, 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*
Episcopis, 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 a mind
 Long rumped, till creased consciousness lay smooth.

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 ('t 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 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.



MR. SLUDGE, "THE MEDIUM."

Now, don't, sir ! Don't expose me ! Just this once !
 This was the first and only time, I 'll swear,—
 Look at me,—see, I kneel,—the only time,
 I swear, I ever cheated,—yes, by the soul
 Of Her who hears—(your sainted mother, sir !)
 All, except this last accident, was truth—
 This little kind of slip !—and even this,
 It was your own wine, sir, the good champagne,
 (I took it for Catawba, you 're so kind)
 Which put the folly in my head !

"Get up?"

You still inflict on me that terrible face ?

You show no mercy?—Not for Her dear sake,
 The sainted spirit's, whose soft breath even now
 Blows on my cheek—(don't you feel something, sir?)
 You 'll tell?

Go tell, then! Who the devil cares
 What such a rowdy chooses to . . .

Aie—aie—aie!

Please, sir! your thumbs are through my windpipe, sir!
 Ch—ch!

Well, sir, I hope you 've done it now!
 Oh Lord! I little thought, sir, yesterday,
 When your departed mother spoke those words
 Of peace through me, and moved you, sir, so much,
 You gave me—(very kind it was of you)
 These shirt-studs—(better take them back again,
 Please, sir)—yes, little did I think so soon
 A trifle of trick, all through a glass too much
 Of his own champagne, would change my best of friends
 Into an angry gentleman!

Though, 't was wrong.

I don't contest the point; your anger 's just:
 Whatever put such folly in my head,
 I know 't was wicked of me. There 's a thick
 Dusk undeveloped spirit (I 've observed)
 Owes me a grudge—a negro's, I should say,
 Or else an Irish emigrant's; yourself
 Explained the case so well last Sunday, sir,
 When we had summoned Franklin to clear up
 A point about those shares i' the telegraph:
 Ay, and he swore . . . or might it be Tom Paine? . . .
 Thumping the table close by where I crouched,
 He 'd do me soon a mischief: that 's come true!
 Why, now your face clears! I was sure it would!
 Then, this one time . . . don't take your hand away,
 Through yours I surely kiss your mother's hand . . .

You 'll promise to forgive me?—or, at least,
 Tell nobody of this? Consider, sir!
 What harm can mercy do? Would but the shade
 Of the venerable dead—one just vouchsafe
 A rap or tip! What bit of paper 's here?
 Suppose we take a pencil, let her write,
 Make the least sign, she urges on her child
 Forgiveness? There now! Eh? Oh! 'T was your
 foot,
 And not a natural creak, sir?

Answer, then!

Once, twice, thrice . . . see, I 'm waiting to say "thrice!"
 All to no use? No sort of hope for me?
 It 's all to post to Greeley's newspaper?

What? If I told you all about the tricks?
 Upon my soul!—the whole truth, and nought else,
 And how there 's been some falsehood—for your part,
 Will you engage to pay my passage out,
 And hold your tongue until I 'm safe on board?
 England 's the place, not Boston—no offence!
 I see what makes you hesitate: don't fear!
 I mean to change my trade and cheat no more,
 Yes, this time really it 's upon my soul!
 Be my salvation!—under Heaven, of course.
 I 'll tell some queer things. Sixty Vs must do.
 A trifle, though, to start with! We 'll refer
 The question to this table?

How you 're changed!

Then split the difference; thirty more, we 'll say.
 Ay, but you leave my presents! Else I 'll swear
 'T was all through those: you wanted yours again,
 So, picked a quarrel with me, to get them back!
 Tread on a worm, it turns, sir! If I turn,
 Your fault! 'T is you 'll have forced me! Who's obliged

To give up life yet try no self-defence?
At all events, I 'll run the risk. Eh?

Done!

May I sit, sir? This dear old table, now!
Please, sir, a parting egg-nogg and cigar!
I 've been so happy with you! Nice stuffed chairs,
And sympathetic sideboards; what an end
To all the instructive evenings! (It 's alight.)
Well, nothing lasts, as Bacon came and said.
Here goes,—but keep your temper, or I 'll scream!

Fol-lol-the-rido-liddle-iddie-ol!

You see, sir, it 's your own fault more than mine;
It 's all your fault, you curious gentlefolk!
You 're prigs,—excuse me,—like to look so spry
So clever, while you cling by half a claw
To the perch whereon you puff yourselves at roost,
Such piece of self-conceit as serves for perch
Because you chose it, so it must be safe.
Oh, otherwise you 're sharp enough! You spy
Who slips, who slides, who holds by help of wing,
Wanting real foothold,—who can't keep upright
On the other perch, your neighbour chose, not you:
There 's no outwitting you respecting him!
For instance, men love money—that, you know—
And what men do to gain it: well, suppose
A poor lad, say a help's son in your house,
Listening at keyholes, hears the company
Talk grand of dollars, V-notes, and so forth,
How hard they are to get, how good to hold,
How much they buy,—if, suddenly, in pops he—
"I 've got a V-note!"—what do you say to him?
What 's your first word which follows your last kick?
"Where did you steal it, rascal?" That 's because
He finds you, fain would fool you, off your perch,
Not on the special piece of nonsense, sir,

Elected your parade-ground : let him try
 Lies to the end of the list,—“ He picked it up,
 “ His cousin died and left it him by will,
 “ The President flung it to him, riding by,
 “ An actress trucked it for a curl of his hair,
 “ He dreamed of luck and found his shoe enriched,
 “ He dug up clay, and out of clay made gold ”—
 How would you treat such possibilities ?
 Would not you, prompt, investigate the case
 With cow-hide ? “ Lies, lies, lies,” you ’d shout : and
 why ?

Which of the stories might not prove mere truth ?
 This last, perhaps, that clay was turned to coin !
 Let ’s see, now, give him me to speak for him !
 How many of your rare philosophers,
 In plaguy books I ’ve had to dip into,
 Believed gold could be made thus, saw it made
 And made it ? Oh, with such philosophers
 You ’re on your best behaviour ! While the lad—
 With him, in a trice, you settle likelihoods,
 Nor doubt a moment how he got his prize :
 In his case, you hear, judge and execute,
 All in a breath : so would most men of sense.

But let the same lad hear you talk as grand
 At the same keyhole, you and company,
 Of signs and wonders, the invisible world ;
 How wisdom scouts our vulgar unbelief
 More than our vulgarest credulity ;
 How good men have desired to see a ghost,
 What Johnson used to say, what Wesley did,
 Mother Goose thought, and fiddle-diddle-dee :—
 If he then break in with, “ Sir, I saw a ghost ! ”
 Ah, the ways change ! He finds you perched and prim ;
 It ’s a conceit of yours that ghosts may be :
 There ’s no talk now of cow-hide. “ Tell it out !

" Don't fear us ! Take your time and recollect !
 " Sit down first ; try a glass of wine, my boy !
 " And, David, (is not that your Christian name ?)
 " Of all things, should this happen twice—it may—
 " Be sure, while fresh in mind, you let us know !"
 Does the boy blunder, blurt out this, blab that,
 Break down in the other, as beginners will ?
 All 's candour, all 's considerateness—" No haste !
 " Pause and collect yourself ! We understand !
 " That 's the bad memory, or the natural shock,
 " Or the unexplained *phenomena* ! "

Egad,

The boy takes heart of grace ; finds, never fear,
 The readiest way to ope your own heart wide,
 Show—what I call your peacock-perch, pet post
 To strut, and spread the tail, and squawk upon !
 " Just as you thought, much as you might expect !
 " There be more things in heaven and earth, Horatio," .
 And so on. Shall not David take the hint,
 Grow bolder, stroke you down at quickened rate ?
 If he ruffle a feather, it 's " Gently, patiently !
 " Manifestations are so weak at first !
 " Doubting, moreover, kills them, cuts all short,
 " Cures with a vengeance ! "

There, sir, that 's your style '

You and your boy—such pains bestowed on him,
 Or any headpiece of the average worth,
 To teach, say, Greek, would perfect him apace,
 Make him a Person (" Porson ? " thank you, sir !)
 Much more, proficient in the art of lies.
 You never leave the lesson ! Fire alight,
 Catch you permitting it to die ! You 've friends ;
 There 's no withholding knowledge,—least from those
 Apt to look elsewhere for their souls' supply :
 Why should not you parade your lawful prize ?

Who finds a picture, digs a medal up,
 Hits on a first edition,—he henceforth
 Gives it his name, grows notable : how much more
 Who ferrets out a "medium?" "David 's yours,
 " You highly-favoured man? Then, pity souls
 " Less privileged! Allow us share your luck!"
 So, David holds the circle, rules the roast,
 Narrates the vision, peeps in the glass ball,
 Sets-to the spirit-writing, hears the raps,
 As the case may be.

Now mark! To be precise—

Though I say, "lies" all these, at this first stage,
 'T is just for science' sake : I call such grubs
 By the name of what they 'll turn to, dragonflies.
 Strictly, it 's what good people style untruth ;
 But yet, so far, not quite the full-grown thing :
 It 's fancying, fable-making, nonsense-work—
 What never meant to be so very bad—
 The knack of story-telling, brightening up
 Each dull old bit of fact that drops its shine.
 One does see somewhat when one shuts one's eyes,
 If only spots and streaks ; tables do tip
 In the oddest way of themselves : and pens, good Lord,
 Who knows if you drive them or they drive you?
 'T is but a foot in the water and out again ;
 Not that duck-under which decides your dive.
 Note this, for it 's important : listen why.

I 'll prove, you push on David till he dives
 And ends the shivering. Here 's your circle, now :
 Two-thirds of them, with heads like you their host,
 Turn up their eyes, and cry, as you expect,
 " Lord, who 'd have thought it!" But there 's always one
 Looks wise, compassionately smiles, submits
 " Of your veracity no kind of doubt,
 " But—do you feel so certain of that boy's?

" Really, I wonder ! I confess myself
 " More chary of my faith ! " That 's galling, sir !
 What, he the investigator, he the sage,
 When all 's done ? Then, you just have shut your eyes,
 Opened your mouth, and gulped down David whole,
 You ! Terrible were such catastrophe !
 So, evidence is redoubied, doubled again,
 And doubled besides ; once more, " He heard, we heard,
 " You and they heard, your mother and your wife,
 " Your children and the stranger in your gates :
 " Did they or did they not ? " So much for him,
 The black sheep, guest without the wedding-garb,
 And doubting Thomas ! Now 's your turn to crow :
 " He 's kind to think you such a fool : Sludge cheats ?
 " Leave you alone to take precautions ! "

Straight

The rest join chorus. Thomas stands abashed,
 Sips silent some such beverage as this,
 Considers if it be harder, shutting eyes
 And gulping David in good fellowship,
 Than going elsewhere, getting, in exchange,
 With no egg-nogg to lubricate the food,
 Some just as tough a morsel. Over the way,
 Holds Captain Sparks his court : is it better there ?
 Have not you hunting-stories, scalping-scenes,
 And Mexican War exploits to swallow plump
 If you 'd be free o' the stove-side, rocking-chair,
 And trio of affable daughters ?

Doubt succumbs !

Victory ! All your circle 's yours again !
 Out of the clubbing of submissive wits,
 David's performance rounds, each chink gets patched,
 Every protrusion of a point 's filed fine,
 All 's fit to set a-rolling round the world,
 And then return to David finally,

Lies seven-feet thick about his first half-inch.
 Here 's a choice birth o' the supernatural,
 Poor David 's pledged to ! You 've employed no tool
 That laws exclaim at, save the devil's own,
 Yet screwed him into henceforth gulling you
 To the top o' your bent,—all out of one half-lie !

You hold, if there 's one half or a hundredth part
 Of a lie, that 's his fault,—his be the penalty !
 I dare say ! You 'd prove firmer in his place ?
 You 'd find the courage,—that first flurry over,
 That mild bit of romancing-work at end,—
 To interpose with " It gets serious, this ;
 " Must stop here. Sir, I saw no ghost at all.
 " Inform your friends I made . . well, fools of them,
 " And found you ready made. I 've lived in clover
 " These three weeks : take it out in kicks of me !"
 I doubt it. Ask your conscience ! Let me know,
 Twelve months hence, with how few embellishments
 You 've told almighty Boston of this passage
 Of arms between us, your first taste o' the foil
 From Sludge who could not fence, sir ! Sludge, your boy !
 I lied, sir,—there ! I got up from my gorge
 On offal in the gutter, and preferred
 Your canvass-backs : I took their carver's size,
 Measured his modicum of intelligence,
 Tickled him on the cockles of his heart
 With a raven feather, and next week found myself
 Sweet and clean, dining daintily, dizened smart,
 Set on a stool buttressed by ladies' knees,
 Every soft smiler calling me her pet,
 Encouraging my story to uncoil
 And creep out from its hole, inch after inch,
 " How last night, I no sooner snug in bed,
 " Tucked up, just as they left me,—than came raps !

"While a light whisked" . . . "Shaped somewhat like a star?"

"Well, like some sort of stars, ma'am,"—"So we thought!

"And any voice? Not yet? Try hard, next time,

"If you can't hear a voice; we think you may;

"At least, the Pennsylvanian 'mediums' did."

Oh, next time comes the voice! "Just as we hoped!"

Are not the hoppers proud now, pleased, profuse

O' the natural acknowledgment?

Of course!

So, off we push, illy-oh-yo, trim the boat,

On we sweep with a cataract ahead,

We're midway to the Horse-shoe: stop, who can,

The dance of bubbles gay about our prow!

Experiences become worth waiting for,

Spirits now speak up, tell their inmost mind,

And compliment the "medium" properly,

Concern themselves about his Sunday coat,

See rings on his hand with pleasure. Ask yourself

How you'd receive a course of treats like these!

Why, take the quietest hack and stall him up,

Cram him with corn a month, then out with him

Among his mates on a bright April morn,

With the turf to tread; see if you find or no

A caper in him, if he bucks or bolts!

Much more a youth whose fancies sprout as rank

As toadstool-clump from melon-bed. 'T is soon,

"Sirrah, you spirit, come, go, fetch and carry,

"Read, write, rap, rub-a-dub, and hang yourself!"

I'm spared all further trouble; all's arranged;

Your circle does my business; I may rave

Like an epileptic dervish in the books,

Foam, fling myself flat, rend my clothes to shreds;

No matter: lovers, friends and countrymen

Will lay down spiritual laws, read wrong things right

By the rule o' reverse. If Francis Verulam
 Styles himself Bacon, spells the name beside
 With a *y* and a *k*, says he drew breath in York,
 Gave up the ghost in Wales when Cromwell reigned,
 (As, sir, we somewhat fear he was apt to say,
 Before I found the useful book that knows)
 Why, what harm 's done? The circle smiles apace,
 "It was not Bacon, after all, do you see!
 "We understand; the trick 's but natural:
 "Such spirits' individuality
 "Is hard to put in evidence: they incline
 "To gibe and jeer, these undeveloped sorts.
 "You see, their world 's much like a jail broke loose,
 "While this of ours remains shut, bolted, barred,
 "With a single window to it. Sludge, our friend,
 "Serves as this window, whether thin or thick,
 "Or stained or stainless; he 's the medium-pane
 "Through which, to see us and be seen, they peep:
 "They crowd each other, hustle for a chance,
 "Tread on their neighbour's kibes, play tricks enough!
 "Does Bacon, tired of waiting, swerve aside?
 "Up in his place jumps Barnum—"I 'm your man,
 "'I 'll answer you for Bacon!' Try once more!"

Or else it 's—"What 's a 'medium?'" He 's a means,
 "Good, bad, indifferent, still the only means
 "Spirits can speak by; he may misconceive,
 "Stutter and stammer,—he 's their Sludge and drudge,
 "Take him or leave him; they must hold their peace,
 "Or else, put up with having knowledge strained
 "To half-expression through his ignorance.
 "Suppose, the spirit Beethoven wants to shed
 "New music he 's brimful of; why, he turns
 "The handle of this organ, grinds with Sludge,
 "And what he poured in at the mouth o' the mill
 "As a Thirty-third Sonata, (fancy now!)

" Comes from the hopper as brand-new Sludge, nought else,

" The Shakers' Hymn in G, with a natural F,

" Or the ' Stars and Stripes ' set to consecutive fourths."

Sir, where 's the scrape you did not help me through,

You that are wise? And for the fools, the folk

Who came to see,—the guests, (observe that word !)

Pray do you find guests criticize your wine,

Your furniture, your grammar, or your nose?

Then, why your "medium?" What 's the difference?

Prove your madeira red-ink and gamboge,—

Your Sludge, a cheat—then somebody 's a goose

For vaunting both as genuine. "Guests!" Don't fear!

They 'll make a wry face, nor too much of that,

And leave you in your glory.

"No, sometimes

"They doubt and say as much!" Ay, doubt they do!

And what 's the consequence? "Of course they doubt"—

(You triumph) "that explains the hitch at once!

