

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING
VOLUME I.



Robert Browning.

THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING

WITH PORTRAITS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I

LONDON
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EDITOR'S NOTE.

THIS edition of Mr. Browning's poems and plays makes no pretence to be critical. One of the most useful of the Shakespearian commentators, Mr. Theobald, has observed that the science of criticism, so far as it affects an editor, is reduced to three classes: "The emendation of corrupt passages, the explanation of obscure and difficult ones, and an inquiry into the beauties and defects of composition." Happily there are no corrupt passages in Browning, but undoubtedly there are some obscure and difficult ones, although the reader will often be surprised to find how frequently obscurity and difficulty will be dissipated and removed by a careful study of the context. So, too, Browning has his beauties and defects of composition; but neither his beauties or defects of composition, nor the obscurities and difficulties of particular passages, are here discussed or explained. All that has been done is to prefix (within square brackets) to some of the plays and poems a few lines explanatory of the characters and events depicted and described, and to explain in the margin of the volumes the meaning of such words as might, if left unexplained, momentarily arrest the understanding of the reader. That some easy words have been explained and some hard ones left alone is more than likely, since, on such a subject, no standard exists either of information or of ignorance. Mr. F. G. Kenyon has been kind enough to make the notes for "The Ring and the Book," but for the rest the Editor alone is responsible.

The edition is a complete one, containing all Mr. Browning's regularly published plays and poems, from *Pauline* (1833) to *Asolando* (1889). In the arrangement of the contents a chronological order has as far as possible been observed; but as Mr. Browning himself rearranged some of his smaller poems regardless of their dates of publication, his publishers have not felt themselves at liberty in these cases to adhere to chronology. In all the poems the poet's latest readings have been followed.

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES TO MY OLD FRIEND JOHN FORSTER, GLAD AND GRATEFUL THAT HE WHO, FROM THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THE VARIOUS POEMS THEY INCLUDE, HAS BEEN THEIR PROMPTTEST AND STAUCHEST HELPER, SHOULD SEEM EVEN NEARER TO ME NOW THAN ALMOST THIRTY YEARS AGO.

LONDON: *April 21, 1863.*

R. B.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO EDITION OF 1868.

THE poems that follow are printed in the order of their publication. The first piece in the series I acknowledge and retain with extreme repugnance, indeed purely of necessity; for not long ago I inspected one, and am certified of the existence of other transcripts, intended sooner or later to be published abroad: by forestalling these, I can at least correct some misprints (no syllable is changed) and introduce a boyish work by an exculpatory word. The thing was my earliest attempt at "poetry always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine," which I have since written according to a scheme less extravagant and scale less impracticable than were ventured upon in this crude preliminary sketch—a sketch that, on reviewal, appears not altogether wide of some hint of the characteristic features of that particular *dramatis persona* it would fain have reproduced: good draughtsmanship, however, and right handling were far beyond the artist at that time.

R. B.

LONDON: December 25, 1867.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO EDITION OF 1888.

I PRESERVE, in order to supplement it, the foregoing preface. I had thought, when compelled to include in my collected works the poem to which it refers, that the honest course would be to reprint, and leave mere literary errors unaltered. Twenty years' endurance of an eyesore seems more than sufficient: my faults remain duly recorded against me, and I claim permission to somewhat diminish these, so far as style is concerned, in the present and final edition where "Pauline" must needs, first of my performances, confront the reader. I have simply removed solecisms, mended the metre a little, and endeavoured to strengthen the phraseology—experience helping, in some degree, the helplessness of juvenile haste and heat in their untried adventure long ago.

The poems that follow are again, as before, printed in chronological order; but only so far as proves compatible with the prescribed size of each volume, which necessitates an occasional change in the distribution of its contents. Every date is subjoined as before.

R. B.

LONDON: *February 27, 1888.*

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PAULINE.

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION.

1833.

[Browning was twenty years old when this Fragment was first published. Amongst the early works of great poets it must always occupy a distinguished place on account of the splendour and extreme beauty of many of its passages. As a rule, such early work is disappointing, or at all events insignificant and uninteresting, but "Pauline" is far from insignificant, and is always interesting. One sees a mind at work and a rich promise of a harvest to come. The story of the young Rossetti transcribing the whole poem from the copy in the British Museum is a literary anecdote always worth recording. Mr. Browning himself seems to have thought lightly of the poem, and in giving one of his own copies to Mr. Frederick Locker spoke of it as a literary curiosity only. In his later days he became a very severe critic of the life and conduct of Shelley, and did not care to be too frequently reminded of his boyish raptures for that strange and unaccountable being. It would be difficult and unprofitable to attempt to analyse "Pauline," the charm of which now consists in detached passages. It is the sole survivor of a great deal of Browning's youthful verse. In a copy recently sold, and formerly belonging to Mr. Crampon, is an autograph note from the Author, recording "that the poem was written in pursuance of a foolish plan I forget or have no wish to remember, involving the assumption of several distinct characters;" whilst in a copy of his own he wrote, "Only this crab remains of the shapely Tree of Life in my fool's paradise."]

PAULINE.

Plus ne suis ce que j'ai été,
Et ne le sçaurais jamais être.—*Marot.*

NON dubito, quin titulus libri nostri raritate sua quamplurimos alliciat ad legendum: inter quos nonnulli oblique opinionis, mente languidi, multi etiam maligni, et in ingenium nostrum ingrati accedent, qui temeraria sua ignorantia, vix conspecto titulo clamabunt. Nos vetita docere, hæresium semina jacere: piis auribus offenculo, præclaris ingeniis scandalo esse: . . . adeo conscientie suæ consulentes, ut nec Apollo, nec Musæ omnes, neque Angelus de cælo me ab illorum execratione vindicare queant: quibus et ego nunc consulo, ne scripta nostra legant, nec intelligant, nec meminerint: nam noxia sunt, venosa sunt: Acherontis ostium est in hoc libro, lapides loquitur, caveant, ne cerebrum illis excutiat. Vos autem, qui æqua mente ad legendum venitis, si tantam prudentiæ discretionem adhibueritis, quantum in melle legendo apes, jam securi legite. Puto namque vos et utilitatis haud parum et voluptatis

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plurimum accepturos. Quod si qua repereritis, quæ vobis non placeant, mittite illa, nec utimini. NAM ET EGO VOBIS ILLA NON PROBO, SED NARRO. Cætera tamen propterea non respuite . . . Ideo, si quid liberius dictum sit, ignoscite adolescentiæ nostræ, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui.—*Hen. Corn. Agrippa, De Occult. Philosoph. in Præfat.*

LONDON: *January 1833.*
V. A. XX.

[This introduction would appear less absurdly pretentious did it apply, as was intended, to a completed structure of which the poem was meant for only a beginning and remains a fragment.]

PAULINE, mine own, bend o'er me—thy soft
breast
Shall pant to mine—bend o'er me—thy sweet
eyes,
And loosened hair and breathing lips, and
arms
Drawing me to thee—these build up a screen

A

To shut me in with thee, and from all fear ;
 So that I might unlock the sleepless brood
 Of fancies from my soul, their lurking-place,
 Nor doubt that each would pass, ne'er to return
 To one so watched, so loved and so secured.
 But what can guard thee but thy naked love ?
 Ah dearest, whoso sucks a poisoned wound
 Envenoms his own veins ! Thou art so good,
 So calm—if thou shouldst wear a brow less
 light
 For some wild thought which, but for me,
 were kept
 From out thy soul as from a sacred star !
 Yet till I have unlocked them it were vain
 To hope to sing ; some woe would light on me ;
 Nature would point at one whose quivering lip
 Was bathed in her enchantments, whose
 brow burned
 Beneath the crown to which her secrets knelt,
 Who learned the spell which can call up the
 dead,
 And then departed smiling like a fiend
 Who has deceived God,—if such one should
 seek
 Again her altars and stand robed and crowned
 Amid the faithful ! Sad confession first,
 Remorse and pardon and old claims renewed,
 Ere I can be—as I shall be no more.

I had been spared this shame if I had sat
 By thee for ever from the first, in place
 Of my wild dreams of beauty and of good,
 Or with them, as an earnest of their truth :
 No thought nor hope having been shut from
 thee,
 No vague wish unexplained, no wandering
 aim
 Sent back to bind on fancy's wings and seek
 Some strange fair world where it might be
 a law ;
 But, doubting nothing, had been led by thee,
 Thro' youth, and saved, as one at length
 awakened
 Who has slept through a peril. Ah vain, vain !

Thou lovest me ; the past is in its grave
 Tho' its ghost haunts us ; still this much is
 ours,

To cast away restraint, lest a worse thing
 Wait for us in the dark. Thou lovest me ;
 And thou art to receive not love but faith,
 For which thou wilt be mine, and smile and
 take
 All shapes and shames, and veil without a
 fear
 That form which music follows like a slave :
 And I look to thee and I trust in thee,
 As in a Northern night one looks alway
 Unto the East for morn and spring and joy.
 Thou seest then my aimless, hopeless state,
 And, resting on some few old feelings won
 Back by thy beauty, wouldst that I essay
 The task which was to me what now thou art :
 And why should I conceal one weakness more ?

Thou wilt remember one warm morn when
 winter
 Crept aged from the earth, and spring's first
 breath
 Blew soft from the moist hills ; the black-
 thorn boughs,
 So dark in the bare wood, when glistening
 In the sunshine were white with coming
 buds,
 Like the bright side of a sorrow, and the
 banks
 Had violets opening from sleep like eyes.
 I walked with thee who knew'st not a deep
 shame
 Lurked beneath smiles and careless words
 which sought
 To hide it till they wandered and were mute,
 As we stood listening on a sunny mound
 To the wind murmuring in the damp copse,
 Like heavy breathings of some hidden thing
 Betrayed by sleep ; until the feeling rushed
 That I was low indeed, yet not so low
 As to endure the calmness of thine eyes.
 And so I told thee all, while the cool breast
 I leaned on altered not its quiet beating :
 And long ere words like a hurt bird's com-
 plaint
 Bade me look up and be what I had been,
 I felt despair could never live by thee :
 Thou wilt remember. Thou art not more
 dear

Than song was once to me ; and I ne'er sung
 But as one entering bright halls where all
 Will rise and shout for him : sure I must own
 That I am fallen, having chosen gifts
 Distinct from theirs—that I am sad and fain
 Would give up all to be but where I was,
 Not high as I had been if faithful found,
 But low and weak yet full of hope, and sure
 Of goodness as of life—that I would lose
 All this gay mastery of mind, to sit
 Once more with them, trusting in truth and
 love
 And with an aim—not being what I am.

Oh Pauline, I am ruined who believed
 That though my soul had floated from its
 sphere
 Of wild dominion into the dim orb
 Of self—that it was strong and free as ever !
 It has conformed itself to that dim orb,
 Reflecting all its shades and shapes, and now
 Must stay where it alone can be adored.
 I have felt this in dreams—in dreams in which
 I seemed the fate from which I fled ; I felt
 A strange delight in causing my decay.
 I was a fiend in darkness chained for ever
 Within some ocean cave ; and ages rolled,
 Till through the cleft rock, like a moonbeam,
 came
 A white swan to remain with me ; and ages
 Rolled, yet I tired not of my first free joy
 In gazing on the peace of its pure wings :
 And then I said " It is most fair to me,
 " Yet its soft wings must sure have suffered
 change
 " From the thick darkness, sure its eyes are
 dim,
 " Its silver pinions must be cramped and
 numbed
 " With sleeping ages here ; it cannot leave me,
 " For it would seem, in light beside its kind,
 " Withered, tho' here to me most beautiful."
 And then I was a young witch whose blue
 eyes,
 As she stood naked by the river springs,
 Drew down a god : I watched his radiant form
 Growing less radiant, and it gladdened me ;
 Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine '

Upon my knees, singing to me of heaven,
 He turned to look at me, ere I could lose
 The grin with which I viewed his perishing :
 And he shrieked and departed and sat long
 By his deserted throne, but sunk at last
 Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and curled
 Around him, " I am still a god—to thee."

Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall,
 Since all the wandering and all the weakness
 Will be a saddest comment on the song :
 And if, that done, I can be young again,
 I will give up all gained, as willingly
 As one gives up a charm which shuts him out
 From hope or part or care in human kind.
 As life wanes, all its care and strife and toil
 Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees
 Which grew by our youth's home, the waving
 mass
 Of climbing plants heavy with bloom and
 dew,
 The morning swallows with their songs like
 words,
 All these seem clear and only worth our
 thoughts :
 So, aught connected with my early life,
 My rude songs or my wild imaginings,
 How I look on them—most distinct amid
 The fever and the stir of after years !

I ne'er had ventured e'en to hope for this,
 Had not the glow I felt at His award,
 Assured me all was not extinct within :
 His whom all honour, whose renown springs
 up
 Like sunlight which will visit all the world,
 So that e'en they who sneered at him at first,
 Come out to it, as some dark spider crawls
 From his foul nets which some lit torch in-
 vades,
 Yet spinning still new films for his retreat.
 Thou didst smile, poet, but can we forgive ?

Sun-treader,¹ life and light be thine for
 ever !
 Thou art gone from us ; years go by and
 spring

¹ Shelley.

Gladdens and the young earth is beautiful,
 Yet thy songs come not, other bards arise,
 But none like thee : they stand, thy majesties,
 Like mighty works which tell some spirit
 there

Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
 Till, its long task completed, it hath risen
 And left us, never to return, and all
 Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain.
 The air seems bright with thy past presence
 yet,

But thou art still for me as thou hast been
 When I have stood with thee as on a throne
 With all thy dim creations gathered round
 Like mountains, and I felt of mould like
 them,

And with them creatures of my own were
 mixed,
 Like things half-lived, catching and giving
 life.

But thou art still for me who have adored
 Tho' single, panting but to hear thy name
 Which I believed a spell to me alone,
 Scarce deeming thou wast as a star to men !
 As one should worship long a sacred spring
 Scarce worth a moth's fitting, which long
 grasses cross,

And one small tree embowers droopingly—
 Joying to see some wandering insect won
 To live in its few rushes, or some locust
 To pasture on its boughs, or some wild bird
 Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air :
 And then should find it but the fountain-
 head,

Long lost, of some great river washing towns
 And towers, and seeing old woods which
 will live

But by its banks untrod of human foot,
 Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering
 In light as some thing lieth half of life
 Before God's foot, waiting a wondrous
 change ;

Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or
 stay

Its course in vain, for it does ever spread
 Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,
 Being the pulse of some great country—so
 Wast thou to me, and art thou to the world !

And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret
 That I am not what I have been to thee :
 Like a girl one has silently loved long
 In her first loneliness in some retreat,
 When, late emerged, all gaze and glow to view
 Her fresh eyes and soft hair and lips which
 bloom

Like a mountain berry : doubtless it is sweet
 To see her thus adored, but there have been
 Moments when all the world was in our
 praise,

Sweeter than any pride of after hours.
 Yet, sun-treader, all hail ! From my heart's
 heart

I bid thee hail ! E'en in my wildest dreams,
 I proudly feel I would have thrown to dust
 The wreaths of fame which seemed o'er-
 hanging me,
 To see thee for a moment as thou art.

And if thou livest, if thou lovest, spirit !
 Remember me who set this final seal
 To wandering thought—that one so pure as
 thou

Could never die. Remember me who flung
 All honour from my soul, yet paused and
 said

“ There is one spark of love remaining yet,
 “ For I have nought in common with him,
 shapes

“ Which followed him avoid me, and foul
 forms

“ Seek me, which ne'er could fasten on his
 mind ;

“ And though I feel how low I am to him,

“ Yet I aim not even to catch a tone

“ Of harmonies he called profusely up ;

“ So, one gleam still remains, although the
 last.”

Remember me who praise thee e'en with tears,
 For never more shall I walk calm with thee ;
 Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,

A melody some wondrous singer sings,
 Which, though it haunt men oft in the still
 eve,

They dream not to essay ; yet it no less
 But more is honoured. I was thine in shame,
 And now when all thy proud renown is out,

I am a watcher whose eyes have grown dim
With looking for some star which breaks on him
Altered and worn and weak and full of tears.

Autumn has come like spring returned to us,
Won from her girlishness ; like one returned
A friend that was a lover, nor forgets
The first warm love, but full of sober thoughts
Of fading years ; whose soft mouth quivers yet
With the old smile, but yet so changed and
still !

And here am I the scoffer, who have probed
Life's vanity, won by a word again
Into my own life—by one little word
Of this sweet friend who lives in loving me,
Lives strangely on my thoughts and looks
and words,

As fathoms down some nameless ocean thing
Its silent course of quietness and joy.
O dearest, if indeed I tell the past,
May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream !
Or if it linger—my lost soul too soon
Sinks to itself and whispers we shall be
But closer linked, two creatures whom the earth
Bears singly, with strange feelings unrevealed
Save to each other ; or two lonely things
Created by some power whose reign is done,
Having no part in God or his bright world.
I am to sing whilst ebbing day dies soft,
As a lean scholar dies worn o'er his book,
And in the heaven stars steal out one by one
As hunted men steal to their mountain watch.
I must not think, lest this new impulse die
In which I trust ; I have no confidence :
So, I will sing on fast as fancies come ;
Rudely, the verse being as the mood it paints.

I strip my mind bare, whose first elements
I shall unveil—not as they struggled forth
In infancy, nor as they now exist,
When I am grown above them and can rule—
But in that middle stage when they were full
Yet ere I had disposed them to my will ;
And then I shall show how these elements
Produced my present state, and what it is.

I am made up of an intensest life,
Of a most clear idea of consciousness

Of self, distinct from all its qualities,
From all affections, passions, feelings, powers ;
And thus far it exists, if tracked, in all :
But linked, in me, to self-supremacy,
Existing as a centre to all things,
Most potent to create and rule and call
Upon all things to minister to it ;
And to a principle of restlessness
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste,
feel, all—

This is myself ; and I should thus have
been
Though gifted lower than the meanest soul.

And of my powers, one springs up to save
From utter death a soul with such desire
Confined to clay—of powers the only one
Which marks me—an imagination which
Has been a very angel, coming not
In fitful visions but beside me ever
And never failing me ; so, though my mind
Forgets not, not a shred of life forgets,
Yet I can take a secret pride in calling
The dark past up to quell it regally.

A mind like this must dissipate itself,
But I have always had one lode-star ; now,
As I look back, I see that I have halted
Or hastened as I looked towards that star—
A need, a trust, a yearning after God :
A feeling I have analysed but late,
But it existed, and was reconciled
With a neglect of all I deemed his laws,
Which yet, when seen in others, I abhorred.
I felt as one beloved, and so shut in
From fear : and thence I date my trust in signs
And omens, for I saw God everywhere ;
And I can only lay it to the fruit
Of a sad after-time that I could doubt
Even his being—e'en the while I felt
His presence, never acted from myself.
Still trusted in a hand to lead me through
All danger ; and this feeling ever fought
Against my weakest reason and resolve.

And I can love nothing—and this dull truth
Has come the last : but sense supplies a love
Encircling me and mingling with my life.

These make myself: I have long sought in
vain

To trace how they were formed by circum-
stance,

Yet ever found them mould my wildest youth
Where they alone displayed themselves, con-
verted

All objects to their use: now see their course!

They came to me in my first dawn of life
Which passed alone with wisest ancient books

All halo-girt with fancies of my own;

And I myself went with the tale—a god

Wandering after beauty, or a giant

Standing vast in the sunset—an old hunter

Talking with gods, or a high-crested chief

Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos.

I tell you, nought has ever been so clear

As the place, the time, the fashion of those
lives:

I had not seen a work of lofty art,

Nor woman's beauty nor sweet nature's face,

Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those

On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea,

The deep groves and white temples and wet
caves:

And nothing ever will surprise me now—

Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,

Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's
hair.

And strange it is that I who could so dream
Should e'er have stooped to aim at aught
beneath—

Aught low or painful; but I never doubted:

So, as I grew, I rudely shaped my life

To my immediate wants; yet strong beneath

Was a vague sense of power though folded
up—

A sense that, though those shades and times
were past,

Their spirit dwelt in me, with them should
rule.

Then came a pause, and long restraint chained
down

My soul till it was changed. I lost myself,

And were it not that I so loathe that loss,

I could recall how first I learned to turn

My mind against itself; and the effects

In deeds for which remorse were vain as for

The wanderings of delirious dream; yet
thence

Came cunning, envy, falsehood, all world's
wrong

That spotted me: at length I cleansed my
soul.

Yet long world's influence remained; and
nought

But the still life I led, apart once more,

Which left me free to seek soul's old delights,

Could e'er have brought me thus far back to
peace.

As peace returned, I sought out some pursuit;

And song rose, no new impulse but the one

With which all others best could be combined.

My life has not been that of those whose
heaven

Was lampless save where poesy shone out;

But as a clime where glittering mountain-tops

And glancing sea and forests steeped in light

Give back reflected the far-flashing sun;

For music (which is earnest of a heaven,

Seeing we know emotions strange by it,

Not else to be revealed,) is like a voice,

A low voice calling fancy, as a friend,

To the green woods in the gay summer time:

And she fills all the way with dancing shapes
Which have made painters pale, and they go

on

Till stars look at them and winds call to them

As they leave life's path for the twilight world

Where the dead gather. This was not at
first,

For I scarce knew what I would do. I had

An impulse but no yearning—only sang.

And first I sang as I in dream have seen

Music wait on a lyrist for some thought,

Yet singing to herself until it came.

I turned to those old times and scenes where

all

That's beautiful had birth for me, and made

Rude verses on them all; and then I paused—

I had done nothing, so I sought to know

What other minds achieved. No fear out-
broke

As on the works of mighty bards I gazed,
In the first joy at finding my own thoughts
Recorded, my own fancies justified,
And their aspirings but my very own.
With them I first explored passion and
mind,—

All to begin afresh ! I rather sought
To rival what I wondered at than form
Creations of my own ; if much was light
Lent by the others, much was yet my own.

I paused again : a change was coming—came :
I was no more a boy, the past was breaking
Before the future and like fever worked.

I thought on my new self, and all my powers
Burst out. I dreamed not of restraint, but
gazed

On all things : schemes and systems went
and came,

And I was proud (being vainest of the weak)
In wandering o'er thought's world to seek
some one

To be my prize, as if you wandered o'er
The White Way for a star.

And my choice fell

Not so much on a system as a man—
On one, whom praise of mine shall not offend,
Who was as calm as beauty, being such
Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline,—
Believing in them and devoting all
His soul's strength to their winning back to
peace ;

Who sent forth hopes and longings for their
sake,

Clothed in all passion's melodies : such first
Caught me and set me, slave of a sweet task,
To disentangle, gather sense from song :
Since, song-inwoven, lurked there words
which seemed

A key to a new world, the muttering
Of angels, something yet unguessed by man.
How my heart leapt as still I sought and found
Much there, I felt my own soul had conceived,
But there living and burning ! Soon 'the orb
Of his conceptions dawned on me ; its praise

Lives in the tongues of men, men's brows
are high

When his name means a triumph and a pride,
So, my weak voice may well forbear to shame
What seemed decreed my fate : I threw myself
To meet it, I was vowed to liberty,
Men were to be as gods and earth as heaven,
And I—ah, what a life was mine to prove !
My whole soul rose to meet it. Now, Pauline,
I shall go mad, if I recall that time !

Oh let me look back ere I leave for ever
The time which was an hour one fondly waits
For a fair girl that comes a withered hag !
And I was lonely, far from woods and fields,
And amid dullest sights, who should be loose
As a stag ; yet I was full of bliss, who lived
With Plato and who had the key to life ;
And I had dimly shaped my first attempt,
And many a thought did I build up on
thought,

As the wild bee hangs cell to cell ; in vain,
For I must still advance, no rest for mind

'Twas in my plan to look on real life,
The life all new to me ; my theories
Were firm, so them I left, to look and learn
Mankind, its cares, hopes, fears, its woes and
joys ;

And, as I pondered on their ways, I sought
How best life's end might be attained—an end
Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

And suddenly without heart-wreck I awoke
As from a dream : I said "'Twas beautiful,
"Yet but a dream, and so adieu to it !"
As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow
Strange towers and high-walled gardens thick
with trees,

Where song takes shelter and delicious mirth
From laughing fairy creatures peeping over,
And on the morrow when he comes to lie
For ever 'neath those garden-trees fruit-
flushed

Sung round by fairies, all his search is vain.
First went my hopes of perfecting mankind,
Next—faith in them, and then 'freedom's self
And virtue's self, then my own motives, ends

And aims and loves, and human love went last.

I felt this no decay, because new powers
Rose as old feelings left—wit, mockery,
Light-heartedness ; for I had oft been sad,
Mistrusting my resolves, but now I cast
Hope joyously away : I laughed and said
“No more of this !” I must not think : at
length

I looked again to see if all went well.

My powers were greater : as some temple
seemed

My soul, where nought is changed and in-
cense rolls

Around the altar, only God is gone
And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat.

So, I passed through the temple and to me
Knelt troops of shadows, and they cried
“Hail, king !

“We serve thee now and thou shalt serve no
more !

“Call on us, prove us, let us worship thee !”
And I said “Are ye strong? Let fancy bear
me

“Far from the past !” And I was borne
away,

As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,
O'er deserts, towers and forests, I being calm.

And I said “I have nursed up energies,
“They will prey on me.” And a band
knelt low

And cried “Lord, we are here and we will
make

“Safe way for thee in thine appointed life !

“But look on us !” And I said “Ye will
worship

“Me ; should my heart not worship too ?”
They shouted

“Thyself, thou art our king !” So, I stood
there

Smiling—oh, vanity of vanities !

For buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit
With which I looked out how to end my
course ;

I felt once more myself, my powers—all
mine ;

I knew while youth and health so lifted me

That, spite of all life's nothingness, no grief
Came nigh me, I must ever be light-hearted ;
And that this knowledge was the only veil
Betwixt joy and despair : so, if age came,
I should be left—a wreck linked to a soul
Yet fluttering, or mind-broken and aware
Of my decay. So a long summer morn
Found me ; and ere noon came, I had
resolved

No age should come on me ere youth was
spent,

For I would wear myself out, like that morn
Which wasted not a sunbeam ; every hour
I would make mine, and die.

And thus I sought
To chain my spirit down which erst I freed
For flights to fame : I said “The troubled life
“Of genius, seen so gay when working forth
“Some trusted end, grows sad when all
proves vain—

“How sad when men have parted with
truth's peace

“For falsest fancy's sake, which waited first
“As an obedient spirit when delight

“Came without fancy's call : but alters soon,
“Comes darkened, seldom, hastens to depart,

“Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.
“But I shall never lose her ; she will live

“Dearer for such seclusion. I but catch
“A hue, a glance of what I sing : so, pain

“Is linked with pleasure, for I ne'er may tell
“Half the bright sights which dazzle me ;
but now

“Mine shall be all the radiance : let them fade
“Untold—others shall rise as fair, as fast !

“And when all's done, the few dim gleams
transferred,”—

(For a new thought sprang up how well it
were,

Discarding shadowy hope, to weave such lays
As straight encircle men with praise and love,

So, I should not die utterly,—should bring
One branch from the gold forest, like the
knight

Of old tales, witnessing I had been there)—
“And when all's done, how vain seems e'en

success—

"The vaunted influence poets have o'er men!
 "'Tis a fine thing that one weak as myself
 "Should sit in his lone room, knowing the
 words
 "He utters in his solitude shall move
 "Men like a swift wind—that tho' dead and
 gone,
 "New eyes shall glisten when his beauteous
 dreams
 "Of love come true in happier frames than
 his.
 "Ay, the still night brings thoughts like
 these, but morn
 "Comes and the mockery again laughs out
 "At hollow praises, smiles allied to sneers;
 "And my soul's idol ever whispers me
 "To dwell with him and his unhonoured song:
 "And I foreknow my spirit, that would press
 "First in the struggle, fail again to make
 "All bow enslaved, and I again should sink.

 "And then know that this curse will come
 on us,
 "To see our idols perish; we may wither,
 "No marvel, we are clay, but our low fate
 "Should not extend to those whom trustingly
 "We sent before into time's yawning gulf
 "To face what dread may lurk in darkness
 there.
 "To find the painter's glory pass, and feel
 "Music can move us not as once, or, worst,
 "To weep decaying wits ere the frail body
 "Decays! Nought makes me trust some
 love is true,
 "But the delight of the contented lowness
 "With which I gaze on him I keep for ever
 "Above me; I to rise and rival him?
 "Feed his fame rather from my heart's best
 blood,
 "Wither unseen that he may flourish still."

 Pauline, my soul's friend, thou dost pity yet
 How this mood swayed me when that soul
 found thine,
 When I had set myself to live this life,
 Defying all past glory. Ere thou camest
 I seemed defiant, sweet, for old delights
 Had flocked like birds again; music, my life,
 Nourished me more than ever; then the lore
 Loved for itself and all it shows—that king
 Treading the purple calmly to his death,¹
 While round him, like the clouds of eve, all
 dusk,
 The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,
 Pile the dim outline of the coming doom;
 And him sitting alone in blood while friends
 Are hunting far in the sunshine; and the boy
 With his white breast and brow and cluster-
 ing curls
 Streaked with his mother's blood, but striv-
 ing hard
 To tell his story ere his reason goes.
 And when I loved thee as love seemed so oft,
 Thou lovedst me indeed: I wondering
 searched
 My heart to find some feeling like such love,
 Believing I was still much I had been.
 Too soon I found all faith had gone from me,
 And the late glow of life, like change on
 clouds,
 Proved not the morn-blush widening into day,
 But eve faint-coloured by the dying sun
 While darkness hastens quickly. I will tell
 My state as though 'twere none of mine—
 despair
 Cannot come near us—this it is, my state.

 Souls alter not, and mine must still advance;
 Strange that I knew not, when I flung away
 My youth's chief aims, their loss might lead
 to loss
 Of what few I retained, and no resource
 Be left me: for behold how changed is all!
 I cannot chain my soul: it will not rest
 In its clay prison, this most narrow sphere:
 It has strange impulse, tendency, desire,
 Which nowise I account for nor explain,
 But cannot stifle, being bound to trust
 All feelings equally, to hear all sides:
 How can my life indulge them? yet they live,
 Referring to some state of life unknown.

 My selfishness is satiated not,
 It wears me like a flame; my hunger for

¹ Agamemnon.

All pleasure, howsoe'er minute, grows pain ;
 I envy—how I envy him whose soul
 Turns its whole energies to some one end,
 To elevate an aim, pursue success
 However mean ! So, my still baffled hope
 Seeks out abstractions ; I would have one joy,
 But one in life, so it were wholly mine,
 One rapture all my soul could fill : and this
 Wild feeling places me in dream afar
 In some vast country where the eye can see
 No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn
 With shining towers and towns, till I grow
 mad
 Well-nigh, to know not one abode but holds
 Some pleasure, while my soul could grasp
 the world,
 But must remain this vile form's slave. I look
 With hope to age at last, which quenching
 much,
 May let me concentrate what sparks it spares.

This restlessness of passion meets in me
 A craving after knowledge : the sole proof
 Of yet commanding will is in that power
 Repressed ; for I beheld it in its dawn,
 The sleepless harpy with just-budding wings,
 And I considered whether to forego
 All happy ignorant hopes and fears, to live,
 Finding a recompense in its wild eyes.
 And when I found that I should perish so,
 I bade its wild eyes close from me for ever,
 And I am left alone with old delights ;
 See ! it lies in me a chained thing, still prompt
 To serve me if I loose its slightest bond :
 I cannot but be proud of my bright slave.

How should this earth's life prove my only
 sphere ?
 Can I so narrow sense but that in life
 Soul still exceeds it ? In their elements
 My love outsoars my reason ; but since love
 Perforce receives its object from this earth
 While reason wanders chainless, the few
 truths
 Caught from its wanderings have sufficed to quell
 Love chained below ; then what were love,
 set free,

Which, with the object it demands, would pass
 Reason companionship the seraphim ?
 No, what I feel may pass all human love
 Yet fall far short of what my love should be.
 And yet I seem more warped in this than
 aught,

Myself stands out more hideously : of old
 I could forget myself in friendship, fame,
 Liberty, nay, in love of mightier souls ;
 But I begin to know what thing hate is—
 To sicken and to quiver and grow white—
 And I myself have furnished its first prey.
 Hate of the weak and ever-wavering will,
 The selfishness, the still-decaying frame . . .
 But I must never grieve whom wing can waft
 Far from such thoughts—as now. Andro-
 meda !¹

And she is with me : years roll, I shall change,
 But change can touch her not—so beautiful
 With her fixed eyes, earnest and still, and hair
 Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze,
 And one red beam, all the storm leaves in
 heaven,

Resting upon her eyes and hair, such hair,
 As she awaits the snake on the wet beach
 By the dark rock and the white wave just
 breaking

At her feet ; quite naked and alone ; a thing
 I doubt not, nor fear for, secure some god
 To save will come in thunder from the stars.
 Let it pass ! Soul requires another change.
 I will be gifted with a wondrous mind,
 Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,
 And in the wane of life, yet only so
 As to call up their fears ; and there shall
 come

A time requiring youth's best energies ;
 And lo, I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,
 And rise triumphant, triumph through decay.

And thus it is that I supply the chasm
 'Twixt what I am and all I fain would be :
 But then to know nothing, to hope for
 nothing,
 To seize on life's dull joys from a strange fear
 Lest, losing them, all's lost and nought
 remains !

¹ As painted by Polidoro di Caravaggio.

There's some vile juggle with my reason here ;
 I feel I but explain to my own loss
 These impulses : they live no less the same.
 Liberty ! what though I despair ? my blood
 Rose never at a slave's name proud as now.
 Oh sympathies, obscured by sophistries !—
 Why else have I sought refuge in myself,
 But from the woes I saw and could not stay ?
 Love ! is not this to love thee, my Pauline ?
 I cherish prejudice, lest I be left
 Utterly loveless ? witness my belief
 In poets, though sad change has come there
 too ;

No more I leave myself to follow them—
 Unconsciously I measure me by them—
 Let me forget it : and I cherish most
 My love of England—how her name, a word
 Of hers in a strange tongue makes my heart
 beat !

Pauline, could I but break the spell ! Not
 now—

All's fever—but when calm shall come again,
 I am prepared : I have made life my own.
 I would not be content with all the change
 One frame should feel, but I have gone in
 thought

Thro' all conjuncture, I have lived all life
 When it is most alive, where strangest fate
 New-shapes it past surmise—the throes of men
 Bit by some curse or in the grasps of doom
 Half-visible and still-increasing round,
 Or crowning their wide being's general aim.

These are wild fancies, but I feel, sweet friend,
 As one breathing his weakness to the ear
 Of pitying angel—dear as a winter flower,
 A slight flower growing alone, and offering
 Its frail cup of three leaves to the cold sun,
 Yet joyous and confiding like the triumph
 Of a child : and why am I not worthy thee ?
 I can live all the life of plants, and gaze
 Drowsily on the bees that flit and play,
 Or bave my breast for sunbeams which will
 kill,
 Or open in the night of sounds, to look
 For the dim stars ; I can mount with the
 bird

Leaping airily his pyramid of leaves
 And twisted boughs of some tall mountain
 tree,
 Or rise cheerfully springing to the heavens ;
 Or like a fish breathe deep the morning air
 In the misty sun-warm water ; or with flower
 And tree can smile in light at the sinking sun
 Just as the storm comes, as a girl would look
 On a departing lover—most serene.

Pauline, come with me, see how I could build
 A home for us, out of the world, in thought !
 I am uplifted : fly with me, Pauline !

Night, and one single ridge of narrow path
 Between the sullen river and the woods
 Waving and muttering, for the moonless night
 Has shaped them into images of life,
 Like the uprising of the giant-ghosts,
 Looking on earth to know how their sons
 fare :

Thou art so close by me, the roughest swell
 Of wind in the tree-tops hides not the panting
 Of thy soft breasts. No, we will pass to
 morning—

Morning, the rocks and valleys and old
 woods.

How the sun brightens in the mist, and here,
 Half in the air, like creatures of the place,
 Trusting the element, living on high boughs
 That swing in the wind—look at the silver
 spray

Flung from the foam-sheet of the cataract
 Amid the broken rocks ! Shall we stay here
 With the wild hawks ? No, ere the hot noon
 come,

Dive we down—safe ! See this our new
 retreat

Walled in with a sloped mound of matted
 shrubs,

Dark, tangled, old and green, still sloping
 down

To a small pool whose waters lie asleep
 Amid the trailing boughs turned water-plants:
 And tall trees overarch to keep us in,
 Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts,
 And in the dreamy water one small group
 Of two or three strange trees are got together

Wondering at all around, as strange beasts
 herd
 Together far from their own land : all wild-
 ness,
 No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants
 pave all,
 And tongues of bank go shelving in the
 lymph,
 Where the pale-throated snake reclines his
 head,
 And old grey stones lie making eddies there,
 The wild-mice cross them dry-shod. Deeper
 in !
 Shut thy soft eyes—now look—still deeper in !
 This is the very heart of the woods all round
 Mountain-like heaped above us ; yet even
 here
 One pond of water gleams ; far off the river
 Sweeps like a sea, barred out from land ; but
 one—
 One thin clear sheet has overleaped and
 wound
 Into this silent depth, which gained, it lies
 Still, as but let by sufferance ; the trees bend
 O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl,
 And through their roots long creeping plants
 out-stretch
 Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling ;
 farther on,
 Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have com-
 bined
 To narrow it ; so, at length, a silver thread,
 It winds, all noiselessly through the deep
 wood
 Till thro' a cleft-way, thro' the moss and stone,
 It joins its parent-river with a shout.

Up for the glowing day, leave the old woods !
 See, they part like a ruined arch : the sky !
 Nothing but sky appears, so close the roots
 And grass of the hill-top level with the air—
 Blue sunny air, where a great cloud floats
 laden
 With light, like a dead whale that white
 birds pick,
 Floating away in the sun in some north sea.
 Air, air, fresh life-blood, thin and searching air,
 The clear, dear breath of God that loveth us,

Where small birds reel and winds take their
 delight !
 Water is beautiful, but not like air :
 See, where the solid azure waters lie
 Made as of thickened air, and down below,
 The fern-ranks like a forest spread themselves
 As though each pore could feel the element ;
 Where the quick glancing serpent winds his
 way,
 Float with methere, Pauline!—but not like air.

Down the hill ! Stop—a clump of trees,
 see, set
 On a heap of rock, which look o'er the far
 plain :
 So, envious climbing shrubs would mount to rest
 And peer from their spread boughs ; wide
 they wave, looking
 At the muleteers who whistle on their way,
 To the merry chime of morning bells, past all
 The little smoking cots, mid fields and banks
 And copses bright in the sun. My spirit
 wanders :
 Hedgerows for me—those living hedgerows
 where
 The bushes close and clasp above and keep
 Thought in—I am concentrated—I feel ;
 But my soul saddens when it looks beyond :
 I cannot be immortal, taste all joy.

O God, where do they tend—these struggling
 aims ?¹
 What would I have ? What is this “sleep”
 which seems
 To bound all ? can there be a “waking” point
 Of crowning life ? The soul would never rule ;
 It would be first in all things, it would have
 Its utmost pleasure filled, but, that complete,
 Commanding, for commanding, sickens it.
 The last point I can trace is—rest beneath
 Some better essence than itself, in weakness ;
 This is “myself,” not what I think should be :
 And what is that I hunger for but God ?

My God, my God, let me for once look on
 thee
 As though nought else existed, we alone !

¹ See note at the end of the poem.

And as creation crumbles, my soul's spark
Expands till I can say,—Even from myself
I need thee and I feel thee and I love thee.
I do not plead my rapture in thy works
For love of thee, nor that I feel as one
Who cannot die: but there is that in me
Which turns to thee, which loves or which
should love.

Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress?
Why have I laboured to put out my life?
Is it not in my nature to adore,
And e'en for all my reason do I not
Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him—
now?

Can I *forego* the trust that he loves me?
Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . .
O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed!
I have denied thee calmly—do I not
Pant when I read of thy consummate power,
And burn to see thy calm pure truths out-flash
The brightest gleams of earth's philosophy?
Do I not shake to hear aught question thee?
If I am erring save me, madden me,
Take from me powers and pleasures, let me
die

Ages, so I see thee! I am knit round
As with a charm by sin and lust and pride,
Yet though my wandering dreams have seen
all shapes

Of strange delight, oft have I stood by thee—
Have I been keeping lonely watch with thee
In the damp night by weeping Olivet,
Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less,
Or dying with thee on the lonely cross,
Or witnessing thine outburst from the tomb.

A mortal, sin's familiar friend, doth here
Avow that he will give all earth's reward,
But to believe and humbly teach the faith,
In suffering and poverty and shame,
Only believing he is not unloved.

And now, my Pauline, I am thine for ever!
I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up
Desert me, and old shades are gathering fast;
Yet while the last light waits, I would say much,
This chiefly, it is gain that I have said

Somewhat of love I ever felt for thee;
But seldom told; our hearts ~~to~~ together
That speech seemed mockery; but when
dark hours come, *POONA*
And joy departs, and thou, sweet, deem'st it
strange

A sorrow moves me, thou canst not remove,
Look on this lay I dedicate to thee,
Which through thee I began, which thus I end,
Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell
How I am thine, and more than ever now
That I sink fast: yet though I deeper sink,
No less song proves one word has brought
me bliss,

Another still may win bliss surely back.
Thou knowest, dear, I could not think all
calm,

For fancies followed thought and bore me off,
And left all indistinct; ere one was caught
Another glanced; so, dazzled by my wealth,
I knew not which to leave nor which to
choose,

For all so floated, nought was fixed and firm.
And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
Who chronicled the stages of all life,
And so thou bad'st me shadow this first stage.
'Tis done, and even now I recognize
The shift, the change from last to past—
discern

Faintly how life is truth and truth is good.
And why thou must be mine is, that e'en now
In the dim hush of night, that I have done,
Despite the sad forebodings, love looks
through—

Whispers,—E'en at the last I have her still,
With her delicious eyes as clear as heaven
When rain in a quick shower has beat down
mist,
And clouds float white above like broods of
swans.

How the blood lies upon her cheek, outspread
As thinned by kisses! only in her lips
It wells and pulses like a living thing,
And her neck looks like marble misted o'er
With love-breath,—a Pauline from heights
above,
Stooping beneath me, looking up—one look
As I might kill her and be loved the more.

So, love me—me, Pauline, and nought but me,
 Never leave loving! Words are wild and weak,
 Believe them not, Pauline! I stained myself
 But to behold thee purer by my side,
 To show thou art my breath, my life, a last
 Resource, an extreme want: never believe
 Aught better could so look on thee; nor seek
 Again the world of good thoughts left for mine!
 There were bright troops of undiscovered suns,
 Each equal in their radiant course; there were
 Clusters of far fair isles which ocean kept
 For his own joy, and his waves broke on them
 Without a choice; and there was a dim crowd
 Of visions, each a part of some grand whole:
 And one star left his peers and came with peace
 Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for him;
 And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship,
 And the crew wandered in its bowers and
 plucked

Its fruits and gave up all their hopes of home;
 And one dream came to a pale poet's sleep,
 And he said, "I am singled out by God,
 "No sin must touch me." Words are wild
 and weak,

But what they would express is,—Leave me
 not,

Still sit by me with beating breast and hair
 Loosened, be watching earnest by my side,
 Turning my books or kissing me when I
 Look up—like summer wind! Be still to me
 A help to music's mystery which mind fails
 To fathom, its solution, no mere clue!

O reason's pedantry, life's rule prescribed!
 I hopeless, I the loveless, hope and love.
 Wiser and better, know me now, not when
 You loved me as I was. Smile not! I have
 Much yet to dawn on you, to gladden you.
 No more of the past! I'll look within no
 more.

I have too trusted my own lawless wants,
 Too trusted my vain self, vague intuition—
 Draining soul's wine alone in the still night,
 And seeing how, as gathering films arose,
 As by an inspiration life seemed bare
 And grinning in its vanity, while ends
 Foul to be dreamed of, smiled at me as fixed
 And fair, while others changed from fair to foul
 As a young witch turns an old hag at night.

No more of this! We will go hand in hand,
 I with thee, even as a child—love's slave,
 Looking no farther than his liege commands.

And thou hast chosen where this life shall be:
 The land which gave me thee shall be our
 home,

Where nature lies all wild amid her lakes
 And snow-swathed mountains and vast pines
 begirt

With ropes of snow—where nature lies all
 bare.

Suffering none to view her but a race
 Or stunted or deformed, like the mute dwarfs
 Which wait upon a naked Indian queen.

And there (the time being when the heavens
 are thick

With storm) I'll sit with thee while thou dost
 sing

Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird
 Which crieth as it flies for perfect joy,
 Or telling me old stories of dead knights;
 Or I will read great lays to thee—how she,
 The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave¹

With power to love and to be loved and live:
 Or we will go together, like twin gods
 Of the infernal world, with scented lamp
 Over the dead, to call and to awake,
 Over the unshaped images which lie
 Within my mind's cave: only leaving all,
 That tells of the past doubt. So, when spring
 comes

With sunshine back again like an old smile,
 And the fresh waters and awakened birds
 And budding woods await us, I shall be
 Prepared, and we will question life once
 more,

Till its old sense shall come renewed by
 change,

Like some clear thought which harsh words
 veiled before;

Feeling God loves us, and that all which errs
 Is but a dream which death will dissipate.
 And then what need of longer exile? Seek
 My England, and, again there, calm approach
 All I once fled from, calmly look on those

¹ Antigone.

The works of my past weakness, as one views
Some scene where danger met him long
before.

Ah that such pleasant life should be but
dreamed !

But whate'er come of it, and though it fade,
And though ere the cold morning all be gone,
As it may be ;—tho' music wait to wile,
And strange eyes and bright wine lure, laugh
like sin

Which steals back softly on a soul half saved,
And I the first deny, decry, despise,
With this avowal, these intents so fair,—
Still be it all my own, this moment's pride !
No less I make an end in perfect joy.
E'en in my brightest time, a lurking fear
Possessed me : I well knew my weak resolves,
I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep
Over its treasure, as one half afraid
To make his riches definite : but now
These feelings shall not utterly be lost,
I shall not know again that nameless care
Lest, leaving all undone in youth, some new
And undreamed end reveal itself too late :
For this song shall remain to tell for ever
That when I lost all hope of such a change,
Suddenly beauty rose on me again.
No less I make an end in perfect joy,
For I, who thus again was visited,
Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits,
And, though this weak soul sink and dark-
ness whelm,

Some little word shall light it, raise aloft,
To where I clearer see and better love,
As I again go o'er the tracts of thought
Like one who has a right, and I shall live
With poets, calmer, purer still each time,
And beauteous shapes will come for me to seize,
And unknown secrets will be trusted me
Which were denied the waverer once ; but now
I shall be priest and prophet as of old.

Sun-treader, I believe in God and truth
And love ; and as one just escaped from death
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel
He lives indeed, so, I would lean on thee !
Thou must be ever with me, most in gloom

If such must come, but chiefly when I die,
For I seem, dying, as one going in the dark
To fight a giant : but live thou for ever,
And be to all what thou hast been to me !
All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts of me
Know my last state is happy, free from doubt
Or touch of fear, Love me and wish me well.

RICHMOND :

October 22, 1832.

NOTE.

Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne soit pas toujours parfaitement compris dans ce qui reste à lire de cet étrange fragment, mais il est moins propre que tout autre à éclaircir ce qui de sa nature ne peut jamais être que songe et confusion. D'ailleurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant à mieux co-ordonner certaines parties l'on ne courrait pas le risque de nuire au seul mérite auquel une production si singulière peut prétendre, celui de donner une idée assez précise du genre qu'elle n'a fait qu'ébaucher. Ce début sans prétention, ce remuement des passions qui va d'abord en accroissant et puis s'apaise par degrés, ces élans de l'âme, ce retour soudain sur soi-même, et par-dessus tout, la tournure d'esprit tout particulière de mon ami, rendent les changemens presque impossibles. Les raisons qu'il fait valoir ailleurs, et d'autres encore plus puissantes, ont fait trouver grâce à mes yeux pour cet écrit qu'autrement je lui eusse conseillé de jeter au feu. Je n'en crois pas moins au grand principe de toute composition—à ce principe de Shakespeare, de Rafaele, de Beethoven, d'où il suit que la concentration des idées est due bien plus à leur conception qu'à leur mise en exécution : j'ai tout lieu de craindre que la première de ces qualités ne soit encore étrangère à mon ami, et je doute fort qu'un redoublement de travail lui fasse acquérir la seconde. Le mieux serait de brûler ceci ; mais que faire ?

Je crois que dans ce qui suit il fait allusion à un certain examen qu'il fit autrefois de l'âme, ou plutôt de son âme, pour découvrir la suite des objets auxquels il lui serait possible d'atteindre, et dont chacun une fois obtenu devait former une espèce de plateau d'où l'on pouvait apercevoir d'autres buts, d'autres projets, d'autres jouissances qui, à leur tour, devaient être surmontés. Il en résultait que l'oubli et le sommeil devaient tout terminer. Cette idée, que je ne saisis pas parfaitement, lui est peut-être aussi inintelligible qu'à moi.

PAULINE.

PARACELSUS.

1835.

[In his choice of Paracelsus, Browning exhibits that fondness for learned subjects and out-of-the-way reading which always characterised him. A Life of Paracelsus, did it only exist, would be a fascinating record of times and ideas now well-nigh inconceivable by us. Paracelsus (a name invented by himself to indicate that he was greater than Celsus) was the son of a doctor, and was born about 1490 in Einsiedeln, in the Swiss canton of Schwyz. He studied at Basel University, and was taught alchemy and chemistry by the renowned Trithemius. He also acquired in the mines in the Tyrol belonging to the Fugger family a practical acquaintance with minerals. His merit became that of an observer and an acquirer of facts. He wandered all over Europe, and even reached Samarcand. In 1526 he returned to Basel, and was appointed town physician, and lectured before the University. His behaviour was eccentric, and his conceit boundless. In 1528 he left Basel and resumed his wandering life. He died in Salzburg in 1541—some say he was murdered, and others that he drank himself to death. He has been credited with an enormous number of works explanatory of his system, which was a mixture of mysticism, charlatanism, and useful empiricism. He lectured both in Latin and German. Erasmus consulted him for the stone, and he is said to have cured the famous printer, Froben, of the gout. It is asserted on his behalf that he discovered zinc, hydrogen gas, and the tincture of opium. His *azoth* is sometimes supposed to have been electricity (see *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. xviii.). The poem sufficiently explains itself, and presents no difficulty to an intelligent reader.]

INSCRIBED TO

AMÉDÉE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

R. B.

LONDON: March 15, 1835.

PARACELSUS.

PERSONS.

AUREOLUS PARACELSUS, *a student.*

FESTUS and MICHAL, *his friends.*

APRILE, *an Italian poet.*

I.—PARACELSUS ASPIRES.

SCENE.—*Würzburg; a garden in the environs.* 1512.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL.

Paracelsus. Come close to me, dear friends; still closer; thus!

Close to the heart which, though long time roll by -

Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,

As now it beats—perchance a long, long time—

At least henceforth your memories shall make
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.

Nor shall my memory want a home in yours—

Alas, that it requires too well such free

Forgiving love as shall embalm it there!

For if you would remember me aright,

As I was born to be, you must forget

All fitful strange and moody waywardness

Which e'er confused my better spirit, to
dwell

Only on moments such as these, dear friends!

—My heart no truer, but my words and ways

More true to it: as Michal, some months

hence,

Will say, "this autumn was a pleasant time,"

For some few sunny days; and overlook

Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.
Autumn would fain be sunny ; I would look
Liker my nature's truth : and both are frail,
And both beloved, for all our frailty.

Michal. Aureole !

Paracelsus. Drop by drop ! she is weeping
like a child !

Not so ! I am content—more than content ;
Nay, autumn wins you best by this its mute
Appeal to sympathy for its decay :

Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less
Your stained and drooping vines their grapes
bow down,

Nor blame those creaking trees bent with
their fruit,

That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth
among !

Then for the winds—what wind that ever raved
Shall vex that ash which overlooks you both,
So proud it wears its berries ? Ah, at length,
The old smile meet for her, the lady of this
Sequestered nest !—this kingdom, limited
Alone by one old populous green wall
Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
Grey crickets and shy lizards and quick
spiders,

Each family of the silver-threaded moss—
Which, look through near, this way, and it
appears

A stubble-field or a cane-brake, a marsh
Of bulrush whitening in the sun : laugh now !

Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
Looking out, wondering at the world—or best,
Yon painted snail with his gay shell of dew,
Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps.

Michal. In truth we have lived carelessly
and well.

Paracelsus. And shall, my perfect pair !—
each, trust me, born

For the other ; nay, your very hair, when
mixed,

Is of one hue. For where save in this nook
Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
And wish me prosperous fortune ? Stay :
that plant

Shall never wave its tangles lightly and softly,

VOL. I.

As a queen's languid and imperial arm
Which scatters crowns among her lovers,
but you

Shall be reminded to predict to me
Some great success ! Ah see, the sun sinks
broad

Behind Saint Saviour's : wholly gone, at last !
Festus. Now, Aureole, stay those wander-
ing eyes awhile !

You are ours to-night, at least ; and while
you spoke

Of Michal and her tears, I thought that none
Could willing leave what he so seemed to
love :

But that last look destroys my dream—that
look

As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star !
How far was Würzburg with its church and
spire

And garden-walls and all things they contain,
From that look's far alighting ?

Paracelsus. I but spoke
And looked alike from simple joy to see
The beings I love best, shut in so well
From all rude chances like to be my lot,
That, when afar, my weary spirit,—disposed
To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts
Of them, their pleasant features, looks and
words,—

Needs never hesitate, nor apprehend
Encroaching trouble may have reached them
too,

Nor have recourse to fancy's busy aid
And fashion even a wish in their behalf
Beyond what they possess already here ;
But, unobstructed, may at once forget
Itself in them, assured how well they fare.

Beside, this Festus knows he holds me one
Whom quiet and its charms arrest in vain,
One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,
Too filled with airy hopes to make account
Of soft delights his own heart garners up :
Whereas behold how much our sense of all
That's beauteous proves alike ! When Festus
learns

That every common pleasure of the world
Affects me as himself ; that I have just
As varied appetite for joy derived

From common things; a stake in life, in short,
Like his; a stake which rash pursuit of aims
That life affords not, would as soon destroy;—
He may convince himself that, this in view,
I shall act well advised. And last, because,
Though heaven and earth and all things were
at stake,

Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting
eve.

Festus. True: and the eve is deepening,
and we sit

As little anxious to begin our talk
As though to-morrow I could hint of it
As we paced arm-in-arm the cheerful town
At sun-dawn; or could whisper it by fits
(Trithenius busied with his class the while)
In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks
peer

Half-frightened by the awful tomes around;
Or in some grassy lane unbosom all
From even-blush to midnight: but, to-
morrow!

Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind?
We have been brothers, and henceforth the
world

Will rise between us:—all my freest mind?
'Tis the last night, dear Aureole!

Paracelsus. Oh, say on!

Devise some test of love, some arduous feat
To be performed for you: say on! If night
Be spent the while, the better! Recall how
oft

My wondrous plans and dreams and hopes
and fears

Have—never wearied you, oh no!—as I
Recall, and never vividly as now,
Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln
And its green hills were all the world to us;
And still increasing to this night which ends
My further stay at Würzburg. Oh, one day
You shall be very proud! Say on, dear
friends!

Festus. In truth? 'Tis for my proper
peace, indeed,

Rather than yours; for vain all projects seem
To stay your course: I said my latest hope
Is fading even now. A story tells
Of some far embassy despatched to win

The favour of an eastern king, and how
The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust
Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime.

Just so, the value of repose and love,
I meant should tempt you, better far than I
You seem to comprehend; and yet desist
No whit from projects where repose nor love
Has part.

Paracelsus. Once more? Alas! As I
foretold.

Festus. A solitary brier the bank puts forth
To save our swan's nest floating out to sea.

Paracelsus. Dear Festus, hear me. What
is it you wish?

That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
Reject God's great commission, and so die!
You bid me listen for your true love's sake:
Yet how has grown that love? Even in a long
And patient cherishing of the self-same spirit
It now would quell; as though a mother
hoped

To stay the lusty manhood of the child
Once weak upon her knees. I was not born
Informed and fearless from the first, but
shrank

From aught which marked me out apart from
men:

I would have lived their life, and died their
death,

Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny:
But you first guided me through doubt and
fear,

Taught me to know mankind and know
myself;

And now that I am strong and full of hope,
That, from my soul, I can reject all aims
Save those your earnest words made plain to
me,

Now that I touch the brink of my design,
When I would have a triumph in their eyes,
A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,
And Festus ponders gravely!

Festus. When you deign

To hear my purpose . . .

Paracelsus. Hear it? I can say
Beforehand all this evening's conference!

'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses; first,

Or he declares, or I, the leading points
Of our best scheme of life, what is man's end
And what God's will; no two faiths e'er
agreed

As his with mine. Next, each of us allows
Faith should be acted on as best we may;
Accordingly, I venture to submit
My plan, in lack of better, for pursuing
The path which God's will seems to authorize.
Well, he discerns much good in it, avows
This motive worthy, that hope plausible,
A danger here to be avoided, there
An oversight to be repaired: in fine
Our two minds go together—all the good
Approved by him, I gladly recognize,
All he counts bad, I thankfully discard,
And nought forbids my looking up at last
For some stray comfort in his cautious brow.
When, lo! I learn that, spite of all, there
lurks

Some innate and inexplicable germ
Of failure in my scheme; so that at last
It all amounts to this—the sovereign proof
That we devote ourselves to God, is seen
In living just as though no God there were;
A life which, prompted by the sad and blind
Folly of man, Festus abhors the most;
But which these tenets sanctify at once,
Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,
Consider it how they may.

Michal. Is it so, Festus?
He speaks so calmly and kindly: is it so?

Paracelsus. Reject those glorious visions of
God's love
And man's design; laugh loud that God
should send

Vast longings to direct us; say how soon
Power satiates these, or lust, or gold; I know
The world's cry well, and how to answer it.
But this ambiguous warfare . . .

Festus. . . . Wearies so
That you will grant no last leave to your friend
To urge it?—for his sake, not yours? I wish
To send my soul in good hopes after you;
Never to sorrow that uncertain words
Erringly apprehended, a new creed
Ill understood, begot rash trust in you,
Had share in your undoing.

Paracelsus. Choose your side,
Hold or renounce: but meanwhile blame
me not

Because I dare to act on your own views,
Nor shrink when they point onward, nor
espy

A peril where they most ensure success.
Festus. Prove that to me—but that! Prove
you abide

Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast
God's labour laid on you; prove, all you covet
A mortal may expect; and, most of all,
Prove the strange course you now affect, will
lead

To its attainment—and I bid you speed,
Nay, count the minutes till you venture forth!
You smile; but I had gathered from slow
thought—

Much musing on the fortunes of my friend—
Matter I deemed could not be urged in vain;
But it all leaves me at my need: in shreds
And fragments I must venture what remains.

Michal. Ask at once, Festus, wherefore
he should scorn . . .

Festus. Stay, Michal: Aureole, I speak
guardedly

And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your
error,

This is no ill-considered choice of yours,
No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.

Not from your own confiding words alone
Am I aware your passionate heart long since
Gave birth to, nourished and at length matures
This scheme. I will not speak of Einsiedeln,
Where I was born your elder by some years
Only to watch you fully from the first:

In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed
Even then—'twas mine to have you in my
view

As you had your own soul and those intents
Which filled it when, to crown your dearest
wish,

With a tumultuous heart, you left with me
Our childhood's home to join the favoured few
Whom, here, Trithemius condescends to teach
A portion of his lore: and not one youth
Of those so favoured, whom you now despise,
Came earnest as you came, resolved, like you,

To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve
 By patient toil a wide renown like his.
 Now, this new ardour which supplants the old
 I watched, too; 'twas significant and strange,
 In one matched to his soul's content at length
 With rivals in the search for wisdom's prize,
 To see the sudden pause, the total change;
 From contest, the transition to repose—
 From pressing onward as his fellows pressed,
 To a blank idleness, yet most unlike
 The dull stagnation of a soul, content,
 Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.
 That careless bearing, free from all pretence
 Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek—
 Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving
 What it professed to praise—though not so
 well
 Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce
 and brief,
 Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly curbed.
 That ostentatious show of past defeat,
 That ready acquiescence in contempt,
 I deemed no other than the letting go
 His shivered sword, of one about to spring
 Upon his foe's throat; but it was not thus:
 Not that way looked your brooding purpose
 then.
 For after-signs disclosed, what you confirmed,
 That you prepared to task to the uttermost
 Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim
 Which—while it bore the name your rivals
 gave
 Their own most puny efforts—was so vast
 In scope that it included their best flights,
 Combined them, and desired to gain one prize
 In place of many,—the secret of the world,
 Of man, and man's true purpose, path and fate.
 —That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream
 This purpose, with the sages of the past,
 Have struck upon a way to this, if all
 You trust be true, which following, heart and
 soul,
 You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW:
 And that this aim shall differ from a host
 Of aims alike in character and kind,
 Mostly in this,—that in itself alone
 Shall its reward be, not an alien end
 Blending therewith; no hope nor fear nor joy

Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure
 Devotion to sustain you or betray:
 Thus you aspire.

Paracelsus. You shall not state it thus:
 I should not differ from the dreamy crew
 You speak of. I profess no other share
 In the selection of my lot, than this
 My ready answer to the will of God
 Who summons me to be his organ. All
 Whose innate strength supports them shall
 succeed
 No better than the sages.

Festus. Such the aim, then,
 God sets before you; and 'tis doubtless need
 That he appoint no less the way of praise
 Than the desire to praise; for, though I hold
 With you, the setting forth such praise to be
 The natural end and service of a man,
 And hold such praise is best attained when
 man

Attains the general welfare of his kind—
 Yet this, the end, is not the instrument.
 Presume not to serve God apart from such
 Appointed channel as he wills shall gather
 Imperfect tributes, for that sole obedience
 Valued perchance! He seeks not that his
 altars

Blaze, careless how, so that they do but blaze.
 Suppose this, then; that God selected you
 To KNOW (heed well your answers, for my
 faith

Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)
 I cannot think you dare annex to such
 Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,
 An intense hope; nor let your gifts create
 Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
 Conducive to success, make destiny
 Dispense with man's endeavour. Now, dare
 you search

Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
 Whether you have not rather wild desire
 For this distinction than security
 Of its existence? whether you discern
 The path to the fulfilment of your purpose
 Clear ϵ that purpose—and again, that
 purpose
 Clear as your yearning to be singled out
 For its pursuer. Dare you answer this?

Paracelsus [after a pause]. No, I have
nought to fear! Who will may know
The secret'st workings of my soul. What
though

It be so?—if indeed the strong desire
Eclipse the aim in me?—if splendour break
Upon the outset of my path alone,
And duskest shade succeed? What fairer seal
Shall I require to my authentic mission
Than this fierce energy?—this instinct striving
Because its nature is to strive?—enticed
By the security of no broad course,
Without success forever in its eyes!
How know I else such glorious fate my
own,

But in the restless irresistible force
That works within me? Is it for human will
To institute such impulses?—still less,
To disregard their promptings! What
should I

Do, kept among you all; your loves, your
cares,

Your life—all to be mine? Be sure that God
Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns
impart!

Ask the geier-eagle why she stoops at once
Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
What full-grown power informs her from the
first,

Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
The silent boundless regions of the sky!
Be sure they sleep not whom God needs!

Nor fear

Their holding light his charge, when every
hour

That finds that charge delayed, is a new death.
This for the faith in which I trust; and hence
I can abjure so well the idle arts

These pedants strive to learn and teach;
Black Arts,

Great Works, the Secret and Sublime, for-
sooth—

Let others prize: too intimate a tie
Connects me with our God! A sullen fiend
To do my bidding, fallen and hateful sprites
To help me—what are these, at best, beside
God helping, God directing everywhere,
So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,

And every object there be charged to strike,
Teach, gratify her master God appoints?
And I am young, my Festus, happy and free!
I can devote myself; I have a life
To give; I, singled out for this, the One!

Think, think! the wide East, where all
Wisdom sprung;

The bright South, where she dwelt; the
hopeful North,

All are passed o'er—it lights on me! 'Tis
time

New hopes should animate the world, new
light

Should dawn from new revealings to a race
Weighed down so long, forgotten so long;
thus shall

The heaven reserved for us at last receive
Creatures whom no unwonted splendours
blind,

But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze
Whose beams not seldom blessed their pil-
grimage,

Not seldom glorified their life below.

Festus. My words have their old fate and
make faint stand

Against your glowing periods. Call this,
truth—

Why not pursue it in a fast retreat,
Some one of Learning's many palaces,
After approved example?—seeking there
Calm converse with the great dead, soul to
soul,

Who laid up treasure with the like intent
—So lift yourself into their airy place,
And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,

Unravelling the knots their baffled skill
Pronounced inextricable, true!—but left
Far less confused. A fresh eye, a fresh hand,
Might do much at their vigour's waning-
point;

Succeeding with new-breathed new-hearted
force,

As at old games the runner snatched the torch
From runner still: this way success might be.

But you have coupled with your enterprise,
An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme

Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.
What books are in the desert? Writes the sea

The secret of her yearning in vast caves
Where yours will fall the first of human feet?
Has wisdom sat there and recorded aught
You press to read? Why turn aside from her
To visit, where her vesture never glanced,
Now—solitudes consigned to barrenness
By God's decree, which who shall dare
impugn?

Now—ruins where she paused but would not
stay,

Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,
She called an endless curse on, so it came:
Or worst of all, now—men you visit, men,
Ignoblest troops who never heard her voice
Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome
Or Athens,—these shall Aureole's teachers be!
Rejecting past example, practice, precept,
Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand alone:
Thick like a glory round the Stagirite
Your rivals throng, the sages: here stand you!
Whatever you may protest, knowledge is not
Paramount in your love; or for her sake
You would collect all help from every source—
Rival, assistant, friend, foe, all would merge
In the broad class of those who showed her
haunts,

And those who showed them not.

Paracelsus. What shall I say?

Festus, from childhood I have been possessed
By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or fierce,
As from without some master, so it seemed,
Repressed or urged its current: this but ill
Expresses what would I convey: but rather
I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
Than that my soul's own workings, own high
nature,

So became manifest. I knew not then
What whispered in the evening, and spoke out
At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,
Were laid away in some great trance—the
ages

Coming and going all the while—till dawned
His true time's advent; and could then record
The words they spoke who kept watch by
his bed,—

Then I might tell more of the breath so light
Upon my eyelids, and the fingers light
Among my hair. Youth is confused; yet never

So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,
I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns
A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.
And having this within me and about me
While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes and
woods

Confined me—what oppressive joy was mine
When life grew plain, and I first viewed the
thronged,

The everlasting concourse of mankind!
Believe that ere I joined them, ere I knew
The purpose of the pageant, or the place
Consigned me in its ranks—while, just awake,
Wonder was freshest and delight most pure—
'Twas then that least supportable appeared
A station with the brightest of the crowd,
A portion with the proudest of them all.
And from the tumult in my breast, this only
Could I collect, that I must thenceforth die
Or elevate myself far, far above

The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long
At once to trample on, yet save mankind,
To make some unexampled sacrifice
In their behalf, to wring some wondrous good
From heaven or earth for them, to perish,
winning

Eternal weal in the act: as who should dare
Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,
That, all its gathered flame discharged on
him,
No storm might threaten summer's azure
sleep:

Yet never to be mixed with men so much
As to have part even in my own work, share
In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,
I would withdraw from their officious praise,
Would gently put aside their profuse thanks.
Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe
Of desert-people from their dragon-foe;
When all the swarthy race press round to kiss
His feet, and choose him for their king, and
yield

Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-
hills, for

His realm: and he points, smiling, to his
scarf

Heavy with riveled gold, his burgeton

Gay set with twinkling stones—and to the East,
 Where these must be displayed!
Festus. Good: let us hear
 No more about your nature, "which first
 shrank
 "From all that marked you out apart from
 men!"
Paracelsus. I touch on that; these words
 but analyse
 The first mad impulse: 'twas as brief as fond,
 For as I gazed again upon the show,
 I soon distinguished here and there a shape
 Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and
 full eye.
 Well pleased was I their state should thus at
 once
 Interpret my own thoughts:—"Behold the
 clue
 "To all," I rashly said, "and what I pine
 "To do, these have accomplished: we are
 peers.
 "They know and therefore rule: I, too, will
 know!"
 You were beside me, Festus, as you say;
 You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom
 fame
 Is lavish to attest the lords of mind,
 Not pausing to make sure the prize in view
 Would satiate my cravings when obtained,
 But since they strove I strove. Then came
 a slow
 And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
 Yet not the meanest plodder, Tritheim counts
 A marvel, but was all-sufficient, strong,
 Or staggered only at his own vast wits;
 While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
 Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slurover
 That struggle; suffice it, that I loathed myself
 As weak compared with them, yet felt some-
 how
 A mighty power was brooding, taking shape
 Within me; and this lasted till one night
 When, as I sat revolving it and more,
 A still voice from without said—"Seest thou
 not,
 "Desponding child, whence spring defeat
 and loss?"

"Even from thy strength. Consider: hast
 thou gazed
 "Presumptuously on wisdom's countenance,
 "No veil between; and can thy faltering
 hands,
 "Unguided by the brain the sight absorbs,
 "Pursue their task as earnest blinkers do
 "Whom radiance ne'er distracted? Live
 their life
 "If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose
 their eyes
 "Unfed by splendour. Let each task present
 "Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts
 "In profitless waiting for the gods' descent,
 "But have some idol of thine own to dress
 "With their array. Know, not for knowing's
 sake,
 "But to become a star to men for ever;
 "Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it
 brings,
 "The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds:
 "Look one step onward, and secure that
 step!"
 And I smiled as one never smiles but once,
 Then first discovering my own aim's extent,
 Which sought to comprehend the works of
 God,
 And God himself, and all God's intercourse
 With the human mind; I understood, no less,
 My fellows' studies, whose true worth I saw,
 But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.
 And softer came the voice—"There is a way:
 "'Tis hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued
 "With frailty—hopeless, if indulgence first
 "Have ripened inborn germs of sin to
 strength:
 "Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man's,
 "Apart from all reward?" And last it
 breathed—
 "Be happy, my good soldier; I am by thee,
 "Be sure, even to the end!"—I answered
 not,
 Knowing him. As he spoke, I was endued
 With comprehension and a steadfast will;
 And when he ceased, my brow was sealed
 his own.
 If there took place no special change in me,
 How comes it all things wore a different hue

Thenceforward?—pregnant with vast consequence,

Teeming with grand result, loaded with fate? So that when, quailing at the mighty range Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste To contemplate undazzled some one truth, Its bearings and effects alone—at once

What was a speck expands into a star, Asking a life to pass exploring thus, Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul! I see my way as birds their trackless way.

I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first, I ask not: but unless God send his hail Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow, In some time, his good time, I shall arrive: He guides me and the bird. In his good time!

Michal. Vex him no further, Festus; it is so!

Festus. Just thus you help me ever. This would hold

Were it the trackless air, and not a path Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet Of many a mighty marcher gone that way. You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,

But they were famous in their day—the proofs Remain. At least accept the light they lend.

Paracelsus. Their light! the sum of all is briefly this:

They laboured and grew famous, and the fruits Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth Given over to a blind and endless strife With evils, what of all their lore abates?

No; I reject and spurn them utterly And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside Their dry wells, with a whitelip and filmed eye, While in the distance heaven is blue above Mountains where sleep the sunned tarns?

Festus. And yet As strong delusions have prevailed ere now. Men have set out as gallantly to seek Their ruin. I have heard of such: yourself Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.

Michal. Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint Through the drear way, do you expect to see Their city dawn amid the clouds afar?

Paracelsus. Ay, sounds it not like some old well-known tale?

For me, I estimate their works and them So rightly, that at times I almost dream I too have spent a life the sages' way, And tread once more familiar paths. Perchance

I perished in an arrogant self-reliance Ages ago; and in that act, a prayer For one more chance went up so earnest, so Instinct with better light let in by death, That life was blotted out—not so completely But scattered wrecks enough of it remain, Dim memories, as now, when once more seems

The goal in sight again. All which, indeed, Is foolish, and only means—the flesh I wear,

The earth I tread, are not more clear to me Than my belief, explained to you or no.

Festus. And who am I, to challenge and dispute

That clear belief? I will divest all fear.

Michal. Then Aureole is God's commissary! he shall

Be great and grand—and all for us!

Paracelsus. No, sweet! Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind 'Tis well; but there our intercourse must end: I never will be served by those I serve.

Festus. Look well to this; here is a plague-spot, here,

Disguise it how you may! 'Tis true, you utter

This scorn while by our side and loving us: 'Tis but a spot as yet: but it will break Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.

How can that course be safe which from the first

Produces carelessness to human love?

It seems you have abjured the helps which men

Who overpass their kind, as you would do, Have humbly sought; I dare not thoroughly probe

This matter, lest I learn too much. Let be That popular praise would little instigate Your efforts, nor particular approval

Reward you ; put reward aside ; alone
 You shall go forth upon your arduous task,
 None shall assist you, none partake your toil,
 None share your triumph : still you must retain
 Some one to cast your glory on, to share
 Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,
 I would encircle me with love, and raise
 A rampart of my fellows ; it should seem
 Impossible for me to fail, so watched
 By gentle friends who made my cause their
 own.

They should ward off fate's envy—the great
 gift,
 Extravagant when claimed by me alone,
 Being so a gift to them as well as me.
 If danger daunted me or ease seduced,
 How calmly their sad eyes should gaze re-
 proach !

Michal. O Aureole, can I sing when all
 alone,

Without first calling, in my fancy, both
 To listen by my side—even I ! And you ?
 Do you not feel this ? Say that you feel this !

Paracelsus. I feel 'tis pleasant that my
 aims, at length

Allowed their weight, should be supposed to
 need

A further strengthening in these goodly helps !
 My course allures for its own sake, its sole
 Intrinsic worth ; and ne'er shall boat of mine
 Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.
 Your sages say, " if human, therefore weak : "

If weak, more need to give myself entire
 To my pursuit ; and by its side, all else . . .
 No matter ! I deny myself but little
 In waiving all assistance save its own.

Would there were some real sacrifice to
 make !

Your friends the sages threw their joys away,
 While I must be content with keeping mine.

Festus. But do not cut yourself from human
 weal !

You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect
 To spend his life in service to his kind
 For no reward of theirs, unbound to them
 By any tie ; nor do so, Aureole ! No—
 There are strange punishments for such. Give
 up

(Although no visible good flow thence) some
 part

Of the glory to another ; hiding thus,
 Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.
 Say, say almost to God—" I have done all
 " For her, not for myself ! "

Paracelsus. And who but lately
 Was to rejoice in my success like you ?

Whom should I love but both of you ?

Festus. I know not ;
 But know this, you, that 'tis no will of mine

You should abjure the lofty claims you make ;
 And this the cause—I can no longer seek
 To overlook the truth, that there would be
 A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,
 Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees :
 —A being knowing not what love is. Hear
 me !

You are endowed with faculties which bear
 Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation
 To summon meaner spirits to do their will
 And gather round them at their need ; in-
 spiring

Such with a love themselves can never feel,
 Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.

I know not if you joy in this or no,
 Or ever dream that common men can live
 On objects you prize lightly, but which make
 Their heart's sole treasure : the affections
 seem

Beauteous at most to you, which we must
 taste

Or die : and this strange quality accords,
 I know not how, with you ; sits well upon
 That luminous brow, though in another it
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An eating brand, a shame. I dare not
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The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,
 There's no alternative—I own you one
 Of higher order, under other laws

Than bind us ; therefore, curb not one bold
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'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us
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 Than bind us ; therefore, curb not one bold
 glance !

'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us
 all . . .

Michal. Stay with us, Aureole ! cast those
 hopes away,

And stay with us ! An angel warns me, too,

Man should be humble ; you are very proud :
And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues
for such !

—Warns me to have in dread no quick
repulse,

No slow defeat, but a complete success :

You will find all you seek, and perish so !

Paracelsus [after a pause]. Are these the
barren firstfruits of my quest ?

Is love like this the natural lot of all ?

How many years of pain might one such hour
O'erbalance ? Dearest Michal, dearest
Festus,

What shall I say, if not that I desire
to justify your love ; and will, dear friends,
In swerving nothing from my first resolves.
See, the great moon ! and ere the mottled owls
Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems
You acquiesce at last in all save this—

If I am like to compass what I seek
By the untried career I choose ; and then,
If that career, making but small account
Of much of life's delight, will yet retain
Sufficient to sustain my soul : for thus
I understand these fond fears just expressed.

And first ; the lore you praise and I neglect,
The labours and the precepts of old time,
I have not lightly disesteemed. But, friends,
Truth is within ourselves ; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may
believe.

There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness ; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception—which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error : and to KNOW
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may
escape,

Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
And you trace back the effluence to its spring
And source within us ; where broods
radiance vast,

To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
Shall favour : chance—for hitherto, your sage

Even as he knows not how those beams are
born,

As little knows he what unlocks their fount :
And men have oft grown old among their
books

To die case-hardened in their ignorance,
Whose careless youth had promised what
long years

Of unremitted labour ne'er performed :
While, contrary, it has chanced some idle
day,

To autumn loiterers just as fancy-free
As the midges in the sun, gives birth at last
To truth—produced mysteriously as cape
Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.

Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,
The lowest as the highest ? some slight film
The interposing bar which binds a soul
And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage
Some film removed, the happy outlet whence
Truth issues proudly ? See this soul of ours !
How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed
In manhood, clogged by sickness, back
compelled

By age and waste, set free at last by death :
Why is it, flesh enthralled it or enthrones ?
What is this flesh we have to penetrate ?
Oh, not alone when life flows still, do truth
And power emerge, but also when strange
chance

Ruffles its current ; in unused conjuncture,
When sickness breaks the body—hunger,
watching,

Excess or languor—oftenest death's approach,
Peril, deep joy or woe. One man shall crawl
Through life surrounded with all stirring
things,

Unmoved ; and he goes mad : and from the
wreck

Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
You first collect how great a spirit he hid.
Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,
Discovering the true laws by which the flesh
Accloys the spirit ! We may not be doomed
To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest
Shall cope with us. Make no more giants,
God,

But elevate the race at once ! We ask

To put forth just our strength, our human strength,

All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted—
See if we cannot beat thine angels yet!

Such is my task. I go to gather this
The sacred knowledge, here and there dis-
persed

About the world, long lost or never found.
And why should I be sad or lorn of hope?

Why ever make man's good distinct from
God's,

Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust?
Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me?

Mine is no mad attempt to build a world
Apart from his, like those who set themselves
To find the nature of the spirit they bore,
And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous
dreams

Were only born to vanish in this life,
Refused to fit them to its narrow sphere,
But chose to figure forth another world
And other frames meet for their vast desires,—
And all a dream! Thus was life scorned;
but life

Shall yet be crowned: twine amaranth! I
am priest!

And all for yielding with a lively spirit
A poor existence, parting with a youth
Like those who squander every energy
Convertible to good, on painted toys,
Breath-bubbles, gilded dust! And though
I spurn

All adventitious aims, from empty praise
To love's award, yet whoso deems such
helps

Important, and concerns himself for me,
May know even these will follow with the
rest—

As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep
Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.
My own affections laid to rest awhile,
Will waken purified, subdued alone
By all I have achieved. Till then—till
then . . .

Ah, the time-wiling loitering of a page
Through bower and over lawn, till eve shall
bring

The stately lady's presence whom he loves—
The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough
coat

Enwraps the queenly pearl—these are faint
types!

See, see, they look on me: I triumph
now!

But one thing, Festus, Michal! I have told
All I shall e'er disclose to mortal: say—
Do you believe I shall accomplish this?

Festus. I do believe!

Michal. I ever did believe!

Paracelsus. Those words shall never fade
from out my brain!

This earnest of the end shall never fade!
Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear
Michal,

Two points in the adventure of the diver,
One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge,
One—when, a prince, he rises with his
pearl?

Festus, I plunge!

Festus. We wait you when you rise!

II.—PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE.—*Constantinople; the house of a
Greek Conjuror. 1521.*

PARACELSUS.

Over the waters in the vaporous West
The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold
Behind the arm of the city, which between,
With all that length of domes and minarets,
Athwart the splendour, black and crooked
runs

Like a Turk verse along a scimitar.
There lie, sullen memorial, and no more
Possess my aching sight! 'Tis done at last.
Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat
Have won me to this act! 'Tis as yon cloud
Should voyage unwrecked o'er many a
mountain-top

And break upon a molehill. I have dared
Cometo a pause with knowledge; scan for once
The heights already reached, without regard
To the extent above; fairly compute

All I have clearly gained ; for once excluding
A brilliant future to supply and perfect
All half-gains and conjectures and crude
hopes :

And all because a fortune-teller wils
His credulous seekers should inscribe thus
much

Their previous life's attainment, in his roll,
Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,
Make up the sum : and here amid the scrawled
Uncouth recordings of the dupes of this
Old arch-genethliac,¹ lie my life's results !

A few blurred characters suffice to note
A stranger wandered long through many lands
And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few
Discoveries, as appended here and there,
The fragmentary produce of much toil,
In a dim heap, fact and surmise together
Confusedly massed as when acquired ; he was
Intent on gain to come too much to stay
And scrutinise the little gained : the whole
Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's
gibber

And a mad lover's ditty—there it lies.

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—
A whole life, and my life ! Nothing to do,
No problem for the fancy, but a life
Spent and decided, wasted past retrieve
Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, what does
this

Remembrancer set down concerning "life" ?
"Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty
dream,"

"It is the echo of time ; and he whose heart
"Beat first beneath a human heart, whose
speech

"Was copied from a human tongue, can
never

"Recall when he was living yet knew not this.

"Nevertheless long seasons pass o'er him

"Till some one hour's experience shows what
nothing,

"It seemed, could clearer show ; and ever
after,

¹ Birthday-book maker, γενεθλιακόν.

"An altered brow and eye and gait and
speech

"Attest that now he knows the adage true,
"Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty
dream.'"

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same hour
As well as any : now, let my time be !

Now ! I can go no farther ; well or ill,
'Tis done. I must desist and take my chance.
I cannot keep on the stretch : 'tis no back-
shrinking—

For let but some assurance beam, some close
To my toil grow visible, and I proceed
At any price, though closing it, I die.
Else, here I pause. The old Greek's prophecy
Is like to turn out true : "I shall not quit
"His chamber till I know what I desire !"
Was it the light wind sang it o'er the sea ?

An end, a rest ! strange how the notion, once
Encountered, gathers strength by moments !
Rest !

Where has it kept so long ? this throbbing
brow

To cease, this beating heart to cease, all cruel
And gnawing thoughts to cease ! To dare
let down

My strung, so high-strung brain, to dare un-
nerve

My harassed o'ertasked frame, to know my
place,

My portion, my reward, even my failure,
Assigned, made sure for ever ! To lose my-
self

Among the common creatures of the world,
To draw some gain from having been a man,
Neither to hope nor fear, to live at length !
Even in failure, rest ! But rest in truth
And power and recompense . . . I hoped
that once !

What, sunk insensibly so deep ? Has all
Been undergone for this ? This the request
My labour qualified me to present
With no fear of refusal ? Had I gone
Slightly through my task, and so judged fit

To moderate my hopes ; nay, were it now
My sole concern to exculpate myself,
End things or mend them,—why, I could not
choose

A humbler mood to wait for the event !
No, no, there needs not this ; no, after all,
At worst I have performed my share of the
task :

The rest is God's concern ; mine, merely this,
To know that I have obstinately held
By my own work. The mortal whose brave
foot

Has trod, unscathed, the temple-court so far
That he descries at length the shrine of
shrines,

Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,
Whom he could pass unquailing, fasten now
Upon him, fairly past their power ; no, no—
He must not stagger, faint, fall down at last,
Having a charm to baffle them ; behold,
He bares his front : a mortal ventures thus
Serene amid the echoes, beams and glooms !
If he be priest henceforth, if he wake up
The god of the place to ban and blast him
there,

Both well ! What's failure or success to me ?
I have subdued my life to the one purpose
Whereto I ordained it ; there alone I spy,
No doubt, that way I may be satisfied.

Yes, well have I subdued my life ! beyond
The obligation of my strictest vow,
The contemplation of my wildest bond,
Which gave my nature freely up, in truth,
But in its actual state, consenting fully
All passionate impulses its soil was formed
To rear, should wither ; but foreseeing not
The tract, doomed to perpetual barrenness,
Would seem one day, remembered as it was,
Beside the parched sand-waste which now
it is,

Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless
then.

I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail
I felt them not ; yet now, 'tis very plain
Some soft spots had their birth in me at first,
If not love, say, like love : there was a time
When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge

Set not remorselessly love's claims aside.
This heart was human once, or why recall
Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg which the
Mayne

Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm ?

And Festus—my poor Festus, with his praise
And counsel and grave fears—where is he now
With the sweet maiden, long ago his bride ?
I surely loved them—that last night, at least,
When we . . . gone ! gone ! the better. I
am saved

The sad review of an ambitious youth
Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,
But let grow up and wind around a will
Till action was destroyed. No, I have gone
Purging my path successively of aught
Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts.
I have made life consist of one idea :
Ere that was master, up till that was born,
I bear a memory of a pleasant life
Whose small events I treasure ; till one morn
I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,
Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell
Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,
To leave all trouble for my future plans,
Since I had just determined to become
The greatest and most glorious man on earth.
And since that morn all life has been for-
gotten :

All is one day, one only step between
The outset and the end : one tyrant all-
Absorbing aim fills up the interspace,
One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up
Through a career apparently adverse
To its existence : life, death, light and
shadow,

The shows of the world, were bare receptacles
Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
Not ministers of sorrow or delight :
A wondrous natural robe in which she went.
For some one truth would dimly beacon me
From mountains rough with pines, and fit
and wink

O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and
tremble

Into assured light in some branching mine
Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold—

And all the beauty, all the wonder fell
On either side the truth, as its mere robe ;
I see the robe now—then I saw the form.
So far, then, I have voyaged with success,
So much is good, then, in this working sea
Which parts me from that happy strip of
land :

But o'er that happy strip a sun shone, too !
And fainter gleams it as the waves grow
rough,

And still more faint as the sea widens ; last
I sicken on a dead gulf streaked with light .
From its own putrefying depths alone.

Then, God was pledged to take me by the
hand ;

Now, any miserable juggle can bid
My pride depart. All is alike at length :
God may take pleasure in confounding pride
By hiding secrets with the scorned and base—
I am here, in short : so little have I paused
Throughout ! I never glanced behind to
know

If I had kept my primal light from wane,
And thus insensibly am—what I am !

Oh, bitter ; very bitter !

And more bitter,

To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin,
Plague beneath plague, the last turning the
first

To light beside its darkness. Let me weep
My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and
gone,

In tears which burn ! Would I were sure to
win

Some startling secret in their stead, a tincture
Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed
Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they
change

To opal shafts !—only that, hurling it
Indignant back, I might convince myself
My aims remained supreme and pure as ever !
Even now, why not desire, for mankind's
sake,

That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,
That, though I sink, another may succeed ?

O God, the despicable heart of us !
Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart !

'Twas politic in you, Aureole, to reject
Single rewards, and ask them in the lump ;
At all events, once launched, to hold straight
on :

For now 'tis all or nothing. Mighty profit
Your gains will bring if they stop short of such
Full consummation ! As a man, you had
A certain share of strength ; and that is gone
Already in the getting these you boast.

Do not they seem to laugh, as who should
say—

“ Great master, we are here indeed, dragged
forth

“ To light ; this hast thou done : be glad !
Now, seek

“ The strength to use which thou hast spent
in getting !”

And yet 'tis much, surely 'tis very much,
Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,
To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
Arrived with inexhaustible light ; and lo,
I have heaped up my last, and day dawns
not !

And I am left with grey hair, faded hands,
And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,
Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast ?
Knowledge it seemed, and power, and re-
compense !

Was she who glided through my room of
nights,

Who laid my head on her soft knees and
smoothed

The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just
began

When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—
God ! was I fighting sleep off for death's
sake ?

God ! Thou art mind ! Unto the master-
mind

Mind should be precious. Spare my mind
alone !

All else I will endure ; if, as I stand
Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me
down,

I bow me ; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will :
I 'o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die ;

And if no trace of my career remain
 Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind
 In these bright chambers level with the air,
 See thou to it! But if my spirit fail,
 My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,
 Hast thou done well by me? So do not thou!
 Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be
 crushed!

Hold me before the frequency of thy seraphs
 And say—"I crushed him, lest he should
 disturb

"My law. Men must not know their
 strength: behold

"Weak and alone, how he had raised himself!"

But if delusions trouble me, and thou,
 Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help
 Throughout my toils and wanderings, dost
 intend

To work man's welfare through my weak
 endeavour,

To crown my mortal forehead with a beam
 From thine own blinding crown, to smile,
 and guide

This puny hand and let the work so wrought
 Be styled my work,—hear me! I covet not
 An influx of new power, an angel's soul:

It were no marvel then—but I have reached
 Thus far, a man; let me conclude, a man!
 Give but one hour of my first energy,
 Of that invincible faith, but only one!
 That I may cover with an eagle-glance
 The truths I have, and spy some certain way
 To mould them, and completing them,
 possess!

Yet God is good: I started sure of that,
 And why dispute it now? I'll not believe
 But some undoubted warning long ere this
 Had reached me: a fire-labrum¹ was not
 deemed

Too much for the old founder of these walls.
 Then, if my life has not been natural,
 It has been monstrous: yet, till late, my course
 So ardently engrossed me, that delight,
 A pausing and reflecting joy, 'tis plain,

¹ The sacred standard used by Constantine
 after his conversion,

Could find no place in it. True, I am worn;
 But who clothes summer, who is life itself?
 God, that created all things, can renew!
 And then, though after-life to please me now
 Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders
 Reward from springing out of toil, as changed
 As bursts the flower from earth and root and
 stalk?

What use were punishment, unless some sin
 Be first detected? let me know that first!
 No man could ever offend as I have done . . .

[*A voice from within.*]

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
 Long ago, but all too low,
 So that scarce a care it stirred
 If the voice were real or no:
 I heard it in my youth when first
 The waters of my life outburst:
 But, now their stream ebbs faint, I
 hear

That voice, still low, but fatal-clear—
 As if all poets, God ever meant
 Should save the world, and therefore lent
 Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
 To do his work, or lightly used
 Those gifts, or failed through weak en-
 deavour,

So, mourn cast off by him for ever,—
 As if these leaned in airy ring
 To take me; this the song they sing.

"Lost, lost! yet come,
 With our wan troop make thy home.
 Come, come! for we
 Will not breathe, so much as breathe
 Reproach to thee,
 Knowing what thou sink'st beneath.
 sank we in those old years,
 who bid thee, come! thou last
 Who, living yet, hast life o'erpast.
 And altogether we, thy peers,
 Will pardon crave for thee, the last
 Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast
 With those who watch but work no more,
 Who gaze on life but live no more.
 Yet we trusted thou should'st speak
 The message which our lips, too weak,

Refused to utter,—shouldst redeem
 Our fault : such trust, and all a dream !
 Yet we chose thee a birthplace
 Where the richness ran to flowers :
 Couldst not sing one song for grace ?
 Not make one blossom man's and ours ?
 Must one more recreant to his race
 Die with unexerted powers,
 And join us, leaving as he found
 The world, he was to loosen, bound ?
 Anguish ! ever and for ever ;
 Still beginning, ending never.
 Yet, lost and last one, come !
 How couldst understand, alas,
 What our pale ghosts strove to say,
 As their shades did glance and pass
 Before thee night and day ?
 Thou wast blind as we were dumb :
 Once more, therefore, come, O come !
 How should we clothe, how arm the spirit
 Shall next thy post of life inherit—
 How guard him from thy speedy ruin ?
 Tell us of thy sad undoing
 Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
 Our weary task, ever renewing
 Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave
 Our powers, and man they could not
 save !”

APRILE enters.

Ha, ha ! our king that wouldst be, here at
 last ?
 Art thou the poet who shall save the
 world ?
 Thy hand to mine ! Stay, fix thine eyes on
 mine !
 Thou wouldst be king ? Still fix thine eyes
 on mine !
Paracelsus. Ha, ha ! why crouchest not ?
 Am I not king ?
 So torture is not wholly unavailing !
 Have my fierce spasms compelled thee from
 thy lair ?
 Art thou the sage I only seemed to be,
 Myself of after-time, my very self
 With sight a little clearer, strength more firm,
 Who robes him in my robe and grasps my
 crown

For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect ?
 I scarcely trusted God with the surmise
 That such might come, and thou didst hear
 the while !

Aprile. Thine eyes are lustreless to mine ;
 my hair

Is soft, nay silken soft : to talk with thee
 Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale.
 Truly, thou hast laboured, hast withstood
 her lips,
 The siren's ! Yes, 'tis like thou hast attained !
 Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou
 comest ?

I thought thy solemn songs would have their
 meed

In after-time ; that I should hear the earth
 Exult in thee and echo with thy praise,
 While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

Paracelsus. Ah fiend, I know thee, I am
 not thy dupe !

Thou art ordained to follow in my track,
 Reaping my sowing, as I scorned to reap
 The harvest sown by sages passed away.
 Thou art the sober searcher, cautious striver,
 As if, except through me, thou hast searched
 or striven !

Ay, tell the world ! Degrade me after all,
 To an aspirant after fame, not truth—
 To all but envy of thy fate, be sure !

Aprile. Nay, sing them to me ; I shall
 envy not :

Thou shalt be king ! Sing thou, and I will sit
 Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,
 And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant
 To fill thy throne : but none shall ever know !
 Sing to me ; for already thy wild eyes
 Unlock my heart-strings, as some crystal-shaft
 Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount
 After long time : so thou reveal'st my soul.
 All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear !

Paracelsus. (His secret ! I shall get his
 secret—fool !)

I am he that aspired to KNOW : and thou ?

Aprile. I would LOVE infinitely, and be
 loved !

Paracelsus. Poor slave ! I am thy king
 indeed.

Aprile. Thou deem'st

That—born a spirit, dowered even as thou,
 Born for thy fate—because I could not curb
 My yearnings to possess at once the full
 Enjoyment, but neglected all the means
 Of realizing even the frailest joy,
 Gathering no fragments to appease my want,
 Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—
 Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe sure
 march

O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,
 Neglecting nought below for aught above,
 Despising nothing and ensuring all—
 Nor that I could (my time to come again)
 Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own.
 Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well.
 I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost ! lost !

Oh ye who armed me at such cost,
 How shall I look on all of ye
 With your gifts even yet on me ?

Paracelsus. (Ah, 'tis some moonstruck
 creature after all !

Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den :
 They spread contagion, doubtless : yet he
 seemed

To echo one foreboding of my heart
 So truly, that . . . no matter ! How he
 stands

With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair
 Which turns to it as if they were akin :
 And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue
 Nearly set free, so far they rise above
 The painful fruitless striving of the brow
 And enforced knowledge of the lips, firm-set
 In slow despondency's eternal sigh !
 Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned
 the cause ?)

I charge thee, by thy fealty, be calm !
 Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.
Aprile. I would love infinitely, and be
 loved.

First : I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,
 The forms of earth. No ancient hunter lifted
 Up to the gods by his renown, no nymph
 Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree
 Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,
 Should be too hard for me ; no shepherd-king
 Regal for his white locks ; no youth who stands
 Silent and very calm amid the throng,

His right hand ever hid beneath his robe
 Until the tyrant pass ; no lawgiver,
 No swan-soft woman rubbed with lucid oils
 Given by a god for love of her—too hard !
 Every passion sprung from man, conceived
 by man,
 Would I express and clothe it in its right
 form,

Or blend with others struggling in one form,
 Or show repressed by an ungainly form.
 Oh, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit
 With a fit frame to execute its will—
 Even unconsciously to work its will—
 You should be moved no less beside some
 strong

Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,
 Endeavouring to subdue it and inform it
 With its own splendour ! All this I would do :
 And I would say, this done, " His sprites
 created,

" God grants to each a sphere to be its world,
 " Appointed with the various objects needed
 " To satisfy its own peculiar want ;
 " So, I create a world for these my shapes
 " Fit to sustain their beauty and their
 strength !"

And, at the word, I would contrive and paint
 Woods, valleys, rocks and plains, dells,
 sands and wastes,

Lakes which, when morn breaks on their
 quivering bed,
 Blaze like a wyvern¹ flying round the sun,
 And ocean isles so small, the dog-fish tracking
 A dead whale, who should find them, would
 swim thrice

Around them, and fare onward—all to hold
 The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone :
 Bronze labyrinth, palace, pyramid and crypt,
 Baths, galleries, courts, temples and terraces,
 Marts, theatres and wharfs—all filled with
 men,

Men everywhere ! And this performed in
 turn,

When those who looked on, pined to hear
 the hopes

And fears and hates and loves which moved
 the crowd,

¹ Dragon.

I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,
And I would speak ; no thought which ever
stirred

A human breast should be untold ; all
passions,

All soft emotions, from the turbulent stir
Within a heart fed with desires like mine,
To the last comfort shutting the tired lids
Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away
Beneath the tent-tree by the wayside well :
And this in language as the need should be,
Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,
Now piled up in a grand array of words.
This done, to perfect and consummate all,
Even as a luminous haze links star to star,
I would supply all chasms with music,
breathing

Mysterious motions of the soul, no way
To be defined save in strange melodies.
Last, having thus revealed all I could love,
Having received all love bestowed on it,
I would die : preserving so throughout my
course

God full on me, as I was full on men :
He would approve my prayer, "I have gone
through

"The loveliness of life ; create for me
"If not for men, or take me to thyself,
"Eternal, infinite love !"

If thou hast ne'er
Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,
Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou art
No king of mine.

Paracelsus. Ah me !

April. But thou art here !

Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end
Till thine own powers for compassing the bliss
Were blind with glory ; nor grow mad to grasp
At once the prize long patient toil should
claim,

Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I
Would do as thou, a second time : nay,
listen !

Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so
great,

Our time so brief, 'tis clear if we refuse
The means so limited, the tools so rude
To execute our purpose, life will fleet,

And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.
We will be wise in time : what though our
work

Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,
Be crippled every way ? 'Twere little praise
Did full resources wait on our goodwill
At every turn. Let all be as it is.

Some say the earth is even so contrived
That tree and flower, a vesture gay, conceal
A bare and skeleton framework. Had we
means

Answering to our mind ! But now I seem
Wrecked on a savage isle : how rear thereon
My palace ? Branching palms the props
shall be,

Fruit glossy mingling ; gems are for the East ;
Who heeds them ? I can pass them. Ser-
pents' scales,

And painted birds' down, furs and fishes' skins
Must help me ; and a little here and there
Is all I can aspire to : still my art
Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.

"Had I green jars of malachite, this way
"I'd range them : where those sea-shells
glisten above,

"Cressets¹ should hang, by right : this way
we set

"The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,
"Woven of fern and rush and blossoming flag."

Or if, by fortune, some completer grace
Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight
sample

Of the prouder workmanship my own home
boasts,

Some trifle little heeded there, but here
The place's one perfection—with what joy
Would I enshrine the relic, cheerfully
Foregoing all the marvels out of reach !
Could I retain one strain of all the psalm
Of the angels, one word of the fiat of God,
To let my followers know what such things
are !

I would adventure nobly for their sakes :
When nights were still, and still the moaning
sea,

And far away I could descrie the land

Whence I departed, whither I return,
I would dispart the waves, and stand once more
At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,
And fling my gains to them, worthless or true.

"Friends," I would say, "I went far, far
for them,

"Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the
mounds

"Of red earth from whose sides strange trees
grow out,

"Past tracks of milk-white minute blinding
sand,

"Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly

"Gathered these magic herbs, berry and bud,

"In haste, not pausing to reject the weeds,

"But happy plucking them at any price.

"To me, who have seen them bloom in their
own soil,

"They are scarce lovely: plait and wear
them, you!

"And guess, from what they are, the springs
that fed them,

"The stars that sparkled o'er them, night by
night,

"The snakes that travelled far to sip their
dew!"

Thus for my higher loves; and thus even
weakness

Would win me honour. But not these alone
Should claim my care; for common life, its
wants

And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues:
The lowest hind should not possess a hope,
A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better
Than he his own heart's language. I would
live

For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,
As a discoverer's memory is attached
To all he finds; they should be mine hence-
forth,

Imbued with me, though free to all before:
For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine,
Should come up crusted o'er with gems. Nor
this

Would need a meaner spirit, than the first;
Nay, 'twould be but the selfsame spirit,
clothed

In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit:

As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow
And comforts violets in their hermitage.

But, master, poet, who hast done all this,
How didst thou 'scape the ruin whelming me?
Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,
Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide
hall,

Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with
light,

Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey,
That will not wait thy summons, will not rise
Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand
Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd
By thee for ever, bright to thy despair?

Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and
ne'er

Resolve to single out one, though the rest
Should vanish, and to give that one, entire
In beauty, to the world; forgetting, so,

Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power?
And, this determined, wast thou ne'er seduced
By memories and regrets and passionate love,
To glance once more farewell? and did their
eyes

Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until
Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,
And laugh that man's applause or welfare ever
Could tempt thee to forsake them? Or when
years

Had passed and still their love possessed thee
wholly,

When from without some murmur startled
thee

Of darkling mortals famished for one ray
Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,
Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those
spells

And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil
Thy early mission, long ago renounced,
And to that end, select some shape once more?
And did not mist-like influences, thick films,
Faint memories of the rest that charmed so long
Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee
off,

As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who treads
A mountain ridge, with guiding spear,
through storm?

Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall ;
Say, I was tempted sorely : say but this,
Dear lord, Aprile's lord !

Paracelsus. Clasp me not thus,
Aprile ! That the truth should reach me thus !
We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not or I faint !

Aprile. My king ! and envious thoughts
could outrage thee ?

Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice
In thy success, as thou ! Let our God's praise
Go bravely through the world at last ! What
care

Through me or thee ? I feel thy breath.
Why, tears ?

Tears in the darkness, and from thee to me ?

Paracelsus. Lovè me henceforth, Aprile,
while I learn

To love ; and, merciful God, forgive us both !
We wake at length from weary dreams ; but
both

Haveslept in fairy-land : though dark and drear
Appears the world before us, we no less
Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled still.
I too have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE—
Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.
Still thou hast beauty and I, power. We
wake :

What penance canst devise for both of us ?

Aprile. I hear thee faintly. The thick
darkness ! Even

Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew : I speak,
And now I die. But I have seen thy face !
O poet, think of me, and sing of me !

But to have seen thee and to die so soon !

Paracelsus. Die not, Aprile ! We must
never part.

Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
Whom this strange chance unites once more ?
Part ? never !

Till thou the lover, know ; and I, the knower,
Love—until both are saved. Aprile, hear !
We will accept our gains, and use them—
now !

God, he will die upon my breast ! Aprile !

Aprile. To speak but once, and die ! yet
by his side.

Hush ! hush !

Ha ! go you ever girl about

With phantoms, powers ? I have created such,
But these seem real as I.

Paracelsus. Whom can you see
Through the accursed darkness ?

Aprile. Stay ; I know,
I know them : who should know them well
as I ?

White brows, lit up with glory ; poets all !

Paracelsus. Let him but live, and I have
my reward !

Aprile. Yes ; I see now. God is the
perfect poet,

Who in his person acts his own creations.

Had you but told me this at first ! Hush !
hush !

Paracelsus. Live ! for my sake, because of
my great sin,

To help my brain, oppressed by these wild
words

And their deep import. Live ! 'tis not too
late.

I have a quiet home for us, and friends.

Michal shall smile on you. Hear you ?
Lean thus,

And breathe my breath. I shall not lose
one word

Of all your speech, one little word, Aprile !

Aprile. No, no. Crown me ? I am not
one of you !

'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one.

Paracelsus. Thy spirit, at least, Aprile !
Let me love !

I have attained, and now I may depart.

III.—PARACELSUS.

SCENE.—*Basil ; a chamber in the house of*
PARACELSUS. 1526.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

Paracelsus. Heap logs and let the blaze
laugh out !

Festus. True, true !

'Tis very fit all, time and chance and change
Have wrought since last we sat thus, face to
face

And soul to soul—all cares, far-looking fears,
Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred
By your long absence, should be cast away,
Forgotten in this glad unhopèd renewal
Of our affections.

Paracelsus. Oh, omit not aught
Which witnesses your own and Michal's own
Affection: spare not that! Only forget
The honours and the glories and what not,
It pleases you to tell profusely out.

Festus. Nay, even your honours, in a sense,
I waive:

The wondrous Paracelsus, life's dispenser,
Fate's commissary, idol of the schools
And courts, shall be no more than Aureole
still,

Still Aureole and my friend as when we parted
Some twenty years ago, and I restrained
As best I could the promptings of my spirit
Which secretly advanced you, from the first,
To the pre-eminent rank which, since, your
own

Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,
Has won for you.

Paracelsus. Yes, yes. And Michal's
face

Still wears that quiet and peculiar light
Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl?

Festus. Just so.

Paracelsus. And yet her calm sweet
countenance,
Though saintly, was not sad; for she would
sing

Alone. Does she still sing alone, bird-like,
Not dreaming you are near? Her carols dropt
In flakes through that old leafy bower built
under

The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice
Among the trees above, while I, unseen,
Sat conning some rare scroll from Tritheim's
shelves

Much wondering notes so simple could divert
My mind from study. Those were happy days.
Respect all such as sing when all alone!

Festus. Scarcely alone: her children, you
may guess,
Are wild beside her.

Paracelsus. Ah, those children quite

Unsettle the pure picture in my mind:
A girl, she was so perfect, so distinct:
No change, no change! Not but this added
grace

May blend and harmonize with its compeers,
And Michal may become her motherhood;
But 'tis a change, and I detest all change,
And most a change in aught I loved long
since.

So, Michal—you have said she thinks of me?

Festus. O very proud will Michal be of you!
Imagine how we sat, long winter-nights,
Scheming and wondering, shaping your pre-
sumed

Adventure, or devising its reward;
Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.
For it was strange how, even when most
secure

In our domestic peace, a certain dim
And flitting shade could sadden all; it seemed
A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,
A sense of something wanting, incomplete—
Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided
By mute consent—but, said or unsaid, felt
To point to one so loved and so long lost.
And then the hopes rose and shut out the
fears—

How you would laugh should I recount them
now!

I still predicted your return at last
With gifts beyond the greatest of them all,
All Tritheim's wondrous troop; did one of
which

Attain renown by any chance, I smiled,
As well aware of who would prove his peer.
Michal was sure some woman, long ere this,
As beautiful as you were sage, had lovèd . . .

Paracelsus. Far-seeing, truly, to discern
so much

In the fantastic projects and day-dreams
Of a raw restless boy!

Festus. Oh, no: the sunrise
Well warranted our faith in this full noon!
Can I forget the anxious voice which said
"Festus, have thought like these ere shaped
themselves

"In other brains than mine? have their
possessors

"Existed in like circumstance? were they weak
 "As I, or ever constant from the first,
 "Despising youth's allurements and rejecting
 "As spider-films the shackles I endure?
 "Is there hope for me?"—and I answered
 gravely

As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,
 More gifted mortal. O you must remember,
 For all your glorious . . .

Paracelsus. Glorious? ay, this hair,
 These hands—nay, touch them, they are
 mine! Recall

With all the said recallings, times when thus
 To lay them by your own ne'er turned you
 pale

As now. Most glorious, are they not?

Festus. Why—why—
 Something must be subtracted from success
 So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous,
 truly,

Who should object such drawbacks. Still,
 still, Aureole,
 You are changed, very changed! 'Twere
 losing nothing

To look well to it: you must not be stolen
 From the enjoyment of your well-won meed.

Paracelsus. My friend! you seek my
 pleasure, past a doubt:

You will best gain your point, by talking, not
 Of me, but of yourself.

Festus. Have I not said
 All touching Michal and my children? Sure
 You know, by this, full well how Aennchen
 looks

Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown
 hair;

And Aureole's glee when some stray gannet
 builds

Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope
 Have I that he will honour (the wild imp)
 His namesake. Sigh not! 'tis too much to ask
 That all we love should reach the same
 proud fate.

But you are very kind to humour me
 By showing interest in my quiet life;
 You, who of old could never tame yourself
 To tranquil pleasures, must at heart de-
 spise . . .

Paracelsus. Festus, strange secrets are let
 out by death

Who blabs so oft the follies of this world:
 And I am death's familiar, as you know.
 I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,
 Warped even from his go-cart to one end—
 The living on princes' smiles, reflected from
 A mighty herd of favourites. No mean trick
 He left untried, and truly well-nigh wormed
 All traces of God's finger out of him:
 Then died, grown old. And just an hour
 before,

Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes,
 He sat up suddenly, and with natural voice
 Said that in spite of thick air and closed doors
 God told him it was June; and he knew well,
 Without such telling, harebells grew in June;
 And all that kings could ever give or take
 Would not be precious as those blooms to him.
 Just so, allowing I am passing sage,
 It seems to me much worthier argument
 Why pansies,¹ eyes that laugh, bear beauty's
 prize

From violets, eyes that dream—(your
 Michal's choice)—

Than all fools find to wonder at in me
 Or in my fortunes. And be very sure
 I say this from no prurient restlessness,
 No self-complacency, itching to turn,
 Vary and view its pleasure from all points,
 And, in this instance, willing other men
 May be at pains, demonstrate to itself
 The realness of the very joy it tastes.

What should delight me like the news of
 friends

Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
 As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their
 flight?

Offer than you had wasted thought on me
 Had you been wise, and rightly valued bliss.
 But there's no taming nor repressing hearts:
 God knows I need such!—So, you heard me
 speak?

Festus. Speak? when?

Paracelsus. When but this morning at
 my class?

¹ Citrinula (flammula) herba Paracelso mul-
 tum familiaris.—DORN.

There was noise and crowd enough. I saw
 you not.
 Surely you know I am engaged to fill
 The chair here?—that 'tis part of my proud
 fate
 To lecture to as many thick-skulled youths
 As please, each day, to throng the theatre,
 To my great reputation, and no small
 Danger of Basil's benches long unused
 To crack beneath such honour?
Festus. I was there ;
 I mingled with the throng : shall I avow
 Small care was mine to listen?—too intent
 On gathering from the murmurs of the crowd
 A full corroboration of my hopes !
 What can I learn about your powers? but
 they
 Know, care for nought beyond your actual
 state,
 Your actual value ; yet they worship you,
 Those various natures whom you sway as one!
 But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .
Paracelsus. Stop, o' God's name : the
 thing's by no means yet
 Past remedy! Shall I read this morning's
 labour
 —At least in substance? Nought so worth
 the gaining
 As an apt scholar! Thus then, with all due
 Precision and emphasis—you, beside, are
 clearly
 Guiltless of understanding more, a whit,
 The subject than your stool—allowed to be
 A notable advantage.
Festus. Surely, Aureole,
 You laugh at me!
Paracelsus. I laugh? Ha, ha! thank
 heaven,
 I charge you, if 't be so! for I forget
 Much, and what laughter should be like.
 No less,
 However, I forego that luxury
 Since it alarms the friend who brings it back.
 True, laughter like my own must echo
 strangely
 To thinking men; a smile were better far;
 So, make me smile! If the exulting look
 You wore but now be smiling, 'tis so long

Since I have smiled! Alas, such smiles are
 born
 Alone of hearts like yours, or herdsmen's
 souls
 Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their
 flocks,
 Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,
 And in the earth a stage for altars only.
 Never change, Festus: I say, never change!
Festus. My God, if he be wretched after
 all!
Paracelsus. When last we parted, Festus,
 you declared,
 —Or Michal, yes, her soft lips whispered
 words
 I have preserved. She told me she believed
 I should succeed (meaning, that in the search
 I then engaged in, I should meet success)
 And yet be wretched: now, she augured false.
Festus. Thank heaven! but you spoke
 strangely: could I venture
 To think bare apprehension lest your friend,
 Dazzled by your resplendent course, might
 find
 Henceforth less sweetness in his own, could
 move
 Such earnest mood in you? Fear not, dear
 friend,
 That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
 Your lot was not my own!
Paracelsus. And this for ever!
 For ever! gull who may, they will be gulled!
 They will not look nor think; 'tis nothing
 new
 In them: but surely he is not of them!
 My Festus, do you know, I reckoned, you—
 Though all beside were sand-blind—you, my
 friend,
 Would look at me, once close, with piercing
 eye
 Untroubled by the false glare that confounds
 A weaker vision: would remain serene,
 Though singular amid a gaping throng.
 I feared you, or I had come, sure, long ere
 this,
 To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,
 And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
 A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest

Past all dispute! 'Tis vain to fret at it.
 I have vowed long ago my worshippers
 Shall owe to their own deep sagacity
 All further information, good or bad.
 Small risk indeed my reputation runs,
 Unless perchance the glance now searching
 me
 Be fixed much longer; for it seems to spell
 Dimly the characters a simpler man
 Might read distinct enough. Old Eastern
 books
 Say, the fallen prince of morning some short
 space
 Remained unchanged in semblance; nay, his
 brow
 Was hued with triumph: every spirit then
 Praising, *his* heart on flame the while:—a
 tale!
 Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray?
Festus. Some foul deed sullies then a life
 which else
 Were raised supreme?
Paracelsus. Good: I do well, most well!
 Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret
 themselves
 With what is past their power to comprehend?
 I should not strive now: only, having nursed
 The faint surmise that one yet walked the
 earth,
 One, at least, not the utter fool of show,
 Not absolutely formed to be the dupe
 Of shallow plausibilities alone:
 One who, in youth, found wise enough to
 choose
 The happiness his riper years approve,
 Was yet so anxious for another's sake,
 That, ere his friend could rush upon a mad
 And ruinous course, the converse of his own,
 His gentle spirit essayed, prejudged for him
 The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,
 And warned the weak one in such tender
 words,
 Such accents—his whole heart in every
 tone—
 That oft their memory comforted that friend
 When it by right should have increased
 despair:
 —Having believed, I say, that this one man

Could never lose the light thus from the first
 His portion—how should I refuse to grieve
 At even my gain if it disturb our old
 Relation, if it make me out more wise?
 Therefore, once more reminding him how
 well
 He prophesied, I note the single flaw
 That spoils his prophet's title. In plain
 words,
 You were deceived, and thus were you de-
 ceived—
 I have not been successful, and yet am
 Most miserable; 'tis said at last; nor you
 Give credit, lest you force me to concede
 That common sense yet lives upon the world!
Festus. You surely do not mean to banter
 me?
Paracelsus. You know, or—if you have
 been wise enough
 To cleanse your memory of such matters—
 knew,
 As far as words of mine could make it clear,
 That 'twas my purpose to find joy or grief
 Solely in the fulfilment of my plan
 Or plot or whatsoever it was; rejoicing
 Alone as it proceeded prosperously,
 Sorrowing then only when mischance re-
 tarded
 Its progress. That was in those Würzburg
 days!
 Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,
 I have pursued this plan with all my strength;
 And having failed therein most signally,
 Cannot object to ruin utter and drear
 As all-excelling would have been the prize
 Had fortune favoured me. I scarce have right
 To vex your frank good spirit late so glad
 In my supposed prosperity, I know,
 And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,
 Would well agree to let your error live,
 Nay, strengthen it with fables of success.
 But mine is no condition to refuse
 The transient solace of so rare a godsend,
 My solitary luxury, my one friend:
 Accordingly I venture to put off
 The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me
 Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,
 Prone at his mercy—but he is my friend!

Not that he needs retain his aspect grave ;
That answers not my purpose ; for 'tis like,
Some sunny morning—Basil being drained
Of its wise population, every corner
Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned
clerks,

Here Ecolampadius, looking worlds of wit,
Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
Munsterus here, Frobenius there, all squeezed
And staring,—that the zany of the show,
Even Paracelsus, shall put off before them
His trappings with a grace but seldom judged
Expedient in such cases :—the grim smile
That will go round ! Is it not therefore best
To venture a rehearsal like the present
In a small way ? Where are the signs I seek,
The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn
Due to all quacks ? Why, this will never
do !

Festus. These are foul vapours, Aureole ;
nought beside !

The effect of watching, study, weariness.
Were there a spark of truth in the confusion
Of these wild words, you would not outrage
thus
Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard
These wanderings, bred of faintness and much
study.

'Tis not thus you would trust a trouble to me,
To Michal's friend.

Paracelsus. I have said it, dearest
Festus !

For the manner, 'tis ungracious probably ;
You may have it told in broken sobs, one day,
And scalding tears, ere long : but I thought
best

To keep that off as long as possible.
Do you wonder still ?

Festus. No ; it must oft fall out
That one whose labour perfects any work,
Shall rise from it with eye so worn that he
Of all men least can measure the extent
Of what he has accomplished. He alone
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,
May clearly scan the little he effects :
But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,
Estimate each aright.

Paracelsus. This worthy Festus

Is one of them, at last ! 'Tis so with all !
First, they set down all progress as a dream ;
And next, when he whose quick discomfiture
Was counted on, accomplishes some few
And doubtful steps in his career,—behold,
They look for every inch of ground to vanish
Beneath his tread, so sure they spy success !

Festus. Few doubtful steps ? when death
retires before

Your presence—when the noblest of man-
kind,
Broken in body or subdued in soul,
May through your skill renew their vigour,
raise

The shattered frame to pristine stateliness ?
When men in racking pain may purchase
dreams

Of what delights them most, swooning at
once

Into a sea of bliss or rapt along
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light ?
When we may look to you as one ordained
To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees
Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered
soul ?

When . . .

Paracelsus. When and where, the devil,
did you get

This notable news ?

Festus. Even from the common voice ;
From those whose envy, daring not dispute
The wonders it decries, attributes them
To magic and such folly.

Paracelsus. Folly ? Why not
To magic, pray ? You find a comfort doubt-
less

In holding, God ne'er troubles him about
Us or our doings : once we were judged worth
The devil's tempting . . . I offend : forgive
me,

And rest content. Your prophecy on the
whole

Was fair enough as prophesyings go ;
At fault a little in detail, but quite
Precise enough in the main ; and hereupon
I pay due homage : you guessed long ago
(The prophet !) I should fail—and I have
failed.

Festus. You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which fed Your youth have not been realized as yet Some obstacle has barred them hitherto? Or that their innate . . .

Paracelsus. As I said but now, You have a very decent prophet's fame, So you but shun details here. Little matter Whether those hopes were mad,—the aims they sought, Safe and secure from all ambitious fools; Or whether my weak wits are overcome By what a better spirit would scorn: I fail. And now methinks 'twere best to change a theme

I am a sad fool to have stumbled on. I say confusedly what comes uppermost; But there are times when patience proves at fault,

As now: this morning's strange encounter— you

Beside me once again! you, whom I guessed Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave) No friend have I among the saints at peace, To judge by any good their prayers effect. I knew you would have helped me—why not he,

My strange competitor in enterprise, Bound for the same end by another path, Arrived, or ill or well, before the time, At our disastrous journey's doubtful close? How goes it with Aprile? Ah, they miss Your lone sad sunny idleness of heaven, Our martyrs for the world's sake; heaven shuts fast:

The poor mad poet is howling by this time! Since you are my sole friend then, here or there,

I could not quite repress the varied feelings This meeting wakens; they have had their vent, And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still Hang like a fretwork on the gate (or what In my time was a gate) fronting the road From Einsiedeln to Lachen?

Festus. Trifle not: Answer me, for my sake alone! You smiled Just now, when I supposed some deed, un- worthy

Yourself, might blot the else so bright result; Yet if your motives have continued pure, Your will unflinching, and in spite of this, You have experienced a defeat, why then I say not you would cheerfully withdraw From contest—mortal hearts are not so fashioned—

But surely you would ne'ertheless withdraw. You sought not fame nor gain nor even love, No end distinct from knowledge,—I repeat Your very words: once satisfied that know- ledge

Is a mere dream, you would announce as much,

Yourself the first. But how is the event? You are defeated—and I find you here!

Paracelsus. As though "here" did not signify defeat!

I spoke not of my little labours here, But of the break-down of my general aims: For you, aware of their extent and scope, To look on these sage lecturings, approved By beardless boys, and bearded dotards worse, As a fit consummation of such aims, Is worthy notice. A professorship

At Basil! Since you see so much in it, And think my life was reasonably drained Of life's delights to render me a match For duties arduous as such post demands,— Be it far from me to deny my power To fill the petty circle lotted out Of infinite space, or justify the host

Of honours thence accruing. So, take notice, This jewel dangling from my neck preserves The features of a prince, my skill restored To plague his people some few years to come: And all through a pure whim. He had eased the earth

For me, but that the droll despair which seized The vermin of his household, tickled me.

I came to see. Here, drivelled the physician, Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault; There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscope Had promised him interminable years; Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's mouth With some undoubted relic—a sudary¹

¹ Napkin.

Of the Virgin ; while another piebald knave
Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)
Was actively preparing 'neath his nose
Such a suffumigation as, once fired,
Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.
I cursed the doctor and upset the brother,
Brushed past the conjurer, vowed that the
first gust

Of stench from the ingredients just alight
Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,
Not easily laid : and ere an hour the prince
Slept as he never slept since prince he was,
A day—and I was posting for my life,
Placarded through the town as one whose spite
Had near availed to stop the blessed effects
Of the doctor's nostrum which, well seconded
By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke—
Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up
Hard by in the abbey—raised the prince to
life :

To the great reputation of the seer
Who, confident, expected all along
The glad event—the doctor's recompense—
Much largess from his highness to the monks—
And the vast solace of his loving people,
Whose general satisfaction to increase,
The prince was pleased no longer to defer
The burning of some dozen heretics
Remanded till God's mercy should be shown
Touching his sickness : last of all were joined
Ample directions to all loyal folk
To swell the complement by seizing me
Who—doubtless some rank sorcerer—en-
deavoured

To thwart these pious offices, obstruct
The prince's cure, and frustrate heaven by help
Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.
By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest
Of further favours. This one case may serve
To give sufficient taste of many such,
So, let them pass. Those shelves support a
pile

Of patents, licences, diplomas, titles
From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy ;
They authorize some honour ; ne'ertheless,
I set more store by this Erasmus sent ;
He trusts me ; our Frobenius is his friend,

And him "I raised" (nay, read it) "from
the dead."

I weary you, I see. I merely sought
To show, there's no great wonder after all
That, while I fill the class-room and attract
A crowd to Basil, I get leave to stay,
And therefore need not scruple to accept
The utmost they can offer, if I please :
For 'tis but right the world should be prepared
To treat with favour e'en fantastic wants
Of one like me, used up in serving her.
Just as the mortal, whom the gods in part
Devoured, received in place of his lost limb
Some virtue or other—cured disease, I think ;
You mind the fables we have read together.

Festus. You do not think I comprehend a
word.

The time was, Aureole, you were apt enough
To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious
breath ;

But surely you must feel how vague and strange
These speeches sound.

Paracelsus. Well, then : you know my
hopes ;

I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain ;
That truth is just as far from me as ever ;
That I have thrown my life away ; that sorrow
On that account is idle, and further effort
To mend and patch what's marred beyond
repairing,

As useless : and all this was taught your friend
By the convincing good old-fashioned method
Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that plain ?

Festus. Dear Aureole, can it be my fears
were just ?

God wills not . . .

Paracelsus. Now, 'tis this I most
admire—

The constant talk men of your stamp keep up
Of God's will, as they style it ; one would swear
Man had but merely to uplift his eye,
And see the will in question characterized
On the heaven's vault. 'Tis hardly wise to
moot

Such topics : doubts are many and faith is weak.

I know as much of any will of God

As knows some dumb and tortured brute
what Man,

His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows
That plague him every way ; but there, of
course,

Where least he suffers, longest he remains—
My case ; and for such reasons I plod on,
Subdued but not convinced. I know as little
Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
Better things in my youth. I simply know
I am no master here, but trained and beaten
Into the path I tread ; and here I stay,
Until some further intimation reach me,
Like an obedient drudge. Though I prefer
To view the whole thing as a task imposed
Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be
done—

Yet, I deny not, there is made provision
Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect ;
Nay, some which please me too, for all my
pride—

Pleasures that once were pains : the iron ring
Festering about a slave's neck grows at length
Into the flesh it eats. I hate no longer
A host of petty vile delights, undreamed of
Or spurned before ; such now supply the place
Of my dead aims : as in the autumn woods
Where tall trees used to flourish, from their
roots

Springs up a fungous brood sickly and pale,
Chill mushrooms coloured like a corpse's
cheek.

Festus. If I interpret well your words, I
own

It troubles me but little that your aims,
Vast in their dawning and most likely grown
Extravagantly since, have baffled you.

Perchance I am glad ; you merit greater
praise ;

Because they are too glorious to be gained,
You do not blindly cling to them and die ;
You fell, but have not sullenly refused
To rise, because an angel worsted you
In wrestling, though the world holds not
your peer,

And though too harsh and sudden is the
change

To yield content as yet, still you pursue
The ungracious path as though 'twere rosy-
strewn.

'Tis well : and your reward, or soon or late,
Will come from him whom no man serves in
vain.

Paracelsus. Ah, very fine ! For my part,
I conceive

The very pausing from all further toil,
Which you find heinous, would become a seal
To the sincerity of all my deeds.

To be consistent I should die at once ;

I calculated on no after-life ;

Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)

Here am I with as passionate regret

For youth and health and love so vainly
lavished,

As if their preservation had been first

And foremost in my thoughts ; and this
strange fact

Humbled me wondrously, and had due force
In rendering me the less averse to follow

A certain counsel, a mysterious warning—

You will not understand—but 'twas a man

With aims not mine and yet pursued like mine,

With the same fervour and no more success,

Perishing in my sight ; who summoned me

As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,

To serve my race at once ; to wait no longer

That God should interfere in my behalf,

But to distrust myself, put pride away,

And give my gains, imperfect as they were,

To men. I have not leisure to explain

How, since, a singular series of events

Has raised me to the station you behold,

Wherein I seem to turn to most account

The mere wreck of the past,—perhaps receive

Some feeble glimmering token that God views

And may approve my penance : therefore here

You find me, doing most good or least harm.

And if folks wonder much and profit little

'Tis not my fault ; only, I shall rejoice

When my part in the farce is shuffled through,

And the curtain falls : I must hold out till then.

Festus. Till when, dear Aureole ?

Paracelsus. Till I'm fairly thrust

From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle

And even professors fall : should that arrive,

I see no sin in ceding to my bent.

You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us

We sin ; God's intimations rather fail

In clearness than in energy : 'twere well
Did they but indicate the course to take
Like that to be forsaken. I would fain
Be spared a further sample. Here I stand,
And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.

Festus. Be you but firm on that head!
long ere then

All I expect will come to pass, I trust :
The cloud that wraps you will have disap-
peared.

Meantime, I see small chance of such event :
They praise you here as one whose lore,
already

Divulged, eclipses all the past can show,
But whose achievements, marvellous as they
be,

Are faint anticipations of a glory
About to be revealed. When Basil's crowds
Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
That he depart.

