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SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE



SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE
BY ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING



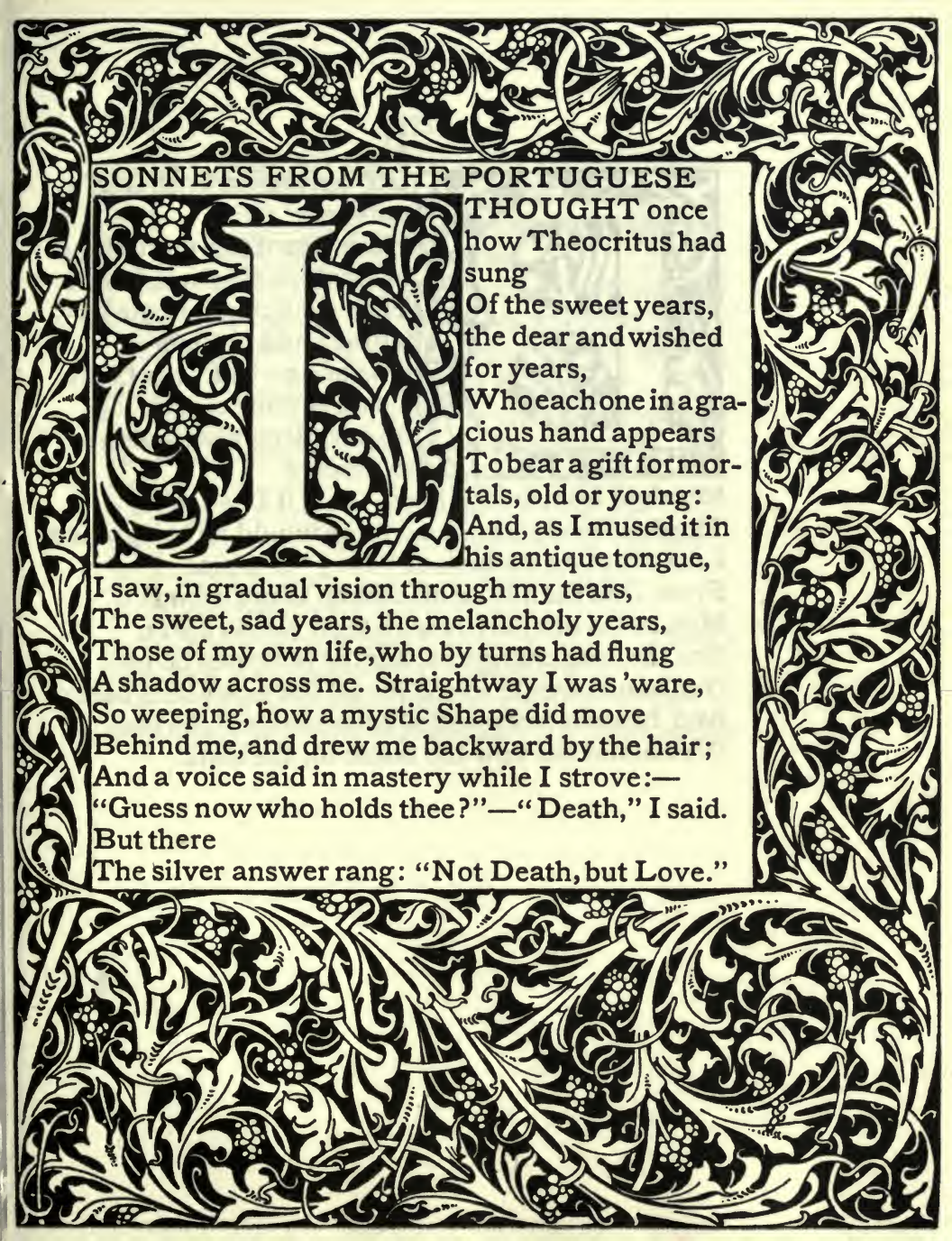
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SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE



SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

L

THOUGHT once
how Theocritus had
sung
Of the sweet years,
the dear and wished
for years,
Who each one in a gra-
cious hand appears
To bear a gift for mor-
tals, old or young:
And, as I mused it in
his antique tongue,

I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery while I strove:—
“Guess now who holds thee?” — “Death,” I said.
But there
The silver answer rang: “Not Death, but Love.”