"Doubt posed our 'medium,' puddled his pure mind;

"He gave them back their rubbish: pitch chaff in,

"Could flour come out o' the honest mill?" So, prompt

Applaud the faithful: cases flock in point,

"How, when a mocker willed a 'medium' once

"Should name a spirit James whose name was George,

"'James' cried the 'medium'—'t was the test of truth!"

In short, a hit proves much, a miss proves more.

Does this convince? The better: does it fail?

Time for the double-shotted broadside, then—

The grand means, last resource. Look black and big!

"You style us idiots, therefore—why stop short?

"Accomplices in rascality: this we hear

"In our own house, from our invited guest

"Found brave enough to outrage a poor boy

"Exposed by our good faith! Have you been heard?
 "Now, then, hear us; one man's not quite worth twelve.
 "You see a cheat? Here's some twelve see an ass:
 "Excuse me if I calculate: good day!"
 Out slinks the sceptic, all the laughs explode,
 Sludge waves his hat in triumph!

Or—he don't.

There's something in real truth (explain who can!)
 One casts a wistful eye at, like the horse
 Who mopes beneath stuffed hay-racks and won't munch
 Because he spies a corn-bag: hang that truth,
 It spoils all dainties proffered in its place!
 I've felt at times when, cockered, cosseted
 And coddled by the aforesaid company,
 Bidden enjoy their bullying,—never fear,
 But o'er their shoulders spit at the flying man,—
 I've felt a child; only, a fractious child
 That, dandled soft by nurse, aunt, grandmother,
 Who keep him from the kennel, sun and wind,
 Good fun and wholesome mud,—enjoined be sweet,
 And comely and superior,—eyes askance
 The ragged sons o' the gutter at their game,
 Fain would be down with them i' the thick o' the filth,
 Making dirt-pies, laughing free, speaking plain,
 And calling granny the grey old cat she is.
 I've felt a spite, I say, at you, at them,
 Huggings and humbug—gnashed my teeth to mark
 A decent dog pass! It's too bad, I say,
 Ruining a soul so!

But what's "so," what's fixed,
 Where may one stop? Nowhere! The cheating's
 nursed
 Out of the lying, softly and surely spun
 To just your length, sir! I'd stop soon enough:
 But you're for progress. "All old, nothing new?"

" Only the usual talking through the mouth,
 " Or writing by the hand? I own, I thought
 " This would develop, grow demonstrable,
 " Make doubt absurd, give figures we might see,
 " Flowers we might touch. There 's no one doubts you,
 Sludge !
 " You dream the dreams, you see the spiritual sights,
 " The speeches come in your head, beyond dispute.
 " Still, for the sceptics' sake, to stop all mouths,
 " We want some outward manifestation !—well,
 " The Pennsylvanians gained such ; why not Sludge ?
 " He may improve with time !"

Ay, that he may !

He sees his lot : there 's no avoiding fate.

'T is a trifle at first. " Eh, David? Did you hear ?

" You jogged the table, your foot caused the squeak,

" This time you 're . . . joking, are you not, my boy ?"

" N-n-no !"—and I 'm done for, bought and sold hence-
 forth.

The old good easy jog-trot way, the . . . eh ?

The . . . not so very false, as falsehood goes,

The spinning out and drawing fine, you know,—

Really mere novel-writing of a sort,

Acting, or improvising, make believe,

Surely not downright cheaterly,—any how,

'T is done with and my lot cast ; Cheat 's my name :

The fatal dash of brandy in your tea

Has settled how you 'll have the souchong smack :

The caddy gives way to the dram-bottle.

Then, it 's so cruel easy ! Oh, those tricks

That can't be tricks, those feats by sleight of hand,

Clearly no common conjuror's !—no, indeed !

A conjuror? Choose me any craft i' the world

A man puts hand to ; and with six months' pains

I 'll play you twenty tricks miraculous

To people untaught the trade. Have you seen glass
 blown,
 Pipes pierced? Why, just this biscuit that I chip,
 Did you ever watch a baker toss one flat
 To the oven? Try and do it! Take my word,
 Practise but half as much, while limbs are lithe
 To turn, shove, tilt a table, crack your joints,
 Manage your feet, dispose your hands aright,
 Work wires that twitch the curtains, play the glove
 At end o' your slipper,—then put out the lights
 And . . . there, there, all you want you'll get, I hope!
 I found it slip, easy as an old shoe.

Now, lights on table again! I've done my part,
 You take my place while I give thanks and rest.
 "Well, Judge Humgruffin, what's your verdict, sir?"
 "You, hardest head in the United States,—
 "Did you detect a cheat here? Wait! Let's see!
 "Just an experiment first, for candour's sake!
 "I'll try and cheat you, Judge! The table tilts:
 "Is it I that move it? Write! I'll press your hand:
 "Cry when I push, or guide your pencil, Judge!"
 Sludge still triumphant! "That a rap, indeed?"
 "That, the real writing? Very like a whale!
 "Then, if, sir, you—a most distinguished man,
 "And, were the Judge not here, I'd say, . . . no matter!
 "Well, sir, if you fail, you can't take us in,—
 "There's little fear that Sludge will!"

Won't he ma'am

But what if our distinguished host, like Sludge,
 Bade God bear witness that he played no trick,
 While you believed that what produced the raps
 Was just a certain child who died, you know,
 And whose last breath you thought your lips had felt?
 Eh? That's a capital point, ma'am: Sludge begins
 At your entreaty with your dearest dead,

The little voice set lispng once again,
 The tiny hand made feel for yours once more,
 The poor lost image brought back, plain as dreams,
 Which image, if a word had chanced recall,
 The customary cloud would cross your eyes,
 Your heart return the old tick, pay its pang !
 A right mood for investigation, this !
 One 's at one's ease with Saul and Jonathan,
 Pompey and Cæsar : but one's own lost child . . .
 I wonder, when you heard the first clod drop
 From the spadeful at the grave, did you feel free
 To investigate who twitched your funeral scarf
 Or brushed your frounces ? Then, it came of course
 You should be stunned and stupid ; then, (how else ?)
 Your breath stopped with your blood, your brain struck
 work.

But now, such causes fail of such effects,
 All 's changed,—the little voice begins afresh,
 Yet you, calm, consequent, can test and try,
 And touch the truth. " Tests ? Didn't the creature tell
 " Its nurse's name, and say it lived six years,
 " And rode a rocking-horse ? Enough of tests !
 " Sludge never could learn that ! "

He could not, eh ?

You compliment him. " Could not ? " Speak for yourself !
 I 'd like to know the man I ever saw
 Once,—never mind where, how, why, when,—once saw,
 Of whom I do not keep some matter treasured
 He 'd swear I " could not " know, sagacious soul !
 What ? Do you live in this world's blow of blacks,
 Palaver, gossipry, a single hour
 Nor find one smut has settled on your nose,
 Of a smut's worth, no more, no less ?—one fact
 Out of the drift of facts, whereby you learn
 What someone was, somewhere, somewhen, somewhy ?

You don't tell folk—"See what has stuck to me !
 " Judge Humgruffin, our most distinguished man,
 " Your uncle was a tailor, and your wife
 " Thought to have married Miggs, missed him, hit you !"—
 Do you, sir, though you see him twice a-week ?
 " No," you reply, " what use retailing it ?
 " Why should I ?" But, you see, one day you *should*,
 Because one day there 's much use,—when this fact
 Brings you the Judge upon both gouty knees
 Before the supernatural ; proves that Sludge
 Knows, as you say, a thing he " could not " know :
 Will not Sludge thenceforth keep an outstretched face
 The way the wind drives ?

" Could not ! " Look you now,
 I 'll tell you a story ! There 's a whiskered chap,
 A foreigner, that teaches music here
 And gets his bread,—knowing no better way.
 He says, the fellow who informed of him
 And made him fly his country and fall West,
 Was a hunchback cobbler, sat, stitched soles and sang,
 In some outlandish place, the city Rome,
 In a cellar by their Broadway, all day long ;
 Never asked questions, stopped to listen or look,
 Nor lifted nose from lapstone ; let the world
 Roll round his three-legged stool, and news run in
 The ears he hardly seemed to keep pricked up.
 Well, that man went on Sundays, touched his pay
 And took his praise from government, you see.
 For something like two dollars every week,
 He 'd engage tell you some one little thing
 Of some one man, which led to many more,
 (Because one truth leads right to the world's end)
 And make you that man's master—when he dined
 And on what dish, where walked to keep his health
 And to what street. His trade was, throwing thus

His sense out, like an anteater's long tongue,
 Soft, innocent, warm, moist, impassible,
 And when 't was crusted o'er with creatures—slick,
 Their juice enriched his palate. "Could not Sludge!"
 I'll go yet a step further, and maintain,
 Once the imposture plunged its proper depth
 I' the rotten of your natures, all of you,—
 (If one 's not mad nor drunk, and hardly then)
 It 's impossible to cheat—that 's, be found out!
 Go tell your brotherhood this first slip of mine,
 All to-day's tale, how you detected Sludge,
 Behaved unpleasantly, till he was fain confess,
 And so has come to grief! You'll find, I think,
 Why Sludge still snaps his fingers in your face.
 There now, you've told them: What 's their prompt
 reply?

"Sir, did that youth confess he had cheated me,
 "I'd disbelieve him. He may cheat at times;
 "That 's in the 'medium'-nature, thus they're made,
 "Vain and vindictive, cowards, prone to scratch.
 "And so all cats are; still a cat 's the beast
 "You coax the strange electric sparks from out,
 "By rubbing back its fur; not so a dog,
 "Nor lion, nor lamb: 't is the cat's nature, sir!
 "Why not the dog's? Ask God, who made them beasts!
 "D'ye think the sound, the nicely-balanced man
 "Like me"—(aside)—"like you yourself,"—(aloud)
 "—He 's stuff to make a 'medium?'" Bless your soul,
 "'T is these hysteric, hybrid half-and-halves,
 "Equivocal, worthless vermin yield the fire!
 "We must take such as we find them, 'ware their tricks,
 "Wanting their service. Sir, Sludge took in you—
 "How. I can't say, not being there to watch:
 "He was tried, was tempted by your easiness,—
 "He did not take in me!"

Thank you for Sludge !

I 'm to be grateful to such patrons, eh,
When what you hear 's my best word ? 'T is a challenge :
" Snap at all strangers, half-trained prairie-dog,
" So you cower duly to your keeper's nod !
" Cat, show what claws were made for, muffling them
" Only to me ! Cheat others if you can,
" Me, if you dare ! " And, my wise sir, I dared—
Did cheat you first, made you cheat others next,
And had the help o' your vaunted manliness
To bully the incredulous. You used me ?
Have not I used you, taken full revenge,
Persuaded folk they knew not their own name,
And straight they 'd own the error ! Who was the fool
When, to an awe-struck wide-eyed open-mouthed
Circle of sages, Sludge would introduce
Milton composing baby-rhymes, and Locke
Reasoning in gibberish, Homer writing Greek
In noughts and crosses, Asaph setting psalms
To crotchet and quaver ? I 've made a spirit squeak
In sham voice for a minute, then outbroke
Bold in my own, defying the imbeciles—
Have copied some ghost's pothooks, half a page,
Then ended with my own scrawl undisguised.
" All right ! The ghost was merely using Sludge,
" Suiting itself from his imperfect stock ! "
Don't talk of gratitude to me ! For what ?
For being treated as a showman's ape,
Encouraged to be wicked and make sport,
Fret or sulk, grin or whimper, any mood
So long as the ape be in it and no man—
Because a nut pays every mood alike.
Curse your superior, superintending sort,
Who, since you hate smoke, send up boys that climb
To cure your chimney, bid a " medium " lie
TO sweep you truth down ! Curse your women too,

Your insolent wives and daughters, that fire up
 Or faint away if a male hand squeeze theirs,
 Yet, to encourage Sludge, may play with Sludge
 As only a "medium," only the kind of thing
 They must humour, fondle . . . oh, to misconceive
 Were too preposterous ! But I' ve paid them out !
 They 've had their wish—called for the naked truth,
 And in she tripped, sat down and bade them stare :
 They had to blush a little and forgive !
 " The fact is, children talk so ; in next world
 " All our conventions are reversed,—perhaps
 " Made light of : something like old prints, my dear !
 " The Judge has one, he brought from Italy,
 " A metropolis in the background,—o'er a bridge,
 " A team of trotting roadsters,—cheerful groups
 " Of wayside travellers, peasants at their work,
 " And, full in front, quite unconcerned, why not ?
 " Three nymphs conversing with a cavalier,
 " And never a rag among them : ' fine,' folk cry—
 " And heavenly manners seem not much unlike !
 " Let Sludge go on ; we 'll fancy it 's in print !"
 If such as came for wool, sir, went home shorn,
 Where is the wrong I did them ? 'T was their choice :
 They tried the adventure, ran the risk, tossed up
 And lost, as some one 's sure to do in games.
 They fancied I was made to lose,—smoked glass
 Useful to spy the sun through, spare their eyes :
 And had I proved a red-hot iron plate
 They thought to pierce, and, for their pains, grew blind,
 Whose were the fault but theirs ? While, as things go,
 Their loss amounts to gain, the more 's the shame !
 They 've had their peep into the spirit-world,
 And all this world may know it. They 've fed fat
 Their self-conceit which else had starved : what chance
 Save this, of cackling o'er a golden egg
 And compassing distinction from the flock,

Friends of a feather? Well, they paid for it,
 And not prodigiously; the price o' the play,
 Not counting certain pleasant interludes,
 Was scarce a vulgar play's worth. When you buy
 The actor's talent, do you dare propose
 For his soul beside? Whereas, my soul you buy!
 Sludge acts Macbeth, obliged to be Macbeth,
 Or you 'll not hear his first word! Just go through
 That slight formality, swear himself 's the Thane,
 And thenceforth he may strut and fret his hour,
 Spout, spawl, or spin his target, no one cares!
 Why hadn't I leave to play tricks, Sludge as Sludge?
 Enough of it all! I 've wiped out scores with you—
 Vented your fustian, let myself be streaked
 Like tom-fool with your ochre and carmine,
 Worn patchwork your respectable fingers sewed
 To metamorphose somebody,—yes, I 've earned
 My wages, swallowed down my bread of shame,
 And shake the crumbs off—where but in your face?

As for religion—why, I served it, sir!
 I 'll stick to that! With my *phenomena*
 I laid the atheist sprawling on his back,
 Propped up Saint Paul, or, at least, Swedenborg!
 In fact, it 's just the proper way to baulk
 These troublesome fellows: liars, one and all,
 Are not these sceptics? Well, to baffle them,
 No use in being squeamish; lie yourself!
 Erect your buttress just as wide o' the line,
 Your side, as they 've built up the wall on theirs;
 Where both meet, midway in a point, is truth,
 High overhead: so, take your room, pile bricks,
 Lie! Oh, there 's titillation in all shame!
 What snow may lose in white, it gains in rose!
 Miss Stokes turns—Rahab,—nor a bad exchange!
 Glory be on her, for the good she wrought,

Breeding belief anew, 'neath ribs of death,
 Brow-beating now the unabashed before,
 Ridding us of their whole life's gathered straws
 By a live coal from the altar! Why, of old,
 Great men spent years and years in writing books
 To prove we 've souls, and hardly proved it then :
 Miss Stokes with her live coal, for you and me !
 Surely, to this good issue, all was fair—
 Not only fondling Sludge, but, even suppose
 He let escape some spice of knavery,—well,
 In wisely being blind to it! Don't you praise
 Nelson for setting spy-glass to blind eye
 And saying . . . what was it—that he could not see
 The signal he was bothered with? Ay, indeed !

I 'll go beyond : there 's a real love of a lie,
 Liars find ready-made for lies they make,
 As hand for glove, or tongue for sugar-plum.
 At best, 't is never pure and full belief ;
 Those furthest in the quagmire,—don't suppose
 They strayed there with no warning, got no chance
 Of a filth-speck in their face, which they clenched teeth,
 Bent brow against! Be sure they had their doubts,
 And fears, and fairest challenges to try
 The floor o' the seeming solid sand! But no!
 Their faith was pledged, acquaintance were apprised,
 All but the last step ventured, kerchiefs waved,
 And Sludge called "pet : " 't was easier marching on
 To the promised land ; join those who, Thursday next,
 Meant to meet Shakespeare : better follow Sludge—
 Prudent, oh sure!—on the alert, how else ?
 But making for the mid-bog, all the same !
 To hear your outcries, one would think I caught
 Miss Stokes by the scuff o' the neck, and pitched her flat,
 Foolish-face-foremost! Hear these simpletons,
 That 's all I beg, before my work 's begun,

Before I 've touched them with my finger-tip !
 Thus they await me (do but listen, now !
 It 's reasoning, this is,—I can't imitate
 The baby voice, though) " In so many tales
 ' Must be some truth, truth though a pin-point big,
 " Yet, some : a single man 's deceived, perhaps—
 " Hardly, a thousand : to suppose one cheat
 " Can gull all these, were more miraculous far
 " Than aught we should confess a miracle "—
 And so on. Then the Judge sums up—(it 's rare)
 Bids you respect the authorities that leap
 To the judgment-seat at once,—why, don't you note
 The limpid nature, the unblemished life,
 The spotless honour, indisputable sense
 Of the first upstart with his story? What—
 Outrage a boy on whom you ne'er till now
 Set eyes, because he finds raps trouble him?