Paracelsus. This favour at their hands
I look for earlier than your view of things
Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw to-
day,

Remove the full half sheer amazement draws,
Mere novelty, nought else ; and next, the tribe
Whose innate blockish dulness just perceives
That unless miracles (as seem my works)
Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight

To puzzle the devil ; next, the numerous set
Who bitterly hate established schools, and help
The teacher that oppugns them, till he once
Have planted his own doctrine, when the
teacher

May reckon on their rancour in his turn ;
Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves
Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue
But seeks, by flattery and crafty nursing,
To force my system to a premature
Short-lived development. Why swell the list?
Each has his end to serve, and his best way
Of serving it : remove all these, remains
A scantling, a poor dozen at the best,
Worthy to look for sympathy and service,
And likely to draw profit from my pains.

Festus. 'Tis no encouraging picture : still,
these few

Redeem their fellows. Once the germ im-
planted,

Its growth, if slow, is sure.

Paracelsus. God grant it so !
I would make some amends : but if I fail,
The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,
That much is in my method and my manner,
My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,
Which hinders of reception and result
My doctrine : much to say, small skill to
speak !

These old aims suffered not a looking-off
Though for an instant ; therefore, only when
I thus renounced them and resolved to reap
Some present fruit—to teach mankind some
truth

So dearly purchased—only then I found
Such teaching was an art requiring cares
And qualities peculiar to itself :
That to possess was one thing—to display
Another. With renown first in my thoughts,
Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it :
One grows but little apt to learn these things.

Festus. If it be so, which nowise I believe,
There needs no waiting fuller dispensation
To leave a labour of so little use.
Why not throw up the irksome charge at
once ?

Paracelsus. A task, a task !

But wherefore hide the whole
Extent of degradation, once engaged
In the confessing vein ? Despite of all
My fine talk of obedience and repugnance,
Docility and what not, 'tis yet to learn
If when the task shall really be performed,
My inclination free to choose once more,
I shall do aught but slightly modify
The nature of the hated task I quit.
In plain words, I am spoiled ; my life still
tends

As first it tended ; I am broken and trained
To my old habits : they are part of me.
I know, and none so well, my darling ends
Are proved impossible : no less, no less,
Even now what humour's me, fond fool, as
when

Their faint ghosts sit with me and flatter me
And send me back content to my dull round ?

How can I change this soul?—this apparatus
Constructed solely for their purposes,
So well adapted to their every want,
To search out and discover, prove and perfect ;
This intricate machine whose most minute
And meanest motions have their charm to me
Though to none else—an aptitude I seize,
An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,
A property, a fitness, I explain
And I alone :—how can I change my soul?
And this wronged body, worthless save when
tasked

Under that soul's dominion—used to care
For its bright master's cares and quite subdue
Its proper cravings—not to ail nor pine
So he but prosper—whither drag this poor
Tried patient body? God! how I essayed
To live like that mad poet, for a while,
To love alone ; and how I felt too warped
And twisted and deformed! What should I
do,

Even tho' released from drudgery, but return
Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and sore,
To my old life and die as I began?
I cannot feed on beauty for the sake
Of beauty only, nor can drink in balm
From lovely objects for their loveliness ;
My nature cannot lose her first imprint ;
I still must hoard and heap and class all truths
With one ulterior purpose : I must know !
Would God translate me to his throne, believe
That I should only listen to his word
To further my own aim ! For other men,
Beauty is prodigally strewn around,
And I were happy could I quench as they
This mad and thriveless longing, and content
me

With beauty for itself alone : alas,
I have addressed a frock of heavy mail
Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights ;
And now the forest-creatures fly from me,
The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm
no more.

Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrive,
I shall o'ertake the company and ride
Glittering as they !

Festus. I think I apprehend
What you would say : if you, in truth, design

To enter once more on the life thus left,
Seek not to hide that all this consciousness
Of failure is assumed !

Paracelsus. My friend, my friend,
I toil, you listen ; I explain, perhaps
You understand : there our communion ends.
Have you learnt nothing from to-day's dis-
course ?

When we would thoroughly know the sick
man's state

We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft
The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,
And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare
My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up
My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem
Enough made known? You! who are you,
forsooth ?

That is the crowning operation claimed
By the arch-demonstrator—heaven the hall,
And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you
Secure good places : 'twill be worth the
while.

Festus. Are you mad, Aureole? What
can I have said

To call for this? I judged from your own
words.

Paracelsus. Oh, doubtless! A sick wretch
describes the ape

That mocks him from the bed-foot, and all
gravely

You thither turn at once : or he recounts
The perilous journey he has late performed,
And you are puzzled much how that could be !
You find me here, half stupid and half
mad :

It makes no part of my delight to search
Into these matters, much less undergo
Another's scrutiny ; but so it chances
That I am led to trust my state to you :
And the event is, you combine, contrast
And ponder on my foolish words as though
They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here—
Here, loathsome with despair and hate and
rage !

Is there no fear, no shrinking and no shame?
Will you guess nothing? will you spare me
nothing?

Must I go deeper? Ay or no?

Festus. Dear friend . . . I had immortal feelings ; such shall never
Paracelsus. True : I am brutal — 'tis a Be wholly quenched : no, no !
part of it ; My friend, you wear
The plague's sign—you are not a lazar-haunter, A melancholy face, and certain 'tis
How should you know? Well then, you There's little cheer in all this dismal work.
think it strange But was it my desire to set abroad
I should profess to have failed utterly, Such memories and forebodings? I foresaw
And yet propose an ultimate return Where they would drive. 'Twere better we
To courses void of hope : and this, because discuss
You know not what temptation is, nor how News from Lucerne or Zurich ; ask and tell
'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part. Of Egypt's flaring sky or Spain's cork-groves.
You are to understand that we who make *Festus.* I have thought : trust me, this
Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end : mood will pass away !
There is not one sharp volley shot at us, I know you and the lofty spirit you bear,
Which 'scaped with life, though hurt, we And easily ravel out a clue to all.
slacken pace These are the trials meet for such as you,
And gather by the wayside herbs and roots Nor must you hope exemption : to be mortal
To staunch our wounds, secure from further Is to be plied with trials manifold.
harm : Look round ! The obstacles which kept the
rest
We are assailed to life's extremest verge. From your ambition, have been spurned by
It will be well indeed if I return, you ;
A harmless busy fool, to my old ways ! Their fears, their doubts, the chains that
I would forget hints of another fate, bind them all,
Significant enough, which silent hours Were flax before your resolute soul, which
Have lately scared me with. nought
Festus. Another ! and what ? Avails to awe save these delusions bred
Paracelsus. After all, Festus, you say well : From its own strength, its selfsame strength
I am disguised,
A man yet : I need never humble me. Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole !
I would have been—something, I know not Since
what ; The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl. The fawn a rustling bough, mortals their cares,
There are worse portions than this one of And higher natures yet would slight and laugh
mine. At these entangling fantasies, as you
You say well ! At trammels of a weaker intellect,—
Festus. Ah ! Measure your mind's height by the shade it
casts !
Paracelsus. And deeper degradation ! I know you.
If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise, *Paracelsus.* And I know you, dearest
If vanity should become the chosen food *Festus !*
Of a sunk mind, should stifle even the wish And how you love unworthily ; and how
To find its early aspirations true, All admiration renders blind.
Should teach it to breathe falsehood like *Festus.* You hold
life-breath— That admiration blinds !
An atmosphere of craft and trick and lies ; *Paracelsus.* Ay and alas !
Should make it proud to emulate, surpass *Festus.* Nought blinds you less than
Base natures in the practices which woke admiration, friend !
Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no !
Utter damnation is reserved for hell !

Whether it be that all love renders wise
In its degree ; from love which blends with
love—

Heart answering heart—to love which spends
itself

In silent mad idolatry of some
Pre-eminant mortal, some great soul of souls,
Which ne'er will know how well it is adored.

I say, such love is never blind ; but rather
Alive to every the minutest spot
Which mars its object, and which hate (sup-
posed

So vigilant and searching) dreams not of.
Love broods on such : what then? When
first perceived

Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,
To overflow those blemishes with all
The glow of general goodness they disturb?
—To make those very defects an endless
source

Of new affection grown from hopes and fears?
And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand
Made even for much proved weak? no
shrinking-back

Lest, since all love assimilates the soul
To what it loves, it should at length become
Almost a rival of its idol? Trust me,
If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,
To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest
spirits

Even at God's foot, 'twill be from such as
love,

Their zeal will gather most to serve their
cause ;

And least from those who hate, who most
essay

P! contumely and scorn to blot the light
Which forces entrance even to their hearts :
For thence will our defender tear the veil
And show within each heart, as in a shrine,
The giant image of perfection, grown
In hate's despite, whose calumnies were
spawned

In the untroubled presence of its eyes.
True admiration blinds not ; nor am I
So blind. I call your sin exceptional ;
It springs from one whose life has passed the
bounds

Prescribed to life. Compound that fault
with God !

I speak of men ; to common men like me
The weakness you reveal endears you more,
Like the far traces of decay in suns.
I bid you have good cheer !

Paracelsus. *Præclare! Optime!*

Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest
Instructing Paracelsus ! yet 'tis so.
Come, I will show you where my merit lies.
'Tis in the advance of individual minds
That the slow crowd should ground their
expectation

Eventually to follow ; as the sea
Waits ages in its bed till some one wave
Out of the multitudinous mass, extends
The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,
Over the strip of sand which could confine
Its fellows so long time : thenceforth the rest,
Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad
If all my labours, failing of aught else,
Suffice to make such inroad and procure
A wider range for thought : nay, they do
this ;

For, whatsoe'er my notions of true knowledge
And a legitimate success, may be,
I am not blind to my undoubted rank
When classed with others : I precede my age:
And who so will is very free to mount
These labours as a platform whence his own
May have a prosperous outset. But, alas !
My followers—they are noisy as you heard ;
But, for intelligence, the best of them
So clumsily wield the weapons I supply
And they extol, that I begin to doubt
Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-
stones

Would not do better service than my arms
Thus vilely swayed—if error will not fall
Sooner before the old awkward batterings
Than my more subtle warfare, not half
learned.

Festus. I would supply that art, then, or
withhold

New arms until you teach their mystery.

Paracelsus. Content you, 'tis my wish ; I
have recourse

To the simplest training. Day by day I seek
To wake the mood, the spirit which alone
Can make those arms of any use to men.
Of course they are for swaggering forth at once
Graced with Ulysses' bow, Achilles' shield—
Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles!
Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step!
A proper sight to scare the crows away!

Festus. Pity you choose not then some
other method

Of coming at your point. The marvellous art
At length established in the world bids fair
To remedy all hindrances like these:
Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore
Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit
For raw beginners; let his types secure
A deathless monument to after-time;
Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy
The ultimate effect: sooner or later
You shall be all-revealed.

Paracelsus. The old dull question
In a new form; no more. Thus: I possess
Two sorts of knowledge; one,—vast,
shadowy,

Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued:
The other consists of many secrets, caught
While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a few
Prime principles which may conduct to much:
These last I offer to my followers here.
Now, bid me chronicle the first of these,
My ancient study, and in effect you bid
Revert to the wild courses just abjured:
I must go find them scattered through the
world.

Then, for the principles, they are so simple
(Being chiefly of the overturning sort),
That one time is as proper to propound them
As any other—to-morrow at my class,
Or half a century hence embalmed in print.
For if mankind intend to learn at all,
They must begin by giving faith to them
And acting on them: and I do not see
But that my lectures serve indifferent well:
No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,
For all their novelty and rugged setting.
I think my class will not forget the day
I let them know the gods of Israel,
Aetius, Orbasius, Galen, Khasis,

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Serapion, Avicenna, Averröes,
Were blocks!

Festus. And that reminds me, I heard
something
About your waywardness: you burned their
books,

It seems, instead of answering those sages.

Paracelsus. And who said that?

Festus. Some I met yesternight
With Æcolampadius. As you know, the
purpose

Of this short stay at Basil was to learn
His pleasure touching certain missives sent
For our Zuinglius and himself. 'Twas he
Apprised me that the famous teacher here
Was my old friend.

Paracelsus. Ah, I forgot: you went . . .

Festus. From Zurich with advices for the ear
Of Luther, now at Wittenberg—(you know,
I make no doubt, the differences of late
With Carolostadius)—and returning sought
Basil and . . .

Paracelsus. I remember. Here's a case,
now,

Will teach you why I answer not, but burn
The books you mention. Pray, does Luther
dream

His arguments convince by their own force
The crowds that own his doctrine? No
indeed!

His plain denial of established points
Ages had sanctified and men supposed
Could never be oppugned while earth was
under

And heaven above them—points which
chance or time

Affected not—did more than the array
Of argument which followed. Boldly deny!
There is much breath-stopping, hair-stiffening
Awhile; then, amazed glances, mute awaiting
The thunderbolt which does not come: and
next,

Reproachful wonder and inquiry: those
Who else had never stirred, are able now
To find the rest out for themselves, perhaps
To outstrip him who set the whole at work,
—As never will my wise class its instructor
And you saw Luther?

<i>Festus.</i> 'Tis a wondrous soul !	<i>Paracelsus.</i> Another world !
<i>Paracelsus.</i> True : the so-heavy chain which galled mankind	And why this world, this common world, to be A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
Is shattered, and the noblest of us all	To some fine life to come? Man must be fed
Must bow to the deliverer—nay, the worker	With angels' food, forsooth; and some few traces
Of our own project—we who long before	Of a diviner nature which look out
Had burst our trammels, but forgot the crowd,	Through his corporeal baseness, warrant him
We should have taught, still groaned beneath their load :	In a supreme contempt of all provision
This he has done and nobly. Speed that may !	For his inferior tastes—some straggling marks .
Whatever be my chance or my mischance,	Which constitute his essence, just as truly
What benefits mankind must glad me too ;	As here and there a gem would constitute
And men seem made, though not as I believed,	The rock, their barren bed, one diamond.
For something better than the times produce.	But were it so—were man all mind—he gains
Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights	A station little enviable. From God
From Suabia have possessed, whom Mün- zer leads,	Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,
And whom the duke, the landgrave and the elector	Intelligence exists which casts our mind Into immeasurable shade. No, no :
Will calm in blood ! Well, well ; 'tis not my world !	Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity ; These are its sign and note and character,
<i>Festus.</i> Hark !	And these I have lost !—gone, shut from me for ever,
<i>Paracelsus.</i> 'Tis the melancholy wind astir	Like a dead friend safe from unkindness more !
Within the trees ; the embers too are grey : Morn must be near.	See, morn at length. The heavy darkness seems
<i>Festus.</i> Best ope the casement : see, The night, late strewn with clouds and flying stars,	Diluted, grey and clear without the stars ; The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves as if
Is blank and motionless : how peaceful sleep The tree-tops altogether ! Like an asp, The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.	Some snake, that weighed them down all night, let go
<i>Paracelsus.</i> Ay ; you would gaze on a wind- shaken tree	His hold ; and from the East, fuller and fuller,
By the hour, nor count time lost.	Day, like a mighty river, flowing in ; But clouded, wintry, desolate and cold.
<i>Festus.</i> So you shall gaze : Those happy times will come again.	Yet see how that broad prickly star-shaped plant, Half-down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves
<i>Paracelsus.</i> Gone, gone, Those pleasant times ! Does not the moaning wind	All thick and glistening with diamond dew. And you depart for Einsiedeln this day, And we have spent all night in talk like this !
Seem to bewail that we have gained such gains And bartered sleep for them ?	If you would have me better for your love, Revert no more to these sad themes.
<i>Festus.</i> It is our trust	<i>Festus.</i> One favour,
That there is yet another world to mend	And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved ;
All error and mischance.	

Unwilling to have fared so well, the while
My friend has changed so sorely. If this
mood

Shall pass away, if light once more arise
Where all is darkness now, if you see fit
To hope and trust again, and strive again,
You will remember—not our love alone—
But that my faith in God's desire that man
Should trust on his support, (as I must think
You trusted) is obscured and dim through
you :

For you are thus, and this is no reward.
Will you not call me to your side, dear
Aureole?

IV.—PARACELSUS ASPIRES.

SCENE.—*Colmar in Alsatia: an Inn. 1528.*

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

*Paracelsus [to JOHANNES OPORINUS, his
Secretary]. Sic itur ad astra! Dear
Von Visenburg*

Is scandalized, and poor Torinus paralysed,
And every honest soul that Basil holds
Aghast; and yet we live, as one may say,
Just as though Liechtenfels had never set
So true a value on his sorry carcass,
And learned Pütter had not frowned us dumb.
We live; and shall as surely start to-morrow
For Nuremberg, as we drink speedy scathe
To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused
A delicate blush, no fainter tinge is born
P the shut heart of a bud. Pledge me, good
John—

“Basil; a hot plague ravage it, and Pütter
“Oppose the plague!” Even so? Do you
too share

Their panic, the reptiles? Ha, ha; faint
through these,

Desist for these! They manage matters so
At Basil, 'tis like: but others may find
means

To being the stoutest braggart of the tribe
Once more to crouch in silence—means to
breed

A stupid wonder in each fool again,

Now big with admiration at the skill
Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes:
And, that done,—means to brand each slavish
brow

So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,
That henceforth flattery shall not pucker it
Out of the furrow; and there that stamp shall stay
To show the next they fawn on, what they
are,

This Basil with its magnates,—fill my cup,—
Whom I curse soul and limb. And now
despatch,

Despatch, my trusty John; and what remains
To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip
Are yet to be completed, see you hasten
This night; we'll weather the storm at least:
to-morrow

For Nuremberg! Now leave us; this grave
clerk

Has divers weighty matters for my ear:

[OPORINUS goes out.

And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant
Festus,

I am rid of this arch-knave that dogs my heels
As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep; at last
May give a loose to my delight. How kind,
How very kind, my first best only friend!
Why, this looks like fidelity. Embrace me!
Not a hair silvered yet? Right! you shall live
Till I am worth your love; you shall be proud,
And I—but let time show! Did you not
wonder?

I sent to you because our compact weighed
Upon my conscience—(you recall the night
At Basil, which the gods confound!)—because
Once more I aspire. I call you to my side:
You come. You thought my message strange?

Festus. So strange

That I must hope, indeed, your messenger
Has mingled his own fancies with the words
Purporting to be yours.

Paracelsus. He said no more,
'Tis probable, than the precious folk I leave
Said fiftyfold more roughly. Well-a-day,
'Tis true! poor Paracelsus is exposed
At last; a most egregious quack he proves:
And those he overreached must spit their hate
On one who, utterly beneath contempt,

Could yet deceive their topping wits. You heard

Bare truth ; and at my bidding you come here To speed me on my enterprise, as once Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend !

Festus. What is your purpose, Aureole ?

Paracelsus. Oh, for purpose,

There is no lack of precedents in a case Like mine ; at least, if not precisely mine, The case of men cast off by those they sought To benefit.

Festus. They really cast you off ?

I only heard a vague tale of some priest, Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim,

Knowing his life's worth best ; and how the judge

The matter was referred to, saw no cause To interfere, nor you to hide your full Contempt of him ; nor he, again, to smother His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame

That Basil soon was made no place for you.

Paracelsus. The affair of Liechtenfels ? the shallowest fable,

The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence !

I knew it, I foretold it from the first,

How soon the stupid wonder you mistook

For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise

Of better things to come—would pall and pass ;

And every word comes true. Saul is among

The prophets ! Just so long as I was pleased

To play off the mere antics of my art,

Fantastic gambols leading to no end,

I got huge praise : but one can ne'er keep down

Our foolish nature's weakness. There they flocked,

Poor devils, jostling, swearing and perspiring,

Till the walls rang again ; and all for me !

I had a kindness for them, which was right ;

But then I stopped not till I tacked to that

A trust in them and a respect—a sort

Of sympathy for them ; I must needs begin

To teach them, not amaze them, "to impart

"The spirit" which should instigate the search

"Of truth," just what you bade me ! I spoke out.

Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust, Filed off—"the sifted chaff of the sack," I said,

Redoubling my endeavours to secure

The rest. When lo ! one man had tarried so long

Only to ascertain if I supported

This tenet of his, or that ; another loved

To hear impartially before he judged,

And having heard, now judged ; this bland disciple

Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,

Spied error where his neighbours marvelled most ;

That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,

Did it because my by-paths, once proved wrong

And beacons properly, would commend again

The good old ways our sires jogged safely o'er,

Though not their squeamish sons ; the other worthy

Discovered divers verses of St. John,

Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,

But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,

The colic and what not. *Quid multa ?* The end

Was a clear class-room, and a quiet leer

From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance

From those in chief who, cap in hand, installed

The new professor scarce a year before ;

And a vast flourish about patient merit

Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure

Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—

Of which the example was some luckless wight

Whom my arrival had discomfited,

But now, it seems, the general voice recalled

To fill my chair and so efface the stain

Basil had long incurred. I sought no better,

Only a quiet dismissal from my post,

And from my heart I wished them better

sued

And better served. Good night to Basil.

then !

But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe

Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them

The pleasure of a parting kick.

Festus. You smile :
Despise them as they merit !

Paracelsus. If I smile,
'Tis with as very contempt as ever turned
Flesh into stone. This courteous recompense,
This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature
fit

To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
At gangrene-blotches, eating poison-blains,
The ulcerous barky scurf of leprosy
Which finds—a man, and leaves—a hideous
thing

That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
—I would lay bare to you the human heart
Which God cursed long ago, and devils make
since

Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.
Oh, sages have discovered we are born
For various ends—to love, to know : has ever
One stumbled, in his search, on any signs
Of a nature in us formed to hate? To hate?
If that be our true object which evokes
Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 'tis
hate !

Yet men have doubted if the best and bravest
Of spirits can nourish him with hate alone.
I had not the monopoly of fools,
It seems, at Basil.

Festus. But your plans, your plans !
I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole !

Paracelsus. Whether to sink beneath such
ponderous shame,
To shrink up like a crushed snail, undergo
In silence and desist from further toil,
And so subside into a monument
Of one their censure blasted? or to bow
Cheerfully as submissively, to lower
My old pretensions even as Basil dictates,
To drop into the rank her wits assign me
And live as they prescribe, and make that use
Of my poor knowledge which their rules
allow,

Proud to be patted now and then, and careful
To practise the true posture for receiving
The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appli-
ance

When they shall condescend to tutor me?
Then, one may feel resentment like a flaihe

Within, and deck false systems in truth's garb,
And tangle and entwine mankind with error,
And give them darkness for a dower and
falsehood

For a possession, ages : or one may mope
Into a shade through thinking, or else drowse
Into a dreamless sleep and so die off.

But I,—now Festus shall divine !—but I
Am merely setting out once more, embracing
My earliest aims again ! What thinks he now?

Festus. Your aims? the aims?—to Know?
and where is found

The early trust . . .

Paracelsus. Nay, not so fast ; I say,
The aims—not the old means. You know
they made me

A laughing-stock ; I was a fool ; you know
The when and the how : hardly those means
again !

Not but they had their beauty ; who should
know

Their passing beauty, if not I? Still, dreams
They were, so let them vanish, yet in beauty
If that may be. Stay : thus they pass in song !

[*He sings.*

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
Of labdanum,¹ and aloe-balls,
Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
From out her hair : such balsam falls
Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled ;
Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
From closet long to quiet vowed,
With moth and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,
As when a queen, long dead, was young.

Mine, every word ! And on such pile shall die
My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,
Themselves fair and forgotten ; yes, forgotten,
Or why abjure them? So, I made this rhyme

¹ A fragrant gum.

That fitting dignity might be preserved ;
No little proud was I ; though the list of drugs
Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse
Halts like the best of Luther's psalms.

Festus. But, Aureole,
Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here—
Did you know all ! I have travelled far, in-
deed,

To learn your wishes. Be yourself again !
For in this mood I recognize you less
Than in the horrible despondency
I witnessed last. You may account this, joy ;
But rather let me gaze on that despair
Than hear these incoherent words and see
This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling eye.

Paracelsus. Why, man, I was light-hearted
in my prime,

I am light-hearted now ; what would you have ?
Aprile was a poet, I make songs—

'Tis the very augury of success I want !

Why should I not be joyous now as then ?

Festus. Joyous ! and how ? and what re-
mains for joy ?

You have declared the ends (which I am sick
Of naming) are impracticable.

Paracelsus. Ay,
Pursued as I pursued them—the arch-fool !
Listen : my plan will please you not, 'tis like,
But you are little versed in the world's ways.
This is my plan—(first drinking its good
luck)—

I will accept all helps ; all I despised
So rashly at the outset, equally
With early impulses, late years have
quenched :

I have tried each way singly : now for both !
All helps ! no one sort shall exclude the rest.
I seek to know and to enjoy at once,
Not one without the other as before.
Suppose my labour should seem God's own
cause

Once more, as first I dreamed,—it shall not
balk me

Of the meanest earthliest sensualet delight
That may be snatched ; for every joy is gain,
And gain is gain, however small. My soul
Can die then, nor be taunted—"what was
gained?"

Nor, on the other hand, should pleasure follow
As though I had not spurned her hitherto,
Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt com-
munion

With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,
Glorious with visions of a full success.

Festus. Success !

Paracelsus. And wherefore not ?

Why not prefer
Results obtained in my best state of being,
To those derived alone from seasons dark
As the thoughts they bred ? When I was
best, my youth

Unwasted, seemed success not surest too ?

It is the nature of darkness to obscure.

I am a wanderer : I remember well

One journey, how I feared the track was
missed,

So long the city I desired to reach

Lay hid ; when suddenly its spires afar

Flashed through the circling clouds ; you
may conceive

My transport. Soon the vapours closed again,
But I had seen the city, and one such glance
No darkness could obscure : nor shall the
present—

A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,

Destroy the vivid memories of the past.

I will fight the battle out ; a little spent

Perhaps, but still an able combatant.

You look at my grey hair and furrowed brow ?

But I can turn even weakness to account :

Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least

To push the ruins of my frame, whereon

The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,

Into a heap, and send the flame aloft.

What should I do with age ? So, sickness
lends

An aid ; it being, I fear, the source of all

We boast of : mind is nothing but disease,

And natural health is ignorance.

Festus. I see

But one good symptom in this notable scheme.

I feared your sudden journey had in view

To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes.

'Tis not so : I am glad.

Paracelsus. And if I please

To spit on them, to trample them, what then ?

'Tis sorry warfare truly, but the fools
 Provoke it. I would spare their self-conceit,
 But if they must provoke me, cannot suffer
 Forbearance on my part, if I may keep
 No quality in the shade, must needs put forth
 Power to match power, my strength against
 their strength,
 And teach them their own game with their
 own arms—

Why, be it so and let them take their chance !
 I am above them like a god, there's no
 Hiding the fact : what idle scruples, then,
 Were those that ever bade me soften it,
 Communicate it gently to the world,
 Instead of proving my supremacy,
 Taking my natural station o'er their head,
 Then owning all the glory was a man's !
 —And in my elevation man's would be.
 But live and learn, though life's short, learn-
 ing, hard !
 And therefore, though the wreck of my past
 self,

I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-room
 Must wait awhile for its best ornament,
 The penitent empiric, who set up
 For somebody, but soon was taught his place ;
 Now, but too happy to be let confess
 His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate
 (*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)
 Your medicine's soundness in his person.

Wait,

Good Pütter !

Festus. He who sneers thus, is a god !

Paracelsus. Ay, ay, laugh at me ! I am
 very glad

You are not gulled by all this swaggering ; you
 Can see the root of the matter !—how I strive
 To put a good face on the overthrow
 I have experienced, and to bury and hide
 My degradation in its length and breadth ;
 How the mean motives I would make you
 think

Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,
 The appetites I modestly allow
 May influence me as being mortal still—
 Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant
 My youth's desires. You are no stupid dupe :
 You find me out ! Yes, I had sent for you

To palm these childish lies upon you, Festus !
 Laugh—you shall laugh at me !

Festus. The past, then, Aureole,
 Proves nothing ? Is our interchange of love
 Yet to begin ? Have I to swear I mean
 No flattery in this speech or that ? For you,
 Whate'er you say, there is no degradation ;
 These low thoughts are no inmates of your
 mind,

Or wherefore this disorder ? You are vexed
 As much by the intrusion of base views,
 Familiar to your adversaries, as they
 Were troubled should your qualities alight
 Amid their murky souls ; not otherwise,
 A stray wolf which the winter forces down
 From our bleak hills, suffices to affright
 A village in the vales—while foresters
 Sleep calm, though all night long the
 famished troop
 Snuff round and scratch against their crazy
 huts.

These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee.

Paracelsus. May you be happy, Festus,
 my own friend !

Festus. Nay, further ; the delights you fain
 would think

The superseders of your nobler aims,
 Though ordinary and harmless stimulants,
 Will ne'er content you. . . .

Paracelsus. Hush ! I once despised them,
 But that soon passes. We are high at first
 In our demand, nor will abate a jot
 Of toil's strict value ; but time passes o'er,
 And humbler spirits accept what we refuse :
 In short, when some such comfort is doled out
 As these delights, we cannot long retain
 Bitter contempt which urges us at first
 To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast
 And thankfully retire. This life of mine
 Must be lived out and a grave thoroughly
 earned :

I am just fit for that and nought beside.
 I told you once, I cannot now enjoy,
 Unless I deem my knowledge gains through
 joy ;
 Nor can I know, but straight warm tears reveal
 My need of linking also joy to knowledge :
 So, on I drive, enjoying all I can,

And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,
 Confusedly; this will better explain—feel
 here!
 Quick beating, is it not?—a fire of the heart
 To work off some way, this as well as any.
 So, Festus sees me fairly launched; his calm
 Compassionate look might have disturbed
 me once,
 But now, far from rejecting, I invite
 What bids me press the closer, lay myself
 Open before him, and be soothed with pity;
 I hope, if he command hope, and believe
 As he directs me—satiating myself
 With his enduring love. And Festus quits me
 To give place to some credulous disciple
 Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus
 Has his peculiar merits: I suck in
 That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,
 And then dismiss the fool; for night is come,
 And I betake myself to study again,
 Till patient searchings after hidden lore
 Half wring some bright truth from its prison;
 my frame
 Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out, my
 hair
 Tingles for triumph. Slow and sure the morn
 Shall break on my pent room and dwindling
 lamp
 And furnace dead, and scattered earths and
 ores;
 When, with a failing heart and throbbing brow,
 I must review my captured truth, sum up
 Its value, trace what ends to what begins,
 Its present power with its eventual bearings,
 Latent affinities, the views it opens,
 And its full length in perfecting my scheme.
 I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down
 From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,
 Proved worthless—which, in getting, yet had
 cost
 Another wrench to this fast-falling frame.
 Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that chases
 sorrow!
 I lapse back into youth, and take again
 My fluttering pulse for evidence that God
 Means good to me, will make my cause his
 own.
 See! I have cast off this remorseless care

Which clogged a spirit born to soar so free,
 And my dim chamber has become a tent,
 Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal . . .
 Why do you start? I say, she listening here.
 (For yonder—Würzburg through the orchard-
 bough!)
 Motions as though such ardent words should
 find
 No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,
 But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill fast
 With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the
 while!
 Ha, ha!
Festus. It seems, then, you expect to reap
 No unreal joy from this your present course,
 But rather . . .
Paracelsus. Death! To die! I owe that
 much
 To what, at least, I was. I should be sad
 To live contented after such a fall,
 To thrive and fatten after such reverse!
 The whole plan is a makeshift, but will last
 My time.
Festus. And you have never mused and
 said,
 "I had a noble purpose, and the strength
 "To compass it; but I have stopped half-way,
 "And wrongly given the first-fruits of my toil
 "To objects little worthy of the gift.
 "Why linger round them still? why clench
 my fault?
 "Why seek for consolation in defeat.
 "In vain endeavours to derive a beauty
 "From ugliness? why seek to make the most
 "Of what no power can change, nor strive
 instead
 "With mighty effort to redeem the past
 "And, gathering up the treasures thus cast
 down,
 "To hold a steady course till I arrive
 "At their fit destination and my own?"
 You have never pondered thus?
Paracelsus. Have I, you ask.
 Often at midnight, when most fancies come,
 Would some such airy project visit me:
 But ever at the end . . . or will you hear
 The same thing in a tale, a parable?
 You and I, wandering over the world wide,

Chance to set foot upon a desert coast.
Just as we cry, "No human voice before
"Broke the inveterate silence of these rocks!"
—Their querulous echo startles us; we
turn :

What ravaged structure still looks o'er the sea?
Some characters remain, too! While we read,
The sharp salt wind, impatient for the last
Of even this record, wistfully comes and goes,
Or sings what we recover, mocking it.
This is the record; and my voice, the wind's.

[*He sings.*

Over the sea our galleys went,
With cleaving prows in order brave
To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,
A gallant armament :

Each bark built out of a forest-tree
Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
And nailed all over the gaping sides,
Within and without, with black bull-hides,
Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,
To bear the playful billows' game :
So, each good ship was rude to see,
Rude and bare to the outward view,

But each upbore a stately tent
Where cedar poles in scented row
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,
And an awning drooped the mast below,
In fold on fold of the purple fine,
That neither noontide nor starshine
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,
Might pierce the regal timent.

When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
We set the sail and plied the oar ;
But when the night-wind blew like breath,
For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore ;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so
free,

Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the voyagers from afar,

Lay stretched along, each weary crew
In a circle round its wondrous tent
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich
scent,
And with light and perfume, music too ;

So the stars wheeled round, and the dark-
ness past,
And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared—a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky :
"Avoid it," cried our pilot, "check
"The shout, restrain the eager eye !
But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh ;
So, we broke the cedar pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
And a statue bright was on every deck !
We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbour thus,
With pomp and paran glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone !
All day we built its shrine for each,
A shrine of rock for every one,
Nor paused till in the westering sun
We sat together on the beach
To sing because our task was done.
When lo ! what shouts and merry songs !
What laughter all the distance stirs !
A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders !

"Our isles are just at hand," they cried,
"Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping ;
"Our temple-gates are opened wide,
"Our olive-groves thick shade are
keeping

"For these majestic forms"—they cried.
Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
From our deep dream, and knew, too
late,

How bare the rock, how desolate,
Which had received our precious freight :
Yet we called out—"Depart !

"Our gifts, once given, must here abide.
"Our work is done ; we have no heart
"To mar our work,"—we cried.

Festus. In truth ?

Paracelsus. Nay, wait : all this in
tracings faint

On rugged stones strewn here and there, but piled

In order once: then follows—mark what follows!

“The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung
“To their first fault, and withered in their pride.”

Festus. Come back then, Aureole; as you fear God, come!

This is foul sin; come back! Renounce the past,

Forswear the future; look for joy no more,
But wait death's summons amid holy sights,
And trust me for the event—peace, if not joy.

Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear Aureole!

Paracelsus. No way, no way! it would not turn to good.

A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss—
'Tis well for him; but when a sinful man,
Envyng such slumber, may desire to put

His guilt away, shall he return at once
To rest by lying there? Our sires knew well
(Spite of the grave discoveries of their sons)

The fitting course for such: dark cells, dim lamps,

A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm:
No mossy pillow blue with violets!

Festus. I see no symptom of these absolute
And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now.
This verse-making can purge you well enough
Without the terrible penance you describe.
You love me still: the lusts you fear will never
Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once more!

Say but the word!

Paracelsus. No, no; those lusts forbid:
They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut
eye

Beside you; 'tis their nature. Thrust yourself
Between them and their prey; let some fool
style me

Or king or quack, it matters not—then try
Your wisdom, urge them to forego their
treat!

No, no; learn better and look deeper, *Festus!*
If you know how a devil sneers within me

While you are talking now of this, now that,
As though we differed scarcely save in trifles!

Festus. Do we so differ? True, change must proceed,

Whether for good or ill; keep from me, which!
Do not confide all secrets: I was born
To hope, and you . . .

Paracelsus. To trust: you know the fruits!
Festus. Listen: I do believe, what you call trust

Was self-delusion at the best: for, see!
So long as God would kindly pioneer
A path for you, and screen you from the world,
Procure you full exemption from man's lot,
Man's common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext

Of your engagement in his service—yield you
A limitless licence, make you God, in fact,
And turn your slave—you were content to say
Most courtly praises! What is it, at last,
But selfishness without example? None
Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours

Remained implied in it; but now you fail,
And we, who prate about that will, are fools!
In short, God's service is established here
As he determines fit, and not your way,

And this you cannot brook. Such discontent
Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at once!
Affirm an absolute right to have and use
Your energies; as though the rivers should say—

“We rush to the ocean; what have we to do
“With feeding streamlets, lingering in the
vales,

“Sleeping in lazy pools?” Set up that plea,
That will be bold at least!

Paracelsus. 'Tis like enough.
The serviceable spirits are those, no doubt,
The East produces: lo, the master bids,—
They wake, raise terraces and garden-grounds:
In one night's space; and, this done, straight begin

Another century's sleep, to the great praise
Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,
Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,
Wake them again. I am of different mould.
I would have soothed my lord, and slaved for
him

And done him service past my narrow bond

And thus I get rewarded for my pains !
Beside, 'tis vain to talk of forwarding
God's glory otherwise ; this is alone
The sphere of its increase, as far as men
Increase it ; why, then, look beyond this
sphere ?

We are his glory ; and if we be glorious,
Is not the thing achieved ?

Festus. Shall one like me
Judge hearts like yours ? Though years have
changed you much,

And you have left your first love, and retain
Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,
Yet I still hold that you have honoured God.
And who shall call your course without re-
ward ?

For, wherefore this repining at defeat
Had triumph ne'er inured you to high hopes ?
I urge you to forsake the life you curse,
And what success attends me ?—simply talk
Of passion, weakness and remorse ; in short,
Anything but the naked truth—you choose
This so-despised career, and cheaply hold
My happiness, or rather other men's.
Once more, return !

Paracelsus. And quickly. John the thief
Has pilfered half my secrets by this time :
And we depart by daybreak. I am weary,
I know not how ; not even the wine-cup soothes
My brain to-night . . .

Do you not thoroughly despise me, Festus ?
No flattery ! One like you needs not be told
We live and breathe deceiving and deceived.
Do you not scorn me from your heart of
hearts,

Me and my cant, each petty subterfuge,
My rhymes and all this frothy shower of
words,

My glozing self-deceit, my outward crust
Of lies which wrap, as tetter, morphew,
furfair

Wrapt the sound flesh ?—so, see you flatter not !
Even God flatters : but my friend, at least,
Is true. I would depart, secure henceforth
Against all further insult, hate and wrong
From puny foes ; my one friend's scorn shall
brand me :

No fear of sinking deeper !

Festus. No, dear Aureole !
No, no ; I came to counsel faithfully.

There are old rules, made long ere we were
born,

By which I judge you. I, so fallible,
So infinitely low beside your mighty
Majestic spirit !—even I can see
You own some higher law than ours which call
Sin, what is no sin—weakness, what is
strength.

But I have only these, such as they are,
To guide me ; and I blame you where they bid,
Only so long as blaming promises
To win peace for your soul : the more, that
sorrow

Has fallen on me of late, and they have
helped me

So that I faint not under my distress.
But wherefore should I scruple to avow
In spite of all, as brother judging brother,
Your fate is most inexplicable to me ?
And should you perish without recompense
And satisfaction yet—too hastily
I have relied on love : you may have sinned,
But you have loved. As a mere human
matter—

As I would have God deal with fragile men
In the end—I say that you will triumph yet !

Paracelsus. Have you felt sorrow, Festus ?—'tis because

You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal
yours !

Well thought on : never let her know this last
Dull winding-up of all : these miscreants
dared

Insult me—me she loved :—so, grieve her
not !

Festus. Your ill success can little grieve
her now.

Paracelsus. Michal is dead ! pray Christ
we do not craze !

Festus. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not
on me thus !

Fool, fool ! this is the heart grown sorrow-
proof—

I cannot bear those eyes.

Paracelsus. Nay, really dead ?

Festus. 'Tis scarce a month.

Paracelsus. Stone dead!—then you have laid her
Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,
I can reveal a secret which shall comfort
Even you. I have no julep, as men think,
To cheat the grave; but a far better secret.
Know, then, you did not ill to trust your love
To the cold earth: I have thought much of it:
For I believe we do not wholly die.

Festus. Aureole!

Paracelsus. Nay, do not laugh; there is a reason
For what I say: I think the soul can never
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
Very unfit to put so strange a thought
In an intelligible dress of words;
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

Festus. But not on this account alone?
you surely,

—Aureole, you have believed this all along?

Paracelsus. And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,
While I am moved at Basil, and full of schemes
For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
As though it mattered how the farce plays out,
So it be quickly played. Away, away!
Have your will, rabble! while we fight the prize,
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats
And leave a clear arena for the brave
About to perish for your sport!—Behold!

V.—PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE.—*Salzburg; a cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian.* 1541.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS.

Festus. No change! The weary night is well-nigh spent,
The lamp burns low, and through the case-ment-bars
Grey morning glimmers feebly: yet no change!

Another night, and still no sigh has stirred
That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit
Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,
Like torch-flame choked in dust. While all beside
Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,
As a stronghold where life intrenched itself;
But they are dead now—very blind and dead:
He will drowse into death without a groan.

My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole!
The days are gone, are gone! How grand thou wast!

And now not one of those who struck thee down—

Poor glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay
And satisfy himself his little hand
Could turn God's image to a livid thing.

Another night, and yet no change! 'Tis much

That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,
And chafe his hands; 'tis much: but he will sure

Know me, and look on me, and speak to me
Once more—but only once! His hollow cheek

Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh

At his own state were just about to break
From the dying man: my brain swam, my throat swelled,

And yet I could not turn away. In truth,
They told me how, when first brought here,
he seemed

Resolved to live, to lose no faculty;
Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,
Until they bore him to this stifling cell:

When straight his features fell, an hour made white

The flushed face, and relaxed the quivering limb,

Only the eye remained intense awhile
As though it recognized the tomb-like place,
And then he lay as here he lies.

Ay, here!

Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded—

Her bravest champion with his well-won
prize—

Her best achievement, her sublime amends
For countless generations fleeting fast
And followed by no trace;—the creature-god
She instances when angels would dispute
The title of her brood to rank with them.
Angels, this is our angel! Those bright forms
We clothe with purple, crown and call to
thrones,

Are human, but not his; those are but men
Whom other men press round and kneel
before;

Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind;
Higher provision is for him you seek
Amid our pomps and glories: see it here!
Behold earth's paragon! Now, raise thee,
clay!

God! Thou art love! I build my faith on
that.

Even as I watch beside thy tortured child
Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
So doth thy right hand guide us through the
world

Wherein we stumble. God! what shall we
say?

How has he sinned? How else should he
have done?

Surely he sought thy praise—thy praise, for all
He might be busied by the task so much
As half forget awhile its proper end.

Dost thou well, Lord? Thou canst not but
prefer

That I should range myself upon his side—
How could he stop at every step to set
Thy glory forth? Hadst thou but granted him
Success, thy honour would have crowned
success,

A halo round a star. Or, say he erred,—
Save him, dear God; it will be like thee:
lathe him

In light and life! Thou are not made like us;
We should be wroth in such a case; but thou
Forgivest—so, forgive these passionate
thoughts

Which come unsought and will not pass
away!

I know thee, who hast kept thy power
made

Light for me in the darkness, tempering
sorrow

So that it reached me like a solemn joy;
It were too strange that I should doubt thy
love.

But what am I? Thou madest him and
knowest

How he was fashioned. I could never err
That way: the quiet place beside thy feet,
Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts:
But he—thou shouldst have favoured him as
well!

Ah! he wakens! Aureole, I am here! 'tis
Festus!

I cast away all wishes save one wish—
Let him but know me, only speak to me!
He mutters; louder and louder; any other
Than I, with brain less laden, could collect
What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but
look!

Is it talking or singing, this he utters fast?
Misery that he should fix me with his eye,
Quick talking to some other all the while!
If he would husband this wild vehemence
Which frustrates its intent!—I heard, I know
I heard my name amid those rapid words.
Oh, he will know me yet! Could I divert
This current, lead it somehow gently back
Into the channels of the past!—His eye
Brighter than ever! It must recognize me!

I am Erasmus: I am here to pray
That Paracelsus use his skill for me.
The schools of Paris and of Padua send
These questions for your learning to resolve.
We are your students, noble master: leave
This wretched cell, what business have you
here?

Our class awaits you; come to us once more!
(O agony! the utmost I can do
Touches him not; how else arrest his ear?)
I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like
him.

Better be mute and see what God shall send.
Paracelsus. Stay, stay with me!

Festus. I will; I am come here
To stay with you—Festus, you loved of old;
Festus, you know, you must know!

Paracelsus. Festus! Where's
Aprile, then? Has he not chanted softly
The melodies I heard all night? I could not
Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,
But I made out his music well enough,
O well enough! If they have filled him full
With magical music, as they freight a star
With light, and have remitted all his sin,
They will forgive me too, I too shall know!

Festus. Festus, your Festus!

Paracelsus. Ask him if Aprile
Knows as he Loves—if I shall Love and
Know?
I try; but that cold hand, like lead—so cold!

Festus. My hand, see!

Paracelsus. Ah, the curse, Aprile,
Aprile!
We get so near—so very, very near!
'Tis an old tale: Jove strikes the Titans
down,
Not when they set about their mountain-
piling
But when another rock would crown the work.
And Phaeton—doubtless his first radiant
plunge
Astonished mortals, though the gods were
calm,
And Jove prepared his thunder: all old tales!

Festus. And what are these to you?

Paracelsus. Ay, fiends must laugh
So cruelly, so well! most like I never
Could tread a single pleasure underfoot,
But they were grinning by my side, were
chuckling
To see me toil and drop away by flakes!
Hell-spawn! I am glad, most glad, that
thus I fail!
Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One
year,
One month, perhaps, and I had served your
turn!
You should have curbed your spite awhile.
But now,
Who will believe 'twas you that held me
back?

Listen: there's shame and hissing and con-
tempt,
And none but laughs who names me, none
but spits
Measureless scorn upon me, me alone,
The quack, the cheat, the liar,—all on me!
And thus your famous plan to sink mankind
In silence and despair, by teaching them
One of their race had probed the inmost truth,
Had done all man could do, yet failed no
less—
Your wise plan proves abortive. Men
despair?
Ha, ha! why, they are hooting the empiric,
The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed
Madly upon a work beyond his wits;
Nor doubt they but the simplest of them-
selves
Could bring the matter to triumphant issue.
So, pick and choose among them all, accursed!
Try now, persuade some other to slave for
you,
To ruin body and soul to work your ends!
No, no; I am the first and last, I think.

Festus. Dear friend, who are accursed;
who has done . . .

Paracelsus. What have I done? Fiends:
dare ask that? or you,
Brave men? Oh, you can chime in boldly,
backed
By the others! What had you to do, sage
peers?
Here stand my rivals; Latin, Arab, Jew,
Greek, join dead hands against me: all I ask
Is, that the world enrol my name with theirs.
And even this poor privilege, it seems,
They range themselves, prepared to disallow.
Only observe! why, fiends may learn from
them!
How they talk calmly of my throes, my fierce
Aspirings, terrible watchings, each one
claiming
Its price of blood and brain; how they dissect
And sneeringly disparage the few truths
Got at a life's cost; they too hanging the while
About my neck, their lies misleading me
And their dead names browbeating me!
Grey crew,

Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,
Is there a reason for your hate? My truths
Have shaken a little the palm about each
prince?

Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards
Were bent on nothing less than to be crowned
As we! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in
chief

To whom the rest cringe low with feigned
respect,

Galen of Pergamos and hell—nay speak
The tale, old man! We met there face to
face:

I said the crown should fall from thee. Once
more

We meet as in that ghastly vestibule:*

Look to my brow! Have I redeemed my
pledge?

Festus. Peace, peace; ah, see!

Paracelsus. Oh, emptiness of fame!

Oh Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars!

—Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,
Could make me overlook the living world
To gaze through gloom at where they stood,
indeed,

But stand no longer? What a warm light life
After the shade! In truth, my delicate witch,
My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
The juggles I had else detected. Fire
May well run harmless o'er a breast like
yours!

The cave was not so darkened by the smoke
But that your white limbs dazzled me: oh,
white,

And panting as they twinkled, wildly
dancing!

I cared not for your passionate gestures then,
But now I have forgotten the charm of
charms,

The foolish knowledge which I came to seek,
While I remember that quaint dance; and
thus

I am come back, not for those mummeries,
But to love you, and to kiss your little feet
Soft as an ermine's winter coat!

Festus. A light

Will struggle through these thronging words
at last.

As in the angry and tumultuous West
A soft star trembles through the drifting
clouds.

These are the strivings of a spirit which hates
So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up
The past to stand between it and its fate.

Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here!

Paracelsus. Cruel! I seek her now—I
kneel—I shriek—

I clasp her vesture—but she fades, still fades;
And she is gone; sweet human love is gone!

'Tis only when they spring to heaven that
angels

Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
Beside you, and lie down at night by you
Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep,
And all at once they leave you, and you know
them!

We are so fooled, so cheated! Why, even
now

I am not too secure against foul play;
The shadows deepen and the walls contract:
No doubt some treachery is going on.

'Tis very dusk. Where are we put, Aprile?
Have they left us in the lurch? This murky
loathsome

Death-trap, this slaughter-house, is not the
hall

In the golden city! Keep by me, Aprile!
There is a hand groping amid the blackness
To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got you,
Poet? Hold on me for your life! If once
They pull you!—Hold!

'Tis but a dream—no more!

I have you still; the sun comes out again;
Let us be happy: all will yet go well!

Let us confer: is it not like, Aprile,
That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
The value of my labours ascertained,

Just as some stream foams long among the
rocks

But after glideth glassy to the sea,
So, full content shall henceforth be my lot?
What think you, poet? Louder! Your clear
voice

Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you ask
How could I still remain on earth, should God
Grant me the great approval which I seek?

I, you, and God can comprehend each other,
But men would murmur, and with cause
enough ;

For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,
Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
They would complain that comfort, shut from
them,

I drank thus unespied ; that they live on,
Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
For ache and care and doubt and weariness,
While I am calm ; help being vouchsafed to me,
And hid from them.—'Twere best consider
that !

You reason well, Aprile ; but at least
Let me know this, and die ! Is this too much ?
I will learn this, if God so please, and die !

If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt
please !

We are so weak, we know our motives least
In their confused beginning. If at first
I sought . . . but wherefore bare my heart
to thee ?

I know thy mercy ; and already thoughts
Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,
And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
For love and praise would clasp me willingly
Could I resolve to seek them. Thou art good,
And I should be content. Yet—yet first show
I have done wrong in daring ! Rather give
The supernatural consciousness of strength
Which fed my youth ! Only one hour of that
With thee to help—O what should bar me
then !

Lost, lost ! Thus things are ordered here !
God's creatures,

And yet he takes no pride in us !—none, none !
Truly there needs another life to come !
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)
And other life await us not—for one,
I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
Against it, and I hurl it back with scorn.

Well, onward though alone ! Small time
remains,
And much to do : I must have fruit, must reap

Some profit from my toils. I doubt my body
Will hardly serve me through ; while I have
laboured

It has decayed ; and now that I demand
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast :
A sad thought, a sad fate ! How very full
Of wormwood 'tis, that just at altar-service,
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,
When glory dawns and all is at the best,
The sacred fire may flicker and grow faint
And die for want of a wood-piler's help !
Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul
Is pulled down in the overthrow. Well,
well—

Let men catch every word, let them lose
nought
Of what I say ; something may yet be done.

They are ruins ! Trust me who am one of you !
All ruins, glorious once, but lonely now.

It makes my heart sick to behold you crouch
Beside your desolate fane : the arches dim,
The crumbling columns grand against the
moon,

Could I but rear them up once more—but that
May never be, so leave them ! Trust me,
friends,

Why should you linger here when I have built
A far resplendent temple, all your own ?
Trust me, they are but ruins ! See, Aprile,
Men will not heed ! Yet were I not prepared
With better refuge for them, tongue of mine
Should ne'er reveal how blank their dwelling
is :

I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what ? you spit at me, you grin and shriek
Contempt into my ear—my ear which drank
God's accents once ? you curse me ? Why
men, men,

I am not formed for it ! Those hideous eyes
Will be before me sleeping, waking, praying,
They will not let me even die. Spare, spare
me,

Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
The horrible scorn ! You thought I could
support it.

But now you see what silly fragile creature

Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad enough,
Not Christ nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved
From Hate like this. Let me but totter back!
Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which creep
Into my very brain, and shut these scorched
Eyelids and keep those mocking faces out.

Listen, Aprile! I am very calm:
Be not deceived, there is no passion here
Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned
thing:

I am calm: I will exterminate the race!
Enough of that: 'tis said and it shall be.
And now be merry: safe and sound am I
Who broke through their best ranks to get
at you.

And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile!

Festus. Have you no thought, no memory
for me,

Aureole? I am so wretched—my pure Michal
Is gone, and you alone are left me now,
And even you forget me. Take my hand—
Lean on me thus. Do you not know me,
Aureole?

Paracelsus. Festus, my own friend, you
are come at last?

As you say, 'tis an awful enterprise;
But you believe I shall go through with it:
'Tis like you, and I thank you. Thank him
for me,

Dear Michal! See how bright St. Saviour's
spire

Flames in the sunset; all its figures quaint
Gay in the glancing light: you might con-
ceive them

A troop of yellow-vested white-haired Jews
Bound for their own land where redemption
dawns.

Festus. Not that blest time—not our
youth's time, dear God!

Paracelsus. Ha—stay! true, I forget—all
is done since,

And he is come to judge me. How he speaks,
How calm, how well! yes, it is true, all true;
All quackery; all deceit; myself can laugh
The first at it, if you desire: but still
You know the obstacles which taught metricks,
So foreign to my nature—envy and hate,

VOL. I.

Blind opposition, brutal prejudice,
Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk
To humour men the way they most approved?
My cheats were never palmed on such as you,
Dear Festus! I will kneel if you require me,
Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,
Explain its bounded nature, and avow
My insufficiency—whate'er you will:

I give the fight up: let there be an end,
A privacy, an obscure nook for me.
I want to be forgotten even by God.

But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,
When I shall die, within some narrow grave,
Not by itself—for that would be too proud—
But where such graves are thickest; let it look
Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,
So that the peasant at his brother's bed
May tread upon my own and know it not;
And we shall all be equal at the last,
Or classed according to life's natural ranks,
Fathers, sons, brothers, friends—not rich,
nor wise,

Nor gifted: lay me thus, then say, "He lived
"Too much advanced before his brother men;
"They kept him still in front: 'twas for
their good

"But yet a dangerous station. It were strange
"That he should tell God he had never ranked
"With men: so, here at least he is a man."

Festus. That God shall take thee to his
breast, dear spirit,

Unto his breast, be sure! and here on earth
Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever.
Sun! all the heaven is glad for thee: what
care

If lower mountains light their snowy phares
At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not
The source of day? Their theft shall be
their bale:

For after-ages shall retrace thy beams,
And put aside the crowd of busy ones
And worship thee alone—the master-mind,
The thinker, the explorer, the creator!
Then, who should sneer at the convulsive
throes

With which thy deeds were born, would
scorn as well

The sheet of winding subterraneous fire

E

Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last
Huge islands up amid the simmering sea.
Behold thy might in me ! thou hast infused
Thy soul in mine ; and I am grand as thou,
Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
Thou so august. I recognize thee first ;
I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and late,
And though no glance reveal thou dost accept
My homage—thus no less I proffer it,
And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest.

Paracelsus. Festus !

Festus. I am for noble Aureole, God !
I am upon his side, come weal or woe.
His portion shall be mine. He has done well.
I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,
As he has sinned. Reward him or I waive
Reward ! If thou canst find no place for him,
He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
His slave for ever. There are two of us.

Paracelsus. Dear Festus !

Festus. Here, dear Aureole ! ever
by you !

Paracelsus. Nay, speak on, or I dream
again. Speak on !
Some story, anything—only your voice.
I shall dream else. Speak on ! ay, leaning so !

Festus. Thus the Mayne glideth
Where my Love abideth.

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

Paracelsus. More, more ; say on !

Festus. And scarce it pushes
Its gentle way through strangling rushes
Where the glossy kingfisher
Flutters when noon-heats are near,
Glad the shelving banks to shun,
Red and steaming in the sun,
Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
Burrows, and the speckled stoat ;

Where the quick sandpipers fit
In and out the marl and grit
That seems to breed them, brown as they :
Nought disturbs its quiet way,
Save some lazy stork that springs,
Trailing it with legs and wings,
Whom the shy fox from the hill
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

Paracelsus. My heart ! they loose my
heart, those simple words ;

Its darkness passes, which nought else could
touch :

Like some dark snake that force may not expel,
Which glideth out to music sweet and low.

What were you doing when your voice broke
through

A chaos of ugly images ? You, indeed !

Are you alone here ?

Festus. All alone : you know me ?

This cell ?

Paracelsus. An unexceptionable vault :
Good brick and stone : the bats kept out,
the rats

Kept in : a snug nook : how should I mis-
take it ?

Festus. But wherefore am I here ?

Paracelsus. Ah, well remembered !

Why, for a purpose—for a purpose, Festus !

'Tis like me : here I trifle while time fleets,
And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return.

You are here to be instructed. I will tell
God's message ; but I have so much to say,
I fear to leave half out. All is confused
No doubt ; but doubtless you will learn in
time.

He would not else have brought you here :
no doubt

I shall see clearer soon.

Festus. Tell me but this—

You are not in despair ?

Paracelsus. I ? and for what ?

Festus. Alas, alas ! he knows not, as I
feared !

Paracelsus. What is it you would ask me
with that earnest

Dear searching face ?

Festus. How feel you, Aureole

Paracelsus. Well

Well. 'Tis a strange thing: I am dying,
Festus,

And now that fast the storm of life subsides,
I first perceive how great the whirl has been.
I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less
A partner of its motion and mixed up
With its career. The hurricane is spent,
And the good boat speeds through the
brightening weather;

But is it earth or sea that heaves below?
The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'erstrewn
With ravaged boughs and remnants of the
shore;

And now some islet, loosened from the land,
Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean;
And now the air is full of uptorn canes,
Light strippings from the fan-trees, tamarisks
Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to
them,

All high in the wind. Even so my varied life
Drifts by me; I am young, old, happy, sad,
Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
And all at once: that is, those past conditions
Float back at once on me. If I select
Some special epoch from the crowd, 'tis but
To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,
And only that particular state is present
With all its long-forgotten circumstance
Distinct and vivid as at first—myself
A careless looker-on and nothing more,
Indifferent and amused, but nothing more.
And this is death: I understand it all.

New being waits me; new perceptions must
Be born in me before I plunge therein;
Which last is Death's affair; and while I
speak,

Minute by minute he is filling me
With power; and while my foot is on the
threshold

Of boundless life—the doors unopened yet,
All preparations not complete within—
I turn new knowledge upon old events,
And the effect is . . . but I must not tell;
It is not lawful. Your own turn will come
One day. Wait, Festus! You will die like me.

Festus. 'Tis of that past life that I burn to
hear.

Paracelsus. You wonder it engages me just
now?

In truth, I wonder too. What's life to me?
Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen
Music, and where I tend bliss evermore.
Yet how can I refrain? 'Tis a refined
Delight to view those chances,—one last view.
I am so near the perils I escape,
That I must play with them and turn them
over,

To feel how fully they are past and gone.
Still, it is like, some further cause exists
For this peculiar mood—some hidden pur-
pose;

Did I not tell you something of it, Festus?
I had it fast, but it has somehow slipt
Away from me; it will return anon.

Festus. (Indeed his cheek seems young
again, his voice

Complete with its old tones: that little laugh
Concluding every phrase, with upturned eye,
As though one stooped above his head to
whom

He looked for confirmation and approval,
Where was it gone so long, so well preserved?
Then, the fore-finger pointing as he speaks,
Like one who traces in an open book
The matter he declares; 'tis many a year
Since I remarked it last: and this in him,
But now a ghastly wreck!)

And can it be,
Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last
That worldly things are utter vanity?
That man is made for weakness, and should
wait

In patient ignorance, till God appoint . . .

Paracelsus. Ha, the purpose: the true pur-
pose: that is it!

How could I fail to apprehend! You here,
I thus! But no more trifling: I see all,
I know all: my last mission shall be done
If strength suffice. No trifling! Stay; this
posture

Hardly befits one thus about to speak:
I will arise.

Festus. Nay, Aureole, are you wild?
You cannot leave your couch.

Paracelsus. No help; no help;

Not even your hand. So! there, I stand
once more!

Speak from a couch? I never lectured thus.
My gown—the scarlet lined with fur; now
put

The chain about my neck; my signet-ring
Is still upon my hand, I think—even so;
Last, my good sword; ah, trusty Azoth,
leapest

Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time?
This couch shall be my throne: I bid these
walls

Be consecrate, this wretched cell become
A shrine, for here God speaks to men through
me.

Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.

Festus. I am dumb with wonder.

Paracelsus. Listen, therefore, Festus!
There will be time enough, but none to spare.
I must content myself with telling only
The most important points. You doubtless
feel

That I am happy, Festus; very happy.

Festus. 'Tis no delusion which uplifts him
thus!

Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin?

Paracelsus. Ay, pardoned: yet why par-
doned?

Festus. 'Tis God's praise

That man is bound to seek, and you . . .

Paracelsus. Have lived!

We have to live alone to set forth well
God's praise. 'Tis true, I sinned much, as
I thought,

And in effect need mercy, for I strove
To do that very thing; but, do your best
Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for ever.
Pardon from him, because of praise denied—
Who calls me to himself to exalt himself?
He might laugh as I laugh!

Festus. But all comes

To the same thing. 'Tis fruitless for mankind
To fret themselves with what concerns them
not;

They are no use that way: they should lie
down

Content as God has made them, nor go mad
In thriveless cares to better what is ill.

Paracelsus. No, no; mistake me not; let
me not work

More harm than I have worked! This is
my case:

If I go joyous back to God, yet bring
No offering, if I render up my soul
Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,
If I appear the better to love God
For sin, as one who has no claim on him,—
Be not deceived! It may be surely thus
With me, while higher prizes still await
The mortal persevering to the end.

Beside I am not all so valueless:
I have been something, though too soon I left
Following the instincts of that happy time.

Festus. What happy time? For God's sake,
for man's sake,

What time was happy? All I hope to know
That answer will decide. What happy time?

Paracelsus. When but the time I vowed
myself to man?

Festus. Great God, thy judgment is
inscrutable!

Paracelsus. Yes, it was in me; I was born
for it—

I, Paracelsus: it was mine by right.
Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
Might learn from its own motions that some-
task

Like this awaited it about the world;
Might seek somewhere in this blank life of
ours

For fit delights to stay its longings vast;
And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her
To fill the creature full she dared thus frame
Hungry for joy; and, bravely tyrannous,
Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
Of other joy to follow—bating nought
Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence
To turn the knowledge and the rapture
wring

As an extreme, last boon, from destiny,
Into occasion for new covetings,
New strifes, new triumphs:—doubtless:
strong soul,

Alone, unaided might attain to this,
So glorious is our nature, so august

Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,
 His naked spirit so majestic !
 But this was born in me ; I was made so ;
 Thus much time saved : the feverish appetites,
 The tumult of unproved desire, the unaimed
 Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,
 Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears
 Were saved me ; thus I entered on my course.
 You may be sure I was not all exempt
 From human trouble ; just so much of doubt
 As bade me plant a surer foot upon
 The sun-road, kept my eye unruined 'mid
 The fierce and flashing splendour, set my
 heart
 Trembling so much as warned me I stood
 there
 On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but cast
 Light on a darkling race ; save for that doubt,
 I stood at first where all aspire at last
 To stand : the secret of the world was mine.
 I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,
 Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
 But somehow felt and known in every shift
 And change in the spirit,—nay, in every pore
 Of the body, even,)—what God is, what we
 are,
 What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy
 In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
 From whom all being emanates, all power
 Proceeds ; in whom is life for evermore,
 Yet whom existence in its lowest form
 Includes ; where dwells enjoyment there is
 he :
 With still a flying point of bliss remote,
 A happiness in store afar, a sphere
 Of distant glory in full view ; thus climbs
 Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever.
 The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
 And the earth changes like a human face ;
 The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
 Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches
 bright
 In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
 Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams
 bask—
 God joys therein. The wroth sea's waves
 are edged
 With foam, white as the bitten lip of hate,

When, in the solitary waste, strange groups
 Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,
 Staring together with their eyes on flame—
 God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride.
 Then all is still ; earth is a wintry clod :
 But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress,
 passes
 Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure
 Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
 The withered tree-roots and the cracks of
 frost,
 Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ;
 The grass grows bright, the boughs are
 swoln with blooms
 Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
 The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run
 Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;
 Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
 Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;
 Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls
 Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
 Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek
 Their loves in wood and plain—and God
 renews
 His ancient rapture. Thus he dwells in all,
 From life's minute beginnings, up at last
 To man—the consummation of this scheme
 Of being, the completion of this sphere
 Of life : whose attributes had here and there
 Been scattered o'er the visible world before,
 Asking to be combined, dim fragments meant
 To be united in some wondrous whole,
 Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
 Suggesting some one creature yet to make,
 Some point where all those scattered rays
 should meet
 Convergent in the faculties of man.
 Power—neither put forth blindly, nor con-
 trolled
 Calmly by perfect knowledge ; to be used
 At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear :
 Knowledge—not intuition, but the slow
 Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,
 Strengthened by love : love—not serenely pure,
 But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown
 plant
 Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth
 changed buds

And softer stains, unknown in happier climes;
Love which endures and doubts and is oppressed

And cherished, suffering much and much sustained,

And blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
A half-enlightened, often-chequered trust :—
Hints and previsions of which faculties,
Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
The inferior natures, and all lead up higher,
All shape out dimly the superior race,
The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
And man appears at last. So far the seal
Is put on life ; one stage of being complete,
One scheme wound up : and from the grand
result

A supplementary reflux of light,
Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
Each back step in the circle. Not alone
For their possessor dawn those qualities,
But the new glory mixes with the heaven
And earth ; man, once descried, imprints for
ever

His presence on all lifeless things : the winds
Are henceforth voices, wailing or a shout,
A querulous mutter or a quick gay laugh,
Never a senseless gust now man is born.

The herded pines commune and have deep
thoughts,

A secret they assemble to discuss

When the sun drops behind their trunks which
glare

Like grates of hell : the peerless cup afloat
Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
Swims bearing high above her head : no bird
Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above
That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking
eye.

The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops
With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,
Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face :
—And this to fill us with regard for man.
With apprehension of his passing worth,
Desire to work his proper nature out,
And ascertain his rank and final place,

For these things tend still upward, progress is
The law of life, man is not Man as yet.

Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly
forth,

While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows : when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,
Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till
then,

I say, begins man's general infancy.

For wherefore make account of feverish starts
Of restless members of a dormant whole,
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body
Slumbers as in a grave? Oh long ago
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids
astir,

The peaceful mouth disturbed ; half-uttered
speech

Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand
clenched stronger,

As it would pluck a lion by the jaw ;

The glorious creature laughed out even in
sleep !

But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,
Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,
He shall start up and stand on his own earth,
Then shall his long triumphant march begin,
Thence shall his being date,—thus wholly
roused,

What he achieves shall be set down to him.

When all the race is perfected alike
As man, that is ; all tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus far :
But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach ; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before
In that eternal circle life pursues.

For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast
supplant

Their proper joys and griefs ; they grow too
great

For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which
fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good : while
peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round
Who should be saved by them and joined
with them.
Such was my task, and I was born to it—
Free, as I said but now, from much that chains
Spirits, high-dowered but limited and vexed
By a divided and delusive aim,
A shadow mocking a reality
Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse
The fitting mimic called up by itself,
And so remains perplexed and nigh put out
By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.
I, from the first, was never cheated thus ;
I never fashioned out a fancied good
Distinct from man's ; a service to be done,
A glory to be ministered unto
With powers put forth at man's expense,
withdrawn
From labouring in his behalf ; a strength
Denied that might avail him. I cared not
Lest his success ran counter to success
Elsewhere : for God is glorified in man,
And to man's glory vowed I soul and limb.
Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,
I failed : I gazed on power till I grew blind.
Power ; I could not take my eyes from that :
That only, I thought, should be preserved,
increased
At any risk, displayed, struck out at once—
The sign and note and character of man.
I saw no use in the past : only a scene
Of degradation, ugliness and tears,
The record of disgraces best forgotten,
A sullen page in human chronicles
Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
Should not stand all-sufficient even now,
Or why his annals should be forced to tell
That once the tide of light, about to break
Upon the world, was sealed within its spring :
I would have had one day, one moment's space,
Change man's condition, push each slumber-
ing claim

Of mastery o'er the elemental world
At once to full maturity, then roll
Oblivion o'er the work, and hide from man
What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear
child
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the past
Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure
By which thou hast the earth : for thee the
present
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
Beside that past's own shade when, in relief,
Its brightness shall stand out : nor yet on thee
Shall burst the future, as successive zones
Of several wonder open on some spirit
Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven :
But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,
While hope and fear and love shall keep thee
man !
All this was hid from me : as one by one
My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circum-
scribed,
As actual good within my reach decreased,
While obstacles sprung up this way and that
To keep me from effecting half the sum,
Small as it proved ; as objects, mean within
The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,
Itself a match for my concentrated strength—
What wonder if I saw no way to shun
Despair? The power I sought for man,
seemed God's.
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
A strange adventure made me know, one sin
Had spotted my career from its uprise ;
I saw Aprile—my Aprile there !
And as the poor melodious wretch dis-
burthened
His heart, and moaned his weakness in my
ear,
I learned my own deep error ; love's undoing
Taught me the worth of love in man's
estate,
And what proportion love should hold with
power
In his right constitution ; love preceding
Power, and with much power, always much
more love ;
Love still too straitened in his present means,
And earnest for new power to set love free.

I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned :

And thus, when men received with stupid wonder

My first revealings, would have worshipped me,
And I despised and loathed their proffered praise—

When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge
For past credulity in casting shame

On my real knowledge, and I hated them—

It was not strange I saw no good in man,

To overbalance all the wear and waste

Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born

To prosper in some better sphere : and why?

In my own heart love had not been made wise

To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,

To know even hate is but a mask of love's,

To see a good in evil, and a hope

In ill-success ; to sympathize, be proud

Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim

Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,

Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts ;

All with a touch of nobleness, despite

Their error, upward tending all though weak,

Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,

But dream of him, and guess where he may be,

And do their best to climb and get to him.

All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men

Regard me, and the poet dead long ago

Who loved too rashly ; and shape forth a third

And better-tempered spirit, warned by both :

As from the over-radiant star too mad

To drink the life-springs, beamless thence
itself—

And the dark orb which borders the abyss,

Ingulfed in icy night,—might have its course

A temperate and equidistant world.

Meanwhile, I have done well, though not
all well.

As yet men cannot do without contempt ;

'Tis for their good, and therefore fit awhile

That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,

Rather than praise the strong and true, in me :

But after, they will know me. If I stoop

Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,

It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp

Close to my breast ; its splendour, soon or late,

Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day.
You understand me ? I have said enough ?

Festus. Now die, dear Aureole !

Paracelsus. Festus, let my hand—

This hand, lie in your own, my own true
friend !

Aprile ! Hand in hand with you, Aprile !

Festus. And this was Paracelsus !

NOTE.

THE liberties I have taken with my subject are very trifling ; and the reader may slip the foregoing scenes between the leaves of any memoir of Paracelsus he pleases, by way of commentary. To prove this, I subjoin a popular account, translated from the "Biographic Universelle, Paris," 1822, which I select, not as the best, certainly, but as being at hand, and sufficiently concise for my purpose. I also append a few notes, in order to correct those parts which do not bear out my own view of the character of Paracelsus ; and have incorporated with them a notice or two, illustrative of the poem itself.

"PARACELSUS (Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus ab Hohenheim) was born in 1493 at Einsiedeln, (1) a little town in the canton of Schwyz, some leagues distant from Zurich. His father, who exercised the profession of medicine at Villach in Carinthia, was nearly related to George Bombast de Hohenheim, who became afterward Grand Prior of the Order of Malta : consequently Paracelsus could not spring from the dregs of the people, as Thomas Erastus, his sworn enemy, pretends.* It appears that his elementary education was much neglected, and that he spent part of his youth in pursuing the life common to the travelling *literati* of the age ; that is to say, in wandering from country to country, predicting the future by astrology and chiro-mancy, evoking apparitions, and practising the

* I shall disguise M. Renaudin's next sentence a little. "Hic (Erastus sc.) Paracelsum trimum a milite quodam, alii a sue exectum ferunt : constat imberbem illum, mulierumque osorem fuisse." A standing High-Dutch joke in those days at the expense of a number of learned men, as may be seen by referring to such rubbish at Melander's "Jocoseria," etc. In the prints from his portrait by Tinoretto, painted a year before his death, Paracelsus is *barbatus*, at all events. But Erastus was never without a good reason for his faith—e.g. "Helvetium fuisse (Paracelsum) vix credo, vix enim ea regio tale monstrum ediderit." (De Medicina Nova.)

different operations of magic and alchemy, in which he had been initiated whether by his father or by various ecclesiastics, among the number of whom he particularizes the Abbot Tritheim, (?) and many German bishops.

"As Paracelsus displays everywhere an ignorance of the rudiments of the most ordinary knowledge, it is not probable that he ever studied seriously in the schools: he contented himself with visiting the Universities of Germany, France, and Italy; and in spite of his boasting himself to have been the ornament of those institutions, there is no proof of his having legally acquired the title of Doctor, which he assumes. It is only known that he applied himself long, under the direction of the wealthy Sigismund Fugger of Schwatz, to the discovery of the *Magnum Opus*.

"Paracelsus travelled among the mountains of Bohemia, in the East, and in Sweden, in order to inspect the labours of the miners, to be initiated in the mysteries of the oriental adepts, and to observe the secrets of nature and the famous mountain of loadstone. (?) He professes also to have visited Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Poland, and Transylvania; everywhere communicating freely, not merely with the physicians, but the old women, charlatans and conjurers of these several lands. It is even believed that he extended his journeyings as far as Egypt and Tartary, and that he accompanied the son of the Khan of the Tartars to Constantinople, for the purpose of obtaining the secret of the tincture of Trismegistus from a Greek who inhabited that capital.

"The period of his return to Germany is unknown: it is only certain that, at about the age of thirty-three, many astonishing cures which he wrought on eminent personages procured him such a celebrity, that he was called in 1526, on the recommendation of Ecolampadius, (4) to fill a chair of physic and surgery at the University of Basil. There Paracelsus began by burning publicly in the amphitheatre the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring his auditors that the latches of his shoes were more instructed than those two physicians; that all Universities, all writers put together, were less gifted than the hairs of his beard and of the crown of his head; and that, in a word, he was to be regarded as the legitimate monarch of medicine. "You shall follow me," cried he, "you, Avicenna, Galen, Rhasis, Montagnana, Mesues, you, gentlemen of Paris, Montpellier, Germany, Cologne, Vienna," and whomsoever

* Frastus, who relates this, here oddly remarks, "Intrum quod non et Caraniantos, Indos et Anglos adiunxit." Not so wonderful neither, if we believe what another adversary "had heard somewhere,"—that all Paracelsus' system came of his pillaging, "Anglium quendam, Rogerium Lacchonem."

the Rhine and Danube nourish; you who inhabit the isles of the sea; you, likewise, Dalmatians, Athenians; thou, Arab; thou, Greek; thou, Jew: all shall follow me, and the monarchy shall be mine. †

"But at Basil it was speedily perceived that the new Professor was no better than an egregious quack. Scarcely a year elapsed before his lectures had fairly driven away an audience incapable of comprehending their emphatic jargon. That which above all contributed to sully his reputation was the debauched life he led. According to the testimony of Oporinus, who lived two years in his intimacy, Paracelsus scarcely ever ascended the lecture-desk unless half drunk, and only dictated to his secretaries when in a state of intoxication: if summoned to attend the sick, he rarely proceeded thither without previously drenching himself with wine. He was accustomed to retire to bed without changing his clothes; sometimes he spent the night in pot-houses with peasants, and in the morning knew no longer what he was about; and, nevertheless, up to the age of twenty-five his only drink had been water. (5)

"At length, fearful of being punished for a serious outrage on a magistrate, (6) he fled from Basil towards the end of the year 1527, and took refuge in Alsatia, whither he caused Oporinus to follow with his chemical apparatus.

"He then entered once more upon the career of ambulatory theosophist. ‡ Accordingly we find him at Colmar in 1528; at Nuremberg in 1529; at St. Gall in 1531; at Pfeffers in 1535; and at Augsburg in 1536: he next made some stay in Moravia, where he still further compromised his reputation by the loss of many distinguished patients, which compelled him

† See his works *passim*. I must give one specimen:—Somebody had been styling him "Luther alter." "And why not?" (he asks, as he well might).

"Luther is abundantly learned, therefore you hate him and me; but we are at least a match for you.—Nam et contra vos et vestros universos principes Avicennam, Galenum, Aristotelem, etc. me satis superque munium esse novi. Et vertex iste meus calvus ac depilis multo plura et sublimiora novit quam vester vel Avicenna vel universæ academiz. Proditte, et signum date, qui viri sitis, quid roboris habeatis? quid autem sitis? Doctores et magistri, pediculos pectentes et fricantes podicem." (Frag. Med.)

‡ "So migratory a life could afford Paracelsus but little leisure for application to books, and accordingly he informs us that for the space of ten years he never opened a single volume, and that his whole medical library was not composed of six sheets: in effect, the inventory drawn up after his death states that the only books which he left were the *Evangelium*, the New Testament, the Commentaries of St. Jerome on the Gospels, a printed volume on Medicine, and seven manuscripts."

to betake himself to Vienna; from thence he passed into Hungary; and in 1538 was at Villach, where he dedicated his 'Chronicle' to the States of Carinthia, in gratitude for the many kindnesses with which they had honoured his father. Finally, from Mindelheim, which he visited in 1540, Paracelsus proceeded to Salzburg, where he died in the Hospital of St. Stephen (*Sebastian* is meant), Sept. 24, 1541."—(Here follows a criticism on his writings, which I omit.)

(1) *Paracelsus* would seem to be a fantastic version of *Von Hohenheim*; Einsiedeln is the Latinized Eremus, whence *Paracelsus* is sometimes called, as in the correspondence of Erasmus, *Eremita*; *Bombast*, his proper name, probably acquired, from the characteristic phraseology of his lectures, that unlucky signification which it has ever since retained.

(2) Then Bishop of Spanheim, and residing at Würzburg in Franconia; a town situated in a grassy fertile country, whence its name, *Herbipolis*. He was much visited there by learned men, as may be seen by his "Epistolæ Familiæres," Hag. 1536: among others, by his staunch friend *Cornelius Agrippa*, to whom he dates thence, in 1510, a letter in answer to the dedicatory epistle prefixed to the treatise *De Occult. Philosoph.*, which last contains the following ominous allusion to *Agrippa's* sojourn: "Quum nuper tecum, R. P. in cœnobio tuo apud *Herbipolim* aliquamdiu conversatus, multa de chymicis, multa de magicis, multa de cabalisticis, cæterisque quæ adhuc in occulto delitescunt, arcanis scientiis atque artibus una contulissessemus," etc.

(3) "Inexplebilis illa aviditas naturæ perscrutandi secreta et reconditarum supellectile scientiarum animum locupletandi, uno eodemque loco diu persistere non patiebatur, sed *Mercurii* instar, omnes terras, nationes et urbes perlustrandi igniculos supponebat, ut cum viris naturæ scrutatoribus, chymicis præsertim, ore tenus conferret, et quæ diuturnis laboribus nocturnisque vigiliis invenerat una vel altera communicatione obtineret." (*Bitiskius* in *Præfat.*) "Patris auxilio primum, deinde propria industria docuissimos viros in Germania, Italia, Gallia, Hispania, aliisque Europæ regionibus, nactus est præceptores; quorum liberali doctrina, et potissimum propria inquisitione ut qui esset ingenio acutissimo ac fere divino, tantum profecit, ut multi testati sint, in universa philosophia, tam ardua, tam arcana et abdita eruisse mortalium æminem." (*Melch. Adam*, in *Vit. Germ. Medic.*) "*Paracelsus* qui in intima naturæ viscera sic penitus introierit, metallorum stirpiumque vires et facultates tam incredibili

ingenii acumine exploraverit ac perviderit, ad morbos omnes vel desperatos et opinione hominum insanabiles percurandum; ut cum *Theophrasto* nata primum medicina perfecta que videtur." (*Petri Rami Orat. de Basilea.*) His passion for wandering is best described in his own words: "Ecce amatorem adolescentem difficillimi itineris haud piget, ut venustam saltem puellam vel fœminam aspiciat: quanto minus nobilissimarum artium amore laboris ac cujuslibet tædiis pigebit?" etc. ("Defensiones Septem adversus æmulos suos," 1573. Def. 4ta. "De peregrinationibus et exilio.")

(4) The reader may remember that it was in conjunction with *Æcolampadius*, then Divinity Professor at Basil, that *Zuinglius* published in 1528 an answer to Luther's Confession of Faith; and that both proceeded in company to the subsequent conference with Luther and Melancthon at Marburg. Their letters fill a large volume.—"D.D. *Johannis Æcolampadii et Huldrici Zuinglii Epistolarum lib. quatuor.*" Bas. 1536. It must be also observed that *Zuinglius* began to preach in 1516, and at Zurich in 1519, and that in 1525 the Mass was abolished in the cantons. The tenets of *Æcolampadius* were supposed to be more evangelical than those up to that period maintained by the glorious German, and our brave Bishop Fisher attacked them as the fouler heresy:—"About this time arose out of Luther's school one *Æcolampadius*, like a mighty and fierce giant; who, as his master had gone beyond the Church, went beyond his master (or else it had been impossible he could have been reputed the better scholar), who denied the real presence; him, this worthy champion (the Bishop) sets upon, and with five books (like so many smooth stones taken out of the river that doth always run with living water) slays the *Phisiite*; which five books were written in the year of our Lord 1526, at which time he had governed the see of Rochester twenty years." (*Life of Bishop Fisher*, 1655.) Now, there is no doubt of the Protestantism of *Paracelsus*, *Erasmus*, *Agrippa*, etc., but the nonconformity of *Paracelsus* was always scandalous. *L. Crasso* ("Elogj d'Humini Letterati," Ven. 1666) informs us that his books were excommunicated by the Church. *Quenstedt* (de *Patr. Doct.*) affirms "nec tantum novæ medicinæ, verum etiam novæ theologiæ autor est." *Delrio*, in his *Disquisit. Magicar.*, classes him among those "partim atheos, partim hæreticos" (lib. i. cap. 3). "Omni tamen multa theologica in ejusdem scriptis plane atheismum olent, ac durissime sonant in auribus vere Christiani." (*D. Gabrielis Claudi Schediasma de Tinct. Univ. Norimb.* 1736.) I shall only add one more authority:—"Oporinus dicit se (*Paracel-*

sum) aliquando Lutherum et Papam. non minus quam nunc Galenum et Hippocratem redacturum in ordinem minabatur, neque enim eorum qui bacterus in scripturam sacram scripsissent, sive veteres, sive recentiores, quenquam scripturæ nucleum recte eruisse, sed circa corticem et quasi membranam tantum hæere." (Th. Erastus, Disputat. de Med. Nova.) These and similar notions had their due effect on Oporinus, who, says Zuingerus, in his "Theatrum," "longum vale dixit ei (Paracelso), ne ob præceptoris, alioqui amicissimi, horrendas blasphemias ipse quoque aliquando pœnas Deo Opt. Max. lueret."

(5) His defenders allow the drunkenness. Take a sample of their excuses: "Genus hoc, non viri vitium est, a Taciti seculo ad nostrum usque non interrupto filo devolutum, sinceritati forte Germanæ cœvum, et nescio an aliquo consanguinitatis vinculo junctum. (Bitiskius.) The other charges were chiefly trumped up by Oporinus: "Domi, quod Oporinus amanuensis ejus sæpe narravit, nunquam nisi potus ad explicanda sua accessit, atque in medio conclavi ad columnam *περφορμένος* adsistens, apprehenso manibus capulo ensis, cujus *κόλωνα* hospitium præbuit, ut aiunt, spiritui familiari, imaginationes aut concepta sua protulit:—alii illud quod in capulo habuit, ab ipso Azoth appellatum, medicinam fuisse præstantissimam aut lapidem Philosophicum putant." (Melch. Adam.) This famous sword was no laughing-matter in those days, and it is now a material feature in the popular idea of Paracelsus. I recollect a couple of allusions to it in our own literature, at the moment.

Ne had been known the Danish Gonswart,
Or Paracelsus with his long sword.

'Volpone,' act ii. scene 2.

Bumbastus kept a devil's bird
Shut in the pummel of his sword,
That taught him all the cunning pranks
Of past and future mountebanks.

'Hudibras,' part ii. cant. 3.

This Azoth was simply "*laudanum suum*." But in his time he was commonly believed to possess the double tincture—the power of curing diseases and transmuting metals. Oporinus often witnessed, as he declares, both these effects, as did also Franciscus, the servant of Paracelsus, who describes, in a letter to Neander, a successful projection at which he was present, and the results of which, good golden ingots, were confided to his keeping. For the other quality, let the following notice vouch among many others:—"Degebat Theophrastus Norimbergæ procius a mendentibus illius urbis, et vaniloquus deceptorque proclamatus, qui, ut

laboranti famæ subveniat, viros quosdam auctoritatis summæ in Republica illa adit, et infamæ amoliendæ, artique suæ asserendæ, specimen ejus pollicetur editurum, nullo stipendio vel accepto pretio, horum faciles præbentium aures jussu elephantiacos aliquot, a communiõne hominum cæterorum segregatos, et in valedudinarium detrusos, alieno arbitrio eliguntur, quos virtute singulari remedium suorum Theophrastus a fœda Græcorum lepra mundat, pristinaeque sanitati restituit; conservat illustre barum curationum urbs in archivis suis testimonium." (Bitiskius.)* It is to be remarked that Oporinus afterwards repented of his treachery: "Sed resipuit tandem, et quem vivum convitiis insectatus fuerat defunctum veneratione prosequutus, infames famæ præceptoris morsus in remorsus conscientiaæ conversi pœnitentia, heu nimis tarda, vulnera clausere exanimi quæ spiranti inflixerant." For these "bites" of Oporinus, see Disputat. Erasti, and Andrea Jocisci "Oratio de Vit. ob. Opori;" for the "remorse," Mic. Toxita in pref. Testamenti, and Conringius (otherwise an enemy of Paracelsus), who says it was contained in a letter from Oporinus to Doctor Vegeus.†

Whatever the moderns may think of these marvellous attributes, the title of Paracelsus to be considered the father of modern chemistry is indisputable. Gerardus Vossius, "De Philos^o et Philos^o sectis," thus prefaces the ninth section of cap. 9, "De Chymia"—"Nobilem hanc medicinæ partem, diu sepultam avorum ætate, quasi ab orco revocavit Th. Paracelsus." I suppose many hints lie scattered in his neglected books, which clever appropriators have since developed with applause. Thus, it appears from his treatise "De Phlebotomia," and elsewhere, that he had discovered the circulation of the blood and the sanguification of the heart; as did after him Realdo Colombo, and still more perfectly Andrea Cesalpino of Arezzo, as Bayle and Bartoli observe. Even

* The premature death of Paracelsus casts no manner of doubt on the fact of his having possessed the Elixir Vitæ: the alchemists have abundant reasons to adduce, from which I select the following, as explanatory of a property of the Tincture not calculated on by its votaries:—"Objectionem illam, quod Paracelsus non fuerit longævus, nonnulli quoque solvunt per rationes physicas: vitæ nimirum abbreviatiõnem fortasse talibus accidere posse, ob Tincturam frequentiore ac largiore dosi sumtam, dum a summe efficaci et penetrabili hujus virtute calor innatus quasi suffocatur." (Gabrielis Claudi Schediasma.)

† For a good defence of Paracelsus I refer the reader to Olav Borrichius' treatise—"Hermetis etc. Sapiaentia vindicata," 1674. Or, if he is so more learned than myself in such matters, I mention simply that Paracelsus introduced the use of Mercury and Laudanum.

Lavater quotes a passage from his work "De Natura Rerum," on practical Physiognomy, in which the definitions and axioms are precise enough: he adds, "though an astrological enthusiast, a man of prodigious genius." See Holcroft's translation, vol. iii. p. 179—"The Eyes." While on the subject of the writings of Paracelsus, I may explain a passage in the third part of the Poem. He was, as I have said, unwilling to publish his works, but in effect did publish a vast number. Valentius (in Præfat. in Paramyr.) declares "quod ad librorum Paracelsi copiam attinet, audio, a Germanis prope trecentos recenseri." "O fœcunditas ingenii!" adds he, appositely. Many of these were, however, spurious; and Fred. Bitiskius gives his good edition (3 vols. fol. Gen. 1658) "rejectis suppositis solo ipsius nomine superbientibus quorum ingens circumfertur numerus." The rest were "charissimum et pretiosissimum authoris pignus, extorsum potius ab illo quam obtentum." "Jam minime eo volente atque jubente hæc ipsius scripta in lucem prodisse videntur; quippe quæ muro inclusa ipso absente, servi cujusdam indicio, furto surrepta atque sublata sunt," says Valen-

tius. These have been the study of a host of commentators, amongst whose labours are most notable, Petri Severini, "Idea Medicinæ Philosophiæ. Bas. 1571;" Mic. Toxetis, "Onomastica. Arg. 1574;" Dornei, "Dict. Parac. Franc. 1584;" and "Pl Philos^æ Compendium cum scholiis auctore Leone Suavio. Paris." (This last, a good book.)

(6) A disgraceful affair. One Liechtenfels, a canon, having been rescued *in extremis* by the "laudanum" of Paracelsus, refused the stipulated fee, and was supported in his meanness by the authorities, whose interference Paracelsus would not brook. His own liberality was allowed by his bitterest foes, who found a ready solution of his indifference to profit in the aforesaid sword-handle and its guest. His freedom from the besetting sin of a profession he abhorred—(as he curiously says somewhere, "Quis quæso deinceps honorem deferat professione tali, quæ a tam facinorosis nebulonibus obitur et administratur?")—is recorded in his epitaph, which affirms—"Bona sua in pauperes distribuenda collocandaque erogavit," *honoravit, or ordinavit*—for accounts differ.

STRAFFORD;

A TRAGEDY.

1837.

[Acted 1st May 1837 at Covent Garden Theatre, Mr. Macready as Strafford and Miss Helen Faucit as Lady Carlisle.]

DEDICATED, IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION,

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY.

LONDON: *April 23, 1837.*

STRAFFORD.

PERSONS.

CHARLES I.
 EARL OF HOLLAND.
 LORD SAVILE.
 SIR HENRY VANE.
 WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORTH, Earl
 of STRAFFORD.
 JOHN PYM.
 JOHN HAMPDEN.
 The younger VANE.
 DENZIL HOLLIS.
 BENJAMIN RUDYARD.
 NATHANIEL FIENNES.
 EARL OF LOUDON.
 MAXWELL, *Usher of the Black Rod.*
 BALFOUR, *Constable of the Tower.*
A Puritan.
 QUEEN HENRIETTA.
 LUCY PERCY, Countess of Carlisle.

*Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents
 of Strafford, Secretaries, Officers of the
 Court, &c. Two of Strafford's children.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A House near Whitehall.* HAMP-
 DEN, HOLLIS, the younger VANE, RUD-
 YARD, FIENNES and many of the
*Presbyterian Party: LOUDON and other
 Scots Commissioners.*

Vane. I say, if he be here—

Rudyard. (And he is here!)—

Hollis. For England's sake let every man
 be still

Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,
 Till Pym rejoin us! Rudyard! Henry Vane!
 One rash conclusion may decide our course
 And with it England's fate—think—England's
 fate!

Hampden, for England's sake they should be
 still!

Vane. You say so, Hollis? Well, I must
 be still.

It is indeed too bitter that one man,
 Any one man's mere presence, should sus-
 pend

England's combined endeavour: little need
 To name him!

Rudyard. For you are his brother, Hollis!

Hampden. Shame on you, Rudyard! time
 to tell him that,

When he forgets the Mother of us all.

Rudyard. Do I forget her?

Hampden. You talk idle hate
 Against her foe: is that so strange a thing?

Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs?

A Puritan. The Philistine strode, cursing
 as he went:

But David—five smooth pebbles from the
 brook

Within his scrip . . .

Rudyard. Be you as still as David!
 Fiennes. Here's Rudyard not ashamed to
 wag a tongue

Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments ;
Why, when the last sat, Wentworth sat with
us !

Rudyard. Let's hope for news of them now
he returns—

He that was safe in Ireland, as we thought !
—But I'll abide Pym's coming.

Vane. Now, by Heaven,
Then may be cool who can, silent who will—
Some have a gift that way ! Wentworth is here,
Here, and the King's safe closeted with him
Ere this. And when I think on all that's past
Since that man left us, how his single arm
Rolled the advancing good of England back
And set the woeful past up in its place,
Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be,—
How that man has made firm the fickle King
(Hampden, I will speak out !)—in aught he
feared

To venture on before ; taught tyranny
Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,
To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close
That strangled agony bleeds mute to death ;
How he turns Ireland to a private stage
For training infant villainies, new ways
Of wringing treasure out 'of tears and blood,
Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark
To try how much man's nature can endure
—If he dies under it, what harm ? if not,
Why, one more trick is added to the rest
Worth a king's knowing, and what Ireland
bears

England may learn to bear :—how all this
while

That man has set himself to one dear task,
The bringing Charles to relish more and more
Power, power without law, power and blood
too

—Can I be still ?

Hampden. For that you should be still.

Vane. Oh Hampden, then and now ! The
year he left us,

The People in full Parliament could wrest
The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King ;
And now, he'll find in an obscure small room
A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men
That take up England's cause : England is
here !

Hampden. And who despairs of England ?

Rudyard. That do I,
If Wentworth comes to rule her. I am sick
To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,
The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,
May yet be longed-for back again. I say,
I do despair.

Vane. And, Rudyard, I'll say this—
Which all true men say after me, not loud
But solemnly and as you'd say a prayer !
This King, who treads our England underfoot,
Has just so much . . . it may be fear or craft,
As bids him pause at each fresh outrage ;
friends,
He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,
Some voice to ask, "Why shrink ? Am I
not by ?"

Now, one whom England loved for serving
her,

Found in his heart to say, "I know where best
"The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans
"Upon me when you trample." Witness, you !
So Wentworth heartened Charles, so England
fell.

But inasmuch as life is hard to take
From England . . .

Many Voices. Go on, Vane ! 'Tis well
said, Vane !

Vane. —Who has not so forgotten Runny-
mead !—

Voices. 'Tis well and bravely spoken,
Vane ! Go on !

Vane. —There are some little signs of late
she knows

The ground no place for her. She glances
round,
Wentworth has dropped the hand, is gone
his way

On other service : what if she arise ?

No ! the King beckons, and beside him stands
The same bad man once more, with the same
smile

And the same gesture. Now shall England
crouch,

Or catch at us and rise ?

Voices. The Renegade !

Haman ! Ahithophel !

Hampden. Gentlemen of the North,

It was not thus the night your claims were urged,

And we pronounced the League and Covenant,
The cause of Scotland, England's cause as well :

Vane there, sat motionless the whole night through.

Vane. Hampden !

Fiennes. Stay, Vane !

Loudon. Be just and patient, Vane !

Vane. Mind how you counsel patience,
Loudon ! you

Have still a Parliament, and this your League
To back it ; you are free in Scotland still :
While we are brothers, hope's for England yet.
But know you wherefore Wentworth comes ?
to quench

This last of hopes ? that he brings war with
him ?

Know you the man's self ? what he dares ?

Loudon. We know,

All know—'tis nothing new.

Vane. And what's new, then,
In calling for his life ? Why, Pym himself—
You must have heard — ere Wentworth
dropped our cause

He would see Pym first ; there were many more
Strong on the people's side and friends of his,
Eliot that's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,
But for these Wentworth cared not ; only, Pym
He would see—Pym and he were sworn, 'tis
said,

To live and die together ; so, they met
At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are sure,
was long,

Specious enough, the devil's argument
Lost nothing on his lips ; he'd have Pym own
A patriot could not play a purer part
Than follow in his track ; they two combined
Might put down England. Well, Pym heard
him out ;

One glance—you know Pym's eye—one word
was all :

" You leave us, Wentworth ! while your
head is on,

" I'll not leave you."

Hampden. Has he left Wentworth,
then ?

Has England lost him ? Will you let him
speak,

Or put your crude surmises in his mouth ?

Away with this ! Will you have Pym or Vane ?

Voices. Wait Pym's arrival ! Pym shall
speak.

Hampden. Meanwhile

Let Loudon read the Parliament's report

From Edinburgh : our last hope, as Vane says,

Is in the stand it makes. Loudon !

Vane. No, no !

Silent I can be : not indifferent !

Hampden. Then each keep silence, pray-
ing God to spare

His anger, cast not England quite away

In this her visitation !

A Puritan. Seven years long

The Midianite drove Israel into dens

And caves. Till God sent forth a mighty man,

PYM enters.

Even Gideon !

Pym. Wentworth's come : nor sickness,
care,

The ravaged body nor the ruined soul,
More than the winds and waves that beat his
ship,

Could keep him from the King. He has not
reached

Whitehall : they've hurried up a Council there
To lose no time and find him work enough.

Where's Loudon ? your Scots' Parliament . . .

Loudon. Holds firm :
We were about to read reports.

Pym. The King
Has just dissolved your Parliament.

Loudon and other Scots. Great God !
An oath-breaker ! Stand by us, England,
then !

Pym. The King's too sanguine ; doubt-
less Wentworth's here ;

But still some little form might be kept up.

Hampden. Now speak, Vane ! Rudyard,
you had much to say !

Hollis. The rumour's false, then . . .

Pym. Ay, the Court gives out
His own concerns have brought him back :

I know

Tis the King calls him. Wentworth super-
sedes

The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons
Whose part is played; there's talk enough,
by this,—

Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is now
To turn the record's last and bloody leaf .
Which, chronicling a nation's great despair,
Tells they were long rebellious, and their lord
Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,
He drew the sword on them and reigned in
peace.

Laud's laying his religion on the Scots
Was the last gentle entry: the new page
Shall run, the King thinks, "Wentworth
thrust it down

"At the sword's point."

A Puritan. I'll do your bidding, Pym,
England's and God's—one blow!

Pym. A goodly thing—
We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing
To right that England. Heaven grows dark
above:

Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall,
To say how well the English spirit comes out
Beneath it! All have done their best, indeed,
From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
To the least here: and who, the least one here,
When she is saved (for her redemption dawns
Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns—it dawns)
Who'd give at any price his hope away
Of being named along with the Great Men?
We would not—no, we would not give that up!

Hampden. And one name shall be dearer
than all names.

When children, yet unborn, are taught that
name

After their fathers',—taught what matchless
man . . .

Pym. . . . Saved England? What if
Wentworth's should be still
That name?

Rudyard and others. We have just said it,
Pym! His death

Saves her! We said it—there's no way beside!
I'll do God's bidding, Pym! They struck
down Joab

And purged the land.

Vane. No villanous striking-down!
Rudyard. No, a calm vengeance: let the
whole land rise

And shout for it. No Feltons!

Pym. Rudyard, no!

England rejects all Feltons; most of all
Since Wentworth . . . Hampden, say the
trust again

Of England in her servants—but I'll think
You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,
Spite of the past, Wentworth rejoins you,
friends!

Vane and others. Wentworth? Apostate!
Judas! Double-dyed

A traitor! Is it Pym, indeed . . .

Pym. . . . Who says
Vane never knew that Wentworth, loved that
man,

Was used to stroll with him, arm locked in arm,
Along the streets to see the people pass,
And read in every island-countenance

Fresh argument for God against the King,—
Never sat down, say, in the very house
Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble
thoughts,

(You've joined us, Hampden—Hollis, you as
well,)

And then left talking over Gracchus' death . . .

Vane. To frame, we know it well, the
choicest clause

In the Petition of Right: he framed such clause
One month before he took at the King's hand
His Northern Presidency, which that Bill
Denounced.

Pym. Too true! Never more, never
more

Walked we together! Most alone I went.
I have had friends—all here are fast my
friends—

But I shall never quite forget that friend.
And yet it could not but be real in him!

You, Vane,—you, Rudyard, have no right to
trust

To Wentworth: but can no one hope with me?
Hampden, will Wentworth dare shed English
blood

Like water?

Hampden. Ireland is Acelanda.

Pym. Will he turn Scotland to a hunting-ground
To please the King, now that he knows the King?

The People or the King? and that King, Charles!

Hampden. Pym, all here know you: you'll not set your heart

On any baseless dream. But say one deed
Of Wentworth's since he left us . . .

[*Shouting without.*

Vane. There! he comes,
And they shout for him! Wentworth's at
Whitehall,

The King embracing him, now, as we speak,
And he, to be his match in courtesies,
Taking the whole war's risk upon himself,
Now, while you tell us here how changed he
is!

Hear you?

Pym. And yet if 'tis a dream, no more,
That Wentworth chose their side, and brought
the King

To love it as though Laud had loved it first,
And the Queen after;—that he led their cause
Calm to success, and kept it spotless through,
So that our very eyes could look upon
The travail of our souls, and close content
That violence, which something mars even
right

Which sanctions it, had taken off no grace
From its serene regard. Only a dream!

Hampden. We meet here to accomplish
certain good

By obvious means, and keep tradition up
Of free assemblages, else obsolete,
In this poor chamber: nor without effect
Has friend met friend to counsel and confirm,
As, listening to the beats of England's heart,
We spoke its wants to Scotland's prompt reply
By these her delegates. Remains alone
That word grow deed, as with God's help it
shall—

But with the devil's hindrance, who doubts too?
Looked we or no that tyranny should turn
Her engines of oppression to their use?
Whereof, suppose the worst be Wentworth
here—

VOL. I.

Shall we break off the tactics which succeed
In drawing out our formidablest foe,
Let bickering and disunion take their place?
Or count his presence as our conquest's proof,
And keep the old arms at their steady play?
Proceed to England's work! Fiennes, read
the list!

Fiennes. Ship-money is refused or fiercely
paid

In every county, save the northern parts
Where Wentworth's influence . . .

[*Shouting.*

Vane. I, in England's name,
Declare her work, this way, at end! Till now,
Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best.
We English had free leave to think; till now,
We had a shadow of a Parliament
In Scotland. But all's changed: they change
the first,

They try brute-force for law, they, first of
all . . .

Voices. Good! Talk enough! The old
true hearts with Vane!

Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her,
there's no act
Serves England!

Voices. Vane for England!

Pym. Pym should be
Something to England. I seek Wentworth,
friends.

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

Lady CARLISLE and WENTWORTH.

Wentworth. And the King?

Lady Carlisle. Wentworth, learn
on me! Sit then!

I'll tell you all; this horrible fatigue
Will kill you.

Wentworth. No;—or, Lucy, just your
arm;

I'll not sit till I've cleared this up with him:
After that, rest. The King?

Lady Carlisle. Confides in you.

Wentworth. Why? or, why now?—They
have kind throats, the knaves!
Shout for me—they!

Lady Carlisle. You come so strangely soon :
 Yet we took measures to keep off the crowd—
 Did they shout for you?
Wentworth. Wherefore should they not?
 Does the King take such measures for himself?
 Beside, there's such a dearth of malcontents,
 You say!
Lady Carlisle. I said but few dared carp at you.
Wentworth. At me? at us, I hope! The King and I!
 He's surely not disposed to let me bear
 The fame away from him of these late deeds
 In Ireland? I am yet his instrument
 Be it for well or ill? He trusts me, too!
Lady Carlisle. The King, dear Wentworth,
 purposes, I said,
 To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .
Wentworth. All the Court! Evermore the Court about us!
 Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane
 About us,—then the King will grant me—
 what?
 That he for once put these aside and say—
 "Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!"
Lady Carlisle. You professed
 You would be calm.
Wentworth. Lucy, and I am calm!
 How else shall I do all I come to do,
 Broken, as you may see, body and mind,
 How shall I serve the King? Time wastes
 meanwhile,
 You have not told me half. His footstep! No.
 Quick, then, before I meet him,—I am calm—
 Why does the King distrust me?
Lady Carlisle. He does not
 Distrust you.
Wentworth. Lucy, you can help me; you
 Have even seemed to care for me: one word!
 Is it the Queen?
Lady Carlisle. No, not the Queen: the
 party
 That poisons the Queen's ear, Savile and
 Holland.
Wentworth. I know, I know: old Vane,
 too, he's one too?
 Go on—and he's made Secretary. Well? 'Or leave them out and go straight to the charge—
 The charge!
Lady Carlisle. Oh, there's no charge,
 no precise charge;
 Only they sneer, make light of—one may say,
 Nibble at what you do.
Wentworth. I know! but, Lucy,
 I reckoned on you from the first!—Go on!
 —Was sure could I once see this gentle friend
 When I arrived, she'd throw an hour away
 To help her . . . what am I?
Lady Carlisle. You thought of me,
 Dear Wentworth?
Wentworth. But go on! The party here!
Lady Carlisle. They do not think your
 Irish government
 Of that surpassing value . . .
Wentworth. The one thing
 Of value! The one service that the crown
 May count on! All that keeps these very
 Vanes
 In power, to vex me—not that they do vex,
 Only it might vex some to hear that service
 Decried, the sole support that's left the King!
Lady Carlisle. So the Archbishop says.
Wentworth. Ah? well, perhaps
 The only hand held up in my defence
 May be old Laud's! These Hollands then,
 these Saviles
 Nibble? They nibble?—that's the very word!
Lady Carlisle. Your profit in the Customs,
 Bristol says,
 Exceeds the due proportion: while the tax . . .
Wentworth. Enough! 'tis too unworthy,—
 I am not
 So patient as I thought. What's Pym about?
Lady Carlisle. Pym?
Wentworth. Pym and the People.
Lady Carlisle. Oh, the Faction!
 Extinct—of no account: there'll never be
 Another Parliament.
Wentworth. Tell Savile that!
 You may know—(ay, you do—the creatures
 here
 Never forget!) that in my earliest life
 I was not . . . much that I am now! The
 King

May take my word on points concerning Pym
Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,
I bid them ruin their wise selves, not me,
These Vanes and Hollands! I'll not be
their tool
Who might be Pym's friend yet.

But there's the King!

Where is he?

Lady Carlisle. Just apprised that you
arrive.

Wentworth. And why not here to meet
me? I was told

He sent for me, nay, longed for me.

Lady Carlisle. Because,—
He is now . . . I think a Council's sitting now
About this Scots affair.

Wentworth. A Council sits?
They have not taken a decided course
Without me in the matter?

Lady Carlisle. I should say . . .

Wentworth. The war? They cannot have
agreed to that?

Not the Scots' war?—without consulting me—
Me, that am here to show how rash it is,
How easy to dispense with?—Ah, you too
Against me! well,—the King may take his
time.

—Forget it, Lucy! Cares make peevish; mine
Weigh me (but 'tis a secret) to my grave.

Lady Carlisle. For life or death I am your
own, dear friend! [*Goes out.*]

Wentworth. Heartless! but all are heart-
less here. Go now,

Forsake the People!

I did not forsake

The People: they shall know it, when the
King

Will trust me!—who trusts all beside at once,
While I have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,
And am not trusted: have but saved the
throne:

Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,
And am not trusted. But he'll see me now.
Weston is dead: the Queen's half English
now—

More English: one decisive word will brush
These insects from . . . the step I know so
well!

The King! But now, to tell him . . . no—
to ask

What's in me he distrusts:—or, best begin
By proving that this frightful Scots affair
Is just what I foretold. So much to say,
And the flesh fails, now, and the time is
come,

And one false step no way to be repaired.

You were avenged, Pym, could you look on me.

PYM enters.

Wentworth. I little thought of you just
then.

Pym. No? I
Think always of you, Wentworth.

Wentworth. The old voice!
I wait the King, sir.

Pym. True—you look so pale!
A Council sits within; when that breaks up
He'll see you.

Wentworth. Sir, I thank you.

Pym. Oh, thank Laud!
You know when Laud once gets on Church
affairs

The case is desperate: he'll not be long
To-day: he only means to prove, to-day,
We English all are mad to have a hand
In butchering the Scots for serving God
After their fathers' fashion: only that!

Wentworth. Sir, keep your jests for those
who relish them!

(Does he enjoy their confidence?) 'Tis kind
To tell me what the Council does.

Pym. You grudge
That I should know it had resolved on war
Before you came? no need: you shall have all
The credit, trust me!

Wentworth. Have the Council dared—
They have not dared . . . that is—I know
you not.

Farewell, sir: times are changed.

Pym. —Since we two met
At Greenwich? Yes: poor patriots though
we be,

You cut a figure, makes some slight return
For your exploits in Ireland! Changed in-
deed,

Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!

Ah, Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance' sake,

Just to decide a question; have you, now,
Felt your old self since you forsook us?

Wentworth. Sir!

Pym. Spare me the gesture! you misapprehend.

Think not I mean the advantage is with me. I was about to say that, for my part, I never quite held up my head since then—Was quite myself since then: for first, you see, I lost all credit after that event With those who recollect how sure I was Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side. Forgive me: Savile, old Vane, Holland here, Eschew plain-speaking: 'tis a trick I keep.

Wentworth. How, when, where, Savile, Vane, and Holland speak, Plainly or otherwise, would have my scorn, All of my scorn, sir . . .

Pym. . . . Did not my poor thoughts Claim somewhat?

Wentworth. Keep your thoughts! believe the King

Mistrusts me for their prattle, all these Vanes And Saviles! make your mind up, o' God's love,

That I am discontented with the King!

Pym. Why, you may be: I should be, that I know,

Were I like you.

Wentworth. Like me?

Pym. I care not much

For titles: our friend Eliot died no lord, Hampden's no lord, and Savile is a lord; But you care, since you sold your soul for one. I can't think, therefore, your soul's purchaser Did well to laugh you to such utter scorn When you twice prayed so humbly for its price,

The thirty silver pieces . . . I should say, The Earldom you expected, still expect, And may. Your letters were the movingest! Console yourself: I've borne him prayers just now

From Stotland not to be oppressed by Laud, Words moving in their way: he'll pay, be sure, As much attention as to those you sent.

Wentworth. False, sir! Who showed them you? Suppose it so, The King did very well . . . nay, I was glad When it was shown me: I refused, the first! John Pym, you were my friend—forbear me once!

Pym. Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,
That all should come to this!

Wentworth. Leave me!

Pym. My friend,
Why should I leave you?

Wentworth. To tell Rudyard this,
And Hampden this!

Pym. Whose faces once were bright At my approach, now sad with doubt and fear, Because I hope in you—yes, Wentworth, you Who never mean to ruin England—you Who shake off, with God's help, an obscene dream

In this Ezekiel chamber, where it crept Upon you first, and wake, yourself, your true And proper self, our Leader, England's Chief, And Hampden's friend!

This is the proudest day!
Come, Wentworth! Do not even see the King!

The rough old room will seem itself again!
We'll both go in together: you've not seen Hampden so long: come: and there's Fiennes: you'll have To know young Vane. This is the proudest day!

[*The KING enters.* WENTWORTH
lets fall PYM's hand.

Charles. Arrived, my lord?—This gentleman, we know
Was your old friend.

The Scots shall be informed
What we determine for their happiness.

[*PYM goes out.*
You have made haste, my lord.

Wentworth. Sir, I am come . . .

Charles. To see an old familiar—nay, 'tis well;
Aid us with his experience: this Scots' League
And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs

That they intrigue with France : the Faction too,

Whereof your friend there is the head and front,

Abets them,—as he boasted, very like.

Wentworth. Sir, trust me ! but for this once, trust me, sir !

Charles. What can you mean ?

Wentworth. That you should trust me, sir !

Oh—not for my sake ! but 'tis sad, so sad

That for distrusting me, you suffer—you

Whom I would die to serve : sir, do you think

That I would die to serve you ?

Charles. But rise, Wentworth !

Wentworth. What shall convince you ?
What does Savile do

To prove him . . . Ah, one can't tear out one's heart

And show it, how sincere a thing it is !

Charles. Have I not trusted you ?

Wentworth. Say aught but that !

There is my comfort, mark you : all will be so different when you trust me—as you shall !

It has not been your fault,—I was away, Mistook, maligned, how was the King to know ?

I am here, now—he means to trust me, now—All will go on so well !

Charles. Be sure I do—

I've heard that I should trust you : as you came,

Your friend, the Countess, told me . . .

Wentworth. No,—hear nothing—

Be told nothing about me !—you're not told

Your right-hand serves you, or your children love you !

Charles. You love me, Wentworth : rise !

Wentworth. I can speak now.

I have no right to hide the truth. 'Tis I can save you : only I. Sir, what must be ?

Charles. Since Laud's assured (the minutes are within)

—Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .

Wentworth. That is, he'll have a war : what's done is done !

Charles. They have intrigued with France : that's clear to Laud.

Wentworth. Has Laud suggested any way to meet

The war's expense ?

Charles. He'd not decide so far Until you joined us.

Wentworth. Most considerate !

He's certain they intrigue with France, these Scots ?

The People would be with us.

Charles. Pym should know.

Wentworth. The People for us—were the People for us !

Sir, a great thought comes to reward your trust :

Summon a Parliament ! in Ireland first, Then, here.

Charles. In truth ?

Wentworth. That saves us ! that puts off

The war, gives time to right their grievances—To talk with Pym. I know the Faction,—

Laud

So styles it,—tutors Scotland : all their plans Suppose no Parliament : in calling one

You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs Of Scotland's treason ; then bid England help : Even Pym will not refuse.

Charles. You would begin With Ireland ?

Wentworth. Take no care for that : that's sure

To prosper.

Charles. You shall rule me. You were best

Return at once : but take this ere you go !

Now, do I trust you ? You're an Earl : my Friend

Of Friends : yes, while . . . You hear me not !

Wentworth. Say it all o'er again—but once again :

The first was for the music : once again !

Charles. Strafford, my friend, there may have been reports,

Vain rumours. Henceforth touching Strafford is

To touch the apple of my sight : why gaze So earnestly ?

Wentworth. I am grown young again,
And foolish. What was it we spoke of?

Charles. Ireland,
The Parliament,—

Wentworth. I may go when I will?
—Now?

Charles. Are you tired so soon of us?
Wentworth. My King!

But you will not so utterly abhor
A Parliament? I'd serve you any way.

Charles. You said just now this was the
only way.

Wentworth. Sir, I will serve you.

Charles. Strafford, spare yourself:
You are so sick, they tell me.

Wentworth. 'Tis my soul
That's well and prospers now.

This Parliament—
We'll summon it, the English one—I'll
care

For everything. You shall not need them
much.

Charles. If they prove restive . . .

Wentworth. I shall be with you.

Charles. Ere they assemble?

Wentworth. I will come, or else
Deposit this infirm humanity

I' the dust. My whole heart stays with you,
my King! [*As WENTWORTH goes out,*
the QUEEN enters.]

Charles. That man must love me.

Queen. Is it over then?
Why, he looks yellower than ever! Well,

At least we shall not hear eternally
Of service—services: he's paid at least.

Charles. Not done with: he engages to
surpass

All yet performed in Ireland.

Queen. I had thought
Nothing beyond was ever to be done.

The war, Charles—will he raise supplies
enough?

Charles. We've hit on an expedient; he
. . . that is,

I have advised . . . we have decided on
The calling—in Ireland—of a Parliament.

Queen. O truly! You agree to that? Is
that

The first fruit of his counsel? But I guessed
As much.

Charles. This is too idle, Henriette!
I should know best. He will strain every
nerve,
And once a precedent established . . .

Queen. Notice
How sure he is of a long term of favour!
He'll see the next, and the next after that;
No end to Parliaments!

Charles. Well, it is done.
He talks it smoothly, doubtless. If, indeed,
The Commons here . . .

Queen. Here! you will summon them
Here? Would I were in France again to see
A King!

Charles. But, Henriette . . .

Queen. Oh, the Scots see clear!
Why should they bear your rule?

Charles. But listen, sweet!
Queen. Let Wentworth listen—you confide
in him!

Charles. I do not, love,—I do not so
confide!

The Parliament shall never trouble us
. . . Nay, hear me! I have schemes, such
schemes: we'll buy

The leaders off: without that, Wentworth's
counsel

Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it
To have excuse for breaking it for ever,
And whose will then the blame be? See you
not?

Come, dearest!—look, the little fairy, now,
That cannot reach my shoulder! Dearest,
come!

ACT II.

SCENE I.—(As in Act I. Scene I.)

*The same Party enters.**Rudyard.* Twelve subsidies!*Vane.* Oh, Rudyard, do not laugh
At least!*Rudyard.* True: Strafford called the
Parliament—

'Tis he should laugh!

A Puritan. Out of the serpent's root
Comes forth a cockatrice.

Fiennes. —A stinging one,
If that's the Parliament: twelve subsidies!

A stinging one! but, brother, where's your
word

For Strafford's other nest-egg, the Scots' war?

The Puritan. His fruit shall be a fiery
flying serpent.

Fiennes. Shall be? It chips the shell,
man; peeps abroad.

Twelve subsidies!—Why, how now, Vane?

Rudyard. Peace, Fiennes!

Fiennes. Ah?—But he was not more a
dupe than I,

Or you, or any here, the day that Pym
Returned with the good news. Look up,
friend Vane!

We all believed that Strafford meant us well
In summoning the Parliament.

HAMPDEN enters.

Vane. Now, Hampden,
Clear me! I would have leave to sleep again:
I'd look the People in the face again:
Clear me from having, from the first, hoped,
dreamed

Better of Strafford!

Hampden. You may grow one day
A steadfast light to England, Henry Vane!

Rudyard. Meantime, by flashes I make
shift to see

Strafford revived our Parliaments; before,
War was but talked of; there's an army, now:
Still, we've a Parliament! Poor Ireland
bears

Another wrench (she dies the hardest
death!)

Why, speak of it in Parliament! and lo,
'Tis spoken, so console yourselves!

Fiennes. The jest!
We clamoured, I suppose, thus long, to win
The privilege of laying on our backs
A sorer burden than the King dares lay!

Rudyard. Mark now: we meet at length,
complaints pour in

From every county, all the land cries out:
On loans and levies, curses ship-money,

Calls vengeance on the Star Chamber; we
lend

An ear. "Ay, lend them all the ears you
have!"

Puts in the King; "my subjects, as you find,
"Are fretful, and conceive great things of
you.

"Just listen to them, friends; you'll sanction
me

"The measures they most wince at, make
them yours,

"Instead of mine, I know: and, to begin,

"They say my levies pinch them,—raise me
straight

"Twelve subsidies!"

Fiennes. All England cannot furnish
Twelve subsidies!

Hollis. But Strafford, just returned
From Ireland—what has he to do with that?
How could he speak his mind? He left before
The Parliament assembled. Pym, who knows
Strafford . . .

Rudyard. Would I were sure we know
ourselves!

What is for good, what, bad—who friend,
who foe!

Hollis. Do you count Parliaments no gain?

Rudyard. A gain?

While the King's creatures overbalance us?
—There's going on, beside, among ourselves
A quiet, slow, but most effectual course

Of buying over, sapping, leavening
The lump till all is leaven. Glanville's gone.

I'll put a case; had not the Court declared
That no sum short of just twelve subsidies
Will be accepted by the King—our House,
I say, would have consented to that offer
To let us buy off ship-money!

Hollis. Most like,
If, say, six subsidies will buy it off,

The House . . .

Rudyard. Will grant them! Hampden,
do you hear?

Congratulate with me! the King's the king,
And gains his point at last—our own assent
To that detested tax? All's over, then!

There's no more taking refuge in this room,
Protesting, "Let the King do what he will,

"We, England, are no party to our shame :
 "Our day will come !" Congratulate with
 me !

Pym enters.

Vane. Pym, Strafford called this Parli-
 ament, you say,
 But we'll not have our Parliaments like those
 In Ireland, Pym !

Rudyard. Let him stand forth, your
 friend !

One doubtful act hides far too many sins ;
 It can be stretched no more, and, to my mind,
 Begins to drop from those it covered.

Other Voices. Good !
 Let him avow himself ! No fitter time !
 We wait thus long for you.

Rudyard. Perhaps, too long !
 Since nothing but the madness of the
 Court,

In thus unmasking its designs at once,
 Has saved us from betraying England. Stay—
 This Parliament is Strafford's : let us vote
 Our list of grievances too black by far
 To suffer talk of subsidies : or best,
 That ship-money's disposed of long ago
 By England : any vote that's broad enough :
 And then let Strafford, for the love of it,
 Support his Parliament !

Vane. And vote as well
 No war to be with Scotland ! Hear you, Pym ?
 We'll vote, no war ! No part nor lot in it
 For England !

Many Voices. Vote, no war ! Stop the
 new levies !
 No Bishops' war ! At once ! When next
 we meet !

Pym. Much more when next we meet !
 Friends, which of you

Since first the course of Strafford was in doubt,
 Has fallen the most away in soul from me ?

Vane. I sat apart, even now under God's eye,
 Pondering the words that should denounce
 you, Pym,

In presence of us all, as one at league
 With England's enemy.

Pym. You are a good
 And gallant spirit, Henry. Take my hand

And say you pardon me for all the pain
 Till now ! Strafford is wholly ours.

Many Voices. Sure ? sure ?

Pym. Most sure : for Charles dissolves the
 Parliament

While I speak here.

—And I must speak, friends, now !
 Strafford is ours. The King detects the
 change,

Casts Strafford off for ever, and resumes
 His ancient path : no Parliament for us,
 No Strafford for the King !

Come, all of you,
 To bid the King farewell, predict success
 To his Scots' expedition, and receive
 Strafford, our comrade now. The next will be
 Indeed a Parliament !

Vane. Forgive me, Pym !

Voices. This looks like truth : Strafford
 can have, indeed,

No choice.

Pym. Friends, follow me ! He's with
 the King.

Come, Hampden, and come, Rudyard, and
 come, Vane !

This is no sullen day for England, sirs !
 Strafford shall tell you !

Voices. To Whitehall then ! Come !

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

CHARLES and STRAFFORD.

Charles. Strafford !

Strafford. Is it a dream ? my papers,
 here—

Thus, as I left them, all the plans you found
 So happy—(look ! the track you pressed my
 hand

For pointing out)—and in this very room,
 Over these very plans, you tell me, sir,
 With the same face, too—tell me just one thing
 That ruins them ! How's this ? What may
 this mean ?

Sir, who has done this ?

Charles. Strafford, who but I ?
 You bade me put the rest away : indeed
 You are alone.

Strafford. Alone, and like to be!
No fear, when some unworthy scheme grows
ripe,
Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to loose
The mischief on the world! Laud hatches
war,
Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me,
And I'm alone.

Charles. At least, you knew as much
When first you undertook the war.

Strafford. My liege,
Was this the way? I said, since Laud would lap
A little blood, 'twere best to hurry over
The loathsome business, not to be whole
months

At slaughter—one blow, only one, then, peace,
Save for the dreams. I said, to please you both
I'd lead an Irish army to the West,
While in the South an English . . . but you
look

As though you had not told me fifty times
'Twas a brave plan! My army is all raised,
I am prepared to join it . . .

Charles. Hear me, Strafford!

Strafford. . . . When, for some little thing,
my whole design

Is set aside—(where is the wretched paper?)
I am to lead—(ay, here it is)—to lead
The English army: why? Northumberland
That I appointed, chooses to be sick—
Is frightened: and, meanwhile, who answers
for

The Irish Parliament? or army, either?

Is this my plan?

Charles. So disrespectful, sir?

Strafford. My liege, do not believe it! I
am yours,

Yours ever: 'tis too late to think about:

To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this unto-
ward step

Shall pass for mine; the world shall think it
mine.

But here! But here! I am so seldom here,
Seldom with you, my King! I, soon to rush
Alone upon a giant in the dark!

Charles. My Strafford!

Strafford [examines papers awhile]. "Seize
the passes of the Tyne!"

But, sir, you see—see all I say is true?
My plan was sure to prosper, so, no cause
To ask the Parliament for help; whereas
We need them frightfully.

Charles. Need the Parliament?

Strafford. Now, for God's sake, sir, not
one error more!

We can afford no error; we draw, now,
Upon our last resource: the Parliament
Must help us!

Charles. I've undone you, Strafford!

Strafford. Nay—
Nay—why despond, sir, 'tis not come to
that!

I have not hurt you? Sir, what have I said
To hurt you? I unsay it! Don't despond!
Sir, do you turn from me?

Charles. My friend of friends!

Strafford. We'll make a shift. Leave me
the Parliament!

Help they us ne'er so little and I'll make
Sufficient out of it. We'll speak them fair.
They're sitting, that's one great thing; that
half gives

Their sanction to us; that's much: don't
despond!

Why, let them keep their money, at the worst!
The reputation of the People's help
Is all we want: we'll make shift yet!

Charles. Good Strafford!

Strafford. But meantime, let the sum be
ne'er so small

They offer, we'll accept it: any sum—
For the look of it: the least grant tells the
Scots

The Parliament is ours—their staunch ally
Turned ours: that told, there's half the blow
to strike!

What will the grant be? What does Glan-
ville think?

Charles. Alas!

Strafford. My liege?

Charles. Strafford!

Strafford. But answer me!
Have they . . . O surely, not refused us half?

Half the twelve subsidies? We never looked
For all of them. How many do they give?

Charles. You have not heard . . .

"We, England, are no party to our shame :
"Our day will come !" Congratulate with
me !

PYM enters.

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ament, you say,
But we'll not have our Parliaments like those
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In thus unmasking its designs at once,
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And say you pardon me for all the pain
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can have, indeed,

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So happy—(look ! the track you pressed my
hand

For pointing out)—and in this very room,
Over these very plans, you tell me, sir,
With the same face, too—tell me just one thing
That ruins them ! How's this ? What may
this mean ?

Sir, who has done this ?

Charles. Strafford, who but I ?
You bade me put the rest away : indeed
You are alone.

Strafford. Alone, and like to be!
No fear, when some unworthy scheme grows
ripe,
Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to loose
The mischief on the world! Laud hatches
war,
Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me,
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When first you undertook the war.

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A little blood, 'twere best to hurry over
The loathsome business, not to be whole
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At slaughter—one blow, only one, then, peace,
Save for the dreams. I said, to please you both
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my whole design

Is set aside—(where is the wretched paper?)
I am to lead—(ay, here it is)—to lead
The English army: why? Northumberland
That I appointed, chooses to be sick—
Is frightened: and, meanwhile, who answers
for

The Irish Parliament? or army, either?

Is this my plan?

Charles. So disrespectful, sir?

Strafford. My liege, do not believe it! I
am yours,

Yours ever: 'tis too late to think about:
To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this unto-
ward step

Shall pass for mine; the world shall think it
mine.

But here! But here! I am so seldom here,
Seldom with you, my King! I, soon to rush
Alone upon a giant in the dark!

Charles. My Strafford!

Strafford [*examines papers awhile*]. "Seize
the passes of the Tyne!"

But, sir, you see—see all I say is true?
My plan was sure to prosper, so, no cause
To ask the Parliament for help; whereas
We need them faithfully.

Charles. Need the Parliament?

Strafford. Now, for God's sake, sir, not
one error more!