II



UT only three in all God's
universe
Have heard this word thou
hast said,—Himself, beside
Thee speaking and me lis-
tening! and replied
One of us—that was God!
—and laid the curse
So darkly on my eyelids as
to amerce

My sight from seeing thee,—that if I had died,
The deathweights placed there would have signified
Less absolute exclusion. “Nay” is worse
From God than from all others, O my friend!
Men could not part us with their worldly jars,
Nor the seas change us, nor the tempests bend:
Our hands would touch for all the mountain-bars:
And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,
We should but vow the faster for the stars.

III



NLIKE are we, unlike,
O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses and our
destinies.

Our ministering two an-
gels look surprise
On one another, as they
strike athwart
Their wings in passing.
Thou, bethink thee, art

A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gazes from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to ply thy part
Of chief musician. What hast thou to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer,—singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?
The chism is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV



THOU hast thy calling to
 some palace floor,
 Most gracious singer of
 high poems! where
 The dancers will break
 footing from the care
 Of watching up thy preg-
 nant lips for more,
 And dost thou lift this
 house's latch too poor
 For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
 To let thy music drop here unaware
 In folds of golden fulness at my door?
 Look up and see the casement broken in,
 The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
 My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
 Hush! call no echo up in further proof
 Of desolation! there's a voice within
 That weeps as — thou must sing — alone, aloof.

V



LIFT my heavy heart
 up solemnly,
 As once Electra her se-
 pulchral urn,
 And, looking in thine
 eyes, I overturn
 The ashes at thy feet.
 Behold and see
 What a great heap of
 grief lay hid in me,

And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
 Through the ashen grayness. If thy foot in scorn
 Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
 It might be well perhaps. But if instead
 Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
 The gray dust up—those laurels on thine head,
 O my Beloved, will not shield thee so,
 That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
 The hair beneath. Stand farther off then! Go.

VI



O from me. Yet I feel
 that I shall stand
 Henceforth in thy sha-
 dow. Nevermore
 Alone upon the threshold
 of my door
 Of individual life, I shall
 command
 The uses of my soul, nor
 lift my hand

Serenely in the sunshine as before.
 Without the sense of that which I forbore —
 Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
 Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
 With pulses that beat double. What I do
 And what I dream include thee, as the wine
 Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
 God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
 And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

VII



HE face of all the world
 is changed, I think,
 Since first I heard the
 footsteps of thy soul
 Move still, oh, still, beside
 me as they stole
 Betwixt me and the
 dreadful outer brink
 Of obvious death, where
 I who thought to sink

Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
 Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
 God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
 And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
 The name of country, heaven, are changed away
 For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
 And this — this lute and song — loved yesterday,
 (The singing angels know) are only dear,
 Because thy name moves right in what they say.

VIII



WHAT can I give thee
back, O liberal
And princely giver,—who
hast brought the gold
And purple of thine heart,
unstained, untold,
And laid them on the out-
side of the wall
For such as I to take or
leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? Am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
Not so ; not cold—but very poor instead !
Ask God who knows! for frequent tears have run
The colours from my life, and left so dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
To give the same as pillow to thy head.
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

IX



AN it be right to give
 what I can give?
 To let thee sit beneath
 the fall of tears
 As salt as mine, and hear
 the sighing years
 Re-sighing on my lips
 renunciative
 Through those infrequent
 smiles which fail to live

For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
 That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
 So to be lovers ; and I own and grieve
 That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
 Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas !
 I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
 Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
 Nor give thee any love—which were unjust.
 Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

X



ET love, mere love, is
 beautiful indeed
 And worthy of accepta-
 tion. Fire is bright,
 Let temple burn, or flax;
 an equal light
 Leaps in the flame from
 cedar-plank or weed:
 And love is fire. And
 when I say at need