Fools, these are : ay, and how of their opposites
 Who never did, at bottom of their hearts,
 Believe for a moment?—Men emasculate,
 Blank of belief, who played, as eunuchs use,
 With superstition safely,—cold of blood,
 Who saw what made for them i' the mystery,
 Took their occasion, and supported Sludge
 —As proselytes? No, thank you, far too shrewd !
 —But promisers of fair play, encouragers
 O' the claimant ; who in candour needs must hoist
 Sludge up on Mars' Hill, get speech out of Sludge
 To carry off, criticize, and cant about !
 Didn't Athens treat Saint Paul so?—at any rate,
 It 's " a new thing," philosophy fumbles at.
 Then there 's the other picker out of pearl
 From dung heaps,—ay, your literary man,
 Who draws on his kid gloves to deal with Sludge
 Daintily and discreetly,—shakes a dust

O' the doctrine, flavours thence, he well knows how,
 The narrative or the novel,—half-believes,
 All for the book's sake, and the public's stare,
 And the cash that 's God's sole solid in this world !
 Look at him ! Try to be too bold, too gross
 For the master ! Not you ! He 's the man for muck ;
 Shovel it forth, full-splash, he 'll smooth your brown
 Into artistic richness, never fear !
 Find him the crude stuff ; when you recognize
 Your lie again, you 'll doff your hat to it,
 Dressed out for company ! " For company,"
 I say, since there 's the relish of success :
 Let all pay due respect, call the lie truth,
 Save the soft silent smirking gentleman
 Who ushered in the stranger : you must sigh
 " How melancholy, he, the only one
 " Fails to perceive the bearing of the truth
 " Himself gave birth to !"—There 's the triumph's smack !
 That man would choose to see the whole world roll
 I' the slime o' the slough, so he might touch the tip
 Of his brush with what I call the best of browns—
 Tint ghost-tales, spirit-stories, past the power
 Of the outworn umber and bistre !

Yet I think

There 's a more hateful form of foolery—
 The social sage's, Solomon of saloons
 And philosophic diner-out, the fribble
 Who wants a doctrine for a chopping-block
 To try the edge of his faculty upon,
 Prove how much common-sense he 'll hack and hew
 I' the critical minute 'twixt the soup and fish !
 These were my patrons : these and the like of them
 Who, rising in my soul now, sicken it,—
 These I have injured ! Gratitude to these ?
 The gratitude, forsooth, of a prostitute

To the greenhorn and the bully—friends of hers,
 From the wag that wants the queer fokes for his club,
 To the snuff-box-decorator, honest man,
 Who just was at his wits' end where to find
 So genial a Pasiphae ! All and each
 Pay, compliment, protect from the police,
 And how she hates them for their pains, like me !
 So much for my remorse at thanklessness
 Toward a deserving public !

But, for God ?

Ay, that 's a question ! Well, sir, since you press—
 (How you do tease the whole thing out of me !
 I don't mean you, you know, when I say, " them :"
 Hate you, indeed ! But that Miss Stokes, that Judge !
 Enough, enough—with sugar : thank you, sir !)
 Now for it, then ! Will you believe me, though ?
 You 've heard what I confess ; I don't unsay
 A single word : I cheated when I could,
 Rapped with my toe-joints, set sham hands at work,
 Wrote down names weak in sympathetic ink,
 Rubbed odic lights with ends of phosphor-match,
 And all the rest ; believe that ! believe this,
 By the same token, though it seem to set
 The crooked straight again, unsay the said,
 Stick up what I 've thrown down ; I can't help that,
 It 's truth ! I somehow vomit truth to-day.
 This trade of mine—‡ don't know, can't be sure
 But there was something in it, tricks and all !
 Really, I want to light up my own mind.
 They were tricks,—true, but what I mean to add
 Is also true. First,—don't it strike you, sir ?
 Go back to the beginning,—the first fact
 We 're taught is, there 's a world beside this world,
 With spirits, not mankind, for tenantry ;
 That much within that world once sojourned here,

That all upon this world will visit there,
 And therefore that we, bodily here below,
 Must have exactly such an interest
 In learning what may be the ways o' the world
 Above us, as the disembodied folk
 Have (by all analogic likelihood)
 In watching how things go in the old world
 With us, their sons, successors, and what not.
 Oh, yes, with added powers probably,
 Fit for the novel state,—old loves grown pure,
 Old interests understood aright,—they watch !
 Eyes to see, ears to hear, and hands to help,
 Proportionate to advancement : they 're ahead,
 That s all—do what we do, but noblier done—
 Use plate, whereas we eat our meals off delf,
 (To use a figure.)

Concede that, and I ask
 Next—what may be the mode of intercourse
 Between us men here, and those once-men there ?
 First comes the Bible's speech ; then, history
 With the supernatural element,—you know—
 All that we sucked in with our mothers' milk,
 Grew up with, got inside of us at last.
 Till it 's found bone of bone and flesh of flesh.
 See now, we start with the miraculous,
 And know it used to be, at all events :
 What 's the first step we take, and can't but take,
 In arguing from the known to the obscure ?
 Why this : " What was before, may be to-day.
 " Since Samuel's ghost appeared to Saul,—of course
 " My brother's spirit may appear to me."
 Go tell your teacher that ! What 's his reply ?
 What brings a shade of doubt for the first time
 O'er his brow late so luminous with faith ?
 " Such things have been," says he, "and there 's no doubt

" Such things may be : but I advise mistrust
 " Of eyes, ears, stomach,—more than all, of brain,
 " Unless it be of your great-grandmother,
 " Whenever they propose a ghost to you !"
 The end is, there 's a composition struck ;
 'T is settled, we 've some way of intercourse
 Just as in Saul's time ; only, different :
 How, when and where, precisely,—find it out !
 I want to know, then, what 's so natural
 As that a person born into this world
 And seized on by such teaching, should begin
 With firm expectancy and a frank look-out
 For his own allotment, his especial share
 I' the secret,—his particular ghost, in fine ?
 I mean, a person born to look that way,
 Since natures differ : take the painter-sort,
 One man lives fifty years in ignorance
 Whether grass be green or red,—“ No kind of eye
 “ For colour,” say you ; while another picks
 And puts away even pebbles, when a child,
 Because of bluish spots and pinky veins—
 “ Give him forthwith a paint-box !” Just the same
 Was I born . . . “ medium,” you won't let me say,—
 Well, seer of the supernatural
 Everywhen, everyhow and everywhere,—
 Will that do ?

I and all such boys of course
 Started with the same stock of Bible-truth ;
 Only,—what in the rest you style their sense,
 Instinct, blind reasoning but imperative,
 This, betimes, taught them the old world had one law
 And ours another : “ New world, new laws,” cried they :
 “ None but old laws, seen everywhere at work,”
 Cried I, and by their help explained my life
 The Jews' way, still a working way to me.

Ghosts made the noises, fairies waved the lights,
 Or Santaclaus slid down on New Year's Eve
 And stuffed with cakes the stocking at my bed,
 Changed the worn shoes, rubbed clean the fingered slate
 O' the sum that came to grief the day before.

This could not last long : soon enough I found
 Who had worked wonders thus, and to what end :
 But did I find all easy, like my mates ?
 Henceforth no supernatural any more ?
 Not a whit : what projects the billiard-balls ?
 " A cue," you answer : " Yes, a cue," said I ;
 " But what hand, off the cushion, moved the cue ?
 " What unseen agency, outside the world,
 " Prompted its puppets to do this and that,
 " Put cakes and shoes and slates into their mind,
 " These mothers and aunts, nay even schoolmasters ?"
 Thus high I sprang, and there have settled since.
 Just so I reason, in sober earnest still,
 About the greater god-sends, what you call
 The serious gains and losses of my life.
 What do I know or care about your world
 Which either is or seems to be ? This snap
 O' my fingers, sir ! My care is for myself ;
 Myself am whole and sole reality
 Inside a raree-show and a market-mob
 Gathered about it : that 's the use of things.
 'T is easy saying they serve vast purposes,
 Advantage their grand selves : be it true or false,
 Each thing may have two uses. What 's a star ?
 A world, or a world's sun : doesn't it serve
 As taper also, time-piece, weather-glass,
 And almanac ? Are stars not set for signs
 When we should shear our sheep, sow corn, prune trees ?
 The Bible says so.

Well, I add one use

To all the acknowledged uses, and declare
If I spy Charles's Wain at twelve to-night,
It warns me, "Go, nor lose another day,
"And have your hair cut, Sludge!" You laugh: and why?
Were such a sign too hard for God to give?
No: but Sludge seems too little for such grace:
Thank you, sir! So you think, so does not Sludge!
When you and good men gape at Providence,
Go into history and bid us mark
Not merely powder-plots prevented, crowns
Kept on kings' heads by miracle enough,
But private mercies—oh, you've told me, sir,
Of such interpositions! How yourself
Once, missing on a memorable day
Your handkerchief—just setting out, you know, —
You must return to fetch it, lost the train,
And saved your precious self from what befell
The thirty-three whom Providence forgot.
You tell, and ask me what I think of this?
Well, sir, I think then, since you needs must know,
What matter had you and Boston city to boot
Sailed skyward, like burnt onion-peelings? Much
To you, no doubt: for me—undoubtedly
The cutting of my hair concerns me more,
Because, however sad the truth may seem,
Sludge is of all-importance to himself.
You set apart that day in every year
For special thanksgiving, were a heathen else:
Well, I who cannot boast the like escape,
Suppose I said "I don't thank Providence
"For my part, owing it no gratitude?"
"Nay, but you owe as much"—you'd tutor me,
"You, every man alive, for blessings gained
"In every hour o' the day, could you but know!
"I saw my crowning mercy: all have such,
"Could they but see!" Well sir, why don't they see?

" Because they won't look,—or perhaps, they can't."
 Then, sir, suppose I can, and will and do
 Look, microscopically as is right,
 Into each hour with its infinitude
 Of influences at work to profit Sludge ?
 For that 's the case : I 've sharpened up my sight
 To spy a providence in the fire's going out,
 The kettle's boiling, the dime's sticking fast
 Despite the hole i' the pocket. Call such facts
 Fancies, too petty a work for Providence,
 And those same thanks which you exact from me,
 Prove too prodigious payment ; thanks for what,
 If nothing guards and guides us little men ?
 No, no, sir ! You must put away your pride,
 Resolved to let Sludge into partnership !
 I live by signs and omens : look at the roof
 Where the pigeons settle—" If the farther bird,
 " The white, takes wing first, I 'll confess when thrashed ;
 " Not, if the blue does"—so I said to myself
 Last week, lest you should take me by surprise :
 Off flapped the white,—and I 'm confessing, sir !
 Perhaps 't is Providence's whim and way
 With only me, i' the world : how can you tell ?
 " Because unlikely !" Was it likelier, now,
 That this our one out of all worlds beside,
 The what-d'you-call-'em millions, should be just
 Precisely chosen to make Adam for,
 And the rest o' the tale ? Yet the tale 's true, you know :
 Such undeserving clod was graced so once ;
 Why not graced likewise undeserving Sludge ?
 Are we merit-mongers, flaunt we filthy rags ?
 All you can bring against my privilege
 Is, that another way was taken with you,—
 Which I don't question. It 's pure grace, my luck.
 I 'm broken to the way of nods and winks,
 And need no formal summoning. You 've a help ;

Holloa his name or whistle, clap your hands,
 Stamp with your foot or pull the bell : all 's one,
 He understands you want him, here he comes.
 Just so, I come at the knocking : you, sir, wait
 The tongue o' the bell, nor stir before you catch
 Reason's clear tingle, nature's clapper brisk,
 Or that traditional peal was wont to cheer
 Your mother's face turned heavenward : short of these
 There 's no authentic intimation, eh ?
 Well, when you hear, you 'll answer them, start up
 And stride into the presence, top of toe,
 And there find Sludge beforehand, Sludge that sprung
 At noise o' the knuckle on the partition-wall !
 I think myself the more religious man.
 Religion 's all or nothing ; it 's no mere smile
 O' contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir—
 No quality o' the fineliter-tempered clay
 Like its whiteness or its lightness ; rather, stuff
 O' the very stuff, life of life, self of self.
 I tell you, men won't notice ; when they do,
 They 'll understand. I notice nothing else,
 I 'm eyes, ears, mouth of me, one gaze and gape,
 Nothing eludes me, everything 's a hint,
 Handle and help. It 's all absurd, and yet
 There 's something in it all, I know : how much ?
 No answer ! What does that prove ? Man 's still man,
 Still meant for a poor blundering piece of work,
 When all 's done ; but, if somewhat 's done, like this,
 Or not done, is the case the same ? Suppose
 I blunder in my guess at the true sense
 O' the knuckle-summons, nine times out of ten,—
 What if the tenth guess happen to be right ?
 If the tenth shovel-load of powdered quartz
 Yield me the nugget ? I gather, crush, sift all,
 Pass o'er the failure, pounce on the success.
 To give you a notion, now—(let who wins, laugh !)

When first I see a man, what do I first?
 Why, count the letters which make up his name,
 And as their number chances, even or odd,
 Arrive at my conclusion, trim my course :
 Hiram H. Horsefall is your honoured name,
 And have n't I found a patron, sir, in you?
 "Shall I cheat this stranger?" I take apple-pips,
 Stick one in either *canthus* of my eye,
 And if the left drops first—(your left, sir, stuck)
 I'm warned, I let the trick alone this time.
 You, sir, who smile, superior to such trash,
 You judge of character by other rules :
 Don't your rules sometimes fail you? Pray, what rule
 Have you judged Sludge by hitherto?

Oh, be sure,

You, everybody blunders, just as I,
 In simpler things than these by far! For see :
 I knew two farmers,—one, a wiseacre
 Who studied seasons, rummaged almanacs,
 Quoted the dew-point, registered the frost
 And then declared, for outcome of his pains,
 Next summer must be dampish : 't was a drought.
 His neighbour prophesied such drought would fall,
 Saved hay and corn, made cent. per cent. thereby,
 And proved a sage indeed : how came his lore?
 Because one brindled heifer, late in March,
 Stiffened her tail of evenings, and somehow
 He got into his head that drought was meant !
 I don't expect all men can do as much :
 Such kissing goes by favour. You must take
 A certain turn of mind for this,—a twist
 I' the flesh, as well. Be lazily alive,
 Open-mouthed, like my friend the anteater,
 Letting all nature's loosely-guarded motes
 Settle and, slick, be swallowed! Think yourself

The one 't the world, the one for whom the world
 Was made, expect it tickling at your mouth !
 Then will the swarm of busy buzzing flies,
 Clouds of coincidence, break egg-shell, thrive,
 Breed, multiply, and bring you food enough.

I can't pretend to mind your smiling, sir !
 Oh, what you mean is this ! Such intimate way,
 Close converse, frank exchange of offices,
 Strict sympathy of the immeasurably great
 With the infinitely small, betokened here
 By a course of signs and omens, raps and sparks,—
 How does it suit the dread traditional text
 O' the "Great and Terrible Name?" Shall the Heaven
 of Heavens
 Stoop to such child's play?

Please sir, go with me

A moment, and I 'll try to answer you.
 The "*Magnum et terribile*" (is that right ?)
 Well, folk began with this in the early day ;
 And all the acts they recognized in proof
 Were thunders, lightnings, earthquakes, whirlwinds, dealt
 Indisputably on men whose death they caused.
 There, and there only, folk saw Providence
 At work,—and seeing it, 't was right enough
 All heads should tremble, hands wring hands amain,
 And knees knock hard together at the breath
 O' the Name's first letter ; why, the Jews, I 'm told,
 Won't write it down, no, to this very hour,
 Nor speak aloud : you know best if 't be so.
 Each ague-fit of fear at end, they crept
 (Because somehow people once born must live)
 Out of the sound, sight, swing and sway o' the Name,
 Into a corner, the dark rest of the world
 And safe space where as yet no fear had reached ;
 'T was there they looked about them, breathed again,

And felt indeed at home, as we might say.
 The current o' common things, the daily life,
 This had their due contempt ; no Name pursued
 Man from the mountain-top where fires abide,
 To his particular mouse-hole at its foot
 Where he ate, drank, digested, lived in short.
 Such was man's vulgar business, far too small
 To be worth thunder : "small," folk kept on, "small,"
 With much complacency in those great days !
 A mote of sand, you know, a blade of grass—
 What was so despicable as mere grass.
 Except perhaps the life o' the worm or fly
 Which fed there? These were "small" and men were
 great.