We can afford no error; we draw, now,
Upon our last resource: the Parliament
Must help us!

Charles. I've undone you, Strafford!

Strafford. Nay—
Nay—why despond, sir, 'tis not come to
that!

I have not hurt you? Sir, what have I said
To hurt you? I unsay it! Don't despond!
Sir, do you turn from me?

Charles. My friend of friends!

Strafford. We'll make a shift. Leave me
the Parliament!

Help they us ne'er so little and I'll make
Sufficient out of it. We'll speak them fair.
They're sitting, that's one great thing; that
half gives

Their sanction to us; that's much: don't
despond!

Why, let them keep their money, at the worst!
The reputation of the People's help

Is all we want: we'll make shift yet!

Charles. Good Strafford!

Strafford. But meantime, let the sum be
ne'er so small

They offer, we'll accept it: any sum—
For the look of it: the least grant tells the
Scots

The Parliament is ours—their staunch ally
Turned ours: that told, there's half the blow
to strike!

What will the grant be? What does Glan-
ville think?

Charles. Alas!

Strafford. My liege?

Charles. Strafford!

Strafford. But answer me!

Have they . . . O surely, not refused us half?
Half the twelve subsidies? We never looked
For all of them. How many do they give?

Charles. You have not heard . . .

Strafford. (What has he done?)—Heard what?
 But speak at once, sir, this grows terrible!
[The KING continuing silent.]
 You have dissolved them!—I'll not leave this man.
Charles. 'Twas old Vane's ill-judged vehemence.
Strafford. Old Vane?
Charles. He told them, just about to vote the half,
 That nothing short of all twelve subsidies
 Would serve our turn, or be accepted.
Strafford. Vane!
 Vane! Who, sir, promised me, that very Vane . . .
 O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me,
 The one last hope—I that despair, my hope—
 That I should reach his heart one day, and cure
 All bitterness one day, be proud again
 And young again, care for the sunshine too,
 And never think of Eliot any more,—
 God, and to toil for this, go far for this,
 Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart
 And find Vane there!
[Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing with a forced calmness.]
 Northumberland is sick:
 Well, then, I take the army: Wilmot leads
 The horse, and he, with Conway, must secure
 The passes of the Tyne: Ormond supplies
 My place in Ireland. Here, we'll try the City:
 If they refuse a loan—debase the coin
 And seize the bullion! we've no other
 choice.
 Herbert . . .
 And this while I am here! with you!
 And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane! I go,
 And, I once gone, they'll close around you,
 sir,
 When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure
 To ruin me—and you along with me!
 Do you see that? And you along with me!
 —Sir, you'll not ever listen to these men,
 And I away, fighting your battle? Sir,
 If they—if She—charge me, no matter how—
 Say you, "At any time when he returns

"His head is mine!" Don't stop me there!
 You know

My head is yours, but never stop me there!

Charles. Too shameful, Strafford! You advised the war,

And . . .

Strafford. I! I! that was never spoken with

Till it was entered on! That loathe the war!

That say it is the maddest, wickedest . . .

Do you know, sir, I think within my heart,

That you would say I did advise the war;

And if, through your own weakness, or what's worse,

These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back,

You will not step between the raging People

And me, to say . . .

I knew it! from the first

I knew it! Never was so cold a heart!

Remember that I said it—that I never

Believed you for a moment!

—And, you loved me?

You thought your perfidy profoundly hid

Because I could not share the whisperings

With Vane, with Savile? What, the face was masked?

I had the heart to see, sir! Face of flesh,

But heart of stone—of smooth cold frightful stone!

Ay, call them! Shall I call for you? The Scots

Goaded to madness? Or the English—Pym—

Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh, you think

I'll leave them in the dark about it all?

They shall not know you? Hampden, Pym shall not?

PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.*, enter.

[Dropping on his knee.] Thus favoured with your gracious countenance

What shall a rebel League avail against

Your servant, utterly and ever yours?

So, gentlemen, the King's not even left

The privilege of bidding me farewell

Who haste to save the People—that you style

Your People—from the mercies of the Scots

And France their friend?

[To CHARLES.] Pym's grave grey
eyes are fixed
Upon you, sir!

Your pleasure, gentlemen?
Hampden. The King dissolved us—'tis the
King we seek
And not Lord Strafford.

Strafford. —Strafford, guilty too
Of counselling the measure. [To CHARLES].
(Hush . . . you know—

You have forgotten—sir, I counselled it)
A heinous matter, truly! But the King
Will yet see cause to thank me for a course
Which now, perchance . . . (Sir, tell them
so!)—he blames.

Well, choose some fitter time to make your
charge:

I shall be with the Scots, you understand?
Then yelp at me!

Meanwhile, your Majesty
Binds me, by this fresh token of your
trust . . .

[Under the pretence of an earnest farewell,
STRAFFORD conducts CHARLES to the
door, in such a manner as to hide his
agitation from the rest: as the King
disappears, they turn as by one impulse
to PYM, who has not changed his original
posture of surprise.

Hampden. Leave we this arrogant strong
wicked man!

Vane and others. Hence, Pym! Come
out of this unworthy place
To our old room again! He's gone.

[STRAFFORD, just about to follow
the KING, looks back.

Pym. Not gone!

[To STRAFFORD.] Keep tryst! the old
appointment's made anew:
Forget not we shall meet again!

Strafford. So be it!
And if an army follows me?

Vane. His friends
Will entertain your army!

Pym. I'll not say
You have misreckoned, Strafford: time
shows.

Perish

Body and spirit! Fool to feign a doubt,
Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve
Of one whose prowess shall achieve the feat!
What share have I in it? Do I affect
To see no dismal sign above your head
When God suspends his ruinous thunder
there?

Strafford is doomed. Touch him no one of
you! [PYM, HAMPDEN, etc., go out.
Strafford. Pym, we shall meet again!

Lady CARLISLE enters.

You here, child?

Lady Carlisle. Hush—
I know it all: hush, Strafford!

Strafford. Ah? you know?
Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy!
All knights begin their enterprise, we read,
Under the best of auspices; 'tis morn,
The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth
(He's always very young)—the trumpets
sound,

Cups pledge him, and, why, the King blesses
him—

You need not turn a page of the romance
To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate. Indeed,
We've the fair Lady here; but she apart,—
A poor man, rarely having handled lance,
And rather old, weary, and far from sure
His Squires are not the Giant's friends. All's
one:

Let us go forth!

Lady Carlisle. Go forth?

Strafford. What matters it?
We shall die gloriously—as the book says.

Lady Carlisle. To Scotland? Not to
Scotland?

Strafford. Am I sick
Like your good brother, brave Northumber-
land?

Beside, these walls seem falling on me.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford,
The wind that saps these walls can undermine
Your camp in Scotland, too. Whence creeps
the wind?

Have you no eyes except for Pym? Look
here!

A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive

In your contempt. You'll vanquish Pym?
Old Vane

Can vanquish you. And Vane you think to fly?
Rush on the Scots! Do nobly! Vane's
slight sneer

Shall test success, adjust the praise, suggest
The faint result: Vane's sneer shall reach you
there.

—You do not listen!

Strafford. Oh,—I give that up!
There's fate in it: I give all here quite up.
Care not what old Vane does or Holland does
Against me! 'Tis so idle to withstand!

In no case tell me what they do!

Lady Carlisle. But, Strafford . . .

Strafford. I want a little strife, beside; real
strife;

This petty palace-warfare does me harm:
I shall feel better, fairly out of it.

Lady Carlisle. Why do you smile?

Strafford. I got to fear them, child!
I could have torn his throat at first, old Vane's,
As he leered at me on his stealthy way
To the Queen's closet. Lord, one loses heart!
I often found it on my lips to say
"Do not traduce me to her!"

Lady Carlisle. But the King . . .

Strafford. The King stood there, 'tis not
so long ago,

—There; and the whisper, Lucy, "Be my
friend

"Of friends!"—My King! I would have . . .

Lady Carlisle. . . . Died for him?

Strafford. Sworn him true, Lucy: I can die
for him.

Lady Carlisle. But go not, Strafford! But
you must renounce

This project on the Scots! Die, wherefore die?
Charles never loved you.

Strafford. And he never will.
He's not of those who care the more for men
That they're unfortunate.

Lady Carlisle. Then wherefore die
For such a master?

Strafford. ~ You that told me first
How good he was—when I must leave true
friends
To find a truer friend!—that drew me here

From Ireland,—“I had but to show myself
“And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile, and
the rest”—

You, child, to ask me this?

Lady Carlisle. (If he have set
His heart abidingly on Charles!)

Then, friend,
I shall not see you any more.

Strafford. Yes, Lucy.

There's one man here I have to meet.

Lady Carlisle. (The King!)

What way to save him from the King?

My soul—

That lent from its own store the charmed dis-
guise

Which clothes the King—he shall behold my
soul!

Strafford.—I shall speak best if you'll not gaze
Upon me: I had never thought, indeed,
To speak, but you would perish too, so sure!
Could you but know what 'tis to bear, my
friend,

One image stamped within you, turning blank
The else imperial brilliance of your mind,—
A weakness, but most precious,—like a flaw
In the diamond, which should shape forth some
sweet face

Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there
Lest nature lose her gracious thought for ever!

Strafford. When could it be? no! Yet . . .
was it the day

We waited in the anteroom, till Holland
Should leave the presence-chamber?

Lady Carlisle. What?

Strafford. —That I

Described to you my love for Charles?

Lady Carlisle. (Ah, no—

One must not lure him from a love like that!
Oh, let him love the King and die! 'Tis past.

I shall not serve him worse for that one
brief

And passionate hope, silent for ever now!)

And you are really bound for Scotland then?

I wish you well: you must be very sure

Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew
Will not be idle—setting Vane aside!

Strafford. If Pym is busy,—you may write
of Pym.

Lady Carlisle. What need, since there's
your King to take your part?

He may endure Vane's counsel; but for
Pym—

Think you he'll suffer Pym to . . .

Strafford. Child, your hair
Is glossier than the Queen's!

Lady Carlisle. Is that to ask
A curl of me?

Strafford. Scotland—the weary way!

Lady Carlisle. Stay, let me fasten it.

—A rival's, Strafford?

Strafford [*showing the George*]. He hung
it there: twine yours around it, child!

Lady Carlisle. No—no—another time—I
trifle so!

And there's a masque on foot. Farewell.

The Court

Is dull; do something to enliven us

In Scotland: we expect it at your hands.

Strafford. I shall not fail in Scotland.

Lady Carlisle. Prosper—if
You'll think of me sometimes!

Strafford. How think of him
And not of you? of you, the lingering streak
(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford . . . Well, when
the eve has its last streak

The night has its first star. [*She goes out.*]

Strafford. That voice of hers—
You'd think she had a heart sometimes!

His voice

Is soft too.

Only God can save him now.

Be Thou about his bed, about his path!

His path! Where's England's path? Diverg-
ing wide,

And not to join again the track my foot
Must follow—whither? All that forlorn way

Among the tombs! Far—far—till . . .
What, they do

Then join again, these paths? For, huge in
the dusk,

There's—Pym to face!

Why then, I have a foe
To close with, and a fight to fight at last

Worthy my soul! What, do they beard the
King,

And shall the King want Strafford at his need?
Am I not here?

Not in the market-place,

Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud
To catch a glance from Wentworth! They
lie down

Hungry yet smile "Why, it must end some
day:

"Is he not watching for our sake?" Not
there!

But in Whitehall, the whited sepulchre,

The . . .

Curse nothing to-night! Only
one name

They'll curse in all those streets to-night.

Whose fault?

Did I make kings? set up, the first, a man

To represent the multitude, receive

All love in right of them—supplant them so,

Until you love the man and not the king—

The man with the mild voice and mournful
eyes

Which send me forth.

—To breast the bloody sea

That sweeps before me: with one star for
guide.

Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.

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Sir HENRY VANE, Lord SAVILE, Lord
HOLLAND and others of the Court.

Sir H. Vane. The Commons thrust you
out?

Savile. And what kept you
From sharing their civility?

Sir H. Vane. Kept me?

Fresh news from Scotland, sir! worse than
the last,

If that may be. All's up with Strafford there:
Nothing to bar the mad Scots marching hither

Next Lord's-day morning, That detained
me, sir!

Well now, before they thrust you out,—go
on,—

In your contempt. You'll vanquish Pym?
 Old Vane
 Can vanquish you. And Vane you think to fly?
 Rush on the Scots! Do nobly! Vane's
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 I could have torn his throat at first, old Vane's,
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 I often found it on my lips to say
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Nothing to bar the mad Scots marching hither

Next Lord's-day morning, That detained
me, sir!

Well now, before they thrust you out,—go
on,—

Their Speaker—did the fellow Lenthal say
All we set down for him?

Holland. Not a word missed.
Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I
And Bristol and some more, with hope to
breed

A wholesome awe in the new Parliament.
But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane,
As glared at us!

Vane. So many?

Savile. Not a bench
Without its complement of burly knaves;
Your hopefulson among them: Hampden leant
Upon his shoulder—think of that!

Vane. I'd think
On Lenthal's speech, if I could get at it.
Urged he, I ask, how grateful they should
prove

For this unlooked-for summons from the King?
Holland. Just as we drilled him.

Vane. That the Scots will march
On London?

Holland. All, and made so much of it,
A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure
To follow, when . . .

Vane. Well?

Holland. 'Tis a strange thing, now!
I've a vague memory of a sort of sound,
A voice, a kind of vast unnatural voice—
Pym, sir, was speaking! Savile, help me out:
What was it all?

Savile. Something about "a matter"—
No,—“work for England.”

Holland. “England's great revenge”
He talked of.

Savile. How should I get used to Pym
More than yourselves?

Holland. However that be,
'Twas something with which we had nought
to do,

For we were “strangers” and 'twas “Eng-
land's work”—

(All this while looking us straight in the face)
In other words, our presence might be spared.
So, in the twinkling of an eye, before
I settled to my mind what ugly brute
Was likest Pym just then, they yelled us out,
Locked the doors after us, and here are we.

Vane. Eliot's old method . . .

Savile. Prithee, Vane, a truce
To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke,
And how to manage Parliaments! 'Twas you
Advised the Queen to summon this: why,
Strafford

(To do him justice) would not hear of it.

Vane. Say rather, you have done the best
of turns

To Strafford: he's at York, we all know why.
I would you had not set the Scots on Strafford
Till Strafford put down Pym for us, my lord!

Savile. Was it I altered Strafford's plans?
did I . . .

A Messenger enters.

Messenger. The Queen, my lords—she
sends me: follow me

At once; 'tis very urgent! she requires
Your counsel: something perilous and strange
Occasions her command.

Savile. We follow, friend!
Now, Vane;—your Parliament will plague
us all!

Vane. No Strafford here beside!

Savile. If you dare hint
I had a hand in his betrayal, sir . . .

Holland. Nay, find a fitter time for quarrels
—Pym

Will overmatch the best of you; and, think,
The Queen!

Vane. Come on, then: understand, I
loathe

Strafford as much as any—but his use!
To keep off Pym, to screen a friend or two,
I would we had reserved him yet awhile.

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

The QUEEN and Lady CARLISLE.

Queen. It cannot be.

Lady Carlisle. It is so.

Queen. Why, the House
Have hardly met.

Lady Carlisle. They met for that.

Queen. No, no!
Meet to impeach Lord Strafford? 'Tis a jest.

Lady Carlisle. A bitter one.

Queen. Consider! 'Tis the House
We summoned so reluctantly, which nothing
But the disastrous issue of the war
Persuaded us to summon. They'll wreak all
Their spite on us, no doubt; but the old way
Is to begin by talk of grievances:
They have their grievances to busy them.

Lady Carlisle. Pym has begun his speech.

Queen. Where's Vane?—That is,
Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves
His Presidency; he's at York, we know,
Since the Scots beat him: why should he
leave York?

Lady Carlisle. Because the King sent for
him.

Queen. Ah—but if
The King did send for him, he let him know
We had been forced to call a Parliament—
A step which Strafford, now I come to think,
Was vehement against.

Lady Carlisle. The policy
Escaped him, of first striking Parliaments
To earth, then setting them upon their feet
And giving them a sword: but this is idle.
Did the King send for Strafford? He will
come.

Queen. And what am I to do?

Lady Carlisle. What do? Fail, madam!
Be ruined for his sake! what matters how,
So it but stand on record that you made
An effort, only one?

Queen. The King away
At Theobald's!

Lady Carlisle. Send for him at once:
he must
Dissolve the House.

Queen. Wait till Vane finds the truth
Of the report: then . . .

Lady Carlisle. —It will matter little
What the King does. Strafford that lends
his arm

And breaks his heart for you!

Sir H. VANE enters.

Vane. The Commons, madam,
Are sitting with closed doors. A huge debate,
No lack of noise; but nothing, I should guess,

Concerning Strafford: Pym has certainly
Not spoken yet.

Queen [to Lady CARLISLE]. You hear?

Lady Carlisle. I do not hear
That the King's sent for!

Vane. Savile will be able
To tell you more.

HOLLAND enters.

Queen. The last news, Holland?
Holland. Pym

Is raging like a fire. The whole House means
To follow him together to Whitehall
And force the King to give up Strafford.

Queen. Strafford?
Holland. If they content themselves with

Strafford! Laud
Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank
too.

Pym has not left out one of them—I would
You heard Pym raging!

Queen. Vane, go find the King!
Tell the King, Vane, the People follow Pym
To brave us at Whitehall!

SAVILE enters.

Savile. Not to Whitehall—
'Tis to the Lords they go: they seek redress
On Strafford from his peers—the legal way,
They call it.

Queen. (Wait, Vane!)

Savile. But the adage gives
Long life to threatened men. Strafford can
save

Himself so readily: at York, remember,
In his own county: what has he to fear?
The Commons only mean to frighten him
From leaving York. Surely, he will not
come.

Queen. Lucy, he will not come!

Lady Carlisle. Once more, the King
Has sent for Strafford. He will come.

Vane. Oh doubtless!
And bring destruction with him: that's his
way.

What but his coming spoils all Conway's plan?
The King must take his counsel, choose his
friends,

Be wholly ruled by him ! What's the result ?
The North that was to rise, Ireland to help,—
What came of it ? In my poor mind, a fright
Is no prodigious punishment.

Lady Carlisle. A fright ?

Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks
To frighten him. [*To the QUEEN.*] You
will not save him then ?

Savile. When something like a charge is
made, the King

Will best know how to save him : and 'tis clear,
While Strafford suffers nothing by the matter,
The King may reap advantage : this in
question,

No dinning you with ship-money complaints !

Queen [*to Lady CARLISLE.*] If we dissolve
them, who will pay the army ?

Protect us from the insolent Scots ?

Lady Carlisle. In truth,

I know not, madam. Strafford's fate concerns
Me little : you desired to learn what course
Would save him : I obey you.

Vane. Notice, too,

There can't be fairer ground for taking full
Revenge—(Strafford's revengeful)—than he'll
have

Against his old friend Pym.

Queen. Why, he shall claim
Vengeance on Pym !

Vane. And Strafford, who is he
To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents
That harass all beside ? I, for my part,
Should look for something of discomfiture
Had the King trusted me so thoroughly
And been so paid for it.

Holland. He'll keep at York :

All will blow over : he'll return no worse,
Humbled a little, thankful for a place
Under as good a man. Oh, we'll dispense
With seeing Strafford for a month or two !

STRAFFORD enters.

Queen. You here !

Strafford. The King sends for me, madam.

Queen. Sir,
The King . . .

Strafford. An urgent matter that
imports the King !

[*To Lady CARLISLE.*] Why, Lucy, what's
in agitation now,

That all this muttering and shrugging, see,
Begins at me ? They do not speak !

Lady Carlisle. 'Tis welcome !

For we are proud of you—happy and proud
To have you with us, Strafford ! You were
staunch

At Durham : you did well there ! Had you
not

Been stayed, you might have . . . we said,
even now,

Our hope's in you !

Vane [*to Lady CARLISLE.*] The Queen
would speak with you.

Strafford. Will one of you, his servants
here, vouchsafe

To signify my presence to the King ?

Savile. An urgent matter ?

Strafford. None that touches you.

Lord Savile ! Say, it were some treacherous
Sly pitiful intriguing with the Scots—

You would go free, at least ! (They half
divine

My purpose !) Madam, shall I see the King ?
The service I would render, much concerns
His welfare.

Queen. But his Majesty, my lord,
May not be here, may . . .

Strafford. Its importance, then,
Must plead excuse for this withdrawal,
madam,

And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.

Queen [*who has been conversing with VANE
and HOLLAND.*] The King will see

you, sir !

[*To Lady CARLISLE.*] Mark me :
Pym's worst

Is done by now : he has impeached the Earl,
Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now.

Let us not seem instructed ! We should work
No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves
With shame in the world's eye. [*To STRAF-*

FORD.] His Majesty

Has much to say with you.

Strafford. Time fleeting, too !
[*To Lady CARLISLE.*] No means of getting
them away ? And She—

What does she whisper? Does she know my purpose?

What does she think of it? Get them away!

Queen [to *Lady CARLISLE*]. He comes to baffle Pym—he thinks the danger

Far off: tell him no word of it! a time

For help will come; we'll not be wanting then.

Keep him in play, Lucy—you, self-possessed

And calm! [*To STRAFFORD*.] To spare

your lordship some delay

I will myself acquaint the King. [*To Lady*

CARLISLE.] Beware!

[*The QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND,*

and SAVILE go out.

Strafford. She knows it?

Lady Carlisle. Tell me, *Strafford*!

Strafford. Afterward!

This moment's the great moment of all time.

She knows my purpose?

Lady Carlisle. Thoroughly: just now

She bade me hide it from you.

Strafford. Quick, dear child,

The whole o' the scheme?

Lady Carlisle. (Ah, he would learn if they

Connive at Pym's procedure! Could they but

Have once apprised the King! But there's

no time

For falsehood, now.) *Strafford*, the whole

is known.

Strafford. Known and approved?

Lady Carlisle. Hardly discountenanced.

Strafford. And the King—say, the King

consents as well?

Lady Carlisle. The King's not yet in-

formed, but will not dare

To interpose.

Strafford. What need to wait him, then?

He'll sanction it! I stayed, child, tell him, long!

It vexed me to the soul—this waiting here.

You know him, there's no counting on the King.

Tell him I waited long!

Lady Carlisle. (What can he mean?

Rejoice at the King's hollowness?)

Strafford. I knew

They would be glad of it,—all over once,

I knew they would be glad: but he'd contrive,

The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,

An angel's making.

VOL. I.

Lady Carlisle. (Is he mad?) Dear *Strafford*,

You were not wont to look so happy.

Strafford. Sweet,

I tried obedience thoroughly. I took

The King's wild plan: of course, ere I could

reach

My army, Conway ruined it. I drew

The wrecks together, raised all heaven and

earth,

And would have fought the Scots: the King

at once

Made truce with them. Then, Lucy, then,

dear child,

God put it in my mind to love, serve, die

For Charles, but never to obey him more!

While he endured their insolence at Ripon

I fell on them at Durham. But you'll tell

The King I waited? All the anteroom

Is filled with my adherents.

Lady Carlisle. *Strafford*—*Strafford*,

What daring act is this you hint?

Strafford. No, no!

'Tis here, not daring if you knew? all here!

[*Drawing papers from his breast.*

Full proof, see, ample proof—does the Queen

know

I have such damning proof? *Bedford* and

Essex,

Brooke, *Warwick*, *Savile* (did you notice

Savile?

The simper that I spoil?), *Saye*, *Mandeville*—

Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym!

Lady Carlisle. Great heaven!

Strafford. From *Savile*

and his lords, to Pym

And his losels, crushed!—Pym shall no

ward the blow

Nor *Savile* creep aside from it! The Crew

And the Cabal—I crush them!

Lady Carlisle. And you go—

Strafford,—and now you go?—

Strafford. —About no work

In the background, I promise you! I go

Straight to the House of Lords to claim these

knaves.

Mainwaring!

Lady Carlisle. Stay—stay, *Strafford*!

Strafford. She'll return,
The Queen—some little project of her own!
No time to lose: the King takes fright
perhaps.

Lady Carlisle. Pym's strong, remember!

Strafford. Very strong, as fits
The Faction's head—with no offence to
Hampden,

Vane, Rudyard and my loving Hollis: one
And all they lodge within the Tower to-night
In just equality. Bryan! Mainwaring!

[*Many of his Adherents enter.*]

The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)
On the Scots' war; my visit's opportune
When all is over, Bryan, you proceed

To Ireland: these dispatches, mark me,
Bryan,

Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond:
We want the army here—my army, raised
At such a cost, that should have done such
good,

And was inactive all the time! no matter,
We'll find a use for it. Willis . . . or, no
—you!

You, friend, make haste to York: bear this,
at once . . .

Or,—better stay for form's sake, see yourself!
The news you carry. You remain with me
To execute the Parliament's command,
Mainwaring! Help to seize these lesser
knaves,

Take care there's no escaping at backdoors:
I'll not have one escape, mind me—not one!
I seem revengeful, Lucy? Did you know
What these men dare!

Lady Carlisle. It is so much they dare!

Strafford. I proved that long ago; my
turn is now.

Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens!
Observe who harbours any of the brood
That scramble off: be sure they smart for it!
Our coffers are but lean.

And you, child, too,
Shall have your task; deliver this to Laud.
Laud will not be the slowest in my praise:
"Thorough" he'll cry!—Foolish, to be so
glad!

This life is gay and glowing, after all:

'Tis worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine
Just for the bliss of crushing them. To-day
Is worth the living for.

Lady Carlisle. That reddening brow!
You seem . . .

Strafford. Well—do I not? I would
be well—

I could not but be well on such a day!
And, this day ended, 'tis of slight import
How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul
In Strafford.

Lady Carlisle. Noble Strafford!
Strafford. No farewell!

I'll see you anon, to-morrow—the first thing.
—If She should come to stay me!

Lady Carlisle. Go—'tis nothing—
Only my heart that swells: it has been thus
Ere now: go, Strafford!

Strafford. To-night, then, let it be.
I must see Him: you, the next after Him.
I'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me,
friends!

You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour
To talk of all your lives. Close after me!
"My friend of friends!"

[*STRAFFORD and the rest go out.*]

Lady Carlisle. The King—ever the King!
No thought of one beside, whose little word
Unveils the King to him—one word from me,
Which yet I do not breathe!

Ah, have I spared
Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward
Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way
He is the better for my love. No, no—
He would not look so joyous—I'll believe
His very eye would never sparkle thus,
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.

SCENE III.—*The Antechamber of
the House of Lords.*

*Many of the Presbyterian Party. The
Adherents of STRAFFORD, etc.*

A Group of Presbyterians.—I. I tell you
he struck Maxwell: Maxwell sought
To stay the Earl: he struck him and passed
on.

2. Fear as you may, keep a good countenance

Before these rufflers.

3. Strafford here the first,
With the great army at his back!

4. No doubt.
I would Pym had made haste: that's Bryan,
hush—

The gallant pointing.

Strafford's Followers. — 1. Mark these
worthies, now!

2. A goodly gathering! "Where the
carcass is

"There shall the eagles"—what's the rest?

3. For eagles
Say crows.

A Presbyterian. Stand back, sirs!

One of Strafford's Followers. Are we
in Geneva?

A Presbyterian. No, nor in Ireland; we
have leave to breathe.

One of Strafford's Followers. Truly? Be-
hold how privileged we be

That serve "King Pym"! There's Some-one
at Whitehall

Who skulks obscure; but Pym struts . . .

The Presbyterian. Nearer.

A Follower of Strafford. , Higher,

We look to see him. [*To his Companions.*]
I'm to have St. John

In charge; was he among the knaves just now
That followed Pym within there?

Another. The gaunt man

Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect
Pym at his heels so fast? I like it not.

MAXWELL enters.

Another. Why, man, they rush into the
net! Here's Maxwell—

Ha, Maxwell? How the brethren flock around
The fellow! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet
Upon your shoulder, Maxwell?

Maxwell. Gentlemen,

Stand back! a great thing passes here.

A Follower of Strafford. [*To another.*] The
Earl

Is at his work! [*To M.*] Say, Maxwell, what
great thing!

Speak out! [*To a Presbyterian.*] Friend,
I've a kindness for you! Friend,

I've seen you with St. John: O stockishness!
Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind

St. John's head in a charger? How, the
plague,

Not laugh?

Another. Say, Maxwell, what great thing!

Another. Nay, wait:

The jest will be to wait.

First. And who's to bear

These demure hypocrites? You'd swear they
came . . .

Came . . . just as we come!

[*A Puritan enters hastily and without
observing STRAFFORD'S Followers.*

The Puritan. How goes on the work?

Has Pym . . .

A Follower of Strafford. The secret's out
at last. Aha,

The carrion's scented! Welcome, crow the
first!

Gorge merrily, you with the blinking eye!

"King Pym has fallen!"

The Puritan. Pym?

A Strafford. Pym!

A Presbyterian. Only Pym?

Many of Strafford's Followers. No, brother,
not Pym only; Vane as well,

Rudyard as well, Hampden, St. John as
well!

A Presbyterian. My mind misgives: can it
be true?

Another. Lost! Lost!

A Strafford. Say we true, Maxwell?

The Puritan. Pride before destruction,

A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.

Many of Strafford's Followers. Ah now!

The very thing! A word in season!

A golden apple in a silver picture,

To greet Pym as he passes!

[*The doors at the back begin to open,
noise and light issuing.*

Maxwell. Stand back, all!

Many of the Presbyterians. I hold with
Pym! And I!

Strafford's Followers. Now for the text!
He comes! Quick!

The Puritan. How hath the oppressor
ceased!

The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked!
The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote
The people in wrath with a continual stroke,
That ruled the nations in his anger—he
Is persecuted and none hindereth!

[*The doors open, and STRAFFORD issues
in the greatest disorder, and amid
cries from within of "Void the
House!"*

Strafford. Impeach me! Pym! I never
struck, I think,
The felon on that calm insulting mouth
When it proclaimed—Pym's mouth pro-
claimed me . . . God!

Was it a word, only a word that held
The outrageous blood back on my heart—
which beats!

Which beats! Some one word—"Traitor,"
did he say,
Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,
Upon me?

Maxwell. In the Commons' name, their
servant
Demands Lord Strafford's sword.

Strafford. What did you say?

Maxwell. The Commons bid me ask your
lordship's sword.

Strafford. Let us go forth: follow me,
gentlemen!

Draw your swords too: cut any down that
bar us.

On the King's service! Maxwell, clear the
way! [*The Presbyterians prepare
to dispute his passage.*

Strafford. I stay: the King himself shall
see me here.

Your tablets, fellow!

[*To MAINWARING.*] Give that to the King!
Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, let be!
Nay, you shall take my sword!

[*MAXWELL advances to take it.*
Or, no—not that!

Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus
far,
All up to that—not that! Why, friend, you
see

When the King lays your head beneath my
foot
It will not pay for that. Go, all of you!

Maxwell. I dare, my lord, to disobey:
none stir!

Strafford. This gentle Maxwell!—Do not
touch him, Bryan!

[*To the Presbyterians.*] Whichever cur of
you will carry this
Escapes his fellow's fate. None saves his life?
None?

[*Cries from within of "STRAFFORD!"*
Slingsby, I've loved you at least:
make haste!

Stab me! I have not time to tell you why.
You then, my Bryan! Mainwaring, you then!
Is it because I spoke so hastily
At Allerton? The King had vexed me.

[*To the Presbyterians.*] You!

—Not even you? If I live over this,
The King is sure to have your heads, you
know!

But what if I can't live this minute through?
Pym, who is there with his pursuing smile!

[*Louder cries of "STRAFFORD!"*

The King! I troubled him, stood in the
way
Of his negotiations, was the one
Great obstacle to peace, the Enemy
Of Scotland: and he sent for me, from York,
My safety guaranteed—having prepared
A Parliament—I see! And at Whitehall
The Queen was whispering with Vane—I see
The trap! [*Tearing off the George.*
I tread a gewgaw underfoot,
And cast a memory from me. One stroke,
now!

[*His own Adherents disarm him.*
Renewed cries of "STRAFFORD!"

England! I see thy arm in this and yield.
Pray you now—Pym awaits me—pray you
now!

[*STRAFFORD reaches the doors: they
open wide. HAMPDEN and a
crowd discovered, and, at the
bar, PYM standing apart. As
STRAFFORD kneels, the scene
shuts.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Whitehall.*

The KING, the QUEEN, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE. (VANE, HOLLAND, SAVILE, in the background.)

Lady Carlisle. Answer them, Hollis, for his sake! One word!

Charles. [*To HOLLIS.*] You stand, silent and cold, as though I were

Deceiving you—my friend, my playfellow
Of other times. What wonder after all?
Just so, I dreamed my People loved me.

Hollis. Sir,
It is yourself that you deceive, not me.

You'll quit me comforted, your mind made up
That, since you've talked thus much and
grieved thus much,

All you can do for Strafford has been done.

Queen. If you kill Strafford—(come, we grant you leave,
Suppose)—

Hollis. I may withdraw, sir?

Lady Carlisle. Hear them out
'Tis the last chance for Strafford! Hear them
out!

Hollis. "If we kill Strafford"—on the
eighteenth day
Of Strafford's trial—"We!"

Charles. Pym, my good Hollis—
Pym, I should say!

Hollis. Ah, true—sir, pardon me!
You witness our proceedings every day;
But the screened gallery, I might have
guessed,

Admits of such a partial glimpse at us,
Pym takes up all the room, shuts out the view.
Still, on my honour, sir, the rest of the place
Is not unoccupied. The Commons sit
—That's England; Ireland sends, and
Scotland too,

Their representatives; the Peers that judge
Are easily distinguished; one remarks
The People here and there: but the close
curtain

Must hide so much!

Queen. Acquaint your insolent crew,
This day the curtain shall be dashed aside!
It served a purpose.

Hollis. Think! This very day?
Ere Strafford rises to defend himself?

Charles. I will defend him, sir!—sanction
the past

This day: it ever was my purpose. Rage
At me, not Strafford!

Lady Carlisle. Nobly!—will he not
Do nobly?

Hollis. Sir, you will do honestly;
And, for that deed, I too would be a king.

Charles. Only, to do this now!—"deaf"
(in your style)

"To subjects' prayers,"—I must oppose them
now!

It seems their will the trial should proceed,—
So palpably their will!

Hollis. You peril much,
But it were no bright moment save for that.
Strafford, your prime support, the sole roof-
tree

Which props this quaking House of Privilege,
(Floods come, winds beat, and see—the
treacherous sand!)

Doubtless, if the mere putting forth an arm
Could save him, you'd save Strafford.

Charles. And they dare
Consummate calmly this great wrong! No
hope?

This ineffaceable wrong! No pity then?
Hollis. No plague in store for perfidy?—
Farewell!

You called me, sir—[*To Lady CARLISLE.*]
you, lady, bade me come

To save the Earl: I came, thank God for it,
To learn how far such perfidy can go!

You, sir, concert with me on saving him
Who have just ruined Strafford!

Charles. I?—and how?

Hollis. Eighteen days long he throws, one
after one,

Pym's charges back: a blind moth-eaten law!
—He'll break from it at last: and whom to
thank?

The mouse that gnawed the lion's net for him
Got a good friend,—but he, the other mouse,

That looked on while the lion freed himself—
 Fared he so well, does any fable say?
Charles. What can you mean?
Hollis. Pym never could have proved
 Strafford's design of bringing up the troops
 To force this kingdom to obedience: Vane—
 Your servant, not our friend, has proved it.
Charles. Vane?
Hollis. This day. Did Vane deliver up
 or no
 Those notes which, furnished by his son to
 Pym,
 Seal Strafford's fate?
Charles. Sir, as I live, I know
 Nothing that Vane has done! What treason
 next?
 I wash my hands of it. Vane, speak the
 truth!
 Ask Vane himself!
Hollis. I will not speak to Vane,
 Who speak to Pym and Hampden every day.
Queen. Speak to Vane's master then!
 What gain to him
 Were Strafford's death?
Hollis. Ha? Strafford cannot turn
 As you, sir, sit there—bid you forth, demand
 If every hateful act were not set down
 In his commission?—whether you contrived
 Or no, that all the violence should seem
 His work, the gentle ways—your own,—his
 part,
 To counteract the King's kind impulses—
 While . . . but you know what he could
 say! And then
 He might produce,—mark, sir!—a certain
 charge
 To set the King's express command aside,
 If need were, and be blameless. He might
 add . . .
Charles. Enough!
Hollis. —Who bade him break
 the Parliament,
 Find some pretence for setting up sword-law!
Queen. Retire!
Charles. Once more, whatever Vane
 dared do,

I know not: he is rash, a fool—I know
 Nothing of Vane!
Hollis. Well—I believe you. Sir,
 Believe me, in return, that . . .
 [Turning to Lady CARLISLE.] Gentle lady,
 The few words I would say, the stones might
 hear
 Sooner than these,—I rather speak to you,
 You, with the heart! The question, trust
 me, takes
 Another shape, to-day: not, if the King
 Or England shall succumb,—but, who shall pay
 The forfeit, Strafford or his master. Sir,
 You loved me once: think on my warning
 now! [Goes out.
Charles. On you and on your warning
 both!—Carlisle!
 That paper!
Queen. But consider!
Charles. Give it me!
 There, signed—will that content you? Do
 not speak!
 You have betrayed me, Vane! See! any day,
 According to the tenor of that paper,
 He bids your brother bring the army up,
 Strafford shall head it and take full revenge.
 Seek Strafford! Let him have the same, before
 He rises to defend himself!
Queen. In truth?
 That your shrewd Hollis should have worked
 a change
 Like this! You, late reluctant . . .
Charles. Say, Carlisle,
 Your brother Percy brings the army up,
 Falls on the Parliament—(I'll think of you,
 My Hollis!) say, we plotted long—'tis mine,
 The scheme is mine, remember! Say, I curse
 Vane's folly in your hearing! If the Earl
 Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie
 With you, Carlisle!
Lady Carlisle. Nay, fear not me! but
 still
 That's a bright moment, sir, you throw away.
 Tear down the veil and save him!
Queen. Go, Carlisle!
Lady Carlisle. (I shall see Strafford—
 speak to him: my heart
 Must never beat so, then! And if I tell

The truth? What's gained by falsehood?
There they stand

Whose trade it is, whose life it is! How vain
Togild such rottenness! Strafford shall know,
Thoroughly know them!

Queen. Trust to me! [*To*
CARLISLE.] Carlisle,

You seem inclined, alone of all the Court,
To serve poor Strafford: this bold plan of yours
Merits much praise, and yet . . .

Lady Carlisle. Time presses, madam.

Queen. Yet—may it not be something
premature?

Strafford defends himself to-day—reserves
Some wondrous effort, one may well suppose!

Lady Carlisle. Ay, Hollis hints as much.

Charles. Why linger then?

Haste with the scheme—my scheme: I shall
be there

To watch his look. Tell him I watch his look!

Queen. Stay, we'll precede you!

Lady Carlisle. At your pleasure.

Charles. Say—

Say, Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall!

I shall be there, remember!

Lady Carlisle. Doubt me not.

Charles. On our return, Carlisle, we wait
you here!

Lady Carlisle. I'll bring his answer. Sir,
I follow you.

(*Prove the King faithless, and I take away*
All Strafford cares to live for: let it be—
'Tis the King's scheme!

My Strafford, I can save,
Nay, I have saved you, yet am scarce content,
Because my poor name will not cross your
mind.

Strafford, how much I am unworthy you!)

SCENE II.—*A Passage adjoining*
Westminster Hall.

Many Groups of Spectators of the Trial.
Officers of the Court, etc.

1st Spectator. More crowd than ever! Not
know Hampden, man?
That's he, by Pym, Pym that is speaking now.

No, truly, if you look so high you'll see
Little enough of either!

2nd Spectator. Stay: Pym's arm
Points like a prophet's rod.

3rd Spectator. Ay, ay, we've heard
Some pretty speaking: yet the Earl escapes.

4th Spectator. I fear it: just a foolish word
or two

About his children—and we see, forsooth,
Not England's foe in Strafford, but the man
Who, sick, half-blind . . .

2nd Spectator. What's that Pym's
saying now

Which makes the curtains flutter? look! A
hand

Clutches them. Ah! The King's hand!

5th Spectator. I had thought
Pym was not near so tall. What said he,
friend?

2nd Spectator. "Nor is this way a novel
way of blood,"

And the Earl turns as if to . . . look! look!

Many Spectators. There!

What ails him? no—he rallies, see—goes on,
And Strafford smiles. Strange!

An Officer. Haselrig!

Many Spectators. Friend? Friend?

The Officer. Lost, utterly lost: just when
we looked for Pym

To make a stand against the ill effects

Of the Earl's speech! Is Haselrig without?
Pym's message is to him.

3rd Spectator. Now, said I true?
Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no?

1st Spectator. Never believe it, man!
These notes of Vane's

Ruin the Earl.

5th Spectator. A brave end: not a whit
Less firm, less Pym all over. Then, the trial
Is closed. No—Strafford means to speak
again?

An Officer. Stand back, there!

5th Spectator. Why, the
Earl is coming hither!

Before the court breaks up! His brother,
look,—

You'd say he'd deprecated some fierce act
In Strafford's mind just now.

<p><i>An Officer.</i> Stand back, I say!</p> <p><i>2nd Spectator.</i> Who's the veiled woman that he talks with?</p> <p><i>Many Spectators.</i> Hush—</p> <p>The Earl! the Earl!</p> <p>[Enter STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY, and other Secretaries, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, etc. STRAFFORD converses with Lady CARLISLE.</p> <p><i>Hollis.</i> So near the end! Be patient—Return!</p> <p><i>Strafford</i> [to his Secretaries]. Here—anywhere—or, 'tis freshest here!</p> <p>To spend one's April here, the blossom-month: Set it down here!</p> <p>[They arrange a table, papers, etc.</p> <p>So, Pym can quail, can cower Because I glance at him, yet more's to do? What's to be answered, Slingsby? Let us end!</p> <p>[To Lady CARLISLE.] Child, I refuse his offer; whatsoever</p> <p>It be! Too late! Tell me no word of him! 'Tis something, Hollis, I assure you that—</p> <p>To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen days Fighting for life and fame against a pack Of very curs, that lie through thick and thin, Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't say</p> <p>"Strafford" if it would take my life!</p> <p><i>Lady Carlisle.</i> Be moved!</p> <p>Glance at the paper!</p> <p><i>Strafford.</i> Already at my heels!</p> <p>Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the track again.</p> <p>Peace, child! Now, Slingsby!</p> <p>[Messengers from LANE and other of STRAFFORD'S Counsel within the Hall are coming and going during the Scene.</p> <p><i>Strafford</i> [setting himself to write and dictate]. I shall beat you, Hollis!</p> <p>Do you know that? In spite of St. John's tricks,</p> <p>In spite of Pym—your Pym who shrank from me!</p> <p>Eliot would have contrived it otherwise.</p>	<p>[To a Messenger.] In truth? This slip, tell Lane, contains as much As I can call to mind about the matter.</p> <p>Eliot would have disdained . . .</p> <p>[Calling after the Messenger.] And Radcliffe, say,</p> <p>The only person who could answer Pym, Is safe in prison, just for that.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Well, well!</p> <p>It had not been recorded in that case, I baffled you.</p> <p>[To Lady CARLISLE.] Nay, child, why look so grieved?</p> <p>All's gained without the King! You saw Pym quail?</p> <p>What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,</p> <p>But tranquilly resume my task as though Nothing had intervened since I proposed To call that traitor to account! Such tricks, Trust me, shall not be played a second time,</p> <p>Not even against Laud, with his grey hair—Your good work, Hollis! Peace! To make amends,</p> <p>You, Lucy, shall be here when I impeach Pym and his fellows.</p> <p><i>Hollis.</i> Wherefore not protest Against our whole proceeding, long ago? Why feel indignant now? Why stand this while</p> <p>Enduring patiently?</p> <p><i>Strafford.</i> Child, I'll tell you—</p> <p>You, and not Pym—you, the slight graceful girl</p> <p>Tall for a flowering lily, and not Hollis—Why I stood patient! I was fool enough To see the will of England in Pym's will; To fear, myself had wronged her, and to wait</p> <p>Her judgment: when, behold, in place of it . . .</p> <p>[To a Messenger who whispers.] Tell Lane to answer no such question! Law,—</p> <p>I grapple with their law! I'm here to try My actions by their standard, not my own! Their law allowed that levy: what's the rest To Pym, or Lane, any but God and me?</p>
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Lady Carlisle. The King's so weak! Secure
this chance! 'Twas Vane,
Never forget, who furnished Pym the notes . . .

Strafford. Fit,—very fit, those precious
notes of Vane,

To close the Trial worthily! I feared
Some spice of nobleness might linger yet
And spoil the character of all the past.
Vane eased me . . . and I will go back and
say

As much—to Pym, to England! Follow me!
I have a word to say! There, my defence
Is done!

Stay! why be proud? Why care
to own

My gladness, my surprise?—Nay, not sur-
prise!

Wherefore insist upon the little pride
Of doing all myself, and sparing him
The pain? Child, say the triumph is my
King's!

When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and
sank down,

One image was before me: could I fail?
Child, care not for the past, so indistinct,
Obscure—there's nothing to forgive in it
'Tis so forgotten! From this day begins
A new life, founded on a new belief
In Charles.

Hollis. In Charles? Rather believe in
Pym!

And here he comes in proof! Appeal to
Pym!

Say how unfair . . .

Strafford. To Pym? I would
say nothing!

I would not look upon Pym's face again.

Lady Carlisle. Stay, let me have to think
I pressed your hand!

[STRAFFORD and his friends go out.]

Enter HAMPDEN and VANE.

Vane. O Hampden, save the great mis-
guided man!

Plead Strafford's cause with Pym! I have
remarked

He moved no muscle when we all de-
claimed

Against him: you had but to breathe—he
turned

Those kind calm eyes upon you.

[Enter PYM, the Solicitor-General
ST. JOHN, the Managers of the
Trial, FIENNES, RUDYARD, etc.]

Rudyard. Horrible!

Till now all hearts were with you: I with-
draw

For one. Too horrible! But we mistake
Your purpose, Pym: you cannot snatch away
The last spar from the drowning man.

Fiennes. He talks

With St. John of it—see, how quietly!

[To other Presbyterians.] You'll join us?
Strafford may deserve the worst:

But this new course is monstrous. Vane, take
heart!

This Bill of his Attainder shall not have
One true man's hand to it.

Vane. Consider, Pym!

Confront your Bill, your own Bill: what is it?
You cannot catch the Earl on any charge,—

No man will say the law has hold of him
On any charge; and therefore you resolve

To take the general sense on his desert,
As though no law existed, and we met

To found one. You refer to Parliament
To speak its thought upon the abortive mass

Of half-borne-out assertions, dubious hints
Hereafter to be cleared, distortions—ay,

And wild inventions. Every man is saved
The task of fixing any single charge

On Strafford: he has but to see in him
The enemy of England.

Pym. A right scruple!

I have heard some called England's enemy
With less consideration.

Vane. Pity me!

Indeed you made me think I was your friend!
I who have murdered Strafford, how remove

That memory from me?

Pym. I absolve you, Vane.

Take you no care for aught that you have
done!

Vane. John Hampden, not this Bill!
Reject this Bill!

He staggers through the ordeal : let him go,
Strew no fresh fire before him ! Plead for
us !

When Strafford spoke, your eyes were thick
with tears !

Hampden. England speaks louder : who
are we, to play

The generous pardoner at her expense,
Magnanimously waive advantages,
And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill ?

Vane. He was your friend.

Pym. I have heard that before.

Fiennes. And England trusts you.

Hampden. Shame be his, who turns
The opportunity of serving her
She trusts him with, to his own mean
account—

Who would look nobly frank at her expense !

Fiennes. I never thought it could have
come to this.

Pym. But I have made myself familiar,
Fiennes,

With this one thought—have walked, and
sat, and slept,

This thought before me. I have done such
things,

Being the chosen man that should destroy
The traitor. You have taken up this thought
To play with, for a gentle stimulant,
To give a dignity to idler life

By the dim prospect of emprise to come,
But ever with the softening, sure belief,
That all would end some strange way right
at last.

Fiennes. Had we made out some weightier
charge !

Pym. You say

That these are petty charges : can we come
To the real charge at all ? There he is safe
In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy
Is not a crime, treachery not a crime :
The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when
you speak

The words, but where's the power to take
revenge

Upon them ? We must make occasion serve,—
The oversight shall pay for the main sin
That mocks us.

Rudyard. But this unexampled course,
This Bill !

Pym. By this, we roll the clouds away
Of precedent and custom, and at once
Bid the great beacon-light God sets in all,
The conscience of each bosom, shine upon
The guilt of Strafford : each man lay his hand
Upon his breast, and judge !

Vane. I only see
Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all beyond !

Rudyard and others. Forgive him ! He
would join us, now he finds

What the King counts reward ! The pardon,
too,
Should be your own. Yourself should bear
to Strafford

The pardon of the Commons.

Pym. Meet him ? Strafford ?

Have we to meet once more, then ? Be it so !
And yet—the prophecy seemed half fulfilled
When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my youth,
Our friendship, divers thoughts came back
at once

And left me, for a time . . . 'Tis very sad !
To-morrow we discuss the points of law
With Lane—to-morrow ?

Vane. Not before to-morrow—
So, time enough ! I knew you would relent !

Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you intro-
duce

The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me !

SCENE III.—*Whitehall.*

The KING.

Charles. My loyal servant ! To defend
himself

Thus irresistibly,—withholding aught
That seemed to implicate us !

We have done
Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, the future
Must recompense the past.

She tarries long.
I understand you, Strafford, now !

The scheme—
Carlisle's mad scheme—he'll sanction it, I
fear,

For love of me. 'Twas too precipitate :
Before the army's fairly on its march,
He'll be at large : no matter.

Well, Carlisle?

Enter PYM.

Pym. Fear me not, sir :—my mission is to
save,

This time.

Charles. To break thus on me ! Un-
announced !

Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.

Charles. No more
Of Strafford ! I have heard too much from
you.

Pym. I spoke, sir, for the People ; will you
hear

A word upon my own account ?

Charles. Of Strafford ?
(So turns the tide already ? Have we tamed
The insolent brawler ?—Strafford's eloquence
Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford, sir,
Has spoken for himself.

Pym. Sufficiently.
I would apprise you of the novel course
The People take : the Trial fails.

Charles. Yes, yes :
We are aware, sir : for your part in it
Means shall be found to thank you.

Pym. Pray you, read
This schedule ! I would learn from your own
mouth

—(It is a matter much concerning me)—
Whether, if two Estates of us concede
The death of Strafford, on the grounds set
forth

Within that parchment, you, sir, can resolve
To grant your own consent to it. This Bill
Is framed by me. If you determine, sir,
That England's manifested will should guide
Your judgment, ere another week such will
Shall manifest itself. If not,—I cast
Aside the measure.

Charles. You can hinder, then,
The introduction of this Bill ?

Pym. I can.

Charles. He is my friend, sir : I have
wronged him : mark you,

Had I not wronged him, this might be. You
think

Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not away,
We know you hate him)—no one else could
love

Strafford : but he has saved me, some affirm.
Think of his pride ! And do you know one
strange,

One frightful thing ? We all have used the man
As though a drudge of ours, with not a source
Of happy thoughts except in us ; and yet
Strafford has wife and children, household
cares,

Just as if we had never been. Ah sir,
You are moved, even you, a solitary man
Wed to your cause—to England if you will !

Pym. Yes—think, my soul—to England !
Draw not back !

Charles. Prevent that Bill, sir ! All your
course seems fair

Till now. Why, in the end, 'tis I should sign
The warrant for his death ! You have said
much

I ponder on ; I never meant, indeed,
Strafford should serve me any more. I take
The Commons' counsel ; but this Bill is
yours—

Nor worthy of its leader : care not, sir,
For that, however ! I will quite forget
You named it to me. You are satisfied ?

Pym. Listen to me, sir ! Eliot laid his
hand,

Wasted and white, upon my forehead once ;
Wentworth—he's gone now !—has talked on,
whole nights,

And I beside him ; Hampden loves me : sir,
How can I breathe and not wish England well,
And her King well ?

Charles. I thank you, sir, who leave
That King his servant. Thanks, sir !

Pym. Let me speak !
—Who may not speak again ; whose spirit
years

For a cool night after this weary day :
—Who would not have my soul turn sicker yet

In a new task, more fatal, more august,
More full of England's utter weal or woe.

I thought, sir, could I find myself with you,

After this trial, alone, as man to man—
I might say something, warn you, pray you,
save—

Mark me, King Charles, save—you !
But God must do it. Yet I warn you, sir—
(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)
As you would have no deeper question moved
—"How long the Many must endure the
One,"

Assure me, sir, if England give assent
To Strafford's death, you will not interfere !
Or—

Charles. God forsakes me. I am in a net
And cannot move. Let all be as you say !

Enter Lady CARLISLE.

Lady Carlisle. He loves you—looking
beautiful with joy
Because you sent me ! he would spare you all
The pain ! he never dreamed you would
forsake

Your servant in the evil day—nay, see
Your scheme returned ! That generous
heart of his !

He needs it not—or, needing it, disdains
A course that might endanger you—you, sir,
Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .

[*Seeing Pym.*] Well met !
No fear for Strafford ! All that's true and
brave

On your own side shall help us : we are now
Stronger than ever.

Ha—what, sir, is this ?
All is not well ! What parchment have you
there ?

Pym. Sir, much is saved us both.

Lady Carlisle. This Bill ! Your lip
Whitens—you could not read one line to me
Your voice would falter so !

Pym. No recreant yet !
The great word went from England to my
soul,

And I arose. The end is very near.

Lady Carlisle. I am to save him ! All
have shrunk beside ;

'Tis only I am left. Heaven will make strong
The hand now as the heart. Then let both
die !

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Whitehall.*

HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE.

Hollis. Tell the King then ! Come in
with me !

Lady Carlisle. Not so !
He must not hear till it succeeds.

Hollis. Succeed ?
No dream was half so vain—you'd rescue
Strafford

And outwit Pym ! I cannot tell you . . . lady,
The block pursues me, and the hideous show.
To-day . . . is it to-day ? And all the while
He's sure of the King's pardon. Think, I
have

To tell this man he is to die. The King
May rend his hair, for me ! I'll not see
Strafford !

Lady Carlisle. Only, if I succeed, re-
member—Charles
Has saved him. He would hardly value life
Unless his gift. My staunch friends wait.

Go in—
You must go in to Charles !

Hollis. And all beside
Left Strafford long ago. The King has signed
The warrant for his death ! the Queen was
sick

Of the eternal subject. For the Court,—
The Trial was amusing in its way,
Only too much of it : the Earl withdrew

In time. But you, fragile, alone, so young
Amid rude mercenaries—you devise
A plan to save him ! Even though it fails,
What shall reward you ?

Lady Carlisle. I may go, you think,
To France with him ? And you reward me,
friend,

Who lived with Strafford even from his youth
Before he set his heart on state-affairs
And they bent down that noble brow of his.
I have learned somewhat of his latter life,
And all the future I shall know : but, Hollis,
I ought to make his youth my own as well.
Tell me, —when he is saved !

Hollis. My gentle friend,
He should know all and love you, but 'tis
vain!

Lady Carlisle. Love? no—too late now!
Let him love the King!

'Tis the King's scheme! I have your word,
remember!

We'll keep the old delusion up. But, quick!
Quick! Each of us has work to do, be-
side!

Go to the King! I hope—Hollis—I hope!
Say nothing of my scheme! Hush, while
we speak

Think where he is! Now for my gallant
friends!

Hollis. Where he is? Calling wildly upon
Charles,

Guessing his fate, pacing the prison-floor.

Let the King tell him! I'll not look on
Strafford.

SCENE II.—*The Tower.*

STRAFFORD *sitting with his Children.*

They sing.

*O bell' andars
Per barca in mare,
Verso la sera
Di Primavera!*

William. The boat's in the broad moon-
light all this while—

*Verso la sera
Di Primavera!*

And the boat shoots from underneath the
moon

Into the shadowy distance; only still
You hear the dipping oar—

Verso la sera,

And faint, and fainter, and then all's quite
gone,

Music and light and all, like a lost star.

Anne. But you should sleep, father: you
were to sleep.

Strafford. I do sleep, Anne; or if not—
you must know

There's such a thing as . . .

William. You're too tired to sleep?

Strafford. It will come by-and-by and all
day long,

In that old quiet house I told you of:

We sleep safe there.

Anne. . . . Why not in Ireland?

Strafford. . . . No!

Too many dreams!—That song's for Venice,
William:

You know how Venice looks upon the map—
Isles that the mainland hardly can let go?

William. You've been to Venice, father?

Strafford. . . . I was young, then.

William. A city with no King; that's
why I like

Even a song that comes from Venice.

Strafford. . . . *William!*

William. Oh, I know why! Anne, do
you love the King?

But I'll see Venice for myself one day.

Strafford. See many lands, boy—England
last of all,—

That way you'll love her best.

William. . . . Why do men say

You sought to ruin her then?

Strafford. . . . Ah,—they say that.

William. Why?

Strafford. . . . I suppose they must have
words to say,

As you to sing.

Anne. . . . But they make songs beside:
Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,
That called you . . . Oh, the names!

William. . . . Don't mind hey, father!
They soon left off when I cried out to them.

Strafford. We shall so soon be out of it,
my boy!

'Tis not worth while: who heeds a foolish
song?

William. Why, not the King.

Strafford. . . . Well: it has been the fate
Of better; and yet,—wherefore not feel sure
That Time, who in the twilight comes to
mend

All the fantastic day's caprice, consign

To the low ground once more the ignoble Term,
And raise the Genius on his orb again,—
That Time will do me right?

Anne. (Shall we sing, William?
He does not look thus when we sing.)

Strafford. For Ireland,
Something is done: too little, but enough
To show what might have been.

William. (I have no heart
To sing now! Anne, how very sad he looks!
Oh, I so hate the King for all he says!)

Strafford. Forsook them! What, the
common songs will run

That I forsook the People? Nothing more?
Ay, Fame, the busy scribe, will pause, no
doubt,

Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves
Noisy to be enrolled,—will register
The curious glosses, subtle notices,
Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see
Beside that plain inscription of The Name—
The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford!

[The Children resume their song
timidly, but break off.]

Ent: HOLLIS and an Attendant.

Strafford. No,—Hollis? in good time!—
Who is he?

Hollis. One
That must be present.

Strafford. Ah—I understand.
They will not let me see poor Laud alone.
How politic! They'd use me by degrees
To solitude: and, just as you came in,
I was solicitous what life to lead
When Strafford's "not so much as Constable
"In the King's service." Is there any means
To keep oneself awake? What would you do
After this bustle, Hollis, in my place?

Hollis. Strafford!

Strafford. Observe, not but that
Pym and you

Will find me news enough—news I shall hear
Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side
At Wentworth. Garrard must be re-engaged
My newsman. Or, a better project now—
What if when all's consummated, and the
Saints

Reign, and the Senate's work goes swim-
mingly,—

What if I venture up, some day, unseen,
To saunter through the Town, notice how
Pym,

Your Tribune, likes Whitehall, drop quietly
Into a tavern, hear a point discussed,
As, whether Strafford's name were John or
James—

And be myself appealed to—I, who shall
Myself have near forgotten!

Hollis. I would speak . . .

Strafford. Then you shall speak,—not
now. I want just now,

To hear the sound of my own tongue. This
place

Is full of ghosts.

Hollis. Nay, you must hear me,
Strafford!

Strafford. Oh, readily! Only, one rare
thing more,—

The minister! Who will advise the King,
Turn his Sejanus, Richelieu and what not,
And yet have health—children, for aught I
know—

My patient pair of traitors! Ah,—but,
William—

Does not his cheek grow thin?
William. 'Tis you look thin,
Father!

Strafford. A scamper o'er the breezy wolds
Sets all to-rights.

Hollis. You cannot sure forget
A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford?

Strafford. No,
Why, no. I would not touch on that, the
first.

I left you that. Well, Hollis? Say at once,
The King can find no time to set me free!

A mask at Theobald's? ¹

Hollis. Hold: no such affair
Detains him.

⁴*Strafford.* True: what needs so great a
matter?

The Queen's lip may be sore. Well: when
he pleases,—

¹ A house near Cheshunt in Herts.

Only, I want the air : it vexes flesh
To be pent up so long.

Hollis. The King—I bear
His message, Strafford: pray you, let me
speak!

Strafford. Go, William! Anne, try o'er
your song again!

[*The Children retire.*]

They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
I know your message: you have nothing new
To tell me: from the first I guessed as much.
I know, instead of coming here himself,
Leading me forth in public by the hand,
The King prefers to leave the door ajar
As though I were escaping—bids me trudge
While the mob gapes upon some show prepared
On the other side of the river! Give at once
His order of release! I've heard, as well
Of certain poor manoeuvres to avoid
The granting pardon at his proper risk;
First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords,
Must talk a trifle with the Commons first,
Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,
And far from blaming them, and . . .

Where's the order?

Hollis. Spare me!

Strafford. Why, he'd not have me
steal away?

With an old doublet and a steeple hat
Like Prynne's? Be smuggled into France,
perhaps?

Hollis, 'tis for my children! 'Twas for them
I first consented to stand day by day
And give your Puritans the best of words,
Be patient, speak when called upon, observe
Their rules, and not return them prompt
their lie!

What's in that boy of mine that he should
prove

Son to a prison-breaker? I shall stay
And he'll stay with me. Charles should
know as much,

He too has children!

[*Turning to HOLLIS's Companion.*] Sir, you
feel for me!

No need to hide that face! Though it have
looked

Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know

Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on
me . . .

Your coming has my pardon, nay, my thanks:
For there is one who comes not.

Hollis. Whom forgive,
As one to die!

Strafford. True, all die, and all need
Forgiveness: I forgive him from my soul.

Hollis. 'Tis a world's wonder: Strafford,
you must die!

Strafford. Sir, if your errand is to set me free
This heartless jest mars much. Ha! Tears
in truth?

We'll end this! See this paper, warm—feel
—warm

With lying next my heart! Whose hand is
there?

Whose promise? Read, and loud for God to
hear!

"Strafford shall take no hurt"—read it, I say!
"In person, honour, nor estate"—

Hollis. The King . . .
Strafford. I could unking him by a breath!
You sit

Where Loudon sat, who came to prophesy
The certain end, and offer me Pym's grace
If I'd renounce the King: and I stood firm
On the King's faith. The King who lives . . .

Hollis. To sign
The warrant for your death.

Strafford. "Put not your trust
"In princes, neither in the sons of men,
"In whom is no salvation!"

Hollis. Trust in God!
The scaffold is prepared: they wait for you:
He has consented. Cast the earth behind!

Charles. You would not see me, Strafford,
at your foot!

It was wrong from me! Only, curse me not!

Hollis [*to STRAFFORD*]. As you hope
grace and pardon in your need,
Be merciful to this most wretched man.

[*Voices from within.*]

*Verso la sera
Di Primavera.*

Strafford. You'll be good to those children,
sir? I know

You'll not believe her, even should the Queen
Think they take after one they rarely saw.
I had intended that my son should live
A stranger to these matters : but you are
So utterly deprived of friends ! He too
Must serve you—will you not be good to
him ?

Or, stay, sir, do not promise—do not swear !
You, Hollis—do the best you can for me !,
I've not a soul to trust to : Wandesford's dead,
And you've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn
comes next :

I've found small time of late for my affairs,
But I trust any of you, Pym himself—
No one could hurt them : there's an infant,
too.

These tedious cares ! Your Majesty could
spare them.

Nay—pardon me, my King ! I had forgotten
Your education, trials, much temptation,
Some weakness : there escaped a peevish
word—

'Tis gone : I bless you at the last. You know
All's between you and me : what has the world
To do with it ? Farewell !

Charles [at the door]. Balfour ! Balfour !

Enter BALFOUR.

The Parliament !—go to them : I grant all
Demands. Their sittings shall be permanent :
Tell them to keep their money if they will :
I'll come to them for every coat I wear
And every crust I eat : only I choose
To pardon Strafford. As the Queen shall
choose !

—You never heard the People howl for blood,
Beside !

Balfour. Your Majesty may hear them now :
The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out :
Please you retire !

Charles. Take all the troops, Balfour !

Balfour. There are some hundred thou-
sand of the crowd.

Charles. Come with me, Strafford ! You'll
not fear, at least !

Strafford. Balfour, say nothing to the
world of this !

I charge you, as a dying man, forget

You gazed upon this agony of one . . .
Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say,
Balfour,

The King was sorry : 'tis no shame in him :
Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,
And that I walked the lighter to the block
Because of it. I shall walk lightly, sir !

Earth fades, heaven breaks on me : I shall
stand next

Before God's throne : the moment's close at
hand

When man the first, last time, has leave to lay
His whole heart bare before its Maker, leave
To clear up the long error of a life
And choose one happiness for evermore.

With all mortality about me, Charles,
Thesudden wreck, the dregs of violent death—
What if, despite the opening angel-song,
There penetrate one prayer for you ? Be saved
Through me ! Bear witness, no one could
prevent

My death ! Lead on ! ere he awake—best,
now !

All must be ready : did you say, Balfour,
The crowd began to murmur ? They'll be
kept

Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's !

Now ! But tread softly—children are at play
In the next room. Precede ! I follow—

*Enter Lady CARLISLE, with many
Attendants.*

Lady Carlisle. Me !
Follow me, Strafford, and be saved ! The
King ?

[*To the KING.*] Well—as you ordered, they
are ranged without,

The convoy . . . [*seeing the KING'S state.*]

[*To STRAFFORD.*] You know all, then !
Why, I thought

It looked best that the King should save you,
—Charles

Alone ; 'tis a shame that you should owe
me ought.

Or no, not shame ! Strafford, you'll not
feel shame

At being saved by me ?

Hollis. All true ! Oh Strafford,

She saves you! all her deed! this lady's deed!

And is the boat in readiness? You, friend, Are Billingsley, no doubt. Speak to her, Strafford!

See how she trembles, waiting for your voice! The world's to learn its bravest story yet.

Lady Carlisle. Talk afterward! Long nights in France enough,

To sit beneath the vines and talk of home.

Strafford. You love me, child? Ah, Strafford can be loved

As well as Vane! I could escape, then?

Lady Carlisle. Haste!

Advance the torches, Bryan!

Strafford. I will die.

They call me proud: but England had no right,

When she encountered me—her strength to mine—

To find the chosen foe a craven. Girl,

I fought her to the utterance, I fell,

I am her's now, and I will die. Beside,

The lookers-on! Eliot is all about

This place, with his most uncomplaining brow.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford!

Strafford. I think if you could know how much

I love you, you would be repaid, my friend!

Lady Carlisle. Then, for my sake!

Strafford. Even for your sweet sake,

I stay.

Hollis. For their sake!

Strafford. To bequeath a stain?

Leave me! Girl, humour me and let me die!

Lady Carlisle. Bid him escape—wake, King! Bid him escape!

Strafford. True, I will go! Die, and forsake the King?

I'll not draw back from the last service.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford!

Strafford. And, after all, what is disgrace to me?

Let us come, child! That it should end this way!

Lead then! but I feel strangely: it was not To end this way.

Lady Carlisle. Lean—lean on me!

Strafford. My King!

Oh, had he trusted me—his friend of friends!

Lady Carlisle. I can support him, Hollis!

Strafford. Not this way!

This gate—I dreamed of it, this very gate.

Lady Carlisle. It opens on the river: our good boat

Is moored below, our friends are there.

Strafford. The same:

Only with something ominous and dark,

Fatal, inevitable.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford! Strafford!

Strafford. Not by this gate! I feel what will be there!

I dreamed of it, I tell you: touch it not!

Lady Carlisle. To save the King,—Strafford, to save the King!

[As STRAFFORD opens the door, PYM is discovered with HAMPDEN, VANE, etc. STRAFFORD falls back; PYM follows slowly and confronts him.]

Pym. Have I done well? Speak, England! Whose sole sake

I still have laboured for, with disregard

To my own heart,—for whom my youth was made

Barren, my manhood waste, to offer up

Her sacrifice—this friend, this Wentworth here—

Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,

And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,

I hunted by all means (trusting that she

Would sanctify all means) even to the block

Which waits for him. And saying this, I feel

No bitterer pang than first I felt, the hour

I swore that Wentworth might leave us, but I

Would never leave him: I do leave him now.

I render up my charge (be witness, God!)

To England who imposed it. I have done

Her bidding—poorly, wrongly,—it may be,

With ill effects—for I am weak, a man:

Still, I have done my best, my human best,

Not faltering for a moment. It is done.

And this said, if I say . . . yes, I will say

I never loved but one man—David not

More Jonathan! Even thus, I love him now:

And look for my chief portion in that world
Where great hearts led astray are turned again,
(Soon it may be, and, certes, will be soon :
My mission over, I shall not live long.)—
Ay, here I know I talk—I dare and must,
Of England, and her great reward, as all
I look for there ; but in my inmost heart,
Believe, I think of stealing quite away
To walk once more with Wentworth—my
youth's friend
Purged from all error, gloriously renewed,
And Eliot shall not blame us. Then indeed . . .

This is no meeting, Wentworth ! Tears increase

Too hot. A thin mist—is it blood?—enwraps
The face I loved once. Then, the meeting be !

Strafford. I have loved England too ;
we'll meet then, Pym.

As well die now ! Youth is the only time
To think and to decide on a great course :
Manhood with action follows ; but 'tis dreary,
To have to alter our whole life in age—
The time past, the strength gone ! As well
die now.

When we meet, Pym, I'd be set right—not
now !

Best die. Then if there's any fault, fault too
Dies, smothered up. Poor grey old little Laud
May dream his dream out, of a perfect Church,
In some blind corner. And there's no one left.
I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym !

And yet, I know not : I shall not be there :
Friends fail—if he have any. And he's weak,
And loves the Queen, and . . . Oh, my fate
is nothing—

Nothing ! But not that awful head—not that !

Pym. If England shall declare such will
to me . . .

Strafford. Pym, you help England ! I,
that am to die,

What I must see ! 'tis here—all here ! My
God,

Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,
How thou wilt plague him, satiating hell !
What? England that you help, become
through you .

A green and putrefying charnel, left
Our children . . . some of us have children
Pym—

Some who, without that, still must ever wear
A darkened brow, an over-serious look,
And never properly be young ! No word?
What if I curse you? Send a strong curse
forth

Clothed from my heart, lapped round with
horror till

She's fit with her white face to walk the world
Scaring kind natures from your cause and
you—

Then to sit down with you at the board-head.
The gathering for prayer . . . O speak, but
speak !

. . . Creep up, and quietly follow each one
home,

You, you, you, be a nestling care for each
To sleep with,—hardly moaning in his dreams,
She gnaws so quietly,—till, lo he starts,
Gets off with half a heart eaten away !

Oh, shall you 'scape with less if she's my
child?

You will not say a word—to me—to Him ?

Pym. If England shall declare such will
to me . . .

Strafford. No, not for England now, not
for Heaven now,—

See, Pym, for my sake, mine who kneel to
you !

There, I will thank you for the death, my
friend !

This is the meeting : let me love you well !

Pym. England,—I am thine own ! Dost
thou exact

That service? I obey thee to the end.

Strafford. O God, I shall die first—I shall
die first !

SORDELLO.

1840

[Sordello was a Mantuan Troubadour mentioned by Dante, some of whose poetry is extant. See Sismondi's "History of the Literature of the South of Europe," vol. i. An analysis of Browning's poem may be found in Mrs. Orr's Handbook.]

TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON.

DEAR FRIEND,—Let the next poem be introduced by your name, therefore remembered along with one of the deepest of my affections, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me. I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might,—instead of what the few must,—like: but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so—you, with many known and unknown to me, think so—others may one day think so; and whether my attempt remain for them or not, I trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours,

R. B.

LONDON: June 9, 1863.

SORDELLO.

BOOK THE FIRST.

Who will, may hear Sordello's story told:
His story? Who believes me shall behold
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end,
Like me: for as the friendless-people's friend
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin

Named o' the Naked Arm,¹ I single out
Sordello, compassed murkily about
With ravage of six long sad hundred years.
Only believe me. Ye believe?

Appears

Verona . . . Never,—I should warn you
first,—

Of my own choice had this, if not the worst
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell
A story I could body forth so well
By making speak, myself kept out of view,
The very man as he was wont to do,
And leaving you to say the rest for him.
Since, though I might be proud to see the dim
Abysmal past divide its hateful surge,
Letting of all men this one man emerge
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,
I should delight in watching first to last
His progress as you watch it, not a whit
More in the secret than yourselves who sit
Fresh-chapleted to listen. But it seems
Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,
Makers of quite new men, producing them,
Would best chalk broadly on each vesture's
hem

The wearer's quality; or take their stand,
Motle on back and pointing-pole in hand,
Beside him. So, for once I face ye, friends,
Summoned together from the world's four
ends,

Dropped down from heaven or cast up from
hell,

To hear the story I propose to tell.
Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick,
Catching the dead, if fate denies the quick,

¹ See "Don Quixote," Part I. ch. 18.

And shaming her ; 'tis not for fate to choose
 Silence or song because she can refuse
 Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache
 Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our
 sake :

I have experienced something of her spite ;
 But there's a realm wherein she has no right
 And I have many lovers. Say, but few
 Friends fate accords me? Here they are :
 now view

The host I muster ! Many a lighted face
 Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace ;
 What else should tempt them back to taste
 our air

Except to see how their successors fare ?
 My audience ! and they sit, each ghostly man
 Striving to look as living as he can,
 Brother by breathing brother ; thou art set,
 Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I'll not fret
 A wondrous soul of them, nor move death's
 spleen

Who loves not to unlock them. Friends ! I
 mean

The living in good earnest—ye elect
 Chiefly for love—suppose not I reject
 Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep,
 Some fit occasion, forth, for fear ye sleep,
 To glean your bland approvals. Then,
 appear,

Verona ! stay—thou, spirit, come not near
 Now—not this time desert thy cloudy place
 To scare me, thus employed, with that pure
 face !

I need not fear this audience, I make free
 With them, but then this is no place for thee !
 The thunder-phrase of the Athenian,¹ grown
 Up out of memories of Marathon,
 Would echo like his own sword's griding
 screech

Braying a Persian shield,—the silver speech
 Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,
 Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in
 The knights to tilt,—wert thou to hear !
 What heart

Have I to play my puppets, bear my part
 Before these worthies ?

¹ Æschylus.

Lo, the past is hurled
 In twain : up-thrust, out-staggering on the
 world.

Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears
 Its outline, kindles at the core, appears
 Verona. 'Tis six hundred years and more
 Since an event. The Second Friedrich wore
 The purple, and the Third Honorius filled
 The holy chair. That autumn eve was stilled :
 A last remains of sunset dimly burned
 O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame turned
 By the wind back upon its bearer's hand
 In one long flare of crimson ; as a brand,
 The woods beneath lay black. A single
 eye

From all Verona cared for the soft sky.
 But, gathering in its ancient market-place,
 Talked group with restless group ; and not a
 face

But wrath made livid, for among them were
 Death's staunch purveyors, such as have in
 care

To feast him. Fear had long since taken root
 In every breast, and now these crushed its
 fruit,

The ripe hate, like a wine : to note the way
 It worked while each grew drunk ! Men
 grave and grey

Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro,
 Letting the silent luxury trickle slow

About the hollows where a heart should be ;
 But the young gulped with a delirious glee
 Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood
 At the fierce news : for, be it understood,

Envoys apprised Verona that her prince
 Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since
 A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust
 Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust
 With Ecelin Romano, from his seat

Ferrara,—over zealous in the feat
 And stumbling on a peril unaware,
 Was captive, trammelled in his proper snare,
 They phrase it, taken by his own intrigue.

Immediate succour from the Lombard League
 Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,
 For Azzo, therefore, and his fellow-hope
 Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast !

Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast.

"Prone is the purple pavis;¹ Este makes
 "Mirth for the devil when he undertakes
 "To play the Ecelin; as if it cost
 "Merely your pushing-by to gain a post
 "Like his! The patron tells ye, once for all,
 "There be sound reasons that preferment fall
 "On our beloved" . . .

"Duke o' the Rood, why not?"

Shouted an Estian, "grudge ye such a lot?
 "The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her
 own,
 "Some stealthy trick to better beasts un-
 known,
 "That quick with prey enough her hunger
 blunts,
 "And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion
 hunts."

"Taurello," quoth an envoy, "as in wane
 "Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain
 "To fly but forced the earth his couch to
 make

"Far inland, till his friend the tempest wake,
 "Waits he the Kaiser's coming; and as yet
 "That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps:
 but let

"Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs
 "The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs
 "The sea it means to cross because of him.
 "Sinketh the breeze? His hope-sick eye
 grows dim;

"Creep closer on the creature! Every day
 "Strengthens the Pontiff; Ecelin, they say,
 "Dozes now at Oliero, with dry lips
 "Telling upon his perished finger-tips
 "How many ancestors are to depose

"Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze
 "Deposits him in hell. So, Guelfs rebuilt
 "Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt
 "When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet

"Buccio Virtu—God's wafer, and the street
 "Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm
 "With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm!
 "This could not last. Off Salinguerra went

"To Padua, Podestà, 'with pure intent,'
 "Said he, 'my presence, judged the single bar
 "'To permanent tranquillity, may jar

¹ Shield.

"'No longer'—so! his back is fairly turned?
 "The pair of goodly palaces are burned,
 "The gardens ravaged, and our Guelfs laugh,
 drunk

"A week with joy. The next, their laughter
 sunk

"In sobs of blood, for they found, some
 strange way,

"Old Salinguerra back again—I say,

"Old Salinguerra in the town once more

"Uprooting, overturning, flame before,

"Blood fetlock-high beneath him. Azzo fled;

"Who 'scaped the carnage followed; then
 the dead

"Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's
 throne,

"He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone,

"Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would
 pounce

"Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,

"On the gorged bird. The burghers ground
 their teeth

"To see troop after troop encamp beneath

"'I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty
 patch

"It took so many patient months to snatch

"Out of the marsh; while just within their walls

"Men fed on men. At length Taurello calls

"A parley: 'let the Count wind up the war!'

"Richard, light-hearted as a plunging star,

"Agrees to enter for the kindest ends

"Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,

"No horse-boy more, for fear your timid
 sort

"Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.

"Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog;

"Ten, twenty, thirty,—curse the catalogue

"Of burnt Guelf houses! Strange, Taurello
 shows

"'Not the least sign of life'—whereat arose

"A general growl: 'How? With his
 victors by?

"'I and my Veronese? My troops and I?

"'Receive us, was your word?' So jogged
 they on,

"Nor laughed their host too openly: once
 gone

"Into the trap!—"

Six hundred years ago !
 Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe
 (Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,
 Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills
 His sprawling path through letters anciently
 Made fine and large to suit some abbot's
 eye)
 When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the
 mask,
 Flung John of Brienne's favour from his
 casque,
 Forsook crusading, had no mind to leave
 Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve
 Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,
 Or make the Alps less easy to recross ;
 And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,
 Was excommunicate that very year.
 "The triple-bearded Teuton come to life !"
 Groaned the Great League ; and, arming for
 the strife,
 Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,
 Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,
 Its cry : what cry ?
 "The Emperor to come !"
 His crowd of feudatories, all and some,
 That leapt down with a crash of swords,
 spears, shields,
 One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,
 Scattered anon, took station here and there,
 And carried it, till now, with little care—
 Cannot but cry for him ; how else rebut
 Us longer ?—cliffs, an earthquake suffered
 jut
 In the mid-sea, each domineering crest
 Which nought save such another throe can
 wrest
 From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed
 grown
 Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown
 Too thick, too fast accumulating round,
 Too sure to over-riot and confound
 Ere long each brilliant islet with itself,
 Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf,
 Whirling the sea-drift wide : alas, the bruised
 And sullen wreck ! Sunlight to be diffused
 For that !—sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at
 first,
 The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst

Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled
 main,
 And, shattered by those rocks, took hold
 again,
 So kindly blazed it—that same blaze to brood
 O'er every cluster of the multitude
 Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments,
 An emulous exchange of pulses, vents
 Of nature into nature ; till some growth
 Unfancied yet, exuberantly clothe
 A surface solid now, continuous, one :
 "The Pope, for us the People, who begun
 "The People, carries on the People thus,
 "To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us !"
 See you ?
 Or say, Two Principles that live
 Each fitly by its Representative.
 "Hill-cat"—who called him so?—the grace-
 fullest
 Adventurer, the ambiguous stranger-guest
 Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,
 Those talons to their sheath !) whose velvet
 purr
 Soothes jealous neighbours when a Saxon
 scout
 —Arpo or Yoland, is it ?—one without
 A country or a name, presumes to couch
 Beside their noblest ; until men avouch
 That, of all Houses in the Trevisan,
 Conrad deserves no fitter, rear or van,
 Than Ecelo ! They laughed as they enrolled
 That name at Milan on the page of gold,
 Godego's lord,—Ramon, Marostica,
 Cartiglian, Bassano, Loria,
 And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief !
 No laughter when his son, "the Lombard
 Chief"
 Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent
 To Italy along the Vale of Trent,
 Welcomed him at Roncaglia ! Sadness
 now—
 The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,
 The Asolan and Euganean hills,
 The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills
 Them all, for Ecelin vouchsafes to stay
 Among and care about them ; day by day
 Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,
 A castle building to defend a cot,

A cot built for a castle to defend,
Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end
To boasts how mountain ridge may join with
ridge

By sunken gallery and soaring bridge.
He takes, in brief, a figure that besseems
The griesliest nightmare of the Church's
dreams,

—A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged
From its old interests, and nowise changed
By its new neighbourhood: perchance the vaunt
Of Otho, "my own Este shall supplant
"Your Este," come to pass. The sire led in
A son as cruel; and this Ecelin
Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall
And curling and compliant; but for all
Romano (so they styled him) throve, that neck
Of his so pinched and white, that hungry
cheek

Proved 'twas some fiend, not him, the
man's-flesh went

To feed: whereas Romano's instrument,
Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole
I' the world, a tree whose boughs were slipt
the bole

Successively, why should not he shed blood
To further a design? Men understood
Living was pleasant to him as he wore
His careless surcoat, glanced some missive
o'er,

Dropped on his truncheon in the public way,
While his lord lifted writhen hands to pray,
Lost at Oliero's convent.

Hill-cats, face
Our Azzo, our Guelf Lion! Why disgrace
A worthiness conspicuous near and far
(Atii at Rome while free and consular,
Este at Padua who repulsed the Hun)
By trumpeting the Church's princely son?
—Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,
Ancona's march, Ferrara's . . . ask, in fine,
Our chronicles, commenced when some old
monk

Found it intolerable to be sunk
(Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)
Quite out of summer while alive and well:
Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,
Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,

Striving to coax from his decrepit brains
The reason Father Porphyry took pains
To blot those ten lines out which used to
stand

First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.

The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore
Was vested in a certain Twenty-four;
And while within his palace these debate
Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,
Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare
Of cressets¹ vented on the dark, nor care
For aught that's seen or heard until we shut
The smother in, the lights, all noises but
The carroch's booming: safe at last! Why
strange

Such a recess should lurk behind a range
Of banquet rooms? Your finger—thus—you
push

A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush
Upon the banqueters, select your prey,
Waiting (the slaughter-weapons in the way
Strewing this very bench) with sharpened ear
A preconcerted signal to appear;
Or if you simply crouch with beating heart,
Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part
To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now;
Nor any . . . does that one man sleep
whose brow

The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er?
What woman stood beside him? not the more

Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes
Because that arras fell between! Her wise
And lulling words are yet about the room,
Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom
Down even to her vesture's creeping stir.
And so reclines he, saturate with her,
Until an outcry from the square beneath
Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to
breathe,

Above the cunning element, and shakes
The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks
On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,
The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit
Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away
Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying day,
In his wool wedding-robe.

¹ Torches.

<p>For he—for he, Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy, (If I should falter now)—for he is thine ! Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine ! A herald-star I know thou didst absorb Relentless into the consummate orb That scared it from its right to roll along A sempiternal path with dance and song Fulfilling its allotted period, Serenest of the progeny of God— Who yet resigns it not ! His darling stoops With no quenched lights, desponds with no blank troops Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent Utterly with thee, its shy element Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear. Still, what if I approach the august sphere Named now with only one name, disentwine That under-current soft and argentine From its fierce mate in the majestic mass Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass In John's transcendent vision,—launch once more That lustre ? Dante, pacer of the shore Where glutted hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom, Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume— Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope Into a darkness quieted by hope ; Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye In gracious twilights where his chosen lie,— I would do this ! If I should falter now ! In Mantua territory half is slough, Half pine-tree forest ; maples, scarlet oaks Breed o'er the river-beds ; even Mincio chokes With sand the summer through : but 'tis morass In winter up to Mantua walls. There was, Some thirty years before this evening's coil, One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil, Goito ; just a castle built amid A few low mountains ; firs and larches hid Their main defiles, and rings of vineyard bound The rest. Some captured creature in a pound,</p>	<p>Whose artless wonder quite precludes dis- tress, Secure beside in its own loveliness, So peered with airy head, below, above, The castle at its toils, the lapwings love To glean among at grape-time. Pass within. A maze of corridors contrived for sin, Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past, You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last A maple-panelled room : that haze which seems Floating about the panel, if there gleams A sunbeam over it, will turn to gold And in light-graven characters unfold The Arab's wisdom everywhere ; what shade Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made, Cut like a company of palms to prop The roof, each kissing top entwined with top, Leaning together ; in the carver's mind Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek com- bined With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear A vintage ; graceful sister-palms ! But quick To the main wonder, now. A vault, see ; thick Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits Across the buttress suffer light by fits Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay, stoop— A dullish grey-streaked cumbrous font, a group Round it,—each side of it, where'er one sees,— Upholds it ; shrinking Caryatides Of just-tinged marble like Eve's lilled flesh Beneath her maker's finger when the fresh First pulse of life shot brightening the snow. The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed ; Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed, Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,</p>
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Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length
 Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength
 Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.
 So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,
 Like priestesses because of sin impure
 Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,
 Having that once drunk sweetness to the
 dregs.

And every eve, Sordello's visit begs
 Pardon for them : constant as eve he came
 To sit beside each in her turn, the same
 As one of them, a certain space : and awe
 Made a great indistinctness till he saw
 Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress-
 chinks,

Gold seven times globed ; surely our maiden
 shrinks

And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain
 Her load were lightened, one shade less the
 stain

Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead
 slipt

From off the rosary whereby the crypt
 Keeps count of the contritions of its charge ?
 Then with a step more light, a heart more
 large,

He may depart, leave her and every one
 To linger out the penance in mute stone.
 Ah, but Sordello ? 'Tis the tale I mean
 To tell you.

In this castle may be seen,
 On the hill-tops, or underneath the vines,
 Or eastward by the mound of firs and pines
 That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,
 A slender boy in a loose page's dress,
 Sordello : do but look on him awhile
 Watching ('tis autumn) with an earnest smile
 The noisy flock of thievish birds at work
 Among the yellowing vineyards ; see him lurk
 ('Tis winter with its sullenest of storms)
 Beside that arras length of broidered forms,
 On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light
 Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter
 bright

—Feclo, dismal father of the brood,
 And Ecclin, close to the girl he wooed,
 Auria, and their Child, with all his wives
 From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives,

Lady of the castle, Adelaide. **HAPOON**
 —Look, now he turns away. Yourself
 shall trace

(The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,
 A sharp and restless lip, so well combine
 With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive
 Delight at every sense ; you can believe
 Sordello foremost in the regal class
 Nature has broadly severed from her mass
 Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames
 Some happy lands, that have luxurious names,
 For loose fertility ; a footfall there
 Suffices to upturn to the warm air
 Half-germinating spices ; mere decay
 Produces richer life ; and day by day
 New pollen on the lily-petal grows,
 And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.

You recognise at once the finer dress
 Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness
 At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled
 (As though she would not trust them with
 her world)

A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,
 And lets but half the sun look fervid through.
 How can such love ?—like souls on each full-
 fraught

Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught
 Beyond its beauty, till exceeding love
 Becomes an aching weight ; and, to remove
 A curse that haunts such natures—to pre-
 clude

Their finding out themselves can work no good
 To what they love nor make it very blest
 By their endeavour,—they are fain invest
 The lifeless thing with life from their own soul,
 Availing it to purpose, to control,
 To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy
 And separate interests that may employ
 That beauty fitly, for its proper sake.
 Nor rest they here ; fresh births of beauty
 wake

Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,
 With every mode of loveliness : then cast
 Inferior idols off their borrowed crown
 Before a coming glory. Up and down
 Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms com-
 bine

To throbb the secret forth ; a touch divine—

And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod ;
Visibly through his garden walketh God.

So fare they. Now revert. One character
Denotes them through the progress and the
stir,—

A need to blend with each external charm,
Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and
warm,—

In something not themselves ; they would
belong

To what they worship—stronger and more
strong

Thus prodigally fed—which gathers shape
And feature, soon imprisons past escape
The votary framed to love and to submit
Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it,
Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs
A legend ; light had birth ere moons and
suns,

Flowing through space a river and alone,
Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were
strown

Hither and thither, foundering and blind :
When into each of them rushed light—to
find

Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance.
Let such forego their just inheritance !
For there's a class that eagerly looks, too,
On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,
Proclaims each new revelation born a twin
With a distinctest consciousness within,
Referring still the quality, now first
Revealed, to their own soul—its instinct
nursed

In silence, now remembered better, shown
More thoroughly, but not the less their own ;
A dream come true ; the special exercise
Of any special function that implies
The being fair, or good, or wise, or strong,
Dormant within their nature all along—
Whose fault ? So, homage, other souls direct
Without, turns inward. "How should this
deject

"Thee, soul?" they murmur ; "wherefore
strength be quelled

"Because, its trivial accidents withheld,

"Organs are missed that clog the world, inert,
"Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,

"Like thine—existence cannot satiate,
"Cannot surprise? Laugh thou at envious
fate,

"Who, from earth's simplest combination
stamp

"With individuality—uncrampt

"By living its faint elemental life,

"Dost soar to heaven's complexest essence,
rife

"With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,

"Equal to being all!"

In truth? Thou hast
Life, then—wilt challenge life for us : our race
Is vindicated so, obtains its place
In thy ascent, the first of us ; whom we
May follow, to the meanest, finally,
With our more bounded wills?

Ah, but to find
A certain mood enervate such a mind,
Counsel it slumber in the solitude

Thus reached nor, stooping, task for man-
kind's good

Its nature just as life and time accord

"—Too narrow an arena to reward

"Emprize—the world's occasion worthless
since

"Not absolutely fitted to evince

"Its mastery!" Or if yet worse befall,

And a desire possess it to put all

That nature forth, forcing our straitened
sphere

Contain it,—to display completely here

The mastery another life should learn,

Thrusting in time eternity's concern,—

So that Sordello . . .

Fool, who spied the mark
Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark

Already as he loiters? Born just now,

With the new century, beside the glow

And efflorescence out of barbarism ;

Witness a Greek or two from the abyss

That stray through Florence-town with
studious air,

Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair :

If Nicolò should carve a Christus yet !

While at Siena is Guidone set,

Forehead on hand ; a painful birth must be

Matured ere Saint Eufemia's sacristy

Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze
At the moon : look you ! The same orange
haze,—

The same blue stripe round that—and, in the
midst,

Thy spectral whiteness, Mother-maid, who
didst

Pursue the dizzy painter !

Woe, then, worth

Any officious babble letting forth
The leprosy confirmed and ruinous
To spirit lodged in a contracted house !
Go back to the beginning, rather ; blend
It gently with Sordello's life ; the end
Is piteous, you may see, but much between
Pleasant enough. Meantime, some pyx to
screen

The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon
The goblin ! So they found at Babylon,
(Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage Antonine)
Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine,
In rummaging among the rarities,
A certain coffer ; he who made the prize
Opened it greedily ; and out there curled
Just such another plague, for half the world
Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and couch
asquat,

Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot
Until your time is ripe ! The coffer-lid
Is fastened, and the coffer safely hid
Under the Loxian's¹ choicest gifts of gold.

Who will may hear Sordello's story told,
And how he never could remember when
He dwelt not at Goito. Calmly, then,
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's
Glided his youth away ; beyond the glades
On the fir-forest border, and the rim
Of the low range of mountain, was for him
No other world : but this appeared his own
To wander through at pleasure and alone.
The castle too seemed empty ; far and wide
Might he disport ; only the northern side
Lay under a mysterious interdict—
Slight, just enough remembered to restrict
His roaming to the corridors, the vault
Where those font-bearers expiate their fault,

¹ Apollo (the bowman)

The maple-chamber, and the little nooks
And nests, and breezy parapet that looks
Over the woods to Mantua : there he strolled.
Some foreign women-servants, very old,
Tended and crept about him—all his clue
To the world's business and embroiled ado
Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most.
And first a simple sense of life engrossed
Sordello in his drowsy Paradise ;
The day's adventures for the day suffice—
Its constant tribute of perceptions strange,
With sleep and stir in healthy interchange,
Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease
Like the great palmer-worm that strips the
trees,

Eats the life out of every luscious plant,
And, when September finds them sere or scant,
Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite,
And hies him after unforeseen delight.
So fed Sordello, not a shard² disheathed ;
As ever, round each new discovery, wreathed
Luxuriantly the fancies infantine
His admiration, bent on making fine
Its novel friend at any risk, would fling
In gay profusion forth : a ficklest king,
Confessed those minions !—eager to dispense
So much from his own stock of thought and
sense

As might enable each to stand alone
And serve him for a fellow ; with his own,
Joining the qualities that just before
Had graced some older favourite. Thus they
wore

A fluctuating halo, yesterday
Set flicker and to-morrow filched away,—
Those upland objects each of separate name,
Each with an aspect never twice the same,
Waxing and waning as the new-born host
Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,
Gave to familiar things a face grotesque ;
Only, preserving through the mad burlesque
A grave regard. Conceive ! the orpine³
patch

Blossoming earliest on the log-house thatch
The day those archers wound along the vines—
Related to the Chief that left their lines

² A fragment.

³ Stonecrop.

To climb with clinking step the northern stair
Up to the solitary chambers where
Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached
thrall :

He o'er-festooning every interval,
As the adventurous spider, making light
Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to
height,

From barbican to battlement : so flung
Fantasies forth and in their centre swung
Our architect,—the breezy morning fresh
Above, and merry,—all his waving mesh
Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-
edged.

This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged
To laying such a spangled fabric low
Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow.
But its abundant will was balked here : doubt
Rose tardily in one so fenced about
From most that nurtures judgment,—care
and pain :

Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,
Less favoured, to adopt betimes and force
Stead us, diverted from our natural course
Of joys—contrive some yet amid the dearth,
Vary and render them, it may be, worth
Most we forego. Suppose Sordello hence
Selfish enough, without a moral sense
However feeble ; what informed the boy
Others desired a portion in his joy?
Or say a ruthless chance broke woof and
warp—

A heron's nest beat down by March winds
sharp,

A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,
A bird with unsoiled breast and unfilmed
eyes

Warm in the brake—could these undo the
trance

Lapping Sordello? Not a circumstance
That makes for you, friend Naddo ! Eat
fern-seed¹

And peer beside us and report indeed
If (your word) "genius" dawned with throes
and stings

And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs,

¹ Made the eater invisible.

Summers, and winters quietly came and
went.

Time put at length that period to content,
By right the world should have imposed :
bereft

Of its good offices, Sordello, left
To study his companions, managed rip
Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,
Core with its crust, their nature with his
own :

Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone.
As if the poppy felt with him ! Though he
Partook the poppy's red effrontery
Till Autumn spoiled their fleeing quite with
rain,

And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling
crane

Lay bare. That's gone : yet why renounce,
for that,

His disenchanting tributaries—flat
Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn,
Their simple presence might not well be
borne

Whose parley was a transport once : recall
The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all,
A poppy :—why distrust the evidence
Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense?
The new-born judgment answered, "little
boots

"Beholding other creatures' attributes
"And having none !" or, say that it sufficed,
"Yet, could one but possess, oneself," (en-
ticed

Judgment) "some special office !" Nought
beside

Serves you? "Well then, be somehow
justified

"For this ignoble wish to circumscribe
"And concentrate, rather than swell, the
tribe

"Of actual pleasures : what, now, from with-
out

"Effects it?—proves, despite a lurking doubt.

"Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared?

"That, tasting joys by proxy thus, you fared
"The better for them?" Thus much craved
his soul.

Alas, from the beginning love is whole

And true ; if sure of nought beside, most sure
 Of its own truth at least ; nor may endure
 A crowd to see its face, that cannot know
 How hot the pulses throb its heart below :
 While its own helplessness and utter want
 Of means to worthily be ministrant
 To what it worships, do but fan the more
 Its flame, exalt the idol far before
 Itself as it would have it ever be.
 Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,
 Coerced and put to shame, retaining will,
 Care little, take mysterious comfort still,
 But look forth tremblingly to ascertain
 If others judge their claims not urged in vain,
 And say for them their stifled thoughts aloud.
 So, they must ever live before a crowd :
 —“Vanity,” Naddo tells you.

Whence contrive

A crowd, now? From these women just
 alive,
 That archer-troop? Forth glided—not alone
 Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,
 Nor Adelaide (bent double o'er a scroll,
 One maiden at her knees, that eve, his soul
 Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd
 glooms
 On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird
 perfumes,
 Started the meagre Tuscan up,—her eyes,
 The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise)
 —But the entire out-world : whatever, scraps
 And snatches, song and story, dreams
 perhaps,
 Conceited the world's offices, and he
 Had hitherto transferred to flower or tree,
 Not counted a befitting heritage
 Each, of its own right, singly to engage
 Some man, no other,—such now dared to
 stand
 Alone. Strength, wisdom, grace on every
 hand
 Soon disengaged themselves, and he discerned
 A sort of human life : at least, was turned
 A stream of lifelike figures through his brain.
 Lord, liegeman, valvassor¹ and suzerain,

¹ Vassal.

Ere he could choose, surrounded him ; a
 stuff

To work his pleasure on ; there, sure enough :
 But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze ?
 Are they to simply testify the ways
 He who convoked them sends his soul along
 With the cloud's thunder or a dove's brood-
 song ?

—While they live each his life, boast each
 his own

Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone
 In some one point where something dearest
 loved

Is easiest gained—far worthier to be proved
 Than aught he envies in the forest-wights !
 No simple and self-evident delights,
 But mixed desires of unimagined range,
 Contrasts or combinations, new and strange,
 Irsome perhaps, yet plainly recognized
 By this, the sudden company—loves prized
 By those who are to prize his own amount
 Of loves. Once care because such make
 account,

Allow that foreign recognitions stamp
 The current value, and his crowd shall vamp
 Him counterfeits enough ; and so their print
 Be on the piece, 'tis gold, attests the mint,
 And “good,” pronounce they whom his new
 appeal

Is made to : if their casual print conceal—
 This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss
 What he has lived without, nor felt the loss—
 Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,
 —What matter? So must speech expand
 the dumb

Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sordello, late
 Whom no poor woodland-sights could satiate,
 Betakes himself to study hungrily
 Just what the puppets his crude phantasy
 Supposes notablest, — popes, kings, priests,
 knights,—

May please to promulgate for appetites ;
 Accepting all their artificial joys
 Not as he views them, but as he employs
 Each shape to estimate the other's stock
 Of attributes, whereon—a marshalled flock
 Of authorized enjoyments—he may spend
 Himself, be men, now, as he used to blend

With tree and flower—nay more entirely, else
'Twere mockery: for instance, "How excels
"My life that chieftain's?" (who apprised
the youth

Ecelin, here, becomes this month, in truth,
Imperial Vicar?) "Turns he in his tent

"Remissly? Be it so—my head is bent

"Deliciously amid my girls to sleep.

"What if he stalks the Trentine-pass? Yon
steep

"I climbed an hour ago with little toil:

"We are alike there. But can I, too, foil

"The Guelf's paid stabber, carelessly afford

"Saint Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o' the
sword

"Baffling the treason in a moment?" Here

No rescue! Poppy he is none, but peer

To Ecelin, assuredly: his hand,

Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand

With Ecelin's success—try, now! He soon

Was satisfied, returned as to the moon

From earth; left each abortive boy's-attempt

For feats, from failure happily exempt,

In fancy at his beck. "One day I will

"Accomplish it! Are they not older still

"—Not grown-up men and women? 'Tis
beside

"Only a dream; and though I must abide

"With dreams now, I may find a thorough
vent

"For all myself, acquire an instrument

"For acting what these people act; my
soul

"Hunting a body out may gain its whole

"Desire some day!" How else express
chagrin

And resignation, show the hope steal in

With which he let sink from an aching wrist

The rough-hewn ash-bow? Straight, a gold
shaft hissed

Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down

Superbly! "Crosses to the breach! God's
Town

"Is gained him back!" Why bend rough
ash-bows more?

Thus lives he: if not careless as before,

Comforted: for one may anticipate,

Rehearse the future, be prepared when fate

Shall have prepared in turn real men whose
names

Startle, real places of enormous fames,

Este abroad and Ecelin at home

To worship him,—Mantua, Verona, Rome

To witness it. Who grudges time so spent?

Rather test qualities to heart's content—

Summon them, thrice selected, near and far—

Compress the starriest into one star,

And grasp the whole at once!

The pageant thinned

Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind

His spirit passed to winnow and divide;

Back fell the simpler phantasms; every side

The strong clave to the wise; with either

classed

The beauteous; so, till two or three amassed

Mankind's beseemingnesses, and reduced

Themselves eventually,—graces loosed,

Strengths lavished,—all to heighten up One

Shape

Whose potency no creature should escape.

Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk?

Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk,

Is some grey scorching Saracenic wine

The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline¹—

Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed and
chapped,

Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped,

Are dates plucked from the bough John
Brienne sent

To keep in mind his sluggish armament

Of Canaan:—Friedrich's, all the pomp and
fiere

Demeanour! But harsh sounds and sights
transpierce

So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells

Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words
are spells

On the obdurate! That right arm indeed

Has thunder for its slave; but where's the
need

Of thunder if the stricken multitude

Hearkens, arrested in its angriest mood,

While songs go up exulting, then dispread,

Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead

¹ *Emir al Maromenin*, Prince of the Faithful.

Like an escape of angels? 'Tis the tune,
Nor much unlike the words his women croon
Smilingly, colourless and faint-designed
Each, as a worn-out queen's face some remind
Of her extreme youth's love-tales. "Eglamor
"Made that!" Half minstrel and half
emperor,

What but ill objects vexed him? Such he
slew.

The kinder sort were easy to subdue
By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones;
And these a gracious hand advanced to
thrones

Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture
this,

Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,
Instead of saying, neither less nor more,
He had discovered, as our world before,
Apollo? That shall be the name; nor bid
Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid
The youth—what thefts of every clime and
day

Contributed to purfle the array
He climbed with (June at deep) some close
ravine

Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,
Over which, singing soft, the runnel slipped
Elate with rains; into whose streamlet dipped
He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet
sock—

Though really on the stubs of living rock
Ages ago it crenelled; vines for roof,
Lindens for wall; before him, aye aloof,
Filtered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,
Born of the simmering quiet, there to die.
Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied
Mighty descents of forest; multiplied
Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees,
There gendered the grave maple stocks at ease.
And, proud of its observer, straight the wood
Tried old surprises on him; black it stood
A sudden barrier ('twas a cloud passed o'er)
So dead and dense, the tiniest brute no more
Must pass; yet presently (the cloud dis-
patched)

Each clump, behold, was glistering detached
A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems!
Yet could not he denounce the stratagems

He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would
hang

White summer-lightnings; as it sank and
sprang

To measure, that whole palpitating breast
Of heaven, 'twas Apollo, nature prest
At eve to worship.

Time stole: by degrees

The Pythons perish off; his votaries
Sink to respectful distance; songs redeem
Their pains, but briefer; their dismissals seem
Emphatic; only girls are very slow
To disappear—his Delians! Some that glow
O' the instant, more with earlier loves to
wrench

Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench;
Alike in one material circumstance—
All soon or late adore Apollo! Glance
The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,
His Daphne! "We secure Count Richard's
voice

"In Este's counsels, good for Este's ends
"As our Taurello," say his faded friends,
"By granting him our Palma!"—the sole
child,

They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled
Ecelin, years before this Adelaide
Wedded and turned him wicked: "but the
maid

"Rejects his suit," those sleepy women boast.
She, scorning all beside, deserves the most
Sordello: so, conspicuous in his world
Of dreams sat Palma. How the tresses curled
Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound
About her like a glory! even the ground
Was bright as with spilt sunbeams; breathe
not, breathe

Not!—poised, see, one leg doubled under-
neath,

Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,
Rests, but the other, listlessly below,
O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air,
The vein-streaks swollen a richer violet where
The languid blood lies heavily; yet calm
On her slight prop, each flat and outspread
palm,

As but suspended in the act to rise
By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes

Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets
Apollo's gaze in the pine glooms.

Time fleets :

That's worst ! Because the pre-appointed age
Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage
And crowd she promised. Lean he grows
and pale,

Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail
Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet
alone

He tarries here ! The earnest smile is gone.
How long this might continue matters not ;
—For ever, possibly ; since to the spot

None come : our lingering Taurello quits
Mantua at last, and light our lady flits

Back to her place disburthened of a care.
Strange—to be constant here if he is there !

Is it distrust ? Oh, never ! for they both
Goad Ecelin alike, Romano's growth

Is daily manifest, with Azzo dumb
And Richard wavering : let but Friedrich
come,

Find matter for the minstrelsy's report
—Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's
court

To sing us a Messina morning up,
And, double rillet of a drinking cup,
Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,
Northward to Provence that, and thus far
south

The other ! What a method to apprise
Neighbours of births, espousals, obsequies,
Which in their very tongue the Troubadour
Records ! and his performance makes a
tour,

For Trouveres bear the miracle about,
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,
Until the Formidable House is famed
Over the country—as Taurello aimed,
Who introduced, although the rest adopt,
The novelty. Such games, her absence
stopped,

Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse
No longer, in the light of day pursues
Her plans at Mantua : whence an accident
Which, breaking on Sordello's mixed content
Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,
The veritable business of mankind.

BOOK THE SECOND.

THE woods were long austere with snow : at
last

Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast
Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,
Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' the
woods

"Our buried year, a witch, grew young again
"To placid incantations, and that stain
"About were from her cauldron, green smoke
blent

"With those black pines"—so Eglamor gave
vent

To a chance fancy. Whence a just rebuke
From his companion ; brother Naddo shook
The solemnest of brows : "Beware," he said,
"Of setting up conceits in nature's stead !"

Forth wandered our Sordello. Nought so sure
As that to-day's adventure will secure
Palma, the visioned lady—only pass
O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted grass,
Under that brake where sundawn feeds the
stalks

Of withered fern with gold, into those walks
Of pine and take her ! Buoyantly he went.
Again his stooping forehead was besprent
With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Then
wide

Opened the great morass, shot every side
With flashing water through and through ;
a-shine,

Thick-steaming, all-alive. Whose shape
divine,

Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour,
glanced

Athwart the flying herons ? He advanced,
But warily ; though Mincio leaped no more,
Each foot-fall burst up in the marish-floor
A diamond jet : and if he stopped to pick
Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick,
And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or
loach,

A sudden pond would silently encroach
This way and that. On Palma passed. The
verge

Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge

Flushed, now, and panting,—crowds to see,—
will own

She loves him—Boniface to hear, to groan,
To leave his suit! One screen of pine-trees
still

Opposes: but—the startling spectacle—
Mantua, this time! Under the walls—a
crowd

Indeed, real men and women, gay and loud
Round a pavilion. How he stood!

In truth
No prophecy had come to pass: his youth
In its prime now—and where was homage
poured

Upon Sordello?—born to be adored,
And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made
To cope with any, cast into the shade
By this and this. Yet something seemed to
prick

And tingle in his blood; a sleight—a trick—
And much would be explained. It went for
nought—

The best of their endowments were ill bought
With his identity: nay, the conceit,
That this day's roving led to Palma's feet
Was not so vain—list! The word, "Palma!"

Steal
Aside, and die, Sordello; this is real,
And this—abjure!

What next? The curtains see
Dividing! She is there; and presently
He will be there—the proper You, at length—
In your own cherished dress of grace and
strength:

Most like, the very Boniface!

Not so.
It was a showy man advanced; but though
A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound
Sank and the crowd disposed themselves
around,

—"This is not he," Sordello felt; while,
"Flace

"For the best Troubadour of Boniface!"

Hollaed the Jongleurs,—"Eglamor,¹ whose
lay

"Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-
day!"

¹ A Troubadour.

Obsequious Naddo strung the master's lute
With the new lute-string, "Elys," named to
suit

The song: he stealthily at watch, the while,
Biting his lip to keep down a great smile
Of pride: then up he struck. Sordello's brain
Swam; for he knew a sometime deed again;
So, could supply each foolish gap and chasm

The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,
Mistaking its true version—was the tale
Not of Apollo? Only, what avail
Luring her down, that Elys an he pleased,
If the man dared no further? Has he ceased
And, lo, the people's frank applause half
done,

Sordello was beside him, had begun
(Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend
The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end,
Taking the other's names and time and place
For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,
After the flying story; word made leap
Out word, rhyme—rhyme; the lay could
barely keep

Pace with the action visibly rushing past:
Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast
Than some Egyptian from the harassed bull
That wheeled abrupt and, bellowing, fronted
full

His plague, who spied a scarab 'neath the
tongue,

And found 'twas Apis' flank his hasty prong
Insulted. But the people—but the cries,
The crowding round, and proffering the prize!
—For he had gained some prize. He
seemed to shrink

Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink
One sight withheld him. There sat Adelaide,
Silent; but at her knees the very maid
Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich,
The same pure fleecy hair; one woft of which,
Golden and great, quite touched his cheek
as o'er

She leant, speaking some six words and no
more.

He answered something, anything; and she
Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily
Upon him, her neck's warmth and all. Again
Moved the arrested magic; in his brain

Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,
And greater glare, until the intense flare
Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his
sense.

And when he woke 'twas many a furlong
thence,

At home; the sun shining his ruddy wont;
The customary birds'-chirp; but his front
Was crowned—was crowned! Her scented
scarf around

His neck! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps
the ground?

A prize? He turned, and peeringly on him
Brooded the women-faces, kind and dim,

Ready to talk—"The Jongleurs in a troop
"Had brought him back, Naddo and
Squarcialupe

"And Tagliafer; how strange! a childhood
spent

"In taking, well for him, so brave a bent!
"Since Eglamor," they heard, "was dead
with spite,

"And Palma chose him for her minstrel."
Light

Sordello rose—to think, now; hitherto
He had perceived. Sure, a discovery grew
Out of it all! Best live from first to last
The transport o'er again. A week he passed,
Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,
From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance
Bounding his own achievement. Strange!

A man

Recounted an adventure, but began
Imperfectly; his own task was to fill
The frame-work up, sing well what he sung ill,
Supply the necessary points, set loose
As many incidents of little use
—More imbecile the other, not to see
Their relative importance clear as he!
But, for a special pleasure in the act
Of singing—had he ever turned, in fact,
From Elys, to sing Elys?—from each fit
Of rapture to contrive a song of it?

True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind
Into a treasure, helped himself to find
A beauty in himself; for, see, he soared
By means of that mere snatch, to many a
hoard

Of fancies; as some falling cone bears soft
The eye along the fir-tree-spire, aloft
To a dove's nest. Then, how divine the cause
Why such performance should exact applause
From men, if they had fancies too? Did fate
Decree they found a beauty separate

In the poor snatch itself?—"Take Elys, there,
"—"Her head that's sharp and perfect like
a pear,

"So close and smooth are laid the few fine
locks

"Coloured like honey oozed from topmost
rocks

"Sun-blanced the livelong summer!—if
they heard

"Just those two rhymes, assented at my word,
"And loved them as I love them who have run

"These fingers through those pale locks, let
the sun

"Into the white cool skin—who first could
clutch,

"Then praise—I needs must be a god to such.
"Or what if some, above themselves, and yet

"Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set
"An impress on our gift? So, men believe

"And worship what they know not, nor
receive

"Delight from. Have they fancies—slow,
perchance,

"Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance
"Until, by song, each floating part be linked

"To each, and all grow palpable, distinct!"
He pondered this.

Meanwhile, sounds low and drear
Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near
And nearer, while the underwood was pushed
Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves
crushed

At the approach of men. The wind seemed
laid;

Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade
Came o'er the sky although 'twas midday yet:
You saw each half-shut downcast floweret
Flutter—"a Roman bride, when they'd
dispart

"Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,
"Holding that famous rape in memory still,
"Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,

"And looked thus," Eglamor would say—
 indeed
 'Tis Eglamor, no other, these precede
 Home hither in the woods. " 'Twere surely
 sweet
 "Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat
 "To sleep!" judged Naddo, who in person led
 Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their
 head,
 A scanty company; for, sooth to say,
 Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day.
 Old worshippers were something shamed, old
 friends
 Nigh weary; still the death proposed amends.
 "Let us but get them safely through my song
 "And home again!" quoth Naddo.
 All along,
 This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)
 —This calm corpse with the loose flowers in
 his hand,
 Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite.
 For him indeed was Naddo's notion right,
 And verse a temple-worship vague and vast,
 A ceremony that withdrew the last
 Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil
 Which hid the holy place: should one so
 frail
 Stand there without such effort? or repine
 If much was blank, uncertain at the shrine
 He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,
 The power responded, and some sound or sight
 Grew up, his own forever, to be fixed,
 In rhyme, the beautiful, forever!—mixed
 With his own life, unloosed when he should
 please,
 Having it safe at hand, ready to ease
 All pain, remove all trouble; every time
 He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,
 (Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love)
 Faltering; so distinct and far above
 Himself, these fancies! He, no genius rare,
 Transfiguring in fire or wave or air
 At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up
 In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,
 His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few
 And their arrangement finds enough to do
 For his best art. Then, how he loved that art!
 The calling marking him a man apart

From men—one not to care, take counsel for
 Cold hearts, comfortless faces—(Eglamor
 Was neediest of his tribe)—since verse, the gift,
 Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift
 Without it, e'en content themselves with
 wealth
 And pomp and power, snatching a life by
 stealth.
 So, Eglamor was not without his pride!
 The sorriest bat which cowers throughout
 noontide
 While other birds are jocund, has one time
 When moon and stars are blinded, and the
 prime
 Of earth is his to claim, nor find a peer;
 And Eglamor was noblest poet here—
 He well knew, 'mid those April woods he cast
 Conceits upon in plenty as he passed,
 That Naddo might suppose him not to think
 Entirely on the coming triumph: wink
 At the one weakness! 'Twas a fervid child,
 That song of his; no brother of the guild
 Had e'er conceived its like. The rest you know,
 The exaltation and the overthrow:
 Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,
 His life—to that it came. Yet envy sank
 Within him, as he heard Sordello out,
 And, for the first time, shouted—tried to shout
 Like others, not from any zeal to show
 Pleasure that way: the common sort did so,
 What else was Eglamor? who, bending down
 As they, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,
 Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,
 Left one great tear on it, then joined his band
 —In time; for some were watching at the door:
 Who knows what envy may effect? "Give
 o'er,
 "Nor charm his lips, nor craze him!" (here
 one spied
 And disengaged the withered crown)—
 "Beside
 "His crown? How prompt and clear those
 verses rang
 "To answer yours! nay, sing them!" And
 he sang
 Them calmly. Home he went; friends used
 to wait
 His coming, zealous to congratulate;

But, to a man—so quickly runs report—
 Could do no less than leave him, and escort
 His rival. That eve, then, bred many a
 thought :

What must his future life be ? was he brought
 So low, who stood so lofty this Spring morn ?
 At length he said, " Best sleep now with my
 scorn,

" And by to-morrow I devise some plain
 " Expedient ! " So, he slept, nor woke again.
 They found as much, those friends, when
 they returned

O'erflowing with the marvels they had learned
 About Sordello's paradise, his roves
 Among the hills and vales and plains and
 groves,

Wherein, no doubt, this lay was roughly cast,
 Polished by slow degrees, completed last
 To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.

Such form the chanter's now, and, out of
 breath,

They lay the beaten man in his abode,
 Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,
 Doleful to hear. Sordello could explore
 By means of it, however, one step more
 In joy ; and, mastering the round at length,
 L learnt how to live in weakness as in strength,
 When from his covert forth he stood, addressed
 Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,
 Primæval pines o'er canopy his couch,
 And, most of all, his fame—(shall I avouch
 Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look,
 And laughed as from his brow Sordello took
 The crown, and laid on the bard's breast,
 and said

It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head ?)
 —Continue. Nor the prayer quite fruitless
 fell.

A plant they have, yielding a three-leaved bell¹
 Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails
 Till evening ; evening gives it to her gales
 To clear away with such forgotten things
 As are an eyesore to the morn : this brings
 Him to their mind, and bears his very name.

So much for Eglamor. My own month
 came ;

¹ St. Bruno's lily, the *Anthericum Liliastrum*.

'Twas a sunrise of blossoming and May.
 Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay
 Sordello ; each new sprinkle of white stars
 That smell fainter of wine than Massic jurs
 Dug up at Baize, when the south wind shed
 The ripest, made him happier ; filleted
 And robed the same, only a lute beside
 Lay on the turf. Before him far and wide
 The country stretched : Goito slept behind
 —The castle and its covert, which confined
 Him with his hopes and fears ; so fain of old
 To leave the story of his birth untold.
 At intervals, ' spite the fantastic glow
 Of his Apollo-life, a certain low
 And wretched whisper, winding through the
 bliss,

Admonished, no such fortune could be his,
 All was quite false and sure to fade one
 day :

The closelier drew he round him his array
 Of brilliance to expel the truth. But when
 A reason for his difference from men
 Surprised him at the grave, he took no rest
 While aught of that old life, superbly dressed
 Down to its meanest incident, remained
 A mystery : alas, they soon explained
 Away Apollo ! and the tale amounts
 To this : when at Vicenza both her counts
 Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,
 Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,
 Reviled him as he followed ; he for spite
 Must fire their quarter, though that self-same
 night

Among the flames young Ecelin was born
 Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn
 From the roused populace hard on the rear,
 By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear
 Grew high ; into the thick Elcorte leapt,
 Saved her, and died ; no creature left except
 His child to thank. And when the full escape
 Was known—how men impaled from chine
 to nape

Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned
 Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned
 Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,
 Missing the sweeter prey—such courage well
 Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,
 Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince

Within a blind retreat where Adelaide—
 (For, once this notable discovery made,
 The past at every point was understood)
 —Might harbour easily when times were
 rude,

When Azzo schemed for Palma, to retrieve
 That pledge of Agnes Este—loth to leave
 Mantua unguarded with a vigilant eye,
 While there Taurello bode ambiguously—
 He who could have no motive now to moil
 For his own fortunes since their utter spoil—
 As it were worth while yet (went the report)
 To disengage himself from her. In short,
 Apollo vanished; a mean youth, just named
 His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed
 —How shall I phrase it?—Monarch of the
 World!

For, on the day when that array was furled
 Forever, and in place of one a slave
 To longings, wild indeed, but longings save
 In dreams as wild, suppressed—one daring
 not

Assume the mastery such dreams allot,
 Until a magical equipment, strength,
 Grace, wisdom, decked him too,—he chose
 at length,

Content with unproved wits and failing frame,
 In virtue of his simple will, to claim
 That mastery, no less—to do his best
 With means so limited, and let the rest
 Go by,—the seal was set: never again
 Sordello could in his own sight remain
 One of the many, one with hopes and cares
 And interests p'wise distinct from theirs,
 Only peculiar in a thriveless store
 Of fancies, which were fancies and no more;
 Never again for him and for the crowd
 A common law was challenged and allowed
 If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied
 By a mad impulse nothing justified
 Short of Apollo's presence. The divorce
 Is clear: why needs Sordello square his
 course

By any known example? Men no more
 Compete with him than tree and flower be-
 fore.

Himself, inactive, yet is greater far
 Than such as act, each stooping to his star,

Acquiring thence his function; he has gained
 The same result with meaner mortals trained
 To strength or beauty, moulded to express
 Each the idea that rules him; since no less
 He comprehends that function, but can still
 Embrace the others, take of might his fill
 With Richard as of grace with Palma, mix
 Their qualities, or for a moment fix
 On one; abiding free meantime, uncramped
 By any partial organ, never stamped
 Strong, and to strength turning all energies—
 Wise, and restricted to becoming wise—
 That is, he loves not, nor possesses One
 Idea that, star-like over, lures him on
 To its exclusive purpose. "Fortunate!

"This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate
 "A soul so various—took no casual mould
 "Of the first fancy and, contracted, cold,
 "Clogged her forever—soul averse to change
 "As flesh: whereas flesh leaves soul free
 to range,

"Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,
 "Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.
 "So, range, free soul!—who, by self-
 consciousness,

"The last drop of all beauty dost express—
 "The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence
 "For thee: while for the world, that can
 dispense

"Wonder on men who, themselves, wonder
 —make

"A shift to love at second-hand, and take
 "For idols those who do but idolize,
 "Themselves,—the world that counts men
 strong or wise,

"Who, themselves, court strength, wisdom,
 —it shall bow

"Surely in unexampled worship now,
 "Discerning me!"—

(Dear monarch, I beseech,
 Notice how lamentably wide a breach
 Is here: discovering this, discover too
 What our poor world has possibly to do
 With it! As pigmy natures as you please—
 So much the better for you; take your ease,
 Look on, and laugh; style yourself God
 alone;

Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone!

All that is right enough : but why want us
 To know that you yourself know thus and
 thus ?)

“ The world shall bow to me conceiving all
 “ Man’s life, who see its blisses, great and
 small,
 “ Afar—not tasting any ; no machine
 “ To exercise my utmost will is mine :
 “ Be mine mere consciousness ! Let men
 perceive
 “ What I could do, a mastery believe,
 “ Asserted and established to the throng
 “ By their selected evidence of song
 “ Which now shall prove, whate’er they are,
 or seek
 “ To be, I am—whose words, not actions
 speak,
 “ Who change no standards of perfection, vex
 “ With no strange forms created to perplex,
 “ But just perform their bidding and no more,
 “ At their own satiating-point give o’er,
 “ While each shall love in me the love that
 leads
 “ His soul to power’s perfection.” Song,
 not deeds,
 (For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would
 brook
 Mankind no other organ ; he would look
 For not another channel to dispense
 His own volition by, receive men’s sense
 Of its supremacy—would live content,
 Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent.
 Nor should, for instance, strength an outlet
 seek
 And, striving, be admired : nor grace bespeak
 Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes :
 Nor wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly
 moods ;
 But he would give and take on song’s one
 point.
 Like some huge throbbing stone that, poised
 a-joint,
 Sounds, to affect on its basaltic bed,
 Must sue in just one accent ; tempests shed
 Thunder, and raves the windstorm : only let
 That key by any little noise be set—
 The far benighted hunter’s halloo pitch
 On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch

Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,
 However loud, however low—all lift
 The groaning monster, stricken to the heart.
 Lo ye, the world’s concernment, for its part,
 And this, for his, will hardly interfere !
 Its businesses in blood and blaze this year
 But wile the hour away—a pastime slight
 Till he shall step upon the platform : right !
 And, now thus much is settled, cast in rough,
 Proved feasible, be counselled ! thought
 enough,—
 Slumber, Sordello ! any day will serve :
 Were it a less digested plan ! how swerve
 To-morrow ? Meanwhile eat these sun-dried
 grapes,
 And watch the soaring hawk there ! Life
 escapes
 Merrily thus.

He thoroughly read o’er
 His truchman Naddo’s missive six times more,
 Praying him visit Mantua and supply
 A famished world.

The evening star was high
 When he reached Mantua, but his fame
 arrived
 Before him : friends applauded, foes connived,
 And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest
 Angels, and all these angels would be blest
 Supremely by a song—the thrice-renowned
 Goito-manufacture. Then he found
 (Casting about to satisfy the crowd)
 That happy vehicle, so late allowed,
 A sore annoyance ; ’twas the song’s effect
 He cared for, scarce the song itself : reflect !
 In the past life, what might be singing’s use ?
 Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse
 Praise, not the toilsome process which pro-
 cured
 That praise, enticed Apollo : dreams abjured,
 No overleaping means for ends—take both
 For granted or take neither ! I am loth
 To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor’s ;
 But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors
 Go pine ; “ the master certes meant to waste
 “ No effort, cautiously had probed the taste
 “ He’d please anon : true bard, in short,—
 disturb
 “ His title if they could ; nor spur nor curb,

"Fancy nor reason, wanting in him; whence
 "The staple of his verses, common sense:
 "He built on man's broad nature—gift of gifts,
 "That power to build! The world contented
 shifts
 "With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort
 "Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort
 "Its poet-soul—that's, after all, a freak
 "(The having eyes to see and tongue to
 speak)
 "With our herd's stupid sterling happiness
 "So plainly incompatible that—yes—
 "Yes—should a son of his improve the breed
 "And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed!"
 "Well, there's Goito and its woods anon,
 "If the worst happen; best go stoutly on
 "Now!" thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet!

You pother with your glossaries to get
 A notion of the Troubadour's intent
 In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent—
 Much as you study arras how to twirl
 His angelot, plaything of page and girl
 Once; but you surely reach, at last,—or, no!
 Never quite reach what struck the people so,
 As from the welter of their time he drew
 Its elements successively to view,
 Followed all actions backward on their course,
 And catching up, unmingled at the source,
 Such a strength, such a weakness, added then
 A touch or two, and turned them into men.
 Virtue took form, nor vice refused a shape;
 Here heaven opened, there was hell agape,
 As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,
 Sinner the other flared portentous by
 A greedy people. Then why stop, surprised
 At his success? The scheme was realized
 Too suddenly in one respect: a crowd
 Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud
 To speak, delicious homage to receive,
 The woman's breath to feel upon his sleeve,
 Who said, "But Anafest—why asks he less
 "Than Lucio, in your verses? how confess,
 "It seemed too much but yestereve!"—the
 youth,

Who bade him earnestly, "Avow the truth!
 "You love Bianca, surely, from your song:
 "I knew I was unworthy!"—soft or strong,

In poured such tributes ere he had arranged
 Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed,
 Digested. Courted thus at unawares,
 In spite of his pretensions and his cares,
 He caught himself shamefully hankering
 After the obvious petty joys that spring
 From true life, fain relinquish pedestals
 And condescend with pleasures—one and all
 To be renounced, no doubt; for, thus to chain
 Himself to single joys and so refrain
 From tasting their quintessence, frustrates,
 sure,
 His prime design; each joy must he abjure
 Even for love of it.

He laughed: what sage

But perishes if from his magic page
 He look because, at the first line, a proof
 'Twas heard salutes him from the cavern roof?
 "On! Give yourself, excluding aught beside,
 "To the day's task; compel your slave
 provide
 "Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf
 "Thoroughly conned. These lays of yours,
 in brief—
 "Cannot men bear, now, something better?
 —fly
 "A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry
 "Of essences? the period sure has ceased
 "For such: present us with ourselves, at least,
 "Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and
 hates
 "Made flesh: wait not!"