I love thee—mark—I love thee!—in thy sight
 I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
 With conscience of the new rays that proceed
 Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
 In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
 Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
 And what I feel, across the inferior features
 Of what I am, doth flash itself, and show
 How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI



AND therefore if to love
 can be desert,
 I am not all unworthy.
 Cheeks as pale
 As these you see, and trem-
 bling knees that fail
 To bear the burden of a
 heavy heart,
 This weary minstrel-life
 that once was girt

To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
 To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale
 A melancholy music,—why advert
 To these things? O Beloved, it is plain
 I am not of thy worth nor for thy place!
 And yet, because I love thee, I obtain
 From that same love this vindicating grace —
 To live on still in love, and yet in vain,
 To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

XII



INDEED this very love
 which is my boast,
 And which, when rising
 up from breast to brow,
 Doth crown me with a
 ruby large enow
 To draw men's eyes and
 prove the inner cost—
 This love even, all my
 worth, to the uttermost,
 I should not love withal, unless that thou
 Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
 When first thine earnest eyes with mine were
 crossed,
 And love called love. And thus I cannot speak
 Of love even as a good thing of my own.
 Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and
 weak,
 And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—
 And that I love, (O soul, I must be meek!)
 Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII



AND wilt thou have me
fashion into speech
The love I bear thee, find-
ing words enough,
And hold the torch out,
while the winds are rough,
Between our faces to cast
light on each?—
I drop it at thy feet. I can-
not teach

My hand to hold my spirit so far off
From myself—me—that I should bring thee
proof

In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

XIV



LF thou must love me, let
 it be for nought
 Except for love's sake
 only. Do not say,
 "I love her for her smile—
 her look—her way
 Of speaking gently,—for
 a trick of thought
 That falls in well with
 mine, and certes brought
 A sense of pleasant ease on such a day,"—
 For these things in themselves, Beloved, may
 Be changed, or change for thee,—and love so
 wrought
 May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
 Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry:
 A creature might forget to weep, who bore
 Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby.
 But love me for love's sake, that evermore
 Thou mayst love on through love's eternity.



ACCUSE me not, beseech
 thee, that I wear
 Too calm and sad a face
 in front of thine;
 For we two look two
 ways, and cannot shine
 With the same sunlight
 on our brow and hair.
 On me thou lookest with
 no doubting care,

As on a bee shut in a crystalline;
 For sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,
 And to spread wing and fly in the outer air
 Were most impossible failure, if I strove
 To fail so. But I look on thee—on thee—
 Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
 Hearing oblivion beyond memory;
 As one who sits and gazes from above,
 Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI



AND yet, because thou
overcomest so,
Because thou art noble
and like a king,
Thou canst prevail against
my fears and fling
Thy purple round me, till
my heart shall grow
Too close against thine
heart hencefoth to know

How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
May prove as lordly and complete a thing
In lifting upward as in crushing low!
And as a vanquished soldier yields his sword
To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,
Even so, Beloved, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. If thou invite me forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

XVII



Y poet, thou canst touch
on all the notes
God set between his
After and Before,
And strike up and strike
off the general roar
Of the rushing worlds a
melody that floats
In a serene air purely.
Antidotes

Of medicated music, answering for
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine!
How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?
A hope, to sing by gladly? or a fine
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?
A shade in which to sing—of palm or pine?
A grave on which to rest from singing? Choose.

XVIII



NEVER gave a lock of
hair away
To a man, Dearest, ex-
cept this to thee,
Which now upon my fin-
gers thoughtfully
I ring out to the full
brown length, and say:
"Take it." My day of
youth went yesterday;
My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,
Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
As girls do, any more: it only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks, the mark of tears,
Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-
shears
Would take this first, but Love is justified:
Take it thou,—finding pure, from all those years,
The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XIX



HE soul's Rialto hath its
merchandise;
I barter curl for curl
upon that mart,
And from my poet's fore-
head to my heart
Receive this lock which
outweighs argosies,—
As purply black, as erst
to Pindar's eyes

The dim purpleal tresses gloomed athwart
The nine white Muse-brows. For this counter-
part,

The bay-crown's shade, Beloved, I surmise,
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black !
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,
I tie the shadow safe from gliding back,
And lay the gift where nothing hindereth,
Here on my heart as on thy brow, to lack
No natural heat till mine grows cold in death.