Well, sir, the old way 's altered somewhat since,
 And the world wears another aspect now :
 Somebody turns our spyglass round, or else
 Puts a new lens in it : grass, worm, fly grow big :
 We find great things are made of little things,
 And little things go lessening till at last
 Comes God behind them. Talk of mountains now ?
 We talk of mould that heaps the mountain, mites
 That throng the mould, and God that makes the mites.
 The Name comes close behind a stomach-cyst,
 The simplest of creations, just a sac
 That 's mouth, heart, legs and belly at once, yet lives
 And feels, and could do neither, we conclude,
 If simplified still further one degree :
 The small becomes the dreadful and immense !
 Lightning, forsooth ? No word more upon that !
 A tin-foil bottle, a strip of greasy silk,
 With a bit of wire and knob of brass, and there 's
 Your dollar's-worth of lightning ! But the cyst—
 The life of the least of the little things ?

No, no !

Preachers and teachers try another tack,
 Come near the truth this time : they put aside
 Thunder and lightning : " That 's mistake," they cry,
 " Thunderbolts fall for neither fright nor sport,
 " But do appreciable good, like tides,
 " Changes o' the wind, and other natural facts—
 " ' Good ' meaning good to man, his body or soul.
 " Mediate, immediate, all things minister
 " To man,—that 's settled : be our future text
 " ' We are His children ! ' " So, they now harangue
 About the intention, the contrivance, all
 That keeps up an incessant play of love,—
 See the Bridgewater book.

Amen to it !

Well, sir, I put this question : I 'm a child ?
 I lose no time, but take you at your word :
 How shall I act a child's part properly ?
 Your sainted mother, sir,—used you to live
 With such a thought as this a-worrying you ?
 " She has it in her power to throttle me,
 " Or stab or poison : she may turn me out,
 " Or lock me in,—nor stop at this to-day,
 " But cut me off to-morrow from the estate
 " I look for "—(long may you enjoy it, sir !)
 " In brief, she may unchild the child I am."
 You never had such crotchets ? Nor have I !
 Who, frank confessing childship from the first,
 Cannot both fear and take my ease at once,
 So, don't fear,—know what might be, well enough.
 But know too, child-like, that it will not be,
 At least in my case, mine, the son and heir
 O' the kingdom, as yourself proclaim my style.
 But do you fancy I stop short at this ?
 Wonder if suit and service, son and heir
 Needs must expect, I dare pretend to find ?

If, looking for signs proper to such an one,
 I straight perceive them irresistible?
 Concede that homage is a son's plain right,
 And, never mind the nods and raps and winks,
 'T is the pure obvious supernatural
 Steps forward, does its duty : why, of course !
 I have presentiments : my dreams come true :
 I fancy a friend stands whistling all in white
 Blithe as a boblink, and he 's dead I learn.
 I take dislike to a dog my favourite long,
 And sell him ; he goes mad next week and snaps.
 I guess that stranger will turn up to-day
 I have not seen these three years ; there 's his knock.
 I wager "sixty peaches on that tree !"—
 That I pick up a dollar in my walk,
 That your wife's brother's cousin's name was George—
 And win on all points. Oh, you wince at this ?
 You 'd fain distinguish between gift and gift,
 Washington's oracle and Sludge's itch
 O' the elbow when at whist he ought to trump ?
 With Sludge it 's too absurd ? *Fine, draw the line
 Somewhere, but, sir, your somewhere is not mine !*

Bless us, I 'm turning poet ! It 's time to end.
 How you have drawn me out, sir ! All I ask
 Is—am I heir or not heir ? If I 'm he,
 Then, sir, remember, that same personage
 (To judge by what we read i' the newspaper)
 Requires, beside one nobleman in gold
 To carry up and down his coronet,
 Another servant, probably a duke,
 To hold egg-nogg in readiness : why want
 Attendance, sir, when helps in his father's house
 Abound, I 'd like to know ?

Enough of talk !

My fault is that I tell too plain a truth.

Why, which of those who say they disbelieve,
Your clever people, but has dreamed his dream,
Caught his coincidence, stumbled on his fact
He can't explain, (he 'll tell you smilingly)
Which he 's too much of a philosopher
To count as supernatural, indeed,
So calls a puzzle and problem, proud of it?
—Bidding you still be on your guard, you know,
Because one fact don't make a system stand,
Nor prove this an occasional escape
Of spirit beneath the matter : that 's the way !
Just so wild Indians picked up, piece by piece,
The fact in California, the fine gold
That underlay the gravel—hoarded these,
But never made a system stand, nor dug !
So wise men hold out in each hollowed palm
A handful of experience, sparkling fact
They can't explain : and since their rest of life
Is all explainable, what proof in this ?
Whereas I take the fact, the grain of gold,
And fling away the dirty rest of life,
And add this grain to the grain found by each fool
O' the million other such philosophers,—
Till I see gold, all gold and only gold,
Truth questionless though unexplainable,
And the miraculous proved the commonplace !
The other fools believed in mud, no doubt—
Failed to know gold they saw : was that so strange ?
Are all men born to play Bach's fiddle-fugues,
" Time " with the foil in carte, jump their own height,
Cut the mutton with the broadsword, skate a five,
Make the red hazard with the cue, clip nails
While swimming, in five minutes row a mile,
Pull themselves three feet up with the left arm,
Do sums of fifty figures in their head,—
And so on, by the scores of instances ?

The Sludge with luck, who sees the spiritual facts
 His fellows strive and fail to see, may rank
 With these, and share the advantage.

Ay, but share

The drawback ! Think it over by yourself ;
 I have not heart, sir, and the fire 's gone grey.
 Defect somewhere compensates for success,
 Everyone knows that. Oh, we 're equals, sir !
 The big-legged fellow has a little arm
 And a less brain, though big legs win the race.
 Do you suppose I 'scape the common lot ?
 Say, I was born with flesh so sensitive,
 Soul so alert, that, practice helping both,
 I guess what 's going on outside the veil,
 Just as a prisoned crane feels pairing-time
 In the islands where his kind are, so must fall
 To capering by himself some shiny night,
 As if your back-yard were a plot of spice—
 Thus am I 'ware o' the spirit-world : while you,
 Blind as a beetle that way,—for amends,
 Why, you can double fist and floor me, sir !
 Ride that hot hardmouthed horrid horse of yours,
 Laugh while it lightens, play with the great dog,
 Speak your mind though it vex some friend to hear,
 Never brag, never bluster, never blush,—
 In short, you 've pluck, when I 'm a coward—there !
 I know it, I can't help it,—folly or no,
 I 'm paralyzed, my hand 's no more a hand,
 Nor my head, a head, in danger : you can smile
 And change the pipe in your cheek. Your gift 's not mine.
 Would you swap for mine ? No ! but you 'd add my gift
 To yours : I dare say ! I too sigh at times,
 Wish I were stouter, could tell truth nor flinch,
 Kept cool when threatened, did not mind so much
 Being dressed gaily, making strangers stare,

Eating nice things ; when I 'd amuse myself,
 I shut my eyes and fancy in my brain,
 I 'm—now the President, now, Jenny Lind,
 Now, Emerson, now, the Benicia Boy—
 With all the civilized world a-wondering
 And worshipping. I know it 's folly and worse ;
 I feel such tricks sap, honeycomb the soul :
 But I can't cure myself,—despond, despair,
 And then, hey, presto, there 's a turn o' the wheel,
 Under comes uppermost, fate makes full amends ;
 Sludge knows and sees and hears a hundred things
 You all are blind to,—I 've my taste of truth,
 Likewise my touch of falsehood,—vice no doubt,
 But you 've your vices also : I 'm content.

What, sir? You won't shake hands? "Because I cheat!
 "You've found me out in cheating!" That 's enough
 To make an apostle swear! Why, when I cheat,
Mean to cheat, do cheat, and am caught in the act,
Are you, or rather, am I sure o' the fact?
 (There 's verse again, but I 'm inspired somehow.)
 Well then I 'm not sure! I may be, perhaps,
 Free as a babe from cheating : how it began,
 My gift,—no matter ; what 't is got to be
 In the end now, that 's the question ; answer that !
 Had I seen, perhaps, what hand was holding mine,
 Leading me whither, I had died of fright,
 So, I was made believe I led myself.
 If I should lay a six-inch plank from roof
 To roof, you would not cross the street, one step,
 Even at your mother's summons : but, being shrewd,
 If I paste paper on each side the plank
 And swear 't is solid pavement, why, you 'll cross
 Humming a tune the while, in ignorance
 Beacon Street stretches a hundred feet below :
 I walked thus, took the paper-cheat for stone.

Some impulse made me set a thing o' the move
 Which, started once, ran really by itself ;
 Beer flows thus, suck the siphon ; toss the kite,
 It takes the wind and floats of its own force.
 Don't let truth's lump rot stagnant for the lack
 Of a timely helpful lie to leaven it !
 Put a chalk-egg beneath the clucking hen,
 She 'll lay a real one, laudably deceived,
 Daily for weeks to come. I 've told my lie,
 And seen truth follow, marvels none of mine ;
 All was not cheating, sir, I 'm positive !
 I don't know if I move your hand sometimes
 When the spontaneous writing spreads so far,
 If my knee lifts the table all that height,
 Why the inkstand don't fall off the desk a-tilt,
 Why the accordion plays a prettier waltz
 Than I can pick out on the piano-forte,
 Why I speak so much more than I intend,
 Describe so many things I never saw.
 I tell you, sir, in one sense, I believe
 Nothing at all,—that everybody can,
 Will, and does cheat : but in another sense
 I 'm ready to believe my very self—
 That every cheat 's inspired, and every lie
 Quick with a germ of truth.

You ask perhaps

Why I should condescend to trick at all
 If I know a way without it ? This is why !
 There 's a strange secret sweet self-sacrifice
 In any desecration of one's soul
 To a worthy end,—is n't it Herodotus
 (I wish I could read Latin !) who describes
 The single gift o' the land's virginity,
 Demanded in those old Egyptian rites,
 (I 've but a hazy notion—help me, sir !)

For one purpose in the world, one day in a life,
 One hour in a day—thereafter, purity,
 And a veil thrown o'er the past for evermore !
 Well now they understood a many things
 Down by Nile city, or wherever it was !
 I 've always vowed, after the minute's lie,
 And the end's gain,—truth should be mine henceforth.
 This goes to the root o' the matter, sir,—this plain
 Plump fact : accept it and unlock with it
 The wards of many a puzzle !

Or, finally,

Why should I set so fine a gloss on things ?
 What need I care ? I cheat in self-defence,
 And there 's my answer to a world of cheats !
 Cheat ? To be sure, sir ! What 's the world worth else ?
 Who takes it as he finds, and thanks his stars ?
 Don't it want trimming, turning, furbishing up
 And polishing over ? Your so-styled great men,
 Do they accept one truth as truth is found,
 Or try their skill at tinkering ? What 's your world ?
 Here are you born, who are, I 'll say at once,
 Of the luckiest whether as to head and heart,
 Body and soul, or all that helps the same.
 Well, now, look back : what faculty of yours
 Came to its full, had ample justice done
 By growing when rain fell, biding its time,
 Solidifying growth when earth was dead,
 Spiring up, broadening wide, in seasons due ?
 Never ! You shot up and frost nipped you off,
 Settled to sleep when sunshine bade you sprout ;
 One faculty thwarted its fellow : at the end,
 All you boast is, " I had proved a topping tree
 " In other climes "—yet this was the right clime
 Had you foreknown the seasons. Young, you 've force
 Wasted like well-streams : old,—oh, then indeed,

Behold a labyrinth of hydraulic pipes
 Through which you 'd play off wondrous waterwork ;
 Only, no water 's left to feed their play.
 Young,—you 've a hope, an aim, a love ; it 's tossed
 And crossed and lost : you struggle on, some spark
 Shut in your heart against the puffs around,
 Through cold and pain ; these in due time subside :
 Now then for age's triumph, the hoarded light
 You mean to loose on the altered face of things,—
 Up with it on the tripod ! It 's extinct.
 Spend your life's remnant asking —which was best,
 Light smothered up that never peeped forth once,
 Or the cold cresset with full leave to shine ?
 Well, accept this too,—seek the fruit of it
 Not in enjoyment, proved a dream on earth,
 But knowledge, useful for a second chance,
 Another life,—you 've lost this world, you 've gained
 Its knowledge for the next.—What knowledge, sir,
 Except that you know nothing ? Nay, you doubt
 Whether 't were better have been made man or brute,
 If aught is true, if good and evil clash.
 No foul, no fair, no inside, no outside,
 There 's your world !

Give it me ! I slap it brisk
 With harlequin's pasteboard sceptre : what 's it now ?
 Changed like a rock-flat, rough with rusty weed,
 At first wash-over o' the returning wave !
 All the dry dead impracticable stuff
 Starts into life and light again ; this world
 Pervaded by the influx from the next.
 I cheat, and what 's the happy consequence ?
 You find full justice straightway dealt you out,
 Each want supplied, each ignorance set at ease,
 Each folly fooled. No life-long labour now
 As the price of worse than nothing ! No mere film

Holding you chained in iron, as it seems,
Against the outstretch of your very arms
And legs i' the sunshine moralists forbid !
What would you have ? Just speak and,—three, you see !
You're supplemented, made a whole at last :
Bacon advises, Shakespeare writes you songs,
And Mary Queen of Scots embraces you.
Thus it goes on, not quite like life perhaps,
But so near, that the very difference piques,
Shows that e'en better than this best will be—
This passing entertainment in a hut
Whose bare walls take your taste—since, one stage more,
And you arrive at the palace : all half real,
And you, to suit it, less than real beside,
In a dream, lethargic kind of death in life,
That helps the interchange of natures, flesh
Transfused by souls, and such souls ! Oh, 'tis choice !
And if at whiles the bubble, blown too thin,
Seem nigh on bursting,—if you nearly see
The real world through the false,—what *do* you see ?
Is the old so ruined ? You find you're in a flock
O' the youthful, earnest, passionate—genius, beauty,
Rank and wealth also, if you care for these,
And all depose their natural rights, hail you,
(That 's me, sir) as their mate and yoke-fellow.
Participate in Sludgehood—nay, grow mine,
I veritably possess them—banish doubt,
And reticence and modesty alike !
Why, here 's the Golden Age, old Paradise
Or new Eutopia ! Here is life indeed,
The world well won now, yours for the first time !

And all this might be, may be, and with good help
Of a little lying shall be : so, Sludge lies !
Why he 's at worst your poet who sings how Greeks
That never were, in Troy which never was

Did this or the other impossible great thing !
 He 's Lowell—it 's a world, you smile and say,
 Of his own invention—wondrous Longfellow,
 Surprising Hawthorne ! Sludge does more than they,
 And acts the books they write : the more his praise !

But why mount up to poets ? Take plain prose—
 Dealers in common sense, set these at work,
 What can they do without their helpful lies ?
 Each states the law and fact and face o' the thing
 Just as he 'd have them, finds what he thinks fit,
 Is blind to what missuits him, just records
 What makes his case out, quite ignores the rest.
 It 's a History of the World, the Lizard Age,
 The Early Indians, the Old Country War,
 Jerome Napoleon, whatsoever you please,
 All as the author wants it. Such a scribe
 You pay and praise for putting life in stones,
 Fire into fog, making the past your world.
 There 's plenty of " How did you contrive to grasp
 " The thread which led you through this labyrinth ?
 " How build such solid fabric out of air ?
 " How on so slight foundation found this tale,
 " Biography, narrative ? " or, in other words,
 " How many lies did it require to make
 " The portly truth you here present us with ? "
 " Oh," quoth the penman, purring at your praise,
 " 'T is fancy all ; no particle of fact :
 " I was poor and threadbare when I wrote that book
 " ' Bliss in the Golden City.' I, at Thebes ?
 " We writers paint out of our heads, you see ! "
 " —Ah, the more wonderful the gift in you,
 " The more creativeness and godlike craft ! "
 But I, do I present you with my piece,
 It 's " What, Sludge ? When my sainted mother spoke
 " The verses Lady Jane Grey last composed

"About the rosy bower in the seventh heaven
 "Where she and Queen Elizabeth keep house,—
 "You made the raps? 'T was your invention that?
 "Cur, slave and devil!"—eight fingers and two thumbs
 Stuck in my throat?

Well, if the marks seem gone,
 'T is because stiffish cock-tail, taken in time,
 Is better for a bruise than arnica.
 There, sir! I bear no malice: 't is n't in me.
 I know I acted wrongly: still, I 've tried
 What I could say in my excuse,—to show
 The devil 's not all devil . . . I don't pretend,
 An angel, much less such a gentleman
 As you, sir! And I 've lost you, lost myself,
 Lost all, l-l-l-

No—are you in earnest, sir?

O, yours, sir, is an angel's part! I know
 What prejudice prompts, and what 's the common course
 Men take to soothe their ruffled self-conceit:
 Only you rise superior to it all!
 No, sir, it don't hurt much; it 's speaking long
 That makes me choke a little: the marks will go!
 What? Twenty V-notes more, and outfit too,
 And not a word to Greeley? One—one kiss
 O' the hand that saves me? You 'll not let me speak,
 I well know, and I 've lost the right, too true!
 But I must say, sir, if She hears (she does)
 Your sainted . . . Well, sir,—be it so! That 's, I think,
 My bed-room candle. Good-night! Bl-l-less you, sir!