Awhile the poet waits

However. The first trial was enough:
 He left imagining, to try the stuff
 That held the imaged thing; and, let it writhe
 Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe
 To reach the light—his Language. How he
 sought
 The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-
 wrought
 That Language,—welding words into the
 crude
 Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude
 Armour was hammered out, in time to be
 Approved beyond the Roman panoply
 Melted to make it,—boots not. This obtained
 With some ado, no obstacle remained

To using it ; accordingly he took
An action with its actors, quite forsook
Himself to live in each, returned anon
With the result—a creature, and, by one
And one, proceeded leisurely to equip
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.
“Accomplished ! Listen, Mantuans !” Fond
essay !

Piece after piece that armour broke away,
Because perceptions whole, like that he sought
To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought
As language : thought may take perception’s
place

But hardly co-exist in any case,
Being its mere presentment—of the whole
By parts, the simultaneous and the sole
By the successive and the many. Lacks
The crowd perception ? painfully it tacks
Thought to thought, which Sordello, needing
such,

Has rent perception into : it’s to clutch
And reconstruct—his office to diffuse,
Destroy : as hard, then, to obtain a Muse
As to become Apollo. “For the rest,
“E’en if some wondrous vehicle expressed
“The whole dream, what impertinence in me
“So to express it, who myself can be
“The dream ! nor, on the other hand, are
those

“I sing to, over-likely to suppose
“A higher than the highest I present
“Now, which they praise already : be content
“Both parties, rather—they with the old verse,
“And I with the old praise—far go, fare
worse !”

A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings
The angel, sparkles off his mail, which rings
Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps ;
So might Apollo from the sudden corpse
Of Hyacinth¹ have cast his luckless quoits.
He set to celebrating the exploits
Of Montfort o’er the Mountaineers.

Then came
The world’s revenge : their pleasure, now his
aim

¹ Accidentally killed by Apollo whilst playing quoits, and changed into the flower.

Merely,—what was it ? “Not to play the
fool

“So much as learn our lesson in your school !”
Replied the world. He found that, every time
He gained applause by any ballad-rhyme,
His auditory recognised no jot
As he intended, and, mistaking not
Him for his meanest hero, ne’er was dunce
Sufficient to believe him—all, at once.
His will . . . conceive it caring for his will !
—Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still
How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,
Had Montfort at completely (so to speak)
His fingers’ ends ; while past the praise-tide
swept

To Montfort, either’s share distinctly kept :
The true meed for true merit !—his abates
Into a sort he most repudiates,
And on them angrily he turns. Who were
The Mantuans, after all, that he should care
About their recognition, ay or no ?
In spite of the convention months ago,
(Why blink the truth ?) was not he forced to
help

This same ungrateful audience, every whelp
Of Naddo’s litter, make them pass for peers
With the bright band of old Goito years,
As erst he toiled for flower or tree ? Why,
there

Sat Palma ! Adelaide’s funereal hair
Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed
A fairy dust upon that multitude,
Although he feigned to take them by them-
selves ;

His giants dignified those puny elves,
Sublimed their faint applause. In short, he
found

Himself still footing a delusive round,
Remote as ever from the self-display
He meant to compass, hampered every way
By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore
then

Continue, make believe to find in men
A use he found not ?

Weeks, months, years went by,
And lo, Sordello vanished utterly,
Sundered in twain ; each spectral part at strife
With each ; one jarred against another life ;

The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man—
Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran
Here, there : let slip no opportunities
As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize
To drop on him some no-time and acquit
His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit—
That waiving any compromise between
No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen
Beyond most methods)—of incurring scoff
From the Man-portion—not to be put off
With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme,
Though ne'er so bright. Who sauntered
forth in dream,

Dressed any how, nor waited mystic frames,
Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,
But just his sorry self?—who yet might be
Sorrer for aught he in reality
Achieved, so pinioned Man's the Poet-part,
Fondling, in turn of fancy, verse ; the Art
Developing his soul a thousand ways—
Potent, by its assistance, to amaze
The multitude with majesties, convince
Each sort of nature that the nature's prince
Accosted it. Language, the makeshift, grew
Into a bravest of expedients, too ;
Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown
Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone
Sufficed. While, out of dream, his day's
work went

To tune a crazy tenzon¹ or sirvent²—
Sohampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge
Between the bard and the bard's audience,
grudge

A minute's toil that missed its due reward !
But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard,
John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,
That on the sea, with, open in his hand,
A bitter-sweetling of a book—was gone.

Then, if internal struggles to be one,
Which frittered him incessantly piecemeal,
Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real
Intruding Mantuans ! ever with some call
To action while he pondered, once for all,

¹ *Tenzon*. A dramatic skirmish in verse before the Court of Love.

² *Sirvent*. Martial, political, and satirical songs. Both Provençal terms.

Which looked the easier effort—to pursue
This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn
through

The present ill-appreciated stage
Of self-revelment, and compel the age
Know him—or else, forswearing bard-craft,
wake

From out his lethargy and nobly shake
Off timid habits of denial, mix
With men, enjoy like men. Ere he could fix
On aught, in rushed the Mantuans ; much
they cared

For his perplexity ! Thus unprepared,
The obvious if not only shelter lay
In deeds, the dull conventions of his day
Prescribed the like of him : why not be glad
'Tis settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad,
Submits to this and that established rule ?
Let Vidal change, or any other fool,
His murrey-coloured³ robe for filamot,⁴
And crop his hair ; too skin-deep, is it not,
Such vigour ? Then, a sorrow to the heart,
His talk ! Whatever topics they might start
Had to be groped for in his consciousness
Straight, and as straight delivered them by
guess.

Only obliged to ask himself, "What was,"
A speedy answer followed ; but, alas,
One of God's large ones, tardy to condense
Itself into a period ; answers whence
A tangle of conclusions must be stripped
At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipped,
They matched rare specimens the Mantuan
flock

Regaled him with, each talker from his stock
Of sorted-o'er opinions, every stage,
Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,
Fruits like the fig-tree's, rather-ripe, rotten-
rich,

Sweet-sour, all tastes to take : a practice which
He too had not impossibly attained,
Once either of those fancy-flights restrained ;
(For, at conjecture how might words ap-
pear

To others, playing there what happened here,

³ Mulberry-colour.

⁴ The colour of a dead leaf.

And occupied abroad by what he spurned
At home, 'twas slipped, the occasion he re-
turned

To seize :) he'd strike that lyre adroitly—
speech,

Would but a twenty-cubit plectre¹ reach ;
A clever hand, consummate instrument,
Were both brought close ; each excellency
went

For nothing, else. The question Naddo
asked,

Had just a lifetime moderately tasked
To answer, Naddo's fashion. More disgust
And more : why move his soul, since move
it must

At minute's notice or as good it failed
To move at all? The end was, he retailed
Some ready-made opinion, put to use
This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce
Gestures and tones—at any folly caught
Serving to finish with, nor too much sought
If false or true 'twas spoken ; praise and
blame

Of what he said grew pretty nigh the same
—Meantime awards to meantime acts : his
soul,

Unequal to the compassing a whole,
Saw, in a tenth part, less and less to strive
About. And as for men in turn . . . con-
trive

Who could to take eternal interest
In them, so hate the worst, so love the best !
Though, in pursuance of his passive plan,
He hailed, decried, the proper way.

As Man

So figured he ; and how as Poet? Verse
Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,
That his poor piece of daily work to do
Was—not sink under any rivals ; who
Loudly and long enough, without these
qualms,

Turned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked psalms,
To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,
"As knops² that stud some almug³ to the pith

¹ An instrument for twanging the strings of
a lyre.

² Buds.

³ Sandal-wood.

"Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and crinkled
worse

"Than pursèd eyelids of a river-horse

"Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs
the breeze"—

Gad-fly, that is. He might compete with
these !

But—but—

"Observe a pompion⁴-twine afloat ;

"Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat !

"Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and
root,

"The entire surface of the pool to boot.

"So could I pluck a cup, put in one song

"A single sight, did not my hand, too strong,

"Twitch in the least the root-strings of the
whole.

"How should externals satisfy my soul?"

"Why that's precise the error Squarcialupe"
(Hazarded Naddo) "finds ; 'the man can't
stoop

"'To sing us out,' quoth he, 'a mere
romance ;

"'He'd fain do better than the best, enhance

"'The subjects' rarity, work problems out

"'Therewith.' Now, you're a bard, a bard
past doubt,

"And no philosopher ; why introduce

"Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but no use

"In poetry—which still must be, to strike,

"Based upon common sense ; there's nothing
like

"Appealing to our nature ! what beside

"Was your first poetry? No tricks were tried

"In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes !

"'The man,' said we, 'tells his own joys
and woes :

"'We'll trust him.' Would you have your
songs endure ?

"Build on the human heart!—why, to be sure

"Yours is one sort of heart—but I mean theirs,

"Ours, every one's, the healthy heart one
cares

"To build on ! Central peace, mother of
strength,

"That's father of . . . nay, go yourself that
length,

⁴ Melon.

" Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do
 " When they have got their calm ! And is
 it true,
 " Fire rankles at the heart of every globe ?
 " Perhaps. But these are matters one may
 probe
 " Too deeply for poetic purposes :
 " Rather select a theory that . . . yes,
 " Laugh ! what does that prove ?—stations
 you midway
 " And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay,
 " That's rank injustice done me ! I restrict
 " The poet ? Don't I hold the poet picked
 " Out of a host of warriors, statesmen . . . did
 " I tell you ? Very like ! As well you hid
 " That sense of power, you have ! True
 bards believe
 " All able to achieve what they achieve—
 " That is, just nothing—in one point abide
 " Profounder simpletons than all beside.
 " Oh, ay ! The knowledge that you are a bard
 " Must constitute your prime, nay sole, re-
 ward ! "

So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe
 Of genius-haunters—how shall I describe
 What grubs or nips or rubs or rips—your louse
 For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,
 Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer,¹
 Picking a sustenance from wear and tear
 By implements it sedulous employs
 To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-toise
 Sordello ? Fifty creepers to elude
 At once ! They settled staunchly ; shame
 ensued :
 Behold the monarch of mankind succumb
 To the last fool who turned him round his
 thumb,
 As Naddo styled it ! 'Twas not worth oppose
 The matter of a moment, gainsay those
 He aimed at getting rid of ; better think
 Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure
 to slink
 Back expeditiously to his safe place,
 And chew the cud—what he and what his race
 Were really, each of them. Yet even this
 Conformity was partial. He would miss

¹ Minstrel-knight of William the Conqueror.

Some point, brought into contact with them
 ere
 Assured in what small segment of the sphere
 Of his existence they attended him ;
 Whence blunders, falsehoods rectified—a
 grim
 List—slur it over ! How ? If dreams were
 tried,
 His will swayed sicklily from side to side,
 Nor merely neutralized his waking act
 But tended e'en in fancy to distract
 The intermediate will, the choice of means.
 He lost the art of dreaming : Mantuan scenes
 Supplied a baron, say, he sang before,
 Handsomely reckless, full to running-o'er
 Of gallantries ; " abjure the soul, content
 " With body, therefore ! " Scarcely had he
 bent
 Himself in dream thus low, when matter fast
 Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast
 And task it duly ; by advances slight,
 The simple stuff becoming composite,
 Count Lori grew Apollo : best recall
 His fancy ! Then would some rough peasant-
 Paul,
 Like those old Ecelin confers with, glance
 His gay apparel o'er ; that countenance
 Gathered his shattered fancies into one,
 And, body clean abolished, soul alone
 Sufficed the grey Paulician ; by and by,
 To balance the ethereality,
 Passions were needed ; foiled he sank again.
 Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('tis time
 explain)
 Because a sudden sickness set it free
 From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee,
 Her mountain-hive Romano swarmed ; at
 once
 A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons
 Blackened the valley. " I am sick too, old,
 " Half-crazed I think ; what good's the
 Kaiser's gold
 " To such an one ? God help me ! for I catch
 " My children's greedy sparkling eyes at
 watch—
 " ' He bears that double breastplate on,' they
 say,
 " ' So many minutes less than yesterday ! '

"Beside, Monk Hilary is on his knees
 "Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall
 please
 "Exact a punishment for many things
 "You know, and some you never knew ;
 which brings
 "To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix
 "And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's
 "And Ecelin's betrothed ; the Count himself
 "Must get my Palma : Ghibellin and Guelf
 "Mean to embrace each other." So began
 Romano's missive to his fighting man
 Taurello—on the Tuscan's death, away
 With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay
 Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap
 Out of Vesuvius' throat, like this mishap
 Startled him. "That accursed Vicenza ! I
 "Absent, and she selects this time to die !
 "Ho, fellows, for Vicenza !" Half a score
 Of horses ridden dead, he stood before
 Romano in his reeking spurs : too late—
 "Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,"
 The chieftain stammered ; "let me die in
 peace—
 "Forget me ! Was it I who craved increase
 "Of rule ? Do you and Friedrich plot your
 worst
 "Against the Father : as you found me first
 "So leave me now. Forgive me ! Palma,
 sure,
 "Is at Goito still. Retain that lure—
 "Only be pacified !"

The country rung

With such a piece of news : on every tongue,
 How Ecelin's great servant, congeed off,
 Had done a long day's service, so, might doff
 The green and yellow, and recover breath
 At Mantua, whither,—since Retrude's death,
 (The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride
 From Otho's house, he carried to reside
 At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile
 A structure worthy her imperial style,
 The gardens raise, the statues there enshrine,
 She never lived to see)—although his line
 Was ancient in her archives and she took
 A pride in him, that city, nor forsook
 Her child when he forsook himself and spent
 A prowess on Romano surely meant

For his own growth—whither he ne'er resorts
 If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)
 With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice
 Were shows to greet him. "Take a friend's
 advice,"
 Quoth Naddo to Sordello, "nor be rash
 "Because your rivals (nothing can abash
 "Some folks) demur that we pronounced
 you best
 "To sound the great man's welcome ; 'tis a
 test,
 "Remember ! Strojavacca looks asquint,
 "The rough fat sloven ; and there's plenty
 hint
 "Your pinions have received of late a shock—
 "Outsoar them, cobswan of the silver flock !
 "Sing well !" A signal wonder, song's no
 whit
 Facilitated.

Fast the minutes flit ;

Another day, Sordello finds, will bring
 The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing ;
 So, a last shift, quits Mantua—slow, alone :
 Out of that aching brain, a very stone,
 Song must be struck. What occupies that
 front ?
 Just how he was more awkward than his wont
 The night before, when Naddo, who had seen
 Taurello on his progress, praised the mien
 For dignity no crosses could affect—
 Such was a joy, and might not he detect
 A satisfaction if established joys
 Were proved imposture ? Poetry annoys
 Its utmost : wherefore fret ? Verses may
 come
 Or keep away ! And thus he wandered, dumb
 Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly
 spent,
 On a blind hill-top : down the gorge he went,
 Yielding himself up as to an embrace.
 The moon came out ; like features of a face,
 A querulous fraternity of pines,
 Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling
 vines
 Also came out, made gradually up
 The picture ; 'twas Goito's mountain-cup
 And castle. He had dropped through one defile
 He never dared explore, the Chief erwhile

Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream,
enwrapped

Him wholly. 'Twas Apollo now they lapped,
Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant
To wear his soul away in discontent,
Brooding on fortune's malice. Heart and brain
Swelled; he expanded to himself again,
As some thin seedling spice-tree starved and
frail,

Pushing between cat's head and ibis' tail
Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth,
—Suffered remain just as it sprung, to soothe
The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet
Well in her chilly green-glazed minaret,—
When rooted up, the sunny day she died,
And flung into the common court beside
Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello! Soon
Was he low muttering, beneath the moon,
Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore,—
Since from the purpose, he maintained before,
Only resulted wailing and hot tears.
Ah, the slim castle! dwindled of late years,
But more mysterious; gone to ruin—trails
Of vine through every loop-hole. Nought
avails

The night as, torch in hand, he must explore
The maple chamber: did I say, its floor
Was made of intersecting cedar beams?
Worn now with gaps so large, there blew
cold streams

Of air quite from the dungeon; lay your ear
Close and 'tis like, one after one, you hear
In the blind darkness water drop. The nests
And nooks retain their long ranged vesture-
chests

Empty and smelling of the iris root
The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit
Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day,
Said the remaining women. Last, he lay
Beside the Carian group reserved and still.

The Body, the Machine for Acting Will,
Had been at the commencement proved unfit;
That for Demonstrating, Reflecting it,
Mankind—no fitter: was the Will Itself
In fault?

His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf
Beside the youngest marble maid awhile;
Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile,

"I shall be king again!" as he withdrew
The envied scarf; into the font he threw
His crown.

Next day, no poet! "Where-
fore?" asked

Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs,
masked

As devils, ended; "don't a song come next?"
The master of the pageant looked perplexed
Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief.

"His Highness knew what poets were: in
brief,

"Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right
"To peevishness, caprice? or, call it spite,
"One must receive their nature in its length
"And breadth, expect the weakness with the
strength!"

—So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,
The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,
Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin,
And nodded that the bull-bait might begin.

BOOK THE THIRD.

AND the font took them: let our laurels lie!
Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly
Because once more Goito gets, once more,
Sordello to itself! A dream is o'er,
And the suspended life begins anew;

Quiet those throbbing temples, then, subdue
That cheek's distortion! Nature's strict
embrace,

Putting aside the past, shall soon efface
Its print as well—factitious humours grown
Over the true—loves, hatreds not his own—
And turn him pure as some forgotten vest
Woven of painted byssus,¹ silkiest

Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip,
Left welter where a trireme let it slip
P' the sea, and vexed a satrap; so the stain
O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its pain,
Its pleasure: how the tinct loosening escapes,
Cloud after cloud! Mantua's familiar shapes
Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit,
Men, women, and the pathos and the wit,

¹ A fine cloth.

Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die. The last face glances through the eglantines, The last voice murmurs, 'twixt the blossomed vines, Of Men, of that machine supplied by thought To compass self-perception with, he sought By forcing half himself—an insane pulse Of a god's blood, on clay it could convulse, Never transmute—on human sights and sounds, To watch the other half with; irksome bounds It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed Forever. Better sure be unrevealed Than part revealed: Sordello well or ill Is finished: then what further use of Will, Point in the prime idea not realized, An oversight? inordinately prized, No less, and pampered with enough of each Delight to prove the whole above its reach. "To need become all natures, yet retain "The law of my own nature—to remain "Myself, yet yearn . . . as if that chestnut, think, "Should yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp and pink, "Or those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs stanch "March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch! "Will and the means to show will, great and small, "Material, spiritual,—abjure them all "Save any so distinct, they may be left "To amuse, not tempt become! and, thus bereft, "Just as I first was fashioned would I be! "Nor, moon, is it Apollo now, but me "Thou visitest to comfort and befriend! "Swim thou into my heart, and there an end, "Since I possess thee!—nay, thus shut mine eyes "And know, quite know, by this heart's fall and rise, "When thou dost bury thee in clouds, and when "Out-standest: wherefore practise upon men "To make that plainer to myself?"	Slide here Over a sweet and solitary year Wasted; or simply notice change in him— How eyes, once with exploring bright, grew dim And satiate with receiving. Some distress Was caused, too, by a sort of consciousness Under the imbecility,—nought kept That down; he slept, but was aware he slept, So, frustrated: as who brainsick made pact Erst with the overhanging cataract To deafen him, yet still distinguished plain His own blood's measured clicking at his brain. To finish. One declining Autumn day— Few birds about the heaven chill and grey, No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods— He sauntered home complacently, their moods According, his and nature's. Every spark Of Mantua life was trodden out; so dark The embers, that the Troubadour, who sung Hundreds of songs, forgot, its trick his tongue, Its craft his brain, how either brought to pass Singing at all; that faculty might class With any of Apollo's now. The year Began to find its early promise sere As well. Thus beauty vanishes; thus stone Outliers flesh: nature's and his youth gone, They left the world to you, and wished you joy. When, stopping his benevolent employ, A presage shuddered through the welkin; harsh The earth's remonstrance followed. 'Twas the marsh Gone of a sudden. Mincio, in its place, Laughed, a broad water, in next morning's face, And, where the mists broke up immense and white F' the steady wind, burned like a splith of light Out of the crashing of a myriad stars. And here was nature, bound by the same bars Of fate with him! "No! youth once gone is gone: "Deeds, let escape, are never to be done. "Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year; for us— "Oh forfeit I unalterably thus
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- " My chance ? nor two lives wait me, this to spend,
 " Learning save that ? Nature has time, may mend
 " Mistake, she knows occasion will recur ;
 " Landslip or seabreach, how affects it her
 " With her magnificent resources ?—I
 " Must perish once and perish utterly.
 " Not any strollings now at even-close
 " Down the field-path, Sordello ! by thorn-rows
 " Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire
 " And dew, outlining the black cypress' spire
 " She waits you at, Elys, who heard you first
 " Woo her, the snow-month through, but ere she durst
 " Answer 'twas April. Linden-flower-time-long
 " Here eyes were on the ground ; 'tis July, strong
 " Now ; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm
 " The woodside, here or by the village elm
 " That holds the moon, she meets you, somewhat pale,
 " But letting you lift up her coarse flax veil
 " And whisper (the damp little hand in yours)
 " Of love, heart's love, your heart's love that endures
 " Till death. Tush ! No mad mixing with the rout
 " Of haggard ribalds wandering about
 " The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house
 " Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse,
 " Parading,—to the gay Palermitans,
 " Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans
 " Nuocera holds,—those tall grave dazzling Norse,
 " High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the morse,
 " Queens of the caves of jet stalactites,
 " He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,
 " The blind night seas without a saving star,
 " And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,
 " Sordello !—here, mollitious alcoves gilt
 " Superb as Byzant domes that devils built !
 " Ah, Byzant, there again ! no chance to go
 " Ever like august cheery Dandolo,
- " Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,
 " Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all,
 " Through vanquished Byzant where friends note for him
 " What pillar, marble massive, sardius¹ slim,
 " 'Twere fittest he transport to Venice' Square—
 " Flattered and promised life to touch them there
 " Soon, by those fervid sons of senators !
 " No more lives, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces, wars !
 " Ah, fragments of a whole ordained to be,
 " Points in the life I waited ! what are ye
 " But roundels of a ladder which appeared
 " Awhile the very platform it was reared
 " To lift me on ?—that happiness I find
 " Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind
 " Instinct which bade forego you all unless
 " Ye led me past yourselves. Ay, happiness
 " Awaited me ; the way life should be used
 " Was to acquire, and deeds like you conducted
 " To teach it by a self-revelment, deemed
 " Life's very use, so long ! Whatever seemed
 " Progress to that, was pleasure ; aught that stayed
 " My reaching it—no pleasure. I have laid
 " The ladder down ; I climb not ; still, aloft
 " The platform stretches ! Bliss strong and soft,
 " I dared not entertain, elude me ; yet
 " Never of what they promised could I get
 " A glimpse till now ! The common sort,
 " Exist, perceive ; with Being are endowed,
 " However slight, distinct from what they See,
 " However bounded ; Happiness must be,
 " To feed the first by gleanings from the last,
 " Attain its qualities, and slow or fast
 " Become what they behold ; such peace-in-strife,
 " By transmutation, is the Use of Life,
 " The Alien turning Native to the soul
 " Or body—which instructs me ; I am whole
 " There and demand a Palma ; had the world
 " Been from my soul to a like distance hurled,

¹ Carnelian stone.

" 'Twere Happiness to make it one with me :
 " Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,
 " Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend
 " In spirit now ; and this done, what 's to blend
 " With? Nought is Alien in the world—
 my Will
 " Owns all already ; yet can turn it—still
 " Less—Native, since my Means to correspond
 " With Will are so unworthy, 'twas my
 bond
 " To tread the very joys that tantalize
 " Most now, into a grave, never to rise.
 " I die then ! Will the rest agree to die ?
 " Next Age or no? Shall its Sordello try
 " Clue after clue, and catch at last the clue
 " I miss?—that's underneath my finger too,
 " Twice, thrice a day, perhaps,—some yearning
 traced
 " Deeper, some petty consequence embraced
 " Closer ! Why fled I Mantua, then?—com-
 plained
 " So much my Will was fettered, yet remained
 " Content within a tether half the range
 " I could assign it?—able to exchange
 " My ignorance (I felt) for knowledge, and
 " Idle because I could thus understand—
 " Could e'en have penetrated to its core
 " Our mortal mystery, yet—fool—fornore,
 " Preferred elaborating in the dark
 " My casual stuff, by any wretched spark
 " Born of my predecessors, though one stroke
 " Of mine had brought the flame forth !
 Mantua's yoke,
 " My minstrel's-trade, was to behold man-
 kind,—
 " My own concern was just to bring my mind
 " Behold, just extricate, for my acquit,
 " Each object suffered stife in the mist
 " Which hazard, custom, blindness interpose
 " Betwixt things and myself."

Whereat he rose.

The level wind carried above the firs
 Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,
 Onward.

" Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,
 " Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops
 " Under a humid finger ; while there fleets,
 " Outside the screen, a pageant time repeats

" Never again ! To be deposed, immured
 " Clandestinely—still petted, still assured
 " To govern were fatiguing work—the Sight
 " Fleeting meanwhile ! 'Tis noontide : weak
 ere night
 " Somehow my will upon it, rather ! Slake
 " This thirst somehow, the poorest impress
 take
 " That serves ! A blasted bud displays you,
 torn,
 " Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn ;
 " But who divines what glory coats o'erclasp
 " Of the bulb dormant in the mummy's grasp
 " Taurello sent?" . . .

" Taurello? Palma sent
 " Your Trouvere," (Naddo interposing leant
 Over the lost bard's shoulder)—"and, believe,
 " You cannot more reluctantly receive
 " Than I pronounce her message : we depart
 " Together. What avail a poet's heart
 " Verona's pomps and gauds? five blades of
 grass
 " Suffice him. News? Why, where your
 marish was,
 " On its mud-banks smoke rises after smoke
 " 'P the valley, like a spout of hell new-broke.
 " Oh, the world's tidings ! small your thanks,
 I guess,
 " For them. The father of our Patroness,
 " Has played Taurello an astounding trick,
 " Parts between Ecelin and Alberic
 " His wealth and goes into a convent : both
 " Wed Guelfs : the Count and Palma plighted
 troth
 " A week since at Verona : and they want
 " You doubtless to contrive the marriage-
 chant
 " Ere Richard storms Ferrara." Then was
 told

The tale from the beginning—how, made bold
 By Salinguerra's absence, Guelfs had burned
 And pillaged till he unawares returned
 To take revenge : how Azzo and his friend
 Were doing their endeavour, how the end
 O' the siege was nigh, and how the Count,
 released
 From further care, would with his marriage-
 feast

Inaugurate a new and better rule,
Absorbing thus Romano.

“Shall I school

“My master,” added Naddo, “and suggest

“How you may clothe in a poetic vest

“These doings, at Verona? Your response

“To Palma! Wherefore jest? ‘Depart at
once?’

“A good resolve! In truth, I hardly hoped

“So prompt an acquiescence. Have you
groped

“Out wisdom in the wilds here?—thoughts
may be

“Over-poetical for poetry.

“Pearl-white, you poets liken Palma’s neck;

“And yet what spoils an orient like some
speck

“Of genuine white, turning its own white
grey?

“You take me? Curse the cicala!”

One more day,

One eve—appears Verona! Many a group,
(You mind) instructed of the osprey’s swoop
On lynx and ounce, was gathering—Christen-
dom

Sure to receive, whate’er the end was, from

The evening’s purpose cheer or detriment,

Since Friedrich only waited some event

Like this, of Ghibellins establishing

Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King

Of Lombardy, he’d glad descend there,
wage

Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage

His barons from the burghers, and restore

The rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore

By Hildebrand.

I’ the palace, each by each,

Sordello sat and Palma: little speech

At first in that dim closet, face with face

(Despite the tumult in the market-place)

Exchanging quick low laughers: now would
rush

Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,

A look left off, a shifting lips’ surmise—

But for the most part their two histories

Ran best thro’ the locked fingers and linked
arms.

And so the night flew on with its alarms

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Till in burst one of Palma’s retinue;

“Now, Lady!” gasped he. Then arose the
two

And leaned into Verona’s air, dead-still.

A balcony lay black beneath until

Out, ’mid a gush of torchfire, grey-haired men

Came on it and harangued the people: then

Sea-like that people surging to and fro

Shouted, “Hale forth the carroch—trumpets,
ho,

“A flourish! Run it in the ancient grooves!

“Back from the bell! Hammer—that whom
behovs

“May hear the League is up! Peal—learn
who list,

“Verona means not first of towns break tryst

“To-morrow with the League!”

Enough. Now turn—

Over the eastern cypresses: discern!

Is any beacon set a-glimmer?

Rang

The air with shouts that overpowered the clang
Of the incessant carroch, even: “Haste—

“The candle’s at the gateway! ere it waste,

“Each soldier stand beside it, armed to march

“With Tiso Sampier through the eastern
arch!”

Ferrara’s succoured, Palma!

Once again

They sat together; some strange thing in train
To say, so difficult was Palma’s place

In taking, with a coy fastidious grace

Like the bird’s flutter ere it fix and feed.

But when she felt she held her friend indeed

Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant

Her lessons; telling of another war.t

Goito’s quiet nourished than his own;

Palma—to serve him—to be served, alone

Importing; Agnes’ milk so neutralized

The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised

If, while Sordello fain had captive led

Nature, in dream was Palma subjected

To some out-soul, which dawned not though
she pined

Delaying, till its advent, heart and mind

Their life. “How dared I let expand the
force

“Within me, till some out-soul, whose resource

K

- "It grew for, should direct it? Every law
 "Of life, its every fitness, every flaw,
 "Must One determine whose corporeal shape
 "Would be no other than the prime escape
 "And revelation to me of a Will
 "Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable
 "Above, save at the point which, I should
 know,
 "Shone that myself, my powers, might over-
 flow
 "So far, so much; as now it signified
 "Which earthly shape it henceforth chose my
 guide,
 "Whose mortal lip selected to declare
 "Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear
 "—The first of intimations, whom to love;
 "The next, how love him. Seemed that orb,
 above
 "The castle-covert and the mountain-close,
 "Slow in appearing?—if beneath it rose
 "Cravings, aversions,—did our green pre-
 cinct
 "Take pride in me, at unawares distinct
 "With this or that endowment,—how, re-
 pressed
 "At once, such jetting power shrank to the
 rest!
 "Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave
 "My spirit thence unfitted to receive
 "The consummating spell?—that spell so
 near
 "Moreover! 'Waits he not the waking
 year?
 "'His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe
 "'By this; to welcome him, fresh runnels
 stripe
 "'The thawed ravines; because of him, the
 wind
 "'Walks like a herald. I shall surely find
 "'Him now I'
 "And chief, that earnest April morn
 "Of Richard's Love-court, was it time, so
 worn
 "And white my cheek, so idly my blood
 beat,
 "Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet
 "And saying as she prompted; till outburst
 "One face from all the faces. Not then first
 "I knew it; where in maple chamber glooms,
 "Crowned with what sanguine-heart pome-
 granate blooms,
 "Advanced it ever? Men's acknowledg-
 ment
 "Sanctioned my own: 'twas taken, Palma's
 bent,—
 "Sordello,—recognized, accepted.
 "Dumb
 "Sat she still scheming. Ecelin would come
 "Gaunt, scared, 'Cesano baffles me,' he'd
 say:
 "'Better I fought it out, my father's way!
 "'Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats,
 "'And you and your Taurello yonder!—
 what's
 "'Romano's business there?' An hour's
 concern
 "To cure the froward Chief!—induce return
 "As heartened from those overmeaning eyes,
 "Wound up to persevere,—his enterprise
 "Marked out anew, its exigent of wit
 "Apportioned,—she at liberty to sit
 "And scheme against the next emergence, I—
 "To covet her Taurello-sprite, made fly
 "Or fold the wing—to con your horoscope
 "For leave command those steely shafts
 shoot ope,
 "Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness
 "In blank smooth snow. What semblance
 of success
 "To any of my plans for making you
 "Mine and Romano's? Break the first wall
 through,
 "Tread o'er the ruins of the Chief, supplant
 "His sons beside, still, vainest were the
 vaunt:
 "There, Salinguerra would obstruct me
 sheer,
 "And the insuperable Tuscan, here,
 "Stay me! But one wild eve that Lady died
 "In her lone chamber: only I beside:
 "Taurello far at Naples, and my sire
 "At Padua, Ecelin away in ire
 "With Alberic. She held me thus—a clutch
 "To make our spirits as our bodies touch—
 "And so began flinging the past up, heaps
 "Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps

- " Within her soul; deeds rose along with
 dreams,
 " Fragments of many miserable schemes,
 " Secrets, more secrets, then—no, not the
 last—
 "'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the past,
 " How . . . ay, she told me, gathering up
 her face,
 " All left of it, into one arch-grimace
 " To die with . . .
 " Friend, 'tis gone ! but not the fear
 " Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear.
 " Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart
 grew weak
 " When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to speak
 " —Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark !—for
 in
 " Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin
 " (How summoned, who divines?)—looking
 as if
 " He understood why Adelaide lay stiff
 " Already in my arms ; for ' Girl, how must
 " ' I manage Este in the matter thrust
 " ' Upon me, how unravel your bad coil?—
 " ' Since ' (he declared) ' 'tis on your brow—
 a soil
 " ' Like hers there !' then in the same breath,
 ' he lacked
 " ' No counsel after all, had signed no pact
 " ' With devils, nor was treason here or there,
 " ' Goito or Vicenza, his affair :
 " ' He buried it in Adelaide's deep grave,
 " ' Would begin life afresh, now,—would not
 slave
 " ' For any Friedrich's nor Taurello's sake !
 " ' What booted him to meddle or to make
 " ' In Lombardy?' And afterward I knew
 " The meaning of his promise to undo
 " All she had done — why marriages were
 made,
 " New friendships entered on, old followers
 paid
 " With curses for their pains,—new friends'
 amaze
 " At height, when, passing out by Gate
 Saint Blaise,
 " He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head
 " Over a friar's neck,—' had vowed,' he said,
 " Long since, nigh thirty years, because his
 wife
 " ' And child were saved there, to bestow his
 life
 " ' On God, his gettings on the Church.'
 " Exiled
 " Within Goito, still one dream beguiled
 " My days and nights ; 'twas found, the orb
 I sought
 " To serve, those glimpses came of Fomalhaut,
 " No other : but how serve it?—authorize
 " You and Romano mingle destinies?
 " And straight Romano's angel stood beside
 " Me who had else been Boniface's bride,
 " For Salinguerra 'twas, with neck low bent,
 " And voice lightened to music, (as he meant
 " To learn, not teach me,) who withdrew the
 pall
 " From the dead past and straight revived it all,
 " Making me see how first Romano waxed,
 " Wherefore he waned now, why, if I relaxed
 " My grasp (even I!) would drop a thing
 effete,
 " Frayed by itself, unequal to complete
 " Its course, and counting every step astray
 " A gain so much. Romano, every way
 " Stable, a Lombard House now—why start
 back
 " Into the very outset of its track?
 " This patching principle which late allied
 " Our House with other Houses—what beside
 " Concerned the apparition, the first Knight
 " Who followed Conrad hither in such plight
 " His utmost wealth was summed in his one
 steed?
 " For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed
 " A task, in the beginning hazardous
 " To him as ever task can be to us ;
 " But did the weather-beaten thief despair
 " When first our crystal cincture of warm air
 " That binds the Trevisan,—as its spice-belt
 " (Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus
 dwelt,—
 " Furtive he pierced, and Este was to face—
 " Despaired Saponian strength of Lombard
 grace?
 " Tried he at making surer aught made sure,
 " Maturing what already was mature?

"No; his heart prompted Ecelo, 'Confront
 " 'Este, inspect yourself. What's nature?
 Wont.

" 'Discard three-parts your nature, and adopt
 " 'The rest as an advantage!' Old strength
 propped

"The man who first grew Podestà among
 "The Vicentines, no less than, while there
 sprung

"His palace up in Padua like a threat,
 "Their noblest spied a grace, unnoticed yet
 "In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object
 gained,

"Romano was established—has remained—
 " 'For are you not Italian, truly peers

" 'With Este? *Azzo* better soothes our ears
 " 'Than *Alberic*? or is this lion's-crine

" 'From over-mounts' (this yellow hair of
 mine)

" 'So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock?'
 " (Thus went he on with something of a mock)

" 'Wherefore recoil, then, from the very fate
 " 'Conceded you, refuse to imitate

" 'Your model farther? Este long since left
 " 'Being mere Este: as a blade its heft,

" 'Este required the Pope to further him:
 " 'And you, the Kaiser—whom your father's
 whim

" 'Foregoes or, better, never shall forego
 " 'If Palma dare pursue what Ecelo

" 'Commenced, but Ecelin desists from: just
 " 'As Adelaide of Susa could intrust

" 'Her donative,—her Piedmont given the
 Pope,

" 'Her Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope
 " ' 'Twixt France and Italy,—to the superb

" 'Matilda's perfecting,—so, lest aught curb
 " 'Our Adelaide's great counter-project for

" 'Giving her Trentine to the Emperor
 " 'With passage here from Germany,—shall
 you

" 'Take it,—my slender plodding talent,
 too!' "

"—Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.

" 'As Patron of the scattered family
 " 'Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit
 " 'Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit

" He

"Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,
 " 'Nothing remains,' Taurello said, 'but
 wait

" 'Some rash procedure: Palma was the link,
 " 'As Agnes' child, between us, and they
 shrink

" 'From losing Palma: judge if we advance,
 " 'Your father's method, your inheritance!'

"The day I was betrothed to Boniface
 "At Padua by Taurello's self, took place

"The outrage of the Ferrarese: again,
 "The day I sought Verona with the train

"Agreed for,—by Taurello's policy
 "Convicting Richard of the fault, since we

"Were present to annul or to confirm,—
 "Richard, whose patience had outstayed its
 term,

"Quitted Verona for the siege.

" And now

"What glory may engird Sordello's brow
 "Through this? A month since at Oliero
 slunk

"All that was Ecelin into a monk;
 "But how could Salinguerra so forget

"His liege of thirty years as grudge even yet
 "One effort to recover him? He sent

"Forthwith the tidings of this last event
 "To Ecelin—declared that he, despite

"The recent folly, recognized his right
 "To order Salinguerra: 'Should he wring

"Its uttermost advantage out, or fling
 " 'This chance away? Or were his sons now
 Head

" 'O' the House?' Through me Taurello's
 missive sped;

"My father's answer will by me return.
 "Behold! 'For him,' he writes, 'no more
 concern

" 'With strife than, for his children, with
 fresh plots

" 'Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he
 blots

" 'For aye: Taurello shall no more subserve,
 " 'Nor Ecelin impose.' Lest this unnerve
 "Taurello at this juncture, slack his grip

" 'Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip,—
 " 'I, in his sons' default (who, mating with
 " 'Este, forsake Romano as the frith

" Its mainsea for that firmland, sea makes head
 " Against I stand, Romano,—in their stead
 " Assume the station they desert, and give
 " Still, as the Kaiser's representative,
 " Taurello licence he demands. Midnight—
 " Morning—by noon to-morrow, making light
 " Of the League's issue, we, in some gay weed
 " Like yours, disguised together, may precede
 " The arbitrators to Ferrara : reach
 " Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach
 " The rest ! Then say if I have misconceived
 " Your destiny, too readily believed
 " The Kaiser's cause your own !"

And Palma's fled.

Though no affirmative disturbs the head,
 A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er,
 Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,
 Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be
 Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy,
 Soul of this body—to wield this aggregate
 Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate
 Though he should live—a centre of disgust
 Even—apart, core of the outward crust
 He vivifies, assimilates. For thus
 I bring Sordello to the rapturous
 Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one
 round
 Of life was quite accomplished ; and he
 found
 Not only that a soul, whate'er its might,
 Is insufficient to its own delight,
 Both in corporeal organs and in skill
 By means of such to body forth its Will—
 And, after, insufficient to apprise
 Men of that Will, oblige them recognize
 The Hid by the Revealed—but that,—the
 last
 Nor lighteat of the struggles overpast,—
 Will, he bade abdicate, which would not void
 The throne, might sit there, suffer he enjoyed
 Mankind, a varied and divine array
 Incapable of homage, the first way,
 Nor fit to render incidentally
 Tribute connived at, taken by the by,
 In joys. If thus with warrant to rescind
 The ignominious exile of mankind—

Whose proper service, ascertained intact
 As yet, (to be by him themselves made act,
 Not watch Sordello acting each of them)
 Was to secure—if the true diadem
 Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank
 The wisdom of that golden Palma,—thank
 Verona's Lady in her citadel
 Founded by Gaulish Brennus, legends tell :
 And truly when she left him, the sun reared
 A head like the first clamberer's who peered
 A-top the Capitol, his face on flame
 With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came.
 Nor slight too much my rhymes—that spring,
 dispread,
 Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
 Like an escape of angels ! Rather say,
 My transcendental platan !¹ mounting gay
 (An archimage so courts a novice-queen)
 With tremulous silvered trunk, whence
 branches sheen
 Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver soon
 With coloured buds, then glowing like the
 moon
 One mild flame,—last a pause, a burst, and all
 Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,
 Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-
 dust,
 Ending the weird work prosecuted just
 For her amusement ; he decrepit, stark,
 Dozes ; her uncontrolled delight may mark
 Apart—

Yet not so, surely never so
 Only, as good my soul were suffered go
 O'er the lagune : forth fare thee, put aside—
 Entrance thy synod, as a god may glide
 Out of the world he fills, and leave it mute
 For myriad ages as we men compute,
 Returning into it without a break
 O' the consciousness ! They sleep, and I
 awake
 O'er the lagune, being at Venice.

Note,

In just such songs as Eglamor (say) wrote
 With heart and soul and strength, for he
 believed
 Himself achieving all to be achieved

¹ Plane-tree.

By singer—in such songs you find alone
Completeness, judge the song and singer one,
And either purpose answered, his in it
Or its in him : while from true works (to wit
Sordello's dream-performances that will
Never be more than dreamed) escapes there
still

Some proof, the singer's proper life was 'neath
The life his song exhibits, this a sheath
To that ; a passion and a knowledge far
Transcending these, majestic as they are,
Smouldered ; his lay was but an episode
In the bard's life : which evidence you owed
To some slight weariness, some looking-off
Or start-away. The childish skit or scoff
In "Charlemagne," (his poem, dreamed divine
In every point except one silly line
About the restiff daughters)—what may lurk
In that? "My life commenced before this
work,"

(So I interpret the significance
Of the bard's start aside and look askance)
"My life continues after : on I fare
"With no more stopping, possibly, no care
"To note the undercurrent, the why and how,
"Where, when, o' the deeper life, as thus
just now.
"But, silent, shall I cease to live? Alas
"For you ! who sigh, 'When shall it come
to pass
" 'We read that story? How will he com-
press
" 'The future gains, his life's true business,
" 'Into the better lay which—that one flout,
" 'Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out—
" 'Engrosses him already, though professed
" 'To meditate with us eternal rest,
" 'And partnership in all his life has found?'"
'Tis but a sailor's promise, weather-bound :
"Strike sail, slip cable, here the bark be
moored
"For once, the awning stretched, the poles
assured !
"Noontide above ; except the wave's crisp
dash,
"Or buzz of colibri,¹ or tortoise' splash,

¹ Humming-birds.

"The margin's silent : out with every spoil
"Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,
"This serpent of a river to his head
"I' the midst ! Admire each treasure, as
we spread

"The bank, to help us tell our history
"Aright : give ear, endeavour to descry
"The groves of giant rushes, how they grew
"Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed
through,
"What mountains yawned, forests to give us
vent
"Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went
"Till . . . may that beetle (shake your cap)
attest

"The springing of a land-wind from the
West !"
—Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it to-
day!

To-morrow, and, the pageant moved away
Down to the poorest tent-pole, we and you
Part company : no other may pursue
Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate
Intends, if triumph or decline await
The tempter of the everlasting steppe.

I muse this on a ruined palace-step
At Venice : why should I break off, nor sit
Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit
England gave birth to? Who's adorable
Enough reclaim a — no Sordello's Will
Alack !—be queen to me? That Bassanese
Busied among her smoking fruit-boats? These
Perhaps from our delicious Asolo
Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico
Not prettier, bind June lilies into sheaves
To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping
leaves
Soiled by their own loose gold-meal? Ah,
beneath

The cool arch stoops she, brownest cheek !
Her wreath
Endures a month—a half-month—if I make
A queen of her, continue for her sake
Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan girl
Splashes with bared legs where a live whirl
In the dead black Giudecca proves sea-weed
Drifting has sucked down three, four, all
indeed

Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned
post
For gondolas.

You sad dishevelled ghost
That pluck at me and point, are you advised
I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her
disguised

--Jewels i' the locks that love no crownet like
Their native field-buds and the green wheat-
spike,

So fair!--who left this end of June's turmoil,
Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,
Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free
In dream, came join the peasants o'er the sea.)
Look they too happy, too tricked out?
Confess

There is such niggard stock of happiness
To share, that, do one's uttermost, dear
wretch,

One labours ineffectually to stretch
It o'er you so that mother and children, both
May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth!

Divide the robe yet farther: be content
With seeing just a score pre-eminent
Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy
wights,

Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights!
For, these in evidence, you clearer claim
A like garb for the rest,—grace all, the same
As these my peasants. I ask youth and
strength

And health for each of you, not more—at
length

Grown wise, who asked at home that the
whole race

Might add the spirit's to the body's grace,
And all be dizen'd out as chiefs and bards.
But in this magic weather one discards
Much old requirement. Venice seems a type
Of Life—'twixt blue and blue extends, a
stripe,

As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt nought
and nought:

'Tis Venice, and 'tis Life—as good you sought
To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone
Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,
As hinder Life the evil with the good
Which make up Living, rightly understood.

Only, do finish something! Peasants, queens,
Take them, made happy by whatever means,
Parade them for the common credit, vouch
That a luckless residue, we send to crouch
In corners out of sight, was just as framed
For happiness, its portion might have claimed
As well, and so, obtaining joy, had stalked
Fastuous as any!--such my project, baulked
Already; I hardly venture to adjust
The first rags, when you find me. To mistrust
Me!--nor unreasonably. You, no doubt,
Have the true knack of tiring suitors out
With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes
Inveterately tear-shot: there, be wise,
Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant
You insult!--shall your friend (not slave) be
shent

For speaking home? Beside, care-bit erased
Broken-up beauties ever took my taste
Supremely; and I love you more, far more
Than her I looked should foot Life's temple-
floor.

Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where
A whisper came, "Let others seek!--thy care
"Is found, thy life's provision; if thy race
"Should be thy mistress, and into one face
"The many faces crowd?" Ah, had I, judge,
Or no, your secret? Rough apparel—grudge
All ornaments save tag or tassel worn
To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn—
Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go
Alone (that's saddest, but it must be so)
Through Venice, sing now and now glance
aside,

Aught desultory or undignified,—
Then, ravishingest lady, will you pass
Or not each formidable group, the mass
Before the Basilic (that feast gone by,
God's great day of the Corpus Domini)
And, wistfully foregoing proper men,
Come timid up to me for alms? And then
The luxury to hesitate, feign do
Some unexampled grace!--when, whom but
you

Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear
Further before you say, it is to sneer
I call you ravishing; for I regret
Little that she, whose early foot was set

Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal,
Now, i' the silent city, seems to fall
Toward me—no wreath, only a lip's unrest
To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed
Dry of their tears upon my bosom. Strange
Such sad chance should produce in thee such
change,

My love! Warped souls and bodies! yet
God spoke

Of right-hand, foot and eye—selects our yoke,
Sordello, as your poetship may find!

So, sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind
Their foolish talk; we'll manage reinstate
Your old worth; ask moreover, when they
prate

Of evil men past hope, "Don't each contrive,
"Despite the evil you abuse, to live?—

"Keeping, each losel, through a maze of lies,
"His own conceit of truth? to which he hies

"By obscure windings, tortuous, if you will,
"But to himself not inaccessible;

"He sees truth, and his lies are for the crowd
"Who cannot see; some fancied right allowed

"His vilest wrong, empowered the losel
clutch

"One pleasure from a multitude of such
"Denied him." Then assert, "All men
appear

"To think all better than themselves, by here
"Trusting a crowd they wrong; but really,"
say,

"All men think all men stupider than they,
"Since, save themselves, no other compre-
hends

"The complicated scheme to make amends
"—Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance,

"Good labours to exist." A slight ad-
vance,—

Merely to find the sickness you die through,
And nought beside! but if one can't eschew
One's portion in the common lot, at least
One can avoid an ignorance increased
Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint
How nought were like dispensing withoutstint
The water of life—so easy to dispense
Beside, when one has probed the centre
whence

Commotion's born—could tell you of it all!

"—Meantime, just meditate my madrigal
"O' the mugwort that conceals a dewdrop
safe!"

What, dullard? we and you in smothery chafe,
Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin
The Horrid,¹ getting neither out nor in,
A hungry sun above us, sands that bung

Our throats,—each dromedary lolls a tongue,
Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,
And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap,
And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,

—Remark, you wonder any one needs choke
With founts about! Potsherd him, Gibeonites!

While awkwardly enough your Moses smites
The rock, though he forego his Promised Land

Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and
Figure as Metaphysic Poet . . . ah,

Mark ye the dim first oozings? Meribah!²
Then, quaffing at the fount my courage gained,

Recall—not that I prompt ye—who ex-
plained . . .

"Presumptuous!" interrupts one. You,
not I

'Tis brother, marvel at and magnify
Such office: "office," quotha? can we get

To the beginning of the office yet?
What do we here? simply experiment

Each on the other's power and its intent
When elsewhere tasked,—if this of mine were
trucked

For yours to either's good,—we watch con-
struct,

In short, an engine: with a finished one,
What it can do, is all,—nought, how 'tis done.

But this of ours yet in probation, dusk
A kernel of strange wheelwork through its husk

Grows into shape by quarters and by halves;
Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that
valve's

Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,
Make out each other more or less precise—

The scope of the whole engine's to be proved;
We die: which means to say, the whole's
removed,

¹ Isaiah xlii. 21, 22.

² Waters of Meribah, that is, of Strife. See
Exodus xvii. 7.

Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex
 gin.—
 To be set up anew elsewhere, begin
 A task indeed, but with a clearer clime
 Than the murky lodgment of our building-time.
 And then, I grant you, it behoves forget
 How 'tis done—all that must amuse us yet
 So long: and, while you turn upon your heel,
 Pray that I be not busy slitting steel
 Or shredding brass, camped on some virgin
 shore
 Under a cluster of fresh stars, before
 I name a tithing o' the wheels I trust to do!
 So occupied, then, are we: hitherto,
 At present, and a weary while to come,
 The office of ourselves,—nor blind nor dumb,
 And seeing somewhat of man's state,—has
 been,
 For the worst of us, to say they so have seen;
 For the better, what it was they saw; the
 best
 Impart the gift of seeing to the rest:
 "So that I glance," says such an one,
 "around,
 "And there's no face but I can read profound
 "Disclosures in; this stands for hope, that—
 fear,
 "And for a speech, a deed in proof, look
 here!
 "Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where
 the nuts
 "O'erarch, will blind thee! Said I not?
 She shuts
 "Both eyes this time, so close the hazels
 meet!
 "Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat
 "Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,
 "Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore
 "Thy sweet shape, Zanze! Therefore
 stoop!"
 "That's truth!"
 "(Adjudge you) 'the incarcerated youth
 "Would say that!"
 "Youth? Hara the hard? Set down
 "That Hara spent his youth in a grim town
 "Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled
 about
 "The minster for protection, never out
 "Of its black belfry's shade and its bells' roar.
 "The brighter shone the suburb,—all the
 more
 "Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof
 "Of any chance escape of joy,—some roof.
 "Taller than they, allowed the rest detect,—
 "Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect
 "Who could, 'twas meant for laughter, that
 ploughed cheek's
 "Repulsive gleam!) when the sun stopped
 both peaks
 "Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,
 "Then sank, a huge flame on its socket edge,
 "With leavings on the grey glass oriel-pane
 "Ghastly some minutes more. No fear of
 rain—
 "The minster minded that! in heaps the dust
 "Lay everywhere. This town, the minster's
 trust,
 "Held Plara; who, its denizen, bade hail
 "In twice twelve sonnets, Tempe's dewy
 vale."
 "Exact the town, the minster and the
 street!"
 "As all mirth triumphs, sadness means
 defeat:
 "Lust triumphs and is gay, Love's triumphed
 o'er
 "And sad: but Lucio's sad. I said before,
 "Love's sad, not Lucio; one who loves maybe
 "As gay his love has leave to hope, as he
 "Downcast that lusts' desire escapes the
 springe:
 "Tis of the mood itself I speak, what tinge
 "Determines it, else colourless,—or mirth,
 "Or melancholy, as from heaven or earth."
 "Ay, that's the variation's gist!"
 "Indeed?
 "Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed!
 "And having seen too what I saw, be bold
 "And next encounter what I do behold
 "(That's sure) but bid you take on trust!"
 Anack
 The use and purpose of such sights! Alack,
 Not so unwisely does the crowd dispense
 On Salinguerras praise in preference
 To the Sordellos: men of action, these!
 Who, seeing just as little as you please.

Yet turn that little to account,—engage
 With, do not gaze at,—carry on, a stage,
 The work o' the world, not merely make report
 The work existed ere their day! In short,
 When at some future no-time a brave band
 Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand
 In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile where's
 the hurt

Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert,
 At whose defection mortals stare aghast
 As though heaven's bounteous windows were
 slammed fast

Incontinent? Whereas all you, beneath,
 Should scowl at, bruise their lips and break
 their teeth

Who ply the pullies, for neglecting you :
 And therefore have I moulded, made anew
 A Man, and give him to be turned and tried,
 Be angry with or pleased at. On your side,
 Have ye times, places, actors of your own?
 Try them upon Sordello when full-grown,
 And then—ah then! If Hercules first
 parched

His foot in Egypt only to be marched
 A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,
 What chance have I? The demigod was mute
 Till, at the altar, where time out of mind
 Such guests became oblations, chaplets
 twined

His forehead long enough, and he began
 Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man.
 Take not affront, my gentle audience! whom
 No Hercules shall make his hecatomb,
 Believe, nor from his brows your chaplet
 rend—

That's your kind suffrage, yours, my patron-
 friend,

Whose great verse blares unintermittent on
 Like your own trumpeter at Marathon,—
 You who, Platea and Salamis being scant,
 Put up with Ætna for a stimulant—

And did well, I acknowledged, as he loomed
 Over the midland sea last month, presumed
 Long, lay demolished in the blazing West
 At eve, while towards him tilting cloudlets
 pressed

Like Persian ships at Salamis. Friend, wear
 A crest proud as desert while I declare

Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring
 Tears of its colour from that painted king¹
 Who lost it, I would, for that smile which
 went

To my heart, fling it in the sea, content,
 Wearing your verse in place, an amulet
 Sovereign against all passion, wear and fret!
 My English Eyebright, if you are not glad
 That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad
 Dishevelled form, wherein I put mankind
 To come at times and keep my pact in mind,
 Renewed me,—hear no crickets in the hedge,
 Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge
 At home, and may the summer showers gush
 Without a warning from the missel thrush!
 So, to our business, now—the fate of such
 As find our common nature—overmuch
 Despised because restricted and unfit
 To bear the burthen they impose on it—
 Cling when they would discard it; craving
 strength

To leap from the allotted world, at length
 They do leap,—flounder on without a term,
 Each a god's germ, doomed to remain a germ
 In unexpanded infancy, unless . . .
 But that's the story—dull enough, confess!
 There might be fitter subjects to allure;
 Still, neither misconceive my portraiture
 Nor undervalue its adornments quaint:
 What seems a fiend perchance may prove a
 saint.

Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,
 Then say if you condemn me or acquit.
 John the Beloved, banished Antioch
 For Patmos, bade collectively his flock
 Farewell, but set apart the closing eve
 To comfort those his exile most would grieve,
 He knew: a touching spectacle, that house
 In motion to receive him! Xanthus' spouse
 You missed, made panther's meat a month
 since; but

Xanthus himself (his nephew 'twas, they shut
 'Twi'x boards and sawed asunder) Polycarp,
 Soft Charicle, next year no wheel could warp
 To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the rest
 Were ranged; thro' whom the grey disciple
 pressed,

¹ Polyocrates of Samos.

Busily blessing right and left, just stopped
To pat one infant's curls, the hangman cropped
Soon after, reached the portal. On its hinge
The door turns and he enters: what quick
twinge

Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix
Whereon, why like some spectral candle-
stick's

Branch the disciple's arms? Dead swooned
he, woke

Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp,
heart-broke,

"Get thee behind me, Satan! Have I toiled
"To no more purpose? Is the gospel foiled
"Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus'
hearth,

"Portrayed with sooty garb and features
swarth—

"Ah, Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled
"To see the—the—the Devil domiciled?"
Whereto sobbed Xanthus, "Father, 'tis your-
self

"Installed, a limning which our utmost pelf
"Went to procure against to-morrow's loss;
"And that's not wy-prong, but a pastoral cross,
"You're painted with!"

His puckered brows unfold—
And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case;
The lady-city, for whose sole embrace
Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms
A brawny mischief to the fragile charms
They tugged for—one discovering that to twist
Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist
Secured a point of vantage—one, how best
He'd parry that by planting in her breast
His elbow spike—each party too intent
For noticing, how'er the battle went,
The conqueror would but have a corpse to
kiss.

"May Boniface be duly damned for this!"
—Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned,
From the wet heap of rubbish where they
burned

His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth:
"A boon, sweet Christ—let Salinguerra seethe
"In hell for ever, Christ, and let myself
"Be there to laugh at him!"—moaned some
young Guelf

Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast
To the charred lintel of the doorway, last
His father stood within to bid him speed.
The thoroughfares were overrun with weed
—Docks, quitchgrass, loathy mallows no
man plants.

The stranger, none of its inhabitants
Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again,
And ask the purpose of a splendid train
Admitted on a morning; every town
Of the East League was come by envoy down
To treat for Richard's ransom: here you saw
The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw
The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross
On its white field. A-tiptoe o'er the fosse
Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully
After the flock of steeples he might spy
In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago
Tomend the ramparts: sure the laggards know
The Pope's as good as here! They paced
the streets

More soberly. At last, "Taurello greets
"The League," announced a pursuivant,—
"will match

"Its courtesy, and labours to dispatch
"At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent
"On pressing matters from his post at Trent,
"With Mainard Count of Tyrol,—simply waits
"Their going to receive the delegates."

"Tito!" Our delegates exchanged a glance,
And, keeping the main way, admired askance
The lazy engines of outlandish birth,
Couched like a king each on its bank of earth—
Arbalist, manganel¹ and catapult;
While stationed by, as waiting a result,
Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased
Working to watch the strangers. "This, at
least,

"Were better spared; he scarce presumes
gainsay

"The League's decision! Get our friend away

¹ Engine for throwing stones.

“And profit for the future: how else teach
 “Fools ’tis not safe to stray within claw’s reach
 “Ere Salinguerra’s final gasp be blown?
 “Those mere convulsive scratches find the
 bone.
 “Who bade him bloody the spent osprey’s
 nare¹?”

The carrochs² halted in the public square.
 Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,
 Men prattled, freelier than the crested gaunt
 White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak
 Was missing, and whoever chose might speak
 “Ecelin” boldly out: so,—“Ecelin
 “Needed his wife to swallow half the sin
 “And sickens by himself: the devil’s whelp,
 “He styles his son, dwindles away, no help
 “From conserves, your fine triple-curdled froth
 “Of virgin’s blood, your Venice viper-broth—
 “Eh? Jubilate!”—“Peace! no little word
 “You utter here that’s not distinctly heard
 “Up at Oliero: he was absent sick
 “When we besieged Bassano—who, i’ the
 thick

“O’ the work, perceived the progress Azzo
 made,
 “Like Ecelin, through his witch Adelaide?
 “She managed it so well that, night by
 night
 “At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite,
 “First fresh, pale by-and-by without a wound,
 “And, when it came with eyes filmed as in
 swound,
 “They knew the place was taken.”—
 “Ominous
 “That Ghibellins should get what cautelous
 “Old Redbeard sought from Azzo’s sire to
 wrench
 “Vainly; Saint George contrived his town
 a trench
 “O’ the marshes, an impermeable bar.”
 “—Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar
 “Of Padua, rather; veins embrace upon
 “His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion.”
 What now?—“The founts! God’s bread,
 touch not a plank!
 “A crawling hell of carrion—every tank

¹ Nostril.² Cars of state.

“Choke-full!—found out just now to Cino’s
 cost—

“The same who gave Taurello up for lost,
 “And, making no account of fortune’s freaks,
 “Refused to budge from Padua then, but
 sneaks

“Back now with Concorezzi: ’faith! they drag
 “Their carroch to San Vitale, plant the flag
 “On his own palace, so adroitly razed
 “He knew it not; a sort of Guelf folk gazed
 “And laughed apart; Cino disliked their air—
 “Must pluck up spirit, show he does not
 care—

“Seats himself on the tank’s edge—will begin
 “To hum, *za, za, Cavalier Ecelin*—
 “A silence; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,
 “Now both feet plough the ground, deeper
 each time,

“At last, *za, za* and up with a fierce kick
 “Comes his own mother’s face caught by the
 thick

“Grey hair about his spur!”

Which means, they lift

The covering, Salinguerra made a shift
 To stretch upon the truth; as well avoid
 Further disclosures; leave them thus em-
 ployed.

Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,
 And poor Ferrara puts a softened face
 On her misfortunes. Let us scale this tall
 Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall
 Bastioned within by trees of every sort
 On three sides, slender, spreading, long and
 short;

Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,
 The fig-tree reared itself,—but stark and
 cramped,

Made fools of, like tamed lions: whence, on
 the edge,

Running ’twixt trunk and trunk to smooth
 one ledge

Ofshade, were shrubs inserted, warp and woof,
 Which smothered up that variance. Scale
 the roof

Of solid tops, and o’er the slope you slide
 Down to a grassy space level and wide,
 Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees
 Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,

Set by itself: and in the centre spreads,
 Borne upon three uneasy leopards' heads,
 A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt
 Of water bubbles in. The walls begirt
 With trees leave off on either hand; pursue
 Your path along a wondrous avenue
 Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone,
 With aloes leering everywhere, grey-grown
 From many a Moorish summer: how they
 wind
 Out of the fissures! likelier to bind
 The building than those rusted cramps which
 drop
 Already in the eating sunshine. Stop,
 You fleeting shapes above there! Ah, the
 pride
 Or else despair of the whole country-side!
 A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps,
 God, goddess, woman, man, the Greek
 rough-rasps
 In crumbling Naples marble—meant to look
 Like those Messina marbles Constance took
 Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed
 To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide,—
 A certain font with caryatides
 Since cloistered at Goito; only, these
 Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop
 Able to right themselves—who see you, stoop
 Their arms o' the instant after you! Unplucked
 By this or that, you pass; for they conduct
 To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,
 Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien
 Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle
 No doubt. Here, left a sullen breathing-
 while,
 Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood
 For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood
 Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath
 Those shading fingers in their iron sheath,
 Steadied his strengths amid the buzz and stir
 Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre
 At the announcement of his over-match
 To wind the day's diversion up, dispatch
 The pertinacious Gaul: while, limbo on heap,
 The Slave, no breath in her round mouth,
 watched leap
 Dart after dart forth, as her hero's car
 Clove dizzily the solid of the war

—Let coil about his knees for pride in him.
 We reach the farthest terrace, and the grim
 San Pietro Palace stops us.

Such the state

Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate
 Sicilian marvels, that his girlish wife
 Retrude still might lead her ancient life
 In her new home: whereat enlarged so much
 Neighbours upon the novel princely touch
 He took,—who here imprisons Boniface.
 Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace;
 And here, emerging from the labyrinth
 Below, Sordello paused beside the plinth
 Of the door-pillar.

He had really left

Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft
 From the morass) where Este's camp was
 made;
 The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade—
 All had been seen by him, but scarce as
 when,—

Eager for cause to stand aloof from men
 At every point save the fantastic tie
 Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry,—
 He made account of such. A crowd,—he
 meant

To task the whole of it; each part's intent
 Concerned him therefore: and, the more he
 pried,

The less became Sordello satisfied
 With his own figure at the moment. Sought
 He respite from his task? Descried he aught
 Novel in the anticipated sight
 Of all these livers upon all delight?

This phalanx, as of myriad points combined,
 Whereby he still had imaged the mankind
 His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,
 His age—in plans to prove at least such thing
 Had been so dreamed,—which now he must
 impress

With his own will, effect a happiness
 By theirs,—supply a body to his soul
 Thence, and become eventually whole
 With them as he had hoped to be without—
 Made these the mankind he once raved
 about?

Because a few of them were notable,
 Should all be figured worthy note? As well

Expect to find Taurello's triple line
 Of trees a single and prodigious pine.
 Real pines rose here and there ; but, close
 among,
 Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a
 throng
 Of shrubs, he saw,—a nameless common sort
 O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report
 And hurried into corners, or at best
 Admitted to be fancied like the rest.
 Reckon that morning's proper chiefs—how
 few !
 And yet the people grew, the people grew,
 Grew ever, as if the many there indeed,
 More left behind and most who should
 succeed,—
 Simply in virtue of their mouths and eyes,
 Petty enjoyments and huge miseries,—
 Mingled with, and made veritably great
 Those chiefs : he overlooked not Mainard's
 state
 Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead
 Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head
 Of infinite and absent Tyrolese
 Or Paduans ; startling all the more, that these
 Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for,
 Yet doubtless on the whole (like Eglamor)
 Smiling ; for if a wealthy man decays
 And out of store of robes must wear, all days,
 One tattered suit, alike in sun and shade,
 'Tis commonly some tarnished gay brocade
 Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more :
 Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store
 Of looks is fain upgather, keep unfurled
 For common wear as she goes through the
 world,
 The faint remainder of some worn-out smile
 Meant for a feast-night's service merely.
 While
 Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus,—
 (Crowds no way interfering to discuss,
 Much less dispute, life's joys with one em-
 ployed
 In envying them,—or, if they aught enjoyed,
 Where lingered something indefinable
 In every look and tone, the mirth as well
 As woe, that fixed at once his estimate
 Of the result, their good or bad estate)—

Old memories returned with new effect :
 And the new body, ere he could suspect,
 Cohered, mankind and he were really fused,
 The new self seemed impatient to be used
 By him, but utterly another way
 Than that anticipated : strange to say,
 They were too much below him, more in
 thrall
 Than he, the adjunct than the principal.
 What bootied scattered units ?—here a mind
 And there, which might repay his own to find,
 And stamp, and use ?—a few, howe'er august,
 If all the rest were grovelling in the dust ?
 No : first a mighty equilibrium, sure,
 Should he establish, privilege procure
 For all, the few had long possessed ! He
 felt
 An error, an exceeding error melt :
 While he was occupied with Mantuan chants,
 Behoved him think of men, and take their
 wants,
 Such as he now distinguished every side,
 As his own want which might be satisfied,—
 And, after that, think of rare qualities
 Of his own soul demanding exercise.
 It followed naturally, through no claim
 On their part, which made virtue of the aim
 At serving them, on his,—that, past retrieve,
 He felt now in their toils, theirs—nor could
 leave
 Wonder how, in the eagerness to rule,
 Impress his will on mankind, he (the fool !)
 Had never even entertained the thought
 That this his last arrangement might be
 fraught
 With incidental good to them as well,
 And that mankind's delight would help to
 swell
 His own. So, if he sighed, as formerly
 Because the merry time of life must fleet,
 'Twas deeper now,—for could the crowds
 repeat
 Their poor experiences ? His hand that shook
 Was twice to be deplored. "The Legate,
 look !
 "With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs on
 a thread,
 "Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head,

"Large tongue, moist open mouth; and this
long while

"That owner of the idiotic smile
"Serves them!"

He fortunately saw in time
His fault however, and since the office prime
Includes the secondary—best accept
Both offices; Taurello, its adept,
Could teach him the preparatory one,
And how to do what he had fancied done
Long previously, ere take the greater task.
How render first these people happy? Ask
The people's friends: for there must be one
good,

One way to it—the Cause! He understood
The meaning now of Palma; why the jar
Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far
Of Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard
hope

And Rome's despair?—'twixt Emperor and
Pope

The confused shifting sort of Eden tale—
Hardihood still recurring, still to fail—
That foreign interloping fiend, this free
And native overbrooding deity:

Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms
The Kaiser ruined, troubling even the calms
Of paradise; or, on the other hand,
The Pontiff, as the Kaisers understand,
One snake-like cursed of God to love the
ground,

Whose heavy length breaks in the noon pro-
found

Some saving tree—which needs the Kaiser,
dressed

As the dislodging angel of that pest:

Yet flames that pest bedropped, flat head, full
fold,

With coruscating dower of dyes. "Behold
"The secret, so to speak, and master-spring

"O' the contest!—which of the two Powers
shall bring

"Men good, perchance the most good: ay,
it may

"Ee that! the question, which best knows
the way."

And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past
Out of San Pietro; never seemed the last

Of archers, slingers: and our friend began
To recollect strange modes of serving man—
Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,
And more. "This way of theirs may,—who
can tell?—

"Need perfecting," said he: "let all be
solved

"At once! Taurello 'tis, the task devolved
"On late: confront Taurello!"

And at last
He did confront him. Scarce an hour had
past

When forth Sordello came, older by years
Than at his entry. Unexampled fears
Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind,
mute

And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,
Into Ferrara—not the empty town
That morning witnessed: he went up and
down

Streets whence the veil had been stript shred
by shred,

So that, in place of huddling with their dead
Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,
Townfolk make shift to crawl forth, sit like
friends

With any one. A woman gave him choice
Of her two daughters, the infantile voice
Or the dimpled knee, for half a chain, his
throat

Was clasped with; but an archer knew the
coat—

Its blue cross and eight lilies,—bade beware
One dogging him in concert with the pair
Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid
his knife.

Night set in early, autumn dews were rife,
They kindled great fires while the Leaguers'
mass

Began at every carroch: he must pass
Between the kneeling people. Presently
The carroch of Verona caught his eye
With purple trappings; silently he bent
Over its fire, when voices violent

Began, "Affirm not whom the youth was
like

"That struck me from the porch: I did not
strike

"Again: I too have chestnut hair; my kin
 "Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin.
 "Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away!
 Sing! Take
 "My glove for guerdon!" And for that
 man's sake
 He turned: "A song of Eglamor's!"—
 scarce named,
 When, "Our Sordello's rather!"—all ex-
 claimed;
 "Is not Sordello famousest for rhyme?"
 He had been happy to deny, this time,—
 Profess as heretofore the aching head
 And failing heart,—suspect that in his stead
 Some true Apollo had the charge of them,
 Was champion to reward or to condemn,
 So his intolerable risk might shift
 Or share itself; but Naddo's precious gift
 Of gifts, he owned, be certain! At the close—
 "I made that," said he to a youth who
 rose
 As if to hear: 'twas Palma through the band
 Conducted him in silence by her hand.
 Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent
 Gave place to Palma and her friend, who
 went
 In turn at Montelungo's visit: one
 After the other were they come and gone,—
 These spokesmen for the Kaiser and the Pope,
 This incarnation of the People's hope,
 Sordello,—all the say of each was said;
 And Salinguerra sat,—himself instead
 Of these to talk with, lingered musing yet.
 'Twas a drear vast presence-chamber roughly
 set
 In order for the morning's use; full face,
 The Kaiser's ominous sign-mark had first
 place,
 The crowned grim-twy-necked eagle, coarsely-
 blackened
 With ochre on the naked wall; nor lacked
 Romano's green and yellow either side;
 But the new token Tito brought had tried
 The Legate's patience—nay, if Palma knew
 What Salinguerra almost meant to do
 Until the sight of her restored his lip
 A certain half-smile, three months' chieftain-
 ship

Had banished! Afterward, the Legate found
 No change in him, nor asked what badge he
 wound
 And unwound carelessly. Now sat the Chief
 Silent as when our couple left, whose brief
 Encounter wrought so opportune effect
 In thoughts he summoned not, nor would
 reject,
 Though time 'twas now if ever, to pause—fix
 On any sort of ending: wiles and tricks
 Exhausted, judge! his charge, the crazy town,
 Just managed to be hindered crashing
 down—
 His last sound troops ranged—care observed
 to post
 His best of the maimed soldiers innermost—
 So much was plain enough, but somehow
 struck
 Him not before. And now with this strange
 luck
 Of Tito's news, rewarding his address
 So well, what thought he of?—how the
 success
 With Friedrich's rescript there, would either
 hush
 Old Ecelin's scruples, bring the manly flush
 To his young son's white cheek, or, last,
 exempt
 Himself from telling what there was to
 tempt?
 No: that this minstrel was Romano's last
 Servant—himself the first! Could he
 contrast
 The whole!—that minstrel's thirty years
 just spent
 In doing nought, their notablest event
 This morning's journey hither, as I told—
 Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,
 A stammering awkward man that scarce
 dared raise
 His eye before the magisterial gaze—
 And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes
 Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,
 Cares and contrivances, yet, you would say
 'Twas a youth nonchalantly looked away
 Through the embrasure northward o'er the
 sick
 Expostulating trees—so agile, quick

And graceful turned the head on the broad
chest

Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest,
Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire
Across the room ; and, loosened of its tire
Of steel, that head let breathe the comely
brown

Large massive locks discoloured as if a crown
Encircled them, so frayed the basnet¹ where
A sharp white line divided clean the hair ;
Glossy above, glossy below, it swept
Curling and fine about a brow thus kept
Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound :
This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,
Mused of, turned over books about. Square-
faced,

No lion more ; two vivid eyes, enchased
In hollows filled with many a shade and streak
Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek.
Nor might the half-smile reach them that
deformed

A lip supremely perfect else—unwarmed,
Unwidened, less or more ; indifferent
Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent,
Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train
As now a rarely was fulfilled again :
Of such, a series made his life, compressed
In each, one story serving for the rest—
How his life-streams rolling arrived at last
At the barrier, whence, were it once overpast,
They would emerge, a river to the end,—
Gathered themselves up, paused, bade fate
befriend,

Took the leap, hung a minute at the height,
Then fell back to oblivion infinite :
Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched
garden-grounds

Where late the adversary, breaking bounds,
Had gained him an occasion, That above,
That eagle, testified he could improve
Effectually. The Kaiser's symbol lay
Beside his rescript, a new badge by way
Of baldric ; while,—another thing that marred
Alike emprise, achievement and reward,—
Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.

What past life did those flying thoughts
pursue ?

¹ Light helmet.

As his, few names in Mantua half so old ;
But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled
It latterly, the Adelardi spared
No pains to rival them : both factions shared
Ferrara, so that, counted out, 'twould yield
A product very like the city's shield,
Half black and white, or Ghibellin and Gueff
As after Salinguerra styled himself
And Este who, till Marchesalla died,
(Last of the Adelardi)—never tried
His fortune there : with Marchesalla's child
Would pass,—could Blacks and Whites be
reconciled
And young Taurello wed Linguetta,—wealth
And sway to a sole grasp. Each treats by
stealth

Already : when the Guelfs, the Ravennese
Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize
Linguetta, and are gone ! Men's first dismay
Abated somewhat, hurries down, to lay
The after indignation, Boniface,
This Richard's father. "Learn the full dis-
grace

"Averted, ere you blame us Guelfs, who rate
"Your Salinguerra, your sole potentate
"That might have been, 'mongst Este's
valvassors—

"Ay, Azzo's—who, not privy to, abhors
"Our step ; but we were zealous." Azzo then
To do with ! Straight a meeting of old men :
"Old Salinguerra dead, his heir a boy,
"What if we change our ruler and decoy
"The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere
"With Italy to build in, fix him here,
"Settle the city's troubles in a trice ?

"For private wrong, let public good suffice !"
In fine, young Salinguerra's staunchest friends
Talked of the townsmen making him amends,
Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was
Rare sport, one morning, over the green grass
A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain,
Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again
In time for Azzo's entry with the bride ;
Count Boniface rode smirking at their side ;
"She brings him half Ferrara," whispers flew,
"And all Ancona ! If the stripling knew !"

Anon the stripling was in Sicily
Where Heinrich ruled in right of Constance ; he

Was gracious nor his guest incapable ;
 Each understood the other. So it fell,
 One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at ease,
 Had near forgotten by what precise degrees
 He crept at first to such a downy seat,
 The Count trudged over in a special heat
 To bid him of God's love dislodge from each
 Of Salinguerra's palaces,—a breach
 Might yawn else, not so readily to shut,
 For who was just arrived at Mantua but
 The youngster, sword on thigh and tuft on chin,
 With tokens for Celano, Ecelin,
 Pistore, and the like ! Next news,—no whit
 Do any of Ferrara's domes besit
 His wife of Heinrich's very blood : a band
 Of foreigners assemble, understand
 Garden-constructing, level and surround,
 Build up and bury in. A last news crowned
 The consternation : since his infant's birth,
 He only waits they end his wondrous girth
 Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà,
 To visit Mantua. When the Podestà
 Ecelin, at Vicenza, called his friend
 Taurello thither, what could be their end
 But to restore the Ghibellins' late Head,
 The Kaiser helping ? He with most to dread
 From vengeance and reprisal, Azzo, there
 With Boniface beforehand, as aware
 Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled
 Both plotters : but the Guelfs in triumph
 yelled
 Too hastily. The burning and the flight,
 And how Taurello, occupied that night
 With Ecelin, lost wife and son, I told :
 —Not how he bore the blow, retained his hold,
 Got friends safe through, left enemies the worst
 O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at first :
 But afterward men heard not constantly
 Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be !
 Though Azzo simply gained by the event
 A shifting of his plagues—the first, content
 To fall behind the second and estrange
 So far his nature, suffer such a change
 That in Romano sought he wife and child,
 And for Romano's sake seemed reconciled
 To losing individual life, which shrunk
 As the other prospered—mortised in his
 trunk ;

Like a dwarf palm which wanton Arabs foil
 Of bearing its own proper wine and oil,
 By grafting into it the stranger-vine,
 Which sucks its heart out, sly and serpentine,
 Till forth one vine-palm feathers to the root,
 And red drops moisten the insipid fruit.
 Once Adelaide set on,—the subtle mate
 Of the weak soldier, urged to emulate
 The Church's valiant women deed for deed,
 And paragon her namesake, win the meed
 O' the great Matilda,—soon they overbore
 The rest of Lombardy,—not as before
 By an instinctive truculence, but patched
 The Kaiser's strategy until it matched
 The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel means.
 "Only, why is it Salinguerra screens
 "Himself behind Romano?—him we bade
 "Enjoy our shine i' the front, not seek the
 shade !"
 —Asked Heinrich, somewhat of the tardiest
 To comprehend. Nor Philip acquiesced
 At once in the arrangement ; reasoned, plied
 His friend with offers of another bride,
 A statelier function—fruitlessly : 'twas plain
 Taurello through some weakness must remain
 Obscure. And Otho, free to judge of both
 —Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth,
 And this more plausible and facile wight
 With every point a-sparkle—chose the right,
 Admiring how his predecessors harped
 On the wrong man : "thus," quoth he, "wits
 are warped
 "By outsides !" Carelessly, meanwhile, his
 life
 Suffered its many turns of peace and strife
 In many lands—you hardly could surprise
 The man ; who shamed Sordello (recognize !)
 In this as much beside, that, unconcerned
 What qualities were natural or earned,
 With no ideal of graces, as they came
 He took them, singularly well the same—
 Speaking the Greek's own language, just be-
 cause
 Your Greek eludes you, leave the least of flaws
 In contracts with him ; while, since Arab lore
 Holds the stars' secret—take one trouble more
 And master it ! 'Tis done, and now deter
 Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined for her,

From Friedrich's path !—Friedrich, whose pilgrimage
 The same man puts aside, whom he'll engage
 To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch,
 Come to Bassano, see Saint Francis' church
 And judge of Guido the Bolognian's piece
 Which, — lend Taurello credit, — rivals Greece—
 Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits
 Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's exploits.
 For elegance, he strung the angelot,¹
 Made rhymes thereto; for prowess, clove he not
 Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper? Why
 Detail you thus a varied mastery
 But to show how Taurello, on the watch
 For men, to read their hearts and thereby catch
 Their capabilities and purposes,
 Displayed himself so far as displayed these :
 While our Sordello only cared to know
 About men as a means whereby he'd show
 Himself, and men had much or little worth
 According as they kept in or drew forth
 That self; the other's choicest instruments
 Surmised him shallow.

Meantime, malcontents
 Dropped off, town after town grew wiser.
 "How
 "Change the world's face?" asked people;
 "as 'tis now
 "It has been, will be ever: very fine
 "Subjecting things profane to things divine,
 "In talk! This contumacy will fatigue
 "The vigilance of Este and the League!
 "The Ghibellins gain on us!"—as it happed.
 Old Azzo and old Boniface, entrapped
 By Ponte Alto, both in one month's space
 Slept at Verona: either left a brace
 Of sons—but, three years after, either's pair
 Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir:
 Azzo remained and Richard—all the stay
 Of Este and Saint Boniface, at bay
 As 'twere. Then, either Ecelin grew old
 Or his brain altered—not o' the proper mould

¹ The lute.

For new appliances—his old palm-stock
 Endured no influx of strange strengths. He'd
 rock
 As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low
 As proud of the completeness of his woe,
 Then weep real tears;—now make some mad
 onslaught
 On Este, heedless of the lesson taught
 So painfully,—now cringe for peace, sue peace
 At price of past gain, bar of fresh increase
 To the fortunes of Romano. Up at last
 Rose Este, down Romano sank as fast.
 And men remarked these freaks of peace and
 war
 Happened while Salinguerra was afar:
 Whence every friend besought him, all in vain,
 To use his old adherent's wits again.
 Not he!—"who had advisers in his sons,
 "Could plot himself, nor needed any one's
 "Advice." 'Twas Adelaide's remaining
 staunch
 Prevented his destruction root and branch
 Forthwith; but when she died, doom fell,
 for gay
 He made alliances, gave lands away
 To whom it pleased accept them, and with-
 drew
 For ever from the world. Taurello, who
 Was summoned to the convent, then refused
 A word at the wicket, patience thus abused,
 Promptly threw off alike his imbecile
 Ally's yoke, and his own frank, foolish smile.
 Soon a few movements of the happier sort
 Changed matters, put himself in men's report
 As heretofore; he had to fight, beside,
 And that became him ever. So, in pride
 And flushing of this kind of second youth,
 He dealt a good-will blow. Este in truth
 Lay prone—and men remembered, somewhat
 late,
 A laughing old outrageous stifled hate
 He bore to Este—how it would outbreak
 At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake
 In sunny weather—as that noted day
 When with his hundred friends he tried to
 slay
 Azzo before the Kaiser's face: and how,
 On Azzo's calm refusal to allow

A liegeman's challenge, straight he too was calmed :

As if his hate could bear to lie embalmed,
Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, and survive
All intermediate crumbings, to arrive
At earth's catastrophe—'twas Este's crash
Not Azzo's he demanded, so, no rash
Procedure ! Este's true antagonist
Rose out of Ecelin : all voices whist,
All eyes were sharpened, wits predicted. He
'Twas, leaned in the embrasure absently,
Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace
With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's
face

I' the dust : but as the trees waved sere, his smile

Deepened, and words expressed its thought
erewhile.

"Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer ?

"That we should stick together, all the year

"I kept Vicenza !—How old Boniface,

"Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,

"He by that pillar, I at this,—caught each

"In mid swing, more than fury of his speech,

"Egging the rabble on to disavow

"Allegiance to their Marquis—Bacchus, how

"They boasted ! Ecelin must turn their
drudge,

"Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge

"Paying arrears of tribute due long since—

"Bacchus ! My man could promise then,
nor wince :

"The bones-and-muscles ! Sound of wind
and limb,

"Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him :

"And now he sits me, slaving and mute,

"Intent on chafing each starved purple foot

"Benumbed past aching with the altar
slab :

"Will no vein throb there when some monk
shall blab

"Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps,

"Friedrich's affirmed to be our side the
Alps'

"—Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet ?

"Sworn to abjure the world, its fume and
fret,

"God's own now ? Drop the dormitory bar,

"Enfold the scanty grey serge scapular¹

"Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out !

"So ! But the midnight whisper turns a
shout,

"Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate

"In the stone walls : the past, the world
you hate

"Is with you, ambush, open field—or see

"The surging flame—we fire Vicenza—glee !

"Follow, let Pilio and Bernardo chafe !

"Bring up the Mantuans—through San
Biagio—safe !

"Ah, the mad people waken ? Ah, they
write

"And reach us ? If they block the gate ?
No tithe

"Can pass—keep back, you Bassanese !
The edge,

"Use the edge—shear, thrust, hew, melt
down the wedge,

"Let out the black of those black upturned
eyes !

"Hell—are they sprinkling fire too ? The
blood fries

"And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear

"Those upturned faces choking with despair.

"Brave ! Slidder through the reeking gate !
'How now ?

"'You six had charge of her ?' And then
the vow

"Comes, and the foam spirts, hair's plucked,
till one shriek

"(I hear it) and you fling—you cannotspeak—
Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who
haled

"The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled

"This morn, naked across the fire : how
crown

"The archer that exhausted lays you down

"Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies ?

"While one, while mine . . .

"Bacchus ! I think there lies

"More than one corpse there" (and he
paced the room)

"—Another cinder somewhere : 'twas my
doom

¹ A loose sleeveless vestment.

"Beside, my doom! If Adelaide is dead,
 "I live the same, this Azzo lives instead
 "Of that to me, and we pull, any how,
 "Este into a heap: the matter's now
 "At the true juncture slipping us so oft.
 "Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you,
 'doffed
 "His crown at such a juncture! Still, if
 holds
 "Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain enfolds
 "The neck of . . . who but this same Ecelin
 "That must recoil when the best days begin!
 "Recoil? that's nought; if the recoiler
 leaves
 "His name for me to fight with, no one
 grieves:
 "But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock
 "His cloister to become my stumbling-block
 "Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 'tis again—
 "The land's inevitable Head—explain
 "The reverences that subject us! Count
 "These Ecelins now! Not to say as fount,
 "Originating power of thought,—from twelve
 "That drop i' the trenches they joined hands
 to delve,
 "Six shall surpass him, but . . . why men
 must twine
 "Somehow with something! Ecelin's a fine
 "Clear name! 'Twere simpler, doubtless,
 twine with me
 "At once: our cloistered friend's capacity
 "Was of a sort! I had to share myself
 "In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf
 "That's forced illumine in fifty points the vast
 "Rare vapour he's environed by. At last
 "My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en
 converge
 "And crown . . . no, Bacchus, they have
 yet to urge
 "The man be crowned!
 " That aloe, an he durst,
 "Would climb! Just such a bloated
 sprawler first
 "I noted in Messina's castle-court
 "The day I came, when Heinrich asked in
 sport
 "If I would pledge my faith to win him back
 "His right in Lombardy: 'for, once bid pack

"Marauders,' he continued, 'in my stead
 "You rule, Taurello!' and upon this head
 "Laid the silk glove of Constance—I see her'
 "Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,
 "Retrude following!
 "I am absolved
 "From further toil: the empery devolved
 "On me, 'twas Tito's word: I have to lay
 "For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,
 "Prompt nobody, and render an account
 "Taurello to Taurello! Nay, I mount
 "To Friedrich: he conceives the post I kept,
 "—Who did true service, able or inept,
 "Who's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I.
 "Me guerdoned, counsel follows: would he
 vie
 "With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface
 "Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race
 "Must break ere govern Lombardy. I point
 "How easy 'twere to twist, once out of joint,
 "The socket from the bone: my Azzo's stare
 "Meanwhile! for I, this idle strap to wear,
 "Shall—fret myself abundantly, what end
 "To serve? There's left me twenty years
 to spend
 "—How better than my old way? Had I one
 "Who laboured to o'erthrow my work—a son
 "Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,
 "To root my pines up and then poison me,
 "Suppose—'twere worth while frustrate that!
 Beside
 "Another life's ordained me: the world's
 tide
 "Rolls, and what hope of parting from the
 press
 "Of waves, a single wave though weariness
 "Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore?
 "My life must be lived out in foam and roar,
 "No question. Fifty years the province held
 "Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles
 quelled,
 "He in the midst—who leaves this quaint
 stone place,
 "These trees a year or two, then not a trace
 "Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's
 tongues
 "Like this poor minstrel with the foolish
 songs—

<p>“To which, despite our bustle, he is linked? “—Flowers one may tease, that never grow extinct. “ Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where “ I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair, “ To overawe the aloes; and we trod “ Those flowers, how call you such?—into the sod; “ A stately foreigner—a world of pain “ To make it thrive, arrest rough winds—all vain! “ It would decline; these would not be destroyed: “ And now, where is it? where can you avoid “ The flowers? I frighten children twenty years “ Longer!—which way, too, Ecelin appears “ To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth “ Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth: “ They feel it at Vicenza! Fate, fate, fate, “ My fine Taurello! Go you, promulgate “ Friedrich's decree, and here's shall aggran- dise “ Young Ecelin—your Prefect's badge! a prize “ Too precious, certainly. “ How now? Compete “ With my old comrade? shuffle from their seat “ His children? Paltry dealing! Don't I know “ Ecelin? now, I think, and years ago! “ What's changed—the weakness? did not I compound “ For that, and undertake to keep him sound “ Despite it? Here's Taurello hankering “ After a boy's preferment—this plaything “ To carry, Bacchus!” And he laughed. Remark Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort Fail: while these last are ever stopping short— (So much they should—so little they can do!) The careless tribe see nothing to pursue If they desist; meantime their scheme suc- ceeds. Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds</p>	<p>Methodic with Taurello; so, he turned,— Enough amused by fancies fairly earned Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck, And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck,— To his own petty but immediate doubt If he could pacify the League without Conceding Richard; just to this was brought That interval of vain discursive thought! As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black Enormous watercourse which guides him back To his own tribe again, where he is king; And laughs because he guesses, numbering The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch Of the first lizard wrested from its couch Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips To cure his nostril with, and festered lips, And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert- blast) That he has reached its boundary, at last May breathe;—thinks o'er enchantments of the South Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth, Eyes, nails, and hair; but, these enchant- ments tried In fancy, puts them soberly aside For truth, projects a cool return with friends, The likelihood of winning mere amends Ere long; thinks that, takes comfort silently, Then, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he, Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon. Midnight: the watcher nodded on his spear, Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear For any meagre and discoloured moon To venture forth; and such was peering soon Above the harassed city—her close lanes Closer, not half so tapering her fanes, As though she shrunk into herself to keep What little life was saved, more safely. Heap By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside The blackest spoke Sordello and replied Palma with none to listen. “'Tis your cause: “What makes a Ghibellin? There should be laws—</p>
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"(Remember how my youth escaped ! I trust
 "To you for manhood, Palma ! tell me just
 "As any child)—there must be laws at work
 "Explaining this. Assure me, good may lurk
 "Under the bad,—my multitude has part
 "In your designs, their welfare is at heart
 "With Salinguerra, to their interest
 "Refer the deeds he dwelt on,—so divest
 "Our conference of much that scared me.

Why

"Affect that heartless tone to Tito ? I
 "Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind
 "This morn, a recreant to my race—mankind
 "O'erlooked till now : why boast my spirit's
 force,
 "—Such force denied its object ? why divorce
 "These, then admire my spirit's flight the same
 "As though it bore up, helped some half-
 orb'd flame
 "Else quenched in the dead void, to living
 space ?

"That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace,
 "Why vaunt so much my unencumbered
 dance,

"Making a feat's facilities enhance
 "Its marvel ? But I front Taurello, one
 "Of happier fate, and all I should have done,
 "He does ; the people's good being paramount
 "With him, their progress may perhaps
 account

"For his abiding still ; whereas you heard
 "The talk with Tito—the excuse preferred
 "For burning those five hostages,—and
 broached

"By way of blind, as you and I approached,
 "I do believe."

She spoke : then he, "My thought
 "Plainlier expressed ! All to your profit—
 nought

"Meantime of these, of conquests to achieve
 "For them, of wretchedness he might relieve
 "While profiting your party. Azzo, too,
 "Supports a cause : what cause ? Do Guelfs
 pursue

"Their ends by means like yours, or better ?"

When

The Guelfs were proved alike, men weighed
 with men,

And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with
 blood and blaze,

Morn broke : "Once more, Sordello, meet
 its gaze

"Proudly—the people's charge against thee
 fails

"In every point, while either party quails !
 "These are the busy ones : be silent thou !

"Two parties take the world up, and allow
 "No third, yet have one principle, subsist

"By the same injustice ; whoso shall enlist
 "With either, ranks with man's inveterate foes.

"So there is one less quarrel to compose :
 "The Guelf, the Ghibellin may be to curse—

"I have done nothing, but both sides do worse
 "Than nothing. Nay, to me, forgotten, rest

"Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers,
 was left

"The notion of a service—ha ? What lured
 "Me here, what mighty aim was I assured

"Must move Taurello ? What if there re-
 main'd

"A cause, intact, distinct from these, ordained
 "For me, its true discoverer ?"

Some one pressed

Before them here, a watcher, to suggest
 The subject for a ballad : "They must know

"The tale of the dead worthy, long ago
 "Consul of Rome—that's long ago for us,

"Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus
 "In the world's corner—but too late no doubt,

"For the brave time he sought to bring about.
 "—Not know Crescentius Nomentanus ?"

Then

He cast about for terms to tell him, when
 Sordello disavow'd it, how they used

Whenever their Superior introduced
 A novice to the Brotherhood—"for I

"Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
 "Appointed too," quoth he, "till Innocent

"Bade me relinquish, to my small content,
 "My wife or my brown sleeves"—some

brother spoke

Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke
 The edict issued, after his demise,

Which blotted fame alike and effigies,
 All out except a floating power, a name

Including, tending to produce the same

Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least	How could he doubt one moment? Rome's the Cause!
Within that brain, though to a vulgar priest And a vile stranger,—two not worth a slave Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho,—fortune gave	Rome of the Pandects, all the world's new laws— Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo; New structures, that inordinately glow, Subdued, brought back to harmony, made ripe By many a relic of the archetype Extant for wonder; every upstart church That hoped to leave old temples in the lurch, Corrected by the Theatre forlorn That,—as a mundane shell, its world late born,— Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints combined,
The rule there: so, Crescentius, haply dressed In white, called Roman Consul for a jest, Taking the people at their word, forth stepped As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept Rome waiting,—stood erect, and from his brain Gave Rome out on its ancient place again, Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome, Kings styled	Rome typifies the scheme to put mankind Once more in full possession of their rights. "Let us have Rome again! On me it lights "To build up Rome—on me, the first and last: "For such a future was endured the past!" And thus, in the grey twilight, forth he sprung To give his thought consistency among The very People—let their facts avail Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.
Themselves mere citizens of, and, beguiled Into great thoughts thereby, would choose the gem	
Out of a lapfull, spoil their diadem —The Senate's cypher was so hard to scratch! He flashes like a phanal, all men catch The flame, Rome's just accomplished! when returned	
Otho, with John, the Consul'sstephadspurned, And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress Of adverse fortune bent. "They crucified "Their Consul in the Forum; and abide "E'er since such slaves at Rome, that I—(for I "Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily "Appointed)—I had option to keep wife "Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife "Lose both. A song of Rome!"	
And Rome, indeed, Robed at Goito in fantastic weed, The Mother-City of his Mantuan days, Looked an established point of light whence rays Traversed the world; for, all the clustered homes Beside of men, seemed bent on being Romes In their degree; the question was, how each Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach. Nor, of the Two, did either principle Struggle to change, but to possess Rome,—still Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.	
Let Rome advance! Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignorance—	BOOK THE FIFTH. Is it the same Sordello in the dusk As at the dawn?—merely a perished husk Now, that arose a power fit to build Up Rome again? The proud conception chilled So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine —A Rome indebted to no Palatine— Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art possessed Of thy wish now, rewarded for thy quest To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons? Are this and this and this the shining ones Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say, Your favoured tenantry pursue their way After a fashion! This companion slips On the smooth causey, t'other blinkard trips At his mooned sandal. "Leave to lead the brawls "Here i' the atria?" No, friend! He that sprawls

On aught but a stibadium¹ . . . what his dues

Who puts the lustral vase to such an use?
Oh, huddle up the day's disasters! March,
Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch,
Rome!

Yet before they quite disband—a whim—
Study mere shelter, now, for him, and him,
Nay, even the worst,—just house them!

Any cave

Suffices: throw out earth! A loophole?
Brave!

They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass
Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou,
alas,

And I am dead! But here's our son excels
At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells
Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes
His dream into a door-post, just escapes
The mystery of hinges. Lie we both
Perdue another age. The goodly growth
Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt was
rough,

But that descendant's garb suits well enough
A portico-contriver. Speed the years—
What's time to us? At last, a city rears
Itself! nay, enter—what's the grave to us?
Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus
The head! Successively sewer, forum,
cirque—

Last age, an aqueduct was counted work,
But now they tire the artificer upon
Blank alabaster, black obsidian,²
—Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgurant,
And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples
pant

Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed
Above the baths. What difference betwixt
This Rome and ours—resemblance what,
between

That scurvy dumb-show and this pageant
sheen—

These Romans and our rabble? Use thy
wit!

The work marched: step by step,—a work-
man fit

¹ Roman couch.

² A kind of glass (volcanic).

Took each, nor too fit,—to one task, one
time,—

No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,
When just the substituting osier lithe
For brittle bulrush, sound wood for soft
withe,

To further loam-and-roughcast-workastage,—
Exacts an architect, exacts an age
No tables of the Mauritanian tree
For men whose maple log's their luxury!
That way was Rome built. "Better" (say
you) "merge

"At once all workmen in the demiurge,
"All epochs in a lifetime, every task
"In one!" So should the sudden city bask
I' the day—while those we'd feast there,
want the knack

Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck
and brack,

Distinguish not rare peacock from vile swan,
Nor Mareotic juice from Cæcuban.

"Enough of Rome! 'Twas happy to
conceive

"Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave

"Me of that credit: for the rest, her spite

"Is an old story—serves my folly right

"By adding yet another to the dull

"List of abortions—things proved beautiful

"Could they be done, Sordello cannot do."

He sat upon the terrace, plucked and threw

The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift

Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch, and

drift

Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,

Mounds of all majesty. "Thou archetype,

"Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!"

And then a low voice wound into his heart:

"Sordello!" (low as some old Pythoness

Conceding to a Lydian King's distress

The cause of his long error—one mistake

Of her past oracle) "Sordello, wake!

"God has conceded two sights to a man—

"One, of men's whole work, time's com-
pleted plan,

"The other, of the minute's work, man's
first

"Step to the plan's completeness: what's
dispersed

- " Save hope of that supreme step which,
 descried
 " Earliest, was meant still to remain untried
 " Only to give you heart to take your own
 " Step, and there stay, leaving the rest alone?
 " Where is the vanity? Why count as one
 " The first step, with the last step? What is
 gone
 " Except Rome's æry magnificence,
 " That last step you'd take first?—an evidence
 " You were God: be man now! Let those
 glances fall!
 " The basis, the beginning step of all,
 " Which proves you just a man—is that gone
 too?
 " Pity to disconcert one versed as you
 " In fate's ill-nature! but its full extent
 " Eludes Sordello, even: the veil rent,
 " Read the black writing—that collective
 man
 " Outstrips the individual. Who began
 " The acknowledged greatnesses? Ay, your
 own art
 " Shall serve us: put the poet's mimes apart—
 " Close with the poet's self, and lo, a dim
 " Yet too plain form divides itself from him!
 " Alcamo's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,
 " Woven into the echoes left erewhile
 " By Nina, one soft web of song: no more
 " Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er
 and o'er!
 " An elder poet in the younger's place;
 " Nina's the strength, but Alcamo's the grace:
 " Each neutralizes each then! Search your
 fill;
 " You get no whole and perfect Poet—still
 " New Ninas, Alcamos, till time's mid-night
 " Shrouds all—or better say, the shutting light
 " Of a forgotten yesterday. Dissect
 " Every ideal workman—(to reject
 " In favour of your fearful ignorance
 " The thousand phantasms eager to advance,
 " And point you but to those within your
 reach)—
 " Were you the first who brought—(in
 modern speech)
 " The Multitude to be materialized?
 " That loose eternal unrest—who devised
- " An apparition i' the midst? The rout
 " Was checked, a breathless ring was formed
 about
 " That sudden flower: get round at any risk
 " The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk
 " O' the lily! Swords across it! Reign thy
 reign
 " And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne!
 " —The very child of over-joyousness,
 " Unfeeling thence, strong therefore: Strength
 by stress
 " Of Strength comes of that forehead confi-
 dent,
 " Those widened eyes expecting heart's
 content,
 " A calm as out of just-quelled noise; nor
 swerves
 " For doubt, the ample cheek in gracious
 curves
 " Abutting on the upthrust nether lip:
 " He wills, how should he doubt then?
 Ages slip:
 " Was it Sordello pried into the work
 " So far accomplished, and discovered lurk
 " A company amid the other clans,
 " Only distinct in priests for castellans
 " And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed
 " Its rule, their interest its interest,
 " Living for sake of living—there an end—
 " Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend
 " In making adversaries or allies)—
 " Dived you into its capabilities
 " And dared create, out of that sect, a sou
 " Should turn a multitude, already whole,
 " Into its body? Speak plainer! Is't so sure
 " God's church lives by a King's investiture?
 " Look to last step! A staggering—a shock—
 " What's mere sand is demolished, while the
 rock
 " Endures: a column of black fiery dust
 " Blots heaven—that help was prematurely
 thrust
 " Aside, perchance!—but air clears, nought's
 erased
 " Of the true outline. Thus much being
 firm based,
 " The other was a scaffold. See him stand
 " Buttressed upon his mattock, Hildebrand

- "Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er ply
 "As in a forge; it buries either eye
 "White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth
 clenched,
 "The neck tight-corded, too, the chin deep-
 trenched,
 "As if a cloud enveloped him while fought
 "Under its shade, grim prizers, thought with
 thought
 "At dead-lock, agonizing he, until
 "The victor thought leap radiant up, and Will,
 "The slave with folded arms and drooping lids
 "They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it
 bids.
 "Call him no flower—a mandrake of the
 earth,
 "Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its
 birth,
 "Rather,—a fruit of suffering's excess,
 "Thence feeling, therefore stronger: still by
 stress
 "Of Strength, work Knowledge! Full three
 hundred years
 "Have men to wear away in smiles and tears
 "Between the two that nearly seemed to
 touch,
 "Observe you! quit one workman and you
 clutch
 "Another, letting both their trains go by—
 "The actors-out of either's policy,
 "Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,
 "Carry the three Imperial crowns across,
 "Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold—
 "While Alexander, Innocent uphold
 "On that, each Papal key—but, link on link,
 "Why is it neither chain betrays a chink?
 "How coalesce the small and great? Alack,
 "For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back!
 "Do the popes coupled there help Gregory
 "Alone? Hark—from the hermit Peter's cry
 "At Claremont, down to the first serf that says
 "Friedrich's no liege of his while he delays
 "Getting the Pope's curse off him! The
 Crusade—
 "Or trick of breeding Strength by other aid
 "Than Strength, is safe. Hark—from the
 wild harangue
 "Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang
- "Yonder! The League—or trick of turning
 Strength
 "Against Pernicious Strength, is safe at
 length.
 "Yet hark—from Mantuan Albert making
 cease
 "The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching
 peace
 "Yonder! God's Truce—or trick to super-
 sede
 "The very Use of Strength, is safe. Indeed
 "We trench upon the future. Who is found
 "To take next step, next age—trail o'er the
 ground—
 "Shall I say, gourd-like?—not the flower's
 display
 "Nor the root's prowess, but the plenteous
 way
 "O' the plant—produced by joy and sorrow,
 whence
 "Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence?
 "Knowledge by stress of merely Knowledge?
 No—
 "E'en were Sordello ready to forego
 "His life for this, 'twere overleaping work
 "Some one has first to do, howe'er it irk,
 "Nor stray a foot's breadth from the beaten
 road.
 "Who means to help must still support the load
 "Hildebrand lifted—'why hast Thou,' he
 groaned,
 "'Imposed on me a burthen, Paul had
 moaned,
 "'And Moses dropped beneath?' Much
 done—and yet
 "Doubtless that grandest task God ever set
 "On man, left much to do: at his arm's
 wrench,
 "Charlemagne's scaffold fell; but pillars
 blench
 "Merely, start back again—perchance have
 been
 "Taken for buttresses: crash every screen,
 "Hammer the tenons¹ better, and engage
 "A gang about your work, for the next age
- ¹ A word of carpentry—the projecting piece
 of wood fitting into framework.

- "Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part
 "By Knowledge! Then, indeed, perchance may start
 "Sordello on his race—would time divulge
 "Such secrets! If one step's awry, one bulge
 "Calls for correction by a step we thought
 "Got over long since, why, till that is wrought,
 "No progress! And the scaffold in its turn
 "Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn.
 "Meanwhile, if your half-dozen years of life
 "In store dispose you to forego the strife,
 "Who takes exception? Only bear in mind
 "Ferrara's reached, Goito's left behind:
 "As you then were, as half yourself, desist!
 "—The warrior-part of you may, an it list,
 "Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,
 "Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys
 "By wielding such in fancy,—what is bard
 "Of you may spurn the vehicle that marred
 "Elys so much, and in free fancy glut
 "His sense, yet write no verses—you have but
 "To please yourself for law, and once could please
 "What once appeared yourself, by dreaming these
 "Rather than doing these, in days gone by.
 "But all is changed the moment you descry
 "Mankind as half yourself,—then, fancy's trade
 "Ends once and always: how may half evade
 "The other half? men are found half of you.
 "Out of a thousand helps, just one or two
 "Can be accomplished presently: but flinch
 "From these (as from the faulchion, raised an inch,
 "Elys, described a couplet) and make proof
 "Of fancy,—then, while one half lolls aloof
 "I the vines, completing Rome to the tip-top—
 "See if, for that, your other half will stop
 "A tear, begin a smile! The rabble's woes,
 "Ludicrous in their patience as they chose
 "To sit about their town and quietly
 "Be slaughtered,—the poor reckless soldiery,
- "With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how
 "'Polt-foot,' sang they, 'was in a pitfall now,'
 "Cheering each other from the engine-mounts,—'
 "That crippled spawling idiot who recounts
 "How, lopped of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,
 "Till the pains crept from out him one by one,
 "And wriggles round the archers on his head
 "To earn a morsel of their chestnut bread,—
 "And Cino, always in the self-same place
 "Weeping; beside that other wretch's case,
 "Eyepits to ear, one gangrene since he plied
 "The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide
 "A double watch in the noon sun; and see
 "Lucchino, beauty, with the favours free,
 "Trim haqueton,¹ spruce beard and scented hair,
 "Campaigning it for the first time—cut there
 "In two already, boy enough to crawl
 "For latter orpine round the southern wall,
 "Tomà, where Richard's kept, because that whore
 "Marfisa, the fool never saw before,
 "Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege:
 "And Tiso's wife—men liked their pretty liege,
 "Cared for her least of whims once,—Berta, wed
 "A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso's dead,
 "Delivering herself of his first child
 "On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled
 "To fifty gazers!"—(Here a wind below
 "Made moody music augural of woe
 "From the pine barrier)—"What if, now the scene
 "Draws to a close, yourself have really been
 "—You, plucking purples in Goito's moss
 "Like edges of a trabea² (not to cross
 "Your consul-humour) or dry aloe-shafts
 "For fasces, at Ferrara—he, fate wafts,
 "This very age, her whole inheritance
 "Of opportunities? Yet you advance

¹ A quilted jacket.² A purple toga.

"Upon the last! Since talking is your trade,
 "There's Salinguerra left you to persuade :
 "Fail! then"—

"No—no—which latest chance
 secure!"

Leaped up and cried Sordello: "this made sure,
 "The past were yet redeemable; its work

"Was—help the Guelfs, whom I, howe'er
 it irk,

"Thus help!" He shook the foolish aloehaulm

Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm
 To the appointed presence. The large head
 Turned on its socket; "And your spokesman," said

The large voice, "is Elcorte's happy sprout?
 "Few such"—(so finishing a speech no doubt
 Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)

"—My sober councils have diversified.

"Elcorte's son! good: forward as you may,
 "Our lady's minstrel with so much to say!"

The hesitating sunset floated back,
 Rosily traversed in the wonted track
 The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth
 Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in earth
 Opposite,—outlined sudden, spur to crest,
 That solid Salinguerra, and caressed
 Palma's contour; 'twas day looped back
 night's pall;

Sordello had a chance left spite of all.

And much he made of the convincing
 speech

Meant to compensate for the past and reach
 Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit,
 quite

To his noon's labour, so proceed till night
 Leisurely! The great argument to bind
 Taurello with the Guelf Cause, body and
 mind,

—Came the consummate rhetoric to that?
 Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat
 Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke,
 Disjoining him who felt from him who spoke.
 Was't not a touching incident—so prompt
 A rendering the world its just account,
 Once proved its debtor? Who'd suppose,
 before

This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore,

At duty's instance could demean himself
 So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf?

Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,
 His inmost self at the out-portion peeped,
 Thus occupied; then stole a glance at those

Appealed to, curious if her colour rose
 Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged

The need of Lombardy becoming purged
 At soonest of her barons; the poor part

Abandoned thus, missing the blood at heart
 And spirit in brain, unseasonably off

Elsewhere! But, though his speech was
 worthy scoff,

Good-humoured Salinguerra, famed for tact
 And tongue, who, careless of his phrase,
 ne'er lacked

The right phrase, and harangued Honorius
 dumb

At his accession,—looked as all fell plumb
 To purpose and himself found interest

In every point his new instructor pressed

—Left playing with the rescript's white wax
 seal

To scrutinize Sordello head and heel.

He means to yield assent sure? No, alas!

All he replied was, "What, it comes to pass

"That poesy, sooner than politics,
 "Makes fade young hair?" To think such
 speech could fix

Taurello!

Then a flash of bitter truth:

So fantasies could break and fritter youth

That he had long ago lost earnestness,

Lost will to work, lost power to even express

The need of working! Earth was turned a
 grave:

No more occasions now, though he should
 crave

Just one, in right of superhuman toil,

To do what was undone, repair such spoil,

Alter the past—nothing would give the chance!

Not that he was to die; he saw askance

Protract the ignominious years beyond

To dream in—time to hope and time despond,

Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice

As saved a trouble; he might, at his choice,

One way or other, idle life out, drop

No few smooth verses by the way—for prop,

<p>A thyrsus, these sad people, all the same, Should pick up, and set store by,—far from blame,</p>	<p>“With common sense: at Mantua I had borne “This chanted, better than their most forlorn “Of bull-baits,—that’s indisputable!”</p>
<p>Plant o’er his hearse, convinced his better part</p>	<p>Brave! Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save!</p>
<p>Survived him. “Rather tear men out the heart</p>	<p>All’s at an end: a Troubadour suppose Mankind will class him with their friends or foes?</p>
<p>“O’ the truth!”—Sordello muttered, and renewed</p>	<p>A puny uncouth ailing vassal think The world and him bound in some special link?</p>
<p>His propositions for the Multitude. But Salinguerra, who at this attack</p>	<p>Abrupt the visionary tether burst. What were rewarded here, or what amerced</p>
<p>Had thrown great breast and ruffling corslet back</p>	<p>If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream Deservingly, got tangled by his theme</p>
<p>To hear the better, smilingly resumed His task; beneath, the carroch’s warning</p>	<p>So far as to conceit the knack or gift Or whatsoe’er it be, of verse, might lift</p>
<p>boomed;</p>	<p>The globe, a lever like the hand and head Of—“Men of Action,” as the Jongleurs said,</p>
<p>He must decide with Tito; courteously He turned then, even seeming to agree</p>	<p>—“The Great Men,” in the people’s dialect? And not a moment did this scorn affect</p>
<p>With his admonisher—“Assist the Pope, “Extend Guelf domination, fill the scope</p>	<p>Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once, Asking “what was,” obtained a full response.</p>
<p>“O’ the Church, thus based on All, by All, for All—</p>	<p>Bid Naddo think at Mantua—he had but To look into his promptuary, put</p>
<p>“Change Secular to Evangelical”—</p>	<p>Finger on a set thought in a set speech: But was Sordello fitted thus for each</p>
<p>Echoing his very sentence: all seemed lost, When suddenly he looked up, laughingly</p>	<p>Conjecture? Nowise; since within his soul, Perception brooded unexpressed and whole.</p>
<p>almost,</p>	<p>A healthy spirit like a healthy frame Craves aliment in plenty—all the same,</p>
<p>To Palma: “This opinion of your friend’s— “For instance, would it answer Palma’s</p>	<p>Changes, assimilates its aliment. Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent?</p>
<p>ends? “Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our</p>	<p>Next day no formularies more you saw Than figs or olives in a sated maw.</p>
<p>Strength”— (Here he drew out his baldrick to its length)</p>	<p>’Tis Knowledge, whither such perceptions tend;</p>
<p>—“To the Pope’s Knowledge—let our captive slip,</p>	<p>They lose themselves in that, means to an end, The many old producing some one new,</p>
<p>“Wide to the walls throw ope our gates, equip</p>	<p>A last unlike the first. If lies are true, The Caliph’s wheel-work man¹ of brass re- ceives</p>
<p>“Azzo with . . . what I hold here! Who’ll subscribe</p>	<p>A meal, munched millet grains and lettuce leaves</p>
<p>“To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe “Henceforward? or pronounce, as Heinrich</p>	<p>Together in his stomach rattle loose; You find them perfect next day to produce:</p>
<p>used, “Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for the joust!”</p>	<p>Together in his stomach rattle loose; You find them perfect next day to produce:</p>
<p>“—When Constance, for his couplets, would promote</p>	<p>Together in his stomach rattle loose; You find them perfect next day to produce:</p>
<p>“Alcamo, from a parti-coloured coat, “To holding her lord’s stirrup in the wars.</p>	<p>Together in his stomach rattle loose; You find them perfect next day to produce:</p>
<p>“Not that I see where couplet-making jars</p>	<p>Together in his stomach rattle loose; You find them perfect next day to produce:</p>

¹ One of the automata sent by Haroun-al-Raschid to Charlemagne.

But ne'er expect the man, on strength of that,
 Can roll an iron camel-collar fiat
 Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what was
 stored
 Bit by bit through Sordello's life, outpoured
 That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing :
 And round those three the People formed a
 ring,
 Of visionary judges whose award
 He recognized in full—faces that barred
 Henceforth return to the old careless life,
 In whose great presence, therefore, his first
 strife
 For their sake must not be ignobly fought ;
 All these, for once, approved of him, he
 thought,
 Suspended their own vengeance, chose await
 The issue of this strife to reinstate
 Them in the right of taking it—in fact
 He must be proved king ere they could exact
 Vengeance for such king's defalcation. Last,
 A reason why the phrases flowed so fast
 Was in his quite forgetting for a time
 Himself in his amazement that the rhyme
 Disguised the royalty so much : he there—
 And Salinguerra yet all-unaware
 Who was the lord, who liegeman !
 " Thus I lay
 " On thine my spirit and compel obey
 " His lord,—my liegeman,—impotent to
 build
 " Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled
 " In what such builder should have been, as
 brook
 " One shame beyond the charge that I forsook
 " His function ! Free me from that shame, I
 bend
 " A brow before, suppose new years to
 spend,—
 " Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly, recur—
 " Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, demur
 " At any crowd he claims ! That I must cede
 " Shamed now, my right to my especial
 meed—
 " Confess thee fitter help the world than I
 " Ordained its champion from eternity,
 " Is much : but to behold thee scorn the post
 " I quit in thy behalf—to hear thee boast

" What makes my own despair ! " And while
 he rung
 The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung,
 The sad walls of the presence-chamber died
 Into the distance, or embowering vied
 With far-away Goito's vine-frontier ;
 And crowds of faces—(only keeping clear
 The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground
 To fight their battle from)—deep clustered
 round
 Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,
 Kind prayers for him no vapour, since, come
 death
 Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint,
 Each bone new-marrowed as whom gods
 anoint
 Though mortal to their rescue. Now let
 sprawl
 The snaky volumes hither ! Is Typhon all
 For Hercules to trample—good report
 From Salinguerra only to extort ?
 " So was I " (closed he his inculcating
 A poet must be earth's essential king)
 " So was I, royal so, and if I fail,
 " 'Tis not the royalty, ye witness quail,
 " But one deposed who, caring not exert
 " Its proper essence, trifled malapert
 " With accidents instead—good things as-
 signed
 " As heralds of a better thing behind—
 " And, worthy through display of these, put
 forth
 " Never the inmost all-surpassing worth
 " That constitutes him king precisely since
 " As yet no other spirit may evince
 " Its like : the power he took most pride to test,
 " Whereby all forms of life had been professed
 " At pleasure, forms already on the earth,
 " Was but a means to power beyond, whose
 birth
 " Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof.
 " Now, whether he came near or kept aloof
 " The several forms he longed to imitate,
 " Not there the kingship lay, he sees too late.
 " Those forms, unalterable first as last,
 " Proved him her copier, not the protoplast
 " Of nature : what would come of being free,
 " By action to exhibit tree for tree,

- "Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or prove
 earth bore
 "One veritable man or woman more?
 "Means to an end, such proofs are: what the
 end?
 "Let essence, whatso'er it be, extend—
 "Never contract. Already you include
 "The multitude; then let the multitude
 "Include yourself; and the result were new:
 "Themselves before, the multitude turn you.
 "This were to live and move and have, in
 them,
 "Your being, and secure a diadem
 "You should transmit (because no cycle
 yearns
 "Beyond itself, but on itself returns)
 "When, the full sphere in wane, the world
 o'erlaid
 "Long since with you, shall have in turn
 obeyed
 "Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still
 "More potent than the last, of human will,
 "And some new king depose the old. Of such
 "Am I—whom pride of this elates too much?
 "Safe, rather say, 'mid troops of peers again;
 "I, with my words, hailed brother of the train
 "Deeds once sufficed: for, let the world roll
 back,
 "Who fails, through deeds howe'er diverse,
 retrack
 "My purpose still, my task? A teeming
 crust—
 "Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict! Then,
 needs must
 "Emerge some Calm embodied, these refer
 "The brawl to—yellow-bearded Jupiter?
 "No! Saturn; some existence like a pact
 "And protest against Chaos, some first fact
 "I' the faint of time. My deep of life, I know,
 "Is unavailing e'en to poorly show" . . .
 (For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)
 . . . "Deeds in their due gradation till
 Song dawned—
 "The fullest effluence of the finest mind,
 "All in degree, no way diverse in kind
 "From minds about it, minds which, more or
 less,
 "Lofty or low, move seeking to impress
- "Themselves on somewhat; but one mind
 has climbed
 "Step after step, by just ascent sublimed.
 "Thought is the soul of act, and, stage by
 stage,
 "Soul is from body still to disengage
 "As tending to a freedom which rejects
 "Such help and incorporeally affects
 "The world, producing deeds but not by
 deeds,
 "Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,
 "Assigning them the simpler tasks it used
 "To patiently perform till Song produced
 "Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind: divest
 "Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's un-
 expressed
 "Will draws above us! All then is to win
 "Save that. How much for me, then? where
 begin
 "My work? About me, faces! and they
 flock,
 "The earnest faces. What shall I unlock
 "By song? behold me prompt, whate'er it be,
 "To minister: how much can mortals see
 "Of Life? No more than so? I take the task
 "And marshal you Life's elemental masque,
 "Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress,
 "This light, this shade make prominent,
 suppress
 "All ordinary hues that softening blend
 "Such natures with the level. Apprehend
 "Which sinner is, which saint, if I allot
 "Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, a blaze or blot,
 "To those you doubt concerning! I enwomb
 "Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot
 tomb;
 "Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph
 "With the black chastening river I engulph!
 "Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine
 "With languors of the planet of decline—
 "These, fail to recognize, to arbitrate
 "Between henceforth, to rightly estimate
 "Thus marshalled in the masque! Myself,
 the while,
 "As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile
 "At my own showing! Next age—what's
 to do?
 "The men and women stationed hitherto

"Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct
 "Each nature to its farthest, or obstruct
 "At soonest, in the world: light, thwarted,
 breaks
 "A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,
 "Or shadow, massed, freezes to gloom:
 behold
 "How such, with fit assistance to unfold,
 "Or obstacles to crush them, disengage
 "Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace
 make, war wage,
 "In presence of you all! Myself, implied
 "Superior now, as, by the platform's side,
 "I bade them do and suffer,—would last
 content
 "The world . . . no—that's too far! I
 circumvent
 "A few, my masque contented, and to these
 "Offer unveil the last of mysteries—
 "Man's inmost life shall have yet freer
 play:
 "Once more I cast external things away,
 "And natures composite, so decompose
 "That" . . . Why, he writes *Sordello!*
 "How I rose,
 "And how have you advanced! since ever-
 more
 "Yourselves effect what I was fain before
 "Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,
 "What I leave bare yourselves can now in-
 vest.
 "How we attain to talk as brothers talk,
 "In half-words, call things by half-names,
 no balk
 "From discontinuing old aids. To-day
 "Takes in account the work of Yesterday:
 "It has not the world a Past now, its adept
 "Consults ere he dispense with or accept
 "New aids? a single touch more may en-
 hance,
 "A touch less turn to insignificance
 "Those structures' symmetry the past has
 strewed
 "The world with, once so bare. Leave the
 mere rude
 "Explicit details! 'tis but brother's speech
 "We need, speech where an accent's change
 gives each

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"The other's soul—no speech to understand
 "By former audience: need was then to
 expand,
 "Expatriate—hardly were we brothers!
 true—
 "Nor I lament my small remove from you,
 "Nor reconstruct what stands already. Ends
 "Accomplished turn to means: my art
 intends
 "New structure from the ancient: as they
 changed
 "The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged
 "The horned and snouted Libyan god,
 upright
 "As in his desert, by some simple bright
 "Clay cinerary pitcher—Thebes as Rome,
 "Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome
 "From earth's reputed consummations razed
 "A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed
 "Above. Ah, whose that fortune? Ne'er-
 theless
 "E'en he must stoop contented to express
 "No tithes of what's to say—the vehicle
 "Never sufficient: but his work is still
 "For faces like the faces that select
 "The single service I am bound effect,—
 "That bid me cast aside such fancies, bow
 "Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow
 "The Kaiser's coming—which with heart,
 soul, strength,
 "I labour for, this eve, who feel at length
 "My past career's outrageous vanity,
 "And would, as its amends, die, even die
 "Now I first estimate the boon of life,
 "If death might win compliance—sure, this
 strife
 "Is right for once—the People my support."
 My poor Sordello! what may we extort
 By this, I wonder? Palma's lighted eyes
 Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise,
 Began, "You love him—what you'd say at
 large
 "Let me say briefly. First, your father's
 charge
 "To me, his friend, peruse: I guessed indeed
 "You were no stranger to the course decreed
 "He bids me leave his children to the saints:
 "As for a certain project, he acquaints

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"The Pope with that, and offers him the best
 "Of your possessions to permit the rest
 "Go peaceably—to Ecelin, a stripe
 "Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,
 "—To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan
 "Clutches already; extricate, who can,
 "Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,
 "Loria and Cartiglione!—all must go,
 "And with them go my hopes. 'Tis lost,
 then! Lost
 "This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost
 "Procuring; thirty years—as good I'd spent
 "Like our admonisher! But each his bent
 "Pursues: no question, one might live absurd
 "Oneself this while, by deed as he by word
 "Persisting to obtrude an influence where
 "'Tis made account of, much as . . . nay,
 you fare
 "With twice the fortune, youngster!—I sub-
 mit,
 "Happy to parallel my waste of wit
 "With the renowned Sordello's: you decide
 "A course for me. Romano may abide
 "Romano,—Bacchus! After all, what dearth
 "Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth?
 "Say there's a prize in prospect, must disgrace
 "Betide competitors, unless they style
 "Themselves Romano? Were it worth my
 while
 "To try my own luck! But an obscure place
 "Suits me—there wants a youth to bustle,
 stalk
 "And attitudinize—some fight, more talk,
 "Most flaunting badges—how, I might make
 clear
 "Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here
 "—Here, pity they are like to lie! For me,
 "With station fixed unceremoniously
 "Long since, small use contesting; I am but
 "The liegeman—you are born the lieges: shut
 "That gentle mouth now! or resume your kin
 "In your sweet self; were Palma Ecelin
 "For me to work with! Could that neck
 endure
 "This bauble for a cumbrous garniture,
 "She should . . . or might one bear it for
 her? Stay—
 "I have not been so flattered many a day

"As by your pale friend—Bacchus! The
 least help
 "Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's whelp:
 "His neck is broad enough—a ready tongue
 "Beside: too writhled—but, the main thing,
 young—
 "I could . . . why, look ye!"
 And the badge was thrown
 Across Sordello's neck: "This badge alone
 "Makes you Romano's Head—becomes
 superb
 "On your bare neck, which would, on mine,
 disturb
 "The pauldron," said Taurello. A mad act,
 Nor even dreamed about before—in fact,
 Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce—
 But he had dallied overmuch, this once,
 With power: the thing was done, and he,
 aware
 The thing was done, proceeded to declare—
 (So like a nature made to serve, excel
 In serving, only feel by service well!)
 —That he would make Sordello that and more.
 "As good a scheme as any. What's to pore
 "At in my face?" he asked—"ponder it stead
 "This piece of news; you are Romano's
 Head!
 "One cannot slacken pace so near the goal,
 "Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole
 "This time! For you there's Palma to
 espouse—
 "For me, one crowning trouble ere I house
 "Like my compeer."
 On which ensued a strange
 And solemn visitation; there came change
 O'er every one of them; each looked on each:
 Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech.
 And when the giddiness sank and the haze
 Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,
 Sordello with the baldrick on, his sire
 Silent, though his proportions seemed aspire
 Momently; and, interpreting the thrill,—
 Night at its ebb,—Palma was found there still
 Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed
 A year ago, while dying on her breast,—
 Of a contrivance, that Vicenza night
 When Ecelin had birth. "Their convoy's
 flight,

"Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame
 "That wallowed like a dragon at his game
 "The toppling city through—San Biagio
 rocks!
 "And wounded lies in her delicious locks
 "Retrude, the frail mother, on her face,
 "None of her wasted, just in one embrace
 "Covering her child: when, as they lifted
 her,
 "Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier
 "And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke,
 "Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the
 smoke,
 "Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward—
 drown
 "His colleague Ecelin's clamour, up and
 down
 "The disarray: failed Adelaide see then
 "Who was the natural chief, the man of men?
 "Outstripping time, her infant there burst
 swathe,
 "Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the
 scathe
 "From wandering after his heritage
 "Lost once and lost for aye: and why that
 rage,
 "That deprecating glance? A new shape
 leant
 "On a familiar shape—gloatingly bent
 "O'er his discomfiture; 'mid wreaths it wore,
 "Still one outflamed the rest—her child's
 before
 "'Twas Salinguerra's for his child: scorn,
 hate,
 "Rage now might startle her when all too late!
 "Then was the moment!—rival's foot had
 spurned
 "Never that House to earth else! Sense
 returned—
 "The act conceived, adventured and com-
 plete,
 "They bore away to an obscure retreat
 "Mother and child—Retrude's self not slain"
 (Nor even here Taurello moved) "though pain
 "Was fled; and what assured them most
 'twas fled,
 "All pain, was, if they raised the pale hushed
 head

"'Twould turn this way and that, waver
 awhile,
 "And only settle into its old smile—
 "(Graceful as the disquieted water-flag
 "Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag
 "On either side their path)—when suffered
 look
 "Down on her child. They marched: no
 sign once shook
 "The company's close litter of crossed spears
 "Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears
 "Slipped in the sunset from her long black
 lash,
 "And she was gone. So far the action rash;
 "No crime. They laid Retrude in the font,
 "Taurello's very gift, her child was wont
 "To sit beneath—constant as eve he came
 "To sit by its attendant girls the same
 "As one of them. For Palma, she would
 blend
 "With this magnific spirit to the end,
 "That ruled her first; but scarcely had she
 dared
 "To disobey the Adelaide who scared
 "Her into vowing never to disclose
 "A secret to her husband, which so froze
 "His blood at half-recital, she contrived
 "To hide from him Taurello's infant lived,
 "Lest, by revealing that, himself should
 mar
 "Romano's fortunes. And, a crime so far,
 "Palma received that action: she was told
 "Of Salinguerra's nature, of his cold
 "Calm acquiescence in his lot! But free
 "To impart the secret to Romano, she
 "Engaged to repossess Sordello of
 "His heritage, and hers, and that way doff
 "The mask, but after years, long years:
 while now,
 "Was not Romano's sign-mark on that brow?"
 Across Taurello's heart his arms were
 locked:
 And when he did speak 'twas as if he mocked
 The minstrel, "who had not to move," he
 said,
 "Nor stir—should fate defraud him of a shred
 "Of his son's infancy? much less his youth!"
 (Laughingly all this)—"which to aid, in truth,

"Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown

"Old, not too old—'twas best they kept alone
"Till now, and never idly met till now ;"

—Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how

All intimations of this eve's event
Were lies, for Friedrich must advance to Trent,
Thence to Verona, then to Rome, there stop,
Tumble the Church down, institute a-top
The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy :

—"That's now ! — no prophesying what may be

"Anon, with a new monarch of the clime,

"Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime

"At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide

"On whom . . ."