XX



ELOVED, my Beloved,
 when I think
 That thou wast in the
 world a year ago,
 What time I sate alone
 here in the snow
 And saw no footprint,
 heard the silence sink
 No moment at thy voice,
 but link by link

Went counting all my chains as if that so
 They never could fall off at any blow
 Struck by thy possible hand,—why, thus I drink
 Of life's great cup of wonder. Wonderful,
 Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
 With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull
 Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
 Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
 Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

XXI



AY over again and yet
 once over again
 That thou dost love me.
 Though the word repeated
 Should seem "a cuckoo-
 song," as thou dost treat it,
 Remember, never to the
 hill or plain,
 Valley and wood, without
 her cuckoo-strain

Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed!
 Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted
 By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
 Cry, "Speak once more, thou lovest!" Who can
 fear

Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
 Too many flowers, though each shall crown the
 year?

Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
 The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
 To love me also in silence with thy soul.

XXII



WHEN our two souls
stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, draw-
ing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening
wings break into fire
At either curved point,—
what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us,
that we should not long
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us, and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Beloved,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

XXIII



S it indeed so? If I lay
 here dead
 Wouldst thou miss any
 life in losing mine?
 And would the sun for
 thee more coldly shine,
 Because of grave-damps
 falling round my head?
 I marvelled, my Beloved,
 when I read

Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
 But—so much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
 While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
 Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range.
 Then, love me, Love! look on me—breathe on me!
 As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
 For love, to give up acres and degree,
 I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
 My near sweet view of Heaven for earth with
 thee!

XXIV



LET the world's sharp-
ness like a clasp-
ing knife
Shut in upon itself and
do no harm
In this close hand of Love,
now soft and warm ;
And let us hear no sound
of human strife
After the click of the
shutting. Life to life—

I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm
Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
The lilies of our lives may reassure
Their blossoms from their roots, accessible
Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer ;
Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.
God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

XXV



HEAVY heart, Beloved,
 have I borne
 From year to year until I
 saw thy face,
 And sorrow after sorrow
 took the place
 Of all those natural joys
 as lightly worn
 As the stringed pearls,
 each lifted in its turn

By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes apace
 Were changed to long despairs, till God's own
 grace

Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn
 My heavy heart. Then thou didst bid me bring
 And let it drop adown thy calmly great
 Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
 Which its own nature doth precipitate,
 While thine doth close above it, mediating
 Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished fate.

XXVI



LIVED with visions for
 my company
 Instead of men and
 women, years ago,
 And found them gentle
 mates, nor thought to know
 A sweeter music than
 they played to me.
 But soon their trailing
 purple was not free
 Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent grow,
 And I myself grew faint and blind below
 Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come—
 to be,
 Beloved, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,
 Their songs, their splendours—better, yet the same,
 As river-water hallowed into fountains—
 Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
 My soul with satisfaction of all wants—
 Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to
 shame.

XXVII



Y own Beloved, who
 hast lifted me
 From this drear flat of
 earth where I was thrown,
 And in betwixt the lan-
 guid ringlets blown
 A life-breath, till the
 forehead hopefully
 Shines out again, as all
 the angels see,

Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,
 Who camest to me when the world was gone,
 And I who looked for only God found thee!
 I find thee : I am safe, and strong, and glad.
 As one who stands in dewless asphodel
 Looks backward on the tedious time he had
 In the upper life,—so I, with bosom-swell,
 Make witness here, between the good and bad,
 That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

XXVIII



Y letters! all dead paper,—
 mute and white!
 And yet they seem alive
 and quivering
 Against my tremulous
 hands which loose the string
 And let them drop down
 on my knee to-night.
 This said, he wished to
 have me in his sight

Once, as a friend; this fixed a day in spring
 To come and touch my hand—a simple thing,
 Yet I wept for it!—this—the paper's light—
 Said, Dear, I love thee; and I sank and quailed
 As if God's future thundered on my past.
 This said, I am thine—and so its ink has paled
 With lying at my heart that beat too fast;
 And this—O Love, thy words have ill availed,
 If what this said I dared repeat at last!