R-r-r, you brute-beast and blackguard! Cowardly
 scamp!

I only wish I dared burn down the house
 And spoil your sniggering! Oh, what, you 're the man?

You 're satisfied at last? You 've found out Sludge?
 We 'll see that presently : my turn, sir, next !
 I too can tell my story : brute,—do you hear?—
 You throttled your sainted mother, that old hag,
 In just such a fit of passion : no, it was . . .
 To get this house of hers, and many a note
 Like these . . . I 'll pocket them, however . . . five,
 Ten, fifteen . . . ay, you gave her throat the twist,
 Or else you poisoned her ! Confound the cuss !
 Where was my head ? I ought to have prophesied
 He 'll die in a year and join her : that 's the way.
 I don't know where my head is : what had I done ?
 How did it all go ? I said he poisoned her,
 And hoped he 'd have grace given him to repent ;
 Whereon he picked this quarrel, bullied me
 And called me cheat : I thrashed him,—who could heip ?
 He howled for mercy, prayed me on his knees
 To cut and run and save him from disgrace :
 I do so, and once off, he slanders me.
 An end of him ! Begin elsewhere anew !
 Boston 's a hole, the herring-pond is wide,
 V-notes are something, liberty still more.
 Beside, is he the only fool in the world ?



THE BOY AND THE ANGEL.

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
 " Praise God ! " sang Theocrite.
 Then to his poor trade he turned,
 Whereby the daily meal was earned.
 Hard he laboured, long and well ;
 O'er his work the boy's curls fell.
 But ever, at each period,
 He stopped and sang, " Praise God !

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

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

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

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

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

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

God said, " A praise is in mine ear ;

" There is no doubt in it, no fear :

" So sing old worlds, and so

" New worlds that from my footstool go.

" Clearer loves sound other ways :

" I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell

The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'T was Easter Day : he flew to Rome,

And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by

The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,

Stood the new Pope, Theocrite :

And all his past career

Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,

Till on his life the sickness weighed ;

And in his cell, when death drew near,

An angel in a dream brought cheer :

And, rising from the sickness drear,

He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,

And on his sight the angel burned.

" I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,

" And set thee here ; I did not well.

" Vainly I left my angel-sphere,

" Vain was thy dream of many a year.

" Thy voice's praise seemed weak ; it dropped—

" Creation's chorus stopped !

" Go back and praise again
 " The early way, while I remain.
 " With that weak voice of our disdain,
 " Take up creation's pausing strain.
 " Back to the cell and poor employ :
 " Resume the craftsman and the boy ! "

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

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



A DEATH IN THE DESERT.

[SUPPOSED of Pamphylax the Antiochene :
 It is a parchment, of my rolls the fifth,
 Hath three skins glued together, is all Greek,
 And goeth from *Epsilon* down to *Mu* :
 Lies second in the surnamed Chosen Chest,
 Stained and conserved with juice of terebinth,
 Covered with cloth of hair, and lettered *Xi*,
 From Xanthus, my wife's uncle, now at peace :
Mu and *Epsilon* stand for my own name,
 I may not write it, but I make a cross
 To show I wait His coming, with the rest,
 And leave off here : beginneth Pamphylax.]

I said, " If one should wet his lips with wine,
 " And slip the broadest plantain-leaf we find,
 " Or else the lappet of a linen robe,
 " Into the water-vessel, lay it right,
 " And cool his forehead just above the eyes,
 " The while a brother, kneeling either side,
 " Should chafe each hand and try to make it warm,—
 " He is not so far gone but he might speak."

This did not happen in the outer cave,
Nor in the secret chamber of the rock,
Where, sixty days since the decree was out,
We had him, bedded on a camel-skin,
And waited for his dying all the while ;
But in the midmost grotto : since noon's light
Reached there a little, and we would not lose
The last of what might happen on his face.

I at the head, and Xanthus at the feet,
With Valens and the Boy, had lifted him,
And brought him from the chamber in the depths,
And laid him in the light where we might see :
For certain smiles began about his mouth,
And his lips moved, presageful of the end.

Beyond, and half way up the mouth o' the cave,
The Bactrian convert, having his desire,
Kept watch, and made pretence to graze a goat
That gave us milk, on rags of various herb,
Plantain and quitch, the rocks' shade keeps alive :
So that if any thief or soldier passed,
(Because the persecution was aware)
Yielding the goat up promptly with his life,
Such man might pass on, joyful at a prize,
Nor care to pry into the cool o' the cave.
Outside was all noon and the burning blue.

"Here is wine," answered Xanthus,—dropped a drop ;
I stooped and placed the lap of cloth aright,
Then chafed his right hand, and the Boy his left :
But Valens had bethought him, and produced
And broke a ball of nard, and made perfume.
Only, he did—not so much wake, as—turn
And smile a little, as a sleeper does
If any dear one call him, touch his face—
And smiles and loves, but will not be disturbed.

Then Xanthus said a prayer, but still he slept :
It is the Xanthus that escaped to Rome,
Was burned, and could not write the chronicle.

Then the Boy sprang up from his knees, and ran,
Stung by the splendour of a sudden thought,
And fetched the seventh plate of graven lead
Out of the secret chamber, found a place,
Pressing with finger on the deeper dints,
And spoke, as 't were his mouth proclaiming first
" I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Whereat he opened his eyes wide at once,
And sat up of himself, and looked at us ;
And thenceforth nobody pronounced a word :
Only, outside, the Bactrian cried his cry
Like the lone desert-bird that wears the ruff,
As signal we were safe, from time to time.

First he said, " If a friend declared to me,
" This my son Valens, this my other son,
" Were James and Peter,—nay, declared as well
" This lad was very John,—I could believe !
" —Could, for a moment, doubtlessly believe :
" So is myself withdrawn into my depths,
" The soul retreated from the perished brain
" Whence it was wont to feel and use the world
" Through these dull members, done with long ago.
" Yet I myself remain ; I feel myself :
" And there is nothing lost. Let be, awhile !"

[This is the doctrine he was wont to teach,
How divers persons witness in each man,
Three souls which make up one soul : first, to wit,
A soul of each and all the bodily parts,
Seated therein, which works, and is what Does,
And has the use of earth, and ends the man
Downward : but tending upward for advice,

Grows into, and again is grown into
 By the next soul, which, seated in the brain,
 Useth the first with its collected use,
 And feeleth, thinketh, willeth,—is what Knows :
 Which, duly tending upward in its turn,
 Grows into, and again is grown into
 By the last soul, that uses both the first,
 Subsisting whether they assist or no,
 And, constituting man's self, is what Is—
 And leans upon the former, makes it play,
 As that played off the first : and, tending up,
 Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the man
 Upward in that dread point of intercourse,
 Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him,
 What Does, what Knows, what Is ; three souls, one
 man.

I give the glossa of Theotypas.]

And then, “ A stick, once fire from end to end ;
 “ Now, ashes save the tip that holds a spark !
 “ Yet, blow the spark, it runs back, spreads itself
 “ A little where the fire was : thus I urge
 “ The soul that served me, till it task once more
 “ What ashes of my brain have kept their shape,
 “ And these make effort on the last o' the flesh,
 “ Trying to taste again the truth of things—”
 (He smiled)—“ their very superficial truth ;
 “ As that ye are my sons, that it is long
 “ Since James and Peter had release by death,
 “ And I am only he, your brother John,
 “ Who saw and heard, and could remember all.
 “ Remember all ! It is not much to say.
 “ What if the truth broke on me from above
 “ As once and oft-times ? Such might hap again :
 “ Doubtlessly He might stand in presence here,
 “ With head wool-white, eyes, flame, and feet like brass,

“ The sword and the seven stars, as I have seen—
“ I who now shudder only and surmise
“ ‘ How did your brother bear that sight and live ? ’
“ If I live yet, it is for good, more love
“ Through me to men : be nought but ashes here
“ That keep awhile my semblance, who was John,—
“ Still, when they scatter, there is left on earth
“ No one alive who knew (consider this !)
“ —Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands
“ That which was from the first, the Word of Life.
“ How will it be when none more saith, ‘ I saw ? ’
“ Such ever was love’s way : to rise, it stoops.
“ Since I, whom Christ’s mouth taught, was bidden teach,
“ I went, for many years, about the world,
“ Saying ‘ It was so ; so I heard and saw.’
“ Speaking as the case asked : and men believed.
“ Afterward came the message to myself
“ In Patmos isle ; I was not bidden teach,
“ But simply listen, take a book and write,
“ Nor set down other than the given word,
“ With nothing left to my arbitrament
“ To choose or change : I wrote, and men believed.
“ Then, for my time grew brief, no message more,
“ No call to write again, I found a way,
“ And, reasoning from my knowledge, merely taught
“ Men should, for love’s sake, in love’s strength, believe ;
“ Or I would pen a letter to a friend
“ And urge the same as friend, nor less nor more :
“ Friends said I reasoned rightly, and believed.
“ But at the last, why, I seemed left alive
“ Like a sea-jelly weak on Patmos strand,
“ To tell dry sea-beach gazers how I fared
“ When there was mid-sea, and the mighty things ;
“ Left to repeat, ‘ I saw, I heard, I knew,’
“ And go all over the old ground again,

“ With Antichrist already in the world,
“ And many Antichrists, who answered prompt
“ ‘ Am I not Jasper as thyself art John ?
“ ‘ Nay, young, whereas through age thou mayest forget :
“ ‘ Wherefore, explain, or how shall we believe ? ’
“ I never thought to call down fire on such,
“ Or, as in wonderful and early days,
“ Pick up the scorpion, tread the serpent dumb ;
“ But patient stated much of the Lord’s life
“ Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work :
“ Since much that at the first, in deed and word,
“ Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,
“ Had grown (or else my soul was grown to match,
“ Fed through such years, familiar with such light,
“ Guarded and guided still to see and speak)
“ Of new significance and fresh result ;
“ What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars,
“ And named them in the Gospel I have writ.
“ For men said, ‘ It is getting long ago : ’
“ ‘ Where is the promise of His coming ? ’—asked
“ These young ones in their strength, as loth to wait,
“ Of me who, when their sires were born, was old.
“ I, for I loved them, answered, joyfully,
“ Since I was there, and helpful in my age ;
“ And, in the main, I think such men believed.
“ Finally, thus endeavouring, I fell sick,
“ Ye brought me here, and I supposed the end,
“ And went to sleep with one thought that, at least,
“ Though the whole earth should lie in wickedness,
“ We had the truth, might leave the rest to God.
“ Yet now I wake in such decrepitude
“ As I had slidden down and fallen afar,
“ Past even the presence of my former self,
“ Grasping the while for stay at facts which snap,
“ Till I am found away from my own world,
“ Feeling for foot-hold through a blank profound,

" Along with unborn people in strange lands,
 " Who say—I hear said or conceive they say—
 " ' Was John at all, and did he say he saw ?
 " ' Assure us, ere we ask what he might see !'

" And how shall I assure them? Can they share
 " —They, who have flesh, a veil of youth and strength
 " About each spirit, that needs must bide its time,
 " Living and learning still as years assist
 " Which wear the thickness thin, and let man see—
 " With me who hardly am withheld at all,
 " But shudderingly, scarce a shred between,
 " Lie bare to the universal prick of light ?
 " Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
 " We whom God loves? When pain ends, gain ends too.
 " To me, that story—ay, that Life and Death
 " Of which I wrote 'it was'—to me, it is ;
 " —Is, here and now : I apprehend nought else.
 " Is not God now i' the world His power first made ?
 " Is not His love at issue still with sin,
 " Visibly when a wrong is done on earth ?
 " Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else around ?
 " Yea, and the Resurrection and Uprise
 " To the right hand of the throne—what is it beside,
 " When such truth, breaking bounds, o'erfloods my soul,
 " And, as I saw the sin and death, even so
 " See I the need yet transiency of both,
 " The good and glory consummated thence ?
 " I saw the Power ; I see the Love, once weak,
 " Resume the Power : and in this word ' I see,'
 " Lo, there is recognised the Spirit of both,
 " That moving o'er the spirit of man, unblinds
 " His eye and bids him look. These are, I see ;
 " But ye, the children, His beloved ones too,
 " Ye need,—as I should use an optic glass
 " I wondered at erewhile, somewhere i' the world,

“ It had been given a crafty smith to make ;
“ A tube, he turned on objects brought too close,
“ Lying confusedly insubordinate
“ For the unassisted eye to master once :
“ Look through his tube, at distance now they lay,
“ Become succinct, distinct, so small, so clear !
“ Just thus, ye needs must apprehend what truth
“ I see, reduced to plain historic fact,
“ Diminished into clearness, proved a point
“ And far away : ye would withdraw your sense
“ From out eternity, strain it upon time,
“ Then stand before that fact, that Life and Death
“ Stay there at gaze, till it dispart, dispread,
“ As though a star should open out, all sides,
“ Grow the world on you, as it is my world.

“ Our life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
“ And hope and fear,—believe the aged friend,—
“ Is just our chance o’ the prize of learning love,
“ How love might be, hath been indeed, and is ;
“ And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
“ Such prize despite the envy of the world,
“ And, having gained truth, keep truth : that is all.
“ But see the double way wherein we are led,
“ How the soul learns diversely from the flesh !
“ With flesh, that hath so little time to stay,
“ And yields mere basement for the soul’s emprise,
“ Expect prompt teaching. Helpful was the light,
“ And warmth was cherishing and food was choice
“ To every’s man’s flesh, thousand years ago,
“ As now to yours and mine ; the body sprang
“ At once to the height, and stayed : but the soul,—no !
“ Since sages who, this noontide, meditate
“ In Rome or Athens, may descry some point
“ Of the eternal power, hid yestereve :
“ And, as thereby the power’s whole mass extends,

“ So much extends the æther floating o’er
“ The love that tops the might, the Christ in God.
“ Then, as new lessons shall be learned in these
“ Till earth’s work stop and useless time run out,
“ So duly, daily, needs provision be
“ For keeping the soul’s prowess possible,
“ Building new barriers as the old decay,
“ Saving us from evasion of life’s proof,
“ Putting the question ever, ‘ Does God love,
“ ‘ And will ye hold that truth against the world ?’
“ Ye know there needs no second proof with good
“ Gained for our flesh from any earthly source :
“ We might go freezing, ages,—give us fire,
“ Thereafter we judge fire at its full worth,
“ And guard it safe through every chance, ye know !
“ That fable of Prometheus and his theft,
“ How mortals gained Jove’s fiery flower, grows old
“ (I have been used to hear the pagans own)
“ And out of mind ; but fire, howe’er its birth,
“ Here is it, precious to the sophist now
“ Who laughs the myth of Æschylus to scorn,
“ As precious to those satyrs of his play,
“ Who touched it in gay wonder at the thing.
“ While were it so with the soul,—this gift of truth
“ Once grasped, were this our soul’s gain safe, and sure
“ To prosper as the body’s gain is wont,—
“ Why, man’s probation would conclude, his earth
“ Crumble ; for he both reasons and decides,
“ Weighs first, then chooses : will he give up fire
“ For gold or purple once he knows its worth ?
“ Could he give Christ up were His worth as plain ?
“ Therefore, I say, to test man, the proofs shift,
“ Nor may he grasp that fact like other fact,
“ And straightway in his life acknowledge it,
“ As, say, the indubitable bliss of fire.
“ Sigh ye, ‘ It had been easier once than now ?’

“ To give you answer I am left alive ;
“ Look at me who was present from the first !
“ Ye know what things I saw ; then came a test,
“ My first, befitting me who so had seen :
“ ‘ Forsake the Christ thou sawest transfigured, Him
“ ‘ Who trod the sea and brought the dead to life ?
“ ‘ What should wring this from thee ! ’—ye laugh and ask.
“ What wrung it ? Even a torchlight and a noise,
“ The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,
“ And fear of what the Jews might do ! Just that,
“ And it is written, ‘ I forsook and fled ; ’
“ There was my trial, and it ended thus.
“ Ay, but my soul had gained its truth, could grow :
“ Another year or two,—what little child,
“ What tender woman that had seen no least
“ Of all my sights, but barely heard them told,
“ Who did not clasp the cross with a light laugh,
“ Or wrap the burning robe round, thanking God ?
“ Well, was truth safe for ever, then ? Not so,
“ Already had begun the silent work
“ Whereby truth, deadened of its absolute blaze,
“ Might need love’s eye to pierce the o’erstretched doubt
“ Teachers were busy, whispering ‘ All is true
“ ‘ As the aged ones report ; but youth can reach
“ ‘ Where age gropes dimly, weak with stir and strain,
“ ‘ And the full doctrine slumbers till to-day.’
“ Thus, what the Roman’s lowered spear was found,
“ A bar to me who touched and handled truth,
“ Now proved the glozing of some new shrewd tongue,
“ This Ebion, this Cerinthus or their mates,
“ Till imminent was the outcry ‘ Save our Christ ! ’
“ Whereon I stated much of the Lord’s life
“ Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work.
“ Such work done, as it will be, what comes next ?
“ What do I hear say, or conceive men say,
“ ‘ Was John at all, and did he say he saw ?