"Embrace him, madman !" Palma cried,
Who through the laugh saw sweat-drops burst apace,

And his lips blanching : he did not embrace
Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand
On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.

Understand,

This while Sordello was becoming flushed
Out of his whiteness ; thoughts rushed, fancies
rushed ;

He pressed his hand upon his head and signed
Both should forbear him. "Nay, the best's
behind !"

Taurello laughed—not quite with the same
laugh :

"The truth is, thus we scatter, ay, like
chaff

"These Guelfs, a despicable monk recoils

"From : nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils

"Our triumph !—Friedrich ? Think you,
I intend

"Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I
spend

"And brain I waste ? Think you, the people
clap

"Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap

"For any Friedrich to fill up ? 'Tis mine—

"That's yours : I tell you, towards some
such design

"Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,

"And for another, yes—but worked no less

"With instinct at my heart ; I else had
swerved,

"While now—look round ! My cunning has
preserved

"Samminiato—that's a central place

"Secures us Florence, boy,—in Pisa's case.

"By land as she by sea ; with Pisa ours,

"And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours

"The land at leisure ! Gloriously dispersed—

"Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first

"That flanked us (ah, you know not !) in the
March ;

"On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,

"Romagna and Bologna, whose first span

"Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan ;

"Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure !" . . .

So he proceeded : half of all this, pure
Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,
But what was undone he felt sure to do,
As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away
The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm
play—

Need of the sword now ! That would soon
adjust

Aught wrong at present ; to the sword in-
trust

Sordello's whiteness, undersize : 'twas plain

He hardly rendered right to his own brain—

Like a brave hound, men educate to pride

Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,

As though he could not, gift by gift, match
men !

Palma had listened patiently : but when

'Twas time expostulate, attempt withdraw

Taurello from his child, she, without awe

Took off his iron arms from, one by one,
Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that
done,

Made him avert his visage and relieve

Sordello (you might see his corslet heave

The while) who, loose, rose—tried to speak,
then sank :

They left him in the chamber. All was blank.

And even reeling down the narrow stair

Taurello kept up, as though unaware

Palma was by to guide him, the old device

—Something of Milan—"how we muster
thrice

"The Torriani's strength there; all along
 "Our own Visconti cowed them"—thus the
 song
 Continued even while she bade him stoop,
 Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-
 loop,
 The turnings to the gallery below,
 Where he stopped short as Palma let him go.
 When he had sat in silence long enough
 Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff
 She stopped the truncheon; only to com-
 mence
 One of Sordello's poems, a pretence
 For speaking, some poor rhyme of "Elys' hair
 "And head that's sharp and perfect like a
 pear,
 "So smooth and close are laid the few fine
 locks
 "Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost
 rocks
 "Sun-blanch'd the livelong summer"—from
 his worst
 Performance, the Goito, as his first:
 And that at end, conceiving from the brow
 And open mouth no silence would serve now,
 Went on to say the whole world loved that
 man
 And, for that matter, thought his face, tho'
 wan,
 Eclipsed the Count's—he sucking in each
 phrase
 As if an angel spoke. The foolish praise
 Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees,
 made
 Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,
 A crown, an aureole: there must she remain
 (Her little mouth compressed with smiling
 pain
 As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)
 To get the best look at, in fittest niche
 Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed her
 brow,
 —"Lauded her father for his treason now,"
 He told her, "only, how could one suspect
 "The wit in him?—whose clansman, re-
 collect,
 "Was ever Salinguerra—she, the same,
 "Romano and his lady—so, might claim

"To know all, as she should"—and thus
 begun
 Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on
 schemes, "not one
 "Fit to be told that foolish boy," he said,
 "But only let Sordello Palma wed,
 "—Then!"
 'Twas a dim long narrow place at best:
 Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West,
 As shows its corpse the world's end some
 split tomb—
 A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom,
 Faced Palma—but at length Taurello set
 Her free; the grating held one ragged jet
 Of fierce gold fire: he lifted her within
 The hollow underneath—how else begin
 Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew
 The ages than with Palma plain in view?
 Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head
 erect,
 Pursuing his discourse; a grand unchecked
 Monotony made out from his quick talk
 And the recurring noises of his walk;
 —Somewhat too much like the o'ercharged
 assent
 Of two resolved friends in one danger blent,
 Who hearten each the other against heart;
 Boasting there's nought to care for, when,
 apart
 The boaster, all's to care for. He, beside
 Some shape not visible, in power and pride
 Approached, out of the dark, ginglyly near,
 Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear
 Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-
 fraught,
 Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,
 And on he strode into the opposite dark,
 Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark
 I' the stone, and whirl of some loose em-
 bossed thong
 That crashed against the angle aye so long
 After the last, punctual to an amount
 Of mailed great paces you could not but
 count,—
 Prepared you for the pacing back again.
 And by the snatches you might ascertain
 That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left
 By this alone in Italy, they left

Asunder, crushed together, at command
Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,
Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne—
But garnished, Strength with Knowledge,
“if we deign

“Accept that compromise and stoop to give
“Rome law, the Cæsar’s Representative.”
Enough, that the illimitable flood
Of triumphs after triumphs, understood
In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed
Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed
Him on till, these long quiet in their graves,
He found ’twas looked for that a whole life’s
braves
Should somehow be made good; so, weak
and worn,

Must stagger up at Milan, one grey morn
Of the to-come, and fight his latest fight.
But, Salinguerra’s prophecy at height—
He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,
A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if
He had our very Italy to keep
Or cast away, or gather in a heap
To garrison the better—ay, his word
Was, “run the cucumber into a gourd,
“Drive Trent upon Apulia”—at their pitch
Who spied the continents and islands which
Grew mulberry leaves and sickles, in the
map—

(Strange that three such confessions so should
hap

To Palma, Dante spoke with in the clear
Amorous silence of the swooning-sphere,—
Cunizza, as he called her! Never ask
Of Palma more! She sat, knowing her task
Was done, the labour of it,—for, success
Concerned not Palma, passion’s votaress.)
Triumph at height, and thus Sordello
crowned—

Above the passage suddenly a sound
Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks
Taurello, bids

With large involuntary asking lids,
Palma interpret. “’Tis his own foot-stamp—
“Your hand! His summons! Nay, this
idle damp

“Befits not!” Out they two reeled dizzily.
“Visconti’s strong at Milan,” resumed he,

In the old, somewhat insignificant way—
(Was Palma wont, years afterward, to say)
As though the spirit’s flight, sustained thus far,
Dropped at that very instant.

Gone they are—

Palma, Taurello; Eglamor anon,
Ecelin,—only Naddo’s never gone!
—Labours, this moonrise, what the Master
meant:

“Is Squarcialupo speckled?—purulent,
“I’d say, but when was Providence put out?
“He carries somehow handily about
“His spite nor fouls himself!” Goito’s vines
Stand like a cheat detected—stark rough
lines,

The moon breaks through, a grey mean scale
against

The vault where, this eve’s Maiden, thou
remain’st

Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed—who can
tell?

As Heaven, now all’s at end, did not so well,
Spite of the faith and victory, to leave
Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve.

While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha! wait
No longer: these in compass, forward fate!

BOOK THE SIXTH.

THE thought of Eglamor’s least like a
thought,

And yet a false one, was, “Man shrinks to
nought

“If matched with symbols of immensity;
“Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky

“Or sea, too little for their quietude:”
And, truly, somewhat in Sordello’s mood
Confirmed its speciousness, while eve slow
sank

Down the near terrace to the farther bank,
And only one spot left from out the night
Glimmered upon the river opposite—

A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray,
And star for star, one richness where they
mixed

As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,

Tumultuous splendours folded in
 To die. Nor turned he till Ferrara's din
 (Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip
 Who lets some first and eager purpose slip
 In a new fancy's birth—the speech keeps on
 Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone)
 —Aroused him, surely offered succour. Fate
 Paused with this eve; ere she precipitate
 Herself,—best put off new strange thoughts
 awhile,
 That voice, those large hands, that portentous
 smile,—
 What help to pierce the future as the past
 Lay in the plaining city?
 And at last
 The main discovery and prime concern,
 All that just now imported him to learn,
 Truth's self, like yonder slow moon to complete
 Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his feet,
 Lighted his old life's every shift and change,
 Effort with counter-effort; nor the range
 Of each looked wrong except wherein it
 checked,
 Some other—which of these could he suspect,
 Prying into them by the sudden blaze?
 The real way seemed made up of all the ways—
 Mood after mood of the one mind in him;
 Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,
 Of a transcendent all-embracing sense
 Demanding only outward influence,
 A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,
 Power to uplift his power,—such moon's
 control
 Over such sea-depths,—and their mass had
 swept
 Onward from the beginning and still kept
 Its course: but years and years the sky above
 Held none, and so, untasked of any love,
 His sensitiveness idled, now amorphous,
 Alive now, and, to sullenness or sport
 Given wholly up, disposed itself anew
 At every passing instigation, grew
 And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers
 spilt,
 Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt
 Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race
 Of whitest ripples o'er the reef—found place

For much display; not gathered up and,
 hurled
 Right from its heart, encompassing the world.
 So had Sordello been, by consequence,
 Without a function: others made pretence
 To strength not half his own, yet had some
 core
 Within, submitted to some moon, before
 Them still, superior still whate'er their
 force,—
 Were able therefore to fulfil a course,
 Nor missed life's crown, authentic attribute.
 To each who lives must be a certain fruit
 Of having lived in his degree,—a stage,
 Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,
 To stop at; and to this the spirits tend
 Who, still discovering beauty without end,
 Amass the scintillations, make one star
 —Something unlike them, self-sustained,
 afar,—
 And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest
 By winning it to notice and invest
 Their souls with alien glory, some one day
 Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape alway,
 Round to the perfect circle—soon or late,
 According as themselves are formed to wait;
 Whether mere human beauty will suffice
 —The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,
 Or human intellect seem best, or each
 Combine in some ideal form past reach
 On earth, or else some shade of these, some
 aim,
 Some love, hate even, take their place, the
 same,
 So to be served—all this they do not lose,
 Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose
 What must be Hell—a progress thus pursued
 Through all existence, still above the food
 That's offered them, still fain to reach beyond
 The widened range, in virtue of their bond
 Of sovereignty. Not that a Palma's Love,
 A Salinguerra's Hate, would equal prove
 To swaying all Sordello: but why doubt
 Some love meet for such strength, some moon
 without
 Would match his sea?—or fear, Good mani-
 fest,
 Only the Best breaks faith?—Ah but the Best

Somehow eludes us ever, still might be
 And is not! Crave we gems? No penury
 Of their material round us! Pliant earth
 And plastic flame—what balks the mage his
 birth
 —Jacinth in balls or lodestone by the block?
 Flinders enrich the strand, veins swell the
 rock;
 Nought more! Seek creatures? Life's i'
 the tempest, thought
 Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods
 are fraught
 With fervours: human forms are well enough!
 But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff
 Profuse at nature's pleasure, men beyond
 These actual men!—and thus are over-fond
 In arguing, from Good—the Best, from force
 Divided—force combined, an ocean's course
 From this our sea whose mere intestine pants
 Might seem at times sufficient to our wants.
 External power! If none be adequate,
 And he stand forth ordained (a prouder fate)
 Himself a law to his own sphere? "Remove
 "All incompleteness!" for that law, that love?
 Nay, if all other laws be feints,—truth veiled
 Helpfully to weak vision that had failed
 To grasp aught but its special want,—for lure,
 Embodied? Stronger vision could endure
 The unbodied want: no part—the whole of
 truth!
 The People were himself; nor, by the ruth
 At their condition, was he less impelled
 To alter the discrepancy beheld,
 Than if, from the sound whole, a sickly part
 Subtracted were transformed, decked out
 with art,
 Then palmed on him as alien woe—the Guelf
 To succour, proud that he forsook himself.
 All is himself; all service, therefore, rates
 Alike, nor serving one part, immolates
 The rest: but all in time! "That lance of
 yours
 "Makes havoc soon with Malek and his
 Moors,
 "That buckler's lined with many a giant's
 beard
 "Ere long, our champion, be the lance up-
 reared,

"The buckler wielded handsomely as now!
 "But view your escort, bear in mind your
 vow,
 "Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere
 that,
 "And, if you hope we struggle through the
 flat,
 "Put lance and buckler by! Next half-
 month lacks
 "Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe
 "To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-pear
 "Which bristling holds Cydippe by the hair,
 "Lames barefoot Agathon: this felled, we'll
 try
 "The picturesque achievements by and by—
 "Next life!"

Ay, rally, mock, O People, urge
 Your claims!—for thus he ventured, to the
 verge,
 Push a vain mummery which perchance dis-
 trust

Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust
 Likewise: accordingly the Crowd—(as yet
 He had unconsciously contrived forget
 I' the whole, to dwell o' the points . . . one
 might assuage

The signal horrors easier than engage
 With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief
 Not to be fancied off, nor gained relief
 In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,
 But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work
 To correspond . . .) this Crowd then, forth
 they stood.

"And now content thy stronger vision, brood
 "On thy bare want; uncovered, turf by turf,
 "Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-worms'
 scurf!"

Down sank the People's Then; uprose
 their Now.

These sad ones render service to! And how
 Piteously little must that service prove
 —Had surely proved in any case! for, move
 Each other obstacle away, let youth
 Become aware it had surprised a truth
 'Twere service to impart—can truth be seized,
 Settled forthwith, and, of the captive eased,
 Its captor find fresh prey, since this alit
 So happily, no guesure luring it,

The earnest of a flock to follow? Vain,
Most vain! a life to spend ere this he chain
To the poor crowd's complacence: ere the
crowd

Pronounce it captured, he descries a cloud
Its kin of twice the plume; which he, in turn,
If he shall live as many lives, may learn
How to secure: not else. Then Mantua
called

Back to his mind how certain bards were
thrall'd

—Buds blasted, but of breath more like
perfume

Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion
bloom;

Some insane rose that burnt heart out in
sweets,

A spendthrift in the spring, no summer greets;
Some Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,
Grown bestial, dreaming how become divine.
Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence
With the commencement, merits crowning!

Hence

Must truth be casual truth, elicited
In sparks so mean, at intervals dispread
So rarely, that 'tis like at no one time
Of the world's story has not truth, the prime
Of truth, the very truth which, loosed, had
hurled

The world's course right, been really in the
world

—Content the while with some mean spark
by dint

Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint
Of buried fire, which, rip earth's breast,
would stream

Sky-ward!

Sordello's miserable gleam

Was looked for at the moment: he would dash
This badge, and all it brought, to earth,—
abash

Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest
The Kaiser from his purpose,—would attest
His own belief, in any case. Before

He dashes it however, think once more!
For, were that little, truly service? "Ay,
"I' the end, no doubt; but meantime?
Plain you spy

"Its ultimate effect, but many flaws

"Of vision blur each intervening cause.

"Were the day's fraction clear as the life's
sum

"Of service, Now as filled as teems To-come

"With evidence of good—nor too minute

"A share to vie with evil! No dispute,

"'Twere fittest maintain the Guelfs in rule:

"That makes your life's work: but you
have to school

"Your day's work on these natures circum-
stanced

"Thus variously, which yet, as each
advanced

"Or might impede the Guelf rule, must be
moved

"Now, for the Then's sake,—hating what
you loved,

"Loving old hatreds! Nor if one man bore

"Brand upon temples while his fellow wore

"The aureole, would it task you to decide:

"But, portioned duly out, the future vied

"Never with the unparcelled present! Smite

"Or spare so much on warrant all so slight?

"The present's complete sympathies to break,

"Aversions bear with, for a future's sake

"So feeble? Tito ruined through one speck,

"The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck?

"This were work, true, but work performed
at cost

"Of other work; aught gained here, else-
where lost.

"For a new segment spoil an orb half-done?

"Rise with the People one step, and sink—
one?

"Were it but one step, less than the whole face

"Of things, your novel duty bids erase!

"Harms to abolish! What, the prophet
saith,

"The minstrel singeth vainly then? Old
faith,

"Old courage, only born because of harms,

"Were not, from highest to the lowest,
charms?

"Flame may persist; but is not glare as
staunch?

"Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals
branch;

- "Blood dries to crimson; Evil's beautified
 "In every shape. Thrust Beauty then aside
 "And banish Evil! Wherefore? After all,
 "Is Evil a result less natural
 "Than Good? For overlook the seasons'
 strife
 "With tree and flower,—the hideous animal
 life,
 "(Of which who seeks shall find a grinning
 taunt
 "For his solution, and endure the vaunt
 "Of nature's angel, as a child that knows
 "Himself befooled, unable to propose
 "Aught better than the fooling)—and but
 care
 "For men, for the mere People then and
 there,—
 "In these, could you but see that Good and
 Ill
 "Claimed you alike! Whence rose their
 claim but still
 "From Ill, as fruit of Ill? What else could
 knit
 "You theirs but Sorrow? Any free from it
 "Were also free from you! Whose happiness
 "Could be distinguished in this morning's
 press
 "Of miseries?—the fool's who passed a gibe
 "On thee,' jeered he, 'so wedded to thy
 tribe,
 "'Thou carriest green and yellow tokens in
 "'Thy very face that thou art Ghibellin!'
 "Much hold on you that fool obtained!
 Nay mount
 "Yet higher—and upon men's own account
 "Must Evil stay: for, what is joy?—to heave
 "Upon obstruction more, and common leave
 "What was peculiar, by such act destroy
 "Itself; a partial death is every joy;
 "The sensible escape, enfranchisement
 "Of a sphere's essence: once the vexed—
 content,
 "The cramped—at large, the growing circle
 —round,
 "All's to begin again—some novel bound
 "To break, some new enlargement to treat;
 "The sphere though larger is not more
 complete.
- "Now for Mankind's experience: who alone
 "Might style the unobstructed world his
 own?
 "Whom palled Goito with its perfect things?
 "Sordello's self: whereas for Mankind
 springs
 "Salvation by each hindrance interposed.
 "They climb; life's view is not at once dis-
 closed
 "To creatures caught up, on the summit left,
 "Heaven plain above them, yet of wings
 bereft:
 "But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot.
 "So, range on range, the girdling forests
 shoot
 "'Twixt your plain prospect and the throngs
 who scale
 "Height after height, and pierce mists, veil
 by veil,
 "Heartened with each discovery; in their
 soul,
 "The Whole they seek by Parts—but, found
 that Whole,
 "Could they revert, enjoy past gains? The
 space
 "Of time you judge so meagre to embrace
 "The Parts were more than plenty, once
 attained
 "The Whole, to quite exhaust it: nought
 were gained
 "But leave to look—not leave to do: Be-
 neath
 "Soon sates the looker—look Above, and
 Death
 "Tempt ere a tith of Life be tasted. Live
 "First, and die soon enough, Sordello!
 Give
 "Body and spirit the first right they claim,
 "And pasture soul on a voluptuous shame
 "That you, a pageant-city's denizen,
 "Are neither vilely lodged midst Lombard
 men—
 "Can force joy out of sorrow, seem to
 truck
 "Bright attributes away for sordid muck,
 "Yet manage from that very muck educe
 "Gold; then subject, nor scruple, to your
 cruce

"The world's discardings! Though real
 ingots pay
 "Your pains, the clods that yielded them are
 clay
 "To all beside,—would clay remain, though
 quenched
 "Your purging-fire; who's robbed then?
 Had you wrenched
 "An ampler treasure forth!—As 'tis, they
 crave
 "A share that ruins you and will not save
 "Them. Why should sympathy command
 you quit
 "The course that makes your joy, nor will
 remit
 "Their woe? Would all arrive at joy?
 Reverse
 "The order (time instructs you) nor coerce
 "Each unit till, some predetermined mode,
 "The total be emancipate; men's road
 "Is one, men's times of travel many; thwart
 "No enterprising soul's precocious start
 "Before the general march! If slow or fast
 "All straggle up to the same point at last,
 "Why grudge your having gained, a month
 ago,
 "The brakes at balm-shed,¹ asphodels in
 blow,
 "While they were landlocked? Speed their
 Then, but how
 "This badge would suffer you improve your
 Now!"
 His time of action for, against, or with
 Our world (I labour to extract the pith
 Of this his problem) grew, that even-tide,
 Gigantic with its power of joy, beside
 The world's eternity of impotence
 To profit though at his whole joy's expense.
 "Make nothing of my day because so brief?
 "Rather make more: instead of joy, use
 grief
 "Before its novelty have time subside!
 "Wait not for the late savour, leave untried
 "Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick
 squeeze
 "Vice like a biting spirit from the lees

¹ Gums exuding from brushwood.

"Of life! Together let wrath, hatred, lust,
 "All tyrannies in every shape, be thrust
 "Upon this Now, which time may reason out
 "As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt;
 "But long ere then Sordello will have slept
 "Away; you teach him at Goito's crypt,
 "There's a blank issue to that fiery thrill.
 "Stirring, the few cope with the many, still:
 "So much of sand as, quiet, makes a mass
 "Unable to produce three tufts of grass,
 "Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render
 void
 "The whole calm glebe's endeavour: be
 employed!
 "And e'en though somewhat smart the
 Crowd for this,
 "Contribute each his pang to make your bliss,
 "'Tis but one pang—one blood-drop to the
 bowl
 "Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp
 uncowl
 "At last, stains ruddily the dull red cape,
 "And, kindling orbs grey as the unripe grape
 "Before, avails forthwith to disenfranchise
 "The portent, soon to lead a mystic dance
 "Among you! For, who sits alone in Rome?
 "Have those great hands indeed hewn out a
 home,
 "And set me there to live? Oh life, life-
 breath,
 "Life-blood,—ere sleep, come travail, life
 ere death!
 "This life stream on my soul, direct, oblique,
 "But always streaming! Hindrances? They
 pique:
 "Helps? such . . . but why repeat, my
 soul o'ertops
 "Each height, then every depth profoundlier
 drops?
 "Enough that I can live, and would live!
 Wait
 "For some transcendent life reserved by Fate
 "To follow this? Oh, never! Fate, I trust
 "The same, my soul to; for, as who flings
 dust,
 "Perchance (so facile was the deed) she
 chequed
 "The void with these materials to affect

- " My soul diversely : these consigned anew
 " To nought by death, what marvel if she
 threw
 " A second and superb spectacle
 " Before me? What may serve for sun, what
 still
 " Wander a moon above me? What else wind
 " About me like the pleasures left behind,
 " And how shall some new flesh that is not
 flesh
 " Cling to me? What's new laughter?
 Soothes the fresh
 " Sleep like sleep? Fate's exhaustless for
 my sake
 " In brave resource: but whether bids she slake
 " My thirst at this first rivulet, or count
 " No draught worth lip save from some rocky
 fount
 " Above 'j' the clouds, while here she's pro-
 vident
 " Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft tree-tent
 " Guards, with its face of reate and sedge,
 nor fail
 " The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail
 " At bottom? Oh, 'twere too absurd to slight
 " For the hereafter the to-day's delight!
 " Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-
 spring: wear
 " Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair!
 " Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart
 " Offer to serve, contented for my part
 " To give life up in service,—only grant
 " That I do serve; if otherwise, why want
 " Aught further of me? If men cannot choose
 " But set aside life, why should I refuse
 " The gift? I take it—I, for one, engage
 " Never to falter through my pilgrimage—
 " Nor end it howling that the stock or stone
 " Were enviable, truly: I, for one,
 " Will praise the world, you style mere ante-
 room
 " To palace—be it so! shall I assume
 " —My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the
 trope,
 " My mouth the smirk, before the doors fly ope
 " One moment? What? with guards row
 on row,
 " Gay swarms of varley that come and go,
- " Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace
 " The plackets¹ of, pert claimants help dis-
 place,
 " Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for,—laugh
 " At yon sleek parasite, break his own staff
 " 'Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder,
 —why
 " Admitted to the presence by and by,
 " Should thought of having lost these make
 me grieve
 " Among new joys I reach, for joys I leave?
 " Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone,²
 " Are floor-work there! But do I let alone
 " That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule
 " Once and for ever?—Floor-work? No
 such fool!
 " Rather, were heaven to forestall earth, I'd say
 " I, is it, must be blest? Then, my own way
 " Bless me! Give firmer arm and fleetier foot,
 " I'll thank you: but to no mad wings trans-
 mute
 " These limbs of mine—our greensward was
 so soft!
 " Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft:
 " We feel the bliss distinctlier, having thus
 " Engines subservient, not mixed up with us.
 " Better move palpably through heaven: nor,
 freed
 " Of flesh, forsooth, from space to space pro-
 ceed
 " 'Mid flying synods of worlds! No: in
 heaven's marge
 " Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe
 " Solid with stars—the Centaur at his game,
 " Made tremulously out in hoary flame!
 " Life! Yet the very cup whose extreme
 dull
 " Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed,
 at full,
 " Aside so oft; the death I fly, revealed
 " So oft a better life this life concealed,
 " And which sage, champion, martyr, through
 each path
 " Have hunted fearlessly—the horrid bath,
 " The crippling-irons and the fiery chair.
 " 'Twas well for them; let me become aware

¹ Under-petticoats.² Red bronze.

"As they, and I relinquish life, too! Let
 "What masters life disclose itself! Forget
 "Vain ordinances, I have one appeal—
 "I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel;
 "So much is truth to me. What Is, then?
 Since
 "One object, viewed diversely, may evince
 "Beauty and ugliness—this way attract,
 "That way repel,—why gloze upon the fact?
 "Why must a single of the sides be right?
 "What bids choose this and leave the opposite?
 "Where's abstract Right for me?—in youth
 ended
 "With Right still present, still to be pursued,
 "Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife
 "Each with its proper law and mode of life,
 "Each to be dwelt at ease in: where, to
 sway
 "Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey
 "Implicit with his serf of fluttering heart,
 "Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start
 "Up, Brutus in the presence, then go shout
 "That some should pick the unstrung jewels
 out—
 "Each, well!"

And, as in moments when the past
 Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast
 Himself quite through mere secondary states
 Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,
 Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid
 By these; as who should pierce hill, plain,
 grove, glade,
 And on into the very nucleus probe
 That first determined there exist a globe.
 As that were easiest, half the globe dissolved,
 So seemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved
 By his flesh-half's break-up; the sudden
 swell
 Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,
 Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,
 Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,
 All qualities, in fine, recorded here,
 Might be but modes of Time and this one
 sphere,
 Urgent on these, but not of force to bind
 Eternity, as Time—as Matter—Mind,
 If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert
 Their attributes within a Life: thus girt

With circumstance, next change beholds
 them cinct
 Quite otherwise—with Good and Ill distinct,
 Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result—
 Contrived to render easy, difficult,
 This or the other course of . . . what new
 bond
 In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond
 Its new sphere, as that course does harm or
 good
 To its arrangements. Once this understood,
 As suddenly he felt himself alone,
 Quite out of Time and this world: all was
 known.
 What made the secret of his past despair?
 —Most imminent when he seemed most
 aware
 Of his own self-sufficiency: made mad
 By craving to expand the power he had,
 And not new power to be expanded?—just
 This made it; Soul on Matter being thrust,
 Joy comes when so much Soul is wrecked in
 Time
 On Matter: let the Soul's attempt sublime
 Matter beyond the scheme and so prevent
 By more or less that deed's accomplishment,
 And Sorrow follows: Sorrow how avoid?
 Let the employer match the thing employed,
 Fit to the finite his infinity,
 And thus proceed for ever, in degree
 Changed but in kind the same, still limited
 To the appointed circumstance and dead
 To all beyond. A sphere is but a sphere;
 Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy
 here;
 Since to the spirit's absoluteness all
 Are like. Now, of the present sphere we call
 Life, are conditions; take but this among
 Many; the body was to be so long
 Youthful, no longer: but, since no control
 Tied to that body's purposes his soul,
 She chose to understand the body's trade
 More than the body's self—had fain conveyed
 Her boundless to the body's bounded lot.
 Hence, the soul permanent, the body not,—
 Scarcely its minute for enjoying here,—
 The soul must needs instruct her weak
 compeer,

Run o'er its capabilities and wring
 A joy thence, she held worth experiencing :
 Which, far from half discovered even,—lo,
 The minute gone, the body's power let go
 AppORTIONED to that joy's acquirement !

Broke

Morning o'er earth, he yearned for all it
 woke—

From the volcano's vapour-flag, winds hoist
 Black o'er the spread of sea,—down to the
 moist

Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,
 Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again—
 The Small, a sphere as perfect as the Great
 To the soul's absoluteness. Meditate
 Too long on such a morning's cluster-chord
 And the whole music it was framed afford,—
 The chord's might half discovered, what
 should pluck

One string, his finger, was found palsy-struck.
 And then no marvel if the spirit, shown
 A saddest sight—the body lost alone
 Through her officious proffered help, deprived
 Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived,—
 Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip
 hence,—

Vain-gloriously were fain, for recompense,
 To stem the ruin even yet, protract
 The body's term, supply the power it lacked
 From her infinity, compel it learn
 These qualities were only Time's concern,
 And body may, with spirit helping, barred—
 Advance the same, vanquished — obtain
 reward,

Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,
 Of Wrong make Right, and turn Ill Good
 below.

And the result is, the poor body soon
 Sinks under what was meant a wondrous
 boon,

Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.

So much was plain then, proper in the
 past ;

To be complete for, satisfy the whole
 Series of spheres—Eternity, his soul
 Needs must exceed, prove incomplete for, each
 Single sphere—Time. But does our know-
 ledge reach

No farther? Is the cloud of hindrance broke
 But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,
 Its loves and hates, as now when death lets
 soar

Sordello, self-sufficient as before,
 Though during the mere space that shall
 elapse

'Twixt his enthrallment in new bonds perhaps?
 Must life be ever just escaped, which should
 Have been enjoyed?—nay, might have been
 and would,

Each purpose ordered right—the soul's no
 whit

Beyond the body's purpose under it.
 Like yonder breadth of watery heaven, a bay,
 And that sky-space of water, ray for ray
 And star for star, one richness where they
 mixed

As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
 Tumultuary splendours folded in
 To die—would soul, proportioned thus, begin
 Exciting discontent, or surelier quell
 The body if, aspiring, it rebel?
 But how so order life? Still brutalize
 The soul, the sad world's way, with muffled
 eyes

To all that was before, all that shall be
 After this sphere—all and each quality
 Save some sole and immutable Great, Good
 And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its
 hood

To follow? Never may some soul see All
 —The Great Before and After, and the Small
 Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,
 And take the single course prescribed before,
 As the king-bird with ages on his plumes
 Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?

But where descry the Love that shall select
 That course? Here is a soul whom, to affect,
 Nature has plied with all her means, from
 trees

And flowers e'en to the Multitude!—and
 these,

Decides he save or no? One word to end!
 Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend
 And speak for you. Of a Power above you
 still

Which, utterly incomprehensible,

Is out of rivalry, which thus you can
Love, tho' unloving all conceived by man—
What need! And of—none the minutest
duct

To that out-nature, nought that would in-
struct

And so let rivalry begin to live—
But of a Power its representative
Who, being for authority the same,
Communication different, should claim
A course, the first chose but this last re-
vealed—

This Human clear, as that Divine concealed—
What utter need!

What has Sordello found?

Or can his spirit go the mighty round,
End where poor Eglamor begun? So, says
Old fable, the two eagles went two ways
About the world: where, in the midst, they
met,

Though on a shifting waste of sand, men set
Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sordello
found?

For they approach—approach—that foot's
rebound

Palma? No, Salinguerra though in mail;
They mount, have reached the threshold,
dash the veil

Aside—and you divine who sat there dead,
Under his foot the badge: still, Palma said,
A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,
Wider than some spent swimmer's if he
spies

Help from above in his extreme despair,
And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns
there

With short quick passionate cry: as Palma
pressed

In one great kiss, her lips upon his breast,
It beat.

By this, the hermit-bee has stopped
His day's toil at Goito: the new-cropped
Dead vine-leaf answers, now 'tis eve, he bit,
Twirled so, and filed all day: the mansion's
fit,

God counselled for. As easy guess the word
That passed betwixt them, and become the
third

To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax
Him with one fault—so, no remembrance racks
Of the stone maidens and the font of stone
He, creeping through the crevice, leaves
alone.

Alas, my friend, alas Sordello, whom
Anon they laid within that old font-tomb,
And, yet again, alas!

And now is't worth
Our while bring back to mind, much less set
forth

How Salinguerra extricates himself
Without Sordello? Ghibellin and Guef
May fight their fiercest out? If Richard
sulked

In durance or the Marquis paid his mulct,
Who cares, Sordello gone? The upshot, sure,
Was peace; our chief made some frank over-
ture

That prospered; compliment fell thick and
fast

On its disposer, and Taurello passed
With foe and friend for an outstripping soul,
Nine days at least. Then,—fairly reached
the goal,—

He, by one effort, blotted the great hope
Out of his mind, nor further tried to cope
With Este, that mad evening's style, but sent
Away the Legate and the League, content
No blame at least the brothers had incurred,
—Dispatched a message to the Monk, he
heard

Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,
Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat
And ne'er spoke more,—informed the
Ferrarese

He but retained their rule so long as these
Lingered in pupillage,—and last, no mode
Apparent else of keeping safe the road
From Germany direct to Lombardy
For Friedrich,—none, that is, to guarantee
The faith and promptitude of who should next
Obtain Sofia's dowry,—sore perplexed—
(Sofia being youngest of the tribe
Of daughters, Ecelin was wont to bribe
The envious magnates with—nor, since he
sent

Henry of Egna this fair child, had Trent

Once failed the Kaiser's purposes—"we lost
"Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post—
"Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich
knock?"

Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock
In pure necessity, and, so destroyed
His slender last of chances, quite made void
Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes
Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's
dreams,

Was sucked into Romano. And so hushed
He up this evening's work that, when 'twas
brushed

Somehow against by a blind chronicle
Which, chronicling whatever woe befell
Ferrara, noted this the obscure woe
Of "Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo
"Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his sire,"
The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could but
admire
Which of Sofia's five was meant.

The chaps
Of earth's dead hope were tardy to collapse,
Obliterated not the beautiful
Distinctive features at a crash: but dull
And duller these, next year, as Guelfs with-
drew

Each to his stronghold. Then (securely too
Ecelin at Campese slept; close by,
Who likes may see him in Solagna lie,
With cushioned head and gloved hand to
denote

The cavalier he was)—then his heart smote
Young Ecelin at last; long since adult.
And, save Vicenza's business, what result
In blood and blaze? (So hard to intercept
Sordello till his plain withdrawal!) Stepped
Then its new lord on Lombardy. 'T the nick
Of time when Ecelin and Alberic
Closed with Taurello, come precisely news
That in Verona half the souls refuse
Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count—
Have cast them from a throne they bid him
mount,

Their Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth.
Ecelin flew there, and the town henceforth
Was wholly his—Taurello sinking back
From temporary station to a track

That suited. News received of this acquit,
Friedrich did come to Lombardy: who
missed

Taurello then? Another year: they took
Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook
For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three
Of Guelfs conspired to call themselves "The
Free,"

Opposing Alberic,—vile Bassanese,—
(Without Sordello!)—Ecelin at ease
Slaughtered them so observably, that oft
A little Salinguerra looked with soft
Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age
To get appointed his proud uncle's page.
More years passed, and that sire had
dwindled down

To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown
Better through age, his parts still in repute,
Subtle—how else?—but hardly so astute
As his contemporaneous friends professed;
Undoubtedly a brawler: for the rest,
Known by each neighbour, and allowed for, let
Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret
Men who would miss their boyhood's bug-
bear: "trap

"The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap
"A battered pinion!"—was the word. In
fine,

One flap too much and Venice's marine
Was meddled with; no overlooking that!
She captured him in his Ferrara, fat
And florid at a banquet, more by fraud
Than force, to speak the truth; there's
slender laud

Ascribed you for assisting eighty years
To pull his death on such a man; fate shears
The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine
thread

You fritter: so, presiding his board-head,
The old smile, your assurance all went well
With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell!)
In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,
Made some pretence at fighting, some amends
For the shame done his eighty years—(apart
The principle, none found it in his heart
To be much angry with Taurello)—gained
Their galleys with the prize, and what re-
mained

But carry him to Venice for a show?
—Set him, as 'twere, down gently—free to go
His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe
The swallows soaring their eternal curve
'Twi'x Theodore and Mark, if citizens
Gathered importunately, fives and tens,
To point their children the Magnifico,
All but a monarch once in firm-land, go
His gait among them now—"it took, indeed,
"Fully this Ecelin to supersede
"That man," remarked the seniors. Singular!
Sordello's inability to bar
Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought
About by his strange disbelief that aught
Was ever to be done,—this thrust the Twain
Under Taurello's tutelage,—whom, brain
And heart and hand, he forthwith in one rod
Indissolubly bound to baffle God
Who loves the world—and thus allowed the
thin

Grey wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,
And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic
(Mere man, alas!) to put his problem quick
To demonstration—prove wherever's will
To do, there's plenty to be done, or ill
Or good. Anointed, then, to rend and rip—
Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and
whip,

They plagued the world: a touch of Hilde-
brand

(So far from obsolete!) made Lombards band
Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,
And saving Milan win the world's applause.
Ecelin perished: and I think grass grew
Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù
By San Zenon where Alberic in turn
Saw his exasperated captors burn
Seven children and their mother; then, re-
galed

So far, tied on to a wild horse, was trailed
To death through raunce and bramble-bush.

I take

God's part and testify that 'mid the brake
Wild o'er his castle on the pleasant knoll,
You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll—
The earthquake spared it last year, laying flat
The modern church beneath,—no harm in
that!

VOL. I.

Chirrup the contumacious grasshopper,
Rustles the lizard and the cushats chirr
Above the ravage: there, at deep of day
A week since, heard I the old Canon say
He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst
And Alberic's huge skeleton unheard
Only five years ago. He added, "June's
"The month for carding off our first cocoons
"The silkworms fabricate"—a double news,
Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. Choose!
And Naddo gone, all's gone; not Eglamor!
Believe, I knew the face I waited for,
A guest my spirit of the golden courts!
Oh strange to see how, despite ill-reports,
Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained
Its joyous look of love! Suns waxed and
waned,

And still my spirit held an upward flight,
Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light
More and more gorgeous—ever that face there
The last admitted! crossed, too, with some care
As perfect triumph were not sure for all,
But, on a few, enduring damp must fall,
—A transient struggle, haply a painful sense
Of the inferior nature's clinging—whence
Slight starting tears easily wiped away,
Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play
Of irrepressible admiration—not
Aspiring, all considered, to their lot
Who ever, just as they prepare ascend
Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend
Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,
That upturned fervid face and hair put back!

Is there no more to say? He of the
rhymes—

Many a tale, of this retreat betimes,
Was born: Sordello die at once for men?
The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen
Telling how *Sordello Prince Visconti* saved
Mantua, and elsewhere notably behaved—
Who thus, by fortune ordering events,
Passed with posterity, to all intents,
For just the god he never could become.
As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never
dumb

In praise of him: while what he should have
been,
Could be, and was not—the one step too mean

N

For him to take,—we suffer at this day
Because of: Ecelin had pushed away
Its chance ere Dante could arrive and take
That step Sordello spurned, for the world's
sake:

He did much—but Sordello's chance was
gone.

Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,
Apollo had been compassed: 'twas a fit
He wished should go to him, not he to it
—As one content to merely be supposed
Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed
Really at home—one who was chiefly glad
To have achieved the few real deeds he had,
Because that way assured they were not worth
Doing, so spared from doing them hence-
forth—

A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes
Never itself, itself. Had he embraced
Their cause then, men had plucked Hes-
perian fruit

And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot
All he was anxious to appear, but scarce
Solicitous to be. A sorry farce
Such life is, after all! Cannot I say
He lived for some one better thing? this
way.—

Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill
By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,
Morning just up, higher and higher runs
A child barefoot and rosy. See! the sun's
On the square castle's inner-court's low wall
Like the chine of some extinct animal

Half turned to earth and flowers; and through
the haze

(Save where some slender patches of grey
maize

Are to be overleaped) that boy has crossed
The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost
Matting the balm and mountain camomile.

Up and up goes he, singing all the while
Some unintelligible words to beat

The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet,
So worsted is he at "the few fine locks

"Stained like pale honey oozed from top-
most rocks

"Sun-blanch'd the livelong summer,"—all
that's left

Of the Goito lay! And thus bereft,
Sleep and forget, Sordello! In effect
He sleeps, the feverish poet—I suspect
Not utterly companionless; but, friends,
Wake up! The ghost's gone, and the story
ends

I'd fain hope, sweetly; seeing, peri or ghoul,
That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,
Evil or good, judicious authors think,
According as they vanish in a stink

Or in a perfume. Friends, be frank! ye snuff
Civet, I warrant. Really? Like enough!

Merely the savour's rareness; any nose
May ravage with impunity a rose:

Rife a musk-pod and 'twill ache like yours!
I'd tell you that same pungency ensures

An after-gust, but that were overbold.
Who would has heard Sordello's story told.

PIPPA PASSES;

A DRAMA.

1841

[This drama is hinged on the chance appearance of Pippa, a poor child, at work all the year round (save one day) at the silk-mills at Asolo, in Northern Italy, at critical moments in the spiritual life-history of the leading characters in the play. Just when their emotions, passions, motives are swinging backwards and forwards Pippa passes by singing some refrain, and her voice determines the actions and fashions the destinies of men and women to whom she was unknown. It is a play of much simplicity, as well as rare charm and beauty.]

I DEDICATE MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS POEM,
ADMIRINGLY TO THE AUTHOR OF "ION,"
AFFECTIONATELY TO MR. SERGEANT TALFOURD

R. B.

LONDON: 1841.

PIPPA PASSES.

PERSONS.

PIPPA.
OTTIMA.
SEBALD,
Foreign Students.
GOTTLIEB,
SCHRAMM.
JULES.
PHENE,
Austrian Police.
BLUPHOCKS.
LUIGI *and his Mother.*
Poor Girls.
MONSIGNOR *and his Attendants.*

INTRODUCTION.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE
TREVISAN.

SCENE.—*A large mean airy chamber. A
girl, PIPPA, from the Silk-mills, spring-
ing out of bed.*

DAY!

✓ Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last :

Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away ;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then over-
flowed the world. ✓

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts
above measure)

One of thy choices or one of thy chances,
(Be they tasks God imposed thee or freaks
at thy pleasure)

—My Day, if I squander such labour or
leisure,

Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me !

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and
good—

Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,
 As if earth turned from work in gamesome
 mood—
 All shall be mine ! But thou must treat me
 not
 As prosperous ones are treated, those who live
 At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
 In readiness to take what thou wilt give,
 And free to let alone what thou refusest ;
 For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
 Me, who am only Pippa,—old-year's sorrow,
 Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow :
 Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
 Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's
 sorrow.
 All other men and women that this earth
 Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
 Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
 Get more joy one way, if another, less :
 Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven
 What were all earth else, with a feel of
 heaven,—
 Sole light that helps me through the year,
 thy sun's !
 Try now ! Take Asolo's Four Happiest
 Ones—
 And let thy morning rain on that superb
 Great haughty Ottima ; can rain disturb
 Her Sebald's homage ? All the while thy rain
 Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-
 pane,
 He will but press the closer, breathe more
 warm
 Against her cheek ; how should she mind
 the storm ?
 And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
 O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and
 groom
 Save for their dear selves ? 'Tis their
 marriage-day ;
 And while they leave church and go home
 their way,
 Hand clasping hand, within each breast
 would be
 Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee.
 Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
 With mist,—will Luigi and his mother
 grieve—

The lady and her child, unmatched, for-
 sooth,
 She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
 For true content ? The cheerful town, warm,
 close
 And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,
 Receives them. And yet once again, out-
 break
 In storm at night on Monsignor, they make
 Such stir about,—whom they expect from
 Rome
 To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,
 And say here masses proper to release
 A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt
 his peace ?
 Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts
 to ward
 Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard.
 But Pippa—just one such mischance would
 spoil
 Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's
 toil
 At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil !
 And here I let time slip for nought !
 Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught
 With a single splash from my ewer !
 You that would mock the best pursuer,
 Was my basin over-deep ?
 One splash of water ruins you asleep,
 And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
 Wheeling and counterwheeling,
 Reeling, broken beyond healing :
 Now grow together on the ceiling !
 That will task your wits.
 Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped to
 see
 Morsel after morsel flee
 As merrily, as giddily . . .
 Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
 Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple ?
 Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon ?¹
 New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
 Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk
 bird's poll !
 Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
 Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll

¹ A lily with purple flowers.

Such turban-flowers ; I say, such lamps
disperse

Thick red flame through that dusk green
universe !

I am queen of thee, floweret !

And each fleshy blossom

Preserve I not—(safer

Than leaves that embower it,

Or shells that embosom)

—From weevil and chafer?

Laugh through my pane then ; solicit the bee ;

Gibe him, be sure ; and, in midst of thy glee,

Love thy queen, worship me !

—Worship whom else? For am I not, this
day,

Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-
day?

My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend
my day?

To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
The whole year round, to earn just bread and
milk :

But, this one day, I have leave to go,

And play out my fancy's fullest games ;

I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—

That I taste of the pleasures, am called by
the names

Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo !

See ! Up the hill-side yonder, through the
morning,

Some one shall love me, as the world calls love :

I am no less than Ottima, take warning !

The gardens, and the great stone house above,

And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,

Are mine ; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,

To court me, while old Luca yet reposes :

And therefore, till the shrub-house door un-
closes,

I . . . what now?—give abundant cause for
prate

About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,

Too bold, too confident she'll still face down

The spitefullest of talkers in our town.

How we talk in the little town below !

But love, love, love—there's better love,
I know !

This foolish love was only day's first offer ;

I choose my next love to defy the scoffer :

For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally

Out of Possagno church at noon?

Their house looks over Orcana valley :

Why should not I be the bride as soon

As Ottima? For I saw, beside,

Arrive last night that little bride—

Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash

Of the pale snow-pure cheek and black bright
tresses,

Blacker than all except the black eyelash ;

I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses !

—So strict was she, the veil

Should cover close her pale

Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce
touch,

Scarce touch, remember, Jules ! For are
not such

Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,

As if one's breath would fray the lily of a
creature?

A soft and easy life these ladies lead :

Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.

Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,

Keep that foot its lady primness,

Let those ankles never swerve

From their exquisite reserve,

Yet have to trip along the streets like me,

All but naked to the knee !

How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss

So startling as her real first infant kiss?

Oh, no—not envy, this !

—Not envy, sure !—for if you gave me

Leave to take or to refuse,

In earnest, do you think I'd choose

That sort of new love to enslave me?

Mine should have lapped me round from the
beginning ;

As little fear of losing it as winning :

Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their
wives,

And only parents' love can last our lives. |

At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,

Commune inside our turret : what prevents

My being Luigi? While that mossy lair

Of lizards through the winter-time is stirred

With each to each imparting sweet intents
 For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—
 (For I observe of late, the evening walk
 Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
 Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
 Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than
 friends)

—Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
 And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;
 Let me be Luigi! If I only knew
 What was my mother's face—my father, too!

Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
 Is God's; then why not have God's love
 befall

Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,
 Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the
 home

Of his dead brother; and God bless in turn
 That heart which beats, those eyes which
 mildly burn

With love for all men! I, to-night at least,
 Would be that holy and beloved priest.

Now wait!—even I already seem to share
 In God's love: what does New-year's hymn
 declare?

What other meaning do these verses bear?

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

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

And more of it, and more of it!—oh yes—
 I will pass each, and see their happiness,
 And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
 Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!

A pretty thing to care about
 So mightily, this single holiday!
 But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
 —With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,

Down the grass path grey with dew,
 Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
 Where the swallow never flew
 Nor yet cicala dared carouse—
 No, dared carouse! [*She enters the street.*]

I.—MORNING.

SCENE.—*Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-
 house.* LUCA'S wife, OTTIMA, and her
 paramour, the German SEBALD.

Sebald [*sings*].

*Let the watching lids wink!
 Day's a-blaze with eyes, think!
 Deep into the night, drink!*

Ottima. Night? Such may be your Rhine-
 land nights perhaps;

But this blood-red beam through the shutter's
 chink

—We call such light, the morning: let us see!
 Mind how you grope your way, though!
 How these tall

Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice
 Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—
Sebald,

It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of
 course

The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,
 Or must I find you something else to spoil?
 Kiss and be friends, my *Sebald*! Is't full
 morning?

Oh, don't speak then!

Sebald. Ay, thus it used to be.
 Ever your house was, I remember, shut
 Till mid-day; I observed that, as I strolled
 On mornings through the vale here; country
 girls

Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,
 Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills:
 But no, your house was mute, would ope no
 eye.

And wisely: you were plotting one thing there,
 Nature, another outside. I looked up—
 Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,
 Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.

Oh, I remember!—and the peasants laughed
And said, "The old man sleeps with the
young wife."

This house was his, this chair, this window
—his.

Ottima. Ah, the clear morning! I can
see St. Mark's;

That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza
Should lie . . . there's Padua, plain enough,
that blue!

Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger!

Sebald. Morning?
It seems to me a night with a sun added.

Where's dew, where's freshness? That
bruised plant, I bruised

In getting through the lattice yestereve,
Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's
mark

I' the dust o' the sill.

Ottima. Oh, shut the lattice, pray!

Sebald. Let me lean out. I cannot scent
blood here,

Foul as the morn may be.

There, shut the world out!

How do you feel now, *Ottima*? There, curse
The world and all outside! Let us throw off

This mask: how do you bear yourself? Let's
out

With all of it.

Ottima. Best never speak of it.

Sebald. Best speak again and yet again of it,
Till words cease to be more than words.

"His blood,"

For instance—let those two words mean
"His blood"

And nothing more. Notice, I'll say them now,
"His blood."

Ottima. Assuredly if I repented

The deed—

Sebald. Repent? Who should repent,
or why?

What puts that in your head? Did I once say
That I repented?

Ottima. No, I said the deed . . .

Sebald. "The deed" and "the event"—
just now it was

"Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such
cant!

Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are . . .

Ottima. Here's the wine;

I brought it when we left the house above,
And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black?
White then?

Sebald. But am not I his cut-throat?
What are you?

Ottima. There trudges on his business
from the Duomo

Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet; always in one place at church,
Close under the stone wall by the south entry.

I used to take him for a brown cold piece
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose

To let me pass—at first, I say, I used:
Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,

I rather should account the plastered wall
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.

This, *Sebald*?

Sebald. No, the white wine—the
white wine!

Well, *Ottima*, I promised no new year
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way;
Nor does it rise. Pour on! To your black
eyes!

Do you remember last damned New Year's
day?

Ottima. You brought those foreign prints.
We looked at them

Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused
him up
To hunt them out.

Sebald. 'Faith, he is not alive
To fondle you before my face.

Ottima. Do you
Fondle me then! Who means to take your
life

For that, my *Sebald*?

Sebald. Hark you, *Ottima*!

One thing to guard against. We'll not
make much

One of the other—that is, not make more
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,
Than yesterday: as if, sweet, I supposed
Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,

To show I love you—yes, still love you—
love you

In spite of Luca and what's come to him
—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,
White sneering old reproachful face and all !
We'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if
We still could lose each other, were not tied
By this : conceive you ?

Ottima. Love !

Sebald. Not tied so sure.

Because though I was wrought upon, have
struck

His insolence back into him—am I
So surely yours?—therefore forever yours ?

Ottima. Love, to be wise, (one counsel
pays another)

Should we have—months ago, when first we
loved,

For instance that May morning we two stole
Under the green ascent of sycamores—

If we had come upon a thing like that
Suddenly . . .

Sebald. “A thing”—there again—
“a thing !”

Ottima. Then, Venus' body, had we come
upon

My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered
close—

Would you have pored upon it ? Why persist
In poring now upon it ? For 'tis here

As much as there in the deserted house :

You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,

Now he is dead I hate him worse : I hate . . .

Dare you stay here ? I would go back and
hold

His two dead hands, and say, “I hate you
worse,

“Luca, than . . .”

Sebald. Off, off—take your
hands off mine,

'Tis the hot evening—off ! oh, morning is it ?

Ottima. There's one thing must be done ;
you know what thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

Sebald. What would come, think you, if
we let him lie

Just as he is ? Let him lie there until
The angels take him ! He is turned by this
Off from his face beside, as you will see.

Ottima. This dusty pane might serve for
looking glass.

Three, four—four grey hairs ! Is it so you said ?
A plait of hair should wave across my neck ?
No—this way.

Sebald. *Ottima*, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of
yours,

That this were undone ! Killing ! Kill the
world

So Luca lives again !—ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign
Surprise that I return at eve to sup.

When all the morning I was loitering here—
Bid me despatch my business and begone.

I would . . .

Ottima. See !

Sebald. No, I'll finish. Do
you think

I fear to speak the bare truth once for all ?

All we have talked of, is, at bottom, fine

To suffer ; there's a recompense in guilt ;

One must be venturesous and fortunate :

What is one young for, else ? In age we'll
sigh

O'er the wild reckless wicked days flown
over ;

Still, we have lived : the vice was in its place.

But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn

His clothes, have felt his money swell my
purse—

Do lovers in romances sin that way ?

Why, I was starving when I used to call

And teach you music, starving while you
plucked me

These flowers to smell !

Ottima. My poor lost friend !

Sebald. He gave me

Life, nothing less : what if he did reproach

My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—

Had he no right ? What was to wonder at ?

He sat by us at table quietly :

Why must you lean across till our cheeks
touched ?

Could he do less than make pretence to strike ?

'Tis not the crime's sake—I'd commit ten crimes

Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone!
And you—O how feel you? Feel you for me?

Ottima. Well then, I love you better now than ever,

And best (look at me while I speak to you)—
Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in truth,
This mask, this simulated ignorance,
This affectation of simplicity,
Falls off our crime; this naked crime of ours
May not now be looked over: look it down!
Great? let it be great; but the joys it brought,
Pay they or no its price? Come: they or it!
Speak not! The past, would you give up
the past

Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?
Give up that noon I owned my love for you?
The garden's silence: even the single bee
Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped,
And where he hid you only could surmise
By some campanula chalice set a-swing.
Who stammered—"Yes, I love you?"

Sebald. And I drew
Back; put far back your face with both my hands

Lest you should grow too full of me—your face
So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!

Ottima. And when I ventured to receive
you here,

Made you steal hither in the mornings—

Sebald. When
I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,
Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread
To a yellow haze?

Ottima. Ah—my sign was, the sun
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree
Nipped by the first frost.

Sebald. You would always laugh
At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass
Over my ankles.

Ottima. Then our crowning night!

Sebald. The July night?

Ottima. The day of it too, Sebald!
When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with
heat,

Its black-blue canopy suffered descend
Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,

And smother up all life except our life.
So lay we till the storm came.

Sebald. How it came!

Ottima. Buried in woods we lay, you re-
collect;

Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
And ever and anon some bright white shaft
Burned thro' the pine-tree roof, here burned
and there,

As if God's messenger thro' the close wood
screen

Plunged and replunged his weapon at a ven-
ture,

Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Sebald. Yes!

Ottima. —While I stretched myself
upon you, hands

To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and
shook

All my locks loose, and covered you with
them—

You, Sebald, the same you!

Sebald. Slower, Ottima!

Ottima. And as we lay—

Sebald. Less vehemently! Love me!
Forgive me! Take not words, mere words,
to heart!

Your breath is worse than wine! Breathe
slow, speak slow!

Do not lean on me!

Ottima. Sebald, as we lay,

Rising and falling only with our pants,
Who said, "Let death come now! 'Tis
right to die!

"Right to be punished! Nought completes
such bliss

"But woe!" Who said that?

Sebald. How did we ever rise?

Wasn't that we slept? Why did it end?

Ottima. I felt you

Taper into a point the ruffled ends
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips.
My hair is fallen now: knot it again!

Sebald. I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now
and now!

This way? Will you forgive me—be once more
My great queen?

Ottima. Bind it thrice about my brow ;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that !

Sebald. I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent . . .

[From without is heard the voice
of PIPPA, singing—

*The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn ;
Morning's at seven ;
The hill-side's dew-pearled ;
The lark's on the wing ;
The snail's on the thorn :
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world !*

[PIPPA passes.

Sebald. God's in his heaven ! Do you hear
that ? Who spoke ?

You, you spoke !

Ottima. Oh—that little ragged girl !
She must have rested on the step : we give
them

But this one holiday the whole year round.
Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside ?
There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.
She stoops to pick my double heartsease
. . . Sh !

She does not hear : call you out louder !

Sebald. Leave me !
Go, get your clothes on—dress those
shoulders !

Ottima. Sebald ?

Sebald. Wipe off that paint ! I hate you.

Ottima. Miserable !

Sebald. My God, and she is emptied of it
now !

Outright now !—how miraculously gone
All of the grace—had she not strange grace
once ?

Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes
No purpose holds the features up together,
Only the cloven brow and puckered chin
Stay in their places : and the very hair,
That seemed to have a sort of life in it,
Drops, a dead web !

Ottima. Speak to me—not of me !

Sebald. —That round great full-orbed face,
where not an angle

Broke the delicious indolence—all broken !

Ottima. To me—not of me ! Ungrateful,
perjured cheat !

A coward too : but ingrate's worse than all.

Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie !

Leave me ! Betray me ! I can see your
drift !

A lie that walks and eats and drinks !

Sebald. My God !

Thosemorbid olive faultless shoulder-blades—
I should have known there was no blood
beneath !

Ottima. You hate me then ? You hate me
then ?

Sebald. To think

She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
And fascinate by sinning, show herself

Superior—guilt from its excess superior

To innocence ! That little peasant's voice

Has righted all again. Though I be lost,

I know which is the better, never fear,

Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,

Nature or trick ! I see what I have done,

Entirely now ! Oh I am proud to feel

Such torments—let the world take credit
thence—

I, having done my deed, pay too its price !

I hate, hate—curse you ! God's in his heaven !

Ottima. —Me !

Me ! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill
me !

Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me—
then

Yourself—then—presently—first hear me
speak !

I always meant to kill myself—wait, you !

Lean on my breast—not as a breast ; don't
love me

The more because you lean on me, my
own

Heart's Sebald ! There, there, both deaths
presently !

Sebald. My brain is drowned now—quite
drowned : all I feel

Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,

A hurry-down within me, as of waters

Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit :
There they go—whirls from a black fiery
sea !

Ottima. Not me—to him, O God, be
merciful !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing
from the hill-side to Orcana. Foreign
Students of painting and sculpture, from
Venice, assembled opposite the house of
JULES, a young French statuary, at
Possagno.*

1st Student. Attention ! My own post is
beneath this window, but the pomegranate
clump yonder will hide three or four of you
with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his
pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five
—who's a defaulter ? We want everybody,
for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his
bride when the jest's found out.

2nd Student. All here ! Only our poet's
away—never having much meant to be
present, moonstrike him ! The airs of that
fellow, that Gioracchino ! He was in violent
love with himself, and had a fair prospect of
thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—
when suddenly a woman falls in love with
him, too ; and out of pure jealousy he takes
himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and
all : whereto is this prophetic epitaph
appended already, as Bluphocks assures me,
—“ *Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to
death by butterflies.*” His own fault, the
simpleton ! Instead of cramp couplets, each
like a knife in your entrails, he should write,
says Bluphocks, both classically and intelli-
gibly.—*Esculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of
the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools
your lip. Phabus' emulsion—One bottle
Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One
box Cures . . .*

3rd Student. Subside, my fine fellow ! If
the marriage was over by ten o'clock, Jules
will certainly be here in a minute with his
bride.

2nd Student. Good !—only, so should the
poet's muse have been universally acceptable,

says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris* . . . and
Delia not better known to our literary dogs
than the boy Giovacchino !

1st Student. To the point, now. Where's
Gottlieb, the new-comer ? Oh,—listen,
Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece
of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we
now assemble to witness the winding-up.
We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when
Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and
by : I am spokesman—the verses that are to
undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche
—but each professes himself alike insulted
by this strutting stone-squarer, who came
alone from Paris to Munich, and thence with
a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here,
but proceeds in a day or two alone again
—oh, alone indubitably !—to Rome and
Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion
with these dissolute, brutalized, heartless
bunglers !—so he was heard to call us all :
now, is Schramm brutalized, I should like to
know ? Am I heartless ?

Gottlieb. Why, somewhat heartless ; for,
suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you
choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you
will have brushed off—what do folks style
it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to
alter ? These love-letters now, you call his
—I can't laugh at them.

4th Student. Because you never read the
sham letters of our inditing which drew forth
these.

Gottlieb. His discovery of the truth will
be frightful.

4th Student. That's the joke. But you
should have joined us at the beginning :
there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a
model he might hire by the hour !

Gottlieb. See here ! “ He has been accus-
tomed,” he writes, “ to have Canova's
“ women about him, in stone, and the world's
“ women beside him, in flesh ; these being
“ as much below, as those above, his soul's
“ aspiration : but now he is to have the
“ reality.” There you laugh again ! I say,
you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Student. Schramm ! (Take the pipe

out of his mouth, somebody!) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—there's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

1st Student. Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolutely past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—"In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you!" Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good-bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer needs detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

5th Student. Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

1st Student. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now, I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's "hair like sea-moss"—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three lire an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the Academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is, by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his mistress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and despatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

6th Student. Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly, speak within yourselves!

5th Student. Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it: and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in.

2nd Student. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off.

6th Student. And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

Gottlieb. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

1st Student. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

6th Student. She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

Gottlieb. How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

1st Student. They go in: now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate: just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated!

II.—NOON.

SCENE.—*Over Orcana. The house of JULES, who crosses its threshold with PHENE: she is silent, on which JULES begins—*

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,

If you'll not die: so, never die! Sit here—My work-room's single seat. I over-lean This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn

Like an entire flower upward: eyes, lips, last Your chin—no, last your throat turns: 'tis their scent

Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look ever This one way till I change, grow you—I could Change into you, beloved!

You by me,
And I by you; this is your hand in mine,
And side by side we sit: all's true. Thank God!

I have spoken: speak you!

O my life to come!

My Tydeus must be carved that's there in clay;

Yet how be carved, with you about the room? Where must I place you? When I think that once

This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven

Without you! Shall I ever work again, Get fairly into my old ways again, Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait, My hand transfers its lineaments to stone?

Will my mere fancies live near you, their truth—

The live truth, passing and repassing me, Sitting beside me?

Now speak!

Only first, See, all your letters! Was't not well contrived?

Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she keeps

Your letters next her skin: which drops out foremost?

Ah,—this that swam down like a first moon-beam

Into my world!

Again those eyes complete Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow, Of all my room holds; to return and rest On me, with pity, yet some wonder too: As if God bade some spirit plague a world, And this were the one moment of surprise And sorrow while she took her station, pausing

O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy!

What gaze you at? Those? Books, I told you of;

Let your first word to me rejoice them, too: This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—

Read this line . . . no, shame—Homer's be the Greek

First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl!

This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,

To mark great places with due gratitude ;
 " *He said, and on Antinous directed*
 " *A bitter shaft*" . . . a flower blots out the
 rest !
 Again upon your search? My statues, then !
 —Ah, do not mind that—better that will
 look
 Whencast in bronze—anAlmaign Kaiser, that,
 Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based
 on hip.
 This, rather, turn to ! What, unrecognized?
 I thought you would have seen that here you
 sit
 As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,
 Naked upon her bright Numidian horse.
 Recall you this then? "Carve in bold re-
 lief"—
 So you commanded—"carve, against I come,
 "A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,
 "Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,
 "Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch.
 "Praise those who slew Hipparchus !' cry
 the guests,
 "While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle
 waves
 "As erst above our champion : stand up,
 all !"
 See, I have laboured to express your thought.
 Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms,
 (Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,
 Only consenting at the branch's end
 They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole
 face,
 The Praiser's, in the centre : who with eyes
 Sightless, so bend they back to light inside
 His brain where visionary forms throng up,
 Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
 Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine
 From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor
 crowns cast off,
 Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
 Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,
 Devoutly their unconquerable hymn.
 But you must say a "well" to that—say
 "well !"
 Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet?
 Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly
 Even to the silence ! Why, before I found

The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
 To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
 For better nature's birth by means of art :
 With me, each substance tended to one form
 Of beauty—to the human archetype.
 On every side occurred suggestive germs
 Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the
 fruit,—
 Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
 Curved beewise o'er its bough ; as rosy limbs,
 Depending, nestled in the leaves ; and just
 From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad
 sprang.
 But of the stuffs one can be master of,
 How I divined their capabilities !
 From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk
 That yields your outline to the air's embrace,
 Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom ;
 Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
 To cut its one confided thought clean out
 Of all the world. But marble !—'neath my
 tools
 More pliable than jelly—as it were
 Some clear primordial creature dug from
 depths
 In the earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,
 And whence all baser substance may be
 worked ;
 Refine it off to air, you may,—condense it
 Down to the diamond ;—is not metal there,
 When o'er the sudden speck my chisel trips ?
 —Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, approach,
 Lay bare those bluish veins of blood asleep?
 Lurks flame in no strange windings where, sur-
 prised
 By the swift implement sent home at once,
 Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
 About its track ?
 Phene? what—why is this?
 That whitening cheek, those still dilating
 eyes !
 Ah, you will die—I knew that you would die !
 PHENE *begins, on his having long*
remained silent.
 Now the end's coming ; to be sure, it must
 Have ended sometime ! Tush, why need I
 speak

Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to mind
 One half of it, beside; and do not care
 For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
 Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try
 To say the words Natalia made me learn,
 To please your friends,—it is to keep myself
 Where your voice lifted me, by letting that
 Proceed: but can it? Even you, perhaps,
 Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
 The music's life, and me along with that—
 No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as we
 are:

Above the world.

You creature with the eyes!

If I could look for ever up to them,
 As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,
 All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,
 Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth
 Whence all that's low comes, and there touch
 and stay

—Never to overtake the rest of me,
 All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
 Drawn by those eyes! What rises is myself,
 Not me the shame and suffering; but they
 sink,
 Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,
 Above the world!

But you sink, for your eyes
 Are altering—altered! Stay—"I love you,
 love" . . .

I could prevent it if I understood:
 More of your words to me: was't in the tone
 Or the words, your power?

Or stay—I will repeat
 Their speech, if that contents you! Only
 change

No more, and I shall find it presently
 Far back here, in the brain yourself filled up.
 Natalia threatened me that harm should follow
 Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
 But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.
 Your friends,—Natalia said they were your
 friends

And meant you well,—because, I doubted it,
 Observing (what was very strange to see)
 On every face, so different in all else,
 The same smile girls like me are used to bear.
 But never men, men cannot stoop so low;

Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that
 smile,

That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit
 Which seems to take possession of the world
 And make of God a tame confederate,
 Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know!
 But still Natalia said they were your friends,
 And they assented though they smiled the
 more,

And all came round me,—that thin English-
 man

With light lank hair seemed leader of the rest;
 He held a paper—"What we want," said he,
 Ending some explanation to his friends—

"Is something slow, involved and mystical,
 "To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his
 taste

"And lure him on until, at innermost
 "Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may
 find—this!

"—As in the apple's core, the noisome fly:
 "For insects on the rind are seen at once,
 "And brushed aside as soon, but this is found
 "Only when on the lips or loathing tongue."
 And so he read what I have got by heart:
 I'll speak it,—“Do not die, love! I am
 yours.”

No—is not that, or like that, part of words
 Yourself began by speaking? Strange to lose
 What cost such pains to learn! Is this more
 right?

*I am a painter who cannot paint;
 In my life, a devil rather than saint;
 In my brain, as poor a creature too:
 No end to all I cannot do!
 Yet do one thing at least I can—
 Love a man or hate a man
 Supremely: thus my lore began.
 Through the Valley of Love I went,
 In the loveliest spot to abide,
 And just on the verge where I pitched my
 tent,
 I found Hate dwelling beside.
 (Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter
 meant,
 Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)
 And further, I traversed Hate's grove,
 In the hatefullest nook to dwell;*

*But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched
Love*

Where the shadow threefold fell.

*(The meaning—those black bride's-eyes
above,*

Not a painter's lip should tell !)

“And here,” said he, “Jules probably will ask,

“You have black eyes, Love,—you are, sure enough,

“My peerless bride,—then do you tell indeed

“What needs some explanation! What means this?”

—And I am to go on, without a word—

So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,

From simple that I was of late.

Once, when I loved, I would enlase

Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face

Of her I loved, in one embrace—

As if by mere love I could love immensely !

Once, when I hated, I would plunge

My sword, and wipe with the first lunge

My foe's whole life out like a sponge—

As if by mere hate I could hate intensely !

But now I am wiser, know better the fashion

*How passion seeks aid from its opposite
passion :*

And if I see cause to love more, hate more

Than ever man loved, ever hated before—

And seek in the Valley of Love,

The nest, or the nook in Hate's Grove,

Where my soul may surely reach

The essence, nought less, of each,

The Hate of all Hates, the Love

Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove,—

I find them the very warders

Each of the other's borders.

When I love most, Love is disguised

In Hate ; and when Hate is surprised

In Love, then I hate most ; ask

*How Love smiles through Hate's iron
casque,*

*Hate grins through Love's rose-braided
mask,—*

And how, having hated thee,

I sought long and painfully

To reach thy heart, nor prick

The skin but pierce to the quick—

*Ask this, my Jules, and be answered
straight*

*By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche
can hate !*

JULES *interposes.*

Lutwyche ! Who else ? But all of them, no doubt,

Hated me : they at Venice—presently

Their turn, however ! You I shall not meet :

If I dreamed, saying this would wake me.

Keep

What's here, the gold—we cannot meet again,

Consider ! and the money was but meant

For two years' travel, which is over now,

All chance or hope or care or need of it.

This—and what comes from selling these, my casts

And books and medals, except . . . let them go

Together, so the produce keeps you safe

Out of Natalia's clutches ! If by chance

(For all's chance here) I should survive the gang

At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,

We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide.

[From without is heard the voice
of PIPPA, singing—

Give her but a least excuse to love me !

When—where—

How—can this arm establish her above me,

If fortune fixed her as my lady there,

There already, to eternally reprove me ?

(“ Hist !”—said Kate the Queen ;

*But “ Oh !”—cried the maiden, binding
her tresses,*

“ 'Tis only a page that carols unseen,

“ Crumbling your hounds their messes !”)

*Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her
honour,*

My heart !

*Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a
donor ?*

Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.

*But that fortune should have thrust all this
upon her !*

(*"Nay, list!"—bade Kate the Queen;
And still cried the maiden, binding her
tresses,
"Tis only a page that carols unseem,
"Fitting your hawks their jesses!"*)

[PIPPA passes.

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang forth?
Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who re-
nounced

The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,
And peasants sing how once a certain page
Pined for the grace of her so far above
His power of doing good to, "Kate the
Queen—

"She never could be wronged, be poor," he
sighed,
"Need him to help her!"

Yes, a bitter thing
To see our lady above all need of us;
Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,
But the world looks so. If whoever loves
Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
The blessing or the blest one, queen or page,
Why should we always choose the page's part?
Here is a woman with utter need of me,—
I find myself queen here, it seems!

How strange!
Look at the woman here with the new soul,
Like my own Psyche,—fresh upon her lips
Alit, the visionary butterfly,
Waiting my word to enter and make bright,
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
This body had no soul before, but slept
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
From taint or foul with stain, as outward things
Fastened their image on its passiveness:
Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again!
Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
Be Art—and further, to evoke a soul
From form be nothing? This new soul is
mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do?
—save

A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death

VOL. I.

Without me, from their booting. Oh, to hear
God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
They broke in with their laughter! I heard
them
Henceforth, not God.

To Ancona—Greece—some isle!
I wanted silence only; there is clay
Everywhere. One may do whate'er one
likes

In Art: the only thing is, to make sure
That one does like it—which takes pains to
know.

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad
dream!

Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's
friends,

What the whole world except our love—my
own,

Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,
Ere night we travel for your land—some isle
With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—
I do but break these paltry models up
To begin Art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I—
And save him from my statue meeting him?
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
Like a god going through his world, there
stands

One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow:
And you are ever by me while I gaze
—Are in my arms as now—as now—as now!
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing
from Orcana to the Turret. Two or
three of the Austrian Police loitering
with BLUPHOCKS, an English vagabond,
just in view of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks.*¹ So, that is your Pippa, the
little girl who passed us singing? Well,
your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be
honestly earned:—now, don't make me that

¹ "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and
on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and
on the unjust."

sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business; we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors: we know that he is a saint and all that a bishop should be, who is a great man beside. *Oh were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a gris, Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to, was the Armenian: for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity: 'twas the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!*) and one morning presented myself, spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past, you'll say—“*How Moses hocus-pocussed Egypt's land with fly and locust,*”—or, “*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,*”—or, “*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam.*” In no wise! “*Shackabrack—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cci-ver, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen Goods!*” So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry, With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, And never an obolus . . .* (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his Intendant—I possess a burning pocketful of *zwanzigers*) . . . *To pay the Stygian Ferry!*

1st Policeman. There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. [*To the rest.*] I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning!

2nd Policeman. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

Bluphocks. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—rhyming to *Panurge consults Hertrippa—Believest thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

2nd Policeman. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger!* Leave this fooling, and look out; the afternoon's over or nearly so.

3rd Policeman. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? What's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

2nd Policeman. Flourish all round—“Put all possible obstacles in his way;” oblong dot at the end—“Detain him till further advices reach you;” scratch at bottom—“Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;” ink-spirt on right-hand side (which is the case here)—“Arrest him at once.” Why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna—well and good, the passport deposited with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct,

we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal, sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III.—EVENING.

SCENE.—*Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo. LUIGI and his Mother entering.*

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh, easing

The utmost heaviness of music's heart.

Luigi. Here in the archway?

Mother. Oh no, no—in farther, Where the echo is made, on the ridge.

Luigi. Here surely, then. How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up! Hark—"Lucius Junius!" The very ghost of a voice

Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those?

Mere withered wallflowers, waving overhead? They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair

That lean out of their topmost fortress—look And listen, mountain men, to what we say, Hand under chin of each grave earthy face. Up and show faces all of you!—"All of you!"

That's the king dwarf with the scarlet comb; old Franz,

Come down and meet your fate? Hark—"Meet your fate!"

Mother. Let him not meet it, my Luigi—do not

Go to his City! Putting crime aside, Half of these ills of Italy are feigned: Your Pellicos and writers for effect, Write for effect.

Luigi. Hush! Say A. writes, and B.

Mother. These A.s and B.s write for effect, I say.

Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good Is silent; you hear each petty injury, None of his virtues; he is old beside, Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?

Luigi. They teach Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail, Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and failed, I could not teach that: mine's the lesser task. Mother, they visit night by night . . .

Mother. —You, Luigi? Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?

Luigi. Why not? Oh, the one thing you fear to hint,

You may assure yourself I say and say Ever to myself! At times—nay, even as now We sit—I think my mind is touched, suspect All is not sound: but is not knowing that, What constitutes one sane or otherwise? I know I am thus—so, all is right again.

I laugh at myself as through the town I walk, And see men merry as if no Italy Were suffering; then I ponder—"I am rich, "Young, healthy; why should this fact trouble me,

"More than it troubles these?" But it does trouble.

No, trouble's a bad word: for as I walk There's springing and melody and giddiness, And old quaint turns and passages of my youth,

Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves, Return to me—whatever may amuse me: And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven

Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,

The very cicala laughs "There goes he, and there!

"Feast him, the time is short; he is on his way

"For the world's sake: feast him this once, our friend!"

And in return for all this, I can trip Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go This evening, mother!

Mother. But mistrust yourself—Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him!

Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am right!

Mother. Mistrust your judgment then, of the mere means

To this wild enterprise. Say, you are right,—

How should one in your state e'er bring to
pass

What would require a cool head, a cold heart,
And a calm hand? You never will escape.

Luigi. Escape? To even wish that, would
spoil all.

The dying is best part of it. Too much
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
To leave myself excuse for longer life :

Was not life pressed down, running o'er with
joy,

That I might finish with it ere my fellows
Who, sparelier feasted, make a longer stay?—

I was put at the board-head, helped to all
At first ; I rise up happy and content.

God must be glad one loves his world so
much.

I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me :—last year's sunsets, and great
stars

Which had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—
Those crescent moons with notched and burn-
ing rims

That strengthened into sharp fire, and there
stood,

Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the
storm—

May's warm slow yellow moonlit summer
nights—

Gone are they, but I have them in my soul !

Mother. (He will not go !)

Luigi. You smile at me?
'Tis true,—

Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
Environ my devotedness as quaintly
As round about some antique altar wreath
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's
skulls.

Mother. See now : you reach the city, you
must cross

His threshold—how?

Luigi. Oh, that's if we conspired !
Then would come pains in plenty, as you
guess—

But guess not how the qualities most fit
For such an office, qualities I have,

Would little stead me, otherwise employed,
Yet prove of rarest merit only here.

Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider
For what his worst defect might serve : and yet
Have you not seen me range our coppice
yonder

In search of a distorted ash?—I find
The wry spoil branch a natural perfect bow.
Fancy the thrice - sage, thrice -precautioned
man

Arriving at the palace on my errand !
No, no ! I have a handsome dress packed
up—

White satin here, to set off my black hair ;
In I shall march—for you may watch your
life out

Behind thick walls, make friends there to
betray you ;

More than one man spoils everything.
March straight—

Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for.
Take the great gate and walk (not saunter)
on

Thro' guards and guards— I have rehearsed
it all

Inside the turret here a hundred times.
Don't ask the way of whom you meet,
observe !

But where they cluster thickest is the door
Of doors ; they'll let you pass—they'll never
blab

Each to the other, he knows not the favourite,
Whence he is bound and what's his business
now.

Walk in—straight up to him ; you have no
knife :

Be prompt, how should he scream? Then,
out with you !

Italy, Italy, my Italy !

You're free, you're free ! Oh mother, I could
dream

They got about me—Andrea from his exile,
Pier from his dungeon, Gualtier from his
grave !

Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems
this patriotism

The easiest virtue for a selfish man

To acquire : he loves himself—and next, the world—

If he must love beyond, — but nought between :

As a short-sighted man sees nought midway
His body and the sun above. But you
Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient
To my least wish, and running o'er with
love :

I could not call you cruel or unkind.
Once more, your ground for killing him !—
then go !

Luigi. Now do you try me, or make sport
of me ?

How first the Austrians got these pro-
vinces . . .

(If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)
—Never by conquest but by cunning, for
That treaty whereby . . .

Mother. Well ?

Luigi. (Sure, he's
arrived,

The tell-tale cuckoo : spring's his confidant,
And he lets out her April purposes !)

Or . . . better go at once to modern time,
He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I
understand

But can't restate the matter ; that's my boast :
Others could reason it out to you, and prove
Things they have made me feel.

Mother. Why go to-night ?
Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now

A morning-star. I cannot hear you, Luigi !

Luigi. "I am the bright and morning-
star," saith God—

And, "to such an one I give the morning-star."
The gift of the morning-star ! Have I God's
gift

Of the morning-star ?

Mother. Chiara will love to see
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.

Luigi. True, mother. Well for those who
live through June !

Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring
pomp

That triumph at the heels of June the god
Leading his revel through our leafy world.
Yes, Chiara will be here.

Mother. In June : remember,
Yourself appointed that month for her coming.

Luigi. Was that low noise the echo ?

Mother. The night-wind.

She must be grown—with her blue eyes up-
turned

As if life were one long and sweet surprise :
In June she comes.

Luigi. We were to see together
The Titian at Treviso. There, again !

[From without is heard the voice
of PIPPA, singing—

*A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than now :
And the king's locks curled,
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and
horn*

*Of some sacrificial bull—
Only calm as a babe new-born :
For he was got to a sleepy mood,
So safe from all decrepitude,
Age with its bane, so sure gone by,
(The gods so loved him while he dreamed)
That, having lived thus long, there seemed
No need the king should ever die.*

Luigi. No need that sort of king should
ever die !

*Among the rocks his city was :
Before his palace, in the sun,
He sat to see his people pass,
And judge them every one
From its threshold of smooth stone.
They haled him many a valley-thief
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found
On the sea-sand left aground ;
And sometimes clung about his feet,
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
Of one with sullen thicket brows :
And sometimes from the prison-house
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
Who through some chink had pushed and
pressed
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
Worm-like into the temple,—caught*

*He was by the very god,
Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!
These, all and every one,
The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

Luigi. That king should still judge sitting
in the sun!

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

[PIPPA passes.

Luigi. And such grace have they, now
that the world ends!

The Python at the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,

Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won in this late time,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach?
'Tis God's voice calls: how could I stay?
Farewell!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing
from the Turret to the Bishop's Brother's
House, close to the Duomo S. Maria.
Poor Girls sitting on the steps.*

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to Venice
—the stout seafarer!
Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for
wings.

Let us all wish; you wish first!

2nd Girl. I? This sunset
To finish.

3rd Girl. That old—somebody I know,
Greyer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last week—
Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
Lampreys and red Breganze-wine, and mum-
bling

The while some folly about how well I fare,
Let sit and eat my supper quietly:
Since had he not himself been late this morning
Detained at—never mind where,—had he
not . . .

“Eh, baggage, had I not!”—

2nd Girl. How she can lie!

3rd Girl. Look there—by the nails!

2nd Girl. What
makes your fingers red!

3rd Girl. Dipping them into wine to write
bad words with

On the bright table: how he laughed!

1st Girl. My turn.

Spring's come and summer's coming. I would
wear

A long loose gown, down to the feet and
hands,

With plaits here, close about the throat, all
day;

And all night lie, the cool long nights, in
bed;

And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . .

ah, I should say,

This is away in the fields—miles!

3rd Girl. Say at once
You'd be at home: she'd always be at home!

Now comes the story of the farm among
The cherry orchards, and how April snowed

White blossoms on her as she ran. Why,
fool,

They've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how tall
you were,

Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage.
Made a dung-hill of your garden!

1st Girl. They, destroy
My garden since I left them? well—perhaps!

I would have done so: so I hope they have!
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall;

They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
It must have been there long ere I was born:
Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long
papers,

And the wasps eat them, prick them through
and through.

3rd Girl. How her mouth twitches! Where
was I?—before

She broke in with her wishes and long gowns
And wasps—would I be such a fool!—Oh,
here!

This is my way: I answer every one
Who asks me why I make so much of him—
(If you say, "you love him"—straight "he'll
not be gulled!")

"He that seduced me when I was a girl
"Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair
like yours,

"Brown, red, white,"—as the case may be:
that pleases!

See how that beetle burnishes in the path!
There sparkles he along the dust: and, there—
Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled at
least!

1st Girl. When I was young, they said if
you killed one

Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
Up there, would shine no more that day nor
next.

2nd Girl. When you were young? Nor
are you young, that's true.

How your plump arms, that were, have
dropped away!

Why, I can span them. Cecco beats you still?
No matter, so you keep your curious hair.

I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair
Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,
Than black: the men say they are sick of black,
Black eyes, black hair!

4th Girl. Sick of yours, like enough.

Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys
And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,
Engaged (but there's no trusting him) to slice
me

Polenta with a knife that had cut up
An ortolan.

2nd Girl. Why, there! Is not that Pippa
We are to talk to, under the window,—
quick,—

Where the lights are?

1st Girl. That she? No, or
she would sing,

For the Intendant said . . .

3rd Girl. Oh, you sing first!

Then, if she listens and comes close . . .
I'll tell you,—

Sing that song the young English noble made,
Who took you for the purest of the pure,
And meant to leave the world for you—what
fun!

2nd Girl [*sings*].

*You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry
Your love's protracted growing:
June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,
From seeds of April's sowing.*

*I plant a heartful now: some seed
At least is sure to strike,
And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,
Not love, but, may be, like.*

*You'll look at least on love's remains,
A grave's one violet:
Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.
What's death? You'll love me yet!*

3rd Girl [*to PIPPA who approaches*]. Oh,
you may come closer—we shall not eat you!
Why, you seem the very person that the
great rich handsome Englishman has fallen
so violently in love with. I'll tell you all
about it.

IV.—NIGHT.

SCENE.—*Inside the Palace by the Duomo.*
MONSIGNOR, dismissing his Attendants.

Monsignor. Thanks, friends, many thanks!
I chiefly desire life now, that I may recom-
pense every one of you. Most I know some-
thing of already. What, a repast prepared?
Benedicto benedicatur . . . ugh, ugh!
Where was I? Oh, as you were remarking,
Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-

weather: but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here. To be sure, when 'twas full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [*To the Intendant.*] Not you, Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment.*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo.

Intendant. Uguccio—

Monsignor. . . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Intendant. Do you choose this especial night to question me?

Monsignor. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother: fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the Third of December, I find him . . .

Intendant. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Monsignor. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this Third of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art. Here's his letter, "He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very

perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,"—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Intendant. Is Correggio a painter?

Monsignor. Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will—fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a musician (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel), transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

Intendant. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now: what is it you want with me?

Monsignor. Ugo!

Intendant. From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what?

Monsignor. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

Intendant. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

Monsignor. I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name),

was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Intendant. No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

Monsignor. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp? Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul! —I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were, —what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth: but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime: and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villanous seize. Because, to pleasure myself apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the offscouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Intendant. What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

Monsignor. —Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I

have whole centuries of sin to root out, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say . . .

Intendant. "Forgive us our *trappasses*?"

Monsignor. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuous efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Intendant. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Monsignor. 1, 2—N^o 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, N^o 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late younger brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

Intendant. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face; or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's

power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.

Monsignor. Liar!

Intendant. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

Monsignor. I see through the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Intendant. And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her nor of me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have indeed begun operations already. There's a certain lusty blue-eyed florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'Tis but a little black-eyed pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her. 'Tis as well settled once and for ever. Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—

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

[PIPPA passes.]

Monsignor [*springing up*]. My people—
one and all—all—within there! Gag this
villain—tie him hand and foot! He dares
. . . I know not half he dares—but remove
him—quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!* Quick,
I say!

SCENE.—PIPPA'S chamber again. *She enters it.*

The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in his tomb,
Wile winter away;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-
worm, I pray,
How fare they?
Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my
Zanze!
“Feast upon lampreys, quaff Breganze”—
The summer of life so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put away!
But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
How fare they?
No bidding me then to . . . what did Zanze
say?

"Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small
feet shoes
"More like" . . . (what said she?)—"and
less like canoes!"
How pert that girl was!—would I be those
pert
Impudent staring women! It had done me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest upon
me:
No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick
rings
Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.
Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,
We shall do better, see what next year
brings.
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you perhaps next year!
Bluff . . . something! I had caught the
uncouth name
But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter
As ours: it were indeed a serious matter
If silly talk like ours should put to shame
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The . . . ah but—ah but, all the same,
No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air;
Best people are not angels quite:
While—not the worst of people's doings
scare
The devil; so there's that proud look to
spare!
Which is mere counsel to myself, mind! for
I have just been the holy Monsignor:
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi started
Out of the turret—doubtlessly departed
On some good errand or another,
For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,
And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled
As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,
And now what am I?—tired of fooling.

Day for folly, night for schooling!
New Year's day is over and spent,
Ill or well, I must be content.
Even my lily's asleep, I vow:
Wake up—here's a friend I've plucked
you:
Call this flower a heart's-ease now!
Something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this, with petals triply swollen,
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen;
While the leaves and parts that witness
Old proportions and their fitness,
Here remain unchanged, unmoved now;
Call this pampered thing improved now!
Suppose there's a king of the flowers
And a girl-show held in his bowers—
"Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"
Says he, "Zanze from the Brenta,
"I have made her gorge polenta
"Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
"As her . . . name there's no pronounc-
ing!
"See this heightened colour too,
"For she swilled Breganze wine
"Till her nose turned deep carmine;
"Twas but white when wild she grew.
"And only by this Zanze's eyes
"Of which we could not change the size,
"The magnitude of all achieved
"Otherwise, may be perceived."
Oh what a drear dark close to my poor
day!
How could that red sun drop in that black
cloud?
Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed!
Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.
Oh lark, be day's apostle
To mavis, merle and throstle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights!
But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,
Toll the world to thy chantry;
Sing to the lats' sleek sisterhoods
Full complines with gallantry:
Then, owls and lats,
Cows and twats,

Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!

[After she has begun to undress herself.]

Now, one thing I should like to really
know:

How near I ever might approach all these
I only fancied being, this long day:

—Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so
As to . . . in some way . . . move them—
if you please,

Do good or evil to them some slight way.

For instance, if I wind

Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[Sitting on the bedside.]

And border Ottina's cloak's hem.

Ah me, and my important part with them,

This morning's hymn half promised when I
rose!

True in some sense or other, I suppose.

[As she lies down.]

God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.

No doubt, some way or other, hymns say
right.

All service ranks the same with God—

With God, whose puppets, best and worst,

Are we: there is no last nor first.

[She sleeps.]

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES;

A TRAGEDY.

1842.

[Victor Amadeus II., originally Duke of Savoy, obtained the title of King of Sardinia in 1720. He was a powerful and self-willed man, and a sagacious sovereign. Saddened by the death of his eldest and favourite son, and of his daughter, the Queen of Spain, he began to meditate abdication in favour of his son Charles. In 1728, after the death of his first wife, and upon his marriage with a second, he carried out his design and withdrew with his lady to his castle at Chambéry, where they both soon began to repent their conduct and to be sick of ennui. In 1731 King Charles was told that his father was on his way to Turin to take up his old post as king; but when father and son met, the former repudiated the notion, and alleged health as the sole ground of his return to the capital. King Charles placed the castle of Moncagliero at his father's disposal, where, however, King Victor resumed his intrigues, and at last demanded that his deed of resignation should be delivered up to be cancelled. King Charles felt the position very keenly, and vacillated a good deal; but finally he concurred in the opinion of his Council that there was nothing for it but to put the old king under arrest, which was done under the direction of the Marquis D'Ormea. King Victor died shortly afterwards, namely, in October 1732.]

NOTE.

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistic consequence of what Voltaire termed "a terrible event without consequences;" and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularizing: since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career—nor quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (a tolerable account of which is to be found, for instance, in Abbé Roman's *Récit*, or even the fifth of Lord Orrery's Letters from Italy)—I cannot expect them to be versed, nor desirous of becoming so, in all the detail of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor—the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will of Charles—the noble and right woman's manliness of his wife—and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say, therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does

what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily. R. B.

LONDON: 1842.

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

PERSONS.

VICTOR AMADEUS, *first King of Sardinia.*
CHARLES EMMANUEL, *his son, Prince of Piedmont.*
POLYXENA, *wife of Charles.*
D'ORMEA, *minister.*

SCENE.—*The Council Chamber of Rivoli Palace, near Turin, communicating with a Hall at the back, an Apartment to the left, and another to the right of the stage.*

TIME, 1730–1731.

FIRST YEAR, 1730.—KING VICTOR.

PART I.

CHARLES, POLYXENA.

Charles. You think so? Well, I do not.
Polyxena. My beloved,

All must clear up ; we shall be happy yet :
This cannot last for ever—oh, may change
To-day or any day !

Charles. —May change? Ah yes—
May change !

Polyxena. Endure it, then.

Charles. No doubt, a life
Like this drags on, now better and now worse.
My father may . . . may take to loving me ;
And he may take D'Ormea closer yet
To counsel him ;—may even cast off her
—That bad Sebastian ; but he also may
. . . Or no, Polyxena, my only friend,
He may not force you from me ?

Polyxena. Now, force me
From you !—me, close by you as if there
gloomed

No Sebastians, no D'Ormeas on our path—
At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand,
Arch-counsellor, prime confidant . . . force
me !

Charles. Because I felt as sure, as I feel sure
We clasp hands now, of being happy once.
Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned
By the world's business that engrossed so
much

My father and my brother : if I peered
From out my privacy,—amid the crash
And blaze of nations, domineered those two.
'Twas war, peace—France our foe, now—
England, friend—

In love with Spain—at feud with Austria !
Well—
I wondered, laughed a moment's laugh for
pride

In the chivalrous couple, then let drop
My curtain—"I am out of it," I said—
When . . .

Polyxena. You have told me, Charles.

Charles. Polyxena—
When suddenly,—a warm March day, just
that !

Just so much sunshine as the cottage child
Basks in delighted, while the cottager
Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,
To catch the more of it—and it must fall
Heavily on my brother ! Had you seen
Philip—the lion-featured ! not like me !

Polyxena. I know—

Charles. And Philip's mouth
yet fast to mine,
His dead cheek on my cheek, his arm still
round

My neck,—they bade me rise, "for I was heir
"To the Duke," they said, "the right hand
of the Duke :"

Till then he was my father, not the Duke.
So . . . let me finish . . . the whole intricate
World's-business their dead boy was born to, I
Must conquer,—ay, the brilliant thing he was,
I, of a sudden must be : my faults, my follies,
—All bitter truths were told me, all at once,
To end the sooner. What I simply styled
Their overlooking me, had been contempt :
How should the Duke employ himself, for-
sooth,

With such an one, while lordly Philip rode
By him their Turin through? But he was
punished,

And must put up with—me ! 'Twas sad
enough
To learn my future portion and submit.

And then the wear and worry, blame on
blame !
For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-smells
about,

How could I but grow dizzy in their pent
Dim palace-rooms at first? My mother's look
As they discussed my insignificance,
She and my father, and I sitting by,—

I bore ; I knew how brave a son they missed :
Philip had gaily run state-papers through,
While Charles was spelling at them painfully !
But Victor was my father spite of that.

"Duke Victor's entire life has been," I said,
"Innumerable efforts to one end ;

"And on the point now of that end's success,
"Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,

"Where's time to be reminded 'tis his child
"He spurns?" And so I suffered—scarcely
suffered,

Since I had you at length !

Polyxena. —To serve in place
Of monarch, minister, and mistress, Charles.

Charles. But, once that crown obtained,
then wasn't not like

Our lot would alter? "When he rests,
takes breath,
"Glances around, sees who there's left to
love—
"Now that my mother's dead, sees I am left—
"Is it not like he'll love me at the last?"
Well, Savoy turns Sardinia; the Duke's King:
Could I—precisely then—could you expect
His harshness to redouble? These few months
Have been . . . have been . . . Polyxena,
do you
And God conduct me, or I lose myself!
What would he have? What is't they want
with me?
Him with this mistress and this minister,
—You see me and you hear him; judge us both!
Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena!
Polyxena. Endure, endure, beloved! Say
you not
He is your father? All's so incident
To novel sway! Beside, our life must change:
Or you'll acquire his kingeraft, or he'll find
Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.
I bear this—not that there's so much to bear.
Charles. You bear? Do not I know that
you, tho' bound
To silence for my sake, are perishing
Piecemeal beside me? And how otherwise
When every creephole from the hideous Court
Is stopped; the Minister to dog me, here—
The Mistress posted to entrap you, there!
And thus shall we grow old in such a life;
Not careless, never estranged,—but old: to
alter
Our life, there is so much to alter!
Polyxena. Come—
Is it agreed that we forego complaint
Even at Turin, yet complain we here
At Rivoli? 'Twere wiser you announced
Our presence to the King. What's now afoot
I wonder? Not that any more's to dread
Than every day's embarrassment: but guess
For me, why train so fast succeeded train
On the high-road, each gayer still than each!
I noticed your Archbishop's pursuivant,
The sable cloak and silver cross; such pomp
Bodes . . . what now, Charles? Can you
conceive?

Charles. Not I.
Polyxena. A matter of some moment.
Charles. There's our life!
Which of the group of loiterers that stare
From the lime-avenue, divines that I—
About to figure presently, he thinks,
In face of all assembled—am the one
Who knows precisely least about it?
Polyxena. Tush!
D'Ormea's contrivance!
Charles. Ay, how otherwise
Should the young Prince serve for the old
King's foil?
—So that the simplest courtier may remark
'Twere idle raising parties for a Prince
Content to linger the Court's laughing-stock.
Something, 'tis like, about that weary business
[Pointing to papers he has laid down,
and which POLYXENA examines.
—Not that I comprehend three words, of
course,
After all last night's study.
Polyxena. The faint heart!
Why, as we rode and you rehearsed just now
Its substance . . . (that's the folded speech
I mean,
Concerning the Reduction of the Fiefs)
—What would you have?—I fancied while
you spoke,
Some tones were just your father's.
Charles. Flattery!
Polyxena. I fancied so:—and here lurks,
sure enough,
My note upon the Spanish Claims! You've
mastered
The fief-speech thoroughly: this other, mind,
Is an opinion you deliver,—stay,
Best read it slowly over once to me;
Read—there's bare time; you read it firmly
—loud
—Rather loud, looking in his face,—don't
sink
Your eye once—ay, thus! "If Spain claims
. . ." begin
—Just as you look at me!
Charles. At you! Oh truly,
You have I seen, say, marshalling your troops,
Dismissing councils, or, through doors ajar,

Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow
chagrins
—Then radiant, for a crown had all at once
Seemed possible again! I can behold
Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit fast,
In this sweet brow, nought could divert me
from
Save objects like Sebastian's shameless lip,
Or worse, the clipped grey hair and dead
white face
And dwindling eye as if it ached with guile,
D'Ormea wears . . .

[*As he kisses her, enter from the
KING'S apartment D'ORMEA.*
I said he would divert
My kisses from your brow!
D'Ormea [*aside*]. Here! So, King
Victor
Spoke truth for once: and who's ordained,
but I
To make that memorable? Both in call,
As he declared. Were't better gnash the
teeth,
Or laugh outright now?
Charles [*to POLYXENA*]. What's his visit
for?
D'Ormea [*aside*]. I question if they even
speak to me.
Polyxena [*to CHARLES*]. Face the man!
He'll suppose you fear him, else.
[*Aloud.*] The Marquis bears the King's
command, no doubt?
D'Ormea [*aside*]. Precisely!—If I threat-
ened him, perhaps?
Well, this at least is punishment enough!
Men used to promise punishment would come.
Charles. Deliver the King's message,
Marquis!
D'Ormea [*aside*]. Ah—
So anxious for his fate? [*Aloud.*] A word,
my Prince,
Before you see your father—just one word
Of counsel!
Charles. Oh, your counsel certainly!
Polyxena, the Marquis counsels us!
Well, sir? Be brief, however!
D'Ormea. What? You know
As much as I?—preceded me, most like,

In knowledge! So! ('Tis in his eye, be-
side—
His voice: he knows it, and his heart's on
flame
Already.) You surmise why you, myself,
Del Borgo, Spava, fifty nobles more,
Are summoned thus?
Charles. Is the Prince used to know,
At any time, the pleasure of the King,
Before his minister?—Polyxena,
Stay here till I conclude my task: I feel
Your presence (smile not) through the walls,
and take
Fresh heart. The King's within that chamber?
D'Ormea [*passing the table whereon a
paper lies, exclaims, as he glances at
it*]. "Spain!"
Polyxena [*aside to CHARLES*]. Tarry awhile:
what ails the minister?
D'Ormea. Madam, I do not often trouble
you.
The Prince loathes, and you scorn me—let
that pass!
But since it touches him and you, not me,
Bid the Prince listen!
Polyxena [*to CHARLES*]. Surely you will
listen!
—Deceit?—those fingers crumpling up his
vest?
Charles. Deceitful to the very fingers' ends!
D'Ormea [*who has approached them, over-
looks the other paper CHARLES continues
to hold*]. My project for the Fiefs! As
I supposed!
Sir, I must give you light upon those measures
—For this is mine, and that I spied of Spain,
Mine too!
Charles. Release me! Do you gloze on me
Who bear in the world's face (that is, the world
You make for me at Turin) your contempt?
—Your measures?—When was not a hateful
task
D'Ormea's imposition? Leave my robe!
What post can I bestow, what grant concede?
Or do you take me for the King?
D'Ormea. Not I!
Not yet for King,—not for, as yet, thank God,
One who in . . . shall I say a year, a month:

Ay!—shall be wretcheder than e'er was slave
 In his Sardinia.—Europe's spectacle
 And the world's bye-word! What? The
 Prince aggrieved
 That I excluded him our counsels? Here
 [*Touching the paper in CHARLES'S hand.*
 Accept a method of extorting gold
 From Savoy's nobles, who must wring its worth
 In silver first from tillers of the soil,
 Whose hinds again have to contribute brass
 To make up the amount: there's counsel, sir,
 My counsel, one year old; and the fruit,
 this—
 Savoy's become a mass of misery
 And wrath, which one man has to meet—
 the King:
 You're not the King! Another counsel, sir!
 Spain entertains a project (here it lies)
 Which, guessed, makes Austria offer that
 same King
 Thus much to baffle Spain; he promises;
 Then comes Spain, breathless lest she be fore-
 stalled,
 Her offer follows; and he promises . . .
Charles. —Promises, sir, when he has just
 agreed
 To Austria's offer?
D'Ormea. That's a counsel, Prince!
 But past our foresight, Spain and Austria
 (choosing
 To make their quarrel up between themselves
 Without the intervention of a friend)
 introduce both treaties, and both promises . . .
Charles. How?
D'Ormea. Prince, a counsel! And
 the fruit of that?
 Both parties covenant afresh, to fall
 Together on their friend, blot out his name,
 Abolish him from Europe. So, take note,
 Here's Austria and here's Spain to fight
 against:
 And what sustains the King but Savoy here,
 A miserable people mad with wrongs?
 You're not the King!
Charles. Polyxena, you said
 All would clear up: all does clear up to me.
D'Ormea. Clear up! 'Tis no such thing
 to envy, then?

VOL. I.

You see the King's state in its length and
 breadth?
 You blame me now for keeping you aloof
 From counsels and the fruit of counsels?
 Wait
 Till I explain this morning's business!
Charles [*aside*]. No—
 Stoop to my father, yes,—D'Ormea, no:
 —The King's son, not to the King's coun-
 sellor!
 I will do something, but at least retain
 The credit of my deed. [*Aloud.*] Then it is
 this
 You now expressly come to tell me?
D'Ormea. This
 To tell! You apprehend me?
Charles. Perfectly.
 Further, D'Ormea, you have shown yourself,
 For the first time these many weeks and
 months,
 Disposed to do my bidding?
D'Ormea. From the heart!
Charles. Acquaint my father, first, I wait
 his pleasure:
 Next . . . or, I'll tell you at a fitter time.
 Acquaint the King!
D'Ormea [*aside*]. If I 'scape Victor yet!
 First, to prevent this stroke at me: if not,—
 Then, to avenge it! [*To CHARLES.*] Gracious
 sir, I go. [*Goes.*]
Charles. God, I forbore! Which more
 offends, that man
 Or that man's master? Is it come to this?
 Have they supposed (the sharpest insult yet)
 I need e'en his intervention? No!
 No—dull am I, conceded,—but so dull,
 Scarcely! Their step decides me.
Polyxena. How decides?
Charles. You would be freed D'Ormea's
 eye and hers?
 —Could fly the court with me and live con-
 tent?
 So, this it is for which the knights assemble!
 The whispers and the closeting of late,
 The savageness and insolence of old,
 —For this!
Polyxena. What mean you?
Charles. How? You fail to catch

P

Their clever plot? I missed it, but could you? These last two months of care to inculcate How dull I am,—D'Ormea's present visit To prove that, being dull, I might be worse Were I a King—as wretched as now dull— You recognize in it no winding up Of a long plot?

Polyxena. Why should there be a plot?

Charles. The crown's secure now; I should shame the crown—

An old complaint; the point is, how to gain My place for one, more fit in Victor's eyes, His mistress the Sebastian's child.

Polyxena. In truth?

Charles. They dare not quite dethrone Sardinia's Prince:

But they may descant on my dullness till They sting me into even praying them Grant leave to hide my head, resign my state, And end the coil. Not see now? In a word, They'd have me tender them myself my rights As one incapable;—some cause for that, Since I delayed thus long to see their drift! I shall apprise the King he may resume My rights this moment.

Polyxena. Pause! I dare not think So ill of Victor.

Charles. Think no ill of him!

Polyxena.—Nor think him, then, so shallow as to suffer

His purpose be divined thus easily. And yet—you are the last of a great line; There's a great heritage at stake; new days Seemed to await this newest of the realms Of Europe:—Charles, you must withstand this!

Charles. Ah—

You dare not then renounce the splendid Court For one whom all the world despises? Speak!

Polyxena. My gentle husband, speak I will, and truth.

Were this as you believe, and I once sure Your duty lay in so renouncing rule, I could . . . could? Oh what happiness it were—

To live, my Charles, and die, alone with you!

Charles. I grieve I asked you. To the presence, then!

By this, D'Ormea acquaints the King, no doubt,

He fears I am too simple for mere hints, And that no less will serve than Victor's mouth Demonstrating in council what I am.

I have not breathed, I think, these many years!

Polyxena. Why, it may be!—if he desire to wed

That woman, call legitimate her child.

Charles. You see as much? Oh, let his will have way!

You'll not repent confiding in me, love?

There's many a brighter spot in Piedmont, far,

Than Rivoli. I'll seek him: or, suppose

You hear first how I mean to speak my mind?

—Loudly and firmly both, this time, be sure!

I yet may see your Rhine-land, who can tell?

Once away, ever then away! I breathe.

Polyxena. And I too breathe.

Charles. Come, my Polyxena!

KING VICTOR.

PART II.

Enter King VICTOR, bearing the Regalia on a cushion, from his apartment. He calls loudly.

Victor. D'Ormea!—for patience fails me, treading thus

Among the obscure trains I have laid,—my knights

Safe in the hall here—in that anteroom,

My son,—D'Ormea, where? Of this, one touch— [*Laying down the crown.*]

This fireball to these mute black cold trains—then

Outbreak enough!

[*Contemplating it.*] To lose all, after all!

This, glancing o'er my house for ages—shaped,

Brave meteor, like the crown of Cyprus now,

Jerusalem, Spain, England, every change

The braver,—and when I have clutched a prize

My ancestry died wan with watching for,

To lose it!—by a slip, a fault, a trick
Learnt to advantage once and not unlearned
When past the use,—“just this once more”

(I thought)

“Use it with Spain and Austria happily,
“And then away with trick!” An oversight
I’d have repaired thrice over, any time
These fifty years, must happen now! There’s
peace

At length; and I, to make the most of peace,
Ventured my project on our people here,
As needing not their help: which Europe
knows,

And means, cold-blooded, to dispose herself
(Apart from plausibilities of war)

To crush the new-made King—who ne’er
till now

Fear’d her. As Duke, I lost each foot of
earth

And laughed at her: my name was left, my
sword

Left, all was left! But she can take, she
knows,

This crown, herself conceded . . . That’s
to try,

Kind Europe! My career’s not closed as yet!

This boy was ever subject to my will,
Timid and tame—the fitter! D’Ormea, too—

What if the sovereign also rid himself
Of thee, his prime of parasites?—I delay!

D’Ormea! [As D’ORMEA enters, the
KING seats himself.

My son, the Prince—attends he?

D’Ormea. Sir,

He does attend. The crown prepared!—it
seems

That you persist in your resolve.

Victor. Who’s come?

The chancellor and the chamberlain? My
knights?

D’Ormea. The whole Annunziata. If, my
liege,

Your fortune had not tottered worse than
now . . .

Victor. Del Borgo has drawn up the
schedules? mine—

My son’s, too? Excellent! Only, beware
Of the least blunder, or we look but fools.

First, you read the Annulment of the Oaths;
Del Borgo follows . . . no, the Prince shall
sign;

Then let Del Borgo read the Instrument:
On which, I enter.

D’Ormea. Sir, this may be truth;

You, sir, may do as you affect—may break
Your engine, me, to pieces: try at least

If not a spring remain worth saving! Take

My counsel as I’ve counselled many times!

What if the Spaniard and the Austrian threat?

There’s England, Holland, Venice—which
ally

Select you?

Victor. Aha! Come, D’Ormea,—
“truth”

Was on your lip a minute since. Allies?

I’ve broken faith with Venice, Holland,
England

—As who knows if not you?

D’Ormea. But why with me

Break faith—with one ally, your best, break
faith?

Victor. When first I stumbled on you,
Marquis—’twas

At Mondovi—a little lawyer’s clerk . . .

D’Ormea. Therefore your soul’s ally!—
who brought you through

Your quarrel with the Pope, at pains enough—

Who simply echoed you in these affairs—

On whom you cannot therefore visit these

Affairs’ ill-fortune—whom you trust to guide

You safe (yes, on my soul) through these
affairs!

Victor. I was about to notice, had you not
Prevented me, that since that great town kept

With its chicanes D’Ormea’s satchel stuffed

And D’Ormea’s self sufficiently recluse,

He missed a sight,—my naval armament

When I burned Toulon. How the skiff
exults

Upon the galliot’s¹ wave!—rises its height,

O’ertops it even; but the great wave bursts,

And hell-deep in the horrible profound

Buries itself the galliot: shall the skiff

¹ A vessel used on the Mediterranean, built
for speed.

Think to escape the sea's black trough in turn?

Apply this : you have been my minister
—Next me, above me possibly ;—sad post,
Huge care, abundant lack of peace of mind ;
Who would desiderate the eminence ?

You gave your soul to get it ; you'd yet give
Your soul to keep it, as I mean you shall,
D'Ormea ! What if the wave ebbed with me ?
Whereas it cants you to another crest ;
I toss you to my son ; ride out your ride !

D'Ormea. Ah, you so much despise me ?

Victor. You, D'Ormea ?
Nowise : and I'll inform you why. A king
Must in his time have many ministers,
And I've been rash enough to part with mine
When I thought proper. Of the tribe, not one
(. . . Or wait, did Pianezze ?—ah, just the
same !)

Not one of them, ere his remonstrance reached
The length of yours, but has assured me
(commonly

Standing much as you stand,—or nearer, say,
The door to make his exit on his speech)

—I should repent of what I did. D'Ormea,
Be candid, you approached it when I bade
you

Prepare the schedules ! But you stopped in
time,

You have not so assured me : how should I
Despise you then ?

Enter CHARLES.

Victor [changing his tone]. Are you in-
structed ? Do

My order, point by point ! About it, sir !

D'Ormea. You so despise me ! [*Aside.*]

One last stay remains—

The boy's discretion there.

[*To CHARLES.*] For your sake, Prince,
I pleaded, wholly in your interest,

To save you from this fate !

Charles [aside]. Must I be told

The Prince was supplicated for—by him ?

Victor [to D'ORMEA]. Apprise Del Borgo,

Spava, and the rest,

Our son attends them ; then return.

D'Ormea.

One word !

Charles [aside]. A moment's pause and they
would drive me hence,

I do believe !

D'Ormea [aside]. Let but the boy be firm !

Victor. You disobey ?

Charles [to D'ORMEA]. You do not disobey
Me, at least ? Did you promise that or no ?

D'Ormea. Sir, I am yours : what would
you ? Yours am I !

Charles. When I have said what I shall say,
'tis like

Your face will ne'er again disgust me. Go !
Through you, as through a breast of glass, I see.

And for your conduct, from my youth till now,
Take my contempt ! You might have spared
me much,

Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed your-
self :

That's over now. Go, ne'er to come again !

D'Ormea. As son, the father—father as,
the son !

My wits ! My wits ! [*Goes.*]

Victor [seated]. And you, what meant
you, pray,

Speaking thus to D'Ormea ?

Charles. Let us not

Waste words upon D'Ormea ! Those I spent
Have half unsettled what I came to say.

His presence vexes to my very soul.

Victor. One called to manage a kingdom,
Charles, needs heart

To bear up under worse annoyances

Than seems D'Ormea—to me, at least.

Charles [aside]. Ah, good !

He keeps me to the point. Then be it so.

[*Aloud.*] Last night, sir, brought me certain
papers—these—

To be reported on,—your way of late.

Is it last night's result that you demand ?

Victor. For God's sake, what has night
brought forth ? Pronounce

The . . . what's your word ?—result !

Charles. Sir, that had proved

Quite worthy of your sneer, no doubt :—a few
Lame thoughts, regard for you alone could

wring,

Lame as they are, from brains like mine, be-
lieve !

As 'tis, sir, I am spared both toil and sneer.
These are the papers.

Victor. Well, sir? I suppose
You hardly burned them. Now for your
result!

Charles. I never should have done great
things of course,
But . . . oh my father, had you loved me
more!

Victor. Loved? [*Aside.*] Has D'Ormea
played me false, I wonder?

[*Aloud.*] Why, Charles, a king's love is
diffused—yourself

May overlook, perchance, your part in it.
Our monarchy is absolutest now
In Europe, or my trouble's thrown away.
I love, my mode, that subjects each and all
May have the power of loving, all and each,
Their mode: I doubt not, many have their sons
To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long:
I have that crown, this chair, D'Ormea,
Charles!

Charles. 'Tis well I am a subject then, not
you.

Victor [*aside*]. D'Ormea has told him every-
thing.

[*Aloud.*] Aha!

I apprehend you: when all's said, you take
Your private station to be prized beyond
My own, for instance?

Charles. —Do and ever did
So take it: 'tis the method you pursue
That grieves . . .

Victor. These words! Let me
express, my friend,
Your thoughts. You penetrate what I sup-
posed

Secret. D'Ormea plies his trade betimes!
I purpose to resign my crown to you.

Charles. To me?

Victor. Now,—in that chamber.

Charles. You resign
The crown to me?

Victor. And time enough, Charles,
sure?

Confess with me, at four-and-sixty years
A crown's a load. I covet quiet once
Before I die, and summoned you for that.

Charles. 'Tis I will speak: you ever hated
me.

I bore it,—have insulted me, borne too—
Now you insult yourself; and I remember
What I believed you, what you really are,
And cannot bear it. What! My life has
passed

Under your eye, tormented as you know,—
Your whole sagacities, one after one,
At leisure brought to play on me—to prove me
A fool, I thought and I submitted; now
You'd prove . . . what would you prove me?

Victor. This to me?

I hardly know you!

Charles. Know me? Oh indeed
You do not! Wait till I complain next time
Of my simplicity!—for here's a sage
Knows the world well, is not to be deceived,
And his experience and his Macchiavels,
D'Ormeas, teach him—what?—that I this
while

Have envied him his crown! He has not
smiled,

I warrant,—has not eaten, drunk, nor slept,
For I was plotting with my Princess yonder!
Who knows what we might do or might not
do?

Go now, be politic, astound the world!
That sentry in the antechamber—nay,
The varlet who disposed this precious trap

[*Pointing to the crown.*]

That was to take me—ask them if they think
Their own sons envy them their posts!—Know
me!

Victor. But you know me, it seems: so,
learn in brief,

My pleasure. This assembly is convened . . .

Charles. Tell me, that woman put it in your
head!

You were not sole contriver of the scheme,
My father!

Victor. Now observe me, sir! I jest
Seldom—on these points, never. Here, I say,
The knights assemble to see me concede,
And you accept, Sardinia's crown.

Charles. Farewell!
'Twere vain to hope to change this: I can
end it.

Not that I cease from being yours, when sunk
 Into obscurity : I'll die for you,
 But not annoy you with my presence. Sir,
 Farewell ! Farewell !

Enter D'ORMEA.

D'Ormea [aside]. Ha, sure he's changed
 again—
 Means not to fall into the cunning trap !

Then Victor, I shall yet escape you, Victor !

*Victor [suddenly placing the crown upon
 the head of CHARLES].* D'Ormea, your
 King !

[*To CHARLES.*] My son, obey me !
 Charles,

Your father, clearer-sighted than yourself,
 Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this looks real !
 My reasons after ; reason upon reason

After : but now, obey me ! Trust in me !

By this, you save Sardinia, you save me !

Why, the boy swoons ! [*To D'ORMEA.*]

Come this side !

*D'Ormea [as CHARLES turns from him to
 VICTOR].* You persist ?

Victor. Yes, I conceive the gesture's mean-
 ing. 'Faith,

He almost seems to hate you : how is that ?

Be re-assured, my Charles ! Is't over now ?

Then, Marquis, tell the new King what re-
 mains

To do ! A moment's work. Del Borgo reads

The Act of Abdication out, you sign it,

Then I sign ; after that, come back to me.

D'Ormea. Sir, for the last time, pause !

Victor. Five minutes longer

I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate—

And I'll so turn those minutes to account

That . . . Ay, you recollect me ! [*Aside.*]

Could I bring

My foolish mind to undergo the reading

That Act of Abdication !

[*As CHARLES motions D'ORMEA
 to precede him.*

Thanks, dear Charles !

[*CHARLES and D'ORMEA retire.*

Victor. A novel feature in the boy,—indeed
 Just what I feared he wanted most. Quite
 right,

This earnest tone : your truth, now, for effect !
 It answers every purpose : with that look,
 That voice,—I hear him : "I began no
 treaty,"

(He speaks to Spain), "nor ever dreamed of
 this

"You show me ; this I from my soul regret ;

"But if my father signed it, bid not me

"Dishonour him—who gave me all, beside :"

And, "True," says Spain, "'twere harsh to
 visit that

"Upon the Prince." Then come the nobles
 trooping :

"I grieve at these exactions—I had cut

"This hand off ere impose them ; but shall I

"Undo my father's deed?"—and they confer :

"Doubtless he was no party, after all ;

"Give the Prince time !"

Ay, give us time, but time !

Only, he must not, when the dark day comes,

Refer our friends to me and frustrate all.

We'll have no child's play, no desponding fits,

No Charles at each cross turn entreating

Victor

To take his crown again. Guard against that !

Enter D'ORMEA.

Long live King Charles !

No—Charles's counsellor !

Well, is it over, Marquis ? Did I jest ?

D'Ormea. "King Charles !" What then
 may you be ?

Victor. Anything !

A country gentleman that, cured of bustle,

Now beats a quick retreat toward Chambery,

Would hunt and hawk and leave you noisy folk

To drive your trade without him. I'm Count

Remont—

Count Tende—any little place's Count !

D'Ormea. Then Victor, Captain against
 Catinat

At Staffarde, where the French beat you ; and
 Duke

At Turin, where you beat the French ; King
 late

Of Savoy, Piedmont, Montferrat, Sardinia,

—Now, "any little place's Count"—

Victor. Proceed !

D'Ormea. Breaker of vows to God, who crowned you first ;
Breaker of vows to man, who kept you since ;
Most profligate to me who outraged God
And man to serve you, and am made pay crimes
I was but privy to, by passing thus
To your imbecile son—who, well you know,
Must—(when the people here, and nations there,
Clamour for you the main delinquent, slipped
From King to—"Count of any little place")
Must needs surrender me, all in his reach,—
I, sir, forgive you : for I see the end—
See you on your return—(you will return)—
To him you trust, a moment . . .

Victor. Trust him? How?
My poor man, merely a prime-minister,
Make me know where my trust errs!

D'Ormea. In his fear,
His love, his—but discover for yourself
What you are weakest, trusting in!

Victor. Aha,
D'Ormea, not a shrewder scheme than this
In your repertory? You know old Victor—
Vain, choleric, inconstant, rash—(I've heard
Talkers who little thought the King so close)
Felicitous now, were't not, to provoke him
To clean forget, one minute afterward,
His solemn act, and call the nobles back
And pray them give again the very power
He has abjured?—for the dear sake of what?
Vengeance on you, *D'Ormea!* No: such
am I,
Count Tende or Count anything you please,
—Only, the same that did the things you say,
And, among other things you say not, used
Your finest fibre, meanest muscle,—you
I used, and now, since you will have it so,
Leave to your fate—mere lumber in the midst,
You and your works. Why, what on earth
beside
Are you made for, you sort of ministers?
D'Ormea. Not left, though, to my fate!
Your witless son
Has more wit than to load himself with
lumber:
He foils you that way, and I follow you.

Victor. Stay with my son—protect the weaker side!
D'Ormea. Ay, to be tossed the people like a rag,
And flung by them for Spain and Austria's sport,
Abolishing the record of your part
In all this perfidy!

Victor. Prevent, beside,
My own return!

D'Ormea. That's half prevented now!
'Twill go hard but you find a wondrous charm
In exile, to discredit me. The Alps,
Silk-mills to watch, vines asking vigilance—
Hounds open for the stag, your hawk's
a-wing—
Brave days that wait the Louis of the South,
Italy's Janus!

Victor. So, the lawyer's clerk
Won't tell me that I shall repent!

D'Ormea. You give me
Full leave to ask if you repent?

Victor. Whene'er
Sufficient time's elapsed for that, you judge!
[*Shouts inside "King CHARLES!"*]

D'Ormea. Do you repent?
Victor [after a slight pause]. . . I've kept
them waiting? Yes!

Come in, complete the Abdication, sir!
[*They go out.*]

Enter POLYXENA.

Polyxena. A shout! The sycophants are
free of Charles!
Oh is not this like Italy? No fruit
Of his or my distempered fancy, this,
But just an ordinary fact! Beside,
Here they've set forms for such proceedings;
Victor
Imprisoned his own mother: he should know,
If any, how a son's to be deprived
Of a son's right. Our duty's palpable.
Ne'er was my husband for the wily king
And the unworthy subjects: be it so!
Come you safe out of them, my Charles! Our
life
Grows not the broad and dazzling life, I
dreamed

Might prove your lot ; for strength was shut
in you

None guessed but I—strength which, un-
trammelled once,

Had little shamed your vaunted ancestry—

Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,

Simplicity and utter truthfulness

—All which, they shout to lose !

So, now my work

Begins — to save him from regret. Save

Charles

Regret?—the noble nature ! He's not made

Like these Italians : 'tis a German soul.

CHARLES enters crowned.

Oh, where's the King's heir? Gone !—the
Crown Prince? Gone !—

Where's Savoy? Gone !—Sardinia? Gone !

But Charles

Is left ! And when my Rhine-land bowers
arrive,

If he looked almost handsome yester-twilight
As his grey eyes seemed widening into
black

Because I praised him, then how will he
look ?

Farewell, you stripped and whited mulberry-
trees

Round each to each by lazy ropes of vine !

Now I'll teach you my language : I'm not
forced

To speak Italian now, Charles ?

[*She sees the crown.*] What is this ?

Answer me—who has done this? Answer !

Charles.

He !

I am King now.

Polyxena. Oh worst, worst, worst of all !

Tell me ! What, Victor? He has made you
King ?

What's he then? What's to follow this?
You, King ?

Charles. Have I done wrong? Yes, for
you were not by !

Polyxena. Tell me from first to last.

Charles. Hush—a new world

Brightens before me ; he is moved away
—The dark form that eclipsed it, he subsides
Into a shape supporting me like you,

And I, alone, tend upward, more and
more

Tend upward : I am grown Sardinia's King.

Polyxena. Now stop : was not this Victor,
Duke of Savoy

At ten years old ?

Charles. He was.

Polyxena. And the Duke spent

Since then, just four-and-fifty years in toil

To be—what ?

Charles. King.

Polyxena. Then why unking himself ?

Charles. Those years are cause enough.

Polyxena. The only cause ?

Charles. Some new perplexities.

Polyxena. Which you can solve

Although he cannot ?

Charles. He assures me so.

Polyxena. And this he means shall last—
how long ?

Charles. How long ?

Think you I fear the perils I confront ?

He's praising me before the people's face—

My people !

Polyxena. Then he's changed — grown
kind, the King ?

Where can the trap be ?

Charles. Heart and soul I pledge !

My father, could I guard the crown you gained,

Transmit as I received it,—all good else

Would I surrender !

Polyxena. Ah, it opens then

Before you, all you dreaded formerly ?

You are rejoiced to be a king, my Charles ?

Charles. So much to dare? The better ;

—much to dread ?

The better. I'll adventure though alone.

Triumph or die, there's Victor still to witness

Who dies or triumphs—either way, alone !

Polyxena. Once I had found my share in
triumph, Charles,

Or death.

Charles. But you are I ! But you I call

To take, Heaven's proxy, vows tendered

Heaven

A moment since. I will deserve the crown !

Polyxena. You will. [*Aside.*] No doubt
it were a glorious thing

For any people, if a heart like his
Ruled over it. I would I saw the trap.

Enter VICTOR.

'Tis he must show me.

Victor. So, the mask falls off
An old man's foolish love at last. Spare
thanks!

I know you, and Polyxena I know.
Here's Charles—I am his guest now—does
he bid me

Be seated? And my light-haired blue-eyed
child

Must not forget the old man far away
At Chambéry, who dozes while she reigns.

Polyxena. Most grateful shall we now be,
talking least

Of gratitude—indeed of anything
That hinders what yourself must need to say
To Charles.

Charles. Pray speak, sir!

Victor. 'Faith, not much to say:
Only what shows itself, you once i' the point
Of sight. You're now the King: you'll
comprehend

Much you may oft have wondered at—the
shifts,

Dissimulation, wiliness I showed.

For what's our post? Here's Savoy and
here's Piedmont,

Here's Montferrat—a breadth here, a space
there—

To o'ersweep all these, what's one weapon
worth?

I often think of how they fought in Greece:
(Or Rome, which was it? You're the
scholar, Charles!)

You made a front-thrust? But if your shield
too

Were not adroitly planted, some shrewd knave
Reached you behind; and him foiled, straight
if thong

And handle of that shield were not cast loose,
And you enabled to outstrip the wind,

Fresh foes assailed you, either side; 'scape
these,

And reach your place of refuge—e'en then, odds
If the gate opened unless breath enough

Were left in you to make its lord a speech.
Oh, you will see!

Charles. No: straight on shall I go,
Truth helping; win with it or die with it.

Victor. 'Faith, Charles, you're not made
Europe's fighting-man!

The barrier-guarder, if you please. You clutch
Hold and consolidate, with envious France
This side, with Austria that, the territory
I held—ay, and will hold . . . which *you*
shall hold

Despite the couple! But I've surely earned
Exemption from these weary politics,
—The privilege to prattle with my son
And daughter here, though Europe wait the
while.