XXIX



THINK of thee!—my
 thoughts do twine and bud
 About thee, as wild vines
 about a tree
 Put out broad leaves, and
 soon there's nought to see
 Except the straggling green
 which hides the wood.
 Yet, O my palm-tree, be
 it understood

I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
 Who art dearer, better! Rather instantly
 Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,
 Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,
 And let these bands of greenery which insphere
 thee
 Drop heavily down,—burst, shattered, every-
 where!
 Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee
 And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
 I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

XXX



SEE thy image through
 my tears to-night,
 And yet to-day I saw
 thee smiling. How
 Refer the cause?—Be-
 loved, is it thou
 Or I? Who makes me
 sad? The acolyte
 Amid the chanted joy
 and thankful rite

May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,
 On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and vow
 Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out of sight,
 As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's amen.
 Beloved, dost thou love? or did I see all
 The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when
 Too vehement light dilated my ideal
 For my soul's eyes? Will that light come again
 As now these tears come—falling hot and real?

XXXI



THOU comest! all is said
without a word.

I sit beneath thy looks, as
children do

In the noon-sun, with souls
that tremble through

Their happy eyelids from
an unaverred

Yet prodigal inward joy.
Behold, I erred

In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue

The sin most, but the occasion—that we two

Should for a moment stand unministered

By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and close,

Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears would
rise,

With thy broad heart serenely interpose :

Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies

These thoughts which tremble when bereft of
those,

Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII



HE first time that the sun
 rose on thine oath
 To love me, I looked for-
 ward to the moon
 To slacken all those bonds
 which seemed too soon
 And quickly tied to make
 a lasting troth.
 Quick-loving hearts, I
 thought, may quickly loathe;
 And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
 For such man's love!—more like an out-of-tune
 Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
 To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste,
 Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
 I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
 A wrong on thee. For perfect strains may float
 'Neath master-hands from instruments de-
 faced,—
 And great souls, at one stroke, may do and doat.

XXXIII



ES, call me by my pet
 name! let me hear
 The name I used to run
 at, when a child,
 From innocent play, and
 leave the cowslips piled,
 To glance up in some
 face that proved me dear
 With the look of its eyes.
 I miss the clear

Fond voices, which, being drawn and reconciled
 Into the music of heaven's undefiled,
 Call me no longer. Silence on the bier
 While I call God—call God!—So let thy mouth
 Be heir to those who are now exanimate;
 Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
 And catch the early love up in the late!
 Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,
 With the same heart, will answer, and not wait.

XXXIV



WITH the same heart, I
 said, I 'll answer thee
 As those, when thou shalt
 call me by my name—
 Lo, the vain promise! Is
 the same the same,
 Perplexed and ruffled by
 life's strategy?
 When called before, I
 told how hastily

I dropped my flowers or brake off from a game,
 To run and answer with the smile that came
 At play last moment, and went on with me
 Through my obedience. When I answer now,
 I drop a grave thought,—break from solitude;—
 Yet still my heart goes to thee—ponder how—
 Not as to a single good but all my good!
 Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
 That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV



F I leave all for thee, wilt
 thou exchange
 And be all to me? Shall I
 never miss
 Home-talk and blessing
 and the common kiss
 That comes to each in
 turn, nor count it strange,
 When I look up, to drop
 on a new range

Of walls and floors,—another home than this?
 Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
 Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
 That's hardest! If to conquer love has tried,
 To conquer grief tries more,—as all things prove;
 For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
 Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love—
 Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
 And fold within, the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI



WHEN we met first and
 loved, I did not build
 Upon the event with
 marble. Could it mean
 To last, a love set pendu-
 lous between
 Sorrow and sorrow?
 Nay, I rather thrilled,
 Distrusting every light
 that seemed to gild

The onward path, and feared to overlean
 A finger even. And though I have grown serene
 And strong since then, I think that God has willed
 A still renewable fear—O love, O troth—
 Lest these enclasped hands should never hold,
 This mutual kiss drop down between us both
 As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold,
 And Love be false! if he, to keep one oath,
 Must lose one joy by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII



ARDON, oh, pardon,
that my soul should make
Of all that strong divineness
which I know
For thine and thee, an
image only so
Formed of the sand, and
fit to shift and break.
It is that distant years
which did not take

Thy sovranly, recoiling with a blow,
Have forced my swimming brain to undergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake
Thy purity of likeness and distort
Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit:
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort
And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII



FIRST time he kissed me,
 he but only kissed
 The fingers of this hand
 wherewith I write,
 And ever since it grew
 more clean and white,—
 Slow to world greetings,
 quick with its “Oh, list,”
 When the angels speak.
 A ring of amethyst

I could not wear here plainer to my sight
 Than that first kiss. The second passed in height
 The first, and sought the forehead, and half
 missed,
 Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed!
 That was the chrism of love which love's own
 crown,
 With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.
 The third upon my lips was folded down
 In perfect, purple state; since when, indeed,
 I have been proud and said: “My Love, my own.”

XXXIX



BECAUSE thou hast the
power and own'st the grace
To look through and be-
hind this mask of me
(Against which years have
beat thus blanchingly
With their rains), and be-
hold my soul's true face,
The dim and dreary wit-
ness of life's race,—

Because thou hast the faith and love to see,
Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,
The patient angel waiting for his place
In the new Heavens,—because nor sin nor woe,
Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighbourhood,
Nor all which others viewing, turn to go,
Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-viewed,—
Nothing repels thee,—Dearest, teach me so
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good!



H, yes! they love through
 all this world of ours!
 I will not gainsay love,
 called love forsooth.
 I have heard love talked
 in my early youth,
 And since, not so long
 back but that the flowers
 Then gathered, smell still.
 Mussulmans and Giaours
 Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth
 For any weeping. Polypheme's white tooth
 Slips on the nut, if after frequent showers
 The shell is over-smooth; and not so much
 Will turn the thing called love aside to hate,
 Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such
 A lover, my Beloved! thou canst wait
 Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls to
 touch
 And think it soon when others cry "Too late."

XLI



THANK all who have
 loved me in their hearts,
 With thanks and love from
 mine. Deep thanks to all
 Who paused a little near
 the prison-wall
 To hear my music in its
 louder parts,
 Ere they went onward,
 each one to the mart's

Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
 But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall
 When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
 Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot,
 To hearken what I said between my tears,—
 Instruct me how to thank thee! Oh, to shoot
 My soul's full meaning into future years,
 That they should lend it utterance, and salute
 Love that endures, from Life that disappears!

XLII



Y future will not copy fair
my past —

I wrote that once; and
thinking at my side
My ministering life-
angel justified
The word by his appeal-
ing look upcast
To the white throne of
God, I turned at last,

And there, instead, saw thee, not unallied
To angels in thy soul! Then I, long tried
By natural ills, received the comfort fast,
While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's staff
Gave out green leaves with morning dews im-
pearled

I seek no copy now of life's first half:
Leave here the pages with long musing curled,
And write me new my future's epigraph,
New angel mine, unhopèd for in the world!