“ ‘Assure us, ere we ask what he might see !’

“ Is this indeed a burthen for late days,
“ And may I help to bear it with you all,
“ Using my weakness which becomes your strength ?
“ For if a babe were born inside this grot,
“ Grew to a boy here, heard us praise the sun,
“ Yet had but yon sole glimmer in light’s place, —
“ One loving him and wishful he should learn,
“ Would much rejoice himself was blinded first
“ Month by month here, so made to understand
“ How eyes, born darkling, apprehend amiss :
“ I think I could explain to such a child
“ There was more glow outside than gleams he caught,
“ Ay, nor need urge ‘ I saw it, so believe !’
“ It is a heavy burthen you shall bear
“ In latter days, new lands, or old grown strange,
“ Left without me, which must be very soon.
“ What is the doubt, my brothers ? Quick with it !
“ I see you stand conversing, each new face,
“ Either in fields, of yellow summer eves,
“ On islets yet unnamed amid the sea ;
“ Or pace for shelter ’neath a portico
“ Out of the crowd in some enormous town
“ Where now the larks sing in a solitude ;
“ Or muse upon blank heaps of stone and sand
“ Idly conjectured to be Ephesus ;
“ And no one asks his fellow any more
“ ‘ Where is the promise of His coming ?’ but
“ ‘ Was he revealed in any of His lives,
“ ‘ As Power, as Love, as Influencing Soul ?’

“ Quick, for time presses, tell the whole mind out,
“ And let us ask and answer and be saved !
“ My book speak on, because it cannot pass ;
“ One listens quietly, nor scoffs but pleads

“ ‘ Here is a tale of things done ages since ;
“ ‘ What truth was ever told the second day ?
“ ‘ Wonders, that would prove doctrine, go for nought.
“ ‘ Remains the doctrine, love ; well, we must love,
“ ‘ And what we love most, power and love in one,
“ ‘ Let us acknowledge on the record here,
“ ‘ Accepting these in Christ : must Christ then be ?
“ ‘ Has He been ? Did not we ourselves make Him ?
“ ‘ Our mind receives but what it holds, no more.
“ ‘ First of the love, then ; we acknowledge Christ—
“ ‘ A proof we comprehend His love, a proof
“ ‘ We had such love already in ourselves,
“ ‘ Knew first what else we should not recognize.
“ ‘ ’T is mere projection from man’s inmost mind,
“ ‘ And, what he loves, thus falls reflected back,
“ ‘ Becomes accounted somewhat out of him ;
“ ‘ He throws it up in air, it drops down earth’s,
“ ‘ With shape, name, story added, man’s old way.
“ ‘ How prove you Christ came otherwise at least ?
“ ‘ Next try the power : He made and rules the world :
“ ‘ Certes there is a world once made, now ruled,
“ ‘ Unless things have been ever as we see.
“ ‘ Our sires declared a charioteer’s yoked steeds
“ ‘ Brought the sun up the east and down the west,
“ ‘ Which only of itself now rises, sets,
“ ‘ As if a hand impelled it and a will,—
“ ‘ Thus they long thought, they who had will and hands :
“ ‘ But the new question’s whisper is distinct,
“ ‘ Wherefore must all force needs be like ourselves ?
“ ‘ We have the hands, the will ; what made and drives
“ ‘ The sun is force, is law, is named, not known,
“ ‘ While will and love we do know ; marks of these,
“ ‘ Eye-witnesses attest, so books declare—
“ ‘ As that, to punish or reward our race,
“ ‘ The sun at undue times arose or set
“ ‘ Or else stood still ; what do not men affirm ?

“ ‘ But earth requires as urgently reward
 “ ‘ Or punishment to-day as years ago,
 “ ‘ And none expects the sun will interpose :
 “ ‘ Therefore it was mere passion and mistake,
 “ ‘ Or erring zeal for right, which changed the truth.
 “ ‘ Go back, far, farther, to the birth of things ;
 “ ‘ Ever the will, the intelligence, the love,
 “ ‘ Man’s !—which he gives, supposing he but finds,
 “ ‘ As late he gave head, body, hands and feet,
 “ ‘ To help these in what forms he called his gods.
 “ ‘ First, Jove’s brow, Juno’s eyes were swept away,
 “ ‘ But Jove’s wrath, Juno’s pride continued long !
 “ ‘ At last, will, power, and love discarded these,
 “ ‘ So law in turn discards power, love, and will.
 “ ‘ What proveth God is otherwise at least ?
 “ ‘ All else, projection from the mind of man !’

“ Nay, do not give me wine, for I am strong,
 “ But place my gospel where I put my hands.

“ I say that man was made to grow, not stop ;
 “ That help, he needed once, and needs no more,
 “ Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn :
 “ For he hath new deeds, and new helps to these.
 “ This imports solely, man should mount on each
 “ New height in view ; the help whereby he mounts,
 “ The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,
 “ Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.
 “ Man apprehends Him newly at each stage
 “ Whereat earth’s ladder drops, its service done ;
 “ And nothing shall prove twice what once was proved.
 “ You stick a garden-plot with ordered twigs
 “ To show inside lie germs of herbs unborn,
 “ And check the careless step would spoil their birth ;
 “ But when herbs wave, the guardian twigs may go,
 “ Since should ye doubt of virtues, question kinds,
 “ It is no longer for old twigs ye look,

" Which proved once underneath lay store of seed,
 " But to the herb's self, by what light ye boast,
 " For what fruit's signs are. This book's fruit is plain,
 " Nor miracles need prove it any more.
 " Doth the fruit show? Then miracles bade 'ware
 " At first of root and stem, saved both till now
 " From trampling ox, rough boar and wanton goat.
 " What? Was man made a wheelwork to wind up,
 " And be discharged, and straight wound up anew?
 " No!—grown, his growth lasts; taught, he ne'er forgets:
 " May learn a thousand things, not twice the same.
 " This might be pagan teaching: now hear mine.

" I say, that as the babe, you feed awhile,
 " Becomes a boy and fit to feed himself,
 " So, minds at first must be spoon-fed with truth:
 " When they can eat, babe's nurture is withdrawn.
 " I fed the babe whether it would or no:
 " I bid the boy or feed himself or starve.
 " I cried once, 'That ye may believe in Christ,
 " 'Behold this blind man shall receive his sight!'
 " I cry now, 'Urgest thou, *for I am shrewd*
 " '*And smile at stories how John's word could cure—*
 " '*Repeat that miracle and take my faith?*'
 " I say, that miracle was duly wrought
 " When, save for it, no faith was possible.
 " Whether a change were wrought? the shows o' the
 world,
 " Whether the change came from our minds which see
 " Of shows o' the world so much as and no more
 " Than God wills for His purpose,—(what do I
 " See now, suppose you, there where you see rock
 " Round us?)—I know not; such was the effect,
 " So faith grew, making void more miracles
 " Because too much: they would compel, not help.
 " I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ

‘ Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
 ‘ All questions in the earth and out of it,
 ‘ And has so far advanced thee to be wise.
 ‘ Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove the proved ?
 ‘ In life’s mere minute, with power to use that proof,
 ‘ Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung ?
 ‘ Thou hast it ; use it and forthwith, or die !

‘ For I say, this is death and the sole death,
 ‘ When a man’s loss comes to him from his gain,
 ‘ Darkness from light, from knowledge ignorance,
 ‘ And lack of love from love made manifest ;
 ‘ A lamp’s death when, replete with oil, it chokes ;
 ‘ A stomach’s when, surcharged with food, it starves.
 ‘ With ignorance was surety of a cure,
 ‘ When man, appalled at nature, questioned first
 ‘ ‘ What if there lurk a might behind this might ?’
 ‘ He needed satisfaction God could give,
 ‘ And did give, as ye have the written word :
 ‘ But when he finds might still redouble might,
 ‘ Yet asks, ‘ Since all is might, what use of will ?’
 ‘ —Will, the one source of might,—he being man
 ‘ With a man’s will and a man’s might, to teach
 ‘ In little how the two combine in large,—
 ‘ That man has turned round on himself and stands :
 ‘ Which in the course of nature is, to die.

‘ And when man questioned, ‘ What if there be love
 ‘ ‘ Behind the will and might, as real as they ?’—
 ‘ He needed satisfaction God could give,
 ‘ And did give, as ye have the written word :
 ‘ But when, beholding that love everywhere,
 ‘ He reasons, ‘ Since such love is everywhere,
 ‘ ‘ And since ourselves can love and would be loved,
 ‘ ‘ We ourselves make the love, and Christ was not,’—
 ‘ How shall ye help this man who knows himself,

" That he must love and would be loved again,
 " Yet, owning his own love that proveth Christ,
 " Rejecteth Christ through very need of Him?
 " The lamp o'erswims with oil, the stomach flags
 " Loaded with nurture, and that man's soul dies.

 " If he rejoin, ' But this was all the while
 " ' A trick ; the fault was, first of all, in thee,
 " ' Thy story of the places, names and dates,
 " ' Where, when and how the ultimate truth had rise,
 " ' —Thy prior truth, at last discovered none,
 " ' Whence now the second suffers detriment.
 " ' What good of giving knowledge if, because
 " ' O' the manner of the gift, its profit fail?
 " ' And why refuse what modicum of help
 " ' Had stopped the after-doubt, impossible
 " ' I' the face of truth—truth absolute, uniform?
 " ' Why must I hit of this and miss of that,
 " ' Distinguish just as I be weak or strong,
 " ' And not ask of thee and have answer prompt,
 " ' Was this once, was it not once?—then and now
 " ' And evermore, plain truth from man to man.
 " ' Is John's procedure just the heathen bard's?
 " ' Put question of his famous play again
 " ' How for the ephemerals' sake, Jove's fire was filched,
 " ' And carried in a cane and brought to earth :
 " ' *The fact is in the fable*, cry the wise,
 " ' *Mortals obtained the boon, so much is fact,*
 " ' *Though fire be spirit and produced on earth.*
 " ' As with the Titan's, so now with thy tale :
 " ' Why breed in us perplexity, mistake,
 " ' Nor tell the whole truth in the proper words?

 " I answer, Have ye yet to argue out
 " The very primal thesis, plainest law,
 " —Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,
 " A master to obey, a course to take,

" Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?
 " Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
 " From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
 " From what once seemed good, to what now proves best :
 " How could man have progression otherwise?
 " Before the point was mooted ' What is God ?'
 " No savage man inquired ' What is myself ?'
 " Much less replied, ' First, last, and best of things.'
 " Man takes that title now if he believes
 " Might can exist with neither will nor love,
 " In God's case—what he names now Nature's Law—
 " While in himself he recognizes love
 " No less than might and will : and rightly takes.
 " Since if man prove the sole existent thing
 " Where these combine, whatever their degree,
 " However weak the might or will or love,
 " So they be found there, put in evidence,—
 " He is as surely higher in the scale
 " Than any might with neither love nor will,
 " As life, apparent in the poorest midge,
 " (When the faint dust-speck flits, ye guess its wing)
 " Is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self—
 " Given to the nobler midge for resting-place !
 " Thus, man proves best and highest—God, in fine,
 " And thus the victory leads but to defeat,
 " The gain to loss, best rise to the worst fall,
 " His life becomes impossible, which is death.

" But if, appealing thence, he cower, avouch
 " He is mere man, and in humility
 " Neither may know God nor mistake himself ;
 " I point to the immediate consequence
 " And say, by such confession straight he falls
 " Into man's place, a thing nor God nor beast,
 " Made to know that he can know and not more :
 " Lower than God who knows all and can ail,

“ Higher than beasts which know and can so far
“ As each beast’s limit, perfect to an end,
“ Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more ;
“ While man knows partly but conceives beside,
“ Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
“ And in this striving, this converting air
“ Into a solid he may grasp and use,
“ Find progress, man’s distinctive mark alone,
“ Not God’s, and not the beasts’ : God is, they are,
“ Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
“ Such progress could no more attend his soul
“ Were all it struggles after found at first
“ And guesses changed to knowledge absolute,
“ Than motion wait his body, were all else
“ Than it the solid earth on every side,
“ Where now through space he moves from rest to rest.
“ Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must expect
“ He could not, what he knows now, know at first ;
“ What he considers that he knows to-day,
“ Come but to-morrow, he will find misknown ;
“ Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns
“ Because he lives, which is to be a man,
“ Set to instruct himself by his past self :
“ First, like the brute, obliged by facts to learn,
“ Next, as man may, obliged by his own mind,
“ Bent, habit, nature, knowledge turned to law.
“ God’s gift was just that man conceive of truth
“ And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,
“ As midway help till he reach fact indeed.
“ The statuary ere he mould a shape
“ Boasts a like gift, the shape’s idea, and next
“ The aspiration to produce the same ;
“ So, taking clay, he calls his shape thereout,
“ Cries ever, ‘ Now I have the thing I see : ’
“ Yet all the while goes changing what was wrought,
“ From falsehood like the truth, to truth itself.

" How were it had he cried ' I see no face,
 " ' No breast, no feet i' the ineffectual clay ?'
 " Rather commend him that he clapped his hands,
 " And laughed ' It is my shape and lives again !'
 " Enjoyed the falsehood, touched it on to truth,
 " Until yourselves applaud the flesh indeed
 " In what is still flesh-imitating clay.
 " Right in you, right in him, such way be man's !
 " God only makes the live shape at a jet.
 " Will ye renounce this pact of creatureship ?
 " The pattern on the Mount subsists no more,
 " Seemed awhile, then returned to nothingness ;
 " But copies, Moses strove to make thereby,
 " Serve still and are replaced as time requires :
 " By these, make newest vessels, reach the type !
 " If ye demur, this judgment on your head,
 " Never to reach the ultimate, angels' law,
 " Indulging every instinct of the soul
 " There where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing !

 " Such is the burthen of the latest time.
 " I have survived to hear it with my ears,
 " Answer it with my lips : does this suffice ?
 " For if there be a further woe than such,
 " Wherein my brothers struggling need a hand,
 " So long as any pulse is left in mine,
 " May I be absent even longer yet,
 " Plucking the blind ones back from the abyss,
 " Though I should tarry a new hundred years !"

But he was dead : 't was about noon, the day
 Somewhat declining : we five buried him
 That eve, and then, dividing, went five ways,
 And I, disguised, returned to Ephesus.

By this, the cave's mouth must be filled with sand.
 Valens is lost, I know not of his trace ;

The Bactrian was but a wild childish man,
 And could not write nor speak, but only loved :
 So, lest the memory of this go quite,
 Seeing that I to-morrow fight the beasts,
 I tell the same to Phœbas, whom believe !
 For many look again to find that face,
 Beloved John's to whom I ministered,
 Somewhere in life about the world ; they err :
 Either mistaking what was darkly spoke
 At ending of his book, as he relates,
 Or misconceiving somewhat of this speech
 Scattered from mouth to mouth, as I suppose.
 Believe ye will not see him any more
 About the world with his divine regard !
 For all was as I say, and now the man
 Lies as he lay once, breast to breast with God.

[Cerinthus read and mused ; one added this :

“ If Christ, as thou affirmest, be of men
 “ Mere man, the first and best but nothing more,—
 “ Account Him, for reward of what He was,
 “ Now and for ever, wretchedest of all.
 “ For see ; Himself conceived of life as love,
 “ Conceived of love as what must enter in,
 “ Fill up, make one with His each soul He loved :
 “ Thus much for man's joy, all men's joy for Him.
 “ Well, He is gone, thou sayest, to fit reward.
 “ But by this time are many souls set free,
 “ And very many still retained alive :
 “ Nay, should His coming be delayed awhile,
 “ Say, ten years longer (twelve years, some compute)
 “ See if, for every finger of thy hands,
 “ There be not found, that day the world shall end,
 “ Hundreds of souls, each holding by Christ's word

“ That He will grow incorporate with all,
“ With me as Pamphylax, with him as John,
“ Groom for each bride ! Can a mere man do this ?
“ Yet Christ saith, this He lived and died to do.
“ Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
“ Or lost ! ”

But 't was Cerinthus that is lost.]

*FEARS AND SCRUPLES.*

I

HERE 's my case. Of old I used to love him,
This same unseen friend, before I knew :
Dreamed there was none like him, none above him,—
Waked to hope and trust my dream was true.

II

Loved I not his letters full of beauty ?
Not his actions famous far and wide ?
Absent, he would know I vowed him duty,
Present, he would find me at his side.

III

Pleasant fancy ! for I had but letters,
Only knew of actions by hearsay :
He himself was busied with my betters ;
What of that ? My turn must come some day.

IV

“ Some day ” proving—no day ! Here 's the puzzle.
Passed and passed my turn is. Why complain ?
He 's so busied ! If I could but muzzle
People 's foolish mouths that give me pain !