Polyxena. Nay, sir,—at Chambéry, away
for ever,

As soon you will be, 'tis farewell we bid
you:

Turn these few fleeting moments to account!
'Tis just as though it were a death.

Victor. Indeed!

Polyxena [*aside*]. Is the trap there?

Charles. Ay, call this parting—death!
The sadder your memory becomes.
If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back
My father?

Victor. I mean . . .

Polyxena [*who watches* VICTOR *narrowly*
this while]. Your father does not mean
You should be ruling for your father's sake:
It is your people must concern you wholly
Instead of him. You mean this, sir? (He
drops

My hand!)

Charles. That people is now part of me.

Victor. About the people! I took certain
measures

Some short time since . . . Oh, I know
well, you know

But little of my measures! These affect
The nobles; we've resumed some grants,
imposed

A tax or two: prepare yourself, in short,
For clamour on that score. Mark me: you
yield

No jot of aught entrusted you!

Polyxena. No jot
You yield!

Charles. My father, when I took the oath,
Although my eye might stray in search of yours,
I heard it, understood it, promised God
What you require. Till from this eminence
He move me, here I keep, nor shall concede
The meanest of my rights.

Victor [aside]. The boy's a fool!
—Or rather, I'm a fool: for, what's wrong
here?

To-day the sweets of reigning: let to-morrow
Be ready with its bitters.

Enter D'ORMEA.

There's beside
Somewhat to press upon your notice first.

Charles. Then why delay it for an instant,
sir?

That Spanish claim perchance? And, now
you speak,

—This morning, my opinion was mature,
Which, boy-like, I was bashful in producing
To one I ne'er am like to fear in future!
My thought is formed upon that Spanish claim.

Victor. Betimes indeed. Not now, Charles!
You require
A host of papers on it.

D'Ormea [coming forward]. Here they are.
[*To CHARLES.*] I, sir, was minister and much
beside

Of the late monarch; to say little, him
I served: on you I have, to say e'en less,
No claim. This case contains those papers:
with them

I tender you my office.

Victor [hastily]. Keep him, Charles!
There's reason for it—many reasons: you
Distrust him, nor are so far wrong there,—but
He's mixed up in this matter—he'll desire
To quit you, for occasions known to me:
Do not accept those reasons: have him stay!

Polyxena [aside]. His minister thrust on us!

Charles [to D'ORMEA]. Sir, believe,
In justice to myself, you do not need
E'en this commending: howsoe'er might seem
My feelings toward you, as a private man,
They quit me in the vast and untried field

Of action. Though I shall myself (as late
In your own hearing I engaged to do)
Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help
Is necessary. Think the past forgotten
And serve me now!

D'Ormea. I did not offer you
My service—would that I could serve you, sir!
As for the Spanish matter . . .

Victor. But despatch
At least the dead, in my good daughter's
phrase,

Beside the living! Help to house me safe
Ere with D'Ormea you set the world a-gape!
Here is a paper—will you overlook
What I propose reserving for my needs?
I get as far from you as possible:

Here's what I reckon my expenditure.

Charles [reading]. A miserable fifty thou-
sand crowns—

Victor. Oh, quite enough for country
gentlemen!

Beside the exchequer happens . . . but find
out

All that, yourself!

Charles [still reading]. "Count Tende"
—what means this?

Victor. Me: you were but an infant when
I burst

Through the defile of Tende upon France.
Had only my allies kept true to me!

No matter. Tende's, then, a name I take
Just as . . .

D'Ormea. —The Marchioness Sebastian
takes

The name of Spigno.

Charles. How, sir?

Victor [to D'ORMEA]. Fool! All that
Was for my own detailing. [*To CHARLES.*]

That anon!

Charles [to D'ORMEA]. Explain what you
have said, sir!

D'Ormea. I supposed
The marriage of the King to her I named,
Profoundly kept a secret these few weeks,
Was not to be one, now he's Count.

Polyxena [aside]. With us
The minister—with him the mistress!

Charles [to VICTOR]. No—

Tell me you have not taken her—that woman
To live with, past recall!

Victor. And where's the crime . . .

Polyxena [*to CHARLES*]. True, sir, this is
a matter past recall

And past your cognizance. A day before,
And you had been compelled to note this:
now,—

Why note it? The King saved his House
from shame:

What the Count did, is no concern of yours.

Charles [*after a pause*]. The Spanish
claim, D'Ormea!

Victor. Why, my son,
I took some ill-advised . . . one's age, in
fact,

Spoils everything: though I was overreached,
A younger brain, we'll trust, may extricate
Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Ormea,
Inform the King!

D'Ormea [*without regarding VICTOR, and
leisurely*]. Thus stands the case with
Spain:

When first the Infant Carlos claimed his proper
Succession to the throne of Tuscany . . .

Victor. I tell you, that stands over! Let
that rest!

There is the policy!

Charles [*to D'ORMEA*]. Thus much I know,
And more—too much: the remedy?

D'Ormea. Of course!
No glimpse of one.

Victor. No remedy at all!

It makes the remedy itself—time makes it.

D'Ormea [*to CHARLES*]. But if . . .

Victor [*still more hastily*]. In fine, I
shall take care of that:

And, with another project that I have . . .

D'Ormea [*turning on him*]. Oh, since
Count Tende means to take again

King Victor's crown!—

Polyxena [*throwing herself at VICTOR'S
feet*]. E'en now retake it, sir!

Oh speak! We are your subjects both, once
more!

Say it—a word effects it! You meant not,
Nor do mean now, to take it: but you
must!

'Tis in you—in your nature—and the shame's
Not half the shame 'twould grow to after-
wards!

Charles. Polyxena!

Polyxena. A word recalls the knights—
Say it! What's promising and what's the
past?

Say you are still King Victor!

D'Ormea. Better say

The Count repents, in brief! [*VICTOR rises.*

Charles. With such a crime

I have not charged you, sir!

Polyxena. (Charles turns from me!)

SECOND YEAR, 1731.—KING CHARLES.

PART I.

Enter Queen POLYXENA and D'ORMEA.—

A pause.

Polyxena. And now, sir, what have you to
say?

D'Ormea. Count Tende . . .

Polyxena. Affirm not I betrayed you; you
resolve

On uttering this strange intelligence

—Nay, post yourself to find me ere I reach

The capital, because you know King Charles

Tarries a day or two at Evian baths

Behind me:—but take warning,—here and
thus [*Seating herself in the royal seat.*

I listen, if I listen—not your friend.

Explicitly the statement, if you still

Persist to urge it on me, must proceed:

I am not made for aught else.

D'Ormea. Good! Count Tende . . .

Polyxena. I, who mistrust you, shall
acquaint King Charles

Who even more mistrusts you.

D'Ormea. Does he so?

Polyxena. Why should he not?

D'Ormea. Ay, why not?

Motives, seek

You virtuous people, motives! Say, I serve

God at the devil's bidding—will that do?

I'm proud: our people have been pacified,

Really I know not how—

Polyxena. By truthfulness.
D'Ormea. Exactly; that shows I had
 nought to do
 With pacifying them. Our foreign perils
 Also exceed my means to stay: but here
 'Tis otherwise, and my pride's piqued. Count
 Tende
 Completes a full year's absence: would you,
 madam,
 Have the old monarch back, his mistress
 back,
 His measures back? I pray you, act upon
 My counsel, or they will be.

Polyxena. When?
D'Ormea. Let's think.
 Home-matters settled—Victor's coming now;
 Let foreign matters settle—Victor's here
 Unless I stop him; as I will, this way.

Polyxena [*reading the papers he presents*].
 If this should prove a plot 'twixt you
 and Victor?
 You seek annoyances to give the pretext
 For what you say you fear.

D'Ormea. Oh, possibly!
 I go for nothing. Only show King Charles
 That thus Count Tende purposes return,
 And style me his inviter, if you please!

Polyxena. Half of your tale is true; most
 like, the Count
 Seeks to return: but why stay you with us?
 To aid in such emergencies.

D'Ormea. Keep safe
 Those papers: or, to serve me, leave no
 proof
 I thus have counselled! When the Count
 returns,
 And the King abdicates, 'twill stead me little
 To have thus counselled.

Polyxena. The King abdicate!
D'Ormea. He's good, we knew long since
 —wise, we discover—
 Firm, let us hope:—but I'd have gone to work
 With him away. Well!

[*CHARLES without*]. In the Council
 Chamber?

D'Ormea. All's lost!
Polyxena. Oh, surely not King
 Charles! He's changed—

That's not this year's care-burthened voice
 and step:

'Tis last year's step, the Prince's voice!

D'Ormea. I know.

[*Enter CHARLES:—D'ORMEA
 retiring a little.*]

Charles. Now wish me joy, Polyxena!
 Wish it me

The old way! [*She embraces him.*]

There was too much cause for that!
 But I have found myself again. What news
 At Turin? Oh, if you but felt the load
 I'm free of—free! I said this year would end
 Or it, or me—but I am free, thank God!

Polyxena. How, Charles?

Charles. You do not
 guess? The day I found

Sardinia's hideous coil, at home, abroad,
 And how my father was involved in it,—
 Of course, I vowed to rest and smile no more
 Until I cleared his name from obloquy.

We did the people right—'twas much to gain
 That point, redress our nobles' grievance, too—
 But that took place here, was no crying shame:
 All must be done abroad,—if I abroad
 Appeased the justly-angered Powers, de-
 stroyed

The scandal, took down Victor's name at last
 From a bad eminence, I then might breathe
 And rest! No moment was to lose. Behold
 The proud result—a Treaty, Austria, Spain
 Agree to—

D'Ormea [*aside*]. I shall merely stipulate
 For an experienced headsman.

Charles. Not a soul
 Is compromised: the blotted past's a blank:
 Even D'Ormea escapes unquestioned. See!

It reached me from Vienna; I remained
 At Evian to despatch the Count his news;
 'Tis gone to Chambery a week ago—
 And here am I: do I deserve to feel
 Your warm white arms around me?

D'Ormea [*coming forward*]. He knows
 that?

Charles. What, in Heaven's name, means
 this?

D'Ormea. He knows that matters

Are settled at Vienna? Not too late!
Plainly, unless you post this very hour
Some man you trust (say, me) to Chambery
And take precautions I acquaint you with,
Your father will return here.

Charles. Are you crazed,
D'Ormea? Here? For what? As well return
To take his crown!

D'Ormea. He will return for that.

Charles [to POLYXENA]. You have not
listened to this man?

Polyxena. He spoke
About your safety—and I listened.

[He disengages himself from her arms.]

Charles [to D'ORMEA]. What
Apprised you of the Count's intentions?

D'Ormea. Me?
His heart, sir; you may not be used to
read

Such evidence however; therefore read
[Pointing to POLYXENA'S papers.]
My evidence.

Charles [to POLYXENA]. Oh, worthy this
of you!

And of your speech I never have forgotten,
Though I professed forgetfulness; which
haunts me

As if I did not know how false it was;
Which made me toil unconsciously thus long
That there might be no least occasion left
For aught of its prediction coming true!

And now, when there is left no least occasion
To instigate my father to such crime—
When I might venture to forget (I hoped)

That speech and recognize Polyxena—
Oh worthy, to revive, and tenfold worse,
That plague! D'Ormea at your ear, his
slanders

Still in your hand! Silent?

Polyxena. As the wronged are.

Charles. And you, D'Ormea, since when
have you presumed

To spy upon my father? I conceive
What that wise paper shows, and easily.
Since when?

D'Ormea. The when and where and how
belong

To me. 'Tis sad work, but I deal in such.

You oftimes serve yourself; I'd serve you
here:

Use makes me not so squeamish. In a word,
Since the first hour he went to Chambery,
Of his seven servants, five have I sorned.

Charles. You hate my father?

D'Ormea. Oh, just as you will!

[Looking at POLYXENA.]

A minute since, I loved him—hate him, now!
What matter?—if you ponder just one thing:
Has he that treaty?—he is setting forward
Already. Are your guards here?

Charles. Well for you
They are not! *[To POLYXENA.]* Him I
knew of old, but you—

To hear that pickthank, further his designs!
[To D'ORMEA.]

Guards?—were they here, I'd bid them, for
your trouble,

Arrest you.

D'Ormea. Guards you shall not want.
I lived

The servant of your choice, not of your need.
You never greatly needed me till now

That you discard me. This is my arrest.
Again I tender you my charge—its duty
Would bid me press you read those docu-
ments.

Here, sir! *[Offering his badge of office.]*
Charles [taking it]. The papers also! Do
you think

I dare not read them?

Polyxena. Read them, sir!

Charles. They prove,

My father, still a month within the year
Since he so solemnly consigned it me,
Means to resume his crown? They shall
prove that,

Or my best dungeon . . .

D'Ormea. Even say, Chambery!
'Tis vacant, I surmise, by this.

Charles. You prove
Your words or pay their forfeit, sir. Go
there!

Polyxena, one chance to read the veil
Thickening and blackening 'twixt us two!
Do say,

You'll see the falsehood of the charges proved!

Do say, at least, you wish to see them proved
False charges—my heart's love of other times!
Polyxena. Ah, Charles!
Charles [to D'ORMEA]. Precede me, sir!
D'Ormea. And I'm at length
A martyr for the truth! No end, they say,
Of miracles. My conscious innocence!
[*As they go out, enter—by the middle door,
at which he pauses—VICTOR.*
Victor. Sure I heard voices? No. Well,
I do best
To make at once for this, the heart o' the
place.
The old room! Nothing changed! So near
my seat,
D'Ormea? [*Pushing away the stool which
is by the KING's chair.*
I want that meeting over first,
I know not why. Tush, he, D'Ormea,
slow
To hearten me, the supple knave? That
burst
Of spite so eased him! He'll inform me . . .
What?
Why come I hither? All's in rough: let
all
Remain rough. There's full time to draw
back—nay,
There's nought to draw back from, as yet;
whereas,
If reason should be, to arrest a course
Of error—reason good, to interpose
And save, as I have saved so many times,
Our House, admonish my son's giddy youth,
Relieve him of a weight that proves too much—
Now is the time,—or now, or never.
'Faith,
This kind of step is pitiful, not due
To Charles, this stealing back—hither,
because
He's from his capital! Oh Victor! Victor!
But thus it is. The age of crafty men
Is loathsome; youth contrives to carry off
Dissimulation; we may intersperse
Extenuating passages of strength,
Ardour, vivacity, and wit—may turn
E'en guile into a voluntary grace:
But one's old age, when graces drop away

And leave guile the pure staple of our lives—
Ah, loathsome!

Not so—or why pause I? Turin
Is mine to have, were I so minded, for
The asking; all the army's mine—I've
witnessed

Each private fight beneath me; all the Court's
Mine too; and, best of all, D'Ormea's still
D'Ormea and mine. There's some grace
clinging yet.

Had I decided on this step, ere midnight
I'd take the crown.

No. Just this step to rise
Exhausts me. Here am I arrived: the rest
Must be done for me. Would I could sit here
And let things right themselves, the masque
unmasque

Of the old King, crownless, grey hair and hot
blood,—

The young King, crowned, but calm before
his time,

They say,—the eager mistress with her
taunts,—

And the sad earnest wife who motions me
Away—ay, there she knelt to me! E'en yet
I can return and sleep at Chambery
A dream out.

Rather shake it off at Turin,
King Victor! Say: to Turin—yes, or no?

'Tis this relentless noonday-lighted chamber,
Lighted like life but silent as the grave,
That disconcerts me. That's the change
must strike.

No silence last year! Some one flung doors
wide

(Those two great doors which scrutinize me
now)

And out I went 'mid crowds of men—men
talking,

Men watching if my lip fell or brow knit,
Men saw me safe forth, put me on my road:
That makes the misery of this return.

Oh had a battle done it! Had I dropped,
Haling some battle, three entire days old,
Hither and thither by the forehead—dropped
In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in France—
Spurned on its horns or underneath its hooves,
When the spent monster went upon its knees

To pad and pash the prostrate wretch—I,
Victor,
Sole to have stood up against France, beat
down

By inches, brayed to pieces finally
In some vast unimaginable charge,
A flying hell of horse and foot and guns
Over me, and all's lost, for ever lost,
There's no more Victor when the world
wakes up!

Then silence, as of a raw battle-field,
Throughout the world. Then after (as whole
days

After, you catch at intervals faint noise
Through the stiff crust of frozen blood)—
there creeps

A rumour forth, so faint, no noise at all,
That a strange old man, with face outworn
for wounds,

Is stumbling on from frontier town to town,
Begging a pittance that may help him find
His Turin out; what scorn and laughter
follow

The coin you fling into his cap! And last,
Some bright morn, how men crowd about
the midst

O' the market-place, where takes the old
king breath

Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-gate
Wide ope!

To Turin, yes or no—or no?

Re-enter CHARLES with papers.

Charles. Just as I thought! A miserable
falsehood
Of hirelings discontented with their pay
And longing for enfranchisement! A few
Testy expressions of old age that thinks
To keep alive its dignity o'er slaves
By means that suit their natures!

[*Tearing them.*] Thus they shake
My faith in Victor!

[*Turning, he discovers VICTOR.*

Victor [after a pause]. Not at Evian,
Charles?

What's this? Why do you run to close the
doors?

No welcome for your father?

Charles [aside]. Not his voice!
What would I give for one imperious tone
Of the old sort! That's gone for ever.

Victor. Must
I ask once more . . .

Charles. No—I concede it, sir!
You are returned for . . . true, your health
declines;

True, Chambery's a bleak unkindly spot;
You'd choose one fitter for your final lodge—
Veneria, or Moncagliè—ay, that's close
And I concede it.

Victor. I received advices
Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter,
Dated from Evian Baths . . .

Charles. And you forbore
To visit me at Evian, satisfied
The work I had to do would fully task
The little wit I have, and that your presence
Would only disconcert me—

Victor. Charles?
Charles. —Me, set

For ever in a foreign course to yours,
And . . .

Sir, this way of wile were good to catch,
But I have not the sleight of it. The truth!
Though I sink under it! What brings you
here?

V. n. Not hope of this reception, certainly,
From one who'd scarce assume a stranger mode
Of speech, did I return to bring about
Some awfulest calamity!

Charles. —You mean,
Did you require your crown again! Oh yes,
I should speak otherwise! But turn not that
To jesting! Sir, the truth! Your health
declines?

Is aught deficient in your equipage?
Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,
And foil the malice of the world which laughs
At petty discontents; but I shall care
That not a soul knows of this visit. Speak!

Victor [aside]. Here is the grateful much-
professing son

Prepared to worship me, for whose sole sake
I think to waive my plans of public good!

[*Aloud.*] Nay, Charles, if I did seek to take
once more

My crown, were so disposed to plague myself,
What would be warrant for this bitterness?

I gave it—grant I would resume it—well?

Charles. I should say simply—leaving out
the why

And how—you made me swear to keep that
crown :

And as you then intended . . .

Victor. Fool ! What way
Could I intend or not intend? As man,

With a man's will, when I say "I intend,"

I can intend up to a certain point,

No farther. I intended to preserve

The crown of Savoy and Sardinia whole :

And if events arise demonstrating

The way, I hoped should guard it, rather like
To lose it . . .

Charles. Keep within your sphere
and mine !

It is God's province we usurp on, else.

Here, blindfold through the maze of things
we walk

By a slight clue of false, true, right and
wrong ;

All else is rambling and presumption. I

Have sworn to keep this kingdom : there's
my truth.

Victor. Truth, boy, is here, within my
breast ; and in

Your recognition of it, truth is, too ;

And in the effect of all this tortuous dealing

With falsehood, used to carry out the truth,

—In its success, this falsehood turns, again,

Truth for the world. But you are right :
these themes

Are over-subtle. I should rather say

In such a case, frankly,—it fails, my scheme :

I hoped to see you bring about, yourself,

What I must bring about. I interpose

On your behalf—with my son's good in
sight—

To bold what he is nearly letting go,

Confirm his title, add a grace perhaps.

There's Sicily, for instance,—granted me

And taken back, some years since : till I give

That island with the rest, my work's half
done.

For hissake, therefore, as of those he rules . . .

Charles. Our sakes are one ; and that, you
could not say,

Because my answer would present itself

Forthwith :—a year has wrought an age's
change.

This people's not the people now, you once

Could benefit ; nor is my policy

Your policy.

Victor [*with an outburst*]. I know it ! You
undo

All I have done—my life of toil and care !

I left you this the absolutest rule

In Europe : do you think I sit and smile,

Bid you throw power to the populace—

See my Sardinia, that has kept apart,

Join in the mad and democratic whirl

Whereto I see all Europe haste full tide ?

England casts off her kings ; France mimics
England :

This realm I hoped was safe. Yet here I
talk,

When I can save it, not by force alone,

But bidding plagues, which follow sons like
you,

Fasten upon my disobedient . . .

[*Recollecting himself.*] Surely

I could say this—if minded so—my son ?

Charles. You could not. Bitterer curses
than your curse

Have I long since denounced upon myself

If I misused my power. In fear of these

I entered on those measures—will abide

By them : so, I should say, Count Tende . . .

Victor. No !
But no ! But if, my Charles, your—more

than old—

Half-foolish father urged these arguments,

And then confessed them futile, but said
plainly

That he forgot his promise, found his strength

Fail him, had thought at savage Chambery

Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli here,

And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga—

Pined for the pleasant places he had built

When he was fortunate and young—

Charles. My father !

Victor. Stay yet !—and if he said he could
not die

Deprived of baubles he had put aside,
He deemed, for ever—of the Crown that binds
Your brain up, whole, sound and impreg-
nable,

Creating kingliness—the Sceptre too,
Whose mere wind, should you wave it, back
would beat

Invaders—and the golden Ball which throbs
As if you grasped the palpitating heart
Indeed o' the realm, to mould as choose you
may!

—If I must totter up and down the streets
My sires built, where myself have introduced
And fostered laws and letters, sciences,
The civil and the military arts!

Stay, Charles! I see you letting me pretend
To live my former self once more—King
Victor,

The venturesome yet politic: they style me
Again, the Father of the Prince: friends wink
Good-humouredly at the delusion you
So sedulously guard from all rough truths
That else would break upon my dotage!—
You—

Whom now I see preventing my old shame—
I tell not, point by cruel point, my tale—
For is't not in your breast my brow is hid?
Is not your hand extended? Say you not . . .

Enter D'ORMEA, leading in POLYXENA.

*Polyxena [advancing and withdrawing
CHARLES—to VICTOR].* In this con-
juncture even, he would say
(Though with a moistened eye and quivering
lip)

The suppliant is my father. I must save
A great man from himself, nor see him fling
His well-earned fame away: there must not
follow

Ruin so utter, a break-down of worth
So absolute: no enemy shall learn,
He thrust his child 'twixt danger and himself,
And, when that child somehow stood danger
out,

Stole back with serpent wiles to ruin Charles
—Body, that's much,—and soul, that's more
—and realm,

That's most of all! No enemy shall say . . .

VOL. I.

D'Ormea. Do you repent, sir?

Victor [resuming himself]. D'Ormea?

This is well!

Worthily done, King Charles, craftily done!

Judiciously you post these, to o'erhear
The little your importunate father thrusts
Himself on you to say!—Ah, they'll correct
The amiable blind facility

You show in answering his peevish suit.
What can he need to sue for? Thanks,
D'Ormea!

You have fulfilled your office: but for you,
The old Count might have drawn some few
more livres

To swell his income! Had you, lady, missed
The moment, a permission might be granted
To buttress up my ruinous old pile!

But you remember properly the list
Of wise precautions I took when I gave
Nearly as much away—to reap the fruits
I should have looked for!

Charles. Thanks, sir: degrade me,
So you remain yourself! Adieu!

Victor. I'll not
Forget it for the future, nor presume
Next time to slight such mediators! Nay—
Had I first moved them both to intercede,
I might secure a chamber in Moncaglier.
—Who knows?

Charles. Adieu!

Victor. You bid me this adieu
With the old spirit?

Charles. Adieu!

Victor. Charles—Charles!
Charles. Adieu!

[VICTOR goes.]

Charles. You were mistaken, Marquis, as
you hear.

'Twas for another purpose the Count came.
The Count desires Moncaglier. Give the
order!

D'Ormea [leisurely]. Your minister has lost
your confidence,
Asserting late, for his own purposes,
Count Tende would . . .

Charles [flinging his baize back]. Be still
the minister!

And give a loose to your insulting joy;

Q

It irks me more thus stifled than expressed :
Loose it !

D'Ormea. There's none to loose, alas !

I see

I never am to die a martyr.

Polyxena. Charles !

Charles. No praise, at least, Polyxena—no
praise !

KING CHARLES.

PART II.

*D'ORMEA, seated, folding papers he has
been examining.*

This at the last effects it : now, King Charles
Or else King Victor—that's a balance : but
now,

D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either turn
O' the scale,—that's sure enough. A point
to solve,

My masters, moralists, whate'er your style !
When you discover why I push myself

Into a pitfall you'd pass safely by,
Impart to me among the rest ! No matter.

Prompt are the righteous ever with their rede
To us the wrongful ; lesson them this once !

For safe among the wicked are you set,
D'Ormea ! We lament life's brevity,

Yet quarter e'en the threescore years and ten,
Nor stick to call the quarter roundly "life."

D'Ormea was wicked, say, some twenty years ;
A tree so long was stunted ; afterward,

What if it grew, continued growing, till
No fellow of the forest equalled it ?

'Twas a stump then ; a stump it still must be :
While forward saplings, at the outset checked,

In virtue of that first sprout keep their style
Amid the forest's green fraternity.

Thus I shoot up to surely get lopped down
And bound up for the burning. Now for it !

*Enter CHARLES and POLYXENA with
Attendants.*

D'Ormea [rises]. Sir, in the due discharge
of this my office—

This enforced summons of yourself from Turin,
And the disclosure I am bound to make

To-night,—there must already be, I feel,
So much that wounds . . .

Charles. Well, sir ?

D'Ormea. —That I, perchance,

May utter also what, another time,
Would irk much,—it may prove less irksome
now.

Charles. What would you utter ?

D'Ormea. That I from my soul
Grieve at to-night's event : for you I grieve,
E'en grieve for . . .

Charles. Tush, another time for talk !
My kingdom is in imminent danger ?

D'Ormea. Let

The Count communicate with France—its
King,

His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for
this,

Though for no other war.

Charles. First for the levies :

What forces can I muster presently ?

[*D'ORMEA delivers papers which*

CHARLES inspects.

Charles. Good—very good. Montorio . . .
how is this ?

—Equips me double the old complement
Of soldiers ?

D'Ormea. Since his land has been relieved
From double imposts, this he manages :

But under the late monarch . . .

Charles. Peace ! I know.

Count Spava has omitted mentioning
What proxy is to head these troops of his.

D'Ormea. Count Spava means to head his
troops himself.

Something to fight for now ; "Whereas,"
says he,

"Under the sovereign's father" . . .

Charles. It would seem

That all my people love me.

D'Ormea. Yes.

[*To POLYXENA while CHARLES con-
tinues to inspect the papers.*

A temper

Like Victor's may avail to keep a state ;
He terrifies men and they fall not off ;

Good to restrain : best, if restraint were all.
But, with the silent circle round him, ends

Such sway : our King's begins precisely there.
For to suggest, impel and set at work,
Is quite another function. Men may slight,
In time of peace, the King who brought
them peace :

In war,—his voice, his eyes, help more than
fear.

They love you, sir !

Charles [to Attendants]. Bring the regalia
forth !

Quit the room ! And now, Marquis, answer me !
Why should the King of France invade my
realm ?

D'Ormea. Why ? Did I not acquaint your
Majesty

An hour ago ?

Charles. I choose to hear again
What then I heard.

D'Ormea. Because, sir, as I said,
Your father is resolved to have his crown
At any risk ; and, as I judge, calls in
The foreigner to aid him.

Charles. And your reason
For saying this ?

D'Ormea [aside]. Ay, just his father's way !
[To CHARLES.] The Count wrote yesterday
to your forces' Chief,

Rhebindler—made demand of help—

Charles. To try
Rhebindler—he's of alien blood : aught else ?

D'Ormea. Receiving a refusal,—some hours
after,

The Count called on Del Borgo to deliver
The Act of Abdication : he refusing,
Or hesitating, rather—

Charles. What ensued ?

D'Ormea. At midnight, only two hours
since, at Turin,

He rode in person to the citadel
With one attendant, to Soccorso gate,
And bade the governor, San Remi, open—
Admit him.

Charles. For a purpose I divine.
These three were faithful, then ?

D'Ormea. They told it me.
And I—

Charles. Most faithful—

D'Ormea. Tell it you—with this

Moreover of my own : if, an hour hence,
You have not interposed, the Count will be
O' the road to France for succour.

Charles. Very good !

You do your duty now to me your monarch
Fully, I warrant ?—have, that is, your project
For saving both of us disgrace, no doubt ?

D'Ormea. I give my counsel,—and the
only one.

A month since, I besought you to employ
Restraints which had prevented many a pang :
But now the harsher course must be pursued.

These papers, made for the emergency,
Will pain you to subscribe : this is a list
Of those suspected merely—men to watch ;
This—of the few of the Count's very house-
hold

You must, however reluctantly, arrest ;
While here's a method of remonstrance—sure
Not stronger than the case demands—to take
With the Count's self.

Charles. Deliver those three papers.

Polyxena [while CHARLES inspects them—
to D'ORMEA]. Your measures are not
over-harsh, sir : France

Will hardly be deterred from her intents
By these.

D'Ormea. If who proposes might dispose,
I could soon satisfy you. Even these,
Hear what he'll say at my presenting !

Charles [who has signed them]. There !
About the warrants ! You've my signature.
What turns you pale ? I do my duty by you
In acting boldly thus on your advice.

D'Ormea [reading them separately]. Arrest
the people I suspected merely ?

Charles. Did you suspect them ?

D'Ormea. Doubtless : but—but—sir,
This Forquieri's governor of Turin,
And Rivarol and he have influence over
Half of the capital ! Rabella, too ?
Why, sir—

Charles. Oh, leave the fear to me !

D'Ormea [still reading]. You bid me
Incarcerate the people on this list ?

Sir—

Charles. But you never bade arrest those
men,

So close related to my father too,
On trifling grounds?

D'Ormea. Oh, as for that, St. George,
President of Chambery's senators,
Is hatching treason! still—

[*More troubled.*] Sir, Count Cumiane
Is brother to your father's wife! What's
here?

Arrest the wife herself?

Charles. You seem to think
A venial crime this plot against me. Well?

D'Ormea [*who has read the last paper*].
Wherefore am I thus ruined? Why
not take

My life at once? This poor formality
Is, let me say, unworthy you! Prevent it
You, madam! I have served you, am pre-
pared

For all disgraces: only, let disgrace
Be plain, be proper—proper for the world
To pass its judgment on 'twixt you and me!
Take back your warrant, I will none of it!

Charles. Here is a man to talk of fickleness!

He stakes his life upon my father's falsehood;
I bid him . . .

D'Ormea. Not you! Were he trebly
false,

You do not bid me . . .

Charles. Is't not written there?
I thought so: give—I'll set it right.

D'Ormea. Is it there?
Oh yes, and plain—arrest him now—drag here
Your father! And were all six times as plain,
Do you suppose I trust it?

Charles. Just one word!
You bring him, taken in the act of flight,
Or else your life is forfeit.

D'Ormea. Ay, to Turin
I bring him, and to-morrow?

Charles. Here and now!
The whole thing is a lie, a hateful lie,
As I believed and as my father said.
I knew it from the first, but was compelled
To circumvent you; and the great D'Ormea,
That baffled Alberoni and tricked Coscia,
The miserable sower of such discord
'Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last.

Oh I see! you arrive—this plan of yours,
Weak as it is, torments sufficiently
A sick old peevish man—wrings hasty speech,
An ill-considered threat from him; that's
noted;

Then out you ferret papers, his amusement
In lonely hours of lassitude—examine
The day-by-day report of your paid spies—
And back you come: all was not ripe, you
find,

And, as you hope, may keep from ripening yet,
But you were in bare time! Only, 'twere
best

I never saw my father—these old men
Are potent in excuses: and meanwhile,
D'Ormea's the man I cannot do without!

Polyxena. Charles—

Charles. Ah, no question!
You against me too!

You'd have me eat and drink and sleep, live,
die

With this lie coiled about me, choking me!
No, no, D'Ormea! You venture life, you say,
Upon my father's perfidy: and I
Have, on the whole, no right to disregard
The chains of testimony you thus wind
About me; though I do—do from my soul
Discredit them: still I must authorize
These measures, and I will. Perugia!

[*Many Officers enter.*] Count—

You and Solar, with all the force you have,
Stand at the Marquis' orders: what he bids,
Implicitly perform! You are to bring
A traitor here; the man that's likeliest one
At present, fronts me; you are at his beck
For a full hour! he undertakes to show
A fouler than himself,—but, failing that,
Return with him, and, as my father lives,
He dies this night! The clemency you blame
So oft, shall be revoked—rights exercised,
Too long abjured.

[*To D'ORMEA.*] Now sir, about the work!
To save your king and country! Take the
warrant!

D'Ormea. You hear the sovereign's man-
date, Count Perugia?

Obeys me! As your diligence, expect
Reward! All follow to Moncagliero!

Charles [*in great anguish*]. D'Ormea!
 [D'ORMEA *goes*.
 He goes, lit up with that appalling smile!
 [*To POLYXENA, after a pause.*
 At least you understand all this?

Polyxena. These means
 Of our defence—these measures of precaution?

Charles. It must be the best way; I should
 have else
 Withered beneath his scorn.

Polyxena. What would you say?

Charles. Why, do you think I mean to
 keep the crown,
 Polyxena?

Polyxena. You then believe the story
 In spite of all—that Victor comes?

Charles. Believe it?
 I know that he is coming—feel the strength
 That has upheld me leave me at his coming!
 'Twas mine, and now he takes his own again.
 Some kinds of strength are well enough to
 have;

But who's to have that strength? Let my
 crown go!

I meant to keep it; but I cannot—cannot!
 Only, he shall not taunt me—he, the first . . .
 See if he would not be the first to taunt me
 With having left his kingdom at a word.
 With letting it be conquered without stroke,
 With . . . no—no—'tis no worse than when
 he left!

I've just to bid him take it, and, that over,
 We'll fly away—fly, for I loathe this Turin,
 This Rivoli, all titles loathe, all state.
 We'd best go to your country—unless God
 Send I die now!

Polyxena. Charles, hear me!

Charles. And again
 Shall you be my Polyxena—you'll take me
 Out of this woe! Yes, do speak, and keep
 speaking!

I would not let you speak just now, for fear
 You'd counsel me against him: but talk, now,
 As we two used to talk in blessed times
 Ere I endure all his caprices; take me
 From this mad post above him!

Polyxena. I believe
 We are undone, but from a different cause.

All your resources, down to the least guard,
 Are at D'Ormea's beck. What if, the while,
 He act in concert with your father? We
 Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli—
 Where find a better place for them?

Charles [*pacing the room*]. And why
 Does Victor come? To undo all that's done,
 Restore the past, prevent the future! Seat
 His mistress in your seat, and place in mine
 . . . Oh, my own people, whom will you
 find there,

To ask of, to consult with, to care for,
 To hold up with your hands? Whom? One
 that's false—

False—from the head's crown to the foot's
 sole, false!

The best is, that I knew it in my heart
 From the beginning, and expected this,
 And hated you, Polyxena, because
 You saw thro' him, though I too saw thro'
 him,

Saw that he meant this while he crowned
 me, while

He prayed for me,—nay, while he kissed my
 brow,

I saw—

Polyxena. But if your measures take effect,
 D'Ormea true to you?

Charles. Then worst of all!
 I shall have loosed that callous wretch on him!
 Well may the woman taunt him with his
 child—

I, eating here his bread, clothed in his clothes,
 Seated upon his seat, let slip D'Ormea
 To outrage him! We talk—perchance he
 tears

My father from his bed; the old hands feel
 For one who is not, but who should be there,
 He finds D'Ormea! D'Ormea too finds him!
 The crowded chamber when the lights go
 out—

Closed doors—the horrid scuffle in the dark—
 The accursed prompting of the minute! My
 guards!

To horse—and after, with me—and prevent!

Polyxena [*seizing his hand*]. King Charles!
 Pause here upon this strip of time
 Allotted you out of eternity!

Crowns are from God: you in his name hold yours.

Your life's no least thing, were it fit your life Should be abjured along with rule; but now, Keep both! Your duty is to live and rule— You, who would vulgarly look fine enough In the world's eye, deserting your soul's charge,—

Ay, you would have men's praise, this Rivoli Would be illumined! While, as'tis, no doubt, Something of stain will ever rest on you; No one will rightly know why you refused To abdicate; they'll talk of deeds you could Have done, no doubt,—nor do I much expect Future achievement will blot out the past, Envelope it in haze—nor shall we two Live happy any more. 'Twill be, I feel, Only in moments that the duty's seen As palpably as now: the months, the years Of painful indistinctness are to come, While daily must we tread these palace-rooms Pregnant with memories of the past: your eye

May turn to mine and find no comfort there, Through fancies that beset me, as yourself, Of other courses, with far other issues, We might have taken this great night: such bear,

As I will bear! What matters happiness? Duty! There's man's one moment: this is yours!

[Putting the crown on his head, and the sceptre in his hand, she places him on his seat: a long pause and silence.]

Enter D'ORMEA and VICTOR, with Guards.

Victor. At last I speak; but once—that once, to you!

'Tis you I ask, not these your varletry, Who's King of us?

Charles *[from his seat]*. Count Tende . . .

Victor. What your spies Assert I ponder in my soul, I say—

Here to your face, amid your guards! I choose

To take again the crown whose shadow I gave—

For still its potency surrounds the weak White locks their felon hands have decomposed.

Or I'll not ask who's King, but simply, who Withholds the crown I claim? Deliver it! I have no friend in the wide world: nor France

Nor England cares for me: you see the sum Of what I can avail. Deliver it!

Charles. Take it, my father!

And now say in turn, Was it done well, my father—sure not well, To try me thus! I might have seen much cause

For keeping it—too easily seen cause!

But, from that moment, e'en more woefully My life had pined away, than pine it will.

Already you have much to answer for.

My life to pine is nothing,—her sunk eyes

Were happy once! No doubt, my people think

I am their King still . . . but I cannot strive!

Take it!

Victor *[one hand on the crown CHARLES offers, the other on his neck]*. So few years give it quietly,

My son! It will drop from me. See you not?

A crown's unlike a sword to give away—

That, let a strong hand to a weak hand give! But crowns should slip from palsied brows to heads

Young as this head: yet mine is weak enough, E'en weaker than I knew. I seek for phrases To vindicate my right. 'Tis of a piece!

All is alike gone by with me—who beat

Once D'Orleans in his lines—his very lines! To have been Eugene's comrade, Louis's

rival, And now . . .

Charles *[putting the crown on him, to the rest]*. The King speaks, yet none kneels, I think!

Victor. I am then King! As I became a King

Despite the nations, kept myself a King, So I die King, with Kingship dying too

Around me. I have lasted Europe's time.
What wants my story of completion? Where
Must needs the damning break show? Who
mistrusts

My children here—tell they of any break
'Twi't my day's sunrise and its fiery fall?
And who were by me when I died but they?
D'Ormea there!

Charles. What means he?

Victor. Ever there!

Charles—how to save your story! Mine
must go.

Say—say that you refused the crown to me!
Charles, yours shall be my story! You im-
mured

Me, say, at Rivoli. A single year
I spend without a sight of you, then die.
That will serve every purpose—tell that tale
The world!

Charles. Mistrust me? Help!

Victor. Past help, past reach!

'Tis in the heart—you cannot reach the heart:
This broke mine, that I did believe, you,
Charles,

Would have denied me and disgraced me.

Polyxena. Charles

Has never ceased to be your subject, sir!
He reigned at first through setting up yourself
As pattern: if he e'er seemed harsh to you,
'Twas from a too intense appreciation
Of your own character: he acted you—
Ne'er for an instant did I think it real,

Nor look for any other than this end.
I hold him worlds the worse on that account;
But so it was.

Charles [to POLYXENA]. I love you now
indeed.

[*To VICTOR.*] You never knew me.

Victor. Hardly till this moment,

When I seem learning many other things
Because the time for using them is past.

If 'twere to do again! That's idly wished.

Truthfulness might prove policy as good
As guile. Is this my daughter's forehead?

Yes:

I've made it fitter now to be a queen's
Than formerly: I've ploughed the deep lines
there

Which keep too well a crown from slipping off.
No matter. Guile has made me King
again.

*Louis—'twas in King Victor's time:—long
since,*

When Louis reigned and, also, Victor reigned.

How the world talks already of us two!

God of eclipse and each discoloured star,

Why do I linger then?

Ha! Where lurks he?

D'Ormea! Nearer to your King! Now
stand!

[*Collecting his strength as D'ORMEA
approaches.*

You lied, D'Ormea! I do not repent.

[*Dies.*

DRAMATIC LYRICS.

184-- 185--

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,
Marched them 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 treason-
ous paroles !
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, sing-
ing 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, sing-
ing 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, sing-
ing 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!*"

THE LOST LEADER.

I.

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:

How all our copper had gone for his service!

Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!

We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,

Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,

Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves!

He alone breaks from the van and the free-men,

—He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

II.

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;

Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:

Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,

One task more declined, one more foot-path untrod,

One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,

One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!

Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!

There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,

Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,

Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,

Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,

Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

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

[16—.]

I.

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

II.

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

III.

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while we
drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned
clear ;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be ;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard
the half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, " Yet there is
time ! "

IV.

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every
one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,

With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its
spray :

v.

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

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

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

IX.

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

X.

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

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO
AED-EL-KADR.

[Abd-el-Kadr was an Arab Chief of Algiers
who resisted the French in 1833.]

I.

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

II.

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,

Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

III.

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV.

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and
dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride !

V.

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
(As I ride, as I ride)
All that's meant me—satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride !

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS.

I.

My heart sank with our Claret-flask,
Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
That serve this pond's black face for mask
And still at yonder broken edges
O' the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen.

II.

Our laughing little flask, compelled
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady;
As when, both arms beside her held,
Feet straightened out, some gay French lady
Is caught up from life's light and motion,
And dropped into death's silent ocean!

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
Like a pygmy castle-warder,
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
Arms and accoutrements all in order;
And fierce he looked North, then, wheeling
South,
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,
Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
Jingled his huge brass spurs together,
Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
And then, with an impudence nought could
abash,
Shrugged his hump-shoulder, to tell the
beholder,
For twenty such knaves he should laugh but
the bolder:
And so, with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,
And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,
Went the little man, Sir Ausbruch, strutting!

Here's to Nelson's memory!
'Tis the second time that I, at sea,
Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
Have drunk it deep in British Beer.
Nelson for ever—any time
Am I his to command in prose or rhyme!
Give me of Nelson only a touch,
And I save it, be it little or much:
Here's one our Captain gives, and so
Down at the word, by George, shall it go!
He says that at Greenwich they point the
beholder
To Nelson's coat, "still with tar on the
shoulder:
"For he used to lean with one shoulder digging,
"Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zigging
"Up against the mizen-rigging!"

GARDEN FANCIES.

I. THE FLOWER'S NAME

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
Thee, 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 !

Eud, if I kiss you 'tis 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.

Flague 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 arbut 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.

II

Vonder'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 mag-
nate ;

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 latis,*

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 ail of a blister,

And great blue spots where the ink has
run,

And reddish streaks that wink and glister

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, *suf-
ficiat* !
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 !

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 'tis 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 horsehairs,
—Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 'twere 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 gratid*
Ave, Virgo ! Gr-r-r—you swine !

THE LABORATORY.

ANCIEN RÉGIME.

I.

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
 May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling
 whitely,
 As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-
 smithy—
 Which is the poison to poison her, prithee ?

II.

He is with her, and they know that I know
 Where they are, what they do : they believe
 my tears flow

While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to
 the drear
 Empty church, to pray God in, for them !—I
 am here.

III.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
 Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste !
 Better sit thus, and observe thy strange
 things,
 Than go where men wait me and dance at
 the King's.

IV.

That in the mortar—you call it a gum ?
 Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings
 come !
 And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
 'Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too ?

V.

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
 What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures !
 To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
 A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket !

VI.

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give,
 And Pauline should have just thirty minutes
 to live !
 But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her
 head
 And her breast and her arms and her hands,
 should drop dead !

VII.

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim !
 Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and
 dim?
 Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
 And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer !

VIII.

What a drop ! She's not little, no minion
 like me !
 That's why she ensnared him : this never
 will free
 The soul from those masculine eyes,—say,
 "no !"
 To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

IX.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed,
she would fall
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

X.

Not that I bid you spare her the pain;
Let death be felt and the proof remain:
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—
He is sure to remember her dying face!

XI.

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be
not morose;
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee!
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

XII.

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your
fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if
you will!
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the
King's!

THE CONFESSIONAL.

[SPAIN.]

I.

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies—there! through my door
And ceiling, there! and walls and floor,
There, lies, they lie—shall still be hurled
Till spite of them I reach the world!

II.

You think Priests just and holy men!
Before they put me in this den
I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside

III.

I had a lover—shame avant!
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest, love e'er turned
His heart's own tint: one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

IV.

So, next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
"That is a sin," I said: and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

V.

But when I falter Beltran's name,
"Ha?" quoth the father; "much I blame
"The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?
"Despair not—strenuously retrieve!
"Nay, I will turn this love of thine
"To lawful love, almost divine;

VI.

"For he is young, and led astray,
"This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
"To change the laws of church and state;
"So, thine shall be an angel's fate,
"Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll
"Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII.

"For, when he lies upon thy breast,
"Thou mayst demand and be possessed
"Of all his plans, and next day steal
"To me, and all those plans reveal,
"That I and every priest, to purge
"His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

VIII.

That father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed bright:
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

IX.

He told me what he would not tell
 For hope of heaven or fear of hell ;
 And I lay listening in such pride !
 And, soon as he had left my side,
 Tripped to the church by morning-light
 To save his soul in his despite.

X.

I told the father all his schemes,
 Who were his comrades, what their dreams ;
 "And now make haste," I said, "to pray
 "The one spot from his soul away ;
 "To-night he comes, but not the same
 "Will look !" At night he never came.

XI.

Nor next night : on the after-morn,
 I went forth with a strength new-born.
 The church was empty ; something drew
 My steps into the street ; I knew
 It led me to the market-place :
 Where, lo, on high, the father's face !

XII.

That horrible black scaffold dressed,
 That stapled block . . . God sink the rest !
 That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
 Those knotted hands and naked breast,
 Till near one busy hangman pressed,
 And, on the neck these arms caressed . . .

XIII.

No part in aught they hope or fear !
 No heaven with them, no hell !—and here,
 No earth, not so much space as pens
 My body in their worst of dens
 But shall bear God and man my cry,
 Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie !

CRISTINA.

I.

SHE should never have looked at me
 If she meant I should not love her !
 There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
 I suppose . . . she may discover

VOL. I.

All her soul to, if she pleases,
 And yet leave much as she found them :
 But I'm not so, and she knew it
 When she fixed me, glancing round them.

II.

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
 But I can't tell (there's my weakness)
 What her look said !—no vile cant, sure,
 About "need to strew the bleakness
 "Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed.
 "That the sea feels"—no "strange yearning
 "That such souls have, most to lavish
 "Where there's chance of least returning."

III.

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows !
 But not quite so sunk that moments,
 Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
 When the spirit's true endowments
 Stand out plainly from its false ones,
 And apprise it if pursuing
 Or the right way or the wrong way,
 To its triumph or undoing.

IV.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
 There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
 Whereby piled-up honours perish,
 Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
 While just this or that poor impulse,
 Which for once had play unstified,
 Seems the sole work of a life-time
 That away the rest have trifled.

V.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
 As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
 Ages past the soul existed,
 Here an age 'tis resting merely,
 And hence fleets again for ages,
 While the true end, sole and single,
 It stops here for is, this love-way,
 With some other soul to mingle?

R

VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,
 And eternally must lose it ;
 Better ends may be in prospect,
 Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
 But this life's end and this love-bliss
 Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
 This she felt as, looking at me,
 Mine and her souls rushed together ?

VII.

Oh, observe ! Of course, next moment,
 The world's honours, in derision,
 Trampled out the light for ever :
 Never fear but there's provision
 Of the devil's to quench knowledge
 Lest we walk the earth in rapture !
 —Making those who catch God's secret
 Just so much more prize their capture !

VIII.

Such am I : the secret's mine now !
 She has lost me, I have gained her ;
 Her soul's mine : and thus, grown perfect,
 I shall pass my life's remainder.
 Life will just hold out the proving
 Both our powers, alone and blended :
 And then, come next life quickly !
 This world's use will have been ended.

THE LOST MISTRESS.

I.

ALL'S over, then : does truth sound bitter
 As one at first believes ?
 Hark, 'tis 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.

For 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 !

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES.

FAME.

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
 Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime ;
 Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods
 Have struggled through its binding osier rods ;
 Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
 Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by ;
 How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate,
 Have softened down the crisp-cut name and
 date !

LOVE.

So, the year's done with !
 (*Love me for ever !*)
 All March begun with,
 April's endeavour ;
 May-wreaths that bound me
 June needs must sever ;
 Now snows fall round me,
 Quenching June's fever—
 (*Love me for ever !*)

MEETING AT NIGHT.

I.

THE grey sea and the long black land ;
 And the yellow half-moon large and low ;
 And the startled little waves that leap
 In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
 As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
 And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

II.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;
 Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;
 A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
 And blue spurt of a lighted match,
 And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
 Than the two hearts beating each to each !

PARTING AT MORNING.

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
 And the sun looked over the mountain's rim :
 And straight was a path of gold for him,
 And the need of a world of men for me.

SONG.

I.

NAY but you, who do not love her,
 Is she not pure gold, my mistress ?
 Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her ?
 Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
 And this last fairest tress of all,
 So fair, see, ere I let it fall ?

II.

Because, you spend your lives in praising ;
 To praise, you search the wide world over :
 Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
 If earth holds aught—speak truth—above
 her ?
 Above this tress, and this, I touch
 But cannot praise, I love so much !

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

See the creature stalking
 While we speak !
 Hush and hide the talking,
 Cheek on cheek !

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

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

VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,
 And eternally must lose it ;
 Better ends may be in prospect,
 Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
 But this life's end and this love-bliss
 Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
 This she felt as, looking at me,
 Mine and her souls rushed together ?

VII.

Oh, observe ! Of course, next moment,
 The world's honours, in derision,
 Trampled out the light for ever :
 Never fear but there's provision
 Of the devil's to quench knowledge
 Lest we walk the earth in rapture !
 —Making those who catch God's secret
 Just so much more prize their capture !

VIII.

Such am I : the secret's mine now !
 She has lost me, I have gained her ;
 Her soul's mine : and thus, grown perfect,
 I shall pass my life's remainder.
 Life will just hold out the proving
 Both our powers, alone and blended :
 And then, come next life quickly !
 This world's use will have been ended.

THE LOST MISTRESS.

I.

ALL'S over, then : does truth sound bitter
 As one at first believes ?
 Hark, 'tis 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.

For 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 !

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES.

FAME.

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
 Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime ;
 Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods
 Have struggled through its binding osier rods ;
 Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
 Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by ;
 How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate,
 Have softened down the crisp-cut name and
 date !

LOVE.

So, the year's done with !
 (*Love me for ever !*)
 All March begun with,
 April's endeavour ;
 May-wreaths that bound me
 June needs must sever ;
 Now snows fall round me,
 Quenching June's fever—
 (*Love me for ever !*)

MEETING AT NIGHT.

I.

THE grey sea and the long black land ;
 And the yellow half-moon large and low ;
 And the startled little waves that leap
 In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
 As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
 And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

II.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;
 Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;
 A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
 And blue spurt of a lighted match,
 And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
 Than the two hearts beating each to each !

PARTING AT MORNING.

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
 And the sun looked over the mountain's rim :
 And straight was a path of gold for him,
 And the need of a world of men for me.

SONG.

I.

NAY but you, who do not love her,
 Is she not pure gold, my mistress ?
 Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her ?
 Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
 And this last fairest tress of all,
 So fair, see, ere I let it fall ?

II.

Because, you spend your lives in praising ;
 To praise, you search the wide world over :
 Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
 If earth holds aught—speak truth—above
 her ?
 Above this tress, and this, I touch
 But cannot praise, I love so much !

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

See the creature stalking
 While we speak !
 Hush and hide the talking,
 Cheek on cheek !

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

EVELYN HOPE.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—

And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so
wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told ?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside ?

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while.
My heart seemed full as it could hold ?
There was place and to spare for the frank
young smile,
And the red young mouth, and the hair's
young gold.

So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep :
 See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand !
 There, that is our secret : go to sleep !
 You will wake, and remember, and under-
 stand.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

I.

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening
 smiles,
 Miles and miles
 On the solitary pastures where our sheep
 Half-asleep
 Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or
 stop
 As they crop—
 Was the site once of a city great and gay,
 (So they say)
 Of our country's very capital, its prince
 Ages since
 Held his court in, gathered councils, wield-
 ing far
 Peace or war.

II.

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,
 As you see,
 To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
 From the hills
 Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
 Into one)
 Where the domed and daring palace shot its
 spires
 Up like fires
 O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
 Bounding all,
 Made of marble, men might march on nor be
 pressed,
 Twelve abreast.

III.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
 Never was !
 Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'er-
 spreads
 And embeds

Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
 Stock or stone—
 Where a multitude of men breathed joy and
 woe
 Long ago ;
 Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread
 of shame
 Struck them tame ;
 And that glory and that shame alike, the
 gold
 Bought and sold.

IV.

Now,—the single little turret that remains
 On the plains,
 By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
 Overscored,
 While the patching houseleek's head of
 blossom winks
 Through the chinks—
 Marks the basement whence a tower in
 ancient time
 Sprang sublime,
 And a burning ring, all round, the chariots
 traced
 As they raced,
 And the monarch and his minions and his
 dames
 Viewed the games.

V.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured
 eve
 Smiles to leave
 To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
 In such peace,
 And the slopes and rills in undistinguished
 grey
 Melt away—
 That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
 Waits me there
 In the turret whence the charioteers caught
 soul
 For the goal,
 When the king looked, where she looks now,
 breathless, dumb
 Til I come.

VI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
 Far and wide,
 All the mountains topped with temples, all
 the glades'
 Colonnades,
 All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and
 then,
 All the men !
 When I do come, she will speak not, she
 will stand,
 Either hand
 On my shoulder, give her eyes the first
 embrace
 Of my face,
 Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and
 speech
 Each on each.

VII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
 South and North,
 And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
 As the sky,
 Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full
 force—
 Gold, of course.
 Oh heart ! oh blood that freezes, blood that
 burns !
 Earth's returns
 For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin !
 Shut them in,
 With their triumphs and their glories and
 the rest !
 Love is best.

A LOVERS' QUARREL.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

Dearest, three months ago !
 When we lived blocked-up with
 snow,—
 When the wind would edge
 In and in his wedge,
 In, as far as the point could go—
 Not to our ingle, though,
 Where we loved each the other so !

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

Fancy the Pampas' sheen !
 Miles and miles of gold and green
 Where the sunflowers blow
 In a solid glow,
 And—to break now and then the
 screen—
 Black neck and eyeballs keen,
 Up a wild horse leaps between !

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

XI.

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

XII.

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

XIII.

Not from the heart beneath—
'Twas a bubble born of breath,
Neither sneer nor vaunt,
Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth!
Oh, power of life and death
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

XIV.

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

XV.

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

XVI.

What of a hasty word?
Is the fleshly heart not stirred
By a worm's pin-prick
Where its roots are quick?
See the eye, by a fly's foot blurred—
Ear, when a straw is heard
Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

XVII.

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

XVIII.

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

XIX.

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

XX.

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

XXI.

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

XXII.

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

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN
THE CITY.

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN
PERSON OF QUALITY.)

I.

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

II.

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

III.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the
 horn of a bull
 Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the
 creature's skull,
 Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf
 to pull!
 —I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the
 hair's turned wool.

IV.

But the city, oh the city—the square with
 the houses! Why?
 They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's
 something to take the eye!

Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry ;
 You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by ;
 Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets high ;
 And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

v.

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

vi.

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

vii.

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

viii.

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

Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix 'r the corn and mingle,
 Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
 Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,
 And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on the hill.
 Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

ix.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells begin :
 No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in :
 You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.
 By-and-by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth ;
 Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.
 At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play, piping hot !
 And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were shot.
 Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
 And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law of the Duke's !
 Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-and-so
 Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome and Cicero,
 "And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming,) "the skirts of Saint Paul has reached,
 "Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous than ever he preached."
 Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession ! our Lady borne smiling and smart
 With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck in her heart !
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tottle-tottle* the fife ;
 No keeping one's haunches still : it's the greatest pleasure in life.

X.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear ! fowls,
 wine, at double the rate.
 They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and
 what oil pays passing the gate
 It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for
 me, not the city !
 Beggars can scarcely be choosers : but still—
 ah, the pity, the pity !
 Look, two and two go the priests, then the
 monks with cowls and sandals,
 And the penitents dressed in white shirts,
 a-holding the yellow candles ;
 One, he carries a flag up straight, and another
 a cross with handles,
 And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for
 the better prevention of scandals :
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-
 tootle* the fife.
 Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such
 pleasure in life !

A TOCCATA¹ OF GALUPPI'S.

[Galuppi was a famous Italian composer of
 the eighteenth century. He was in London
 from 1741 to 1744.]

I.

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

II.

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

¹ An overture—a *touch* piece.

III.

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

IV.

Did young people take their pleasure when
 the sea was warm in May ?
 Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning
 ever to mid-day,
 When they made up fresh adventures for the
 morrow, do you say ?

V.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and
 lips so red,—
 On her neck the small face buoyant, like a
 bell-flower on its bed,
 O'er the breast's superb abundance where a
 man might base his head ?

VI.

Well, and it was graceful of them—they'd
 break talk off and afford
 —She, to bite her mask's black velvet—he,
 to finger on his sword,
 While you sat and played Toccatas, stately
 at the clavichord ?

VII.

What ? Those lesser thirds so plaintive,
 sixths diminished, sigh on sigh,
 Told them something ? Those suspensions,
 those solutions—"Must we die ?"
 Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might
 last ! we can but try !"

VIII.

"Were you happy ?"—"Yes."—"And are
 you still as happy ?"—"Yes. And you ?"
 —"Then, more kisses !"—"Did I stop them,
 when a million seemed so few ?"
 Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must
 be answered to !

IX.

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they
praised you, I dare say!
"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good
alike at grave and gay!
"I can always leave off talking when I hear
a master play!"

X.

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in
due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some
with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where
they never see the sun.

XI.

But when I sit down to reason, think to take
my stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from
nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I creep
thro' every nerve.

XII.

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

XIII.

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

XIV.

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

XV.

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

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 Rafiels, you hum and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit!
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

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 grins
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!
'Tis looking downward that 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" 'tis the common soul,
 The collective, I mean: the race of Man
 That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
 And grow here according to God's 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, nowise
 polished:
 They stand for our copy, and, once invested
 With all they can teach, we shall see them
 abolished.

XVII.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
 The better! What's come to perfection
 perishes.
 Things learned on earth, we shall practise
 in heaven:
 Works done least rapidly, Art most
 cherishes.
 Thyself 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; 'tis no idle quiddit.
 The worthies began a revolution,
 Which if on earth you intend to acknow-
 ledge,
 Why, honour them now! (ends my allocution)
 Nor confer your degree when the folk 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 Nicolo¹ the Pisan,
My painter—who but Cimabue?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti² and Ghirlandajo,³
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!

¹ A sculptor, died 1278.

² Died 1455. Designed the bronze gates of
the Baptistry at Florence.

³ A painter, died 1498.

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;⁴ and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Frà Angelico's:

But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,⁵
To grant me a taste of your intonaco,⁶
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,⁷ 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 tempera⁸ crumbly—

Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

⁴ The son of Frà Lippo Lippi. Wronged,
because some of his pictures have been attributed
to others.

⁵ Died 1366. One of Giotto's pupils and
assistants.

⁶ Rough cast.

⁷ Painter, sculptor, and goldsmith.

⁸ Distemper—mixture of water and egg yolk.

XXVIII.

Margheritone of Arezzo,¹
 With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling
 larret
 (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 Carlino²

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 Buonarroti 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 Ognissanti²?)
 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?

¹ Sculptor and architect, died 1313.

² All Saints.

XXXII.

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain
 dotard
 Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
 To the worse side of the Mont Saint Gothard,
 We shall begin by way of rejoicing;
 None of that shooting the sky (blank car-
 tridge),
 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 hag
 'em hot—
 No mere display at the stone of Dante,
 But a kind of sober Witanagemot
 (Ex: "Casa Guidi," *quod vivas 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 Orgagna³ hither!

XXXIV.

How we shall prologize, 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,⁴
 And turn the bell-tower's *ah* to *altissimo*:

³ A Florentine painter, died 1576.

⁴ Tartar king.

And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia¹
 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, unbaffled
 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!

"DE GUSTIBUS——"

I.

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
 (If our loves remain)
 In an English lane,
 By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
 Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
 A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
 Making love, say,—
 The happier they!
 Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
 And let them pass, as they will too soon,
 With the bean-flowers' boon,
 And the blackbird's tune,
 And May, and June!

II.

What I love best in all the world
 Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
 In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine
 Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
 (If I get my head from out the mouth
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
 And come again to the land of lands)—
 In a sea-side house to the farther South,
 Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
 And one sharp tree—'tis a cypress—stands,

¹ A woodcock.

By the many hundred years red-rusted,
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
 My sentinel to guard the sands
 To the water's edge. For, what expands
 Before the house, but the great opaque
 Blue breadth of sea without a break?
 While, in the house, for ever crumbles
 Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
 From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
 A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
 Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
 And says there's news to-day—the king
 Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
 Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
 —She hopes they have not caught the
 felons.

Italy, my Italy!

Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
 (When fortune's malice
 Lost her—Calais)—

Open my heart and you will see
 Graved inside of it, "Italy."
 Such lovers old are I and she:
 So it always was, so shall ever be!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

I.

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

II.

And after April, when May follows,
 And the whitethroat builds, and all the
 swallows!
 Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the
 hedge
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover

Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's
edge—
That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song
twice over,
Lest you should think he never could re-
capture
The first fine careless rapture !
And though the fields look rough with hoary
dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM
THE SEA.

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

SAUL.

I.

SAID Abner, “ At last thou art come ! Ere
I tell, ere thou speak,
“ Kiss my cheek, wish me well ! ” Then I
wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
And he, “ Since the King, O my friend, for
thy countenance sent,
“ Neither drunken nor eaten have we ; nor
until from his tent
“ Thou return with the joyful assurance the
King liveth yet,
“ Shall our lip with the honey be bright,
with the water be wet.

VOL. I.

“ For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a
space of three days,
“ Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants,
of prayer nor of praise,
“ To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have
ended their strife,
“ And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch
sinks back upon life.

II.

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

III.

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and
rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The
tent was unlooped ;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and
under I stooped ;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch,
all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I
groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open.
Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and
was not afraid
But spoke, “ Here is David, thy servant ! ”
And no voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the blackness ;
but soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness
—the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion : and
slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest
of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-
roof, showed Saul.

IV.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both
arms stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre, that
goes to each side ;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as,
caught in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king-serpent all
heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till
deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul,
drear and stark, blind and dumb.

V.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies
we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noon-
tide—those sunbeams like swords !
And I first played the tune all our sheep
know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till fold-
ing be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for
lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within
the stream's bed ;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as
star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue
and so far !

VI.

—Then the tune, for which quails on the
cornland will each leave his mate
To fly after the player ; then, what makes
the crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another : and
then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa¹ a-musing outside his
sand house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half
bird and half mouse !
God made all the creatures and gave them
our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children,
one family here.

¹ The jumping hare.

VII.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers,
their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friend-
ship, and great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's
life.—And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey
—“ Bear, bear him along
“ With his few faults shut up like dead
flowerets ! Are balm-seeds not here
“ To console us ? The land has none left
such as he on the bier.
“ Oh, would we might keep thee, my
brother ! ”—And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens,
next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—
And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and
buttress an arch
Nought can break ; who shall harm them,
our friends ?—Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory
enthroned.
But I stopped here : for here in the darkness
Saul groaned.

VIII.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence,
and listened apart ;
And the tentshook, for mighty Saul shuddered :
and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban, at
once with a start,
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies
courageous at heart.
So the head : but the body still moved not,
still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued
it unchecked,
As I sang,—

IX.

“ Oh, our manhood's prime vigour !
No spirit feels waste,
“ Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor
sinew unbraced.

- "Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping
 from rock up to rock,
 "The strong rending of boughs from the
 fir-tree, the cool silver shock
 "Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the
 hunt of the bear,
 "And the sultriness showing the lion is
 couched in his lair.
 "And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over
 with gold dust divine,
 "And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher,
 the full draught of wine,
 "And the sleep in the dried river-channel
 where bulrushes tell
 "That the water was wont to go warbling
 so softly and well.
 "How good is man's life, the mere living!
 how fit to employ
 "All the heart and the soul and the senses
 for ever in joy!
 "Hast thou loved the white locks of thy
 father, whose sword thou didst guard
 "When he trusted thee forth with the armies,
 for glorious reward?
 "Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother,
 held up as men sung
 "The low song of the nearly-departed, and
 hear her faint tongue
 "Joining in while it could to the witness,
 'Let one more attest,
 "'I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a life-
 time, and all was for best?'
 "Then they sung thro' their tears in strong
 triumph, not much, but the rest.
 "And thy brothers, the help and the contest,
 the working whence grew
 "Such result as, from seething grape-bundles,
 the spirit strained true:
 "And the friends of thy boyhood—that boy-
 hood of wonder and hope,
 "Present promise and wealth of the future
 beyond the eye's scope,—
 "Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a
 people is thine;
 "And all gifts, which the world offers singly,
 on one head combine!
 "Oa one head, all the beauty and strength,
 love and rage (like the three
- "That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour
 and lets the gold go)
 "High ambition and deeds which surpass it,
 fame crowning them,—all
 "Brought to blaze on the head of one
 creature—King Saul!"
- X.
- And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart,
 hand, harp and voice,
 Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each
 bidding rejoice
 Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as
 when, dare I say,
 The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains
 through its array,
 And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!"
 cried I, and stopped,
 And waited the thing that should follow.
 Then Saul, who hung propped
 By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was
 struck by his name.
 Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons
 goes right to the aim,
 And some mountain, the last to withstand
 her, that held (he alone,
 While the vale laughed in freedom and
 flowers) on a broad bust of stone
 A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,
 —leaves grasp of the sheet?
 Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously
 down to his feet,
 And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive
 yet, your mountain of old,
 With his rents, the successive bequeathings
 of ages untold—
 Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles,
 each furrow and scar
 Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest
 —all hail, there they are!
 —Now again to be softened with verdure,
 again hold the nest
 Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to
 the green on his crest
 For their food in the arduous of summer.
 One long shudder thrilled
 All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank
 and was stilled

At the King's self left standing before me,
 released and aware.
 What was gone, what remained? All to
 traverse, 'twixt hope and despair;
 Death was past, life not come: so he waited.
 Awhile his right hand
 Held the brow, helped the eyes left too
 vacant forthwith to remand
 To their place what new objects should enter:
 'twas Saul as before.
 I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor
 was hurt any more
 Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye
 watch from the shore,
 At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's
 slow decline
 Over hills which, resolved in stern silence,
 o'erlap and entwine
 Base with base to knit strength more in-
 tensely: so, arm folded arm
 O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI.

What spell or what charm,
 (For, awhile there was trouble within me)
 what next should I urge
 To sustain him where song had restored him?
 —Song filled to the verge
 His cup with the wine of this life, pressing
 all that it yields
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty:
 beyond, on what fields,
 Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to
 brighten the eye
 And bring blood to the lip, and commend
 them the cup they put by?
 He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not:
 he lets me praise life,
 Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII.

Then fancies grew rife
 Which had come long ago on the pasture,
 when round me the sheep
 Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled
 slow as in sleep;
 And I lay in my hollow and mused on the
 world that might lie

'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip
 'twixt the hill and the sky:
 And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained
 to be passed with my flocks,
 "Let me people at least, with my fancies,
 the plains and the rocks,
 "Dream the life I am never to mix with, and
 image the show
 "Of mankind as they live in those fashions
 I hardly shall know!
 "Schemes of life, its best rules and right
 uses, the courage that gains,
 "And the prudence that keeps what men strive
 for." And now these old trains
 Of vague thought came again; I grew surer;
 so, once more the string
 Of my harp made response to my spirit, as
 thus—

XIII.

"Yea, my King,"
 I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere
 comforts that spring
 "From the mere mortal life held in common
 by man and by brute:
 "In our flesh grows the branch of this life,
 in our soul it bears fruit.
 "Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,
 —how its stem trembled first
 "Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler;
 then safely outburst
 "The fan-branches all round; and thou
 mindest when these too, in turn
 "Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed
 perfect: yet more was to learn,
 "E'en the good that comes in with the palm-
 fruit. Our dates shall we slight,
 "When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow?
 or care for the plight
 "Of the palm's self whose slow growth
 produced them? Not so! stem and
 branch
 "Shall decay, nor be known in their place,
 while the palm-wine shall staunch
 "Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I
 pour thee such wine.
 "Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for!
 the spirit be thine!

" By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee,
 thou still shalt enjoy
 " More indeed, than at first when unconscious,
 the life of a boy.
 " Crush that life, and behold its wine running!
 Each deed thou hast done
 " Dies, revives, goes to work in the world;
 until e'en as the sun
 " Looking down on the earth, though
 clouds spoil him, though tempests
 efface,
 " Can find nothing his own deed produced
 not, must everywhere trace
 " The results of his past summer-prime,—so,
 each ray of thy will,
 " Every flash of thy passion and prowess,
 long over, shall thrill
 " Thy whole people, the countless, with
 ardour, till they too give forth
 " A like cheer to their sons, who in turn,
 fill the South and the North
 " With the radiance thy deed was the germ
 of. Carouse in the past!
 " But the license of age has its limit; thou
 diest at last:
 " As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the
 rose at her height
 " So with man—so his power and his beauty
 for ever take flight.
 " No! Again a long draught of my soul-
 wine! Look forth o'er the years!
 " Thou hast done now with eyes for the
 actual; begin with the seer's!
 " Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale
 make his tomb—bid arise
 " A grey mountain of marble heaped four-
 square, till, built to the skies,
 " Let it mark where the great First
 King slumbers: whose fame would ye
 know?
 " Up above see the rock's naked face, where
 the record shall go
 " In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such
 was Saul, so he did;
 " With the sages directing the work, by the
 populace chid,—
 " For not halt, they'll affirm, is comprised
 there! Which fault to amend,

" In the grove with his kind grows the cedar,
 whereon they shall spend
 " (See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their
 praise, and record
 " With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,
 —the statesman's great word
 " Side by side with the poet's sweet com-
 ment. The river's a-wave
 " With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other
 when prophet-winds rave:
 " So the pen gives unborn generations their
 due and their part
 " In thy being! Then, first of the mighty,
 thank God that thou art!"

XIV.

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou
 who didst grant me that day,
 And before it not seldom hast granted thy
 help to essay,
 Carry on and complete an adventure,—my
 shield and my sword
 In that act where my soul was thy servant,
 thy word was my word,—
 Still be with me, who then at the summit of
 human endeavour
 And scaling the highest, man's thought could,
 gazed hopeless as ever
 On the new stretch of heaven above me—till,
 mighty to save,
 Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance
 —God's throne from man's grave!
 Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my
 voice to my heart
 Which can scarce dare believe in what mar-
 vels last night I took part,
 As this morning I gather the fragments, alone
 with my sheep,
 And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish
 like sleep!
 For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while
 Hebron¹ upheaves
 The dawn struggling with night on his
 shoulder, and Kidron² retrieves
 Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

¹ One of the six cities of Refuge.

² A brook near Jerusalem.

<p style="text-align: center;">xv.</p> <p>I say then,—my song While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right-hand replumed His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance bathes, He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore, And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before. He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though much spent Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did choose, To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose. So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the pile Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there awhile, And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to raise His bent head, and the other hung slack— till I touched on the praise I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there; And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak-roots which please To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: thro' my hair</p>	<p>The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power— All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower. Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized mine— And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign? I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss, "I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this; "I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence, "As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense!"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">xvi.</p> <p>Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more! outbroke—</p> <p style="text-align: center;">xvii.</p> <p>"I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke: "I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain "And pronounced on the rest of his hand- work—returned him again "His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw: "I report, as a man may of God's work— all's love, yet all's law. "Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked "To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was asked. "Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare. "Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite Care! "Do I task any faculty highest, to image success? "I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less, "In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God "In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.</p>
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"And thus looking within and around me, I
 ever renew
 "(With that stoop of the soul which in bend-
 ing upraises it too)
 "The submission of man's nothing-perfect to
 God's all-complete,
 "As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb
 to his feet.
 "Yet with all this abounding experience,
 this deity known,
 "I shall dare to discover some province, some
 gift of my own.
 "There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard
 to hoodwink,
 "I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh
 as I think)
 "Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it,
 wot ye, I worst
 "E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could
 love if I durst!
 "But I sink the pretension as fearing a man
 may o'ertake
 "God's own speed in the one way of love: I
 abstain for love's sake.
 "—What, my soul? see thus far and no
 farther? when doors great and small,
 "Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch,
 should the hundredth appal?
 "In the least things have faith, yet distrust in
 the greatest of all?
 "Do I find love so full in my nature, God's
 ultimate gift,
 "That I doubt his own love can compete
 with it? Here, the parts shift?
 "Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—
 the end, what Began?
 "Would I fain in my impotent yearning do
 all for this man,
 "And dare doubt he alone shall not help
 him, who yet alone can?
 "Would it ever have entered my mind, the
 bare will, much less power,
 "To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the
 marvellous dower
 "Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to
 make such a soul,
 "Such a body, and then such an earth for
 insphering the whole?

"And doth it not enter my mind (as my
 warm tears attest)
 "These good things being given, to go on,
 and give one more, the best?
 "Ay, to save and redeem and restore him,
 maintain at the height
 "This perfection,—succeed with life's day-
 spring, death's minute of night?
 "Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch
 Saul the mistake,
 "Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now,—
 and bid him awake
 "From the dream, the probation, the prelude,
 to find himself set
 "Clear and safe in new light and new life,—
 a new harmony yet
 "To be run, and continued, and ended—who
 knows?—or endure!
 "The man taught enough, by life's dream, of
 the rest to make sure;
 "By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning
 intensified bliss,
 "And the next world's reward and repose,
 by the struggles in this.

XVIII.

"I believe it! 'Tis thou, God, that givest,
 'tis I who receive:
 "In the first is the last, in thy will is my
 power to believe.
 "All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover,
 as prompt to my prayer
 "As I breathe out this breath, as I open these
 arms to the air.
 "From thy will, stream the worlds, life and
 nature, thy dread Sabaoth:
 "I will?—the mere atoms despise me! Why
 am I not loth
 "To look that, even that in the face too?
 Why is it I dare
 "Think but lightly of such impuissance?
 What stops my despair?
 "This;—'tis not what man Does which
 exalts him, but what man Would
 do!
 "See the King—I would help him but
 cannot, the wishes fall through.

<p>“Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich, “To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which, “I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now! “Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou! “So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, utmost crown— “And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down “One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath, “Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death! “As thy Love is discovered almighty, al- mighty be proved “Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved! “He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak. “’Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek “In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be “A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me, “Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand “Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!”</p>	<p>And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted not, For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest, Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest. Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth— Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day’s tender birth; In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills; In the shuddering forests’ held breath; in the sudden wind-thrills; In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff and chill That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with awe: E’en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new law. The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers; The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved the vine-bowers: And the little brooks witnessing murmured. persistent and low, With their obstinate, all but hushed voices— “E’en so, it is so!”</p>
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XIX.

I know not too well how I found my way
home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to
left and to right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the
alive, the aware:
I repressed, I got through them as hardly,
as strugglingly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished
for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was
awakened, hell loosed with her
crews;

MY STAR.

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

Then it stops like a bird ; like a flower,
hangs furled :
They must solace themselves with the
Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world ?
Mine has opened its soul to me ; therefore
I love it.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

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

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

XI.

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

XII.

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

XIII.

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

XIV.

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

XV.

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

XVI.

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

XVII.

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

XVIII.

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

XIX.

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

XX.

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

XXI.

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

XXII.

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

XXIII.

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

XXIV.

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

XXV.

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

XXVI.

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

XXVII.

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

XXVIII.

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

XXIX.

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

XXX.

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

XXXI.

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

XXXII.

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

XXXIII.

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

XXXIV.

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

XXXV.

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

XXXVI.

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

XXXVII.

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

XXXVIII.

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

XXXIX.

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

XL.

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

XLI.

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

XLII.

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

XLIII.

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

XLIV.

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

XLV.

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

XLVI.

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

XLVII.

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

XLVIII.

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

XLIX.

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

L.

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
 It forwards the general deed of man,
 And each of the Many helps to recruit
 The life of the race by a general plan ;
 Each living his own, to boot.

LI.

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

LII.

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

LIII.

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

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

I.

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

II.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
 Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
 The beating of my heart to reach its place.
 When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone ?
 When cry for the old comfort and find none ?
 Never, I know ! Thy soul is in thy face.

III.

Oh, I should fade—'tis willed so ! Might I
 save,
 Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
 Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
 It is not to be granted. But the soul
 Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves
 that whole ;
 Vainly the flesh fades ; soul makes all
 things new.

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

“So, what if in the dusk of life that’s left,
“I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,
“Look from my path when, mimicking
the same,
“The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and
gone?
“—Where was it till the sunset? where anon
“It will be at the sunrise! What’s to
blame?”

XI.

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

XII.

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

XIII.

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

XIV.

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

XV.

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

XVI.

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

XVII.

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
Why must I, ’twixt the leaves of coronal,
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why need the other women know so much,
And talk together, “Such the look and
such
“The smile he used to love with, then as
now!”

XVIII.

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

XIX.

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

XX.

And yet thou art the nobler of us two :
 What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
 Outstripping my ten small steps with one
 stride ?

I'll say then, here's a trial and a task—
 Is it to bear?—if easy, I'll not ask :
 Though love fail, I can trust on in thy
 pride.

XXI.

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

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

I.

I WONDER do you feel to-day
 As I have felt since, hand in hand,
 We sat down on the grass, to stray
 In spirit better through the land,
 This morn of Rome and May ?

II.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
 Has tantalized me many times,
 (Like turns of thread the spiders throw
 Mocking across our path) for rhymes
 To catch at and let go.

III.

Help me to hold it ! First it left.
 The yellowing fennel,¹ run to seed
 There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
 Some old tomb's ruin : yonder weed
 Took up the floating weft,

IV.

Where one small orange cup amassed
 Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
 Among the honey-meal : and last,
 Everywhere on the grassy slope
 I traced it. Hold it fast !

V.

The champaign with its endless fleece
 Of feathery grasses everywhere !
 Silence and passion, joy and peace,
 An everlasting wash of air—
 Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI.

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
 Such miracles performed in play,
 Such primal naked forms of flowers,
 Such letting nature have her way
 While heaven looks from its towers !

VII.

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
 Let us be unashamed of soul,
 As earth lies bare to heaven above !
 How is it under our control
 To love or not to love ?

VIII.

I would that you were all to me,
 You that are just so much, no more.
 Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free !
 Where does the fault lie? What the core
 O' the wound, since wound must be ?

¹ Herb with yellow flowers and seeds supposed to be medicinal.

IX.

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part my part
In life, for good and ill.

X.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

XI.

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

XII.

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

MISCONCEPTIONS.

I.

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet
hung to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

II.

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,

Ere the true bosom she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.¹
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went
on—
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

So wore night; the East was gray,
White the broad-faced hemlock-flowers:
There would be another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

¹ A vestment used by ecclesiastics, and formerly by senators and persons of high rank.

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

XI.

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

XII.

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

Vol. I.

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 ? 'Tis
 well !
 Lose who may—I still can say,
 Those who win heaven, blest are they !

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE.

I.

JUNE was not over
 Though past the full,
 And the best of her roses
 Had yet to blow,
 When a man I know
 (But shall not discover,
 Since ears are dull,
 And time discloses)
 Turned him and said with a man's true
 air,
 Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere,—
 "If I tire of your June, will she greatly
 care ?"

T

II.

Well, dear, in-doors with you !

True ! serene deadness

Tries a man's temper.

What's in the blossom

June wears on her bosom ?

Can it clear scores with you ?

Sweetness and redness.

Eadem semper !

Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly !

If June mend her bower now, your hand left
unsightly

By plucking the roses,—my June will do
rightly.

III.

And after, for pastime,

If June be refulgent

With flowers in completeness,

All petals, no prickles,

Delicious as trickles

Of wine poured at mass-time,—

And choose One indulgent

To redness and sweetness :

Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
June use my June-lightning, the strong insect-
ridder,

And stop the fresh film-work,—why, June
will consider.

A PRETTY WOMAN.

I.

THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,

And the blue eye

Dear and dewy,

And that infantine fresh air of hers !

II.

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,

And enfold you,

Ay, and hold you,

And so keep you what they make you, Sweet !

III.

You like us for a glance, you know—

For a word's sake

Or a sword's sake,

All's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

IV.

And in turn we make you ours, we say—

You and youth too,

Eyes and mouth too,

All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V.

All's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—

Sing and say for,

Watch and pray for,

Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet !

VI.

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,

Though we prayed you,

Paid you, brayed you

In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet !

VII.

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there :

Be its beauty

Its sole duty !

Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there !

VIII.

And while the face lies quiet there,

Who shall wonder

That I ponder

A conclusion ? I will try it there.

IX.

As,—why must one, for the love foregone,

Scout mere liking ?

Thunder-striking

Earth,—the heaven, we looked above for, gone !

X.

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,

Love with liking ?

Crush the fly-king

In his gauze, because no honey-bee ?

XI.

May not liking be so simple-sweet,

If love grew there

'Twould undo there

All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet ?

XII.

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

XIII.

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

XIV.

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

XV.

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

XVI.

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

XVII.

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

XVIII.

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

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 Boulevard 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!

LOVE IN A LIFE.

I.

ROOM after room,
 I hunt the house through
 We inhabit together.
 Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt
 find her—
 Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind
 her
 Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!

As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath
blossomed anew :
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of
her feather.

II.

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

LIFE IN A LOVE.

ESCAPE me ?

Never—

Beloved !

While I am I, and you are you,

So long as the world contains us both,

Me the loving and you the loth,

While the one eludes, must the other pursue.

My life is a fault at last, I fear :

It seems too much like a fate, indeed !

Though I do my best I shall scarce suc-
ceed.

But what if I fail of my purpose here ?

It is but to keep the nerves at strain,

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

And, baffled, get up and begin again,—

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

While, look but once from your farthest
bound

At me so deep in the dust and dark,

No sooner the old hope goes to ground

Than a new one, straight to the self-same
mark,

I shape me—

Ever

Removed !

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, it dies out in scorn.
Fear? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are short,
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

"Speak, I love thee best!"
 He exclaimed :
 "Let thy love my own foretell!"
 I confessed :

"Clasp my heart on thine
 "Now unblamed,
 "Since upon thy soul as well
 "Hangeth mine!"

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

WOMEN AND ROSES.

I.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me?

II.

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
Then follow women fresh and gay,
Living and loving and loved to-day.
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
Beauties yet unborn. And all, to one cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached:
Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time!
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?
Oh, to possess and be possessed!
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!
Once but of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink but once and die!—In vain, the same
fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

V.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed,
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI.

Deep, as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips!
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure,
Girdle me for once! But no—the old
measure,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

VII.

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud's the babe unborn:
First streak of a new morn.

VIII.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear!
What is far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our flesh
moulders.
What shall arrive with the cycle's change?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began
her,
Shaped her to his mind!—Alas! in like
manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

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 em-
 broilment,
 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,
 " 'Tis 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 com-
 posure.

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 mis-
 feisance?

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 for-
 gives.
 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!

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

A PICTURE AT FANO.

I.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only
 leave
 That child, when thou hast done with him,
 for me!

Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
 Shall find performed thy special ministry,
 And time come for departure, thou, suspending
 Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
 Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
 From where thou standest now, to where
 I gaze,
 —And suddenly my head is covered o'er
 With those wings, white above the child
 who prays
 Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee
 guarding
 Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
 Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opens
 its door.

III.

I would not look up thither past thy head
 Because the door opens, like that child, I
 know,
 For I should have thy gracious face instead,
 Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend
 me low
 Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
 And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
 Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's
 spread?

IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest
 My head beneath thine, while thy healing
 hands
 Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
 Pressing the brain, which too much thought
 expands,
 Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
 Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
 And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!
 I think how I should view the earth and
 skies
 And sea, when once again my brow was bared
 After thy healing, with such different eyes.
 O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:
 And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
 What further may be sought for or declared?

VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
 (Alfred, dear friend!)—that little child to
 pray,
 Holding the little hands up, each to each
 Pressed gently,—with his own head turned
 away
 Over the earth where so much lay before him
 Of work to do, though heaven was opening
 o'er him,
 And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
 To sit and see him in his chapel there,
 And drink his beauty to our soul's content
 —My angel with me too: and since I care
 For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
 And glory comes this picture for a dower,
 Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)—

VIII.

And since he did not work thus earnestly
 At all times, and has else endured some
 wrong—

I took one thought his picture struck from me,
 And spread it out, translating it to song.
 My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
 How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
 This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

MEMORABILIA.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

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's¹ 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'erwhispered!
 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

¹ The Syrian Venus.

X.

Most like the centre-spike of gold
Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,
What time, with arduours 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 com-
bine
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 murex¹ up ?
What porridge had John Keats ?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-
GOTHA.

[An imaginary composer.]

I.

HIST, but a word, fair and soft !
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues !
Answer the question I've put you so oft :
What do you mean by your mountainous
fugues ?²
See, we're alone in the loft,—

¹ Molluscs from which the famous Tyrian purple dye was obtained.

² A fugue is a short melody.

II.

I, the poor organist here,
Hugues, the composer of note,
Dead though, and done with, this many a year :
Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,
Make the world prick up its ear !

III.

See, the church empties apace :
Fast they extinguish the lights.
Hallo there, sacristan ! Five minutes' grace !
Here's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,
Baulks one of holding the base.

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

Here's your book, younger folks shelve !
Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number
twelve ?
Here's what should strike, could one handle
it cunningly :
Help the axe, give it a helve !

VIII.

Page after page as I played,
 Every bar's rest, where one wipes
 Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed,
 O'er my three claviers,¹ yon forest of pipes
 Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX.

Sure you were wishful to speak?
 You, with brow ruled like a score,
 Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
 Like two great breves,² as they wrote them
 of yore,
 Each side that bar, your straight beak!

X.

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

XI.

Well then, speak up, never flinch!
 Quick, ere my candle's a snuff
 —Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch—
 I believe in you, but that's not enough:
 Give my conviction a clinch!

XII.

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

XIII.

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

¹ Keyboard of organ.
² A note in music.

XIV.

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

XV.

One says his say with a difference;
 More of expounding, explaining!
 All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance;
 Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-
 restraining:
 Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

XVI.

One is incisive, corrosive;
 Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant;
 Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive;
 Four overbears them all, strident and
 strepitant:
 Five . . . O Danaides,³ O Sieve!

XVII.

Now, they ply axes and crowbars;
 Now, they prick pins at a tissue
 Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's⁴
 Worked on the bone of a lie. To what
 issue?
 Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

XVIII.

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

³ The daughters of Danaus, condemned to
 pour water into a sieve.

⁴ The Spanish casuist, so severely mauled
 by Pascal.

XIX.

What with affirming, denying,
 Holding, risposting,¹ subjoining,
 All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance
 I'm trying . . .
 There ! See our roof, its gilt moulding
 and groining
 Under those spider-webs lying !

XX.

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
 Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
 Till we exclaim—"But where's music, the
 dickens ?
 "Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web
 strengthens
 "—Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?"²

XXI.

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

XXII.

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

XXIII.

Over our heads truth and nature—
 Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
 Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature—
 God's gold just shining its last where that
 lodges,
 Palled beneath man's usurpature.

XXIV.

So we o'er shroud stars and roses,
 Cherub and trophy and garland ;

¹ A quick return in fencing.

² A closely woven fabric.

Nothings grow something which quietly closes
 Heaven's earnest eye : not a glimpse of the
 far land
 Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV.

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

XXVI.

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

XXVII.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger :
 Learning it once, who would lose it ?
 Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,
 Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse it—
 Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

XXVIII.

Hugues ! I advise *meâ panâ*
 (Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
 Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the
 arena !
 Say the word, straight I unstop the full-organ,
 Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.³

XXIX.

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

³ *Giovanni P. da Palestrina*, celebrated musician (1524-1594).

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES ;

A TRAGEDY.

1843.

[The Druses still exist on Mount Lebanon, and entertain opinions said to have been first promulgated at the beginning of the eleventh century by an Egyptian caliph who styled himself Hakeem Biamrallah ; that is, He who judges by the order of God. See Holland's " Stories from Browning," p. 172.]

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

PERSONS.

The Grand-Master's Prefect.

The Patriarch's Nuncio.

The Republic's Admiral.

LOYS DE DREUX, *Knight-Novice.*

Initiated Druses—DJABAL, KHALIL, ANAEL,

MAANI, KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB,

and others.

Uninitiated Druses.

Prefect's Guard. Nuncio's Attendants. Admiral's Force.

TIME, 14—.

PLACE.—*An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonized by Druses of Lebanon, and garrisoned by the Knights-Hospitallers of Rhodes.*

SCENE.—*A Hall in the Prefect's Palace.*

ACT I.

Enter stealthily KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB and other initiated Druses, each as he enters casting off a robe that conceals his distinctive black vest and white turban ; then, as giving a loose to exultation, —

Karshook. The moon is carried off in purple fire :

Day breaks at last ! Break glory, with the day,

On Djabal's dead incarnate mystery

Now ready to resume its pristine shape

Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst
In what seemed death to uninstructed eyes,
On red Mokattam's verge—our Founder's
flesh,

As he resumes our Founder's function !

Raghib. —Death

Sweep to the Christian Prefect that enslaved

So long us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea !

Ayob. Most joy be thine, O Mother-
mount ! Thy brood

Returns to thee, no outcasts as we left,

But thus—but thus ! Behind, our Prefect's
corse ;

Before, a presence like the morning—thine,
Absolute Djabal late,—God Hakeem now

That day breaks !

Karshook. Off then, with disguise
at last !

As from our forms this hateful garb we strip,
Lose every tongue its glozing accent too,

Discard each limb the ignoble gesture ! Cry,

'Tis the Druse Nation, warders on our Mount

Of the world's secret, since the birth of time,

—No kindred slips, no offsets from thy stock,

No spawn of Christians are we, Prefect, we

Who rise . . .

Ayob. Who shout . . .

Raghib. Who seize, a first-fruits, ha—
Spoil of the spoiler ! Brave !

[*They begin to tear down, and to dispute
for, the decorations of the hall.*

Karshook. Hold !

Ayob. —Mine, I say ;

And mine shall it continue !

Karshook. Just this fringe! Take anything beside! Lo, spire on spire, Curl serpentwise wreathed columns to the top O' the roof, and hide themselves mysteriously Among the twinkling lights and darks that haunt
Yon cornice! Where the huge veil, they suspend
Before the Prefect's chamber of delight,
Floats wide, then falls again as if its slave,
The scented air, took heart now, and anon
Lost heart to buoy its breadths of gorgeousness
Above the gloom they droop in—all the porch
Is jewelled o'er with frostwork character; ;
And, see, yon eight-point cross of white
flame, winking
Hoar-silvery like some fresh-broke marble
stone:
Raze out the Rhodian cross there, so thou
leav'st me
This single fringe!
Ayoob. Ha, wouldst thou, dog-
fox? Help!
—Three hand-breadths of gold fringe, my son
was set
To twist, the night he died!
Karshook. Nay, hear the knave!
And I could witness my one daughter borne,
A week since, to the Prefect's couch, yet fold
These arms, be mute, lest word of mine
should mar
Our Master's work, delay the Prefect here
A day, prevent his sailing hence for Rhodes—
How know I else?—Hear me denied my right
By such a knave!
Raghib [*interposing*]. Each ravage for him-
self!
Booty enough! On, Druses! Be there found
Blood and a heap behind us; with us, Djabal
Turned Hakeem; and before us, Lebanon!
Yields the porch? Spare not! There his
minions dragged
Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Prefect's
couch!
Ayoob! Thy son, to soothe the Prefect's
pride,
Bent o'er that task, the death-sweat on his
brow,
Carving the spice-tree's heart in scroll-work
there!
Onward in Djabal's name!
As the tumult is at height, enter KHALIL.
A pause and silence.
Khalil. Was it for this,
Djabal hath summoned you? Deserve you thus
A portion in to-day's event? What, here—
When most behoves your feet fall soft, your
eyes
Sink low, your tongues lie still,—at Djabal's
side,
Close in his very hearing, who, perchance,
Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's dreaded
shape,—
Dispute you for these gauds?
Ayoob. How say'st thou, Khalil?
Doubtless our Master prompts thee! Take
the fringe,
Old Karshook! I supposed it was a day . . .
Khalil. For pillage?
Karshook. Hearken, Khalil!
Never spoke
A boy so like a song-bird; we avouch thee
Prettiest of all our Master's instruments
Except thy bright twin-sister; thou and Anael
Challenge his prime regard: but we may crave
(Such nothings as we be) a portion too
Of Djabal's favour; in him we believed,
His bound ourselves, him moon by moon
obeyed,
Kept silence till this daybreak—so, may claim
Reward: who grudges me my claim?
Ayoob. To-day
Is not as yesterday!
Raghib. Stand off!
Khalil. Rebel you?
Must I, the delegate of Djabal, draw
His wrath on you, the day of our Return?
Other Druses. Wrench from their grasp the
fringe! Hounds! must the earth
Vomit her plagues on us thro' thee?—and
thee?
Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault!
Khalil. Oh, shame!
Thus breaks to-day on you, the mystic tribe
Who, flying the approach of Osman, bore

Our faith, a merest spark, from Syria's ridge
Its birthplace, hither! "Let the sea divide
"These hunters from their prey," you said;
"and safe

"In this dim islet's virgin solitude
"Tend we our faith, the spark, till happier
time

"Fan it to fire; till Hakeem rise again,
"According to his word that, in the flesh
"Which faded on Mokattam ages since,
"He, at our extreme need, would interpose,
"And, reinstating all in power and bliss,
"Lead us himself to Lebanon once more."
Was't not thus you departed years ago,
Ere I was born?

Druse. 'Twas even thus, years ago.
Khalil. And did you call—(according to
old laws

Which bid us, lest the sacred grow profane,
Assimilate ourselves in outward rites
With strangers fortune makes our lords, and
live

As Christian with the Christian, Jew with Jew,
Druse only with the Druses)—did you call
Or no, to stand 'twixt you and Osman's rage
(Mad to pursue e'en hither thro' the sea
The remnant of our tribe), a race self-vowed
To endless warfare with his hordes and him,
The White-cross Knights of the adjacent Isle?

Karshook. And why else rend we down,
wrench up, raise out?

These Knights of Rhodes we thus solicited
For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest
Than aught we fled—their Prefect; who began
His promised mere paternal governance
By a prompt massacre of all our Sheikhs
Able to thwart the Order in its scheme
Of crushing, with our nation's memory,
Each chance of our return, and taming us
Bondslaves to Rhodes for ever—all, he thinks
To end by this day's treason.

Khalil. Say I not?
You, fitted to the Order's purposes,
Your Sheikhs cut off, your rites, your garb
proscribed,
Must yet receive one degradation more;
The Knights at last throw off the mask—
transfer,

As tributary now and appanage,
This islet they are but protectors of,
To their own ever-craving liege, the Church,
Who licenses all crimes that pay her thus.
You, from their Prefect, were to be consigned
(Pursuant of I know not what vile pact)
To the Knights' Patriarch, ardent to outvie
His predecessor in all wickedness.
When suddenly rose Djabal in the midst,
Djabal, the man in semblance, but our God
Confessed by signs and portents. Ye saw fire
Bicker round Djabal, heard strange music fit
Bird-like about his brow?

Druses. We saw—we heard!
Djabal is Hakeem, the incarnate Dread,
The phantasm Khalif, King of Prodiges!
Khalil. And as he said has not our Khalif
done,

And so disposed events (from land to land
Passing invisibly) that when, this morn,
The pact of villany complete, there comes
This Patriarch's Nuncio with this Master's
Prefect

Their treason to consummate,—each will face
For a crouching handful, an uplifted nation:
For simulated Christians, confessed Druses:
And, for slaves past hope of the Mother-mount,
Freedmen returning there 'neath Venice' flag;
That Venice which, the Hospitallers' foe,
Grants us from Candia escort home at price
Of our relinquished isle, Rhodes counts her
own—

Venice, whose promised argosies should stand
Toward harbour: is it now that you, and you,
And you, selected from the rest to bear
The burthen of the Khalif's secret, further
To-day's event, entitled by your wrongs,
And witness in the Prefect's hall his fate—
That you dare clutch these gauds? Ay, drop
them!

Karshook. True,
Most true, all this; and yet, may one dare hint,
Thou art the youngest of us?—though employed
Abundantly as Djabal's confidant,
Transmitter of his mandates, even now.
Much less, when'er beside him Anael graces
The cedar throne, his queen-bride, art thou like
To occupy its lowest step that day!

Now, Khalil, wert thou checked as thou
aspirist,

Forbidden such or such an honour,—say,
Would silence serve so amply?

Khalil. Karshook thinks
I covet honours? Well, nor idly thinks.
Honours? I have demanded of them all
The greatest.

Karshook. I supposed so.

Khalil. Judge, yourselves!
Turn, thus: 'tis in the alcove at the back
Of yonder columned porch, whose entrance now
The veil hides, that our Prefect holds his state,
Receives the Nuncio, when the one, from
Rhodes,

The other lands from Syria; there they meet.
Now, I have sued with earnest prayers . . .

Karshook. For what
Shall the Bride's brother vainly sue?

Khalil. That mine—
Avenging in one blow a myriad wrongs
—Might be the hand to slay the Prefect there!
Djabal reserves that office for himself.

[A silence.]

Thus far, as youngest of you all, I speak
—Scarce more enlightened than yourselves;
since, near

As I approach him, nearer as I trust
Soon to approach our Master, he reveals
Only the God's power, not the glory yet.
Therefore I reasoned with you: now, as
servant

To Djabal, bearing his authority,
Hear me appoint your several posts! Till noon
None see him save myself and Anael: once
The deed achieved, our Khalif, casting off
The embodied Awe's tremendous mystery,
The weakness of the flesh disguise, resumes
His proper glory, ne'er to fade again.

Enter a Druse.

The Druse. Our Prefect lands from Rhodes!
—without a sign

That he suspects aught since he left our Isle;
Nor in his train a single guard beyond
The few he sailed with hence: so have we
learned
From Loys.

Karshook. Loys? Is not Loys gone
For ever?

Ayoob. Loys, the Frank Knight, returned?
The Druse. Loys, the boy, stood on the
leading prow

Conspicuous in his gay attire, and leapt
Into the surf the foremost. Since day-dawn
I kept watch to the Northward; take but note
Of my poor vigilance to Djabal!

Khalil. Peace!

Thou, Karshook, with thy company, receive
The Prefect as appointed: see, all keep
The wonted show of servitude: announce
His entry here by the accustomed peal
Of trumpets, then await the further pleasure
Of Djabal! (Loys back, when Djabal sent
To Rhodes that we might spare the single
Knight
Worth sparing!)

Enter a second Druse.

The Druse. I espied it first! Say, I
First spied the Nuncio's galley from the
South!

Said'st thou a Crossed-keys' flag would flap
the mast?

It nears apace! One galley and no more.
If Djabal chance to ask who spied the flag,
Forget not, I it was!

Khalil. Thou, Ayoob, bring
The Nuncio and his followers hither! Break
One rule prescribed, ye wither in your blood,
Die at your fault!

Enter a third Druse.

The Druse. I shall see home, see home!
—Shall banquet in the sombre groves again!
Hail to thee, Khalil! Venice looms afar;
The argosies of Venice, like a cloud,
Bear up from Candia in the distance!

Khalil. Joy!
Summon our people, Raghib! Bid all forth!
Tell them the long-kept secret, old and
young!

Set free the captive, let the trampled raise
Their faces from the dust, because at length
The cycle is complete, God Hakeem's reign
Begins anew! Say, Venice for our guard,

Ere night we steer for Syria! Hear you,
Druses?

Hear you this crowning witness to the claims
Of Djabal? Oh, I spoke of hope and fear,
Reward and punishment, because he bade
Who has the right; for me, what should I say
But, mar not those imperial lineaments,
No majesty of all that rapt regard
Vex by the least omission! Let him rise
Without a check from you!

Druses. Let Djabal rise!

Enter LOYS.—The Druses are silent.

Loys. Who speaks of Djabal?—for I seek
him, friends!

[*Aside.*] *Tu Dieu!* 'Tis as our Isle broke
out in song

For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off
To-day, and I succeed him in his rule!
But no—they cannot dream of their good
fortune!

[*Aloud.*] Peace to you, Druses! I have
tidings for you

But first for Djabal: where's your tall
bewitcher,

With that small Arab thin-lipped silver-mouth?

Khalil [aside to KARSHOOK]. Loys, in
truth! Yet Djabal cannot err!

Karshook [to KHALIL]. And who takes
charge of Loys? That's forgotten,
Despite thy wariness! Will Loys stand
And see his comrades slaughtered?

Loys [aside]. How they shrink
And whisper, with those rapid faces! What?

The sight of me in their oppressors' garb
Strike terror to the simple tribe? God's shame

On those that bring our Order ill repute!

But all's at end now; better days begin
For these mild mountaineers from over-sea:

The timidest shall have in me no Prefect
To cower at thus! [*Aloud.*] I asked for
Djabal—

Karshook [aside]. Better
One lured him, ere he can suspect, inside

The corridor; 'twere easy to despatch
A youngster. [*To LOYS.*] Djabal passed
some minutes since

Thro' yonder porch, and . . .

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Khalil [aside]. Hold! What,
him despatch?

The only Christian of them all we charge
No tyranny upon? Who,—noblest Knight
Of all that learned from time to time their
trade

Of lust and cruelty among us,—heir
To Europe's pomp, a truest child of pride,—
Yet stood between the Prefect and ourselves
From the beginning? Loys, Djabal makes
Account of, and precisely sent to Rhodes
For safety? I take charge of him!

[*To LOYS.*] Sir Loys,—

Loys. There, cousins! Does Sir Loys
strike you dead?

Khalil [advancing]. Djabal has intercourse
with few or none

Till noontide: but, your pleasure?

Loys. "Intercourse
"With few or none?"—(Ah, Khalil, when
you spoke

I saw not your smooth face! All health!—
and health

To Anael! How fares Anael?)—"Inter-
course

"With few or none?" Forget you, I've
been friendly

With Djabal long ere you or any Druse?

—Enough of him at Rennes, I think, beneath
The Duke my father's roof! He'd tell by
the hour,

With fixed white eyes beneath his swarthy
brow,

Plausiblest stories . . .

Khalil. Stories, say you?—Ah,
The quaint attire!

Loys. My dress for the last time!
How sad I cannot make you understand,
This ermine, o'er a shield, betokens me
Of Bretagne, ancientest of provinces
And noblest; and, what's best and oldest
there,

See, Dreux', our house's blazon, which the
Nuncio

Tacks to an Hospitalier's vest to-day!

Khalil. The Nuncio we await? What
brings you back

From Rhodes, Sir Loys?

Loys. How you island-tribe
Forget the world's awake while here you
drowse!

What brings me back? What should not
bring me, rather!

Our Patriarch's Nuncio visits you to-day—
Is not my year's probation out? I come
To take the knightly vows.

Khalil. What's that you wear?

Loys. This Rhodian cross? The cross
your Prefect wore.

You should have seen, as I saw, the full Chapter
Rise, to a man, while they transferred this cross
From that unworthy Prefect's neck to . . .
(fool—

My secret will escape me!) In a word,
My year's probation passed, a Knight ere eve
Am I; bound, like the rest, to yield my wealth
To the common stock, to live in chastity,
(We Knights espouse alone our Order's fame)
—Change this gay weed for the back white-
crossed gown,

And fight to death against the Infidel

—Not, therefore, against you, you Christians
with

Such partial difference only as befits
The peacefullest of tribes. But Khalil, prithee,
Is not the Isle brighter than wont to-day?

Khalil. Ah, the new sword!

Loys. See now! You handle sword
As 'twere a camel-staff. Pull! That's my
motto,

Annealed "*Pro fide*," on the blade in blue.

Khalil. No curve in it? Surely a blade
should curve.

Loys. Straight from the wrist! Loose—
it should poise itself!

Khalil [*waving with irrepressible exulta-
tion the sword*]. We are a nation, Loys,
of old fame

Among the mountains! Rights have we to keep
With the sword too!

[*Remembering himself*.] But I forget—you
bid me

Seek Djabal?

Loys. What! A sword's sight scares
you not?

(The People I will make of him and them!

Oh let my Prefect-sway begin at once!)
Bring Djabal—say, indeed, that come he must!

Khalil. At noon seek Djabal in the Pre-
fect's Chamber,

And find . . . [*Aside*.] Nay, 'tis thy cursed
race's token,

Frank pride, no special insolence of thine!

[*Aloud*.] Tarry, and I will do your bidding,
Loys!

[*To the rest aside*.] Now, forth you! I pro-
ceed to Djabal straight.

Leave this poor boy, who knows not what
he says!

Oh will it not add joy to even thy joy,
Djabal, that I report all friends were true?

[*KHALIL goes, followed by the Druses.*

Loys. *Tu Dieu!* How happy I shall
make these Druses!

Was't not surpassingly contrived of me

To get the long list of their wrongs by heart,

Then take the first pretence for stealing off

From these poor islanders, present myself

Sudden at Rhodes before the noble Chapter,

And (as best proof of ardour in its cause

Which ere to-night will have become, too,
mine)

Acquaint it with this plague-sore in its body,

This Prefect and his villanous career?

The princely Synod! All I dared request

Was his dismissal; and they graciously

Consigned his very office to myself—

Myself may cure the Isle diseased!

And well

For them, they did so! Since I never felt

How lone a lot, tho' brilliant, I embrace,

Till now that, past retrieval, it is mine.

To live thus, and thus die! Yet, as I leapt

On shore, so home a feeling greeted me

That I could half believe in Djabal's story,

He used to tempt my father with, at Rennes—

And me, too, since the story brought me
here—

Of some Count Dreux and ancestor of ours
Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's war,
Left his old name in Lebanon.

Long days

At least to spend in the Isle! and, my news
known

An hour hence, what if Anael turn on me
The great black eyes I must forget ?

Why, fool,

Recall them, then? My business is with
Djabal,

Not Anael! Djabal tarries: if I seek him?—
The Isle is brighter than its wont to-day.

ACT II.

Enter DJABAL.

Djabal. That a strong man should think
himself a God!

I—Hakeem? To have wandered through
the world,

Sown falsehood, and thence reaped now
scorn, now faith,

For my one chant with many a change, my
tale

Of outrage, and my prayer for vengeance—
this

Required, forsooth, no mere man's faculty,
Nought less than Hakeem's? The persuad-
ing Loys

To pass probation here; the getting access
by Loys to the Prefect; worst of all,
The gaining my tribe's confidence by fraud
That would disgrace the very Frank,—a few
Of Europe's secrets which subdue the flame,
The wave,—to ply a simple tribe with these,
Took Hakeem?

And I feel this first to-day!

Does the day break, is the hour imminent
When one deed, when my whole life's deed,
my deed

Must be accomplished? Hakeem? Why
the God?

Shout, rather, "Djabal, Youssof's child,
thought slain

"With his whole race, the Druses' Sheikhs,
this Prefect

"Endeavoured to extirpate—saved, a child,

"Returns from traversing the world, a man,

"Able to take revenge, lead back the march

"To Lebanon"—so shout, and who gainsays?
But now, because delusion mixed itself

Insensibly with this career, all's changed!
Have I brought Venice to afford us convoy?

"True—but my jugglings wrought that!"
Put I heart

Into our people where no heart lurked?—
"Ah,

"What cannot an impostor do!"

Not this!

Not do this which I do! Not bid avaut
Falsehood! Thou shalt not keep thy hold
on me!

—Nor even get a hold on me! 'Tis now—
This day—hour—minute—'tis as here I stand

On the accursed threshold of the Prefect,
That I am found deceiving and deceived!

And now what do I?—hasten to the few
Deceived, ere they deceive the many—shout,

"As I professed, I did believe myself!

"Say, Druses, had you seen a butchery—

"If Ayoob, Karshook saw—Maani there
"Must tell you how I saw my father sink;

"Mymother's arms twine still about my neck;

"I hear my brother shriek, here's yet the scar
"Of what was meant for my own death-blow

—say,

"If you had woke like me, grown year by year
"Out of the tumult in a far-off clime,

"Would it be wondrous such delusion grew?

"I walked the world, asked help at every
hand;

"Came help or no? Not this and this?
Which helps

"When I returned with, found the Prefect
here,

"The Druses here, all here but Hakeem's self,

"The Khalif of the thousand prophecies,

"Reserved for such a juncture,—could I call

"My mission aught but Hakeem's? Promised
Hakeem

"More than performs the Djabal—you
absolve?

"—Me, you will never shame before the
crowd

"Yet happily ignorant?—Me, both throngs
surround,

"The few deceived, the many unabused,

"—Who, thus surrounded, slay for you and
them

"The Prefect, lead to Lebanon? No Khalif,
"But Sheikh once more! Mere Djabal—
not" . . .

Enter KHALIL hastily.

Khalil. —God Hakeem!

'Tis told! The whole Druse nation knows
thee, Hakeem,

As we! and mothers lift on high their babes
Who seem aware, so glisten their great eyes,
Thou hast not failed us; ancient brows are
proud;

Our elders could not earlier die, it seems,
Than at thy coming! The Druse heart is
thine!

Take it! my lord and theirs, be thou adored!
Djabal [aside]. Adored!—but I renounce
it utterly!

Khalil. Already are they instituting choirs
And dances to the Khalif, as of old
'Tis chronicled thou bad'st them.

Djabal [aside]. I abjure it!
'Tis not mine—not for me!

Khalil. Why pour they wine
Flavoured like honey and bruised mountain-
herbs,

Or wear those strings of sun-dried cedar-fruit?
Oh, let me tell thee—Esaad, we supposed
Doting, is carried forth, eager to see
The last sun rise on the Isle: he can see now!
The shamed Druse women never wept before:
They can look up when we reach home, they
say.

Smell!—sweet cane, saved in Lilith's breast
thus long—

Sweet!—it grows wild in Lebanon. And I
Alone do nothing for thee! 'Tis my office
Just to announce what well thou know'st—
but thus

Thou bidst me. At this self-same moment
tend

The Prefect, Nuncio and the Admiral
Hither by their three sea-paths: nor forget
Who were the trusty watchers!—thou forget?
Like me, who do forget that Anael bade . . .

Djabal [aside]. Ay, Anael, Anael—is that
said at last?

Louder than all, that would be said, I knew!

What does abjuring mean, confessing mean,
To the people? Till that woman crossed my
path,

On went I, solely for my people's sake:
I saw her, and I then first saw myself,
And slackened pace: "if I should prove
indeed

"Hakeem—with Anael by!"

Khalil [aside]. Ah, he is rapt!
Dare I at such a moment break on him
Even to do my sister's bidding? Yes:

The eyes are Djabal's and not Hakeem's yet,
Though but till I have spoken this, perchance,

Djabal [aside]. To yearn to tell her, and
yet have no one

Great heart's word that will tell her! I could
gasp

Doubtless one such word out, and die.

[*Aloud.*] You said

That Anael . . .

Khalil. . . . Fain would see thee,
speak with thee,

Before thou change, discard this Djabal's shape
She knows, for Hakeem's shape she is to know.
Something to say that will not from her mind!
I know not what—"Let him but come!"
she said.

Djabal [half-apart]. My nation—all my
Druses—how fare they?

Those I must save, and suffer thus to save,
Hold they their posts? Wait they their
Khalif too?

Khalil. All at the signal pant to flock
around

That banner of a brow!

Djabal [aside]. And when they flock,
Confess them this: and after, for reward,
Be chased with howlings to her feet perchance!
—Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf and
blind,

Precede me there, forestall my story there,
Tell it in mocks and jeers!

I lose myself.

Who needs a Hakeem to direct him now?
I need the veriest child—why not this child?

[*Turning abruptly to KHALIL.*

You are a Druse too, Khalil; you were
nourished

Like Anael with our mysteries: if she
 Could vow, so nourished, to love only one
 Who should avenge the Druses, whence pro-
 ceeds

Your silence? Wherefore made you no essay,
 Who thus implicitly can execute
 My bidding? What have I done, you could
 not?

Who, knowing more than Anael the prostra-
 tion

Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life
 Of this detested . . .

Does he come, you say,

This Prefect? All's in readiness?

Khalil. The sword,

The sacred robe, the Khalif's mystic tiar,
 Laid up so long, are all disposed beside
 The Prefect's chamber.

Djabal. —Why did you despair?

Khalil. I know our nation's state? Too
 surely know,

As thou who speak'st to prove me! Wrongs
 like ours

Should wake revenge: but when I sought
 the wronged

And spoke,—“The Prefect stabbed your son
 —arise!

“Your daughter, while you starve, eats
 shameless bread

“In his pavilion—then arise!”—my speech
 Fell idly: 'twas, “Be silent, or worse fare!

“Endure till time's slow cycle prove com-
 plete!

“Who mayst thou be that takest on thee to
 thrust

“Into this peril—art thou Hakeem?” No!
 Only a mission like thy mission renders

All these obedient at a breath, subdues

Their private passions, brings their wills to
 one.

Djabal. You think so?

Khalil. Even now—when
 they have witnessed

Thy miracles—had I not threatened all
 With Hakeem's vengeance, they would mar
 the work,

And couch ere this, each with his special prize,
 Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main hope

To perish. No! When these have kissed
 thy feet

At Lebanon, the past purged off, the present
 Clear,—for the future, even Hakeem's mission
 May end, and I perchance, or any youth,
 Shall rule them thus renewed.—I tutor thee!
Djabal. And wisely. (He is Anael's
 brother, pure

As Anael's self.) Go say, I come to her.

Haste! I will follow you. [*KHALIL goes.*

Oh, not confess

To these, the blinded multitude—confess,

Before at least the fortune of my deed

Half-authorize its means! Only to her

Let me confess my fault, who in my path

Curled up like incense from a Mage-king's
 tomb

When he would have the wayfarer descend

Through the earth's rift and bear hid treasure
 forth!

How should child's-carelessness prove man-
 hood's crime

Till now that I, whose lone youth hurried past,

Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses' sake,

At length recover in one Druse all joy?

Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer, still

Would I confess. On the gulf's verge I pause.

How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus?

Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy!

[*Goes.*

*Enter ANAEL, and MAANI who is assisting
 to array her in the ancient dress of the
 Druses.*

Anael. Those saffron vestures of the tabret-
 girls!

Comes *Djabal*, think you?

Maani. Doubtless *Djabal* comes.

Anael. Dost thou snow-swathe thee king-
 lier, Lebanon,

Than in my dreams?—Nay all the tresses off

My forehead! Look I lovely so? He says

That I am lovely.

Maani. Lovely: nay, that hangs
 Awry.

Anael. You tell me how a khandjar hangs?

The sharp side, thus, along the heart, see,
 marks

The maiden of our class. Are you content
For Djabal as for me?

Maani. Content, my child.

Anael. Oh mother, tell me more of him!

He comes

Even now—tell more, fill up my soul with
him!

Maani. And did I not . . . yes, surely
. . . tell you all?

Anael. What will be changed in Djabal
when the Change

Arrives? Which feature? Not his eyes!

Maani. 'Tis writ
Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove the
dark

Superbly.

Anael. Not his eyes! His voice perhaps?
Yet that's no change; for a grave current
lived

—Grandly beneath the surface ever lived,
That, scattering, broke as in live silver spray
While . . . ah, the bliss . . . he would dis-
course to me

In that enforced still fashion, word on word!
'Tis the old current which must swell thro'
that,

For what least tone, Maani, could I lose?

'Tis surely not his voice will change!

—If Hakeem

Only stood by! If Djabal, somehow, passed
Out of the radiance as from out a robe;
Possessed, but was not it!

He lived with you?

Well—and that morning Djabal saw me first
And heard me vow never to wed but one
Who saved my People—on that day . . . pro-
ceed!

Maani. Once more, then: from the time
of his return

In secret, changed so since he left the Isle
That I, who screened our Emir's last of sons,
This Djabal, from the Prefect's massacre
—Who bade him ne'er forget the child he
was,

—Who dreamed so long the youth he might
become—

I knew not in the man that child; the man
Who spoke alone of hope to save our tribe,

How he had gone from land to land to save
Our tribe—allies were sure, nor foes to dread.
And much he mused, days, nights, alone he
mused:

But never till that day when, pale and worn
As by a persevering woe, he cried

“Is there not one Druse left me?”—and I
showed

The way to Khalil's and your hiding-place
From the abhorred eye of the Prefect here,
So that he saw you, heard you speak—till
then,

Never did he announce—(how the moon
seemed

To ope and shut, the while, above us both!)
—His mission was the mission promised us;

The cycle had revolved; all things renewing,
He was lost Hakeem clothed in flesh to lead
His children home anon, now veiled to work
Great purposes: the Druses now would
change!

Anael. And they have changed! And
obstacles did sink,

And furtherances rose! And round his form
Played fire, and music beat her angel wings!

My people, let me more rejoice, oh more
For you than for myself! Did I but watch

Afar the pageant, feel our Khalif pass,
One of the throng, how proud were I—tho'
ne'er

Singled by Djabal's glance! But to be
chosen

His own from all, the most his own of all,
To be exalted with him, side by side,

Lead the exulting Druses, meet . . . ah, how
Worthily meet the maidens who await

Ever beneath the cedars—how deserve
This honour, in their eyes? So bright are
they

Who saffron-vested sound the tabret there,
The girls who throng there in my dream!

One hour

And all is over: how shall I do aught
That may deserve next hour's exalting?—

How?— [*Suddenly to MAANI.*

Mother, I am not worthy him! I read it
Still in his eyes! He stands as if to tell me
I am not, yet forbears. Why else revert

To one theme ever?—how mere human gifts
Suffice him in myself—whose worship fades,
Whose awe goes ever off at his approach,
As now, who when he comes . . .

[DJABAL enters.] Oh why is it
I cannot kneel to you?

Djabal. Rather, 'tis I
Should kneel to you, my Anael!

Anael. Even so!
For never seem you—shall I speak the
truth?—

Never a God to me! 'Tis the Man's hand,
Eye, voice! Oh do you veil these to our
people,

Or but to me? To them, I think, to them!
And brightness is their veil, shadow—my
truth!

You mean that I should never kneel to you
—So, thus I kneel!

Djabal [preventing her]. No—no!
[Feeling the khandjar as he raises her.

Ha, have you chosen . . .

Anael. The khandjar with our ancient garb.
But, *Djabal,*

Change not, be not exalted yet! Give time
That I may plan more, perfect more! My
blood

Beats, beats!

[*Aside.*] Oh must I then—since

Loys leaves us

Never to come again, renew in me
These doubts so near effaced already—must
I needs confess them now to *Djabal*?—own
That when I saw that stranger, heard his
voice,

My faith fell, and the woeful thought flashed
first

That each effect of *Djabal's* presence, taken
For proof of more than human attributes
In him, by me whose heart at his approach
Beat fast, whose brain while he was by swam
round,

Whose soul at his departure died away,
—That every such effect might have been
wrought

In other frames, tho' not in mine, by Loys
Or any merely mortal presence? Doubt
Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now?

How shall I meet the rapture presently,
With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed?

Djabal [aside]. Avow the truth? I cannot!
In what words

Avow that all she loved in me was false?

—Which yet has served that flower-like love
of hers

To climb by, like the clinging gourd, and
clasp

With its divinest wealth of leaf and bloom.

Could I take down the prop-work, in itself
So vile, yet interlaced and overlaid

With painted cups and fruitage—might these
still

Bask in the sun, unconscious their own
strength

Of matted stalk and tendril had replaced

The old support thus silently withdrawn!

But no; the beauteous fabric crushes too.

'Tis not for my sake but for *Anael's* sake

I leave her soul this *Hakeem* where it leans.

Oh could I vanish from her, quit the Isle!

And yet—a thought comes: here my work is
done

At every point; the Druses must return—

Have convoy to their birth-place back,
whoe'er

The leader be, myself or any Druse—

Venice is pledged to that: 'tis for myself,

For my own vengeance in the Prefect's death,

I stay now, not for them: to slay or spare

The Prefect, whom imports it save myself?

He cannot bar their passage from the Isle;

What would his death be but my own reward?

Then, mine I will forego. It is foregone!

Let him escape with all my House's blood!

Ere he can reach land, *Djabal* disappears,

And *Hakeem*, *Anael* loved, shall, fresh as
first,

Live in her memory, keeping her sublime

Above the world. She cannot touch that
world

By ever knowing what I truly am,

Since Loys,—of mankind the only one

Able to link my present with my past,

My life in Europe with my Island life,

Thence, able to unmask me,—I've disposed

Safely at last at Rhodes, and . . .

Enter KHALIL.

Khalil. Loys greets thee !

Djabal. Loys? To drag me back? It cannot be !

Anael [*aside*]. Loys ! Ah, doubt may not be stifled so !

Khalil. Can I have erred that thou so gazest? Yes,

I told thee not in the glad press of tidings
Of higher import, Loys is returned
Before the Prefect, with, if possible,
Twice the light-heartedness of old. As
though

On some inauguration he expects,
To-day, the world's fate hung !

Djabal. —And asks for me ?

Khalil. Thou knowest all things. Thee
in chief he greets,

But every Druse of us is to be happy
At his arrival, he declares : were Loys
Thou, Master, he could have no wider soul
To take us in with. How I love that Loys !

Djabal [*aside*]. Shame winds me with her
tether round and round.

Anael [*aside*]. Loys? I take the trial ! it
is meet,

The little I can do, be done ; that faith,
All I can offer, want no perfecting
Which my own act may compass. Ay, this
way

All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt
Be chased by other aid than mine. Advance
Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my Lord,
The mortal with the more than mortal gifts !

Djabal [*aside*]. Before, there were so few
deceived ! and now

There's doubtless not one least Druse in the
Isle

But, having learned my superhuman claims,
And calling me his Khalif-God, will clash
The whole truth out from Loys at first word !
While Loys, for his part, will hold me up,
With a Frank's unimaginable scorn
Of such imposture, to my people's eyes !
Could I but keep him longer yet awhile
From them, amuse him here until I plan
How he and I at once may leave the Isle !

Khalil I cannot part with from my side—
My only help in this emergency :
There's Anael !

Anael. Please you ?

Djabal. Anael—none but she !

[*To ANAEL.*] I pass some minutes in the
chamber there,

Ere I see Loys : you shall speak with him
Until I join you. Khalil follows me.

Anael [*aside*]. As I divined : he bids me
save myself,

Offers me a probation—I accept.

Let me see Loys !

Loys [*without*]. *Djabal* !

Anael [*aside*]. 'Tis his voice.

The smooth Frank trifer with our people's
wrongs,

The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud
On this and that inflicted tyranny,
—Aught serving to parade an ignorance
Of how wrong feels, inflicted ! Let me close
With what I viewed at distance : let myself
Probe this delusion to the core !

Djabal. He comes.

Khalil, along with me ! while Anael waits
Till I return once more—and but once more.

ACT III.

ANAEL and LOYS.

Anael. Here leave me ! Here I wait
another. 'Twas

For no mad protestation of a love
Like this you say possesses you, I came.

Loys. Love? how protest a love I dare not
feel ?

Mad words may doubtless have escaped me :
you

Are here—I only feel you here !

Anael. No more !

Loys. But once again, whom could you
love? I dare,

Alas, say nothing of myself, who am
A Knight now, for when Knighthood we
embrace,

Love we abjure : so, speak on safely : speak,

Lest I speak, and betray my faith! And yet
To say your breathing passes through me,
changes

My blood to spirit, and my spirit to you,
As Heaven the sacrificer's wine to it—
This is not to protest my love! You said
You could love one . . .

Anael. One only! We are bent
To earth—who raises up my tribe, I love;
The Prefect bows us—who removes him; we
Have ancient rights—who gives them back
to us,

I love. Forbear me! Let my hand go!

Loys. Him
You could love only? Where is Djabal? Stay!
[*Aside.*] Yet wherefore stay? Who does this
but myself?

Had I apprised her that I come to do
Just this, what more could she acknowledge?
No,

She sees into my heart's core! What is it
Feeds either cheek with red, as Junesome rose?
Why turns she from me? Ah fool, over-fond
To dream I could call up . . .

. . . What never dream
Yet feigned! 'Tis love! Oh *Anael* speak to
me!

Djabal—

Anael. Seek Djabal by the Prefect's
chamber

At noon! [*She paces the room.*]
Loys [*aside*]. And am I not the Prefect now?

Is it my fate to be the only one
Able to win her love, the only one
Unable to accept her love? The past
Breaks up beneath my footing: came I here
This morn as to a slave, to set her free
And take her thanks, and then spend day by day
Content beside her in the Isle? What works
This knowledge in me now? Her eye has
broken

The faint disguise away: for *Anael's* sake
I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause
Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till now,
To live without!

—As I must live! To-day
Ordains me Knight, forbids me . . . never
shall

Forbid me to profess myself, heart, arm,
Thy soldier!

Anael. Djabal you demanded, comes.

Loys [*aside*]. What wouldst thou, *Loys*?
See him? Nought beside
Is wanting; I have felt his voice a spell
From first to last. He brought me here,
made known

The Druses to me, drove me hence to seek
Redress for them; and shall I meet him now,
When nought is wanting but a word of his,
To—what?—induce me to spurn hope, faith,
pride,

Honour away,—to cast my lot among
His tribe, become a proverb in men's mouths,
Breaking my high pact of companionship
With those who graciously bestowed on me
The very opportunities I turn

Against them! Let me not see Djabal now!

Anael. The Prefect also comes.

Loys [*aside*]. Him let me see,
Not Djabal! Him, degraded at a word,
To soothe me,—to attest belief in me—
And after, Djabal! Yes, ere I return
To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have destroyed
This heart's rebellion, and coerced this will
For ever.

Anael, not before the vows
Irrevocably fix me . . .

Let me fly!
The Prefect, or I lose myself for ever!

[*Goes.*]
Anael. Yes, I am calm now; just one way
remains—

One, to attest my faith in him: for, see,
I were quite lost else: *Loys*, Djabal, stand
On either side—two men! I balance looks
And words, give Djabal a man's preference,
No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is absorbed!
And for a love like this, the God who saves
My race, selects me for his bride? One way!

Enter DJABAL.

Djabal [*to himself*]. No moment is to waste
then; 'tis resolved.