XLIII



OW do I love thee? Let
me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth
and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when
feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being
and Ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of
every day's

Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right ;
I love thee purely, as men turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

XLIV



ELOVED, thou hast
brought me many flowers
Plucked in the garden,
all the summer through
And winter, and it
seemed as if they grew
In this close room, nor
missed the sun and showers.
So, in the like name of
that love of ours,

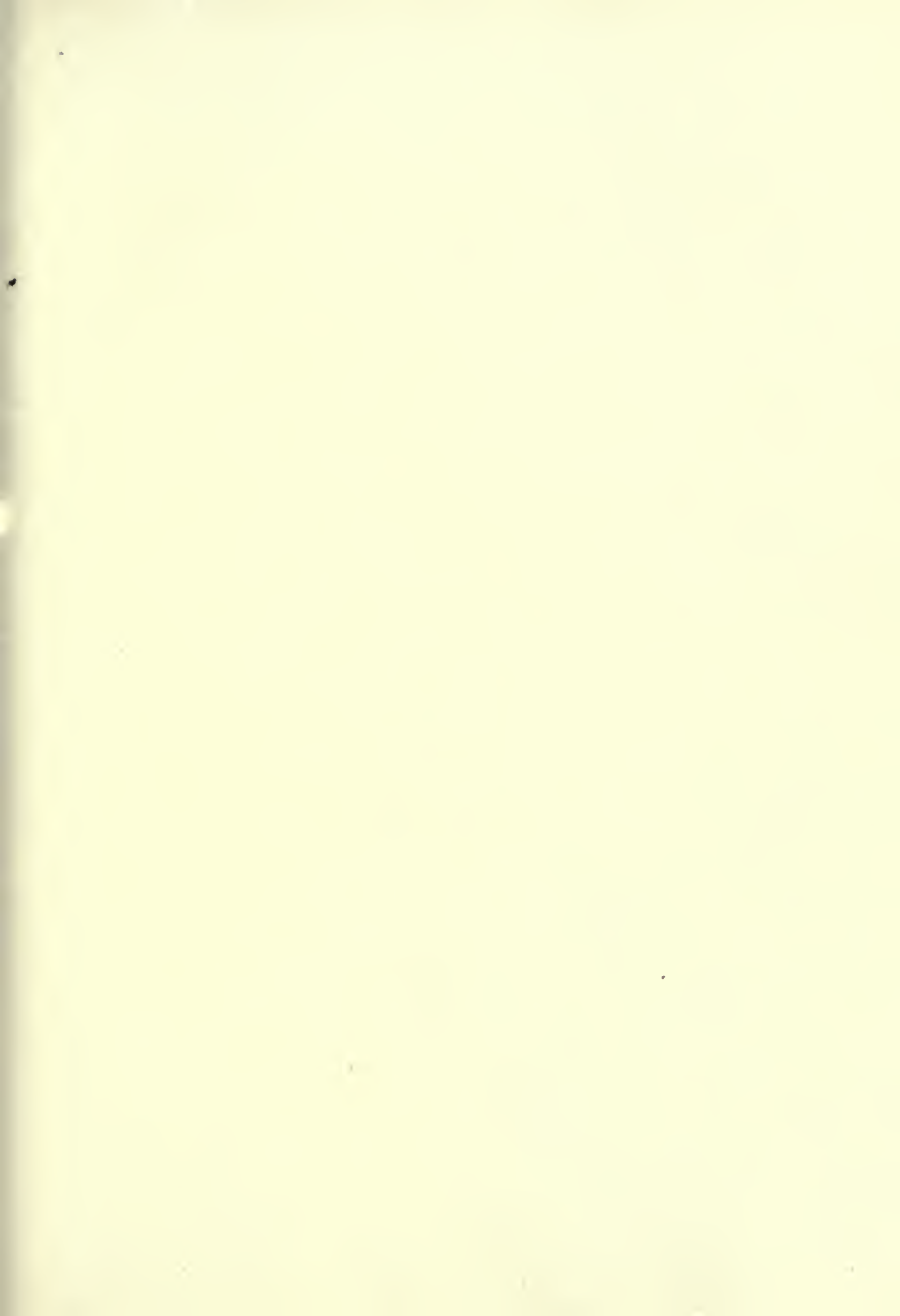
Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days I withdrew
From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and
bowers

Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
And wait thy weeding; yet here's eglantine,
Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not
pine.

Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours true,
And tell thy soul their roots are left in mine.

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