V

“Letters?” (hear them!) “You a judge of writing?
 “Ask the experts! How they shake the head
 “O’er these characters, your friend’s inditing--
 “Call them forgery from A to Z!

VI

“Actions? Where’s your certain proof” (they bother)
 “He, of all you find so great and good,
 “He, he only, claims this, that, the other
 “Action—claimed by men, a multitude?”

VII

I can simply wish I might refute you,
 Wish my friend would,—by a word, a wink,—
 Bid me stop that foolish mouth,—you brute you!
 He keeps absent,—why, I cannot think.

VIII

Never mind! Though foolishness may flout me,
 One thing’s sure enough: ’t is neither frost,
 No, nor fire, shall freeze or burn from out me
 Thanks for truth—though falsehood, gained—though
 lost.

IX

All my days, I’ll go the softer, sadlier,
 For that dream’s sake! How forget the thrill
 Through and through me as I thought “The gladlier
 “Lives my friend because I love him still!”

X

Ah, but there’s a menace someone utters!
 “What and if your friend at home play tricks?
 “Peep at hide-and-seek behind the shutters?
 “Mean your eyes should pierce through solid bricks?”

XI

“What and if he, frowning, wake you, dreamy?
 “Lay on you the blame that bricks—conceal?”

“ Say ‘ *At least I saw who did not see me,*
 “ ‘ *Does see now, and presently shall feel ?* ’ ”

XII

“ Why, that makes your friend a monster ! ” say you :
 “ Had his house no window ? At first nod,
 “ Would you not have hailed him ? ” Hush, I pray you !
 What if this friend happen to be—God ?



ARTEMIS PROLOGIZES.

I AM a goddess of the ambrosial courts,
 And save by Heré, Queen of Pride, surpassed
 By none whose temples whiten this the world.
 Through heaven I roll my lucid moon along ;
 I shed in hell o'er my pale people peace ;
 On earth I, caring for the creatures, guard
 Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-bitch sleek,
 And every feathered mother's callow brood,
 And all that love green haunts and loneliness.
 Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging crowns
 Of poppies red to blackness, bell and stem,
 Upon my image at Athenai here ;
 And this dead youth, Asclepios bends above,
 Was dearest to me. He, my buskined step
 To follow through the wild-wood leafy ways,
 And chase the panting stag, or swift with darts
 Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard low.
 Neglected homage to another god :
 Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight smoke
 Of tapers lulled, in jealousy despatched
 A noisome lust that, as the gadbee stings,
 Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for himself
 The son of Theseus her great absent spouse.
 Hippulutos exclaiming in his rage

Against the fury of the Queen, she judged
Life insupportable ; and, pricked at heart
An Amazonian stranger's race should dare
To scorn her, perished by the murderous cord :
Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll
The fame of him her swerving made not swerve.
And Theseus read, returning, and believed,
And exiled, in the blindness of his wrath,
The man without a crime who, last as first,
Loyal, divulged not to his sire the truth.
Now Theseus from Poseidon had obtained
That of his wishes should be granted three,
And one he imprecated straight—" Alive
" May ne'er Hippolutos reach other lands ! "
Poseidon heard, ai ai ! And scarce the prince
Had stepped into the fixed boots of the car
That give the feet stay against the strength
Of the Henetian horses, and around
His body flung the rein, and urged their speed
Along the rocks and shingles of the shore,
When from the gaping wave a monster flung
His obscene body in the coursers' path.
These, mad with terror, as the sea-bull sprawled
Wallowing about their feet, lost care of him
That reared them ; and the master-chariot-pole
Snapping beneath their plunges like a reed,
Hippolutos, whose feet were trammelled fast,
Was yet dragged forward by the circling rein
Which either hand directed ; nor they quenched
The frenzy of their flight before each trace,
Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woeful car,
Each boulder-stone, sharp stub and spiny shell,
Huge fish-bone wrecked and wreathed amid the sands
On that detested beach, was bright with blood
And morsels of his flesh : then fell the steeds
Head-foremost, crashing in their mooned fronts,

Shivering with sweat, each white eye horror-fixed.
 His people, who had witnessed all afar,
 Bore back the ruins of Hippolotos.
 But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced
 (Indomitable as a man foredoomed)
 That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer,
 I, in a flood of glory visible,
 Stood o'er my dying votary and, deed
 By deed, revealed, as all took place, the truth.
 Then Theseus lay the woefullest of men,
 And worthily ; but ere the death-veils hid
 His face, the murdered prince full pardon breathed
 To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai wails.

So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries,
 Lest in the cross-way none the honey-cake
 Should tender, nor pour out the dog's hot life ;
 Lest at my fane the priests disconsolate
 Should dress my image with some faded poor
 Few crowns, made favours of, nor dare object
 Such slackness to my worshippers who turn
 Elsewhere the trusting heart and loaded hand,
 As they had climbed Olumpos to report
 Of Artemis and nowhere found her throne—
 I interposed : and, this eventful night,—
 (While round the funeral pyre the populace
 Stood with fierce light on their black robes which bound
 Each sobbing head, while yet their hair they clipped
 O'er the dead body of their withered prince,
 And, in his palace, Theseus prostrated
 On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the slab
 'T was bruised on, groaned away the heavy grief—
 As the pyre fell, and down the cross-logs crashed
 Sending a crowd of sparkles through the night,
 And the gay fire, elate with mastery,
 Towered like a serpent o'er the clotted jars

Of wine, dissolving oils and frankincense,
 And splendid gums like gold,)—my potency
 Conveyed the perished man to my retreat
 In the thrice-venerable forest here.
 And this white-bearded sage who squeezes now
 The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of fame,
 Asclepios, whom my radiant brother taught
 The doctrine of each herb and flower and root,
 To know their secret'st virtue and express
 The saving soul of all : who so has soothed
 With lavers the torn brow and murdered cheeks,
 Composed the hair and brought its gloss again,
 And called the red bloom to the pale skin back,
 And laid the strips and jagged ends of flesh
 Even once more, and slacked the sinew's knot
 Of every tortured limb—that now he lies
 As if mere sleep possessed him underneath
 These interwoven oaks and pines. Oh cheer,
 Divine presenter of the healing rod,
 Thy snake, with ardent throat and lulling eye,
 Twines his lithe spires around ! I say, much cheer !
 Proceed thou with thy wisest pharmacies !
 And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-nymphs,
 Ply as the sage directs, these buds and leaves
 That strew the turf around the twain ! While I
 Await, in fitting silence, the event.



PHEIDIPPIDES.

χαίρετε, νικῶμεν.

FIRST I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock !
 Gods of my birthplace, demons and heroes, honor to all !
 Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, co-equal in
 praise

--Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the ægis and
spear !

Also, ye of the bow and the buskin, praised be your peer,
Now, henceforth and forever,—O latest to whom I upraise
Hand and heart and voice ! For Athens, leave pasture
and flock !

Present to help, potent to save, Pan—patron I call !

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I return !
See, 't is myself here standing alive, no spectre that speaks !
Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me, Athens
and you,

“Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for aid !
“Persia has come, we are here, where is She ?” Your
command I obeyed,

Ran and raced : like stubble, some field which a fire runs
through,

Was the space between city and city : two days, two
nights did I burn

Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.

Into their midst I broke : breath served but for “Persia
has come !

“Persia bids Athens proffer slaves'-tribute, water and
earth ;

“Razed to the ground is Eretria—but Athens, shall
Athens sink,

“Drop into dust and die—the flower of Hellas utterly die,

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

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

“How,—when ? No care for my limbs !—there's light-
ning in all and some—

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

O my Athens—Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond?
 Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,
 Malice,—each eye of her gave me its glitter of gratified
 hate!

Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for excuses.
 I stood

Quivering,—the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an inch
 from dry wood:

“Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they
 debate?”

“Thunder, thou Zeus! Athené, are Spartans a quarry
 beyond

“Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them
 ‘Ye must’!”

No bolt launched from Olumpus! Lo, their answer at
 last!

“Has Persia come,—does Athens ask aid,—may Sparta
 befriend?”

“Nowise precipitate judgment—too weighty the issue at
 stake!

“Count we no time lost time which lags through respect
 to the Gods!

“Ponder that precept of old, ‘No warfare, whatever the
 odds

‘In your favour, so long as the moon, half-orbed, is
 unable to take

“‘Full-circle her state in the sky!’ Already she rounds
 to it fast:

“Athens must wait, patient as we—who judgment
 suspend.”

Athens,—except for that sparkle,—thy name, I had
 mouldered to ash!

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

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

Yet “ O Gods of my land ! ” I cried, as each hillock and
plain,

Wood and stream, I knew, I named, rushing past them
again,

“ Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honors we paid
you erewhile ?

“ Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome libation ! Too
rash

“ Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack !

“ Oak and olive and bay,—I bid you cease to enwreath
“ Brows made bold by your leaf ! Fade at the Persian’s
foot,

“ You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn
a slave !

“ Rather I hail thee, Parnes,—trust to thy wild waste
tract !

“ Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain ! What matter if
slacked

“ My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to
cave

“ No deity deigns to drape with verdure,—at least I can
breathe,

“ Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the
mute ! ”

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes’ ridge ;

Gully and gap, I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a
bar

Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the
way

Right ! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure
across :

- “ Where I could enter, there I depart by ! Night in the fosse ?
 “ Athens to aid ? Though the dive were through Erebos, thus I obey—
 “ Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise ! No bridge
 “ Better ! ”—when—ah ! what was it I came on, of wonders that are ?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he—majestical Pan !
 Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned his hoof ;
 All the great God was good in the eyes grave-kindly—the curl

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

- “ Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no feast !
 “ Wherefore ? Than I what godship to Athens more helpful of old ?
 “ Ay, and still, and forever her friend ! Test Pan, trust me !
 “ Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have faith
 “ In the temples and tombs ! Go, say to Athens, ‘ The Goat-God saith :
 “ ‘ When Persia—so much as strews not the soil—is flung under the sea,
 “ ‘ Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your most and least,
 “ ‘ Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the free and the bold ! ’

“ Say Pan saith : ‘ Let this, foreshowing the place, be the pledge ! ’ ”

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

“ So much guerdon to Athens, while ”— (out broke the good smile anew)

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

Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer, but flew.

Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the razor’s edge !

Pan for Athens, Pan for me ! myself have a guerdon rare !

Then spoke Miltiades. “ And thee, best runner of Greece,

“ Whose limbs did duty indeed,—what gift is promised thyself ?

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

Rosily blushed the youth : he paused : but, lifting at length

His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered the rest of his strength

Into the utterance—“ Pan spoke thus : ‘ For what thou hast done

“ ‘ Count on a worthy reward ! Henceforth be allowed thee release

“ ‘ From the racer’s toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in pelf ! ’

“ I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to my mind !

“ Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel may grow,—

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

Unforeseeing one ! Yes, he fought on the Marathon day :
 So, when Persia was dust, all cried " To Akropolis !
 " Run, Pheidippides, one race more ! the meed is thy due !
 " ' Athens is saved, thank Pan,' go shout !" He flung
 down his shield,
 Ran like fire once more : and the space 'twixt the Fennel-
 field
 And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs
 through,
 Till in he broke : " Rejoice, we conquer !" Like wine
 through clay,
 Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died—the bliss !

 So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of
 salute
 Is still " Rejoice !" —his word which brought rejoicing
 indeed.
 So is Pheidippides happy for ever,—the noble strong man
 Who could race like a God, bear the face of a God,
 whom a God loved so well
 He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was
 suffered to tell
 Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he began

So to end gloriously—once to shout, thereafter be mute :
 “ Athens is saved ! ”—Pheidippides dies in the shout for
 his meed.



THE PATRIOT.

AN OLD STORY.

I

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

II

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

III

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.

IV

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.

V

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

VI

Thus I entered, and thus I go !
 In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
 " Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
 Me ?"—God might question ; now instead,
 'T is God shall repay : I am safer so.



POPULARITY.

I

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 !

II

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 ?

III

His clenched hand shall unclose 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.

IV

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 !"

V

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, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI

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 ?

VII

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.

VIII

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'er-whispered !
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX

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

X

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.

XI

Mere conchs ! not fit for warp or woof !
 Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
 And clarify,—refine to proof
 The liquor filtered by degrees,
 While the world stands aloof.

XII

And there 's the extract, flasked and fine,
 And priced and saleable at last !
 And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
 To paint the future from the past,
 Put blue into their line.

XIII

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 ?



PISCAH-SIGHTS. I.

I

OVER the ball of it,
 Peering and prying,
 How I see all of it,
 Life there, outlying !
 Roughness and smoothness,
 Shine and defilement,
 Grace and uncouthness ;
 One reconciliation.

II

Orbed as appointed,
 Sister with brother
 Joins, ne'er disjointed
 One from the other.
 All 's lend-and-borrow ;
 Good, see, wants evil,
 Joy demands sorrow,
 Angel weds devil !

III

“ Which things must—*why* be ? ”
 Vain our endeavour !
 So shall things aye be
 As they were ever.
 “ Such things should *so* be ! ”
 Sage our desistence !
 Rough-smooth let globe be,
 Mixed—man's existence !

IV

Man—wise and foolish,
 Lover and scorner.
 Docile and mulish—
 Keep each his corner !

PISGAH-SIGHTS.

Honey yet gall of it !
 There 's the life lying,
 And I see all of it,
 Only, I m dying !

*PISGAH-SIGHTS. 2.*

I

COULD I but live again,
 Twice my life over,
 Would I once strive again ?
 Would not I cover
 Quietly all of it—
 Greed and ambition—
 So, from the pall of it,
 Pass to fruition ?

II

“ Soft ! ” I 'd say, “ Soul mine !
 “ Three-score and ten years,
 “ Let the blind mole mine
 “ Digging out deniers !
 “ Let the dazed hawk soar,
 “ Claim the sun's rights too !
 “ Turf 't is thy walk 's o'er,
 “ Foliage thy flight 's to.”

III

Only a learner,
 Quick one or slow one,
 Just a discerner,
 I would teach no onc.
 I am earth's native :
 No re-arranging it !
 I be creative,
 Chopping and changing it ?

IV

March, men, my fellows !
 Those who, above me,
 (Distance so mellows)
 Fancy you love me :
 Those who, below me,
 (Distance makes great so)
 Free to forego me,
 Fancy you hate so !

V

Praising, reviling,
 Worst head and best head,
 Past me defiling,
 Never arrested,
 Wanters, abounders,
 March, in gay mixture,
 Men, my surrounders !
 I am the fixture !

VI

So shall I fear thee,
 Mightiness yonder !
 Mock-sun—more near thee,
 What is to wonder ?
 So shall I love thee,
 Down in the dark,—lest
 Glowworm I prove thee,
 Star that now sparklest !



PISGAH-SIGHTS. 3.

I

GOOD, to forgive :
 Best, to forget !
 Living, we fret ;
 Dying, we live.

PISGAH-SIGHTS.

Fretless and free,
 Soul, clap thy pinion !
 Earth have dominion,
 Body, o'er thee !

II

Wander at will,
 Day after day,—
 Wander away,
 Wandering still—
 Soul that canst soar !
 Body may slumber :
 Body shall cumber
 Soul-flight no more.

III

Waft of soul's wing !
 What lies above ?
 Sunshine and Love,
 Skyblue and Spring !
 Body hides—where ?
 Ferns of all feather,
 Mosses and heather,
 Yours be the care !



AT THE "MERMAID."

The figure that thou here seest . . . Tut !
 Was it for gentle Shakespeare put ?

B. JONSON. (*Adapted.*)

I

I—"Next Poet?" No, my hearties,
 I nor am nor fain would be !
 Choose your chiefs and pick your parties,
 Not one soul revolt to me !

I, forsooth, sow song-sedition ?
 I, a schism in verse provoke ?
 I, blown up by bard's ambition,
 Burst—your bubble-king ? You joke.

II

Come, be grave ! The sherris mantling
 Still about each mouth, mayhap,
 Breeds you insight—just a scantling—
 Brings me truth out—just a scrap.
 Look and tell me ! Written, spoken,
 Here 's my life-long work : and where
 —Where 's your warrant or my token
 I 'm the dead king's son and heir ?

III

Here 's my work : does work discover
 What was rest from work—my life ?
 Did I live man's hater, lover ?
 Leave the world at peace, at strife ?
 Call earth ugliness or beauty ?
 See things there in large or small ?
 Use to pay its Lord my duty ?
 Use to own a lord at all ?

IV

Blank of such a record, truly,
 Here 's the work I hand, this scroll,
 Yours to take or leave ; as duly,
 Mine remains the unproffered soul.
 So much, no whit more, my debtors—
 How should one like me lay claim
 To that largess elders, betters
 Sell you cheap their souls for—fame ?

V

Which of you did I enable
 Once to slip inside my breast
 There to catalogue and label
 What I like least, what love best,
 Hope and fear, believe and doubt of,
 Seek and shun, respect—deride?
 Who has right to make a rout of
 Rarities he found inside?