If Khalil may be trusted to lead back
My Druses, and if *Loys* can be lured
Out of the Isle—if I procure his silence,

Or promise never to return at least,—
All's over. Even now my bark awaits ;
I reach the next wild islet and the next,
And lose myself beneath the sun for ever.
And now, to Anael !

Anael. Djabal, I am thine !

Djabal. Mine ? Djabal's ?—As if Hakeem
had not been ?

Anael. Not Djabal's ? Say first, do you
read my thought ?

Why need I speak, if you can read my thought ?

Djabal. I do not, I have said a thousand
times.

Anael. (My secret's safe, I shall surprise
him yet !)

Djabal, I knew your secret from the first :
Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our porch
You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,
And one fringe fell behind your neck—I see !)

. . . I knew you were not human, for I said
“ This dim secluded house where the sea beats
“ Is heaven to me—my people's huts are he.”

“ To them ; this august form will follow me,
“ Mix with the waves his voice will,—I have
him ;

“ And they, the Prefect ! Oh, my happiness
“ Rounds to the full whether I choose or no !

“ His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,
“ His hand grew damp—surely he meant to say

“ He let me love him : in that moment's bliss
“ I shall forget my people pine for home—

“ They pass and they repress with pallid eyes !”
I vowed at once a certain vow ; this vow—

Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.
Embrace me !

Djabal [apart]. And she loved me ! Nought
remained

But that ! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect dead ?

Anael. Ah, you reproach me ! True, his
death crowns all,

I know—or should know : and I would do
much,

Believe ! but, death ! Oh, you, who have
known death,

Would never doom the Prefect, were death
fearful

As we report !

Death !—a fire curls within us

From the foot's palm, and fills up to the brain,
Up, out, then shatters the whole bubble-shell
Of flesh, perchance !

Death !—witness, I would die,
Whate'er death be, would venture now to
die

For Khalil, for Maani—what for thee ?
Nay but embrace me, Djabal, in assurance

My vow will not be broken, for I must
Do something to attest my faith in you,
Be worthy you !

Djabal [avoiding her]. I come for that—to
say

Such an occasion is at hand : 'tis like
I leave you—that we part, my Anael,—part
For ever !

Anael. We part ? Just so ! I have suc-
cumbed,—

I am, he thinks, unworthy—and nought less
Will serve than such approval of my faith.

Then, we part not ! Remains there no way
short

Of that ? Oh not that !

Death !—yet a hurt bird
Died in my hands ; its eyes filmed—“ Nay,
it sleeps,”

I said, “ will wake to-morrow well : ” 'twas
dead.

Djabal. I stand here and time fleets.
Anael—I come

To bid a last farewell to you : perhaps
We never meet again. But, ere the Prefect
Arrive . . .

Enter KHALIL, breathlessly.

Khalil. He's here ! The Prefect ! Twenty
guards,

No more : no sign he dreams of danger. All
Awaits thee only. Ayoub, Karshook, keep
Their posts—wait but the deed's accomplish-
ment

To join us with thy Druses to a man.
Still holds his course the Nuncio—near and
near

The fleet from Candia steering.

Djabal [aside]. All is lost !
—Or won ?

Khalil. And I have laid the sacred robe,

The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch—the place

Commanded. Thou wilt hear the Prefect's trumpet.

Djabal. Then I keep Anael,—him then, past recall,

I slay—'tis forced on me. As I began I must conclude—so be it!

Khalil. For the rest, Save Loys, our foe's solitary sword, All is so safe that . . . I will ne'er entreat Thy post again of thee: tho' danger none, There must be glory only meet for thee In slaying the Prefect.

Anael [aside]. And 'tis now that *Djabal* Would leave me!—in the glory meet for him!

Djabal. As glory, I would yield the deed to you

Or any Druse; what peril there may be, I keep. [*Aside.*] All things conspire to hound me on.

Not now, my soul, draw back, at least! Not now!

The course is plain, how'er obscure all else. Once offer this tremendous sacrifice, Prevent what else will be irreparable, Secure these transcendental helps, regain The Cedars—then let all dark clear itself! I slay him!

Khalil. Anael, and no part for us!
[*To DJABAL.*] Hast thou possessed her with . . .

Djabal [to ANAEL]. Whom speak you to? What is it you behold there? Nay, this smile Turns stranger. Shudder you? The man must die,

As thousands of our race have died thro' him. One blow, and I discharge his weary soul From the flesh that pollutes it! Let him fill Straight some new expiatory form, of earth Or sea, the reptile or some aëry thing: What is there in his death?

Anael. My brother said, Is there no part in it for us?

Djabal. For *Khalil*,— The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's entry; Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening In the Pavilion to receive him—here I slay the Prefect; meanwhile *Ayoob* leads

The Nuncio with his guards within: once these Secured in the outer hall, bid *Ayoob* bar Entry or egress till I give the sign

Which waits the landing of the argosies You will announce to me: this double sign That justice is performed and help arrived, When *Ayoob* shall receive, but not before, Let him throw ope the palace doors, admit The Druses to behold their tyrant, ere We leave for ever this detested spot.

Go, *Khalil*, hurry all! No pause, no pause! Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon!

Khalil. What sign? and who the bearer?

Djabal. Who shall show My ring, admit to *Ayoob*. How she stands!

Have I not . . . I must have some task for her. *Anael*, not that way! 'Tis the Prefect's chamber!

Anael, keep you the ring—give you the sign! (It holds her safe amid the stir.) You will Be faithful?

Anael [taking the ring]. I would fain be worthy. Hark! [*Trumpet without.*

Khalil. He comes.

Djabal. And I too come.

Anael. One word, but one! Say, shall you be exalted at the deed?

Then? On the instant?

Djabal. I exalted? What? He, there—we, thus—our wrongs revenged, our tribe

Set free? Oh, then shall I, assure yourself, Shall you, shall each of us, be in his death Exalted!

Khalil. He is here.

Djabal. Away—away! [*They go.*

Enter the PREFECT with Guards, and LOYS.

The Prefect [to Guards]. Back, I say, to the galley every guard!

That's my sole care now; see each bench retains

Its complement of rowers; I embark O' the instant, since this Knight will have it so. Alas me! Could you have the heart, my *Loys*! [*To a Guard who whispers.*] Oh, bring the holy Nuncio here forthwith!

[*The Guards go.*

Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see
The grey discarded Prefect leave his post,
With tears i' the eye! So, you are Prefect
now?
You depose me—you succeed me? Ha, ha!
Loys. And dare you laugh, whom laughter
less becomes
Than yesterday's forced meekness we be-
held . . .
Prefect. —When you so eloquently pleaded,
Loys,
For my dismissal from the post? Ah, meek
With cause enough, consult the Nuncio else!
And wish him the like meekness: for so
staunch
A servant of the Church can scarce have bought
His share in the Isle, and paid for it, hard
pieces!
You've my successor to condole with, Nuncio!
I shall be safe by then i' the galley, Loys!
Loys. You make as you would tell me you
rejoice
To leave your scene of . . .
Prefect. Trade in the dear Druses?
Blood and sweat traffic? Spare what yester-
day
We heard enough of! Drove I in the Isle
A profitable game? Learn wit, my son,
Which you'll need shortly! Did it never breed
Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,
When I, the insatiate . . . and so forth—
was bent
On having a partaker in my rule?
Why did I yield this Nuncio half the gain,
If not that I might also shift—what on him?
Half of the peril, Loys!
Loys. Peril?
Prefect. Hark you!
I'd love you if you'd let me—this for reason,
You save my life at price of . . . well, say
risk
At least, of yours. I came a long time since
To the Isle; our Hospitallers bade me tame
These savage wizards, and reward myself—
Loys. The Knights who so repudiate your
crime?
Prefect. Loys, the Knights! we doubtless
understood

Each other; as for trusting to reward
From any friend beside myself . . . no, no!
I clutched mine on the spot, when it was
sweet,
And I had taste for it. I felt these wizards
Alive—was sure they were not on me, only
When I was on them: but with age comes
caution:
And stinging pleasures please less and sting
more.
Year by year, fear by fear! The girls were
brighter
Than ever ('faith, there's yet one Anael left,
I set my heart upon—Oh, prithee, let
That brave new sword lie still!)—These joys
looked brighter,
But silenter the town, too, as I passed.
With this alcove's delicious memories
Began to mingle visions of gaunt fathers,
Quick-eyed sons, fugitives from the mine.
the oar,
Stealing to catch me. Brief, when I began
To quake with fear—(I think I hear the
Chapter
Solicited to let me leave, now all
Worth staying for was gained and gone!)—I
say,
Just when, for the remainder of my life,
All methods of escape seemed lost—that then
Up should a young hot-headed Loys spring,
Talk very long and loud,—in fine, compel
The Knights to break their whole arrange-
ment, have me
Home for pure shame—from this safehold of
mine
Where but ten thousand Druses seek my life,
To my wild place of banishment, San Gines
By Murcia, where my three fat manors lying,
Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's
gold,
Are all I have to guard me,—that such fortune
Should fall to me, I hardly could expect.
Therefore I say, I'd love you.
Loys. Can it be?
I play into your hands then? Oh no, no!
The Venerable Chapter, the Great Order
Sunk o' the sudden into fiends of the pit?
But I will back—will yet unveil you!

Prefect. Me?
To whom?—perhaps Sir Galeas, who in
Chapter
Shook his white head thrice—and some
dozen times
My hand next morning shook, for value
paid!
To that Italian saint, Sir Cosimo?—
Indignant at my wringing year by year
A thousand bezants from the coral-divers,
As you recounted; felt the saint aggrieved?
Well might he—I allowed for his half-share
Merely one hundred. To Sir . . .

Loys. See! you dare
Inculpate the whole Order; yet should I,
A youth, a sole voice, have the power to
change
Their evil way, had they been firm in it?
Answer me!

Prefect. Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,
And that son's wealth, the father's influence,
too,

And the young arm, we'll even say, my Loys,
—The fear of losing or diverting these
Into another channel, by gainsaying
A novice too abruptly, could not influence
The Order! You might join, for aught they
cared,

Their red-cross rivals of the Temple! Well,
I thank you for my part, at all events.
Stay here till they withdraw you! You'll
inhabit

My palace—sleep, perchance, in the alcove
Whither I go to meet our holy friend.
Good! and now disbelieve me if you can,—
This is the first time for long years I enter
Thus [*lifts the arras*] without feeling just as
if I lifted

The lid up of my tomb.

Loys. They share his crime!
God's punishment will overtake you yet.

Prefect. Thank you it does not! Pardon
this last flash:

I hear a sober visage presently
With the disinterested Nuncio here—
His purchase-money safe at Marcia, too!
Let me repeat—for the first time, no draught
Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me.

When we next meet, this folly may have
passed,

We'll hope. Ha, ha!

[*Goes through the arras.*]

Loys. Assure me but . . . he's gone!
He could not lie. Then what have I escaped,
I, who had so nigh given up happiness
For ever, to be linked with him and them!
Oh, opportunist of discoveries! I
Their Knight? I utterly renounce them all!
Hark! What, he meets by this the Nuncio?

Yes,
Thesame hyæna groan-like laughter! Quick—
To Djabal! I am one of them at last,
These simple-hearted Druses—Anael's tribe!
Djabal! She's mine at last. Djabal, I say!

[*Goes.*]

ACT IV.

Enter DJABAL.

Djabal. Let me but slay the Prefect.
The end now!
To-morrow will be time enough to pry
Into the means I took: suffice, they served,
Ignoble as they were, to hurl revenge
True to its object.

[*Seeing the robe, etc. disposed.*]

Mine should never so
Have hurried to accomplishment! Thee,
Djabal,

Far other mood befitted! Calm the Robe
Should clothe this doom's awarder!

[*Taking the robe.*] Shall I dare
Assume my nation's Robe? I am at least
A Druse again, chill Europe's policy
Drops from me: I dare take the Robe.

Why not
The Tiar? I rule the Druses, and what more
Betokens it than rule?—yet—yet—

[*Lays down the tiar.*
[*Footsteps in the alcove.*] He comes!

[*Taking the sword.*
If the Sword serve, let the Tiar lie! So,
feet

Clogged with the blood of twenty years can
fall

Thus lightly! Round me, all ye ghosts!
 He'll lift . . .

Which arm to push the arras wide?—or both?
 Stab from the neck down to the heart—there
 stay!

Near he comes—nearer—the next footstep!
 Now! [*As he dashes aside the arras,*
ANAEL is discovered.]

Ha! Anael! Nay, my Anael, can it be?
 Heard you the trumpet? I must slay him here,
 And here you ruin all. Why speak you not?
 Anael, the Prefect comes! [*ANAEL screams.*]
 So slow to feel
 'Tis not a sight for you to look upon?
 A moment's work—but such work! Till
 you go,
 I must be idle—idle, I risk all!
 [*Pointing to her hair.*]

Those locks are well, and you are beautiful
 thus,
 But with the dagger 'tis, I have to do!
Anael. With mine!
Djabal. Blood—Anael?
Anael. Djabal, 'tis thy deed!
 It must be! I had hoped to claim it mine—
 Be worthy thee—but I must needs confess
 'Twas not I, but thyself . . . not I have . . .
 Djabal!
 Speak to me!
Djabal. Oh, my punishment!
Anael. Speak to me
 While I can speak! touch me, despite the
 blood!

When the command passed from thy soul to
 mine,
 I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee,
 And the approaching exaltation,—“make
 “One sacrifice!” I said,—and he sat there,
 Bade me approach; and, as I did approach,
 Thy fire with music burst into my brain.
 'Twas but a moment's work, thou saidst—
 perchance
 It may have been so! Well, it is thy deed.
Djabal. It is my deed.
Anael. His blood all this!
 —this! and . . .
 And more! Sustain me, Djabal! Wait not
 —now

Let flash thy glory! Change thyself and me!
 It must be! Ere the Druses flock to us!
 At least confirm me! Djabal, blood gushed
 forth—
 He was our tyrant—but I looked he'd fall
 Prone as asleep—why else is death called
 sleep?
 Sleep? He bent o'er his breast! 'Tis sin,
 I know,—
 Punish me, Djabal, but wilt thou let him?
 Be it thou that punishest, not he—who creeps
 On his red breast—is here! 'Tis the small
 groan
 Of a child—no worse! Bestow the new life,
 then!
 Too swift it cannot be, too strange, surpass-
 ing! [*Following him as he retreats.*]
 Now! Change us both! Change me and
 change thou!
Djabal [*sinks on his knees*]. Thus!
 Behold my change! You have done nobly.
 I!—
Anael. Can Hakeem kneel?
Djabal. No Hakeem,
 and scarce Djabal!
 I have dealt falsely, and this woe is come.
 No—hear me ere scorn blast me! Once and
 ever,
 The deed is mine. Oh think upon the past!
Anael [*to herself*]. Did I strike once, or
 twice, or many times?
Djabal. I came to lead my tribe where,
 bathed in glooms,
 Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep:
 Anael, I saw my tribe: I said, “Without
 “A miracle this cannot be”—I said
 “Be there a miracle!”—for I saw you.
Anael. His head lies south the portal.
Djabal. —Weighed with this
 The general good, how could I choose my
 own?
 What matter was my purity of soul?
 Little by little I engaged myself—
 Heaven would accept me for its instrument,
 I hoped: I said Heaven had accepted me.
Anael. Is it this blood breeds dreams in
 me? Who said
 You were not Hakeem? And your miracles—

The fire that plays innocuous round your form?

[*Again changing her whole manner.*

Ah, thou wouldst try me—thou art Hakeem still!

Djabal. Woe—woe! As if the Druses of the Mount

(Scarce Arabs, even there, but here, in the Isle, Beneath their former selves) should comprehend

The subtle lore of Europe! A few secrets That would not easily affect the meanest Of the crowd there, could wholly subjugate The best of our poor tribe. Again that eye?

Anael [*after a pause springs to his neck*].

Djabal, in this there can be no deceit!

Why, Djabal, were you human only,—think, Maani is but human, Khalil human, Loys is human even—did their words Haunt me, their looks pursue me? Shame on you

So to have tried me! Rather, shame on me So to need trying! Could I, with the Prefect And the blood, there—could I see only you? —Hang by your neck over this gulf of blood? Speak, I am saved! Speak, Djabal! Am I saved?

[*As DJABAL slowly unclasps her arms, and puts her silently from him.*

Hakeem would save me. Thou art Djabal.

Crouch!

Down to the dust, thou basest of our kind! The pile of thee, I reared up to the cloud— Full, midway, of our fathers' trophied tombs, Based on the living rock, devoured not by The unstable desert's jaws of sand,—falls prone.

Fire, music, quenched: and now thou liest there

A ruin, obscene creatures will moan through. —Let us come, Djabal!

Djabal. Whither come?

Anael. At once—

Ist so it grow intolerable. Come! Will I not share it with thee? Best at once! So, feel less pain! Let them deride,—thy tribe

Now trusting in thee,—Loys shall deride! Come to them, hand in hand, with me!

Djabal.

Where come?

Anael. Where?—to the Druses thou hast wronged! Confess,

Now that the end is gained—(I love thee now—)

That thou hast so deceived them—(perchance love thee

Better than ever.) Come, receive their doom Of infamy! O, best of all I love thee!

Shame with the man, no triumph with the God,

Be mine! Come!

Djabal. Never! More shame yet? and why?

Why? You have called this deed mine—it is mine!

And with it I accept its circumstance.

How can I longer strive with fate? The past Is past: my false life shall henceforth show true.

Hear me! The argosies touch land by this; They bear us to fresh scenes and happier skies.

What if we reign together?—if we keep Our secret for the Druses' good?—by means Of even their superstition, plant in them New life? I learn from Europe: all who seek Man's good must awe man, by such means as these.

We two will be divine to them—we are!

All great works in this world spring from the ruins

Of greater projects—ever, on our earth, Babels men block out, Babylons they build.

I wrest the weapon from your hand! I claim

The deed! Retire! You have my ring— you bar

All access to the Nuncio till the forces From Venice land.

Anael. Thou wilt feign Hakeem then?

Djabal [*putting the Tiara of Hakeem on his head*]. And from this moment that I dare ope wide

Eyes that till now refused to see, begins

My true dominion: for I know myself, And what am I to personate. No word?

[*ANAEL goes.*

'Tis come on me at last! His blood on her—

What memories will follow that! Her eye,
Her fierce distorted lip and ploughed black
brow!

Ah, fool! Has Europe then so poorly tamed
The Syrian blood from out thee? Thou,
presume

To work in this foul earth by means not foul?
Scheme, as for heaven,—but, on the earth,
be glad

If a least ray like heaven's be left thee!

Thus

I shall be calm—in readiness—no way
Surprised. *[A noise without.]*

This should be Khalil and my Druses.
Venice is come then! Thus I grasp thee,
sword!

Druses, 'tis Hakeem saves you! In! Behold
Your Prefect!

*Enter LOYS. DJABAL hides the khandjar
in his robe.*

Loys. Oh, well found, Djabal!—but no
time for words.

You know who waits there?

[Pointing to the alcove.]

Well!—and that 'tis there

He meets the Nuncio? Well? Now, a
surprise—

He there—

Djabal. I know—

Loys. —is now no mortal's lord,
Is absolutely powerless—call him, dead—

He is no longer Prefect—you are Prefect!
Oh, shrink not! I do nothing in the dark,
Nothing unworthy Breton blood, believe!

I understood at once your urgency
That I should leave this isle for Rhodes; I felt
What you were loath to speak—your need of
help.

I have fulfilled the task, that earnestness
Imposed on me: have, face to face, con-
fronted

The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on him
The enormities of his long rule; he stood
Mute, offered no defence, no crime denied.
On which, I spoke of you, and of your tribe,

Your faith so like our own, and all you urged
Of old to me: I spoke, too, of your goodness,
Your patience—brief, I hold henceforth the
Isle

In charge, am nominally lord,—but you,
You are associated in my rule—
Are the true Prefect! Ay, such faith had
they

In my assurance of your loyalty
(For who insults an imbecile old man?)
That we assume the Prefecture this hour.

You gaze at me? Hear greater wonders yet—
I cast down all the fabric I have built.

These Knights, I was prepared to worship
. . . . but

Of that another time; what's now to say,
Is—I shall never be a Knight! Oh, Djabal,
Here first I throw all prejudice aside,
And call you brother! I am Druse like you:
My wealth, my friends, my power, are wholly
yours,

Your people's, which is now my people: for
There is a maiden of your tribe, I love—
She loves me—Khalil's sister—

Djabal. Arael?

Loys. Start you?

Seems what I say, unknighly? Thus it
chanced:

When first I came, a novice, to the isle . . .

*Enter one of the NUNCIO'S Guards from
the alcove.*

Guard. Oh horrible! Sir Loys! Here is
Loys!

And here— *[Others enter from the alcove.]*
[Pointing to DJABAL.] Secure him, bind him

—this is he! *[They surround DJABAL.]*

Loys. Madmen—what is't you do? Stand
from my friend,

And tell me!

Guard. Thou canst have no part in this—
Surely no part! But slay him not! The
Nuncio

Commanded, slay him not!

Loys. Speak, or . . .

Guard. The Prefect
Lies murdered there by him thou dost em-
brace.

Loys. By Djabal? Miserable fools! How Djabal?
 [*A Guard lifts DJABAL'S robe; DJABAL flings down the khandjar.*
Loys [after a pause]. Thou hast received some insult worse than all, Some outrage not to be endured—
 [*To the Guards.*] Stand back! He is my friend—more than my friend. Thou hast slain him upon that provocation.
Guard. No! No provocation! 'Tis a long devised Conspiracy: the whole tribe is involved. He is their Khalif—'tis on that pretence—Their mighty Khalif who died long ago, And now comes back to life and light again! All is just now revealed, I know not how, By one of his confederates—who, struck With horror at this murder, first apprised The Nuncio. As 'twas said, we find this Djabal Here where we take him.
Djabal [aside]. Who broke faith with me?
Loys [to DJABAL]. Hear'st thou? Speak! Till thou speak, I keep off these, Or die with thee. Deny this story! Thou A Khalif, an impostor? Thou, my friend, Whose tale was of an inoffensive tribe, With . . . but thou know'st—on that tale's truth I pledged My faith before the Chapter: what art thou?
Djabal. Loys, I am as thou hast heard. All's true. No more concealment! As these tell thee, all Was long since planned. Our Druses are enough To crush this handful: the Venetians land Even now in our behalf. Loys, we part. Thou, serving much, wouldst fain have served me more;
 It might not be. I thank thee. As thou hearest, We are a separated tribe: farewell!
Loys. Oh where will truth be found now? Canst thou so lie like the Druses? Do they share thy crime? Those thou professest of our Ereton stock,

Are partners with thee? Why, I saw but now Khalil, my friend: he spoke with me—no word Of this! and Anael—whom I love, and who Loves me—she spoke no word of this.
Djabal. Poor boy! Anael, who loves thee? Khalil, fast thy friend?
 We, offsets from a wandering Count of Dreux? No: older than the oldest, princelier Than Europe's princeliest race, our tribe: enough For thine, that on our simple faith we found A monarchy to shame your monarchies At their own trick and secret of success. The child of this our tribe shall laugh upon The palace-step of him whose life ere night Is forfeit, as that child shall know, and yet Shall laugh there! What, we Druses wait forsooth The kind interposition of a boy—Can only save ourselves if thou concede:—Khalil admire thee? He is my right-hand, My delegate!—Anael accept thy love? She is my bride!
Loys. Thy bride? She one of them?
Djabal. My bride!
Loys. And she retains her glorious eyes!
 She, with those eyes, has shared this miscreant's guilt!
 Ah—who but she directed me to find Djabal within the Prefect's chamber? Khalil Bade me seek Djabal there, too. All is truth. What spoke the Prefect worse of them than this?
 Did the Church ill to institute long since Perpetual warfare with such serpentry? And I—have I desired to shift my part, Evade my share in her design? 'Tis well.
Djabal. Loys, I wronged thee—but unwittingly:
 I never thought there was in thee a virtue That could attach itself to what thou deemest A race below thine own. I wronged thee, Loys,

But that is over : all is over now,
Save the protection I ensure against
My people's anger. By their Khalif's side,
Thou art secure and mayst depart : so,
come !

Loys. Thy side? I take protection at thy
hand?

Enter other Guards.

Guards. Fly with him ! Fly, Sir Loys !
'Tis too true :

And only by his side thou mayst escape.
The whole tribe is in full revolt : they flock
About the palace—will be here—on thee—
And there are twenty of us, we the Guards
O' the Nuncio, to withstand them ! Even we
Had stayed to meet our death in ignorance,
But that one Druse, a single faithful Druse,
Made known the horror to the Nuncio. Fly !
The Nuncio stands aghast. At least let us
Escape thy wrath, O Hakeem ! We are
nought

In thy tribe's persecution ! [*To LOYS.*]
Keep by him !

They hail him Hakeem, their dead Prince
returned :

He is their God, they shout, and at his beck
Are life and death !

*Loys [springing at the khandjar DJABAL
had thrown down, seizes him by the throat].*

Thus by his side am I !

Thus I resume my knighthood and its warfare,
Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride of
place !

Thus art thou caught. Without, thy dupes
may cluster :

Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee,—thou art
Hakeem,

How say they?—God art thou ! but also here
Is the least, youngest, meanest the Church
calls

Her servant, and his single arm avails
To aid her as she lists. I rise, and thou
Art crushed. Hordes of thy Druses flock
without :

Here thou hast me, who represent the Cross,
Honour and Faith, 'gainst Hell, Mahound
and thee.

Die ! [*DJABAL remains calm.*] Implore my
mercy, Hakeem, that my scorn
May help me ! Nay, I cannot ply thy trade ;
I am no Druse, no stabber : and thine eye,
Thy form, are too much as they were—my
friend

Had such. Speak ! Beg for mercy at my
foot ! [*DJABAL still silent.*

Heaven could not ask so much of me—not,
sure,

So much. I cannot kill him so.

[*After a pause.*] Thou art

Strong in thy cause, then—dost outbrave us,
then.

Heardst thou that one of thine accomplices,
Thy very people, has accused thee ? Meet
His charge ! Thou hast not even slain the
Prefect

As thy own vile creed warrants. Meet that
Druse !

Come with me and disprove him—be thou
tried

By him, nor seek appeal ! Promise me this,
Or I will do God's office. What, shalt thou
Boast of assassins at thy beck, yet truth
Want even an executioner ? Consent,
Or I will strike—look in my face—I will !

Djabal. Give me again my khandjar, if
thou darest ! [*LOYS gives it.*

Let but one Druse accuse me, and I plunge
This home. A Druse betray me ? Let us go !
[*Aside.*] Who has betrayed me ?

[*Shouts without.*

Hearst thou ? I hear

No plainer than long years ago I heard
That shout—but in no dream now. They
return !

Wilt thou be leader with me, Loys ? Well.

ACT V.

*The Uninitiated Druses, filling the hall
tumultuously, and speaking together.*

Here flock we, obeying the summons. Lo,
Hakeem hath appeared, and the Prefect is
dead, and we return to Lebanon ! My manu-

facture of goats' fleece must, I doubt, soon fall away there. Come, old Nasif—link thine arm in mine—we fight, if needs be. Come, what is a great fight-word?—"Lebanon?" (My daughter—my daughter!)—But is Khalil to have the office of Hamza?—Nay, rather, if he be wise, the monopoly of henna and cloves. Where is Hakeem?—The only prophet I ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in my youth: a little black Copht, dressed all in black too, with a great stripe of yellow cloth flapping down behind him like the back-fin of a water-serpent. Is this he? Biamrallah! Biamreh! HAKEEM!

Enter the NUNCIO, with Guards.

Nuncio [*to his Attendants*]. Hold both, the sorcerer and this accomplice

Ye talk of, that accuseth him! And tell Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope: Bid him approve himself our Knight indeed! Lo, this black disemboing of the Isle!

[*To the Druses.*] Ah children, what a sight for these old eyes

That kept themselves alive this voyage through To smile their very last on you! I came To gather one and all you wandering sheep Into my fold, as though a father came . . . As though, in coming, a father should . . .

[*To his Guards.*] (Ten, twelve—Twelve guards of you, and not an outlet? None?

The wizards stop each avenue? Keep close!) [*To the Druses.*] As if one came to a son's house, I say,

Sodid I come—no guard with me—to find . . . Alas—alas!

A Druse. Who is the old man?

Another. Oh, ye are to shout! Children, he styles you.

Druses. Ay, the Prefect's slain! Glory to the Khalif, our Father!

Nuncio. Even so I find, (ye prompt aright) your father slain. While most he plotted for your good, that father (Alas, how kind, ye never knew)—lies slain. [*Aside.*] (And hell's worm gnaw the glazing knave—with me,

For being duped by his cajoleries!

Are these the Christians? These the docile crew

My bezants went to make me Bishop o'er?) [*To his Attendants, who whisper.*] What say ye does this wizard style himself?

Hakeem? Biamrallah? The third Fatemite? What is this jargon? He—the insane Khalif, Dead near three hundred years ago, come back In flesh and blood again?

Druses. He mutters! Hear ye? He is blaspheming Hakeem. The old man Is our dead Prefect's friend. Tear him!

Nuncio. Ye dare not.

I stand here with my five-and-seventy years, The Patriarch's power behind me, God's above. Those years have witnessed sin enough; ere now

Misguided men arose against their lords, And found excuse; but ye, to be enslaved By sorceries, cheats—alas! the same tricks, tried

On my poor children in this nook o' the earth, Could triumph, that have been successively Exploded, laughed to scorn, all nations through:

"*Romaiot, Ioudaioite kai proselutot,*
"Cretes and Arabians"—you are duped the last.

Said I, refrain from tearing me? I pray ye Tear me! Shall I return to tell the Patriarch That so much love was wasted—every gift Rejected, from his benison I brought, Down to the galley-full of bezants, sunk . . . An hour since at the harbour's mouth, by that . . .

That . . . never will I speak his hated name! [*To his Servants.*] What was the name his fellow slip-fetter

Called their arch-wizard by? [*They whisper.*] Oh, Djabal was't?

Druses. But how a sorcerer? false wherein? *Nuncio.* (Ay, Djabal!)

How false? Ye know not, Djabal has confessed . . .

Nay, that by tokens found on him we learn . . .

What I sailed hither solely to divulge—

How by his spells the demons were allured
To seize you : not that these be aught save lies
And mere illusions. Is this clear? I say,
By measures such as these, he would have
led you

Into a monstrous ruin : follow ye?
Say, shall ye perish for his sake, my sons?

Druses. Hark ye!

Nuncio. —Be of one privilege amerced?
No! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies are!
No! With the Patriarch's licence, still I
bid

Tear him to pieces who misled you! Haste!

Druses. The old man's beard shakes, and
his eyes are white fire! After all, I know
nothing of Djabal beyond what Karshook
says; he knows but what Khalil says, who
knows just what Djabal says himself. Now,
the little Copht Prophet, I saw at Cairo in
my youth, began by promising each bystander
three full measures of wheat . . .

Enter KHALIL and the initiated DRUSES.

Khalil. Venice and her deliverance are at
hand:

Their fleet stands through the harbour. Hath
he slain

The Prefect yet? Is Djabal's change come
yet?

Nuncio [to Attendants]. What's this of
Venice? Who's this boy?

[Attendants *whisper.*] One Khalil?
Djabal's accomplice, Loys called, but now,
The only Druse, save Djabal's self, to fear?
[*To the Druses.*] I cannot hear ye with
these aged ears:

Is it so? Ye would have my troops assist?
Doth he abet him in his sorceries?

Down with the cheat, guards, as my children
bid! [*They spring at KHALIL; as
he beats them back,*

Stay! No more bloodshed! Spare deluded
youth!

Whom seek'st thou? (I will teach him)—
whom, my child?

Thou know'st not what these know, what
these declare.

I am an old man as thou seest—have done

With life; and what should move
the truth?

Art thou the only fond one of thy tribe
'Tis I interpret for thy tribe.

Khalil. Oh, this
Is the expected Nuncio! Druses, he
Endure ye this? Unworthy to partak
The glory Hakeem gains you! While I
The ships touch land: who mak
Lebanon?

They plant the winged lion in these b
Nuncio [*aside*]. If it be true! \

Oh, never true!

Yet Venice would so gladly thwack
Knights,

So fain get footing here, stand clo
Rhodes!

Oh, to be duped this way!

Khalil. Ere he ap

And lead you gloriously, repent, I say
Nuncio [*aside*]. Nor any way to :
the arch-wizard stark

Ere the Venetians come? Cut off the
The trunk were easily stilled. [2

Druses.] He? Bring him forth

Since so you needs will have it, I asse:
You'd judge him, say you, on the :
confound

The sorcerer in his very circle? Whe:
Our short black-bearded fallow frien:
swore

He'd earn the Patriarch's guerdon l
stab?

Bring Djabal forth at once!

Druses. Ay, bring him

The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and
And we're the Patriarch's children-
men, we!

Where is the glory? Show us all the g
Khalil. You dare not so insult

What, not see . . .

(I tell thee, Nuncio, these are uninstru:
Untrusted: they know nothing of our Kl

—Not see that if he lets a doubt arise
'Tis but to give yourselves the chan

seeming

To have some influence in your own Re
That all may say ye would have trusted

Without the all-convincing glory—ay,
And did! Embrace the occasion, friends!

For, think—

What wonder when his change takes place?

But now

For your sakes, he should not reveal himself.

No: could I ask and have, I would not ask

The change yet!

Enter DJABAL and LOYS.

Spite of all, reveal thyself!

I had said, pardon them for me—for Anael—

For our sakes pardon these besotted men—

Ay, for thine own—they hurt not thee! Yet

now

One thought swells in me and keeps down all
else.

This Nuncio couples shame with thee, has
called

Imposture thy whole course, all bitter things

Has said: he is but an old fretful man!

Hakeem—nay, I must call thee Hakeem now—

Reveal thyself! See! Where is Anael? See!

Loys [to DJABAL]. Here are thy people.

Keep thy word to me!

Djabal. Who of my people hath accused me?

Nuncio. So!

So this is Djabal, Hakeem, and what not?

A fit deed, Loys, for thy first Knight's day!

May it be augury of thy after-life!

Ever prove truncheon of the Church as now

That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having
charge

Of the Isle here, I claim thee [*turning to*
DJABAL] as these bid me,

Forfeit for murder done thy lawful prince,

Thou conjurer that peep'st and mutterest!

Why should I hold thee from their hands?

(Spells, children?)

But hear how I dispose of all his spells!

Thou art a prophet?—wouldst entice thy
tribe

From me?—thou workest miracles? (Attend!

Let him but move me with his spells!) I,

Nuncio . . .

Djabal. . . Which how thou camest to be,

I say not now,

Though I have also been at Stamboul, Luke!

Ply thee with spells, forsooth! What need
of spells?

If Venice, in her Admiral's person, stoop

To ratify thy compact with her foe,

The Hospitallers, for this Isle—withdraw

Her warrant of the deed which reinstates

My people in their freedom, tricked away

By him I slew,—refuse to convoy us

To Lebanon and keep the Isle we leave—

Then will be time to try what spells can do!

Dost thou dispute the Republic's power?

Nuncio. Lo ye!

He tempts me too, the wily exorcist!

No! The renowned Republic was and is

The Patriarch's friend: 'tis not for courting

Venice

That I—that these implore thy blood of me.

Lo ye, the subtle miscreant! Ha, so

subtle?

Ye, Druses, hear him. Will ye be deceived?

How he evades me! Where's the miracle

He works? I bid him to the proof—fish up

Your galley-full of bezants that he sank!

That were a miracle! One miracle!

Enough of trifling, for it chafes my years.

I am the Nuncio, Druses! I stand forth

To save you from the good Republic's rage

When she shall find her fleet was summoned

here

To aid the mummeries of a knave like this.

[*As the Druses hesitate, his*

Attendants whisper.

Ah, well suggested! Why, we hold the while

One who, his close confederate till now,

Confesses Djabal at the last a cheat,

And every miracle a cheat. Who throws me

His head? I make three offers, once I offer,—

And twice . . .

Djabal. Let who moves perish at

my foot!

Khalil. Thanks, Hakeem. thanks! Oh,

Anael, Maani,

Why tarry they?

Druses [to each other]. He can! He can!

Live fire—

[*To the NUNCIO.*] I say he can, old man!

Thou know'st him not.

Live fire like that thou seest now in his eyes,

Plays fawning round him. See! The change begins.
 All the brow lightens as he lifts his arm.
 Look not at me! It was not I!
Djabal. What Druse
 Accused me, as he saith? I bid each bone
 Crumble within that Druse! None, Loys,
 none
 Of my own people, as thou said'st, have
 raised
 A voice against me.
Nuncio [*aside*]. Venice to come! Death!
Djabal [*continuing*]. Confess and go un-
 scathed, however false!
 Seest thou my Druses, Luke? I would sub-
 mit
 To thy pure malice did one Druse confess!
 How said I, Loys?
Nuncio [*to his Attendants who whisper*].
 Ah, ye counsel so?
 [*Aloud.*] Bring in the witness, then, who,
 first of all,
 Disclosed the treason! Now I have thee,
 wizard!
 Ye hear that? If one speaks, he bids you
 tear him
 Joint after joint: well then, one does speak!
 One,
 Befooled by Djabal, even as yourselves,
 But who hath voluntarily proposed
 To expiate, by confessing thus, the fault
 Of having trusted him.
 [*They bring in a veiled Druse.*
Loys. Now, Djabal, now!
Nuncio. Friend, Djabal fronts thee! Make
 a ring, sons. Speak!
 Expose this Djabal—what he was, and
 how:
 The wiles he used, the aims he cherished: all,
 Explicitly as late 'twas spoken to these
 My servants: I absolve and pardon thee.
Loys. Thou hast the dagger ready, Djabal?
Djabal. Speak,
 Recreant!
Druses. Stand back, fool! farther! Sud-
 denly
 You shall see some huge serpent glide from
 under

The empty vest, or down will thunder crash!
 Back, Khalil!
Khalil. I go back? Thus go I back!
 [*To ANAEL.*] Unveil! Nay, thou shalt face
 the Khalil! Thus!
 [*He tears away ANAEL'S veil; DJABAL
 folds his arms and bows his head;
 the Druses fall back; LOYS springs
 from the side of DJABAL and the
 NUNCIO.*
Loys. Then she was true—she only of
 them all!
 True to her eyes—may keep those glorious
 eyes,
 And now be mine, once again mine! Oh,
 Anael!
 Dared I think thee a partner in his crime—
 That blood could soil that hand? nay, 'tis
 mine—Anael,
 —Not mine?—who offer thee before all
 these
 My heart, my sword, my name—so thou wilt
 say
 That Djabal, who affirms thou art his bride,
 Lies—say but that he lies!
Djabal. Thou, Anael?
Loys. Nay, Djabal, nay, one chance for
 me—the last!
 Thou hast had every other; thou hast spoken
 Days, nights, what falsehood listed thee—let
 me
 Speak first now; I will speak now!
Nuncio. Loys, pause!
 Thou art the Duke's son, Bretagne's choicest
 stock,
 Loys of Dreux, God's sepulchre's first sword:
 This wilt thou spit on, this degrade, this
 trample
 To earth?
Loys [*to ANAEL*]. Who had foreseen that
 one day Loys
 Would stake these gifts against some other
 good
 In the whole world? I give them thee! I
 would
 My strong will might bestow real shape on
 them,
 That I might see, with my own eyes, thy foot

Tread on their very neck ! 'Tis not by gifts
I put aside this Djabal : we will stand—
We do stand, see, two men ! Djabal, stand
forth !

Who's worth her, I or thou ? I—who for
Anael

Uprightly, purely kept my way, the long
True way—left thee each by-path, boldly
lived

Without the lies and blood,—or thou, or thou ?
Me ! love me, Anael ! Leave the blood and
him !

[To DJABAL.] Now speak—now, quick on
this that I have said,—

Thou with the blood, speak if thou art a man !
Djabal [to ANAEL]. And was it thou be-
trayedst me ? 'Tis well !

I have deserved this of thee, and submit.
Nor 'tis much evil thou inflictest : life
Ends here. The cedars shall not wave
for us :

For there was crime, and must be punishment.
See fate ! By thee I was seduced, by thee
I perish : yet do I—can I repent ?
I with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
By my Frank policy,—and with, in turn,
My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab
heart—

While these remained in equipoise, I lived
—Nothing ; had either been predominant,
As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,
I had been something ;—now, each has
destroyed

The other—and behold, from out their crash,
A third and better nature rises up—
My mere man's-nature ! And I yield to it :
I love thee, I who did not love before !

Anael. Djabal !

Djabal. It seemed love, but it was
not love :

How could I love while thou adoredst me ?
Now thou despisest, art above me so
Immeasurably ! Thou, no other, doonest
My death now ; this my steel shall execute
Thy judgment ; I shall feel thy hand in it.
Oh luxury to worship, to submit,
Transcended, doomed to death by thee !

Anael.

My Djabal !

Djabal. Dost hesitate ? I force thee then.
Approach,

Druses ! for I am out of reach of fate ;
No further evil waits me. Speak the doom !
Hear, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and hear,
Loys !

Anael. HAKEEM ! [She falls dead.

[The Druses scream, grovelling before him.

Druses. Ah Hakeem !—not on me thy
wrath !

Biamrallah, pardon ! never doubted I !

Ha, dog, how sayest thou ?

[They surround and seize the NUNCIO
and his Guards. LOYS flings him-
self upon the body of ANAEL, on
which DJABAL continues to gaze
as stupefied.

Nuncio. Caitiffs ! Have ye eyes ?
Whips, racks should teach you ! What, his
fools ? his dupes ?

Leave me ! Unhand me !

Khalil [approaching DJABAL timidly].
Save her for my sake !

She was already thine ; she would have shared
To-day thine exaltation : think, this day
Her hair was plaited thus because of thee !
Yes, feel the soft bright hair—feel !

Nuncio [struggling with those who have
seized him]. What, because

His leman dies for him ? You think it hard
To die ? Oh, would you were at Rhodes,
and choice

Of deaths should suit you !

Khalil [bending over ANAEL'S body].

Just restore her life !

So little does it ! there—the eyelids tremble !
'Twas not my breath that made them : and
•the lips

Move of themselves. I could restore her life !
Hakeem, we have forgotten—have presumed
On our free converse : we are better taught.
See, I kiss—how I kiss thy garment's hem
For her ! She kisses it—Oh, take her deed
In mine ! Thou dost believe now, Anael ?—
See,

She smiles ! Were her lips open o'er the teeth
Thus, when I spoke first ? She believes in
thee !

Go not without her to the cedars, lord!
Or leave us both—I cannot go alone!
I have obeyed thee, if I dare so speak:
Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Djabal knew?
Thou feelest then my tears fall hot and fast
Upon thy hand, and yet thou speakest not?
Ere the Venetian trumpet sound—ere thou
Exalt thyself, O Hakeem! save thou her!

Nuncio. And the accursed Republic will arrive

And find me in their toils—dead, very like,
Under their feet!

What way—not one way yet
To foil them? None?

[*Observing DJABAL's face.*

What ails the Khalif? Ah,
That ghastly face! A way to foil them yet!
[*To the Druses.*] Look to your Khalif, Druses!

Is that face
God Hakeem's? Where is triumph,—where
is . . . what

Said he of exaltation—hath he promised
So much to-day? Why then, exalt thyself!
Cast off that husk, thy form, set free thy soul
In splendour! Now, bear witness! here I
stand—

I challenge him exalt himself, and I
Become, for that, a Druse like all of you!

The Druses. Exalt thyself! Exalt thyself,
O Hakeem!

Djabal [advances]. I can confess now all
from first to last.

There is no longer shame for me. I am . . .

[*Here the Venetian trumpet sounds: the Druses shout, DJABAL's eye catches the expression of those about him, and, as the old dream comes back, he is again confident and inspired.*

—Am I not Hakeem? And ye would have
crawled

But yesterday within these impure courts
Wherewith ye stand erect! Not grand enough?
—What more could be conceded to such beasts
As all of you, so sunk and base as you,
Than a mere man? A man among such beasts
Was miracle enough: yet him you doubt,
If him you forsake, him fain would you destroy—

With the Venetians at your gate, the Nuncio
Thus—(see the baffled hypocrite!) and, best,
The Prefect there!

Druses. No, Hakeem, ever thine!

Nuncio. He lies—and twice he lies—and
thrice he lies!

Exalt thyself, Mahound! Exalt thyself!

Djabal. Druses! we shall henceforth be
far away—

Out of mere mortal ken—above the cedars—
But we shall see ye go, hear ye return,
Repeopling the old solitudes,—through thee,
My Khalil! Thou art full of me: I fill
Thee full—my hands thus fill thee! Yestereve,
—Nay, but this morn, I deemed thee ignorant
Of all to do, requiring word of mine
To teach it: now, thou hast all gifts in one,
With truth and purity go other gifts,
All gifts come clustering to that. Go,
lead

My people home whate'er betide!

[*Turning to the Druses.*] Ye take

This Khalil for my delegate? To him
Bow as to me? He leads to Lebanon—
Ye follow?

Druses. We follow! Now exalt thyself!

Djabal [raises LOYS]. Then to thee, Loys!
How I wronged thee, Loys!

Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full
revenge,

Fit for thy noble self, revenge—and thus.
Thou, loaded with such wrongs, the princely
soul,

The first sword of Christ's sepulchre—thou
shalt

Guard Khalil and my Druses home again!
Justice, no less, God's justice and no more,
For those I leave! To seeking this, devote
Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant
life:

And, this obtained them, leave their Lebanon,
My Druses' blessing in thine ears—(they
shall

Bless thee with blessing sure to have its
way)

—One cedar-blossom in thy ducal cap,
One thought of Anael in thy heart,—per-
chance,

One thought of him who thus, to bid thee
 speed,
 His last word to the living speaks! This
 done,
 Resume thy course, and, first amidst the
 first
 In Europe, take my heart along with thee!
 Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly—
 What shall withstand thee then?
 [*He bends over ANAEL.*] And last to
 thee!
 Ah, did I dream I was to have, this day,
 Exalted thee? A vain dream: hast thou
 not
 Won greater exaltation? What remains

But press to thee, exalt myself to thee?
 Thus I exalt myself, set free my soul!
 [*He stabs himself. As he falls, supported by KHALIL and LOYS, the Venetians enter; the ADMIRAL advances.*]
Admiral. God and St. Mark for Venice!
 Plant the Lion!
 [*At the clash of the planted standard, the Druses shout and move tumultuously forward, LOYS drawing his sword.*]
Djabal [*leading them a few steps between KHALIL and LOYS.*] On to the Mountain! At the Mountain, Druses! [*Dies.*]

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON;

A TRAGEDY.

1843.

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

PERSONS.

MILDRED TRESHAM.
 GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.
 THOROLD, Earl Tresham.
 AUSTIN TRESHAM.
 HENRY, Earl Mertoun.
 GERARD, and other retainers of Lord Tresham.

TIME, 17—.

ACT I.

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

1st Retainer. Ay, do! push, friends, and then you'll push down me!
 —What for? Does any hear a runner's foot Or a steed's trample. or a coach-wheel's cry?

Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?
 But there's no breeding in a man of you
 Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,
 Old Gerard!

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

2nd Retainer. Now, Gerard, out with it!
 What makes you sullen, this of all the days
 I' the year? To-day that young rich bountiful
 Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they
 match

With our Lord Tresham through the country-
 side,

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

Gerard. What then?

2nd Retainer. What then? Why, you, she
 speaks to, if she meets

Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart
 The boughs to let her through her forest
 walks,

You, always favourite for your no-deserts,
 You've heard, these three days, how Earl
 Mertoun sues

To lay his heart and house and broad lands
 too

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

I—
 "What then?" say you!

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

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

4th Retainer. Let Gerard be!
 He's coarse-grained, like his carved black
 cross-bow stock.

Ha, look now, while we squabble with him,
 look!

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

1st Retainer. Our retainers look as fine—
 That's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds
 himself

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Just on his haunches by the wheel!

6th Retainer. Ay—ay!

You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces: what's a horse to you?
D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the midst

So cunningly?—then, Philip, mark this further;

No leg has he to stand on!

1st Retainer. No? That's comfort.

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

The Earl at least! Come, there's a proper man,

I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,

Has got a starrier eye.

3rd Retainer. His eyes are blue:

But leave my hawks alone!

4th Retainer. So young, and yet
So tall and shapely!

5th Retainer. Here's Lord Tresham's self!

There now—there's what a nobleman should be!

He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like
A House's head.

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

That stateliness?

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

And the whole beautiful bright company
Close round them—in they go! [*Jumping down from the window-bench, and making for the table and its jugs.*]

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

6th Retainer. My father drove his father first to court,

After his marriage-day—ay, did he!

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

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

2nd Retainer [aside]. He's vexed, now,
that he let the show escape!

[*To GERARD.*] Remember that the Earl returns this way.

Gerard. That way?

2nd Retainer. Just so.

Gerard. Then my way's here.

[*Goes.*
2nd Retainer. Old Gerard
Will die soon—mind, I said it! He was used
To care about the pitifullest thing

That touched the House's honour, not an eye
But his could see wherein: and on a cause
Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard
Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away

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

Such point decorous, and such square by rule—

He knew such niceties, no herald more:
And now—you see his humour: die he will!

2nd Retainer. God help him! Who's for the great servants'-hall
To hear what's going on inside? They'd follow
Lord Tresham into the saloon.

3rd Retainer. I!—

4th Retainer. I!—
Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,
Some hint of how the parley goes inside!
Prosperity to the great House once more!
Here's the last drop!

1st Retainer. Have at you! Boys,
hurrah!

SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN,
AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN.

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

Mertoun. Thanks!

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

One favour more, nor that the least,—to think
The welcome I should give;—'tis given!

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

Mertoun. I thank you—less
For the expressed commendings which your
seal,
And only that, authenticates—forbids
My putting from me . . . to my heart I take

Your praise . . . but praise less claims my
gratitude,

Than the indulgent insight it implies
Of what must needs be uppermost with one
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to
ask,

In weighed and measured unimpassioned
words,

A gift, which, if as calmly 'tis denied,
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
Despair within his soul. That I dare ask
Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord
Tresham,

I love your sister—as you'd have one love
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her!
Wealth,

Rank, all the world thinks me, they're yours,
you know,

To hold or part with, at your choice—but
grant

My true self, me without a rood of land,
A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or
life?

Guendolen [*apart to* AUSTIN]. Why, this
is loving, Austin!

Austin. He's so young!
Guendolen. Young? Old enough, I think,
to half surmise

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

Austin. Hush!
He reddens.

Guendolen. Mark him, Austin; that's true
love!

Ours must begin again.

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

I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.
That I am wholly satisfied with you
On this occasion, when a falcon's eye
Were dull compared with mine to search out
faults,

Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give
Or to refuse.

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

Tresham. My best of words
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

Mertoun. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember, touch ;
I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game : the heron roused
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing
Thro' thickets and glades a mile in yours,—or else

Some eyass¹ ill-reclaimed has taken flight
And lured me after her from tree to tree,
I marked not whither. I have come upon
The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
And—and then . . . I have seen her.

Guendolen [*aside to AUSTIN*]. Note that mode

Of faltering out that, when a lady passed,
He, having eyes, did see her ! You had said—
"On such a day I scanned her, head to foot ;
"Observed a red, where red should not have been,

"Outside her elbow ; but was pleased enough
"Upon the whole." Let such irreverent talk
Be lessoned for the future !

Tresham. What's to say
May be said briefly. She has never known
A mother's care ; I stand for father too.
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—
You cannot know the good and tender heart,

Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
As light where friend's are—how imbued with lore

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

We brothers talk !

Mertoun. I thank you.

Tresham. In a word,
Control's not for this lady ; but her wish
To please me outstrips in its subtlety
My power of being pleased : herself creates
The want she means to satisfy. My heart

¹ Young hawk.

Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.
Can I say more?

Mertoun. No more—thanks, thanks—no more !

Tresham. This matter then discussed . . .

Mertoun. —We'll waste no breath
On aught less precious. I'm beneath the roof

Which holds her : while I thought of that,
my speech

To you would wander—as it must not do,
Since as you favour me I stand or fall.

I pray you suffer that I take my leave !

Tresham. With less regret 'tis suffered,
that again

We meet, I hope, so shortly.

Mertoun. We ? again ?—

Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you will crown

Your goodness by forthwith apprising me
When . . . if . . . the lady will appoint a day

For me to wait on you—and her.

Tresham. So soon

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

Mertoun. You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.

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

Tresham. So may it prove !

Mertoun. You, lady, you, sir, take

My humble salutation !

Guendolen and Austin. Thanks !

Tresham. Within there !

[*Servants enter.* TRESHAM conducts
MERTOUN to the door. Meantime
AUSTIN remarks,

Well,

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

"She'll not say, no,"—what comes it to beside ?

I should have prayed the brother, "speak this speech,

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

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

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

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

"Only let her accept me, and do you

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

Guendolen. That way you'd take, friend Austin? What a shame

I was your cousin, tamely from the first Your bride, and all this fervour's run to waste!

Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?

The Earl's a fool.

Austin. Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

Tresham [returning]. Now, voices, voices!

'St! the lady's first!

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

The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!

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

A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth, As you will never! come—the Earl?

Guendolen. He's young.

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

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

Austin, how old is she?

Guendolen. There's tact for you!

I meant that being young was good excuse

If one should tax him . . .

Tresham. Well?

Guendolen. —With lacking wit.

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

Guendolen. In standing straighter than the steward's rod

And making you the tiresomest harangue, Instead of slipping over to my side And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet lady,

"Your cousin there will do me detriment

"He little dreams of: he's absorbed, I see,

"In my old name and fame—be sure he'll leave

"My Mildred, when his best account of me

"Is ended, in full confidence I wear

"My grandsire's periwig down either check.

"I'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . . .

Tresham. . . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,

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

He should have said what now I say for him.

Yon golden creature, will you help us all?

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

—You are . . . what Austin only knows! Come up,

All three of us: she's in the library

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

Guendolen. Austin, how we must—!

Tresham. Must what? Must speak

truth,

Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him! I challenge you!

Guendolen. Witchcraft's a fault in him,

For you're bewitched.

Tresham. What's urgent we obtain

Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—

Next day at furthest.

Guendolen. Ne'er instruct me!

Tresham. Come!

—He's out of your good graces, since forsooth, He stood not as he'd carry us by storm

With his perfections! You're for the composed

Manly assured becoming confidence!

—Get her to say, "to-morrow," and I'll give you . . .

I'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled

With petting and snail-paces. Will you? Come!

SCENE III.—MILDRED'S chamber. A painted window overlooks the park. MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.

Guendolen. Now, Mildred, spare those pains. I have not left

Our talkers in the library, and climbed

The wearisome ascent to this your bower
In company with you,—I have not dared . . .
Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you
Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,
Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell
—Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most
Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes,
He would maintain, were grey instead of
blue—

I think I brought him to contrition!—Well,
I have not done such things, (all to deserve
A minute's quiet cousin's talk with you,)
To be dismissed so coolly.

Mildred. Guendolen!

What have I done? what could suggest . . .

Guendolen. There, there!

Do I not comprehend you'd be alone
To throw those testimonies in a heap,
Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,
With that poor silly heartless Guendolen's
Ill-timed misplaced attempted smartnesses—
And sift their sense out? now, I come to
spare you

Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and have!
Demand, be answered! Lack I ears and eyes?
Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table
The Conqueror dined on when he landed
first,

Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—
The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great
need?

Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes!

Mildred. My brother—

Did he . . . you said that he received him
well?

Guendolen. If I said only "well" I said
not much.

Oh, stay—which brother?

Mildred. Thorold! who—who else?

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

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

The least retainer that e'er caught his glance
Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk:
And in the world, the court, if men would
cite

The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name
Rises of its clear nature to their lips.

But he should take men's homage, trust in it,
And care no more about what drew it down.
He has desert, and that, acknowledgment;
Is he content?

Mildred. You wrong him, Guendolen.

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

The light of his interminable line,
An ancestry with men all paladins,
And women all . . .

Mildred. Dear Guendolen, 'tis late!
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon
Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.

Guendolen. Well, that Thorold
Should rise up from such musings, and receive
One come audaciously to graft himself
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
No slightest spot in such an one . . .

Mildred. Who finds
A spot in Mertoun?

Guendolen. Not your brother; therefore,
Not the whole world.

Mildred. I am weary, Guendolen.
Bear with me!

Guendolen. I am foolish.

Mildred. Oh no, kind!

But I would rest.

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

Mildred. Brown hair.

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

Mildred. How? did not you—Oh, Austin
'twas, declared

His hair was light, not brown—my head!—
and look,

The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber!
Sweet,

Good night!

Guendolen. Forgive me—sleep the sound-
lier for me!

[*Going, she turns suddenly.*

Mildred!
Perdition! all's discovered! Thorold finds
—That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers

Was grander daughter still—to that fair dame
Whose garter slipped down at the famous
dance! [Goes.

Mildred. Is she—can she be really gone
at last?

My heart! I shall not reach the window.
Needs

Must I have sinned much, so to suffer.

[*She lifts the small lamp which is sus-
pended before the Virgin's image
in the window, and places it by
the purple pane.*

There!

[*She returns to the seat in front.*

Mildred and Mertoun! Mildred, with con-
sent

Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's
bride!

Too late! 'Tis sweet to think of, sweeter
still

To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up
The curse of the beginning; but I know
It comes too late: 'twill sweetest be of all
To dream my soul away and die upon.

[*A noise without.*

The voice! Oh why, why glided sin the
snake

Into the paradise Heaven meant us both?

[*The window opens softly.*

A low voice sings.

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

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

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

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

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

*Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's
bubbling the bird's warble!*

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

*And this woman says, "My days were sunless
and my nights were moonless,*

*"Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the
lark's heart's outbreak tuneless,*

*"If you loved me not!" And I who—(ah, for
words of flame!) adore her,
Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably
before her—*

[*He enters, approaches her seat,
and bends over her.*

*I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice
takes me,*

*And by noontide as by midnight make her mine,
as hers she makes me!*

[*The Earl throws off his slouched
hat and long cloak.*

My very heart sings, so I sing, Beloved!

Mildred. Sit, Henry—do not take my hand!

Mertoun. 'Tis mine.

The meeting that appalled us both so much
Is ended.

Mildred. What begins now?

Mertoun. Happiness

Such as the world contains not.

Mildred. That is it.

Our happiness would, as you say, exceed
The whole world's best of blisses: we—do we
Deserve that? Utter to your soul, what
mine

Long since, Beloved, has grown used to hear,
Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,
And so familiar now; this will not be!

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

Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside

The truth, as—what had e'er prevailed on me
Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last

Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too?

Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break
On the strange unrest of our night, confused

With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops

On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,
And no expressless glory in the East?

When I am by you, to be ever by you,
When I have won you and may worship you,

Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be"?

Mildred. Sin has surprised us, so will
punishment.

Mertoun. No—me alone, who sinned alone!

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

Mertoun. Of your life
I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste
A thought about when you are by me?—you
It was, I said my folly called the storm
And pulled the night upon. 'Twas day with
me—
Perpetual dawn with me.

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

Mertoun [after a pause]. How good
Your brother is! I figured him a cold—
Shall I say, haughty man?

Mildred. They told me all.
I know all.

Mertoun. It will soon be over.

Mildred. Over?
Oh, what is over? what must I live through
And say, "'tis over"? Is our meeting over?
Have I received in presence of them all
The partner of my guilty love—with brow
Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips
Which make believe that when they strive to
form

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

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

Ah God, some prodigy of thine will stop
This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
In its birth even! some fierce leprous spot
Will mar the brow's dissimulating! I
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by
heart,

But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,
The love, the shame, and the despair—with
them

Round me aghast as round some cursed fount
That should spirt water, and spouts blood.

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

VOL. I.

This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace
That's gone from me—gone once, and gone
for ever!

Mertoun. Mildred, my honour is your
own. I'll share

Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.
A word informs your brother I retract
This morning's offer; time will yet bring forth
Some better way of saving both of us.

Mildred. I'll meet their faces, Henry!
Mertoun. When? to-morrow!

Get done with it!

Mildred. Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!
Next day! I never shall prepare my words
And looks and gestures sooner.—How you
must

Despise me!

Mertoun. Mildred, break it if you choose,
A heart the love of you uplifted—still
Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,
To heaven! but Mildred, answer me,—first
pace

The chamber with me—once again—now, say
Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)
—Contempt for you in! I would pluck it off
And cast it from me!—but no—no, you'll not
Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat that?

Mildred. Dear Henry!

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

On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens now
Only in the recalling how it burned

That morn to see the shape of many a dream
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms
To her we dream of—I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,
Might speak to her, might live and die her
own,

Who knew? I spoke. Oh, Mildred, feel
you not

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

And weigh them in the diamond scales of
pride,

Resolved the treasure of a first and last
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its
worth,

—That now I think upon your purity
And utter ignorance of guilt—your own
Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised
Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk
A silly language, but interpret, you !)
If I, with fancy at its full, and reason
Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,
If you had pity on my passion, pity
On my protested sickness of the soul
To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch
Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you
Accorded gifts and knew not they were
gifts—

If I grew mad at last with enterprise
And must behold my beauty in her bower
Or perish—(I was ignorant of even
My own desires—what then were you?) if
sorrow—

Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce
My reason, blind myself to light, say truth
Is false and lie to God and my own soul?
Contempt were all of this !

Mildred. Do you believe . . .

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

Mertoun. Oh, to love less what one has
injured ! Dove,
Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—
Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into
strength?

Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee?
Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and
device !

Mildred, I love you and you love me.

Mildred. Go !

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

Mertoun. This is not our last meeting ?

Mildred. One night more.

Mertoun. And then—think, then !

Mildred. Then, no

sweet courtship-days,
No dawning consciousness of love for us,
No strange and palpitating births of sense

From words and looks, no innocent fears and
hopes,

Reserves and confidences : morning's over !

Mertoun. How else should love's perfected
noontide follow ?

All the dawn promised shall the day perform
Mildred. So may it be ! but—

You are cautious, Love ?

Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls ?

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

To-morrow night ?

Mildred. Farewell ! Stay, Henry
. . . wherefore ?

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

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

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

I was so young, I loved him so, I had

No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.

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

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Library.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, hastily.

Tresham. This way ! In, Gerard, quick !

[*As GERARD enters, TRESHAM
secures the door.*

Now speak ! or, wait—

I'll bid you speak directly. [*Sits himself.*

Now repeat

Firmly and circumstantially the tale

You just now told me ; it eludes me ; either

I did not listen, or the half is gone

Away from me. How long have you lived
here ?

Here in my house, your father kept our woods
Before you ?

Gerard. —As his father did, my lord.

I have been eating, sixty years almost,
Your bread.

Tresham. Yes, yes. You ever were of all

The servants in my father's house, I know,
The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

Gerard. I'll speak
God's truth. Night after night . . .

Tresham. Since when?

Gerard. At least

A month—each midnight has some man access
To Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresham. Tush, "access"—
No wide words like "access" to me!

Gerard. He runs
Along the woodside, crosses to the South,
Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .

Tresham. The last great yew-tree?

Gerard. You might stand upon
The main boughs like a platform. Then

he . . .

Tresham. Quick!

Gerard. Climbs up, and, where they lessen
at the top,

—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line
That reaches to the lady's casement—

Tresham. —Which
He enters not! Gerard, some wretched fool
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!

When such are young, it seems a precious thing
To have approached,—to merely have ap-

proached,
Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon. He does not

enter?

Gerard?

Gerard. There is a lamp that's full 't the
midst,

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

Tresham. Leave that name out! Well?
That lamp?

Gerard. —Is moved at midnight higher up
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane; he waits

For that among the boughs: at sight of that,
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,

Open the lady's casement, enter there . . .

Tresham. —And stay?

Gerard. An hour, two hours.

Tresham. And this you saw
Once?—twice?—quick!

Gerard. Twenty times.

Tresham. And what brings you
Under the yew-trees?

Gerard. The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger stag

That broke the pale, I saw the man.

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

Gerard. But
He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,
In a great moonlight, light as any day,

From Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresham [after a pause]. You have
no cause

—Who could have cause to do my sister
wrong?

Gerard. Oh, my lord, only once—let me
this once

Speak what is on my mind! Since first I
noted

All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net
Plucked me this way and that—fire if I turned

To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire
If down I flung myself and strove to die.

The lady could not have been seven years
old

When I was trusted to conduct her safe
Through the deer-herd to stroke the snow-

white fawn

I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand
Within a month. She ever had a smile

To greet me with—she . . . if it could undo
What's done, to lop each limb from off this

trunk . . .

All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—
I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt

For Heaven's compelling. But when I was
fixed

To hold my peace, each morsel of your food
Eaten beneath your roof, my fourth-place

too,
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in-

doubts
What it behoved me do. This morn it
seemed

Either I must confess to you, or die:
Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm
That crawls, to have betrayed my lady.

Tresham. No—
No, Gerard!

Gerard. Let me go!

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

Gerard. A slouched hat and a large dark foreign cloak
Wraps his whole form; even his face is hid;
But I should judge him young: no hind, be sure!

Tresham. Why?

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

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

Gerard. Thanks, thanks, my lord!
[*Goes.*]

Tresham [*paces the room. After a pause.*]
Oh, thought's absurd!—as with some monstrous fact
Which, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to give
Merciful God that made the sun and stars,
The waters and the green delights of earth,
The lie! I apprehend the monstrous fact—
Yet know the maker of all worlds is good,
And yield my reason up, inadequate
To reconcile what yet I do behold—
Blasting my sense! There's cheerful day
outside:
This is my library, and this the chair
My father used to sit in carelessly
After his soldier-fashion, while I stood
Between his knees to question him: and here
Gerard our grey retainer,—as he says,
Fed with our food, from sire to son, an age,—
Has told a story—I am to believe!
That Mildred . . . oh, no, no! both tales
are true,
Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!
Would she, or could she, err—much less,
confound
All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . .
Heaven
Keep me within its hand!—I will sit here

Until thought settle and I see my course.
Avert, oh God, only this woe from me!
[*As he sinks his head between his arms
on the table, GUENDOLEN'S voice
is heard at the door.*]
Lord Tresham! [*She knocks.*] Is Lord
Tresham there?
[*TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls
down the first book above him
and opens it.*]
Tresham. Come in! [*She enters.*
Ha, Guendolen!—good morning.
Guendolen. Nothing more?
Tresham. What should I say more?
Guendolen. Pleasant question! more?
This more. Did I besiege poor Mildred's
brain
Last night till close on morning with “the
Earl,”
“The Earl”—whose worth did I asseverate
Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,
What is all this? You are not well!
Tresham. Who, I?
You laugh at me.
Guendolen. Has what I'm fain to hope,
Arrived then? Does that huge tome show
some blot
In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back
Than Arthur's time?
Tresham. When left you Mildred's
chamber?
Guendolen. Oh, late enough, I told you!
The main thing
To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,
Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .
Tresham. Send her here!
Guendolen. Thorold?
Tresham. I mean—acquaint
her, Guendolen,
—But mildly!
Guendolen. Mildly?
Tresham. Ah, you guessed aright!
I am not well: there is no hiding it.
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—
That is, at once! here in the library!
The passage in that old Italian book
We hunted for so long is found, say, found—

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

Guendolen. I'll die
Piecemeal, record that, if there have not
gloomed
Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!

Tresham. Go! or, Guendolen,
Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—
In the adjoining gallery! There, go!

[*GUENDOLEN goes.*
Another lesson to me! You might bid
A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct
Some sly investigation point by point
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch
The inquisitorial cleverness some praise.
If you had told me yesterday, "There's one
"You needs must circumvent and practise
with,

"Entrap by policies, if you would worm
"The truth out: and that one is—Mildred!"
There,

There—reasoning is thrown away on it!
Prove she's unchaste . . . why, you may
after prove

That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you will!
Where I can comprehend nought, nought's
to say.

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

Enter MILDRED.

Mildred. What book
Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen
Thought you were pale; you are not pale.
That book?

That's Latin surely.

Tresham. Mildred, here's a line,
(Don't lean on me: I'll English it for you)
"Love conquers all things." What love
conquers them?

What love should you esteem—best love?

Mildred. True love.

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

Of all that love or that profess to love?

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

Tresham. Mildred, I do believe a brother's
love

For a sole sister must exceed them all.

For see now, only see! there's no alloy
Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold
Of other loves—no gratitude to claim;
You never gave her life, not even aught
That keeps life—never tended her, instructed.
Enriched her—so, your love can claim no right
O'er her save pure love's claim: that's what
I call

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

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

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

—Much head these make against the new-
comer!

The startling apparition, the strange youth—
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or,
say,

Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all
change

This Ovid ever sang about) your soul
. . . Her soul, that is,—the sister's soul!
With her

'Twas winter yesterday; now, all is warmth,
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's
voice,

"Arise and come away!" Come whither?
—far

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

I think such love, (apart from yours and
mine,)

Contented with its little term of life,
Intending to retire betimes, aware

How soon the background must be place
for it,

—I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
All the world's love in its unworldliness.

Mildred. What is this for?

Tresham. This, Mildred, is it for !
Or, no, I cannot go to it so soon !
That's one of many points my haste left out—
Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-
slight film
Between the being tied to you by birth,
And you, until those slender threads compose
A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours :
So close you live and yet so far apart !
And must I rend this web, tear up, break
down
The sweet and palpitating mystery
That makes hersacred? You—for you I mean,
Shall I speak, shall I not speak ?

Mildred. Speak !

Tresham. I will.

Is there a story men could—any man
Could tell of you, you would conceal from
me ?

I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip,
Say "There is no such story men could tell,"
And I'll believe you, though I disbelieve
The world—the world of better men than I,
And women such as I suppose you. Speak !
[*After a pause.*] Not speak ? Explain then !
Clear it up then ! Move

Some of the miserable weight away
That presses lower than the grave ! Not speak ?
Some of the dead weight, Mildred ! Ah, if I
Could bring myself to plainly make their
charge

Against you ! Must I, Mildred ? Silent still ?
[*After a pause.*] Is there a gallant that has
night by night

Admittance to your chamber ?

[*After a pause.*] Then, his name !

Till now, I only had a thought for you :
But now,—his name !

Mildred. Thorold, do you devise
Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
There be ! 'Tis nought to say that I'll
endure

And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to
purge

Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire :

But do not plunge me into other guilt !

Oh, guilt enough ! I cannot tell his name.

Tresham. Then judge yourself ! How
should I act ? Pronounce !

Mildred. Oh, Thorold, you must never
tempt me thus !

To die here in this chamber by that sword
Would seem like punishment : so should I
glide,

Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss !

'Twere easily arranged for me : but you—

What would become of you ?

Tresham. And what will now
Become of me ? I'll hide your shame and
mine

From every eye ; the dead must heave their
hearts

Under the marble of our chapel-floor ;

They cannot rise and blast you. You may
wed

Your paramour above our mother's tomb ;
Our mother cannot move from 'neath your
foot.

We too will somehow wear this one day out :
But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl !
The youth without suspicion face can come
From Heaven, and heart from . . . whence
proceed such hearts ?

I have despatched last night at your com-
mand

A missive bidding him present himself
To-morrow—here—thus much is said ; the
rest

Is understood as if 'twere written down—

"His suit finds favour in your eyes." Now
dictate

This morning's letter that shall countermand
Last night's—do dictate that !

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

Tresham. The Earl ?

Mildred. I will receive him.

Tresham [*starting up*]. Ho there !
Guendolen !

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.

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

The woman there !

Austin and Guendolen. How ? Mildred ?

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

You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held
A thousand Treshams—never one like her!
No lighter of the signal-lamp her quick
Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness
To mix with breath as foul! no loosener
O' the lattice, practised in the stealthy tread,
The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!
Not one composer of the bacchant's mien
Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a word!
Know her!

Guendolen. Oh, Mildred, look to me, at
least!

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

Rigid as stone and whiter!

Tresham. You have heard . . .

Guendolen. Too much! You must proceed
no further.

Mildred. Yes—

Proceed! All's truth. Go from me!

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

All this I would forgive in her. I'd con
Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take
Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,
I'd bind myself before them to exact
The prescribed vengeance—and one word of
hers,

The sight of her, the bare least memory
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride
Above all prides, my all in all so long,
Would scatter every trace of my resolve.
What were it silently to waste away
And see her waste away from this day forth,
Two scathed things with leisure to repent,
And grow acquainted with the grave, and die
Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?
It were not so impossible to bear.
But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge
renewed

Of love with the successful gallant there,

She calmly bids me help her to entice,
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
Who thinks her all that's chaste and good
and pure,

—Invites me to betray him . . . who so fit
As honour's self to cover shame's arch-deed?
—That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her
own phrase)—

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

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

“Talk not to me of torture—I'll betray
“No comrade I've pledged faith to!”—you
have heard

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

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

“Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I find
“In him, why should I leave him then for
gold,

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

Respond to such poor outcasts of the world
As to so many friends; bad as you please,
You've felt they were God's men and women
still,

So, not to be disowned by you. But she
That stands there, calmly gives her lover up
As means to wed the Earl that she may hide
Their intercourse the surelier: and, for this,
I curse her to her face before you all.
Shame hunt her from the earth! Then
Heaven do right

To both! It hears me now—shall judge her
then! [*As MILDRED faints and falls,*

TRESHAM rushes out.

Austin. Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany
you!

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

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

Austin. No, Guendolen! I echo Thorold's
voice.

She is unworthy to behold . . .

Guendolen. Us two?
 If you spoke on reflection, and if I
 Approved your speech—if you (to put the
 thing
 At lowest) you the soldier, bound to make
 The king's cause yours and fight for it, and
 throw
 Regard to others of its right or wrong,
 —If with a death-white woman you can help,
 Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,
 You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend
 This morning, playfellow but yesterday,
 Who said, or thought at least a thousand
 times,
 "I'd serve you if I could," should now face
 round
 And say, "Ah, that's to only signify
 "I'd serve you while you're fit to serve your-
 self;
 "So long as fifty eyes await the turn
 "Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,
 "I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need—
 "When every tongue is praising you, I'll join
 "The praisers' chorus—when you're hemmed
 about
 "With lives between you and detraction—
 lives
 "To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,
 "Rough hand should violate the sacred ring
 "Their worship throws about you, — then
 indeed,
 "Who'll stand up for you stout as I?" If so
 We said, and so we did,—not Mildred there
 Would be unworthy to behold us both,
 But we should be unworthy, both of us,
 To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,
 Which, if that sword were broken in your face
 Before a crowd, that badge torn off your
 breast,
 And you cast out with hooting and contempt,
 —Would push his way thro' all the hooters,
 gain
 Your side, go off with you and all your shame
 To the next ditch you choose to die in!
Austin,
 Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred,
 —here's
 Your brother says he does not believe half—

No, nor half that—of all he heard! He says,
 Look up and take his hand!
Austin. Look up and take
 My hand, dear Mildred!
Mildred. I—I was so young!
 Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had
 No mother; God forgot me: so, I fell.
Guendolen. Mildred!
Mildred. Require no further!
 Did I dream
 That I could palliate what is done? All's true.
 Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand?
 Let go my hand! You do not know, I see.
 I thought that Thorold told you.
Guendolen. What is this?
 Where start you to?
Mildred. Oh, Austin, loosen me!
 You heard the whole of it—your eyes were
 worse,
 In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless
 You stay to execute his sentence, loose
 My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you
 here?
Guendolen. Here, Mildred, we two friends
 of yours will wait
 Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse!
 Only, when you shall want your bidding done,
 How can we do it if we are not by?
 Here's Austin waiting patiently your will!
 One spirit to command, and one to love
 And to believe in it and do its best,
 Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world
 Has been won many a time, its length and
 breadth,
 By just such a beginning!
Mildred. I believe
 If once I threw my arms about your neck
 And sunk my head upon your breast, that I
 Should weep again.
Guendolen. Let go her hand now,
Austin!
 Wait for me. Pace the gallery and think
 On the world's seemings and realities,
 Until I call you. [AUSTIN goes.
Mildred. No—I cannot weep.
 No more tears from this brain—no sleep—no
 tears!
 O Guendolen, I love you!

Guendolen. Yes : and "love"
Is a short word that says so very much !
It says that you confide in me.

Mildred. Confide !

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

Mildred. My friend,
You know I cannot tell his name.

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

Mildred. Ah, do you ask me that ?—but I
am fallen

So low !

Guendolen. You love him still, then ?

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

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

Mildred. There is a cloud around me.

Guendolen. But you said
You would receive his suit in spite of this ?

Mildred. I say there is a cloud . . .

Guendolen. No cloud to me !
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same !

Mildred. What maddest fancy . . .

Guendolen [*calling aloud*]. Austin !
(spare your pains—

When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—
Mildred. By all you love, sweet Guen-

dolen, forbear !

Have I confided in you . . .

Guendolen. Just for this !
Austin !—Oh, not to guess it at the first !

But I did guess it—that is, I divined,
Felt by an instinct how it was : why else
Should I pronounce you free from all that
heap

Of sins which had been irredeemable ?
I felt they were not yours—what other way
Than this, not yours ? The secret's wholly
mine !

Mildred. If you would see me die before
his face . . .

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

To-night ?

Mildred. Ah Heaven, he's lost !

Guendolen. I thought so. Austin !

Enter AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding ?

Austin. Thorold's gone,
I know not how, across the meadow-land.

I watched him till I lost him in the skirts

O' the beech-wood.

Guendolen. Gone ? All thwarts us.

Mildred. Thorold too ?

Guendolen. I have thought. First lead
this Mildred to her room.

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

ACT III.

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

Enter TRESHAM through the trees.

Again here ! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath—the orchard—I have traversed
glades

And dells and bosky paths which used to lead
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering
My boy's adventurous step. And now they
tend

Hither or soon or late ; the blackest shade
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees
ope wide,

And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts
Again my step ; the very river put
Its arm about me and conducted me
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun
Their will no longer : do your will with me !
Oh, bitter ! To have reared a towering scheme
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,

Were nothing : all men hope, and see their hopes

Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew.
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
Were just as though I hoped that from these old
Confederates against the sovereign day,
Children of older and yet older sires,
Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,
On many a beauty's whimple—would proceed
No poison-tree, to thrust, from hell its root,
Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.
Why came I here? What must I do? [*A bell strikes.*] A bell?

Midnight! and 'tis at midnight . . . Ah, I catch

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

And I obey you! Hist! This tree will serve.
[*He retires behind one of the trees.*

After a pause, enter MERTOUN cloaked as before.

Mertoun. Not time! Beat out thy last voluptuous beat

Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought the clock

'T the chapel struck as I was pushing through
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!
So much the more delicious task to watch
Mildred revive : to pluck out, thorn by thorn,
All traces of the rough forbidden path
My rash love lured her to! Each day must see
Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed:
Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
Delights in store. I'll not regret the past.

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

And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star!

I never saw it lovelier than now

It rises for the last time. If it sets,

'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn.

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

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

'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck

A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath

The casement there. Take this, and hold your peace.

Tresham. Into the moonlight yonder, come with me!

Out of the shadow!

Mertoun. I am armed, fool!

Tresham. Yes,

Or no? You'll come into the light, or no?

My hand is on your throat—refuse!—

Mertoun. That voice!

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

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

Tresham. You're armed: that's well.

Declare

Your name: who are you?

Mertoun. (*Tresham!*—she is lost!)

Tresham. Oh, silent? Do you know, you bear yourself

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

The bravo holds an assured countenance,

The thief is voluble and plausible,

But silently the slave of lust has crouched

When I have fancied it before a man.

Your name!

Mertoun. I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,

Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—

That he for his own sake forbear to ask

My name! As heaven's above, his future weal

Or woe depends upon my silence! Vain!

I read your white inexorable face.

Know me, Lord Tresham!

[*He throws off his disguises.*

Tresham. Mertoun!

[*After a pause.*] Draw now!

Mertoun. Hear me

But speak first!

Tresham. Not one least word on your life!

Be sure that I will strangle in your throat

The least word that informs me how you live

And yet seem what you seem! No doubt

'twas you

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

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

Tresham. Ha ha, what should I
Know of your ways? A miscreant like your-
self,

How must one rouse his ire? A blow?—
that's pride

No doubt, to him! One spurns him, does
one not?

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

Mertoun. 'Twixt him and me and Mildred,
Heaven be judge!

Can I avoid this? Have your will, my lord!
[*He draws and, after a few passes, falls.*]

Tresham. You are not hurt?

Mertoun. You'll hear me now!

Tresham. But rise!

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

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

Tresham. Not hurt? It cannot be!
You made no effort to resist me. Where
Did my sword reach you? Why not have
returned

My thrusts? Hurt where?

Mertoun. My lord—

Tresham. How young he is!

Mertoun. Lord Tresham, I am very young,
and yet

I have entangled other lives with mine.

Do let me speak, and do believe my speech!
That when I die before you presently,—

Tresham. Can you stay here till I return
with help?

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

I did you grievous wrong and knew it not—
Upon my honour, knew it not! Once known,
I could not find what seemed a better way
To right you than I took: my life—you feel
How less than nothing were the giving you
The life you've taken! But I thought my
way

The better—only for your sake and hers:

And as you have decided otherwise,

Would I had an infinity of lives

To offer you! Now say—instruct me—think!

Can you, from the brief minutes I have left,

Eke out my reparation? Oh think—think!

For I must wring a partial—dare I say,

Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

Tresham. I do

Forgive you.

Mertoun. Wait and ponder that great word!

Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope

To speak to you of—Mildred!

Tresham. Mertoun, haste

And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you

Should tell me for a novelty you're young,

Thoughtless, unable to recall the past.

Be but your pardon ample as my own!

Mertoun. Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke
and a drop

Of blood or two, should bring all this about!

Why, 'twas my very fear of you, my love

Of you—(what passion like a boy's for one

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

You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,

The scholar and the gentleman. I burned

To knit myself to you: but I was young,

And your surpassing reputation kept me

So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that love?

With less of love, my glorious yesterday

Of praise and gentlest words and kindest
looks,

Had taken place perchance six months ago.

Even now, how happy we had been! And
yet

I know the thought of this escaped you,
Tresham!

Let me look up into your face; I feel

'Tis changed above me: yet my eyes are glazed.

Where? where?

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

Ah, Mildred! What will

Mildred do?

Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
That's bleeding fast away! I'll live—must
live,

There, if you'll only turn me I shall live
And save her! Tresham—oh, had you but
heard!

Had you but heard! What right was yours
to set

The thoughtless foot upon her life and
mine,

And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,
"All had gone otherwise"? We've sinned
and die:

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

Tresham. Yes, be satisfied!

That process is begun.

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

What those three small words mean! Say,
loving her

Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,
Who had no pity, will have no remorse,
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with
me,

Dear Mildred! 'tis so easy, and you'll 'scape
So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,
With rude speech spoken to you, ruder
deeds

Done to you?—heartless men shall have my
heart,

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

Aware, perhaps, of every blow—oh God!—
Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear
The felon stripe by stripe! Die, Mildred!

Leave

Their honourable world to them! For God
We're good enough, though the world casts
us out. *[A whistle is heard.]*

Tresham. Ho, Gerard!

*Enter GERARD, AUSTIN and GUENDOLEN,
with lights.*

No one speak!

You see what's done.

I cannot bear another voice.

Mertoun. There's light—

Light all about me, and I move to it.

Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not

Just promise to deliver words of mine
To Mildred?

Tresham. I will bear those words to her.

Mertoun. Now?

Tresham. Now. Lift you the body,
and leave me

The head.

*[As they have half raised MERTOUN,
he turns suddenly.]*

Mertoun. I knew they turned me: turn
me not from her!

There! stay you! there! *[Dies.]*

Guendolen [after a pause]. Austin, remain
you here

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

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

Guendolen. She will die.

Tresham. Oh no, she will not die! I
dare not hope

She'll die. What ground have you to think
she'll die?

Why, Austin's with you!

Austin. Had we but arrived

Before you fought!

Tresham. There was no fight at all.
He let me slaughter him—the boy! I'll
trust

The body there to you and Gerard—thus!

Now bear him on before me.

Austin. Whither bear him?

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

[*They bear out the body of MERTOUN.*
Will she die, Guendolen?

Guendolen. Where are you taking me?

Tresham. He fell just here.

Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life

—You who have nought to do with Mertoun's fate,

Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?
When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm
Through our ancestral grounds, will not a shade

Be ever on the meadow and the waste—
Another kind of shade than when the night
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up?
But will you ever so forget his breast
As carelessly to cross this bloody turf
Under the black yew avenue? That's well!
You turn your head: and I then?—

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

Tresham. Dear and ancient trees
My fathers planted, and I loved so well!
What have I done that, like some fabled crime
Of yore, lets loose a Fury leading thus
Her miserable dance amidst you all?
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone
With all your tops a vast antiphony,
Demanding and responding in God's praise!
Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell—
farewell!

SCENE II.—MILDRED'S chamber.

MILDRED *alone.*

He comes not! I have heard of those who
seemed

Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought
Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet
Did they so gather up their diffused strength
At her first menace, that they bade her strike,

And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to
scorn.

Oh, 'tis not so with me! The first woe fell,
And the rest fall upon it, not on me:
Else should I bear that Henry comes not?—
fails

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

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

Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon
Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'Tis she,
Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The
world

Forsakes me: only Henry's left me—left?
When I have lost him, for he does not come,
And I sit stupidly. . . . Oh Heaven, break up
This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
By any means or any messenger!

Tresham [without]. Mildred!

Mildred. Come in!

Heaven hears me!

[*Enter TRESHAM.*] You? alone?

Oh, no more cursing!

Tresham. Mildred, I must sit.

There—you sit!

Mildred. Say it, Thorold—do not look
The curse! deliver all you come to say!
What must become of me? Oh, speak that
thought

Which makes your brow and cheeks so pale!

Tresham. My thought?

Mildred. All of it!

Tresham. How we waded—years ago—
After those water-lilies, till the plash,
I know not how, surprised us; and you dared
Neither advance nor turn back: so, we stood
Laughing and crying until Gerard came—
Once safe upon the turf, the loudest too,

For once more reaching the relinquished prize!
How idle thoughts are, some men's, dying
men's!

Mildred,—

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

Tresham. It weighs so much upon my mind
that I

This morning took an office not my own!
I might . . . of course, I must be glad or
grieved,

Content or not, at every little thing
That touches you. I may with a wrong
heart

Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more:
Will you forgive me?

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

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

Mildred [*startling up*]. Why does not
Henry Mertoun come to-night?
Are you, too, silent?

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

Ah, this speaks for you!

You've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now
proceed!

What is it I must pardon? This and all?
Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.

Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

Tresham. He bade me tell you . . .

Mildred. What I do forbid
Your utterance of! So much that you may
tell

And will not—how you murdered him . . .
but, no!

You'll tell me that he loved me, never more
Than bleeding out his life there: must I say
"Indeed," to that? Enough! I pardon you.

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

Of this last deed Another's judge: whose
doom

I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.

Mildred. Oh, true! There's nought for me
to pardon! True!

You loose my soul of all its cares at once.

Death makes me sure of him for ever! You

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

And take my answer—not in words, but
reading

Himself the heart I had to read him late,
Which death . . .

Tresham. Death? You are dying
too? Well said

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

Mildred. Tell Guendolen
I loved her, and tell Austin . . .

Tresham. Him you loved:
And me?

Mildred. Ah, Thorold! Was't not rashly
done

To quench that blood, on fire with youth and
hope

And love of me—whom you loved too, and
yet

Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him? Oh, doubtlessly

You let him speak his poor confused boy's-
speech

—Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath

And respite me!—you let him try to give

The story of our love and ignorance,

And the brief madness and the long despair—

You let him plead all this, because your
code

Of honour bids you hear before you strike:

But at the end, as he looked up for life

Into your eyes—you struck him down:

Tresham. No! No!

Had I but heard him—had I let him speak
Half the truth—less—had I looked long on

him

I had desisted! Why, as he lay there,

The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all

The story ere he told it: I saw through

The troubled surface of his crime and yours

A depth of purity immovable,

Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest

Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath;

I would not glance: my punishment's at
hand.

There, Mildred, is the truth! and you—say on—

You curse me?

Mildred. As I dare approach that Heaven Which has not bade a living thing despair, Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,

But bids the vilest worm that turns on it Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not, But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls!

[*Falls on his neck.*]

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

It loves you as mine loves! Confirm me, Henry!

[*Dies.*]

Tresham. I wish thee joy, Beloved! I am glad

In thy full gladness!

Guendolen [*without*]. Mildred! Tresham!

[*Entering with AUSTIN.*] Thorold, I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons! That's well.

Tresham. Oh, better far than that!

Guendolen. She's dead!

Let me unlock her arms!

Tresham. She threw them thus About my neck, and blessed me, and then died:

You'll let them stay now, Guendolen!

Austin. Leave her

And look to him! What ails you, Thorold?

Guendolen. White

As she, and whiter! Austin! quick—this side!

Austin. A froth is oozing through his clenched teeth;

Both lips, where they're not bitten through, are black:

Speak, dearest Thorold!

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

But for you, Austin, I believe!—there, there, 'Twill pass away soon!—ah,—I had forgotten:

I am dying.

Guendolen. Thorold—Thorold—why was this?

Tresham. I said, just as I drank the poison off,

The earth would be no longer earth to me, The life out of all life was gone from me.

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

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

Tresham. Already Mildred's face is peace- fuller.

I see you, Austin—feel you: here's my hand, Put yours in it—you, Guendolen, yours too! You're lord and lady now—you're Treshams; name

And fame are yours: you hold our 'scutcheon up.

Austin, no blot on it! You see how blood Must wash one blot away: the first blot came

And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye

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

Austin. No blot shall come!

Tresham. I said that: yet it did come. Should it come,

Vengeance is God's, not man's. Remember me!

[*Dies.*]

Guendolen [*letting fall the pulseless arm*]. Ah, Thorold, we can but—remember you!

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY;

A PLAY.

1844.

NO ONE LOVES AND HONOURS BARRY CORNWALL MORE THAN
DOES ROBERT BROWNING;
WHO, HAVING NOTHING BETTER THAN THIS PLAY
TO GIVE HIM IN PROOF OF IT, MUST SAY SO.

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Hiding the arms of Monchenci and Vere?
—*Hanmer.*

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PLACE.—*The Palace at Juliers.*

TIME, 16—.

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MORNING.

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

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY and other
Courtiers, round GUIBERT, who is silently
reading a paper: as he drops it at the end—

Guibert. That this should be her birthday;
and the day
We all invested her, twelve months ago,

As the late Duke's true heiress and our liege;
And that this also must become the day . . .
Oh, miserable lady!

1st Courtier. Ay, indeed?

2nd Courtier. Well, Guibert?

3rd Courtier. But your news,
my friend, your news!

The sooner, friend, one learns Prince Ber-
thold's pleasure,

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

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

Our old Duke just disclosed his child's retreat,
Declared her true succession to his rule,
And died: this birthday was the day, last
year,

We convoyed her from Castle Ravestein—
That sleeps out trustfully its extreme age
On the Meuse' quiet bank, where she lived
queen

Over the water-buds,—to Juliers' court
With joy and bustle. Here again we stand;
Sir Gauceleme's buckle's constant to his cap:
To-day's much such another sunny day!

Gauceleme. Come, Guibert, this outgrows a
jest, I think!

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

Guibert. What lesson, sir?

That everybody, if he'd thrive at court,
Should, first and last of all, look to himself?

Why, no: and therefore with your good example,
—Ho, Master Adolf!—to myself I'll look.

Enter ADOLF.

Guibert. The Prince's letter; why, of all men else,
comes it to me?

Adolf. By virtue of your place,
sir Guibert! 'Twas the Prince's express charge,
his envoy told us, that the missive there
should only reach our lady by the hand
of whosoever held your place.

Guibert. Enough!

[ADOLF retires.

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

at leisure minutes these half-dozen years,
to find me never in the mood to quit?
Who asks may have it, with my blessing,
and—

his to present our lady. Who'll accept?
You,—you,—you? There it lies, and may,
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Mausfroy [a youth, picking up the paper,
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Don't read another! Well,—"to claim his
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Could tell her on this happy day of days,
That, save the nosegay in her hand, perhaps,
There's nothing left to call her own. Sir
Clugnet,

You famish for promotion; what say you?

Clugnet [an old man]. To give this letter
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Of service: services ask recompense:
What kind of corner may be Ravestein?

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Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,
With no such bad remainder of a roof.

Clugnet. Oh,—but the town?

Guibert. Five houses, fifteen huts;
A church whereto was once a spire, 'tis
judged;

And half a dyke, except in time of thaw.

Clugnet. Still, there's some revenue?

Guibert. Else Heaven forfend!
You hang a beacon out, should fogs increase;
So, when the Autumn floats of pine-wood
steer

Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks to you,
Their grateful raftsmen fling a guildler in;
—That's if he mean to pass your way next
time.

Clugnet. If not?

Guibert. Hang guildlers, then! He
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Keep your paper!

And, let me say, it shows no handsome
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girl,

That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law;

Z

That one, confessed her father's cousin's child,
 And, she away, indisputable heir,
 Against our choice protesting and the Duke's,
 Claimed Juliers?—nor, as he preferred his claim,
 That first this, then another potentate,
 Inclined to its allowance?—I or you,
 Or any one except the lady's self?
 Oh, it had been the direst cruelty
 To break the business to her! Things might change:
 At all events, we'd see next masque at end,
 Next mummerly over first: and so the edge
 Was taken off sharp tidings as they came,
 Till here's the Prince upon us, and there's she
 —Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,
 With just the faintest notion possible
 That some such claimant earns a livelihood
 About the world, by feigning grievances—
 Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,
 And fewer listen to, a second time.
 Your method proves a failure; now try mine!
 And, since this must be carried . . .
Guibert [*snatching the paper from him*].
 By your leave!
 Your zeal transports you! 'Twill not serve
 the Prince
 So much as you expect, this course you'd take.
 If she leaves quietly her palace,—well;
 But if she died upon its threshold,—no:
 He'd have the trouble of removing her.
 Come, gentles, we're all—what the devil
 knows!
 You, Gaucelme, won't lose character, beside:
 You broke your father's heart superiorly
 To gather his succession—never blush!
 You're from my province, and, be comforted,
 They tell of it with wonder to this day.
 You can afford to let your talent sleep.
 We'll take the very worst supposed, as true:
 There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his
 child
 Among the river-flowers at Ravestein,
 With whom the right lay! Call the Prince
 our Duke!
 There, she's no Duchess, she's no anything

More than a young maid with the bluest eyes:
 And now, sirs, we'll not break this young
 maid's heart
 Coolly as Gaucelme could and would! No
 haste!
 His talent's full-blown, ours but in the bud:
 We'll not advance to his perfection yet—
 Will we, Sir Maufroy? See, I've ruined
 Maufroy
 For ever as a courtier!
Gaucelme. Here's a coil!
 And, count us, will you? Count its residue,
 This boasted convoy, this day last year's
 crowd!
 A birthday, too, a gratulation day!
 I'm dumb: bid that keep silence!
Maufroy and others. Eh, Sir Guibert?
 He's right: that does say something: that's
 bare truth.
 Ten—twelve, I make: a perilous dropping off!
Guibert. Pooh—is it audience hour? The
 vestibule
 Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort
 That want our privilege of entry here.
Gaucelme. Adolf! [*Re-enter ADOLF.*]
 Who's outside?
Guibert. Oh, your looks suffice!
 Nobody waiting?
Maufroy [*looking through the door-folds*].
 Scarce our number!
Guibert. 'Sdeath!
 Nothing to beg for, to complain about?
 It can't be! Ill news spreads, but not so fast
 As thus to frighten all the world!
Gaucelme. The world
 Lives out of doors, sir—not with you and me
 By presence-chamber porches, state-room
 stairs,
 Wherever warmth's perpetual: outside's free
 To every wind from every compass-point,
 And who may get nipped needs be weather-
 wise.
 The Prince comes and the lady's People go;
 The snow-goose settles down, the swallows
 flee—
 Why should they wait for winter-time? 'Tis
 instinct.
 Don't you feel somewhat chilly?

Guibert. That's their craft ?
 And last year's crowd-ers-round and criers-forth
 That strewed the garlands, overarched the
 roads,
 Lighted the bonfires, sang the loyal songs !
 Well 'tis my comfort, you could never call me
 The People's Friend ! The People keep
 their word—
 I keep my place : don't doubt I'll entertain
 The People when the Prince comes, and the
 People
 Are talked of ! Then, their speeches—no
 one tongue
 Found respite, not a pen had holiday
 —For they wrote, too, as well as spoke,
 these knaves !
 Now see : we tax and tithe them, pill and
 poll,
 They wince and fret enough, but pay they
 must
 —We manage that,—so, pay with a good
 grace
 They might as well, it costs so little more.
 But when we've done with taxes, meet folk
 next
 Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,
 In public—there they have us if they will,
 We're at their mercy after that, you see !
 For one tax not ten devils could extort—
 Over and above necessity, a grace ;
 This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit—
 Their vine-leaf wrappage of our tribute penny,
 And crowding attestation, all works well.
 Yet this precisely do they thrust on us !
 These cappings quick, these crook-and-cri-
 nings low,
 Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,
 With grin that shuts the eyes and opes the
 mouth—
 So tender they their love ; and, tender made,
 Go home to curse us, the first do it we ask.
 As if their souls were any longer theirs !
 As if they had not given ample warrant
 To who should clap a collar on their neck,
 Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank,
 And take them for the brute they boast
 themselves !
 Stay—there's a bustle at the outer door—

And somebody entreating . . . that's my
 name !
Adolf.—I heard my name !
Adolf. 'Twas probably
 The suitor.
Guibert. Oh, there is one ?
Adolf. With a suit
 He'd fain enforce in person.
Guibert. The good heart
 —And the great fool ! Just ope the mid-
 door's fold !
 Is that a lappet of his cloak, I see ?
Adolf. If it bear plenteous sign of travel
 . . . ay,
 The very cloak my comrades tore !
Guibert. Why tore ?
Adolf. He seeks the Duchess' presence in
 that trim :
 Since daybreak, was he posted hereabouts
 Lest he should miss the moment.
Guibert. Where's he now ?
Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly, not
 more :
 They have ado enough to thrust him back.
Guibert. Ay—but my name, I caught ?
Adolf. Oh, sir—he said
 —What was it ?—You had known him for-
 merly,
 And, he believed, would help him did you
 guess
 He waited now ; you promised him as much :
 The old plea ! 'Faith, he's back,—renews
 the charge !
 [*Speaking at the door.*] So long as the man
 parleys, peace outside—
 Nor be too ready with your halberts, there !
Gaucelme. My horse bespattered, as he
 blocked the path
 A thin sour man, not unlike somebody.
Adolf. He holds a paper in his breast,
 whereon
 He glances when his cheeks flush and his
 brow
 At each repulse—
Gaucelme. I noticed he'd a brow.
Adolf. So glancing, he grows calmer, leans
 awhile
 Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,

And presently turns round, quiet again,
With some new pretext for admittance.—

Back!

[To GUIBERT.]—Sir, he has seen you! Now
cross halberts! Ha—

Pascal is prostrate—there lies Fabian too!
No passage! Whither would the madman
press?

Close the doors quick on me!

Guibert. Too late! He's here.

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

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

Charged by your townsmen, all who starve
at Cleves,

To represent their heights and depths of woe
Before our Duchess and obtain relief!

Such errands barricade such doors, it seems:
But not a common hindrance drives me back

On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit
With hope for the first time, which sent me
forth.

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

Who followed me—your strongest—many a
mile

That I might go the fresher from their ranks,
—Who sit—your weakest—by the city gates,

To take me fuller of what news I bring

As I return—for I must needs return!

—Can I? 'Twere hard, no listener for their
wrongs,

To turn them back upon the old despair—
Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus—

So, I do—any way you please—implore!

If you . . . but how should you remember
Cleves?

Yet they of Cleves remember you so well!

Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,
Your words and deeds caught up at second
hand,—

Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts,

O' the very levity and recklessness

Which only prove that you forget their wrongs.

Cleves, the grand town, whose men and
women starve,

Is Cleves forgotten? Then, remember me!
You promised me that you would help me
once,

For other purpose: will you keep your word?

Guibert. And who may you be, friend?

Valence. Valence of Cleves.

Guibert. Valence of . . . not the advocate
of Cleves,

I owed my whole estate to, three years back?

Ay, well may you keep silence! Why, my
lords,

You've heard, I'm sure, how, Pentecost
three years,

I was so nearly ousted of my land

By some knave's-pretext—(eh? when you
refused me

Your ugly daughter, Clugnet!)—and you've
heard

How I recovered it by miracle

—(When I refused her!) Here's the very
friend,

—Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank!

Nay, Valence, this procedure's vile in you!

I'm no more grateful than a courtier should,

But politic am I—I bear a brain,

Can cast about a little, might require

Your services a second time. I tried

To tempt you with advancement here to court

—"No!"—well, for curiosity at least

To view our life here—"No!"—our Duchess,
then,—

A pretty woman's worth some pains to see,

Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown

Complete the forehead pale and tresses
pure . . .

Valence. Our city trusted me its miseries,

And I am come.

Guibert. So much for taste! But

"come,"—

So may you be, for anything I know,

To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's
daughter,

And with an equal chance you get all three.

If it was ever worth your while to come,

Was not the proper way worth finding too?

Valence. Straight to the palace-portal, sir,

I came—

Guibert. —And said?—

Valence. —That I had brought
the miseries
Of a whole city to relieve.

Guibert. —Which saying
Won your admittance? You saw me, indeed,
And here, no doubt, you stand: as certainly,
My intervention, I shall not dispute,
Procures you audience; which, if I procure,—
That paper's closely written—by Saint Paul,
Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies,
Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B and C!
Perhaps you'd enter, make a reverence,
And launch these "miseries" from first to
last?

Valence. How should they let me pause or
turn aside?

Gaucelme [*to VALENCE*]. My worthy sir,
one question! You've come straight
From Cleves, you tell us: heard you any talk
At Cleves about our lady?

Valence. Much.

Gaucelme. And what?

Valence. Her wish was to redress all
wrongs she knew.

Gaucelme. That, you believed?

Valence. You see me, sir!

Gaucelme. —Nor stopped
Upon the road from Cleves to Juliers here,
For any—rumours you might find afloat?

Valence. I had my townsmen's wrongs to
busy me.

Gaucelme. This is the lady's birthday, do
you know?

—Her day of pleasure?

Valence. —That the great, I know,
For pleasure born, should still be on the
watch

To exclude pleasure when a duty offers:

Even as, for duty born, the lowly too

May ever snatch a pleasure if in reach:

Both will have plenty of their birthright, sir!

Gaucelme [*aside to GUIBERT*]. Sir Guibert,
here's your man! No scruples now—
You'll never find his like! Time presses
hard.

I've seen your drift and Adolf's too, this while,
But you can't keep the hour of audience
back

Much longer, and at noon the Prince arrives.
[*Pointing to VALENCE.*] Entrust him with
it—fool no chance away!

Guibert. Him?

Gaucelme. —With the missive! What's
the man to her?

Guibert. No bad thought! Yet, 'tis yours,
who ever played
The tempting serpent: else 'twere no bad
thought!

I should—and do—mistrust it for your sake,
Or else . . .

*Enter an Official who communicates
with ADOLF.*

Adolf. The Duchess will receive the court.

Guibert. Give us a moment, Adolf!
Valence, friend,
I'll help you. We of the service, you're to
mark,

Have special entry, while the herd . . . the
folk

Outside, get access through our help alone;
—Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose

So ever will be: your natural lot is, therefore,

To wait your turn and opportunity,

And probably miss both. Now, I engage

To set you, here and in a minute's space,

Before the lady, with full leave to plead

Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C,

To heart's content.

Valence. I grieve that I must ask,—
This being, yourself admit, the custom here,—

To what the price of such a favour mounts?

Guibert. Just so! You're not without a
courtier's tact.

Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,
Do such as we without a recompense.

Valence. Yours is?—

Guibert. A trifle: here's a document
'Tis some one's duty to present her Grace—

I say, not mine—these say, not theirs—such
points

Have weight at court. Will you relieve us all
And take it? Just say, "I am bidden lay

"This paper at the Duchess' feet!"

Valence. No more?
I thank you, sir!

Adolf. Her Grace receives the court.
Guibert [*aside*]. Now, *sursum corda*, quoth
the mass-priest! Do—
Whoever's my kind saint, do let alone
These pushings to and fro, and pullings
back;
Peaceably let me hang o' the devil's arm
The downward path, if you can't pluck me off
Completely! Let me live quite his, or yours!
[*The Courtiers begin to range themselves,
and move toward the door.*]
After me, Valence! So, our famous Cleves
Lacks bread? Yet don't we gallants buy
their lace?
And dear enough—it beggars me, I know,
To keep my very gloves fringed properly.
This, Valence, is our Great State Hall you
cross;
Yon grey urn's veritable marcasite,
The Pope's gift: and those salvers testify
The Emperor. Presently you'll set your
foot
. . . But you don't speak, friend Valence!
Valence. I shall speak.
Gauclme [*aside to GUIBERT*]. Guibert—it
were no such ungraceful thing
If you and I, at first, seemed horror-struck
With the bad news. Look here, what you
shall do.
Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword and cry
“Yield strangers our allegiance? First I'll
perish
“Beside your Grace!”—and so give me the cue
To . . .
Guibert. —Clap your hand to note-book
and jot down
That to regale the Prince with? I conceive.
[*To VALENCE.*] Do, Valence, speak, or I
shall half suspect
You're plotting to supplant us, me the first,
I the lady's favour! Is't the grand harangue
You mean to make, that thus engrosses
you?
—Which of her virtues you'll apostrophize?
Or is't the fashion you aspire to start,
Of that close-curl'd, not unbecoming hair?
Or what else ponder you?
Valence. My townsmen's wrongs.

ACT II.

NOON.

SCENE.—*The Presence-chamber.**The DUCHESS and Sabyne.**The Duchess.* Announce that I am ready
for the court!*Sabyne.* 'Tis scarcely audience-hour, I
think; your GraceMay best consult your own relief, no doubt,
And shun the crowd: but few can have
arrived.*The Duchess.* Let those not yet arrived,
then, keep away!'Twas me, this day last year at Ravestein,
You hurried. It has been full time, beside,
This half-hour. Do you hesitate?*Sabyne.* Forgive me!*The Duchess.* Stay, Sabyne; let me hasten
to make sureOf one true thanker: here with you begins
My audience, claim you first its privilege!
It is my birth's event they celebrate:You need not wish me more such happy days,
But—ask some favour! Have you none to ask?Has Adolf none, then? this was far from least
Of much I waited for impatiently,
Assure yourself! It seemed so naturalYour gift, beside this bunch of river-bells,
Should be the power and leave of doing good
To you, and greater pleasure to myself.You ask my leave to-day to marry Adolf?
The rest is my concern.*Sabyne.* Your Grace is ever
Our lady of dear Ravestein,—but, for
Adolf . . .*The Duchess.* “But”? You have not,
sure, changed in your regardAnd purpose towards him?
Sabyne. We change?*The Duchess.* Well then? Well?
Sabyne. How could we two be happy, and,
most like,Leave Juliers, when—when . . . but 'tis
audience-time!

The Duchess. "When, if you left me, I were left indeed!"

Would you subjoin that?—Bid the court approach!

—Why should we play thus with each other, Sabyne?

Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss, If friends detain me, and get blame for it, There is a cause? Of last year's fervid throng Scarce one half comes now.

Sabyne [aside]. One half? No, alas!

The Duchess. So can the mere suspicion of a cloud

Over my fortunes, strike each loyal heart. They've heard of this Prince Berthold; and, forsooth,

Some foolish arrogant pretence he makes, May grow more foolish and more arrogant, They please to apprehend! I thank their love.

Admit them!

Sabyne [aside]. How much has she really learned?

The Duchess. Surely, whoever's absent, Tristan waits?

—Or at least Romuald, whom my father raised

From nothing—come, he's faithful to me, come!

(Sabyne, I should but be the prouder—yes, The fitter to comport myself aright)

Not Romuald? Xavier—what said he to that?

For Xavier hates a parasite, I know!

[SABYNE goes out.]

The Duchess. Well, sunshine's everywhere, and summer too.

Next year 'tis the old place again, perhaps— The water-breeze again, the birds again.

—It cannot be! It is too late to be!

What part had I, or choice in all of it? Hither they brought me; I had not to think

Nor care, concern myself with doing good Or ill, my task was just—to live,—to live,

And, answering ends there was no need explain, To render Juliers happy—so they said.

All could not have been falsehood: some was

love,

And wonder and obedience. I did all They looked for: why then cease to do it now?

Yet this is to be calmly set aside, And—ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I know,

Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .

It cannot nor it shall not be! His right? Well then, he has the right, and I have not,

—But who bade all of you surround my life And close its growth up with your ducal crown Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me perishing?

I could have been like one of you,—loved, hoped,

Fear'd, lived and died like one of you—but you

Would take that life away and give me this, And I will keep this! I will face you! Come!

Enter the COURTIERs and VALENCE.

The Courtiers. Many such happy mornings to your Grace!

The Duchess [aside, as they pay their devoir]. The same words, the same faces,—the same love!

I have been overfearful. These are few; But these, at least, stand firmly: these are mine.

As many come as may; and if no more, 'Tis that these few suffice—they do suffice! What succour may not next year bring me? Plainly,

I feared too soon. [To the Courtiers.] I thank you, sirs: all thanks!

Valence [aside, as the DUCHESS passes from one group to another, conversing]. 'Tis she—the vision this day last year brought,

When, for a golden moment at our Cleves, She tarried in her progress hither. Cleves

Chose me to speak its welcome, and I spoke —Not that she could have noted the recluse

—Ungainly, old before his time—who gazed. Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and that

gaze Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her own!

She was above it—but so would not sink
My gaze to earth! The People caught it,
hers—

Thenceforward, mine; but thus entirely mine,
Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul
Ere she retired and left me—them? She
turns—

There's all her wondrous face at once! The
ground

Reels and . . . [*suddenly occupying himself
with his paper*]

These wrongs of theirs I have to plead!
The Duchess [*to the Courtiers*]. Nay, com-
pliment enough! and kindness' self

Should pause before it wish me more such
years.

'Twas fortunate that thus, ere youth escaped,
I tasted life's pure pleasure—one such, pure,
Is worth a thousand, mixed—and youth's for
pleasure:

Mine is received; let my age pay for it.

Gaucelme. So, pay, and pleasure paid for,
thinks your Grace,

Should never go together?

Guibert. How, Sir Gaucelme?

Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly

At the snatched breathing-intervals of work?

As good you saved it till the dull day's-end

When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone.

Eat first, then work upon the strength of food!

The Duchess. True: you enable me to risk
my future,

By giving me a past beyond recall.

I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year:

Let me endeavour to be the Duchess now!

And so,—what news, Sir Guibert, spoke
you of?

[*As they advance a little, and*

GUIBERT speaks—

—That gentleman?

Valence [*aside*]. I feel her eyes on me.

Guibert [*to VALENCE*]. The Duchess, sir,
inclines to hear your suit.

Advance! He is from Cleves.

Valence [*coming forward. Aside*]. Their
wrongs—their wrongs!

The Duchess. And you, sir, are from
Cleves? How fresh in mind,

The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves!
She entertained me bravely, but the best
Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by
With insuppressive joy on every face!

What says my ancient famous happy Cleves?

Valence. Take the truth, lady—you are
made for truth!

So think my friends: nor do they less deserve
The having you to take it, you shall think,

When you know all—nay, when you only know
How, on that day you recollect at Cleves,

When the poor acquiescing multitude
Who thrust themselves with all their woes
apart

Into unnoticed corners, that the few,
Their means sufficed to muster trappings for,

Might fill the foreground, occupy your sight
With joyous faces fit to bear away

And boast of as a sample of all Cleves

—How, when to daylight these crept out
once more,

Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags
Whence the scant coin, which had not half
bought bread,

That morn he shook forth, counted piece by
piece,

And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent them

To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path

—How, when the golden flood of music and
bliss

Ebbed, as their moon retreated, and again
Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare

—Then I, their friend, had only to suggest

“Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp!”

And as one man they cried “He speaks the
truth:

“Show her the horror! Take from our own
mouths

“Our wrongs and show them, she will see
them too!”

This they cried, lady! I have brought the
wrongs.

The Duchess. Wrongs? Cleves has wrongs
—apparent now and thus?

I thank you! In that paper? Give it me!

Valence. (There, Cleves!) In this! (What
did I promise, Cleves?)

Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are reduced

Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon! I forget
I buy the privilege of this approach,
And promptly would discharge my debt. I lay
This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet.

[Presenting GUIBERT's paper.

Guibert. Stay! for the present . . .

The Duchess. Stay, sir? I take aught
That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride
Than this your ducal circlet. Thank you, sir!

[The DUCHESS reads hastily; then,
turning to the Courtiers—

What have I done to you? Your deed or mine
Was it, this crowning me? I gave myself
No more a title to your homage, no,
Than church-flowers, born this season, wrote
the words

In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.
For such a flower, you plucked me; well,
you erred—

Well, 'twas a weed; remove the eye-sorc quick!
But should you not remember it has lain
Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined,
Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things?
—That if't be faded 'tis with prayer's sole
breath—

That the one day it boasted was God's day?
Still, I do thank you! Had you used respect,
Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf,
Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet
May yield some wandering insect rest and food:
So, fling me forth, and—all is best for all!

[After a pause.] Prince Berthold, who art
Juliers' Duke it seems—

The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and
the Pope's—

Be mine, too! Take this People! Tell not me
Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,
—But take them, from a heart that yearns
to give!

Find out their love,—I could not; find their
fear,—

I would not; find their like,—I never shall,
Among the flowers! [Taking off her coronet.

Colombe of Ravestein

Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here!

Valence [advancing to GUIBERT]. Sir
Guibert, knight, they call you—this of
mine

Is the first step I ever set at court.

You dared make me your instrument, I find;
For that, so sure as you and I are men,
We reckon to the utmost presently:

But as you are a courtier and I none,
Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,
Have too far outraged, by my ignorance

Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed

A second step and risk addressing her:

—I am degraded—you let me address!

Out of her presence, all is plain enough

What I shall do—but in her presence, too,

Surely there's something proper to be done.

[To the others.] You, gentles, tell me if I
guess aright—

May I not strike this man to earth?

The Courtiers [as GUIBERT springs for-
ward, withholding him]. Let go!

—The clothiers' spokesman, Guibert? Grace
a churl?

The Duchess [to VALENCE]. Oh, be ac-
quainted with your party, sir!

He's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts;

A lion crests him for a cognizance;

“Scorning to waver”—that's his 'scutcheon's
word;

His office with the new Duke—probably

The same in honour as with me; or more,

By so much as this gallant turn deserves.

He's now, I dare say, of a thousand times

The rank and influence that remain with her

Whose part you take! So, lest for taking it
You suffer . . .

Valence. I may strike him then to earth?

Guibert [falling on his knee]. Great and
dear lady, pardon me! Hear once!

Believe me and be merciful—be just!

I could not bring myself to give that paper

Without a keener pang than I dared meet

—And so felt Clugnet here, and Maufroy here
—No one dared meet it. Protestation's

cheap,—

But, if to die for you did any good,

[To GAUCELME.] Would not I die, sir? Say
your worst of me!

But it does no good, that's the mournful truth.

And since the hint of a resistance, even,

Would just precipitate, on you the first,

A speedier ruin—I shall not deny,
 Saving myself indubitable pain,
 I thought to give you pleasure (who might say?)
 By showing that your only subject found
 To carry the sad notice, was the man
 Precisely ignorant of its contents;
 A nameless, mere provincial advocate;
 One whom 'twas like you never saw before,
 Never would see again. All has gone wrong;
 But I meant right, God knows, and you, I trust!

The Duchess. A nameless advocate, this gentleman?

—(I pardon you, Sir Guibert!)

Guibert [*rising, to VALENCE*]. Sir, and you?
Valence. —Rejoice that you are lightened
 of a load.

Now, you have only me to reckon with.

The Duchess. One I have never seen,
 much less obliged?

Valence. Dare I speak, lady?

The Duchess. Dare you!
 Heard you not?

I rule no longer?

Valence. Lady, if your rule

Were based alone on such a ground as these
 [*Pointing to the Courtiers.*]

Could furnish you,—abjure it! They have
 hidden

A source of true dominion from your sight.

The Duchess. You hear them—no such
 source is left . . .

Valence. Hear Cleves!

Whose haggard craftsmen rose to starve this
 day,

Starve now, and will lie down at night to starve,
 Sure of a like to-morrow—but as sure
 Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,
 Since end things must, end howso'er things
 may.

What curbs the brute-force instinct in its hour?
 What makes—instead of rising, all as one,
 And teaching fingers, so expert to wield
 Their tool, the broadsword's play or carbine's
 trick,

—What makes that there's an easier help,
 they think,

For you, whose name so few of them can spell,
 Whose face scarce one in every hundred saw,—

You simply have to understand their wrongs,
 And wrongs will vanish—so, still trades are
 plied,

And swords lie rusting, and myself stand here?
 There is a vision in the heart of each

Of justice, mercy, wisdom, tenderness
 To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its cure:

And these embodied in a woman's form
 That best transmits them, pure as first received,
 From God above her, to mankind below.

Will you derive your rule from such a ground,
 Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say,

Of this man—this—and this?

The Duchess [*after a pause*]. You come
 from Cleves:

How many are at Cleves of such a mind?

Valence [*from his paper*]. "We, all the
 manufacturers of Cleves—"

The Duchess. Or stay, sir—lest I seem too
 covetous—

Are you my subject? such as you describe,
 Am I to you, though to no other man?

Valence [*from his paper*].—"Valence,
 ordained your Advocate at Cleves"—

The Duchess [*replacing the coronet*]. Then
 I remain Cleves' Duchess! Take you
 note,

While Cleves but yields one subject of this
 stamp,

I stand her lady till she waves me off!

For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold;
 Laugh at each menace; and, his power defy-

ing,

Return his missive with its due contempt!

[*Casting it away.*]

Guibert [*picking it up*]. —Which to the
 Prince I will deliver, lady,

(Note it down, Gaucelme)—with your message
 too!

The Duchess. I think the office is a sub-
 ject's, sir!

—Either . . . how style you him?—my
 special guarder

The Marshal's—for who knows but violence
 May follow the delivery?—Or, perhaps,

My Chancellor's—for law may be to urge
 On its receipt!—Or, even my Chamberlain's—

For I may violate established form!

[To VALENCE.] Sir,—for the half-hour till this service ends,

Will you become all these to me?

Valence [falling on his knee]. My liege!

The Duchess. Give me!

[*The Courtiers present their badges of office.*

[*Putting them by.*] Whatever was their virtue once,

They need new consecration. [*Raising VALENCE.*] Are you mine?

I will be Duchess yet! [*She retires.*

The Courtiers. Our Duchess yet!

A glorious lady! Worthy love and dread!

I'll stand by her.—And I, whate'er betide!

Guibert [to VALENCE]. Well done, well done, sir! I care not who know,

You have done nobly and I envy you—

Tho' I am but unfairly used, I think:

For when one gets a place like this I hold,

One gets too the remark that its mere wages,

The pay and the preferment, make our prize.

Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,
We're laughed at—much would zeal and faith
subsist

Without these also! Yet, let these be stopped,

Our wages discontinue,—then, indeed,

Our zeal and faith, (we hear on every side,)

Are not released—having been pledged away

I wonder, for what zeal and faith in turn?

Hard money purchased me my place! No,
no—

I'm right, sir—but your wrong is better still,
If I had time and skill to argue it.

Therefore, I say, I'll serve you, how you
please—

If you like,—fight you, as you seem to wish—
(The kinder of me that, in sober truth,

I never dreamed I did you any harm) . . .

Gaucelme. —Or, kinder still, you'll introduce, no doubt,

His merits to the Prince who's just at hand,
And let no hint drop he's made Chancellor

And Chamberlain and Heaven knows what
beside!

Clugnet [to VALENCE]. You stare, young
sir, and threaten! Let me say,

That at your age, when first I came to court,
I was not much above a gentleman;

While now . . .

Valence. —You are Head-Lackey?

With your office

I have not yet been graced, sir!

Other Courtiers [to CLUGNET]. Let him
talk!

Fidelity, disinterestedness,

Excuse so much! Men claim my worship ever
Who staunchly and steadfastly . . .

Enter ADOLF.

Adolf. The Prince arrives.

Courtiers. Ha? How?

Adolf. He leaves his guard a stage behind
At Aix, and enters almost by himself.

1st Courtier. The Prince! This foolish
business puts all out.

2nd Courtier. Let Gaucelme speak first!

3rd Courtier. Better I began

About the state of Juliers: should one say

All's prosperous and inviting him?

4th Courtier. —Or rather,

All's prostrate and imploring him?

5th Courtier. That's best

Where's the Cleves' paper, by the way?

4th Courtier [to VALENCE]. Sir—sir—

If you'll but lend that paper—trust it me,

I'll warrant . . .

5th Courtier. Softly, sir—the Marshal's
duty!

Clugnet. Has not the Chamberlain a hear-
ing first

By virtue of his patent?

Gaucelme. Patents?—Duties?

All that, my masters, must begin again!

One word composes the whole controversy:

We're simply now—the Prince's!

The Others. Ay—the Prince's!

Enter SABYNE.

Sabynne. Adolf! Bid . . . Oh, no time
for ceremony!

Where's whom our lady calls her only subject?

She needs him. Who is here the Duchess's?

Valence [starting from his reverie]. Most
gratefully I follow to her feet.

ACT III.

AFTERNOON.

SCENE.—*The Vestibule.**Enter* PRINCE BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.*Berthold.* A thriving little burgh this Juliers looks.[*Half-apart.*] Keep Juliers, and as good you kept Cologne :

Better try Aix, though !—

Melchior. Please 't your Highness speak ?*Berthold* [*as before*]. Aix, Cologne, Frankfurt,—Milan ;—Rome !—*Melchior.* The Grave.More weary seems your Highness, I remark,
Than sundry conquerors whose path I've watchedThrough fire and blood to any prize they gain.
I could well wish you, for your proper sake,
Had met some shade of opposition here
—Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock,
Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.
You must not look for next achievement's palm

So easily : this will hurt your conquering.

Berthold. My next ? Ay, as you say, my next and next !Well, I am tired, that's truth, and moody too,
This quiet entrance-morning : listen why !
Our little burgh, now, Juliers—'tis indeed
One link, however insignificant,
Of the great chain by which I reach my hope,
—A link I must secure ; but otherwise,
You'd wonder I esteem it worth my grasp.
Just see what life is, with its shifts and turns !
It happens now—this very nook—to be
A place that once . . . not a long while since,
neither—When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on
Of foreign courts, and bore my claims about,
Discarded by one kinsman, and the other
A poor priest merely,—then, I say, this place
Shone my ambition's object ; to be Duke—
Seemed then, what to be Emperor seems now.
My rights were far from judged as plain and sureIn those days as of late, I promise you :
And 'twas my day-dream, Lady Colombe here
Might e'en compound the matter, pity me,
Be struck, say, with my chivalry and grace
(I was a boy !)—bestow her hand at length,
And make me Duke, in her right if not mine.
Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers now.
Hearken : if ever I be Emperor,
Remind me what I felt and said to-day !*Melchior.* All this consoles a bookish man like me.—And so will weariness cling to you. Wrong,
Wrong ! Had you sought the lady's court
yourself,—Faced the redoubtables composing it,
Flattered this, threatened that man, bribed
the other,—Pleaded by writ and word and deed, your
cause,—

Conquered a footing inch by painful inch,—

And, after long years' struggle, pounced at last
On her for prize,—the right life had been lived,
And justice done to divers facultiesShut in that brow. Yourself were visible
As you stood victor, then ; and whom now—
(your pardon !)I am forced narrowly to search and see,
So are you hid by helps—this Pope, your
uncle—Your cousin, the other King ! You are a
mind,—They, body : too much of mere legs-and-arms
Obstructs the mind so ! Match these with
their like :

Match mind with mind !

Berthold. And where's your
mind to match ?They show me legs-and-arms to cope withal !
I'd subjugate this city—where's its mind ?[*The Courtiers enter slowly.*]*Melchior.* Got out of sight when you came
troops and all !And in its stead, here greets you flesh-and-
blood :

A smug œconomy of both, this first !

[*As CLUGNET bows obsequiously.*]Well done, gout, all considered !—I may go ?
Berthold. Help me receive them !

Melchior. Oh, they just will say
What yesterday at Aix their fellows said—
At Treves, the day before! Sir Prince, my
friend,
Why do you let your life slip thus?—Mean-
time,
I have my little Juliers to achieve—
The understanding this tough Platonist,
Your holy uncle disinterred, Amelius:
Lend me a company of horse and foot,
To help me through his tractate—gain my
Duchy!

Berthold. And Empire, after that is gained,
will be—?

Melchior. To help me through your uncle's
comment, Prince! [*Goes.*]

Berthold. Ah? Well: he o'er-refines—
the scholar's fault!

How do I let my life slip? Say, this life,
I lead now, differs from the common life
Of other men in mere degree, not kind,
Of joys and griefs,—still there is such degree
Mere largeness in a life is something, sure,—
Enough to care about and struggle for,
In this world: for this world, the size of
things;

The sort of things, for that to come, no doubt.
A great is better than a little aim:
And when I wooed Priscilla's rosy mouth
And failed so, under that grey convent-wall,
Was I more happy than I should be now

[*By this time, the Courtiers
are ranged before him.*]

If failing of my Empire? Not a whit.
—Here comes the mind, it once had tasked
me sore

To baffle, but for my advantages!
All's best as 'tis: these scholars talk and talk.
[*Seats himself.*]

The Courtiers. Welcome our Prince to
Juliers!—to his heritage!
Our dutifullest service proffer we!

Clugnet. I, please your Highness, having
exercised

The function of Grand Chamberlain at court,
With much acceptance, as men testify . . .

Berthold. I cannot greatly thank you,
gentlemen!

The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy
founded

On strictest justice—you concede it, therefore,
I do not wonder: and the kings my friends
Protest they mean to see such claim enforced,—
You easily may offer to assist.

But there's a slight discretionary power
To serve me in the matter, you've had long,
Though late you use it. This is well to say—
But could you not have said it months ago?
I'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon,
true—

'Tis flung me—I stoop down, and from the
ground

Pick it, with all you placid standers-by:
And now I have it, gems and mire at once,
Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you say!

Guibert. (By Paul, the advocate our
doughty friend
Cuts the best figure!)

Gaucelme. If our ignorance
May have offended, sure our loyalty . . .

Berthold. Loyalty? Yours? Oh—of your-
selves you speak!

I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope!
And since I have been forced repeat my
claims

As if they never had been urged before,
As I began, so must I end, it seems.

The formal answer to the grave demand!
What says the lady?

Courtiers [one to another]. *1st Courtier.*
Marshal! *2nd Courtier.* Orator!

Guibert. A variation of our mistress' way!
Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet!—that, he
waits!

1st Courtier. Your place!
2nd Courtier. Just now it was
your own!

Guibert. The devil's!
Berthold [*to GUIBERT*]. Come 'forward,
friend—you with the paper, there!

Is Juliers the first city I've obtained?
By this time, I may boast proficiency

In each decorum of the circumstance.
Give it me as she gave it—the petition,
Demand, you style it! What's required, in
brief?