VI

Rarities or, as he 'd rather,
 Rubbish such as stocks his own :
 Need and greed (O strange) the Father
 Fashioned not for him alone !
 Whence—the comfort set a-strutting,
 Whence—the outcry "Haste, behold !"
 "Bard's breast open wide, past shutting,
 "Shows what brass we took for gold !"

VII

Friends, I doubt not he 'd display you
 Brass—myself call oreichalch,—
 Furrish much amusement ; pray you
 Therefore, be content I balk
 Him and you, and bar my portal !
 Here 's my work outside ; opine
 What 's inside me mean and mortal !
 Take your pleasure, leave me mine !

VIII

Which is—not to buy your laurel
 As last king did, nothing loth.
 Tale adorned and pointed moral
 Gained him praise and pity both.

Out rushed sighs and groans by dozens,
 Forth by scores oaths, curses flew :
 Proving you were cater-cousins,
 Kith and kindred, king and you !

IX

Whereas do I ne'er so little
 (Thanks to sherris) leave ajar
 Bosom's gate—no jot nor tittle
 Grow we nearer than we are.
 Sinning, sorrowing, despairing,
 Body-ruined, spirit-wrecked,—
 Should I give my woes an airing,—
 Where 's one plague that claims respect ?

X

Have you found your life distasteful ?
 My life did and does smack sweet.
 Was your youth of pleasure wasteful ?
 Mine I saved and hold complete.
 Do your joys with age diminish ?
 When mine fail me, I 'll complain.
 Must in death your daylight finish ?
 My sun sets to rise again.

XI

What, like you, he proved—your Pilgrim--
 This our world a wilderness,
 Earth still gray and heaven still grim,
 Not a hand there his might press,
 Not a heart his own might throb to,
 Men all rogues and women—say,
 Dolls which boys' heads duck and bob to,
 Grown folk drop or throw away ?

XII

My experience being other,
 How should I contribute verse
 Worthy of your king and brother?
 Balaam-like I bless, not curse.
 I find earth not gray but rosy,
 Heaven not grim but fair of hue.
 Do I stoop? I pluck a posy.
 Do I stand and stare? All 's blue.

XIII

Doubtless I am pushed and shoved by
 Rogues and fools enough: the more
 Good luck mine, I love, am loved by
 Some few honest to the core.
 Scan the near high, scout the far low!
 "But the low come close:" what then?
 Simpletons? My match is Marlowe;
 Sciologists? My mate is Ben.

XIV

Womankind—"the cat-like nature,
 "False and fickle, vain and weak"—
 Scarcely this sad nomenclature
 Suits my tongue, if I must speak.
 Does the sex invite, repulse so,
 Tempt, betray, by fits and starts?
 So becalm but to convulse so,
 Decking heads and breaking hearts?

XV

Well may you blaspheme at fortune!
 I "threw Venus" (Ben, expound!)
 Never did I need importune
 Her, of all the Olympian round.

Blessings on my benefactress !
 Cursings suit—for aught I know—
 Those who twitched her by the back tress,
 Tugged and thought to turn her—so !

XVI

Therefore, since no leg to stand on
 Thus I 'm left with,—joy or grief
 Be the issue,—I abandon
 Hope or care you name me Chief !
 Chief and king and Lord's anointed,
 I ?—who never once have wished
 Death before the day appointed :
 Lived and liked, not poohed and pished !

XVII

" Ah, but so I shall not enter,
 " Scroll in hand, the common heart—
 " Stopped at surface : since at centre
 " Song should reach *Welt-schmerz*, world smart !"
 " Enter in the heart ?" Its shelly
 Cuirass guard mine, fore and aft !
 Such song " enters in the belly
 " And is cast out in the draught."

XVIII

Back then to our sherris-brewage !
 " Kingship" quotha ? I shall wait—
 Waive the present time : some new age
 But let fools anticipate !
 Meanwhile greet me—" friend, good fellow
 " Gentle Will," my merry men !
 As for making Envy yellow
 With " Next Poet"—(Manners, Ben !)

HOUSE.

I

SHALL I sonnet-sing you about myself?
 Do I live in a house you would like to see?
 Is it scant of gear, has it store of pelf?
 "Unlock my heart with a sonnet-key?"

II

Invite the world, as my betters have done?
 "Take notice: this building remains on view,
 "Its suites of reception every one,
 "Its private apartment and bedroom too;

III

"For a ticket, apply to the Publisher."
 No: thanking the public, I must decline.
 A peep through my window, if folks prefer;
 But please you, no foot over threshold of mine!

IV

I have mixed with a crowd and heard free talk
 In a foreign land where an earthquake chanced,
 And a house stood gaping, nought to balk
 Man's eye wherever he gazed or glanced.

V

The whole of the frontage shaven sheer,
 The inside gaped: exposed to day,
 Right and wrong and common and queer,
 Bare, as the palm of your hand, it lay.

VI

The owner? Oh, he had been crushed, no doubt!
 "Odd tables and chairs for a man of wealth!
 "What a parcel of musty old books about!
 "He smoked,—no wonder he lost his health!

VII

" I doubt if he bathed before he dressed.

" A brasier?—the pagan, he burned perfumes !

" You see it is proved, what the neighbours guessed :

" His wife and himself had separate rooms."

VIII

Friends, the goodman of the house at least

Kept house to himself till an earthquake came :

'T is the fall of its frontage permits you feast

On the inside arrangement you praise or blame.

IX

Outside should suffice for evidence :

And whoso desires to penetrate

Deeper, must dive by the spirit-sense—

No optics like yours, at any rate !

X

" Hoity toity ! A street to explore,

" Your house the exception ! ' *With this same key*

" ' *Shakespeare unlocked his heart,*' once more !"

Did Shakespeare ? If so, the less Shakespeare he !



SHOP.

I

So, friend, your shop was all your house !

Its front, astonishing the street,

Invited view from man and mouse

To what diversity of treat

Behind its glass—the single sheet !

II

What gimcracks, genuine Japanese :

Gape-jaw and goggle-eye, the frog :

Dragons, owls, monkeys, beetles, geese ;
 Some crush-nosed human-hearted dog :
 Queer names, too, such a catalogue !

III

I thought " And he who owns the wealth
 " Which blocks the window's vastitude,
 " —Ah, could I peep at him by stealth
 " Behind his ware, pass shop, intrude
 " On house itself, what scenes were viewed !

IV

" If wide and showy thus the shop,
 " What must the habitation prove ?
 " The true house with no name a-top—
 " The mansion, distant one remove,
 " Once get him off his traffic-groove !

V

" Pictures he likes, or books perhaps ;
 " And as for buying most and best,
 " Commend me to these city chaps !
 " Or else he 's social, takes his rest
 " On Sundays, with a Lord for guest.

VI

" Some suburb-palace, parked about
 " And gated grandly, built last year :
 " The four-mile walk to keep off gout ;
 " Or big seat sold by bankrupt peer :
 " But then he takes the rail, that 's clear.

VII

" Or, stop ! I wager, taste selects
 " Some out o' the way, some all-unknown
 " Retreat : the neighbourhood suspects
 " Little that he who rambles lone
 " Makes Rothschild tremble on his throne !

VIII

Nowise ! Nor Mayfair residence
 Fit to receive and entertain,—
 Nor Hampstead villa's kind defence
 From noise and crowd, from dust and drain, -
 Nor country-box was soul's domain !

IX

Nowise ! At back of all that spread
 Of merchandize, woe 's me, I find
 A hole i' the wall where, heels by head,
 The owner couched, his ware behind,
 —In cupboard suited to his mind.

X

For, why ? He saw no use of life
 But, while he drove a roaring trade,
 To chuckle "Customers are rife !"
 To chafe "So much hard cash outlaid
 "Yet zero in my profits made !

XI

"This novelty costs pains, but—takes ?
 "Cumbers my counter ! Stock no more !
 "This article, no such great shakes,
 "Fizzes like wild fire ? Underscore
 "The cheap thing—thousands to the fore !"

XII

'T was lodging best to live most nigh
 (Cramp, coffinlike as crib might be)
 Receipt of Custom ; ear and eye
 Wanted no outworld : "Hear and see
 "The bustle in the shop !" quoth he.

XIII

My fancy of a merchant-prince
 Was different. Through his wares we groped

Our darkling way to—not to mince
 The matter—no black den where moped
 The master if we interloped !

XIV

Shop was shop only : household-stuff?
 What did he want with comforts there ?
 “ Walls, ceiling, floor, stay blank and rough,
 “ So goods on sale show rich and rare !
 “ *Sell and scud home,*” be shop’s affair !”

XV

What might he deal in? Gems, suppose !
 Since somehow business must be done
 At cost of trouble,—see, he throws
 You choice of jewels, everyone
 Good, better, best, star, moon and sun !

XVI

Which lies within your power of purse ?
 This ruby that would tip aright
 Solomon’s sceptre ? Oh, your nurse
 Wants simply coral, the delight
 Of teething baby,—stuff to bite !

XVII

Howe’er your choice fell, straight you took
 Your purchase, prompt your money rang
 On counter,—scarce the man forsook
 His study of the “ Times,” just swang
 Till-ward his hand that stopped the clang,—

XVIII

Then off made buyer with a prize,
 Then seller to his “ Times ” returned,
 And so did day wear, wear, till eyes
 Brightened apace, for rest was earned :
 He locked door long ere candle burned.

XIX

And whither went he? Ask himself,
 Not me! To change of scene, I think.
 Once sold the ware and pursed the pelf,
 Chaffer was scarce his meat and drink,
 Nor all his music—money-chink.

XX

Because a man has shop to mind
 In time and place, since flesh must live,
 Needs spirit lack all life behind,
 All stray thoughts, fancies fugitive,
 All loves except what trade can give?

XXI

I want to know a butcher paints,
 A baker rhymes for his pursuit,
 Candlestick-maker much acquaints
 His soul with song, or, haply mute,
 Blows out his brains upon the flute!

XXII

But—shop each day and all day long!
 Friend, your good angel slept, your star
 Suffered eclipse, fate did you wrong!
 From where these sorts of treasures are,
 There should our hearts be—Christ, how far!

—•••—

A TALE.

I

WHAT a pretty tale you told me
 Once upon a time
 —Said you found me somewhere (scold me!)
 . Was it prose or was it rhyme,
 Greek or Latin? Greek, you said,
 While your shoulder propped my head.

II

Anyhow there 's no forgetting
 This much if no more,
 That a poet (pray, no petting !)
 Yes, a bard, sir, famed of yore,
 Went where suchlike used to go,
 Singing for a prize, you know.

III

Well, he had to sing, nor merely
 Sing but play the lyre ;
 Playing was important clearly
 Quite as singing : I desire,
 Sir, you keep the fact in mind
 For a purpose that 's behind.

IV

There stood he, while deep attention
 Held the judges round,
 —Judges able, I should mention,
 To detect the slightest sound
 Sung or played amiss : such ears
 Had old judges, it appears !

V

None the less he sang out boldly,
 Played in time and tune,
 Till the judges, weighing coldly
 Each note's worth, seemed, late or soon,
 Sure to smile " In vain one tries
 " Picking faults out : take the prize ! "

VI

When, a mischief ! Were they seven
 Strings the lyre possessed ?
 Oh, and afterwards eleven,
 Thank you ! Well, sir,—who had guessed

Such ill luck in store?—it happed
One of those same seven strings snapped

VII

All was lost, then ! No ! a cricket
 (What “cicada” ? Pooh !)
—Some mad thing that left its thicket
 For mere love of music—flew
With its little heart on fire,
Lighted on the crippled lyre.

VIII

So that when (Ah joy !) our singer
 For his truant string
Feels with disconcerted finger,
 What does cricket else but fling
Fiery heart forth, sound the note
Wanted by the throbbing throat ?

IX

Ay and, ever to the ending,
 Cricket chirps at need,
Executes the hand’s intending,
 Promptly, perfectly,—indeed
Saves the singer from defeat
 With her chirrup low and sweet.

X

Till, at ending, all the judges
 Cry with one assent
“ Take the prize—a prize who grudges
 “ Such a voice and instrument ?
“ Why, we took your lyre for harp,
“ So it shrilled us forth F sharp !”

XI

Did the conqueror spurn the creature,
 Once its service done ?

That 's no such uncommon feature
 In the case when Music's son
 Finds his Lotte's power too spent
 For aiding soul-development.

XII

No ! This other, on returning
 Homeward, prize in hand,
 Satisfied his bosom's yearning :
 (Sir, I hope you understand !)
 —Said " Some record there must be
 " Of this cricket's help to me !"

XIII

So, he made himself a statue :
 Marble stood, life-size ;
 On the lyre, he pointed at you,
 Perched his partner in the prize ;
 Never more apart you found
 Her, he throned, from him, she crowed.

XIV

That 's the tale : its application ?
 Somebody I know
 Hopes one day for reputation
 Through his poetry that 's—Oh,
 All so learned and so wise
 And deserving of a prize !

XV

If he gains one, will some ticket,
 When his statue 's built,
 Tell the gazer "'T was a cricket
 " Helped my crippled lyre, whose lilt
 " Sweet and low, when strength usurped
 " Softness' place i' the scale, she chirped ?

XVI

“ For as victory was nighest,
 “ While I sang and played,—
 “ With my lyre at lowest, highest,
 “ Right alike,—one string that made
 “ ‘ Love ’ sound soft was snapt in twain,
 “ Never to be heard again,—

XVII

“ Had not a kind cricket fluttered,
 “ Perched upon the place
 “ Vacant left, and duly uttered
 “ ‘ Love, Love, Love,’ whene’er the bass
 “ Asked the treble to atone
 “ For its somewhat sombre drone.”

XVIII

But you don’t know music ! Wherefore
 Keep on casting pearls
 To a—poet ? All I care for
 Is—to tell him that a girl’s
 “ Love ” comes aptly in when gruff
 Grows his singing. (There, enough !)

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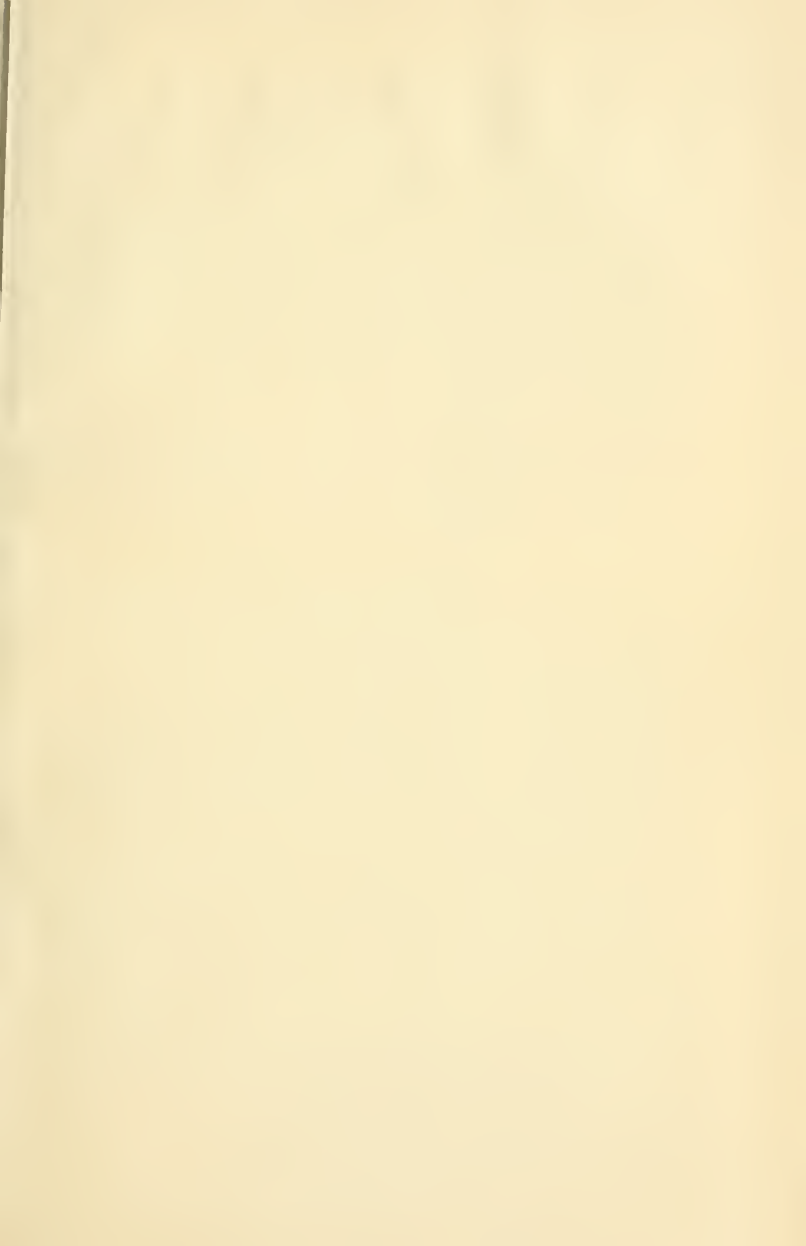
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