What title's reservation, appanage's Allowance? I heard all at Treves, last week.

Gaucelme [to *GUIBERT*]. "Give it him as she gave it!"

Guibert. And why not?

[To *BERTHOLD*.] The lady crushed your summons thus together,

And bade me, with the very greatest scorn
So fair a frame could hold, inform you . . .

Courtiers. Stop—
Idiot!

Guibert. —Inform you she denied your claim,

Defied yourself! (I tread upon his heel,
The blustering advocate!)

Berthold. By heaven and earth!

Dare you jest, sir?

Guibert. Did they at Treves, last week?

Berthold [starting up]. Why then, I look much bolder than I knew,

And you prove better actors than I thought:
Since, as I live, I took you as you entered
For just so many dearest friends of mine,
Fled from the sinking to the rising power
—The sneaking'st crew, in short, I e'er despised!

Whereas, I am alone here for the moment,
With every soldier left behind at Aix!

Silence? That means the worst? I thought as much!

What follows next then?

Courtiers. Gracious Prince, he raves!

Guibert. He asked the truth and why not get the truth?

Berthold. Am I a prisoner? Speak, will somebody?

—But why stand paltering with imbeciles?
Let me see her, or . . .

Guibert. Her, without her leave,
Shall no one see: she's Duchess yet!

Courtiers [footsteps without, as they are disputing]. Good chance!
She's here—the Lady Colombe's self!

Berthold. 'Tis well!

[*Aside*.] Array a handful thus against my world?

Not ill done, truly! Were not this a mind

To match one's mind with? Colombe! Let us wait!

I failed so, under that grey convent wall!

She comes.

Guibert. The Duchess! Strangers, range yourselves!

[*As the DUCHESS enters in conversation with VALENCE, BERTHOLD and the Courtiers fall back a little.*

The Duchess. Presagefully it beats, presagefully,

My heart: the right is Berthold's and not mine.

Valence. Grant that he has the right, dare I mistrust

Your power to acquiesce so patiently
As you believe, in such a dream-like change
Of fortune—change abrupt, profound, complete?

The Duchess. Ah, the first bitterness is over now!

Bitter I may have felt it to confront
The truth, and ascertain those natures' value
I had so counted on; that was a pang:
But I did bear it, and the worst is over.
Let the Prince take them!

Valence. And take Juliers too?

—Your people without crosses, wands and chains—

Only with hearts?

The Duchess. There I feel guilty, sir!

I cannot give up what I never had:
For I ruled these, not them—these stood between.

Shall I confess, sir? I have heard by stealth
Of Berthold from the first; more news and more:

Closer and closer swam the thundercloud,
But I was safely housed with these, I knew.

At times when to the casement I would turn,
At a bird's passage or a flower-trail's play,
I caught the storm's red glimpses on its edge—
Yet I was sure some one of all these friends
Would interpose: I followed the bird's flight
Or plucked the flower: some one would interpose!

Valence. Not one thought on the People—
and Cleves there!

The Duchess. Now, sadly conscious my real sway was missed,
Its shadow goes without so much regret :
Else could I not again thus calmly bid you,
Answer Prince Berthold !

Valence. Then you acquiesce?

The Duchess. Remember over whom it was I ruled !

Guibert [stepping forward]. Prince Berthold, yonder, craves an audience, lady !

The Duchess [to VALENCE]. I only have to turn, and I shall face

Prince Berthold ! Oh, my very heart is sick !
It is the daughter of a line of Dukes
This scornful insolent adventurer
Will bid depart from my dead father's halls !
I shall not answer him—dispute with him—
But, as he bids, depart ! Prevent it, sir !
Sir—but a mere day's respite ! Urge for me
—What I shall call to mind I should have urged

When time's gone by : 'twill all be mine,
you urge !

A day—an hour—that I myself may lay
My rule down ! 'Tis too sudden—must not be !

The world's to hear of it ! Once done—forever !

How will it read, sir ? How be sung about ?
Prevent it !

Berthold [approaching]. Your frank indignation, lady,

Cannot escape me. Overbold I seem ;
But somewhat should be pardoned my surprise
At this reception,—this defiance, rather.
And if, for their and your sake, I rejoice
Your virtues could inspire a trusty few
To make such gallant stand in your behalf,
I cannot but be sorry, for my own,
Your friends should force me to retrace my steps :

Since I no longer am permitted speak
After the pleasant peaceful course prescribed
No less by courtesy than relationship—
Which I remember, if you once forgot.
But never must attack pass unrepelled.
Suffer that, through you, I demand of these,
Who controverts my claim to Juliers ?

The Duchess. —Me
You say, you do not speak to—

Berthold. Of your subjects
I ask, then : whom do you accredit ? Where
Stand those should answer ?

Valence [advancing]. The lady is alone.

Berthold. Alone, and thus ? So weak and yet so bold ?

Valence. I said she was alone—

Berthold. And weak,
I said.

Valence. When is man strong until he feels alone ?

It was some lonely strength at first, be sure,
Created organs, such as those you seek,
By which to give its varied purpose shape :
And, naming the selected ministrants,
Took sword, and shield, and sceptre,—each,
a man !

That strength performed its work and passed
its way :

You see our lady : there, the old shapes
stand !

—A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chancellor—
“Be helped their way, into their death put
life

“And find advantage !”—so you counsel us.
But let strength feel alone, seek help itself,—
And, as the inland-hatched sea-creature hunts
The sea's breast out,—as, littered 'mid the
waves

The desert-brute makes for the desert's joy,
So turns our lady to her true resource,
Passing o'er hollow fictions, worn-out types,
—And I am first her instinct fastens on.

And prompt I say, as clear as heart can speak,
The People will not have you ; nor shall have !
It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves
And fight you to the last,—though that does
much,

And men and children,—ay, and women too,
Fighting for home, are rather to be feared
Than mercenaries fighting for their pay—

But, say you beat us, since such things have
been,

And, where this Juliers laughed, you set your
foot

Upon a steaming bloody plash—what then ?

Stand you the more our lord that there you stand?

Lord it o'er troops whose force you concentrate,

A pillared flame whereto all ardours tend—

Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes you amplify,

A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows brood—

But never, in this gentle spot of earth,

Can you become our Colombe, our play-queen,

For whom, to furnish lilies for her hair,

We'd pour our veins forth to enrich the soil.

—Our conqueror? Yes!—Our despot? Yes!

—Our Duke?

Know yourself, know us!

Berthold [*who has been in thought*]. Know your lady, also!

[*Very deferentially*].—To whom I needs must exculpate myself

For having made a rash demand, at least.

Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be

Her chief adviser, I submit my claims,

[*Giving papers*].

But, this step taken, take no further step, Until the Duchess shall pronounce their worth.

Here be our meeting-place; at night, its time:

Till when I humbly take the lady's leave!

[*He withdraws. As the DUCHESS turns to VALENCE, the Courtiers interchange glances and come forward a little.*

1st Courtier. So, this was their device!

2nd Courtier. No bad device!

3rd Courtier. You'd say they love each other, Guibert's friend

From Cleves, and she, the Duchess!

4th Courtier. —And moreover,

That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to help Their loves!

5th Courtier. Pray, Guibert, what is next to do?

Guibert [*advancing*]. I laid my office at the Duchess' foot—

Others. And I—and I—and I!

The Duchess. I took them, sirs. *Guibert* [*apart to VALENCE*]. And now, sir,

I am simple knight again—

Guibert, of the great ancient house, as yet That never bore affront; whate'er your birth,—

As things stand now, I recognize yourself

(If you'll accept experience of some date)

As like to be the leading man o' the time,

Therefore as much above me now, as I

Seemed above you this morning. Then, I offered

To fight you: will you be as generous

And now fight me?

Valence. Ask when my life is mine!

Guibert. ('Tis hers now!)

Clugnet [*apart to VALENCE, as GUIBERT turns from him*]. You, sir, have

insulted me

Grossly,—will grant me, too, the selfsame favour

You've granted him, just now, I make no question?

Valence. I promise you, as him, sir.

Clugnet. Do you so?

Handsomely said! I hold you to it, sir.

You'll get me reinstated in my office

As you will *Guibert*!

The Duchess. I would be alone!

[*They begin to retire slowly; as*

VALENCE is about to follow—

Alone, sir—only with my heart: you stay!

Gaucelme. You hear that? Ah, light breaks upon me! Cleves—

It was at Cleves some man harangued us all—

With great effect,—so those who listened said, My thoughts being busy elsewhere: was this he?

Guibert,—your strange, disinterested man!

Your uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend!

The modest worth you mean to patronize!

He cares about no Duchesses, not he— His sole concern is with the wrongs of

Cleves!

What, *Guibert*? What, it breaks on you at last?

Guibert. Would this hall's floor were a mine's roof! I'd back

And in her very face . . .

Gaucelme. Apply the match
That fired the train,—and where would you
be, pray?

Guibert. With him!

Gaucelme. Stand, rather, safe
outside with me!
The mine's charged: shall I furnish you the
match

And place you properly? To the ante-
chamber!

Guibert. Can you?

Gaucelme. Try me! Your friend's
in fortune!

Guibert. Quick—
To the antechamber! He is pale with bliss!

Gaucelme. No wonder! Mark her eyes!

Guibert. To the antechamber!
[*The Courtiers retire.*]

The Duchess. Sir, could you know all you
have done for me
You were content! You spoke, and I am
saved.

Valence. Be not too sanguine, lady! Ere
you dream,
That transient flush of generosity
Fades off, perchance. The man, beside, is
gone,—

Him we might bend; but see, the papers here—
Inalterably his requirement stays,
And cold hard words have we to deal with
HOW.

In that large eye there seemed a latent pride,
To self-denial not incompetent,
But very like to hold itself dispensed
From such a grace: however, let us hope!
He is a noble spirit in noble form.
I wish he less had bent that brow to smile
As with the fancy how he could subject
Himself upon occasion to—himself!
From rudeness, violence, you rest secure;
But do not think your Duchy rescued yet!

The Duchess. You,—who have opened a
new world to me,
Will never take the faded language up
Of that I leave? My Duchy—keeping it,
Or losing it—is that my sole world now?

Valence. Ill have I spoken if you thence
despise

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Juliers; although the lowest, on true grounds,
Be worth more than the highest rule, on false:
Aspire to rule, on the true grounds!

The Duchess. Nay, hear—
False, I will never—rash, I would not be!
This is indeed my birthday—soul and body,
Its hours have done on me the work of years.
You hold the requisition: ponder it!

If I have right, my duty's plain: if he—
Say so, nor ever change a tone of voice!
At night you meet the Prince; meet meat eve!

Till when, farewell! This discomposes you!
Believe in your own nature, and its force
Of renovating mine! I take my stand
Only as under me the earth is firm:

So, prove the first step stable, all will prove.
That first, I choose: [*Laying her hand on his.*]
—the next to take, choose you!

[*She withdraws.*]

Valence [*after a pause*]. What drew down
this on me?—on me, dead once,
She thus bids live,—since all I hitherto
Thought dead in me, youth's arduous and
emprise,

Burst into life before her, as she bids
Who needs them. Whither will this reach,
where end?

Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet
she's above—

So very far above me! All's too plain:
I served her when the others sank away,
And she rewards me as such souls reward—
The changed voice, the suffusion of the cheek,
The eye's acceptance, the expressive hand,
—Reward, that's little, in her generous
thought,
Thought all to me . . .

I cannot so disclaim
Heaven's gift, nor call it other than it is!
She loves me!

[*Looking at the Prince's papers.*—Which love,
these, perchance, forbid.

Can I decide against myself—pronounce
She is the Duchess and no mate for me?
—Cleves, help me! Teach me,—every
haggard face,—

To sorrow and endure! I will do right
Whatever be the issue. Help me, Cleves!

ACT IV.

EVENING.

SCENE.—*An Antechamber.**Enter the Courtiers.*

Maufroy. Now, then, that we may speak
—how spring this mine?

Gaucelme. Is Guibert ready for its match?
He cools!

Not so friend Valence with the Duchess there!
“Stay, Valence! Are not you my better
self?”

And her cheek mantled—

Guibert. Well, she loves him, sir:
And more,—since you will have it I grow
cool,—

She's right: he's worth it.

Gaucelme. For his deeds to-day?
Say so!

Guibert. What should I say beside?

Gaucelme. Not this—
For friendship's sake leave this for me to say—
That we're the dupes of an egregious cheat!
This plain unpractised suitor, who found way
To the Duchess through the merest die's
turn-up

A year ago, had seen her and been seen,
Loved and been loved.

Guibert. Impossible!

Gaucelme. —Nor say,
How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover,
Was this which—taking not their stand on
facts

Boldly, for that had been endurable,
But worming on their way by craft, they
choose

Resort to, rather,—and which you and we,
Sheep-like, assist them in the playing-off!
The Duchess thus parades him as preferred,
Not on the honest ground of preference,
Seeing first, liking more, and there an end—
But as we all had started equally,
And at the close of a fair race he proved
The only valiant, sage and loyal man.
Herself, too, with the pretty fits and starts,—

The careless, winning, candid ignorance
Of what the Prince might challenge or forego—
She had a hero in reserve! What risk
Ran she? This deferential easy Prince
Who brings his claims for her to ratify
—He's just her puppet for the nonce!

You'll see,—

Valence pronounces, as is equitable,
Against him: off goes the confederate:
As equitably, Valence takes her hand!

The Chancellor. You run too fast: her
hand, no subject takes.

Do not our archives hold her father's will?
That will provides against such accident,
And gives next heir, Prince Berthold, the
reversion

Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding so.

Gaucelme. I know that, well as you,—but
does the Prince?

Knows Berthold, think you, that this plan,
he helps,

For Valence's ennoblement,—would end,
If crowned with the success which seems its
due,

In making him the very thing he plays,
The actual Duke of Juliers? All agree
That Colombe's title waived or set aside,
He is next heir.

The Chancellor. Incontrovertibly.

Gaucelme. Guibert, your match, now, to
the train!

Guibert. Enough!
I'm with you: selfishness is best again.

I thought of turning honest—what a dream!
Let's wake now!

Gaucelme. Selfish, friend, you never
were:

'Twas but a series of revenges taken
On your unselfishness for prospering ill.
But now that you're grown wiser, what's our
course?

Guibert. —Wait, I suppose, till Valence
weds our lady,

And then, if we must needs revenge ourselves,
Apprise the Prince.

Gaucelme. —The Prince, ere then
dismissed

With thanks for playing his mock part so well?

Tell the Prince now, sir ! Ay, this very night,
Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,
Explain how such a marriage makes him Duke,
Then trust his gratitude for the surprise !

Guibert. —Our lady wedding Valence all
the same

As if the penalty were undisclosed ?

Good ! If she loves, she'll not disown her
love,

Throw Valence up. I wonder you see that.

Gaucelme. The shame of it—the sudden-
ness and shame !

Within her, the inclining heart—without,

A terrible array of witnesses—

And Valence by, to keep her to her word,

With Berthold's indignation or disgust !

We'll try it !—Not that we can venture much.

Her confidence we've lost for ever : Berthold's
Is all to gain.

Guibert. To-night, then, venture we !

Yet—if lost confidence might be renewed ?

Gaucelme. Never in noble natures ! With
the base ones,—

Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smarting-
while,

And something grows and grows and gets
to be

A mimic of the lost joint, just so like

As keeps in mind it never, never will

Replace its predecessor ! Crabs do that :

But lop the lion's foot—and . . .

Guibert. To the Prince !

Gaucelme [*aside*]. And come what will to
the lion's foot, I pay you,

My cat's-paw, as I long have yearned to pay.

[*Aloud.*] Footsteps ! Himself ! 'Tis Valence
breaks on us,

Exulting that their scheme succeeds. We'll
hence—

And perfect ours ! Consult the archives, first—

Then, fortified with knowledge, seek the Hall !

Clugnet [*to GAUCELME as they retire*].

You have not smiled so since your father
died !

As they retire, enter VALENCE with papers.

Valence. So must it be ! I have examined
these

With scarce a palpitating heart—so calm,

Keeping her image almost wholly off,

Setting upon myself determined watch,

Repelling to the uttermost his claims :

And the result is—all men would pronounce

And not I, only, the result to be—

Berthold is heir ; she has no shade of right

To the distinction which divided us,

But, suffered to rule first, I know not why,

Her rule connived at by those Kings and
Popes,

To serve some devil's-purpose,—now 'tis
gained,

Whate'er it was, the rule expires as well.

—Valence, this rapture . . . selfish can
it be ?

Eject it from your heart, her home !—It stays !

Ah, the brave world that opens on us both !

—Do my poor townsmen so esteem it ?
Cleves,—

I need not your pale faces ! This, reward

For service done to you ? Too horrible !

I never served you : 'twas myself I served—

Nay, served not—rather saved from punish-
ment

Which, had I failed you then, would plague
me now.

My life continues yours, and your life, mine.

But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step—

Cleves ! If I breathe no prayer for it—if she,

[*Footsteps without.*

Colombe, that comes now, freely gives her-
self—

Will Cleves require, that, turning thus to her,
I . . .

Enter Prince BERTHOLD.

Pardon, sir ! I did not look for you
Till night, i' the Hall ; nor have as yet

declared

My judgment to the lady.

Berthold. So I hoped.

Valence. And yet I scarcely know why
that should check

The frank disclosure of it first to you—

What her right seems, and what, in conse-
quence,

She will decide on.

Berthold. That I need not ask.
Valence. You need not : I have proved the lady's mind :
 And, justice being to do, dare act for her.
Berthold. Doubtless she has a very noble mind.
Valence. Oh, never fear but she'll in each conjuncture
 Bear herself bravely ! She no whit depends
 On circumstance ; as she adorns a throne,
 She had adorned . . .
Berthold. A cottage—in what book
 Have I read that, of every queen that lived ?
 A throne ! You have not been instructed,
 sure,
 To forestall my request ?
Valence. 'Tis granted, sir !
 My heart instructs me. I have scrutinized
 Your claims . . .
Berthold. Ah—claims, you mean,
 at first preferred ?
 I come, before the hour appointed me,
 To pray you let those claims at present rest,
 In favour of a new and stronger one.
Valence. You shall not need a stronger :
 on the part
 O' the lady, all you offer I accept,
 Since one clear right suffices : yours is clear.
 Propose !
Berthold. I offer her my hand.
Valence. Your hand ?
Berthold. A Duke's, yourself say ; and, at
 no far time,
 Something here whispers me—an Emperor's.
 The lady's mind is noble : which induced
 This seizure of occasion ere my claims
 Were—settled, let us amicably say !
Valence. Your hand !
Berthold. (He will fall down
 and kiss it next !)
 Sir, this astonishment's too flattering,
 Nor must you hold your mistress' worth so
 cheap.
 Enhance it, rather,—urge that blood is blood—
 The daughter of the Bургraves, Landgraves,
 Markgraves,
 Remains thy daughter ! I shalt scarce gain-
 say.

Elsewhere or here, the lady needs must rule :
 Like the imperial crown's great chrysopease,¹
 They talk of—somewhat out of keeping there,
 And yet no jewel for a meaner cap.
Valence. You wed the Duchess ?
Berthold. Cry you mercy, friend !
 Will the match also influence fortunes here ?
 A natural solicitude enough.
 Be certain, no bad chance it proves for you !
 However high you take your present stand,
 There's prospect of a higher still remove—
 For Juliers will not be my resting-place,
 And, when I have to choose a substitute
 To rule the little burgh, I'll think of you
 Who need not give your mates a character.
 And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant
 The grey smooth Chamberlain : he'd hesitate
 A doubt his lady could demean herself
 So low as to accept me. Courage, sir !
 I like your method better : feeling's play
 Is franker much, and flatters me beside.
Valence. I am to say, you love her ?
Berthold. Say that too !
 Love has no great concernment, thinks the
 world,
 With a Duke's marriage. How go precedents
 In Juliers' story—how use Juliers' Dukes ?
 I see you have them here in goodly row ;
 Yon must be Luitpold—ay, a stalwart sire !
 Say, I have been arrested suddenly
 In my ambition's course, its rocky course,
 By this sweet flower : I fain would gather it
 And then proceed : so say and speedily
 —(Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's
 brazen self !)
 Enough, sir : you possess my mind, I think.
 This is my claim, the others being withdrawn,
 And to this be it that, i' the Hall to-night,
 Your lady's answer comes ; till then, fare-
 well ! [*He retires.*]
Valence [*after a pause*]. The heavens and
 earth stay as they were ; my heart
 Beats as it beat : the truth remains the truth.
 What falls away, then, if not faith in her ?
 Was it my faith, that she could estimate
 Love's value, and, such faith still guiding me,

¹ A variety of chalcedony.

Dare I now test her? Or grew faith so strong
Solely because no power of test was mine?

Enter the DUCHESS.

The Duchess. My fate, sir! Ah, you turn away. All's over.

But you are sorry for me? Be not so!
What I might have become, and never was,
Regret with me! What I have merely been,
Rejoice I am no longer! What I seem
Beginning now, in my new state, to be,
Hope that I am!—for, once my rights proved void,

This heavy roof seems easy to exchange
For the blue sky outside—my lot henceforth.

Valence. And what a lot is Berthold's!

The Duchess. How of him?

Valence. He gathers earth's whole good
into his arms;

Standing, as man now, stately, strong and wise,

Marching to fortune, not surprised by her.
One great aim, like a guiding-star, above—
Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness,
to lift

His manhood to the height that takes the
prize;

A prize not near—lest overlooking earth
He rashly spring to seize it—nor remote,
So that he rest upon his path content:
But day by day, while shimmering grows
shine,

And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,
He sees so much as, just evolving these,
The stateliness, the wisdom and the strength,
To due completion, will suffice this life,
And lead him at his grandest to the grave.
After this star, out of a night he springs;
A beggar's cradle for the throne of thrones
He quits; so, mounting, feels each step he
mounts,

Nor, as from each to each exultingly
He passes, overleaps one grade of joy.
This, for his own good:—with the world,
each gift

Of God and man,—reality, tradition,
Fancy and fact—so well environ him,

That as a mystic panoply they serve—
Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind,
And work his purpose out with half the
world,

While he, their master, dexterously slipt
From such encumbrance, is meantime employed

With his own prowess on the other half.
Thus shall he prosper, every day's success
Adding, to what is he, a solid strength—
An æry might to what encircles him,
Till at the last, so life's routine lends help,
That as the Emperor only breathes and
moves,

His shadow shall be watched, his step or
stalk

Become a comfort or a portent, how
He trails his ermine take significance,—
Till even his power shall cease to be most
power,

And men shall dread his weakness more, nor
dare

Peril their earth its bravest, first and best,
Its typified invincibility.

Thus shall he go on, greatening, till he ends—
The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
The fiery centre of an earthly world!

The Duchess. Some such a fortune I had
dreamed should rise

Out of my own—that is, above my power
Seemed other, greater potencies to stretch—

Valence. For you?

The Duchess. It was not I moved
there, I think:

But one I could,—though constantly beside,
And aye approaching,—still keep distant
from,

And so adore. 'Twas a man moved there.

Valence. Who?

The Duchess. I felt the spirit, never saw
the face.

Valence. See it! 'Tis Berthold's! He
enables you

To realize your vision.

The Duchess. Berthold?

Valence. Duke—

Emperor to be: he proffers you his hand.

The Duchess. Generous and princely!

Valence. He is all of this.

The Duchess. Thanks, Berthold, for my father's sake! No hand
Degrades me.

Valence. You accept the proffered hand?

The Duchess. That he should love me!

Valence. "Loved" I did not say.
Had that been—love might so incline the
Prince
To the world's good, the world that's at his
foot,—
I do not know, this moment, I should dare
Desire that you refused the world—and
Cleves—
The sacrifice he asks.

The Duchess. Not love me, sir?

Valence. He scarce affirmed it.

The Duchess. May not deeds affirm?

Valence. What does he? . . . Yes, yes,
very much he does!

All the shame saved, he thinks, and sorrow
saved—
Immitigable sorrow, so he thinks,—
Sorrow that's deeper than we dream, per-
chance.

The Duchess. Is not this love?

Valence. So very much he does!
For look, you can descend now gracefully:
All doubts are banished, that the world might
have,
Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-time,
May call up of your heart's sincerity now.
To such, reply, "I could have kept my rule—
"Increased it to the utmost of my dreams—
"Yet I abjured it." This, he does for
you:
It is munificently much.

The Duchess. Still "much!"
But why is it not love, sir? Answer me!

Valence. Because not one of Berthold's
words and looks
Had gone with love's presentment of a flower
To the beloved: because bold confidence,
Open superiority, free pride—
Love owns not, yet were all that Berthold
owned:
Because where reason, even, finds no flaw,
Unerringly a lover's instinct may.

The Duchess. You reason, then, and
doubt?

Valence. I love, and know.

The Duchess. You love? How strange!
I never cast a thought
On that. Just see our selfishness! You
seemed
So much my own . . . I had no ground—
and yet,
I never dreamed another might divide
My power with you, much less exceed it.

Valence. Lady,
I am yours wholly.

The Duchess. Oh, no, no, not mine!
'Tis not the same now, never more can be.
—Your first love, doubtless. Well, what's
gone from me?

What have I lost in you?

Valence. My heart replies—
No loss there! So, to Berthold back again:
This offer of his hand, he bids me make—
Its obvious magnitude is well to weigh.

The Duchess. She's . . . yes, she must
be very fair for you!

Valence. I am a simple advocate of Cleves.

The Duchess. You! With the heart and
brain that so helped me,
I fancied them exclusively my own,
Yet find are subject to a stronger sway!
She must be . . . tell me, is she very fair?

Valence. Most fair, beyond conception or
belief.

The Duchess. Black eyes?—no matter!
Colombe, the world leads
Its life without you, whom your friends pro-
fessed
The only woman: see how true they spoke!
One lived this while, who never saw your face,
Nor heard your voice—unless . . . Is she
from Cleves?

Valence. Cleves knows her well.

The Duchess. Ah—just a fancy, now!
When you poured forth the wrongs of Cleves,
—I said,
—Thought, that is, afterward . . .

Valence. You thought of me?

The Duchess. Of whom else? Only such
great cause, I thought,

For such effect : see what true love can do !
Cleves is his love. I almost fear to ask
. . . And will not. This is idling : to our
work !

Admit before the Prince, without reserve,
My claims misgrounded ; then may follow
better

. . . When you poured out Cleves' wrongs
impetuously,

Was she in your mind ?

Valence. All done was done for her
—To humble me !

The Duchess. She will be proud at least.

Valence. She ?

The Duchess. When you tell her.

Valence. That will never be.

The Duchess. How — are there sweeter
things you hope to tell ?

No, sir ! You counselled me, — I counsel you
In the one point I — any woman — can.

Your worth, the first thing ; let her own
come next —

Say what you did through her, and she
through you —

The praises of her beauty afterward !

Will you ?

Valence. I dare not.

The Duchess. Dare not ?

Valence. She I love

Suspects not such a love in me.

The Duchess. You jest.

Valence. The lady is above me and away.
Not only the brave form, and the bright mind,
And the great heart, combine to press me
low —

But all the world calls rank divides us.

The Duchess. Rank !

Now grant me patience ! Here's a man
declares

Oracularly in another's case —

Sees the true value and the false, for them —
Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do
see.

You called my court's love worthless — so it
turned :

I threw away as dross my heap of wealth,
And here you stickle for a piece or two !
First — has she seen you ?

Valence. Yes.

The Duchess. She loves you, then.

Valence. One, flash of hope burst ; then
succeeded night :

And all's at darkest now. Impossible !

The Duchess. We'll try : you are — so to
speak — my subject yet ?

Valence. As ever — to the death.

The Duchess. Obey me, then !

Valence. I must.

The Duchess. Approach her, and . . .
no ! first of all

Get more assurance. " My instructress," say,
" Was great, descended from a line of kings,
" And even fair " — (wait why I say this
folly) —

" She said, of all men, none for eloquence,
" Courage, and (what cast even these to shade)
" The heart they sprung from, — none deserved
like him

" Who saved her at her need : if she said this,
" What should not one I love, say ? "

Valence. Heaven — this hope —

Oh, lady, you are filling me with fire !

The Duchess. Say this ! — nor think I bid
you cast aside

One touch of all the awe and reverence ;
Nay, make her proud for once to heart's con-
tent

That all this wealth of heart and soul's her
own !

Think you are all of this, — and, thinking it,
. . . (Obey !)

Valence. I cannot choose.

The Duchess. Then, kneel to her
[VALENCE sinks on his knee.]

I dream !

Valence. Have mercy ! Yours, unto the
death, —

I have obeyed. Despise, and let me die !

The Duchess. Alas, sir, is it to be ever
thus ?

Even with you as with the world ? I know
This morning's service was no vulgar deed
Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,
Explains all done and infinitely more,
So, takes the shelter of a nobler cause.
Your service named its true source, — loyalty !

The rest's unsaid again. The Duchess bids you,

Rise, sir! The Prince's words were in debate.

Valence [rising]. Rise? Truth, as ever, lady, comes from you!

I should rise—I who spoke for Cleves, can speak

For Man—yet tremble now, who stood firm then.

I laughed—for 'twas past tears—that Cleves should starve

With all hearts beating loud the infamy, And no tongue daring trust as much to air: Yet here, where all hearts speak, shall I be mute?

Oh, lady, for your own sake look on me!

On all I am, and have, and do—heart, brain,

Body and soul,—this Valence and his gifts!

I was proud once: I saw you, and they sank,

So that each, magnified a thousand times,

Were nothing to you—but such nothingness,

Would a crown gild it, or a sceptre prop,

A treasure speed, a laurel-wreath enhance?

What is my own desert? But should your love

Have . . . there's no language helps here

. . . singled me,—

Then—oh, that wild word “then!”—be just to love,

In generosity its attribute!

Love, since you pleased to love! All's cleared—a stage

For trial of the question kept so long:

Judge you—Is love or vanity the best?

You, solve it for the world's sake—you, speak first

What all will shout one day—you, vindicate Our earth and be its angel! All is said.

Lady, I offer nothing—I am yours:

But, for the cause' sake, look on me and him, And speak!

The Duchess. I have received the Prince's message:

Say, I prepare my answer!

Valence. Take me, Cleves!
[*He withdraws.*]

The Duchess. Mourful—that nothing's what it calls itself!

Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty—mere love! And, love in question, what may Berthold's be?

I did ill to mistrust the world so soon:

Already was this Berthold at my side.

The valley-level has its hawks no doubt:

May not the rock-top have its eagles, too?

Yet Valence . . . let me see his rival then!

ACT V.

NIGHT.

SCENE.—*The Hall.*

Enter BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.

Melchior. And here you wait the matter's issue?

Berthold. Here.

Melchior. I don't regret I shut Amelius, then.

But tell me, on this grand disclosure,—how Behaved our spokesman with the forehead?

Berthold. Oh,

Turned out no better than the foreheadless— Was dazzled not so very soon, that's all!

For my part, this is scarce the hasty showy Chivalrous measure you give me credit of.

Perhaps I had a fancy,—but 'tis gone.

—Let her commence the unfriended innocent And carry wrongs about from court to court?

No, truly! The least shake of fortune's sand,

—My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing fit,

King-cousin takes a fancy to blue eyes,— And wondrously her claims would brighten up;

Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient law, O'er-looked provisoes, o'er-past premises,

Follow in plenty. No: 'tis the safe step.

The hour beneath the convent-wall is lost:

Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine.

Melchior. Which is to say, you, losing heart already,

Elude the adventure.

Berthold. Not so—or, if so—

Why not confess at once that I advise

None of our kingly craft and guild just now

To lay, one moment, down their privilege
With the notion they can any time at pleasure
Retake it : that may turn out hazardous.
We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end
O' the night, with our great masque : those
favoured few

Who keep the chamber's top, and honour's
chance

Of the early evening, may retain their place
And figure as they list till out of breath.

But it is growing late : and I observe
A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the doorway
Not only bar new-comers entering now,
But caution those who left, for any cause,
And would return, that morning draws too
near ;

The ball must die off, shut itself up. We—
I think, may dance lights out and sunshine in,
And sleep off headache on our frippery :
But friend the other, who cunningly stole out,
And, after breathing the fresh air outside,
Means to re-enter with a new costume,
Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.
I stick to privilege, on second thoughts.

Melchior. Yes—you evade the adventure :
and, beside,

Give yourself out for colder than you are.
King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes?
Don't they come in for somewhat of the motive
With you too?

Berthold. Yes—no : I am past that now.
Gone 'tis : I cannot shut my soul to fact.
Of course, I might by forethought and con-
trivance

Reason myself into a rapture. Gone :
And something better come instead, no doubt.

Melchior. So be it ! Yet, all the same,
proceed my way,
Though to your ends ; so shall you prosper
best !

The lady,—to be won for selfish ends,—
Will be won easier my unselfish . . . call it,
Romantic way.

Berthold. Won easier?

Melchior. Will not she?

Berthold. There I profess humility without
bound :

I'll cannot speed—not I—the Emperor.

Melchior. And I should think the Emperor
best waived,

From your description of her mood and
way.

You could look, if it pleased you, into hearts ;
But are too indolent and fond of watching
Your own—you know that, for you study it.

Berthold. Had you but seen the orator her
friend,

So bold and vobule an hour before,
Abashed to earth at aspect of the change !
Make her an Empress? Ah, that changed
the case !

Oh, I read hearts ! 'Tis for my own behoof,
I court her with my true worth : wait the event !
I learned my final lesson on that head

When years ago,—my first and last essay—
Before the priest my uncle could by help
Of his superior, raise me from the dirt—
Priscilla left me for a Brabant lord
Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb.
I am past illusion on that score.

Melchior. Here comes
The lady—

Berthold. —And there you go. But do
not ! Give me
Another chance to please you ! Hear me
plead !

Melchior. You'll keep, then, to the lover,
to the man?

*Enter the DUCHESS—followed by ADOLF and
SABYNE and, after an interval, by the
Courtiers.*

Berthold. Good auspice to our meeting !
The Duchess. May it prove !

—And you, sir, will be Emperor one day?
Berthold. (Ay, that's the point !) I may be
Emperor.

The Duchess. 'Tis not for my sake only,
I am proud

Of this you offer : I am prouder far
That from the highest state should duly spring
The highest, since most generous, of deeds.

Berthold. (Generous—still that !) You
underrate yourself.

You are, what I, to be complete, must gain—
Find now, and may not find, another time.

While I career on all the world for stage,
There needs at home my representative.

The Duchess. —Such, rather, would some
warrior-woman be—

One dowered with lands and gold, or rich in
friends—

One like yourself.

Berthold. Lady, I ain myself,
And have all these: I want what's not myself,
Nor has all these. Why give one hand two
swords?

Here's one already: be a friend's next gift
A silk glove, if you will—I have a sword.

The Duchess. You love me, then?

Berthold. Your lineage I revere,
Honour your virtue, in your truth believe,
Do homage to your intellect, and bow
Before your peerless beauty.

The Duchess. But, for love—

Berthold. A further love I do not under-
stand.

Our best course is to say these hideous truths,
And see them, once said, grow endurable:
Like waters shuddering from their central bed,
Black with the midnight bowels of the earth,
That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's
throes,

A portent and a terror—soon subside,
Freshen apace, take gold and rainbow hues
In sunshine, sleep in shadow, and at last
Grow common to the earth as hills or trees—
Accepted by all things they came to scare.

The Duchess. You cannot love, then?

Berthold. —Charlemagne, perhaps!
Are you not over-curious in love-lore?

The Duchess. I have become so, very
recently.

It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem,
Respect, and all your candour promises,
By putting on a calculating mood—
Asking the terms of my becoming yours?

Berthold. Let me not do myself injustice,
neither.

Because I will not condescend to fictions
That promise what my soul can ne'er acquit,
It does not follow that my guarded phrase
May not include far more of what you seek,
Than wide profession of less scrupulous men.

You will be Empress, once for all: with me
The Pope disputes supremacy—you stand,
And none gainsays, the earth's first woman.

The Duchess. That—
Or simple Lady of Ravestein again?

Berthold. The matter's not in my arbitra-
ment:

Now I have made my claims—which I
regret—

Cede one, cede all.

The Duchess. This claim then, you enforce?

Berthold. The world looks on.

The Duchess. And when must I decide?

Berthold. When, lady? Have I said thus
much so promptly

For nothing?—Poured out, with such pains,
at once

What I might else have suffered to ooze forth
Droplet by droplet in a lifetime long—

For aught less than as prompt an answer,
too?

All's fairly told now: who can teach you
more?

The Duchess. I do not see him.

Berthold. I shall ne'er deceive.

This offer should be made befittingly
Did time allow the better setting forth

The good of it, with what is not so good,

Advantage, and disparagement as well:

But as it is, the sum of both must serve.

I am already weary of this place;

My thoughts are next stage on to Rome.
Decide!

The Empire—or,—not even Juliers now!

Hail to the Empress—farewell to the Duchess!

[*The Courtiers, who have been drawing
nearer and nearer, interpose.*

Gaucelme. —“Farewell,” Prince? when
we break in at our risk—

Clugnet. Almost upon court-licence tres-
passing—

Gaucelme. —To point out how your claims
are valid yet!

You know not, by the Duke her father's will,
The lady, if she weds beneath her rank,
Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's favour—
So 'tis expressly stipulate. And if
It can be shown 'tis her intent to wed

A subject, then yourself, next heir, by right
Succeed to Juliers.

Berthold. What insanity?—

Guibert. Sir, there's one Valence, the pale
fiery man

You saw and heard this morning—thought,
no doubt,

Was of considerable standing here :

I put it to your penetration, Prince,
If aught save love, the truest love for her
Could make him serve the lady as he did !
He's simply a poor advocate of Cleves
—Creeps here with difficulty, finds a place
With danger, gets in by a miracle,
And for the first time meets the lady's face—
So runs the story : is that credible ?

For, first—no sooner in, than he's apprised
Fortunes have changed ; you are all-powerful
here,

The lady as powerless : he stands fast by her !

The Duchess [*aside*]. And do such deeds
spring up from love alone ?

Guibert. But here occurs the question,
does the lady

Love him again ? I say, how else can she ?
Can she forget how he stood singly forth
In her defence, dared outrage all of us,
Insult yourself—for what, save love's reward ?

The Duchess [*aside*]. And is love then the
sole reward of love ?

Guibert. But, love him as she may and
must—you ask,

Means she to wed him ? “Yes,” both natures
answer !

Both, in their pride, point out the sole result ;
Nought less would he accept nor she propose.
For each conjecture was she great enough
—Will be, for this.

Chagnet. Though, now that this
is known,

Policy, doubtless, urges she deny . . .

The Duchess. —What, sir, and wherefore ?
—since I am not sure

That all is any other than you say !
You take this Valence, hold him close to
me,

Him with his actions : can I choose but look ?
I am not sure, love trulier shows itself

Than in this man, you hate and would
degrade,

Yet, with your worst abatement, show me
thus.

Nor am I—(thus made look within myself,
Ere I had dared)—now that the look is
dared—

Sure that I do not love him !

Guibert. Hear you, Prince ?

Berthold. And what, sirs, please you, may
this prattle mean

Unless to prove with what alacrity
You give your lady's secrets to the world ?
How much indebted, for discovering
That quality, you make me, will be found
When there's a keeper for my own to seek.

Courtiers. “Our lady?”

Berthold. —She assuredly remains

The Duchess. Ah, Prince—and you too
can be generous ?

You could renounce your power, if this
were so,

And let me, as these phrase it, wed my love
Yet keep my Duchy ? You perhaps exceed
Him, even, in disinterestedness !

Berthold. How, lady, should all this affect
my purpose ?

Your will and choice are still as ever, free.

Say, you have known a worthier than myself
In mind and heart, of happier form and face—
Others must have their birthright : I have gifts,
To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight.
Against a hundred alien qualities,

I lay the prize I offer. I am nothing :

Wed you the Empire ?

The Duchess. And my heart away ?

Berthold. When have I made pretension
to your heart ?

I give none. I shall keep your honour safe ;
With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts
Yon marble woman with the marble rose,
Loose on her hand, she never will let fall,
In graceful, slight, silent security.

You will be proud of my world-wide career,
And I content in you the fair and good.

What were the use of planting a few seeds
The thankless climate never would mature—
Affections all repelled by circumstance ?

Enough : to these no credit I attach,—
To what you own, find nothing to object.
Write simply on my requisition's face
What shall content my friends—that you admit,
As Colombe of Ravestein, the claims therein,
Or never need admit them, as my wife—
And either way, all's ended !

The Duchess. Let all end !

Berthold. The requisition !

Guibert. —Valence holds, of course !

Berthold. Desire his presence !

[ADOLF goes out.]

Courtiers [to each other]. Out it all comes
yet ;

He'll have his word against the bargain yet ;
He's not the man to tamely acquiesce.

One passionate appeal—upbraiding even,
May turn the tide again. Despair not yet !

[*They retire a little.*]

Berthold [to MELCHIOR]. The Empire has
its old success, my friend !

Melchior. You've had your way : before
the spokesman speaks,

Let me, but this once, work a problem out,
And ever more be dumb ! The Empire wins ?
To better purpose have I read my books !

. *Enter VALENCE.*

Melchior [to the Courtiers]. Apart, my
masters !

[*To VALENCE.*] Sir, one word with you !
I am a poor dependant of the Prince's—
Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence.
You are no higher, I find : in other words,
We two, as probably the wisest here,
Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools.
Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact
Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for them ?
Do you reply so, and what trouble saved !
The Prince, then—an embroiled strange heap
of news

This moment reaches him—if true or false,
All dignity forbids he should inquire
In person, or by worthier deputy ;
Yet somehow must inquire, lest slander come :
And so, 'tis I am pitched on. You have heard
His offer to your lady ?

Valence. Yes.

Melchior. —Conceive

Her joy thereat ?

Valence. I cannot.

Melchior. No one can.

All draws to a conclusion, therefore.

Valence [aside]. So !

No after-judgment—no first thought revised—
Her first and last decision !—me, she leaves,
Takes him ; a simple heart is flung aside,
The ermine o'er a heartless breast embraced.
Oh Heaven, this mockery has been played
too oft !

Once, to surprise the angels—twice, that fiends
Recording, might be proud they chose not so—
Thrice, many thousand times, to teach the
world

All men should pause, misdoubt their
strength, since men

Can have such chance yet fail so signally,
—But ever, ever this farewell to Heaven,
Welcome to earth—this taking death for life—
This spurning love and kneeling to the world—
Oh Heaven, it is too often and too old !

Melchior. Well, on this point, what but
an absurd rumour

Arises—these, its source—its subject, you !
Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,
They say, your service claims the lady's hand !
Of course, nor Prince nor lady can respond :
Yet something must be said : for, were it true
You made such claim, the Prince would . . .

Valence. Well, sir,—would ?

Melchior. —Not only probably withdraw
his suit,

But, very like, the lady might be forced
Accept your own. Oh, there are reasons
why !

But you'll excuse at present all save one,—
I think so. What we want is, your own witness,
For, or against—her good, or yours : decide !

Valence [aside]. Be it her good if she
accounts it so !

[*After a contest.*] For what am I but hers, to
choose as she ?

Who knows how far, beside, the light from her
May reach, and dwell with, what she looks
upon ?

Melchior [to the Prince]. Now to him, you !

Berthold [to VALENCE]. My friend acquaints you, sir,
The noise runs . . .

Valence. —Prince, how fortunate are you,
Wedding her as you will, in spite of noise,
To show belief in love! Let her but love you,

All else you disregard! What else can be?
You know how love is incompatible
With falsehood—purifies, assimilates
All other passions to itself.

Melchior. Ay, sir:
But softly! Where, in the object we select,
Such love is, perchance, wanting?

Valence. Then indeed,
What is it you can take?

Melchior. Nay, ask the world!
Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,
An influence o'er mankind.

Valence. When man perceives . . .
—Ah, I can only speak as for myself!

The Duchess. Speak for yourself!
Valence. May I?—no, I have spoken,
And time's gone by. Had I seen such an one,
As I loved her—weighing thoroughly that word—

So should my task be to evolve her love:
If for myself!—if for another—well.

Berthold. Heroic truly! And your sole reward,—

The secret pride in yielding up love's right?

Valence. Who thought upon reward? And yet how much

Comes after—oh, what amplest recompense!
Is the knowledge of her, nought? the memory, nought?

—Lady, should such an one have looked on you,

Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world
And say, love can go unrequited here!

You will have blessed him to his whole life's end—

Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,
All goodness cherished where you dwelt—and dwell.

What would he have? He holds you—you,
Both form

And mind, in his,—where self-love makes such room

For love of you, he would not serve you now
The vulgar way,—repulse your enemies,
Win you new realms, or best, to save the old

Die blissfully—that's past so long ago!
He wishes you no need, thought, care of him—
Your good, by any means, himself unseen,
Away, forgotten!—He gives that life's task up,

As it were . . . but this charge which I return—

[*Offers the requisition, which she takes.*
Wishing your good.

The Duchess [*having subscribed it*]. And opportunely, sir—

Since at a birthday's close, like this of mine,

Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.
Most on a wedding-day, as mine is too,
Should gifts be thought of: yours comes first by right.

Ask of me!
Berthold. He shall have whate'er he asks,
For your sake and his own.

Valence [*aside*]. If I should ask—
The withered bunch of flowers she wears—perhaps,

One last touch of her hand, I never more
Shall see! [*After a pause, presenting his paper to the Prince.*

Cleves' Prince, redress the wrongs of Cleves!

Berthold. I will, sir!
The Duchess [*as VALENCE prepares to retire*]. —Nay, do out your duty, first!

You bore this paper; I have registered
My answer to it: read it and have done!

[*VALENCE reads it.*
I take him—give up Juliers and the world.
This is my Birthday.

Melchior. Berthold, my one hero
Of the world she gives up, one friend worth my books,

Sole man I think it pays the pains to watch,—
Speak, for I know you through your Popes
and Kings!

Berthold [after a pause]. Lady, well rewarded! Sir, as well deserved! I could not imitate—I hardly envy—I do admire you. All is for the best. Too costly a flower were this, I see it now, To pluck and set upon my barren helm To wither—any garish plume will do. I'll not insult you and refuse your Duchy— You can so well afford to yield it me, And I were left, without it, sadly lorn. As it is—for me—if that will flatter you, A somewhat wearier life seems to remain Than I thought possible where . . . 'faith, their life Begins already! They're too occupied To listen: and few words content me best. [Abruptly to the Courtiers.] I am your Duke, though! Who obey me here?

The Duchess. Adolf and Sabyne follow us—

Guibert [starting from the Courtiers]. —And I?

Do I not follow them, if I mayn't you? Shall not I get some little duties up At Ravestein and emulate the rest? God save you, Gaucelme! 'Tis my Birthday, too!

Berthold. You happy handful that remain with me . . . That is, with Dietrich the black Barnabite

I shall leave over you—will earn your wages

Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his trade! Meantime,—go copy me the precedents . . . Of every installation, proper styles And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes— While I prepare to plod on my old way, And somewhat wearily, I must confess!

The Duchess [with a light joyous laugh as she turns from them]. Come, Valence, to our friends, God's earth . . .

Valence [as she falls into his arms]. —And thee!

DRAMATIC ROMANCES.

184— 185—

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

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

THE 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 un-
 done :
 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,
'Tis God shall repay : I am safer so.

MY LAST DUCHESS.

FERRARA.

THAT's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there ; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek : perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle
laps
"Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
"Must never hope to reproduce the faint

"Half-flush that dies along her throat :"
such stuff

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed ; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one ! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving
speech,

Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—
good ! but thanked

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make
your will

Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
"Or that in you disgusts me ; here you miss,
"Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping ; and I
choose

Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her ; but who passed
without

Much the same smile? This grew ; I gave
commands ;

Then all smiles stopped together. There
she stands

As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll
meet

The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed ;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for
me !

COUNT GISMOND.

AIX IN PROVENCE.

I.

CHRIST God who savest man, save most
Of men Count Gismond who saved me !
Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,
Chose time and place and company
To suit it ; when he struck at length
My honour, 'twas with all his strength.

II.

And doubtlessly ere he could draw
All points to one, he must have schemed !
That miserable morning saw
Few half so happy as I seemed,
While being dressed in queen's array
To give our tourney prize away.

III.

I thought they loved me, did me grace
To please themselves ; 'twas all their deed ;
God makes, or fair or foul, our face ;
If showing mine so caused to bleed
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

IV.

They, too, so beauteous ! Each a queen
By virtue of her brow and breast ;
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,
As I do. E'en when I was dressed,
Had either of them spoke, instead
Of glancing sideways with still head !

V.

But no : they let me laugh, and sing
My birthday song quite through, adjust
The last rose in my garland, fling
A last look on the mirror, trust
My arms to each an arm of theirs,
And so descend the castle-stairs—

VI.

And come out on the morning-troop
Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,

VOL. I.

And called me queen, and made me stoop
Under the canopy—(a streak
That pierced it, of the outside sun,
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun)—

VII.

And they could let me take my state
And foolish throne amid applause
Of all come there to celebrate
My queen's-day—Oh I think the cause
Of much was, they forgot no crowd
Makes up for parents in their shroud !

VIII.

However that be, all eyes were bent
Upon me, when my cousins cast
Theirs down ; 'twas time I should present
The victor's crown, but . . . there, 'twill
last
No long time . . . the old mist again
Blinds me as then it did. How vain !

IX.

See ! Gismond's at the gate, in talk
With his two boys : I can proceed.
Well, at that moment, who should stalk
Forth boldly—to my face, indeed—
But Gauthier, and he thundered "Stay !"
And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say !

X.

"Bring torches ! Wind the penance-sheet
"About her ! Let her shun the chaste,
"Or lay herself before their feet !
"Shall she whose body I embraced
"A night long, queen it in the day ?
"For honour's sake no crowns, I say !"

XI.

I ? What I answered ? As I live,
I never fancied such a thing
As answer possible to give.
What says the body when they spring
Some monstrous torture-engine's whole
Strength on it ? No more says the soul.

2 B

XII.

Till out strode Gismond ; then I knew
That I was saved. I never met
His face before, but, at first view,
I felt quite sure that God had set
Himself to Satan ; who would spend
A minute's mistrust on the end ?

XIII.

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat
Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth
With one back-handed blow that wrote
In blood men's verdict there. North, South,
East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,
And damned, and truth stood up instead.

XIV.

This glads me most, that I enjoyed
The heart of the joy, with my content
In watching Gismond unalloyed
By any doubt of the event :
God took that on him—I was bid
Watch Gismond for my part : I did.

XV.

Did I not watch him while he let
His armourer just brace his greaves,
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
The while ! His foot . . . my memory leaves
No least stamp out, nor how anon
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

XVI.

And e'en before the trumpet's sound
Was finished, prone lay the false knight,
Prone as his lie, upon the ground :
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight
O' the sword, but open-breasted drove,
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

XVII.

Which done, he dragged him to my feet
And said " Here die, but end thy breath
" In full confession, lest thou fleet
" From my first, to God's second death !
" Say, hast thou lied ? " And, " I have lied
" To God and her," he said, and died.

XVIII.

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked
—What safe my heart holds, though no
word
Could I repeat now, if I tasked
My powers for ever, to a third
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest
Until I sank upon his breast.

XIX.

Over my head his arm he flung
Against the world ; and scarce I felt
His sword (that dripped by me and swung)
A little shifted in its belt :
For he began to say the while
How South our home lay many a mile.

XX.

So 'mid the shouting multitude
We two walked forth to never more
Return. My cousins have pursued
Their life, untroubled as before
I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place
God lighten ! May his soul find grace !

XXI.

Our elder boy has got the clear
Great brow ; tho' when his brother's black
Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here ?
And have you brought my tercel¹ back ?
I just was telling Adela
How many birds it struck since May.

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.

¹ A male of the peregrine falcon.

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.

'Twas 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.

INSTANS TYRANNUS.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

"Were the object less mean, would he stand
"At the swing of my hand !
"For obscurity helps him and blots
"The hole where he squats."
So, I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain ! Gold and jewels I threw,
Still he couched there perdue ;
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,
Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilt :
Still he kept to his filth.

IV.

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, did I press :
Just a son or a mother to seize !
No such booty as these.

Were it simply a friend to pursue
'Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself !
No : I could not but smile through my chafe :
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
—Through minuteness, to wit.

V.

Then a humour more great took its place
At the thought of his face,
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
The trouble uncouth
'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
To put out of its pain.
And, "no !" I admonished myself,
"Is one mocked by an elf,
"Is one baffled by toad or by rat ?
"The gravamen's in that !
"How the lion, who crouches to suit
"His back to my foot,
"Would admire that I stand in debate !
"But the small turns the great
"If it vexes you,—that is the thing !
"Toad or rat vex the king ?
"Though I waste half my realm to unearth
"Toad or rat, 'tis well worth !"

VI.

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

VII.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end ?
Did I say "without friend" ?
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest !

Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and
prayed!
—So, *I* was afraid!

MESMERISM.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

And the socket floats and flares,
And the house-beams groan,
And a foot unknown
Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
And the locks slip unawares—

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

Have and hold, then and there,
Her, from head to foot,
Breathing and mute,
Passive and yet aware,
In the grasp of my steady stare—

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

XI.

Command her soul to advance
And inform the shape
Which has made escape
And before my countenance
Answers me glance for glance—

XII.

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

XIII.

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

XIV.

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

XV.

And must follow as I require,
 As befits a thrall,
 Bringing flesh and all,
 Essence and earth-attire,
 To the source of the tractile fire :

XVI.

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

XVII.

Out of doors into the night !
 On to the maze
 Of the wild wood-ways,
 Not turning to left nor right
 From the pathway, blind with sight—

XVIII.

Making thro' rain and wind
 O'er the broken shrubs,
 'Twixt the stems and stubs,
 With a still, composed, strong mind,
 Nor a care for the world behind—

XIX.

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

XX.

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

XXI.

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

XXII.

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

XXIII.

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

XXIV.

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

XXV.

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

XXVI.

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

XXVII.

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

THE GLOVE.

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur.*)

"HEIGHO!" yawned one day King Francis,
"Distance all value enhances !
"When a man's busy, why, leisure
"Strikes him as wonderful pleasure :
"Faith, and at leisure once is he ?
"Straightway he wants to be busy.
"Here we've got peace ; and aghast I'm
"Caught thinking war the true pastime.
"Is there a reason in metre ?
"Give us your speech, master Peter !"
I who, if mortal dare say so,
Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,
"Sire," I replied, "joys prove cloudlets :
"Men are the merest Ixions"—
Here the King whistled aloud, "Let's
"—Heigho—go look at our lions !"
Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company, Francis was leading,
Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold ;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.
And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost
With the dame he professed to adore most.
Oh, what a face ! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside ;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,
And shelved to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
As glossy and black as a scarab,¹

¹ A beetle.

And bade him make sport and at once stir
Up and out of his den the old monster.
They opened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled : one's heart's beating redoubled ;
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter ;
Then earth in a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion.
Such a brute ! Were I friend Clement
Marot

(Whose experience of nature's but narrow,
And whose faculties move in no small mist
When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu.
One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
As over the barrier which bounded
His platform, and us who surrounded
The barrier, they reached and they rested
On space that might stand him in best stead :
For who knew, he thought, what the amaze-
ment,
The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
And if, in this minute of wonder,
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
The lion at last was delivered ?
Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead !
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain
To waylay the date-gathering negress :
So guarded he entrance or egress.
"How he stands !" quoth the King : "we
may well swear,
("No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere
"And so can afford the confession,)
"We exercise wholesome discretion
"In keeping aloof from his threshold ;
"Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh
hold,

“ Their first would too pleasantly purloin
 “ The visitor’s brisquet or surloin :
 “ But who’s he would prove so fool-hardy ?
 “ Not the best man of Marignan, pardie ! ”

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
 Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
 Fell close to the lion, and rested :
 The dame ’twas, who flung it and jested
 With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
 For months past ; he sat there pursuing
 His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
 Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight’s a tarrier !
 De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
 Walked straight to the glove,—while the
 lion

Ne’er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on
 The palm-tree-edged desert-spring’s sapphire,
 And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—
 Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
 Leaped back where the lady was seated,
 And full in the face of its owner
 Flung the glove.

“ Your heart’s queen, you dethrone her ?
 “ So should I ! ”—cried the King—“ ’twas
 mere vanity,
 “ Not love, set that task to humanity ! ”
 Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
 From such a proved wolf in sheep’s clothing.

Not so, I ; for I caught an expression
 In her brow’s undisturbed self-possession
 Amid the Court’s scoffing and merriment,—
 As if from no pleasing experiment
 She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
 So long as the process was needful,—
 As if she had tried in a crucible,
 To what “ speeches like gold ” were reducible,
 And, finding the finest prove copper,
 Felt the smoke in her face was but proper ;
 To know what she had *not* to trust to,
 Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
 She went out ’mid hooting and laughter ;
 Clement Marot stayed ; I followed after,

And asked, as a grace, what it all meant ?
 If she wished not the rash deed’s recalcitrant ?
 “ For I ”—so I spoke—“ am a poet :
 “ Human nature,—behoves that I know it ! ”

She told me, “ Too long had I heard
 “ Of the deed proved alone by the word :
 “ For my love—what De Lorge would not
 dare !
 “ With my scorn—what De Lorge could
 compare !
 “ And the endless descriptions of death
 “ He would brave when my lip formed a
 breath,

“ I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
 “ Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,
 “ For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
 “ Must offer my love in return.

“ When I looked on your lion, it brought
 “ All the dangers at once to my thought,
 “ Encountered by all sorts of men,
 “ Before he was lodged in his den,—
 “ From the poor slave whose club or bare
 hands

“ Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
 “ With no King and no Court to applaud,
 “ By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,
 “ Yet to capture the creature made shift,
 “ That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
 “—To the page who last leaped o’er the
 fence.

“ Of the pit, on no greater pretence
 “ Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
 “ Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
 “ So, wiser I judged it to make
 “ One trial what ‘ death for my sake ’
 “ Really meant, while the power was yet
 mine,

“ Than to wait until time should define
 “ Such a phrase not so simply as I,
 “ Who took it to mean just ‘ to die.’
 “ The blow a glove gives is but weak :
 “ Does the mark yet discolour my cheek ?
 “ But when the heart suffers a blow,
 “ Will the pain pass so soon, do you know ? ”

I looked, as away she was sweeping.
 And saw a youth eagerly keeping

As close as he dared to the doorway.
 No doubt that a noble should more weigh
 His life than befits a plebeian ;
 And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
 (I judge by a certain calm fervour
 The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
 —He'd have scarce thought you did him the
 worst turn

If you whispered " Friend, what you'd get,
 first earn ! "

And when, shortly after, she carried
 Her shame from the Court, and they married,
 To that marriage some happiness, maugre
 The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
 Those in wonder and praise, these in envy ;
 And in short stood so plain a head taller
 That he wooed and won . . . how do you
 call her ?

The beauty, that rose in the sequel
 To the King's love, who loved her a week
 well.

And 'twas noticed he never would honour
 De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
 With the easy commission of stretching
 His legs in the service, and fetching
 His wife, from her chamber, those straying
 Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
 While the King took the closet to chat in,—
 But of course this adventure came pat in.
 And never the King told the story,
 How bringing a glove brought such glory,
 But the wife smiled—" His nerves are grown
 firmer :

" Mine he brings now and utters no murmur."

Veniens occurrere morbo !

With which moral I drop my theorbo.

TIME'S REVENGES.

I've a Friend, over the sea ;
 I like him, but he loves me.
 It all grew out of the books I write ;
 They find such favour in his sight

That he slaughters you with savage looks
 Because you don't admire my books.
 He does himself though,—and if some vein
 Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,
 To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
 Round should I just turn quietly,
 Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand
 Till I found him, come from his foreign
 land

To be my nurse in this poor place,
 And make my broth and wash my face
 And light my fire and, all the while,
 Bear with his old good-humoured smile
 That I told him " Better have kept away
 " Than come and kill me, night and day,
 " With, worse than fever throbs and shoots,
 " The creaking of his clumsy boots."

I am as sure that this he would do,
 As that Saint Paul's is striking two.
 And I think I rather . . . woe is me !
 —Yes, rather would see him than not see,
 If lifting a hand could seat him there
 Before me in the empty chair
 To-night, when my head aches indeed,
 And I can neither think nor read
 Nor make these purple fingers hold
 The pen ; this garret's freezing cold !

And I've a Lady—there he wakes,
 The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
 Within me, at her name, to pray
 Fate send some creature in the way
 Of my love for her, to be down-torn,
 Upthrust and outward-borne,
 So I might prove myself that sea
 Of passion which I needs must be !
 Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint
 And my style infirm and its figures faint,
 All the critics say, and more blame yet,
 And not one angry word you get.
 But, please you, wonder I would put
 My cheek beneath that lady's foot
 Rather than trample under mine
 The laurels of the Florentine,
 And you shall see how the devil spends
 A fire God gave for other ends !
 I tell you, I stride up and down
 This garret, crowned with love's best crown,

And feasted with love's perfect feast,
 To think I kill for her, at least,
 Body and soul and peace and fame,
 Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,
 —So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
 Filled full, eaten out and in
 With the face of her, the eyes of her,
 The lips, the little chin, the stir
 Of shadow round her mouth ; and she
 —I'll tell you,—calmly would decree
 That I should roast at a slow fire,
 If that would compass her desire
 And make her one whom they invite
 To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be heaven ; there must be hell ;
 Meantime, there is our earth here—well !

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND.

THAT second time they hunted me
 From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
 And Austria, hounding far and wide
 Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,
 Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—
 I made six days a hiding-place
 Of that dry green old aqueduct
 Where I and Charles, when boys, have
 plucked
 The fire-flies from the roof above,
 Bright creeping thro' the moss they love :
 —How long it seems since Charles was lost !
 Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
 The country in my very sight ;
 And when that peril ceased at night,
 The sky broke out in red dismay
 With signal fires ; well, there I lay
 Close covered o'er in my recess,
 Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
 Thinking on Metternich our friend,
 And Charles's miserable end,
 And much beside, two days ; the third,
 Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
 The peasants from the village go
 To work among the maize ; you know,
 With us in Lombardy, they bring
 Provisions packed on mules, a string

With little bells that cheer their task,
 And casks, and boughs on every cask
 To keep the sun's heat from the wine ;
 These I let pass in jingling line,
 And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
 The peasants from the village, too ;
 For at the very rear would troop
 Their wives and sisters in a group
 To help, I knew. When these had passed,
 I threw my glove to strike the last,
 Taking the chance : she did not start,
 Much less cry out, but stooped apart,
 One instant rapidly glanced round,
 And saw me beckon from the ground.
 A wild bush grows and hides my crypt ;
 She picked my glove up while she stripped
 A branch off, then rejoined the rest
 With that ; my glove lay in her breast.
 Then I drew breath ; they disappeared :
 It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
 Exactly where my glove was thrown.
 Meanwhile came many thoughts : on me
 Rested the hopes of Italy.
 I had devised a certain tale
 Which, when 'twas told her, could not
 fail
 Persuade a peasant of its truth ;
 I meant to call a freak of youth
 This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
 And no temptation to betray.
 But when I saw that woman's face,
 Its calm simplicity of grace,
 Our Italy's own attitude
 In which she walked thus far, and stood,
 Planting each naked foot so firm,
 To crush the snake and spare the worm—
 At first sight of her eyes, I said,
 " I am that man upon whose head
 " They fix the price, because I hate
 " The Austrians over us : the State
 " Will give you gold—oh, gold so much !—
 " If you betray me to their clutch,
 " And be your death, for aught I know,
 " If once they find you saved their foe.
 " Now, you must bring me food and drink,
 " And also paper, pen and ink,

"And carry safe what I shall write
 "To Padua, which you'll reach at night
 "Before the duomo shuts; go in,
 "And wait till Tenebræ begin;
 "Walk to the third confessional,
 "Between the pillar and the wall,
 "And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
 "Say it a second time, then cease;
 "And if the voice inside returns,
 "*From Christ and Freedom; what con-*
cerns
 "*The cause of Peace?*—for answer, slip
 "My letter where you placed your lip;
 "Then come back happy we have done
 "Our mother service—I, the son,
 "As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand
 In the same place, with the same eyes:
 I was no surer of sun-rise
 Than of her coming. We conferred
 Of her own prospects, and I heard
 She had a lover—stout and tall,
 She said—then let her eyelids fall,
 "He could do much"—as if some doubt
 Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
 "She could not speak for others, who
 "Had other thoughts; herself she knew:"
 And so she brought me drink and food.
 After four days, the scouts pursued
 Another path; at last arrived
 The help my Paduan friends contrived
 To furnish me: she brought the news.
 For the first time I could not choose
 But kiss her hand, and lay my own
 Upon her head—"This faith was shown
 "To Italy, our mother; she
 "Uses my hand and blesses thee."
 She followed down to the sea-shore;
 I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
 Concerning—much less wished for—ought
 Beside the good of Italy,
 For which I live and mean to die!
 I never was in love; and since
 Charles proved false, what shall now con-
 vince.

My inmost heart I have a friend?
 However, if I pleased to spend
 Real wishes on myself—say, three—
 I know at least what one should be.
 I would grasp Metternich until
 I felt his red wet throat distil
 In blood thro' these two hands. And next,
 —Nor much for that am I perplexed—
 Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
 Should die slow of a broken heart
 Under his new employers. Last
 —Ah, there, what should I wish? For
 fast
 Do I grow old and out of strength.
 If I resolved to seek at length
 My father's house again, how scared
 They all would look, and unprepared!
 My brothers live in Austria's pay
 —Disowned me long ago, men say;
 And all my early mates who used
 To praise me so—perhaps induced
 More than one early step of mine—
 Are turning wise: while some opine
 "Freedom grows license," some suspect
 "Haste breeds delay," and recollect
 They always said, such premature
 Beginnings never could endure!
 So, with a sullen "All's for best,"
 The land seems settling to its rest.
 I think then, I should wish to stand
 This evening in that dear, lost land,
 Over the sea the thousand miles,
 And know if yet that woman smiles
 With the calm smile; some little farm
 She lives in there, no doubt: what harm
 If I sat on the door-side bench,
 And, while her spindle made a trench
 Fantastically in the dust,
 Inquired of all her fortunes—just
 Her children's ages and their names,
 And what may be the husband's aims
 For each of them. I'd talk this out,¹
 And sit there, for an hour about,
 Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
 Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how
 It steals the time! To business now.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY.

PIANO DI SORRENTO

FORTÙ, Fortù, my beloved one,
 Sit here by my side,
 On my knees put up both little feet !
 I was sure, if I tried,
 I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco.
 Now, open your eyes,
 Let me keep you amused till he vanish
 In black from the skies,
 With telling my memories over
 As you tell your beads ;
 All the Plain saw me gather, I garland.
 —The flowers or the weeds.

Time for rain ! for your long hot dry Autumn
 Had net-worked with brown
 The white skin of each grape on the bunches,
 Marked like a quail's crown,
 Those creatures you make such account of,
 Whose heads,—speckled white
 Over brown like a great spider's back,
 As I told you last night,—
 Your mother bites off for her supper.
 Red-ripe as could be,
 Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
 In halves on the tree :
 And betwixt the loose walls of great flint-
 stone,
 Or in the thick dust
 On the path, or straight out of the rock-
 side,
 Wherever could thrust
 Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower
 Its yellow face up,
 For the prize were great butterflies fighting,
 Some five for one cup.
 So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
 What change was in store,
 By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets
 Which woke me before
 I could open my shutter, made fast
 With a bough and a stone,
 And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs,
 Sole lattice that's known.

Quick and sharp rang the rings down the
 net-poles,
 While, busy beneath,
 Your priest and his brother tugged at them,
 The rain in their teeth.
 And out upon all the flat house-roofs
 Where split figs lay drying,
 The girls took the frails under cover :
 Nor use seemed in trying
 To get out the boats and go fishing,
 For, under the cliff,
 Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-
 rock.
 No seeing our skiff
 Arrive about noon from Amalfi,
 —Our fisher arrive,
 And pitch down his basket before us,
 All trembling alive
 With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit ;
 You touch the strange lumps,
 And mouths gape there, eyes open, all
 manner
 Of horns and of humps,
 Which only the fisher looks grave at,
 While round him like imps
 Cling screaming the children as naked
 And brown as his shrimps ;
 Himself too as bare to the middle
 —You see round his neck
 The string and its brass coin suspended,
 That saves him from wreck.
 But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,
 So back, to a man,
 Came our friends, with whose help in the
 vineyards
 Grape-harvest began.
 In the vat, halfway up in our house-side,
 Like blood the juice spins,
 While your brother all bare-legged is dancing
 Till breathless he grins
 Dead-beaten in effort on effort
 To keep the grapes under,
 Since still when he seems all but master,
 In pours the fresh plunder
 From girls who keep coming and going
 With basket on shoulder,
 And eyes shut against the rain's driving ;
 Your girls that are older,—

For under the hedges of aloe,
 And where, on its bed
 Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple
 Lies pulpy and red,
 All the young ones are kneeling and filling
 Their laps with the snails
 Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—
 Your best of regales,
 As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,
 When, supping in state,
 We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen,
 Three over one plate)
 With lasagne so tempting to swallow
 In slippery ropes,
 And gourds fried in great purple slices,
 That colour of popes.
 Meantime, see the grape bunch they've
 brought you :
 The rain-water slips
 O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe
 Which the wasp to your lips
 Still follows with fretful persistence :
 Nay, taste, while awake,
 This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-
 ball
 That peels, flake by flake,
 Like an onion, each smoother and whiter ;
 Next, sip this weak wine
 From the thin green glass flask, with its
 stopper,
 A leaf of the vine ;
 And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh
 That leaves thro' its juice
 The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth.
 Scirocco is loose !
 Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives
 Which, thick in one's track,
 Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite
 them,
 Tho' not yet half black !
 How the old twisted olive trunks shudder,
 The medlars let fall
 Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees
 Snap off, figs and all,
 For here comes the whole of the tempest !
 No refuge, but creep
 Back again to my side and my shoulder,
 And listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next week,
 When all the vine-boughs
 Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture
 The mules and the cows ?
 Last eve, I rode over the mountains ;
 Your brother, my guide,
 Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles
 That offered, each side,
 Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious,—
 Or strip from the sorbs
 A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous,
 Those hairy gold orbs !
 But my mule picked his sure sober path out,
 Just stopping to neigh
 When he recognized down in the valley
 His mates on their way
 With the faggots and barrels of water ;
 And soon we emerged
 From the plain, where the woods could scarce
 follow ;
 And still as we urged
 Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,
 As up still we trudged
 Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,
 And place was e'en grudged
 'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones
 Like the loose broken teeth
 Of some monster which climbed there to die
 From the ocean beneath—
 Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-
 weed
 That clung to the path,
 And dark rosemary ever a-dying
 That, 'spite the wind's wrath,
 So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
 And lentisks¹ as staunch
 To the stone where they root and bear berries,
 And . . . what shows a branch
 Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets
 Of pale seagreen leaves ;
 Over all trod my mule with the caution
 Of gleaners o'er sheaves,
 Still, foot after foot like a lady,
 Till, round after round,
 He climbed to the top of Calvano,
 And God's own profound

¹ The mastic tree (resinous).

<p>Was above me, and round me the mountains, And under, the sea, And within me my heart to bear witness What was and shall be. Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal ! No rampart excludes Your eye from the life to be lived In the blue solitudes. Oh, those mountains, their infinite move- ment ! Still moving with you ; For, ever some new head and breast of them Thrusts into view To observe the intruder ; you see it If quickly you turn And, before they escape you surprise them. They grudge you should learn How the soft plains they look on, lean over And love (they pretend) —Cower beneath them, the flat sea-pine crouches, The wild fruit-trees bend, E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut : All is silent and grave : 'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty, How fair ! but a slave. So, I turned to the sea ; and there slumbered As greenly as ever Those isles of the siren, your Galli ; No ages can sever The Three, nor enable their sister To join them,—halfway On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses— No farther to-day, Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave, Watches breast-high and steady From under the rock, her bold sister Swum halfway already. Fortū, shall we sail there together And see from the sides Quite new rocks show their faces, new haunts Where the siren abides ? Shall we sail round and round them, close over The rocks, tho' unseem, That ruffle the grey glassy water To glorious green ? Then scramble from splinter to splinter, Reach land and explore,</p>	<p>On the largest, the strange square black turret With never a door, Just a loop to admit the quick lizards ; Then, stand there and hear The birds' quiet singing, that tells us What life is, so clear ? —The secret they sang to Ulysses When, ages ago, He heard and he knew this life's secret I hear and I know.</p> <p>Ah, see ! The sun breaks o'er Calvano ; He strikes the great gloom And flutters it o'er the mount's summit In airy gold fume. All is over. Look out, see the gipsy, Our tinker and smith, Has arrived, set up bellows and forge, And down-squatted forthwith To his hammering, under the wall there ; One eye keeps aloof The urchins that itch to be putting His jews'-harps to proof, While the other, thro' locks of curled wire, Is watching how sleek Shines the hog, come to share in the windfall —Chew, abbot's own cheek ! All is over. Wake up and come out now, And down let us go, And see the fine things got in order At church for the show Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening. To-morrow's the Feast Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means Of Virgins the least, As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse Which (all nature, no art) The Dominican brother, these three weeks, Was getting by heart. Not a pillar nor post but is dizen'd With red and blue papers ; All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar A-blaze with long tapers ; But the great masterpiece is the scaffold Rigged glorious to hold All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers And trumpeters bold,</p>
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Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,
 Who, when the priest's hoarse,
 Will strike us up something that's brisk
 For the feast's second course.
 And then will the flaxen-wigged Image
 Be carried in pomp
 Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession
 The priests mean to stomp.
 All round the glad church lie old bottles
 With gunpowder stopped,
 Which will be, when the Image re-enters,
 Religiously popped ;
 And at night from the crest of Calvano
 Great bonfires will hang,
 On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,
 And more poppers bang.
 At all events, come—to the garden
 As far as the wall ;
 See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
 Till out there shall fall
 A scorpion with wide angry nippers !

—“Such trifles !” you say ?
 Fortū, in my England at home,
 Men meet gravely to-day
 And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
 Be righteous and wise
 —If 'twere proper, Scirocco should vanish
 In black from the skies !

IN A GONDOLA.

He sings.

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart
 In this my singing.
 For the stars help me, and the sea bears part ;
 The very night is clinging
 Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space
 Above me, whence thy face
 May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling-
 place.

She speaks.

Say after me, and try to say
 My very words, as if each word
 Came from you of your own accord,
 In your own voice, in your own way :

“This woman's heart and soul and brain
 “Are mine as much as this gold chain
 “She bids me wear ; which” (say again)
 “I choose to make by cherishing
 “A precious thing, or choose to fling
 “Over the boat-side, ring by ring.”
 And yet once more say . . . no word more !
 Since words are only words. Give o'er !

Unless you call me, all the same,
 Familiarly by my pet name,
 Which if the Three should hear you call,
 And me reply to, would proclaim
 At once our secret to them all.
 Ask of me, too, command me, blame—
 Do, break down the partition-wall
 'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
 Curtained in dusk and splendid folds !
 What's left but—all of me to take ?
 I am the Three's : prevent them, slake
 Your thirst ! 'Tis said, the Arab sage,
 In practising with gems, can loose
 Their subtle spirit in his cruce
 And leave but ashes : so, sweet mage,
 Leave them my ashes when thy use
 Sucks out my soul, thy heritage !

He sings.

I.

Past we glide, and past, and past !
 What's that poor Agnese doing
 Where they make the shutters fast ?
 Grey Zanobi's just a-wooing
 To his couch the purchased bride :
 Past we glide !

II.

Past we glide, and past, and past !
 Why's the Pucci Palace flaring
 Like a beacon to the blast ?
 Guests by hundreds, not one caring
 If the dear host's neck were wried :
 Past we glide !

She sings.

I.

The moth's kiss, first !
 Kiss me as if you made believe
 You were not sure, this eve,

How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide ope I burst.

II.

The bee's kiss, now!
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings.

I.

What are we two?
I am a Jew,
And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,
To a feast of our tribe;
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy . . . Scatter the vision for ever! And
now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

II.

Say again, what we are?
The sprite of a star,
I lure thee above where the destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
'Than my pale one announce there is wither-
ing away
Some . . . Scatter the vision for ever! And
now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

He muses.

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
The land's lap or the water's breast?
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must;
Which life were best on Summer eyes?

He speaks, musing.

Lie back; could thought of mine improve
you?

From this shoulder let there spring
A wing; from this, another wing;
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you!
Snow-white must they spring, to blend
With your flesh, but I intend
They shall deepen to the end,
Broader, into burning gold,
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
As if a million sword-blades hurled
Defiance from you to the world!

Rescue me thou, the only real!
And scare away this mad ideal
That came, nor motions to depart!
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!

Still he muses.

I.

What if the Three should catch at last
Thy serenader? While there's cast
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
Gian pinions me, Himself has past
His stylet thro' my back; I reel;
And . . . is it thou I feel?

II.

They trail me, these three godless knaves,
Past every church that saints and saves,
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
By Lido's wet accursed graves,
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
And . . . on thy breast I sink!

She replies, musing.

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-
deep,
As I do: thus: were death so unlike sleep,
Caught this way? Death's to fear from flame
or steel,
Or poison doubtless; but from water—
feel!

Go find the bottom! Would you stay me?
There!

Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away: since you have praised my hair,
'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks.

Row home? must we row home? Too surely
Know I where its front's demurely
Over the Giudecca piled;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All's the set face of a child:
But behind it, where's a trace
Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face?
No two windows look one way
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I, passing, saw you overhead!
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then a sweet cry, and last came you—
To catch your lory¹ that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe to see you reach
So far back o'er the balcony
To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear lory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine! What should your chamber do?
—With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake

¹ A parrot.

VOL. I.

At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
Who brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave
Around them such a magic tether
That dumb they look: your harp, be-
lieve,

With all the sensitive tight strings
Which dare not speak, now to itself
Breathes slumberously, as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,
As an angel may, between the maze
Of midnight palace-pillars, on
And on, to sow God's plagues, have gone
Through guilty glorious Babylon.
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
As the dry limpet for the lymph
Come with a tune he knows so well.
And how your statues' hearts must
swell!

And how your pictures must descend
To see each other, friend with friend!
Oh, could you take them by surprise,
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke
Doing the quaintest courtesies
To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke!
And, deeper into her rock den,
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen
You'd find retreated from the ken
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—
As if the Tizian thinks of her,
And is not, rather, gravely bent
On seeing for himself what toys
Are these, his progeny invent,
What litter now the board employs
Whereon he signed a document
That got him murdered! Each enjoys
Its night so well, you cannot break
The sport up, so, indeed must make
More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks.

I.

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
Is used to tie the jasmine back
That overflows my room with sweets,

2 C

Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets
My Zanze! If the ribbon's black,
The Three are watching: keep away!

II.

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreathe
A mesh of water-weeds about
Its prow, as if he unaware
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair!
That I may throw a paper out
As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are we.
Only one minute more to-night with me?
Resume your past self of a month ago!
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
The lady with the colder breast than snow.
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand
More than I touch yours when I step to land,
And say, "All thanks, Siora!"—

Heart to heart

And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we part,
Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou
art! [*He is surprised, and stabbed.*]
It was ordained to be so, sweet!—and best
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy breast.
Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards! Care
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not scorn
To death, because they never lived: but I
Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more
kiss)—can die!

WARING.

[Mr. Alfred Domett, C.M.G., author of
"Ranolf and Amohia," full of descriptions of
New Zealand scenery.]

I.

I.

WHAT'S become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London town?

II.

Who'd have guessed it from his lip
Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
On the night he thus took ship
Or started landward?—little caring
For us, it seems, who supped together
(Friends of his too, I remember)
And walked home thro' the merry weather,
The snowiest in all December.
I left his arm that night myself
For what's-his-name's, the new prose-poet
Who wrote the book there, on the shelf—
How, forsooth, was I to know it
If Waring meant to glide away
Like a ghost at break of day?
Never looked he half so gay!

III.

He was prouder than the devil:
How he must have cursed our revel!
Ay and many other meetings,
Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,
As up and down he paced this London,
With no work done, but great works undone,
Where scarce twenty knew his name.
Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
Written, bustled? Who's to blame
If your silence kept unbroken?
"True, but there were sundry jottings,
"Stray-leaves, fragments, blurs and blot-
tings,
"Certain first steps were achieved
"Already which"—(is that your meaning?)
"Had well borne out whoe'er believed
"In more to come!" But who goes gleaning
Hedgeside chance-glades, while full-sheaved
Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening
Pride alone, puts forth such claims
O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV.

Meantime, how much I loved him,
I find out now I've lost him.
I who cared not if I moved him,
Who could so carelessly accost him,
Henceforth never shall get free
Of his ghostly company,

His eyes that just a little wink
 As deep I go into the merit
 Of this and that distinguished spirit—
 His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink,
 As long I dwell on some stupendous
 And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)
 Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
 Demoniaco-seraphic
 Penman's latest piece of graphic.
 Nay, my very wrist grows warm
 With his dragging weight of arm.
 E'en so, swimmingly appears,
 Through one's after-supper musings,
 Some lost lady of old years
 With her beauteous vain endeavour
 And goodness unrepaid as ever;
 The face, accustomed to refusings,
 We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never
 Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
 Being aught like false, forsooth, to?
 Telling aught but honest truth to?
 What a sin, had we centupled
 Its possessor's grace and sweetness!
 No! she heard in its completeness
 Truth, for truth's a weighty matter,
 And truth, at issue, we can't flatter!
 Well, 'tis done with; she's exempt
 From damning us thro' such a sally;
 And so she glides, as down a valley,
 Taking up with her contempt,
 Past our reach; and in, the flowers
 Shut her unregarded hours.

v.

Oh, could I have him back once more,
 This Waring, but one half-day more!
 Back, with the quiet face of yore,
 So hungry for acknowledgment
 Like mine! I'd fool him to his bent.
 Feed, should not he, to heart's content?
 I'd say, "to only have conceived,
 "Planned your great works, apart from
 progress,
 "Surpasses little works achieved!"
 I'd lie so, I should be believed.
 I'd make such havoc of the claims
 Of the day's distinguished names
 To feast him with, as feasts an ogress

Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned
 child!

Or as one feasts a creature rarely
 Captured here, unreconciled
 To capture; and completely gives
 Its pettish humours license, barely
 Requiring that it lives.

vi.

Ichabod, Ichabod,
 The glory is departed!
 Travels Waring East away?
 Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
 Reports a man upstarted
 Somewhere as a god,
 Hordes grown European-hearted,
 Millions of the wild made tame
 On a sudden at his fame?
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar?
 Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,
 With the demurest of footfalls
 Over the Kremlin's pavement bright
 With serpentine and syenite,¹
 Steps, with five other Generals
 That simultaneously take snuff,
 For each to have pretext enough
 And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
 Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff
 To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
 And leave the grand white neck no gash?
 Waring in Moscow, to those rough
 Cold northern natures born perhaps,
 Like the lambwhite maiden dear
 From the circle of mute kings
 Unable to repress the tear,
 Each as his sceptre down he flings,
 To Dian's fane at Taurica,
 Where now a captive priestess, she alway
 Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
 With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten
 beach
 As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands
 Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian
 strands
 Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry
 Amid their barbarous twitter!
 In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!

¹ Egyptian granite.

Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain
 That we and Waring meet again
 Now, while he turns down that cool narrow
 lane
 Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
 All fire and shine, abrupt as when there's slid
 Its stiff gold blazing pall
 From some black coffin-lid.
 Or, best of all,
 I love to think
 The leaving us was just a feint ;
 Back here to London did he slink,
 And now works on without a wink
 Of sleep, and we are on the brink
 Of something great in fresco-paint :
 Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
 Up and down and o'er and o'er
 He splashes, as none splashed before
 Since great Caldara Polidore.¹
 Or Music means this land of ours
 Some favour yet, to pity won
 By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,—
 "Give me my so-long promised son,
 "Let Waring end what I begun !"
 Then down he creeps and out he steals
 Only when the night conceals
 His face ; in Kent 'tis cherry-time,
 Or hops are picking : or at prime
 Of March he wanders as, too happy,
 Years ago when he was young,
 Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
 And the early moths had sprung
 To life from many a trembling sheath
 Woven the warm boughs beneath ;
 While small birds said to themselves
 What should soon be actual song,
 And young gnats, by tens and twelves,
 Made as if they were the throng
 That crowd around and carry aloft
 The sound they have nursed, so sweet and
 pure,
 Out of a myriad noises soft,
 Into a tone that can endure
 Amid the noise of a July noon
 When all God's creatures crave their boon,
 All at once and all in tune,

¹ Surnamed da Caravaggio. A pupil of Raphael.

And get it, happy as Waring then,
 Having first within his ken
 What a man might do with men :
 And far too glad, in the even-glow,
 To mix with the world he meant to take
 Into his hand, he told you, so—
 And out of it his world to make,
 To contract and to expand
 As he shut or oped his hand.
 Oh Waring, what's to really be ?
 A clear stage and a crowd to see !
 Some Garrick, say, out shall not he
 The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck ?
 Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
 Some Junius—am I right ?—shall tuck
 His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife !
 Some Chatterton shall have the luck
 Of calling Rowley into life !
 Some one shall somehow run a muck
 With this old world for want of strife
 Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
 To rouse us, Waring ! Who's alive ?
 Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
 Distinguished names !—but 'tis, somehow,
 As if they played at being names
 Still more distinguished, like the games
 Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
 With a visage of the sternest !
 Bring the real times back, confessed
 Still better than our very best !

II.

I.

"WHEN I last saw Waring . . ."
 (How all turned to him who spoke !
 You saw Waring ? Truth or joke ?
 In land-travel or sea-faring ?)

II.

"We were sailing by Triest
 "Where a day or two we harboured :
 "A sunset was in the West,
 "When, looking over the vessel's side,
 "One of our company espied
 "A sudden speck to larboard.

"And as a sea-duck flies and swims
 "At once, so came the light craft up,
 "With its sole lateen sail that trims
 "And turns (the water round its rims
 "Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
 "And by us like a fish it curled,
 "And drew itself up close beside,
 "Its great sail on the instant furl'd,
 "And o'er its thwarts a shrill voice cried,
 "(A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
 "'Buy wine of us, you English Brig?
 "'Or fruit, tobacco and cigars?
 "'A pilot for you to Triest?
 "'Without one, look you ne'er so big,
 "'They'll never let you up the bay!
 "'We natives should know best.'
 "I turned, and 'just those fellows' way,'
 "Our captain said, 'The 'long-shore thieves
 "'Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

III.

"In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;
 "And one, half-hidden by his side
 "Under the furl'd sail, soon I spied,
 "With great grass hat and kerchief black,
 "Who looked up with his kingly throat,
 "Said somewhat, while the other shook
 "His hair back from his eyes to look
 "Their longest at us; then the boat,
 "I know not how, turned sharply round,
 "Laying her whole side on the sea
 "As a leaping fish does; from the lee
 "Into the weather, cut somehow
 "Her sparkling path beneath our bow
 "And so went off, as with a bound,
 "Into the rosy and golden half
 "O' the sky, to overtake the sun
 "And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
 "Its singing cave; yet I caught one
 "Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
 "And neither time nor toil could mar
 "Those features: so I saw the last
 "Of Waring!"—You? Oh, never star
 Was lost here but it rose afar!
 Look East, where whole new thousands
 are!
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

THE TWINS.

"Give" and "It-shall-be-given-unto-you."

I.

GRAND rough old Martin Luther
 Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,
 The better the uncouth: :
 Do roses stick like burrs?

II.

A beggar asked an alms
 One day at an abbey-door,
 Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,
 The abbot replied, "We're poor!"

III.

"Poor, who had plenty once,
 "When gifts fell thick as rain:
 "But they give us nought, for the nonce,
 "And now should we give again?"

IV.

Then the beggar, "See your sins!
 "Of old, unless I err,
 "Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
 "Date and Dabitur.

V.

"While Date was in good case
 "Dabitur flourished too:
 "For Dabitur's lenten face
 "No wonder if Date rue.

VI.

"Would ye retrieve the one?
 "Try and make plump the other!
 "When Date's penance is done,
 "Dabitur helps his brother.

VII.

"Only, beware relapse!"
 The Abbot hung his head.
 This beggar might be perhaps
 An angel, Luther said.

A LIGHT WOMAN.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

XI.

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

XII.

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

XIII.

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

XIV.

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

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER.

I.

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
 Since now at length my fate I know,
 Since nothing all my love avails,
 Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
 Since this was written and needs must
 be—

My whole heart rises up to bless
 Your name in pride and thankfulness !
 Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
 Only a memory of the same,
 —And this beside, if you will not blame,
 Your leave for one more last ride with me.

II.

My mistress bent that brow of hers ;
 Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
 When pity would be softening through,
 Fixed me a breathing-while or two
 With life or death in the balance : right !
 The blood replenished me again ;
 My last thought was at least not vain :
 I and my mistress, side by side
 Shall be together, breathe and ride,
 So, one day more am I deified.
 Who knows but the world may end to-
 night ?

III.

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

IV.

Then we began to ride. My soul
 Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll

Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
 Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry ?
 Had I said that, had I done this,
 So might I gain, so might I miss.
 Might she have loved me ? just as well
 She might have hated, who can tell !
 Where had I been now if the worst befell ?
 And here we are riding, she and I.

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

What does it all mean, poet ? Well,
 Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
 What we felt only ; you expressed
 You hold things beautiful the best.
 And pace them in rhyme so, side by
 side.

'Tis something, nay 'tis much : but then,
 Have you yourself what's best for men?
 Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
 Nearer one whit your own sublime
 Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
 Sing, riding's a joy ! For me, I ride.

VIII.

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

IX.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
 Proposed bliss here should sublimate
 My being—had I signed the bond—
 Still one must lead some life beyond,
 Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
 This foot once planted on the goal,
 This glory-garland round my soul,
 Could I descry such? Try and test !
 I sink back shuddering from the quest.
 Earth being so good, would heaven seem
 best?
 Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

X.

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

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN ;
 A CHILD'S STORY.

(Written for, and inscribed to, W. M.
 the Younger.)

I.

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

II.

Rats !
 They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
 And bit the babies in the cradles,
 And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
 And licked the soup from the cooks' own
 ladles,
 Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
 Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
 And even spoiled the women's chats
 By drowning their speaking
 With shrieking and squeaking
 In fifty different sharps and flats.

III.

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

IV.

An hour they sat in council,
 At length the Mayor broke silence :
 " For a guildler I'd my ermine gown sell,
 " I wish I were a mile hence !
 " It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—
 " I'm sure my poor head aches again,
 " I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
 " Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap !"
 Just as he said this, what should hap
 At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
 " Bless us," cried the Mayor, " what's that ?"
 (With the Corporation as he sat,
 Looking little though wondrous fat ;
 Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
 Than a too-long-opened oyster,
 Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
 For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
 " Only a scraping of shoes on the mat ?
 " Anything like the sound of a rat
 " Makes my heart go pit-a-pat !"

V.

" Come in !"—the Mayor cried, looking
 bigger :
 And in did come the strangest figure !
 His queer long coat from heel to head
 Was half of yellow and half of red,
 And he himself was tall and thin,
 With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
 And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
 No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
 But lips where smiles went out and in ;
 There was no guessing his kith and kin :
 And nobody could enough admire
 The tall man and his quaint attire.
 Quoth one : " It's as my great-grandsire,
 " Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
 " Had walked this way from his painted
 tombstone !"

VI.

He advanced to the council-table :
 And, " Please your honours," said he, " I'm
 able,
 " By means of a secret charm, to draw
 " All creatures living beneath the sun,
 " That creep or swim or fly or run,
 " After me so as you never saw !

" And I chiefly use my charm
 " On creatures that do people harm,
 " The mole and toad and newt and viper ;
 " And people call me the Pied Piper."
 (And here they noticed round his neck
 A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
 To match with his coat of the self-same
 cheque ;
 And at the scarf's end hung a pipe ;
 And his fingers, they noticed, were ever
 straying
 As if impatient to be playing
 Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
 Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
 " Yet," said he, " poor piper as I am,
 " In Tartary I freed the Cham,
 " Last June, from his huge swarms of
 gnats ;
 " I eased in Asia the Nizam
 " Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats :
 " And as for what your brain bewilders,
 " If I can rid your town of rats
 " Will you give me a thousand guilders ?"
 " One? fifty thousand !"—was the exclamation
 Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII.

Into the street the Piper stopt,
 Smiling first a little smile,
 As if he knew what magic slept
 In his quiet pipe the while ;
 Then, like a musical adept,
 To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
 And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
 Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled ;
 And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
 You heard as if an army muttered ;
 And the muttering grew to a grumbling ;
 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling ;
 And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
 Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
 Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
 Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
 Families by tens and dozens,
 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
 Followed the Piper for their lives.

From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser,

Wherein all plunged and perished !
—Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
Swam across and lived to carry

(As he, the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary :
Which was, “At the first shrill notes of the pipe,

“I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,

“And putting apples, wondrous ripe,

“Into a cider-press’s gripe :

“And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,

“And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,

“And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,

“And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks :

“And it seemed as if a voice

“(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
“Is breathed) called out, ‘Oh rats, rejoice !

“‘The world is grown to one vast drysal-
tery !

“‘So munch on, crunch on, take your
nuncheon,

“‘Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !’

“And just as a bulky sugar-punchon,

“All ready staved, like a great sun shone

“Glorious scarce an inch before me,

“Just as methought it said, ‘Come, bore me !’

“—I found the Weser rolling o’er me.”

VIII.

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

IX.

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked
blue ;
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock ;

And half the money would replenish
Their cellar’s biggest butt with Rhenish.

To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow !

“Beside,” quoth the Mayor with a knowing
wink,

“Our business was done at the river’s brink ;

“We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,

“And what’s dead can’t come to life, I think.

“So, friend, we’re not the folks to shrink

“From the duty of giving you something for
drink,

“And a matter of money to put in your poke ;

“But as for the guilders, what we spoke

“Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.

“Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.

“A thousand guilders ! Come, take fifty !”

X.

The Piper’s face fell, and he cried

“No trifling ! I can’t wait, beside !

“I’ve promised to visit by dinnertime

“Bagdat, and accept the prime

“Of the Head-Cook’s pottage, all he’s rich in,

“For having left, in the Caliph’s kitchen,

“Of a nest of scorpions no survivor :

“With him I proved no bargain-driver,

“With you, don’t think I’ll bate a stiver !

“And folks who put me in a passion

“May find me pipe after another fashion.”

XI.

“How ?” cried the Mayor, “d’ye think I
brook

“Being worse treated than a Cook ?

“Insulted by a lazy ribald

“With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?

“You threaten us, fellow ? Do your worst,

“Blow your pipe there till you burst !”

XII.

Once more he stepped into the street

And to his lips again

Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane ;

And ere he blew three notes (such sweet

Soft notes as yet musician’s cunning

Never gave the enraptured air)

There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
 Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
 Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
 Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,
 And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
 Out came the children running.
 All the little boys and girls,
 With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
 And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
 Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
 The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
 As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
 Unable to move a step, or cry
 To the children merrily skipping by,
 —Could only follow with the eye
 That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
 But how the Mayor was on the rack,
 And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
 As the Piper turned from the High Street
 To where the Weser rolled its waters
 Right in the way of their sons and daughters !
 However he turned from South to West,
 And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
 And after him the children pressed ;
 Great was the joy in every breast.
 " He never can cross that mighty top !
 " He's forced to let the piping drop,
 " And we shall see our children stop !"
 When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
 A wondrous portal opened wide,
 As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed ;
 And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
 And when all were in to the very last,
 The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
 Did I say, all ? No ! One was lame,
 And could not dance the whole of the way ;
 And in after years, if you would blame
 His sadness, he was used to say,—

" It's dull in our town since my playmates left !
 " I can't forget that I'm bereft
 " Of all the pleasant sights they see,
 " Which the Piper also promised me.
 " For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
 " Joining the town and just at hand,
 " Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
 " And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
 " And everything was strange and new ;
 " The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
 " And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
 " And honey-bees had lost their stings,
 " And horses were born with eagles' wings :
 " And just as I became assured
 " My lame foot would be speedily cured,
 " The music stopped and I stood still,
 " And found myself outside the hill,
 " Left alone against my will,
 " To go now limping as before,
 " And never hear of that country more !"

XIV.

Alas, alas for Hamelin !
 There came into many a burgher's pate
 A text which says that heaven's gate
 Ope to the rich at as easy rate
 As the needle's eye takes a camel in !
 The mayor sent East, West, North and South,
 To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
 Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
 Silver and gold to his heart's content,
 If he'd only return the way he went,
 And bring the children behind him.
 But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,
 And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
 They made a decree that lawyers never
 Should think their records dated duly
 If, after the day of the month and year,
 These words did not as well appear,
 " And so long after what happened here
 " On the Twenty-second of July,
 " Thirteen hundred and seventy-six : "
 And the better in memory to fix
 The place of the children's last retreat,
 They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—
 Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
 Was sure for the future to lose his labour.

Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
 To shock with mirth a street so solemn ;
 But opposite the place of the cavern
 They wrote the story on a column,
 And on the great church-window painted
 The same, to make the world acquainted
 How their children were stolen away,
 And there it stands to this very day.
 And I must not omit to say
 That in Transylvania there's a tribe
 Of alien people who ascribe
 The outlandish ways and dress
 On which their neighbours lay such stress,
 To their fathers and mothers having risen
 Out of some subterraneous prison
 Into which they were trepanned
 Long time ago in a mighty band
 Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
 But how or why, they don't understand.

XV.

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
 Of scores out with all men—especially pipers !
 And, whether they pipe us free from rats or
 from mice,
 If we've promised them aught, let us keep
 our promise !

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

I.

YOU'RE my friend :
 I was the man the Duke spoke to ;
 I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too ;
 So here's the tale from beginning to end,
 My friend !

II.

Ours is a great wild country :
 If you climb to our castle's top,
 I don't see where your eye can stop ;
 For when you've passed the cornfield country,
 Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,
 And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
 And cattle-tract to open-chase,
 And open-chase to the very base
 Of the mountain where, at a funeral pace,

Round about, solemn and slow,
 One by one, row after row,
 Up and up the pine-trees go,
 So, like black priests up, and so
 Down the other side again
 To another greater, wilder country,
 That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
 Branched through and through with many a vein
 Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt ;
 Look right, look left, look straight before,—
 Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
 Copper-ore and iron-ore,
 And forge and furnace mould and melt,
 And so on, more and ever more,
 Till at the last, for a bounding belt,
 Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea
 shore,
 —And the whole is our Duke's country.

III.

I was born the day this present Duke was—
 (And O, says the song, ere I was old !)
 In the castle where the other Duke was—
 (When I was happy and young, not old !)
 I in the kennel, he in the bower :
 We are of like age to an hour.
 My father was huntsman in that day ;
 Who has not heard my father say
 That, when a boar was brought to bay,
 Three times, four times out of five,
 With his huntspear he'd contrive
 To get the killing-place transfix'd,
 And pin him true, both eyes betwixt ?
 And that's why the old Duke would rather
 He lost a salt-pit than my father,
 And loved to have him ever in call ;
 That's why my father stood in the hall
 When the old Duke brought his infant out
 To show the people, and while they passed
 The wondrous bantling round about,
 Was first to start at the outside blast
 As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn
 Just a month after the babe was born.
 "And," quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since
 "The Duke has got an heir, our Prince
 "Needs the Duke's self at his side :"
 The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
 But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,

Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch ;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners
Of all achievements after all manners,
And "ay," said the Duke with a surly
pride.

The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,

In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and
groom,

What he called stink, and they, perfume :
—They should have set him on red Berold
Mad with pride, like fire to manage !
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine !
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin !
(Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game !
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame !)
Had they broached a white-beer cask from
Berlin

—Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips, when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel
And ropy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

IV.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows who :
And now was the time to revisit her tribe.
Abroad and afar they went, the two,

And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother
again.

V.

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape ;

Full of his travel, struck at himself.

You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways ?
—Not he ! For in Paris they told the elf
Our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days ;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without
knowing it,

This Duke would fain know he was, without
being it ;

'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of
his showing it,

Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our
seeing it,

He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of
them torn-out :

And chief in the chase his neck he perilled
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength ;
—They should have set him on red Berold
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey-spire !

VI.

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard :
And out of a convent, at the word,
Came the lady, in time of spring.

—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling !
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of urochs or buffle
In winter-time when you need to muffle.
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,

And so we saw the lady arrive :
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger !
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made in a piece of nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness

That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees :
In truth, she was not hard to please !

Up she looked, down she looked, round at
the mead,
Straight at the castle, that's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls :
As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand ?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it ;
And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed
tired—
If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and grey bird on the field was
the plover.
When suddenly appeared the Duke :
And as down she sprung, the small foot
pointed
On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
And welcomed her with his grandest
smile ;
And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward ;
And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown grey ;
For such things must begin some one day.

VII.

In a day or two she was well again ;
As who should say, " You labour in vain !
" This is all a jest against God, who meant
" I should ever be, as I am, content
" And glad in his sight ; therefore, glad I
will be."
So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII.

She was active, stirring, all fire—
Could not rest, could not tire—
To a stone she might have given life !
(I myself loved once, in my day)
—A shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say)

Never in all the world such an one !
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
Of rule—(but for after-sadness that came)
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
With which the young Duke and the old
dame
Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame :
They bore it all in complacent guise,
As though an artificer, after contriving
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion to
strike him !
So found the Duke, and his mother like him :
The lady hardly got a rebuff—
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX.

So, the little lady grew silent and thin,
Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin ;
And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
And said in his heart, " 'Tis done to spite me,
" But I shall find in my power to right me !"
Don't swear, friend ! The old one, many a
year,
Is in hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall
hear.

X.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
When the stag had to break with his foot, of
a morning,
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,

Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
 And another and another, and faster and
 faster,
 Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water
 rolled :
 Then it so chanced that the Duke our
 master
 Asked himself what were the pleasures in
 season,
 And found, since the calendar bade him be
 hearty,
 He should do the Middle Age no treason
 In resolving on a hunting-party.
 Always provided, old books showed the way
 of it !
 What meant old poets by their strictures ?
 And when old poets had said their say of it,
 How taught old painters in their pictures ?
 We must revert to the proper channels,
 Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
 And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions:
 Here was food for our various ambitions,
 As on each case, exactly stated—
 To encourage your dog, now, the properest
 chirrup,
 Or best prayer to Saint Hubert on mount-
 ing your stirrup—
 We of the household took thought and debated.
 Blessed was he whose back ached with the
 jerkin
 His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;
 Blessed he who nobly sunk "ohs"
 And "ahs" while he tugged on his grand-
 sire's trunk-hose ;
 What signified hats if they had no rims on,
 Each slouching before and behind like the
 scallop,
 And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
 Loaded with lacquer and looped with crim-
 son ?
 So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme
 on't,
 What with our Venerers, Prickers and
 Verderers,
 Might hope for real hunters at length and
 not murderers,
 And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time
 on't !

XI.

Now you must know that when the first dizziness
 Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots
 subsided,
 The Duke put this question, "The Duke's
 part provided,
 "Had not the Duchess some share in the
 business?"
 For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
 Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses :
 And, after much laying of heads together,
 Somebody's cap got a notable feather
 By the announcement with proper unction
 That he had discovered the lady's function ;
 Since ancient authors gave this tenet,
 "When horns wind a mort and the deer
 is at siege,
 "Let the dame of the castle prick forth on
 her jennet,
 "And, with water to wash the hands of
 her liege
 "In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,
 "Let her preside at the disemboweling."
 Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
 As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
 And thrust her broad wings like a banner
 Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon ;
 And if day by day and week by week
 You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
 And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
 Would it cause you any great surprise
 If, when you decided to give her an airing,
 You found she needed a little preparing ?
 —I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
 If she clung to the perch, as to take it in
 dudgeon ?
 Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
 Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
 In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
 And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
 Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
 As if pressed by fatigue even he could not
 dissipate,
 And duly acknowledged the Duke's fore-
 thought,
 But spoke of her health, if her health were
 worth aught,

Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,
So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—
Was conduct ever more affronting?

With all the ceremony settled—
With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his oldest ewer,
And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-
balled,—

No wonder if the Duke was nettled !
And when she persisted nevertheless,—
Well, I suppose here's the time to confess
That there ran half round our lady's chamber
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber,
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in
waiting,

Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why,
a fervent

Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant ;
And if she had the habit to peep through the
casement,

How could I keep at any vast distance ?

And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb-stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,

And then, with a smile that partook of the
awful,

Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was held decorous and
lawful ;

And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like
instinct,

As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its
quince-tinct.

Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once!

What meant she?—Who was she?—Her
duty and station,

The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at
once,

Its decent regard and its fitting relation—
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell
free

And turn them out to carouse in a belfry
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of
hers ran on !

Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed ;
And after her,—making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase—oh such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column !

XII.

However, at sunrise our company mustered ;
And here was the huntsman bidding un-
kennel,

And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker
blustered,

With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel ;
For the court-yard walls were filled with
fog

You might have cut as an axe chops a log—
Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness ;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but
queasily,

And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen.

And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it
asunder

This way and that from the valley under ;
And, looking through the court-yard arch,

Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gipsies on their march ?

No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

XIII.

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside ;

North they go, South they go, trooping or
lonely,

And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a
trace there,

That puts you in mind of a place here, a
place there.

But with us, I believe they rise out of the
ground,

And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned ;

Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
For the earth—not a use to which they don't
turn it,

The ore that grows in the mountain's
womb,

Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle ;

Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within
wards ;

Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve
inwards,

Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a
swivel

And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.

Then they cast bells like the shell of the
winkle

That keep a stout heart in the ram with their
tinkle ;

But the sand—they pinch and pound it like
otters ;

Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers and
potters !

Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,

As if in pure water you dropped and let die

A bruised black-blooded mulberry ;

And that other sort, their crowning pride,

With long white threads distinct inside,
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which
dangle

Loose such a length and never tangle,

Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear
waters,

And the cup-lily couches with all the white
daughters :

Such are the works they put their hand to,

The uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.

And these made the troop, which our Duke
saw sally

Toward his castle from out of the valley,

Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,

Come out with the morning to greet our
riders.

And up they wound till they reached the ditch,
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch

That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
By her gait directly and her stoop,

I, whom Jacynth was used to importune

To let that same witch tell us our fortune.

The oldest Gipsy then above ground ;

And, sure as the autumn season came round,

She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,

And every time, as she swore, for the last
time.

And presently she was seen to sidle

Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,

So that the horse of a sudden reared up

As under its nose the old witch peered up

With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes

Of no use now but to gather brine,

And began a kind of level whine

Such as they used to sing to their viols

When their ditties they go grinding

Up and down with nobody minding :

And then, as of old, at the end of the
humming

Her usual presents were forthcoming

—A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,

(Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine
pebbles,)

Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a
pipe-end,—

And so she awaited her annual stipend.

But this time, the Duke would scarcely
vouchsafe

A word in reply ; and in vain she felt

With twitching fingers at her belt

For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,

Ready to put what he gave in her pouch
safe,—

Till, either to quicken his apprehension,

Or possibly with an after-intention,

She was come, she said, to pay her duty

To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.

No sooner had she named his lady,

Than a shine lit up the face so shady,

And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—

For it struck him, the babe just wanted
weaning ;

If one gave her a taste of what life was and
sorrow,

She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-
morrow ;

And who so fit a teacher of trouble
 As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double?
 So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
 (If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
 That their own fleece serves for natural
 fur-suit)
 He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his
 gesture,
 The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate
 With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
 I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned
 From out of the throng, and while I drew
 near
 He told the crone—as I since have reckoned
 By the way he bent and spoke into her
 ear
 With circumspection and mystery—
 The main of the lady's history,
 Her frowardness and ingratitude:
 And for all the crone's submissive attitude
 I could see round her mouth the loose plaits
 tightening,
 And her brow with assenting intelligence
 brightening,
 As though she engaged with hearty good-
 will
 Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
 And promised the lady a thorough frightening.
 And so, just giving her a glimpse
 Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps
 The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the
 hershaw,
 He bade me take the Gipsy mother
 And set her telling some story or other
 Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
 To wile away a weary hour
 For the lady left alone in her bower,
 Whose mind and body craved exertion
 And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV.

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere
 curveter,
 Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
 Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and
 servitor,
 And back I turned and bade the crone
 follow.

And what makes me confident what's to be
 told you
 Had all along been of this crone's devising,
 Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold
 you,
 There was a novelty quick as surprising:
 For first, she had shot up a full head in
 stature,
 And her step kept pace with mine nor
 faltered,
 As if age had foregone its usurpature,
 And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
 And the face looked quite of another nature,
 And the change reached too, whatever the
 change meant,
 Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement:
 For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
 Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
 Like the band-roll strung with tomans
 Which proves the veil a Persian woman's:
 And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
 Come out as after the rain he paces,
 Two unmistakable eye-points duly
 Live and aware looked out of their places.
 So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
 Of the lady's chamber standing sentry;
 I told the command and produced my com-
 panion,
 And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
 For since last night, by the same token,
 Not a single word had the lady spoken:
 They went in both to the presence together,
 While I in the balcony watched the weather.

XV.

And now, what took place at the very first
 of all,
 I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:
 Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
 On that little head of hers and burn it
 If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
 Asleep of a sudden and there continue
 The whole time sleeping as profoundly
 As one of the boars my father would pin you
 'Twixt the eyes where life holds garrison,
 —Jacynth forgive me the comparison!
 But where I begin my own narration
 Is a little after I took my station

To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
 And, having in those days a falcon eye,
 To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
 From where the bushes thinlier crested
 The hillocks, to a plain where's not one
 tree.

When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
 By—was it singing, or was it saying,
 Or a strange musical instrument playing
 In the chamber?—and to be certain
 I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
 And there lay Jacynth asleep,
 Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
 In a rosy sleep along the floor
 With her head against the door ;
 While in the midst, on the seat of state,
 Was a queen—the Gipsy woman late,
 With head and face downbent
 On the lady's head and face intent :
 For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
 The lady sat between her knees
 And o'er them the lady's clasped hands met,
 And on those hands her chin was set,
 And her upturned face met the face of the
 crone

Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
 As if she could double and quadruple
 At pleasure the play of either pupil
 —Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,
 As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
 They moved to measure, or bell-clappers.

I said " Is it blessing, is it banning,
 " Do they applaud you or burlesque you—
 " Those hands and fingers with no flesh
 on ? "

But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,
 At once I was stopped by the lady's expres-
 sion :

For it was life her eyes were drinking
 From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
 —Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
 Into the heart and breast whose heaving
 Told you no single drop they were leaving,
 —Life, that filling her, passed redundant
 Into her very hair, back swerving
 Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
 As her head thrown back showed the white
 throat curving ;

And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
 Moving to the mystic measure,
 Bounding as the bosom bounded.
 I stopped short, more and more confounded,
 As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
 As she listened and she listened :
 When all at once a hand detained me,
 The selfsame contagion gained me,
 And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
 Making out words and prose and rhyme,
 Till it seemed that the music furled
 Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
 From under the words it first had propped,
 And left them midway in the world :
 Word took word as hand takes hand,
 I could hear at last, and understand,
 And when I held the unbroken thread,
 The Gipsy said :—

" And so at last we find my tribe.
 " And so I set thee in the midst,
 " And to one and all of them describe
 " What thou saidst and what thou didst,
 " Our long and terrible journey through,
 " And all thou art ready to say and do
 " In the trials that remain :
 " I trace them the vein and the other vein
 " That meet on thy brow and part again,
 " Making our rapid mystic mark ;
 " And I bid my people prove and probe
 " Each eye's profound and glorious globe
 " Till they detect the kindred spark
 " In those depths so dear and dark,
 " Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
 " Circling over the midnight sea.
 " And on that round young cheek of thine
 " I make them recognize the tinge,
 " As when of the costly scarlet wine
 " They drip so much as will impinge
 " And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
 " One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
 " Over a silver plate whose sheen
 " Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
 " For so I prove thee, to one and all,
 " Fit, when my people ope their breast,
 " To see the sign, and hear the call,
 " And take the vow, and stand the test
 " Which adds one more child to the rest—

- "When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
 "And the world is left outside.
 "For there is probation to decree,
 "And many and long must the trials be
 "Thou shalt victoriously endure,
 "If that brow is true and those eyes are sure ;
 "Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
 "Of the prize he dug from its mountain-tomb—
 "Let once the vindicating ray
 "Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
 "And steel and fire have done their part
 "And the prize falls on its finder's heart ;
 "So, trial after trial past,
 "Wilt thou fall at the very last
 "Breathless, half in trance
 "With the thrill of the great deliverance,
 "Into our arms for evermore ;
 "And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
 "About thee, what we knew before,
 "How love is the only good in the world.
 "Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
 "Or brain devise, or hand approve !
 "Stand up, look below,
 "It is our life at thy feet we throw
 "To step with into light and joy ;
 "Not a power of life but we employ
 "To satisfy thy nature's want ;
 "Art thou the tree that props the plant,
 "Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree—
 "Canst thou help us, must we help thee ?
 "If any two creatures grew into one,
 "They would do more than the world has done :
 "Though each apart were never so weak,
 "Ye vainly through the world should seek
 "For the knowledge and the might
 "Which in such union grew their right :
 "So, to approach at least that end,
 "And blend,—as much as may be, blend
 "Thee with us or us with thee,—
 "As climbing plant or propping tree,
 "Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
 "Up and about, with blossoms and leaves ?
 "Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown,
 "Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
 "Die on thy boughs and disappear
 "While not a leaf of thine is serene ?
 "Or is the other fate in store,
 "And art thou fitted to adore,
 "To give thy wondrous self away,
 "And take a stronger nature's sway ?
 "I foresee and could foretell
 "Thy future portion, sure and well :
 "But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,
 "Let them say what thou shalt do !
 "Only be sure thy daily life,
 "In its peace or in its strife,
 "Never shall be unobserved ;
 "We pursue thy whole career,
 "And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—
 "Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
 "We are beside thee in all thy ways,
 "With our blame, with our praise,
 "Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
 "Glad, angry—but indifferent, no !
 "Whether it be thy lot to go,
 "For the good of us all, where the haters meet
 "In the crowded city's horrible street ;
 "Or thou step alone through the morass
 "Where never sound yet was
 "Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
 "For the air is still, and the water still,
 "When the blue breast of the dipping coot
 "Dives under, and all is mute.
 "So, at the last shall come old age,
 "Decrepit as befits that stage ;
 "How else wouldst thou retire apart
 "With the hoarded memories of thy heart.
 "And gather all to the very least
 "Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
 "Let fall through eagerness to find
 "The crowning dainties yet behind ?
 "Ponder on the entire past
 "Laid together thus at last,
 "When the twilight helps to fuse
 "The first fresh with the faded hues,
 "And the outline of the whole,
 "As round eve's shades their framework roll,
 "Grandly fronts for once thy soul.
 "And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
 "Of yet another morning breaks,

“And like the hand which ends a dream,
 “Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
 “Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
 “Then——”

Ay, then indeed something
 would happen!

But what? For here her voice changed
 like a bird's;

There grew more of the music and less of
 the words;

Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
 To paper and put you down every syllable

With those clever clerkly fingers,

All I've forgotten as well as what lingers
 In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
 To give you even this poor version

Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with
 stammering

—More fault of those who had the hammer-
 ing

Of prosody into me and syntax,

And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!

But to return from this excursion,—

Just, do you mark, when the song was
 sweetest,

The peace most deep and the charm com-
 pletest,

There came, shall I say, a snap—

And the charm vanished!

And my sense returned, so strangely
 banished,

And, starting as from a nap,

I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
 With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring
 made I

Down from the casement, round to the portal,
 Another minute and I had entered,—

When the door opened, and more than mortal
 stood, with a face where to my mind centred

All beauties I ever saw or shall see,

The Duchess: I stopped as if struck by
 palsy.

She was so different, happy and beautiful,

I felt at once that all was best,

And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
 But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.

Not that, in fact, there was any commanding;
 I saw the glory of her eye,

And the brow's height and the breast's ex-
 panding,

And I was hers to live or to die.

As for finding what she wanted,

You know God Almighty granted

Such little signs should serve wild creatures

To tell one another all their desires,

So that each knows what his friend requires,

And does its bidding without teachers.

I preceded her; the crone

Followed silent and alone;

I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered

In the old style; both her eyes had slunk

Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;

In short, the soul in its body sunk

Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.

We descended, I preceding;

Crossed the court with nobody heeding;

All the world was at the chase,

The courtyard like a desert-place,

The stable emptied of its small fry;

I saddled myself the very palfrey

I remember patting while it carried her,

The day she arrived and the Duke married

her.

And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving

Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing

The lady had not forgotten it either,

And knew the poor devil so much beneath her

Would have been only too glad for her service

To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk

derwise,

But, unable to pay proper duty where owing

it,

Was reduced to that pitiful method of show-
 ing it:

For though the moment I began setting

His saddle on my own nag of Berold's beget-
 ting,

(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)

She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,

By a single rapid finger's lifting,

And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,

And a little shake of the head, refused me,—

I say, although she never used me,

Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy be-
 hind her,

And I ventured to remind her,

I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
 Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
 —Something to the effect that I was in readi-
 ness

Whenever God should please she needed
 me,—

Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
 With a look that placed a crown on me,
 And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom—
 And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
 Dropped me . . . ah, had it been a purse
 Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
 Why, you see, as soon as I found myself

So understood,—that a true heart so may
 gain

Such a reward,—I should have gone home
 again,

Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself !
 It was a little plait of hair

Such as friends in a convent make

To wear, each for the other's sake,—

This, see, which at my breast I wear,
 Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment),
 And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
 And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this is
 idle,

These are feelings it is not good to foster,—
 I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
 And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost
 her.

XVI.

When the liquor's out why clink the cannikin?
 I did think to describe you the panic in
 The redoubtable breast of our master the
 mannikin,

And what was the pitch of his mother's yellow-
 ness,

How she turned as a shark to snap the
 spare-rib

Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving
 Carib,

When she heard, what she called the flight
 of the feloness

—But it seems such child's play,

What they said and did with the lady away !
 And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
 Always made me—and no doubt makes you

—sick.

Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so
 stern

As that sweet form disappeared through the
 postern,

She that kept it in constant good humour,
 It ought to have stopped; there seemed
 nothing to do more.

But the world thought otherwise and went on,
 And my head's one that its spite was spent on:
 Thirty years are fled since that morning,
 And with them all my head's adorning.

Nor did the old Duchess die outright,

As you expect, of suppressed spite,

The natural end of every adder

Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder :

But she and her son agreed, I take it,

That no one should touch on the story to
 wake it,

For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled
 fiery,

So, they made no search and small inquiry—
 And when fresh Gipsies have paid us a visit,
 I've

Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,

But told them they're folks the Duke don't
 want here,

And bade them make haste and cross the
 frontier.

Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke
 was glad of it,

And the old one was in the young one's
 stead,

And took, in her place, the household's
 head,

And a blessed time the household had of it !

And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
 How I trench, more than needs, on the
 nauseous,

I could favour you with sundry touches

Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
 Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's
 yellowness

(To get on faster) until at last her

Cheek grew to be one master-plaster

Of mucus and fucus from mere use of
 ceruse :

In short, she grew from scalp to udder

Just the object to make you shudder.

XVII.

You're my friend—
 What a thing friendship is, world without end!
 How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up
 As if somebody broached you a glorious
 runlet,
 And poured out, all lovelily, sparkingly,
 sunlit,
 Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
 Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—
 Friendship may match with that monarch of
 fluids;
 Each supple a dry brain, fills you its ins-and-
 outs,
 Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when the
 thin sand doubts
 Whether to run on or stopshort, and guarantees
 Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant
 ease.
 I have seen my little lady once more,
 Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest
 of it,
 For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you
 before;
 I always wanted to make a clean breast
 of it:
 And now it is made—why, my heart's blood,
 that went trickle,
 Trickle, but anon, in such muddy driblets,
 Is pumped up brisk now, through the main
 ventricle,
 And genially floats me about the giblets.
 I'll tell you what I intend to do:
 I must see this fellow his sad life through—
 He is our Duke, after all,
 And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.
 My father was born here, and I inherit
 His fame, a chain he bound his son with;
 Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
 But there's no mine to blow up and get
 done with:
 So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.
 For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,
 Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
 Some day or other, his head in a morion
 And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll
 kick up,
 Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.

And then, when red doth the sword of our
 Duke rust,
 And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a
 blue crust,
 Then I shall scrape together my earnings;
 For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth
 reposes,
 And our children all went the way of the
 roses:
 It's a long lane that knows no turnings.
 One needs but little tackle to travel in;
 So, just one stout cloak shall I indue:
 And for a staff, what beats the javelin
 With which his boars my father pinned you?
 And then, for a purpose you shall hear
 presently,
 Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful,
 I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly!
 Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
 What's a man's age? He must hurry more,
 that's all;
 Cram in a day, what his youth took a year
 to hold:
 When we mind labour, then only, we're
 too old—
 What age had Methusalem when he begat
 Saul?
 And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship
 sees,
 (Come all the way from the north-parts
 with sperm oil).
 I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
 And arrive one day at the land of the Gipsies,
 And find my lady, or hear the last news of
 her
 From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
 His forehead chapleted green with wreathy
 hop,
 Sunburned all over like an Æthiopi.
 And when my Cotnar begins to operate
 And the tongue of the rogue to run at a
 proper rate,
 And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each
 flaccid dent,
 I shall drop in with—as if by accident—
 “You never knew, then, how it all ended,
 “What fortune good or bad attended
 “The little lady your Queen befriended?”

—And when that's told me, what's remaining?
 This world's too hard for my explaining.
 The same wise judge of matters equine
 Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
 To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
 And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak
 wine,
 He also must be such a lady's scorner!
 Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:
 Now up, now down, the world's one
 saw.

—So, I shall find out some snug corner
 Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
 Turn myself round and bid the world good
 night;
 And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's
 blowing
 Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
 To a world where will be no further throwing
 Pearls before swine that can't value them.
 Amen!

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL,
 SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF
 LEARNING IN EUROPE.

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
 Singing together.
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar
 thorpes
 Each in its tether
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
 Cared-for till cock-crow:
 Look out if yonder be not day again
 Rimming the rock-row!
 That's the appropriate country; there, man's
 thought,
 Rarer, intenser,
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
 Chafes in the censer.
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and
 crop;
 Seek we sepulture
 On a tall mountain, citted to the top,
 Crowded with culture!

All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
 Clouds overcome it;
 No! yonder sparkle is the citadel's
 Circling its summit.
 Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:
 Wait ye the warning?
 Our low life was the level's and the night's;
 He's for the morning.
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect each
 head,
 'Ware the beholders!
 This is our master, famous calm and dead,
 Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe
 and croft,
 Safe from the weather!
 He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
 Singing together,
 He was a man born with thy face and throat,
 Lyric Apollo!
 Long he lived nameless: how should spring
 take note
 Winter would follow?
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!
 Cramped and diminished,
 Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!
 "My dance is finished?"
 No, that's the world's way: (keep the
 mountain-side,
 Make for the city!)
 He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
 Over men's pity;
 Left play for work, and grappled with the world
 Bent on escaping:
 "What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou
 keepest furled?
 "Show me their shaping,
 "Theirs who most studied man, the bard and
 sage,—
 "Give!"—So, he gowned him,
 Straight got by heart that book to its last
 page:
 Learned, we found him.
 Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
 Accents uncertain:
 "Time to taste life," another would have said,
 'Up with the curtain!"

This man said rather, "Actual life comes next?"	Oh, if we draw a circle premature, Heedless of far gain,
"Patience a moment !	Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure
"Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,	Bad is our bargain !
"Still there's the comment.	Was it not great? did not he throw on God, (He loves the burthen)—
"Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,	God's task to make the heavenly period Perfect the earthen?
"Painful or easy !	Did not he magnify the mind, show clear Just what it all meant?
"Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,	He would not discount life, as fools do here, Paid by instalment.
"Ay, nor feel queasy."	He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
Oh, such a life as he resolved to live, When he had learned it,	Found, or earth's failure :
When he had gathered all books had to give ! Sooner, he spurned it.	"Wilt thou trust death or not?" He answered "Yes :
Image the whole, then execute the parts— Fancy the fabric	"Hence with life's pale lure !"
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,	That low man seeks a little thing to do, Sees it and does it :
Ere mortar dab brick !	This high man, with a great thing to pursue, Dies ere he knows it.
(Here's the town-gate reached : there's the market-place Gaping before us.)	That low man goes on adding one to one, His hundred's soon hit :
Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace (Hearten our chorus !)	This high man, aiming at a million, Misses an unit.
That before living he'd learn how to live— No end to learning :	That, has the world here—should he need the next, Let the world mind him !
Earn the means first—God surely will contrive Use for our earning.	This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed Seeking shall find him.
Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes : "Live now or never !"	So, with the throttling hands of death at strife, Ground he at grammar ;
He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes ! "Man has Forever."	Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife : While he could stammer
Back to his book then : deeper drooped his head :	He settled <i>Hoti's</i> business—let it be !— Properly based <i>Oun</i> —
<i>Calculus</i> racked him :	Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic <i>De</i> , Dead from the waist down.
Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead : <i>Tusis</i> attacked him.	Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place :
"Now, master, take a little rest !"—not he ! (Caution redoubled,	Hail to your purlieus, All ye highfliers of the feathered race, Swallows and curlews !
Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly !) Not a whit troubled	Here's the top-peak ; the multitude below Live, for they can, there :
Back to his studies, fresher than at first, Fierce as a dragon	This man decided not to Live but Know— Bury this man there ?
He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst) Sucked at the flagon.	

Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot,
clouds form,

Lightnings are loosened,

Stars come and go! Let joy break with the
storm,

Peace let the dew send!

Lofty designs must close in like effects:

Loftily lying,

Leave him—still loftier than the world sus-
pects,

Living and dying.

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, *Vir-
gilius*. 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.)

[Molay was Grand Master of the Templars
when that order was suppressed in 1312.]

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 Saint 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 con-
firm 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 tumbrels a-tilt,
Make a trench all round with the city muck;
Inside they pile log upon log, good store;
Faggots no 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 bavins¹ that kindle forthwith;
Billets that blaze substantial and slow;
Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;
Larch-heart that charsto a chalk-whiteglow:
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?

¹ Fagots.

Or heave his chest, which 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.

’Tis 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 unclose;
 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 SER-
 MON 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 par-
 take 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—'tis sermon-time!

II.

Bob, 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 piggedly, 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 thungumbob!

What's he at, quotha? reading his text!
Now you've his curtsey—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 wov
I 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 bounds:

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,

" Bide 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 dis-
 grace,

" 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 ! ”

[*Pope Gregory XVI. abolished this bad business of the Sermon.—R. B.*]

PROTUS.

[This poem is without warrant of history.]

AMONG these latter busts we count by scores,
 Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
 Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged
 vest,

Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast,—
 One loves a baby face, with violets there,
 Violets instead of laurel in the hair,
 As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. “ Protus ends a period

“ Of empery beginning with a god ;

“ Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant,

“ Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant :

“ And if he quickened breath there, ’twould
 like fire

“ Pantingly through the dim vast realm
 transpire.

“ A fame that he was missing spread afar :

“ The world from its four corners, rose in
 war,

“ Till he was borne out on a balcony

“ To pacify the world when it should see.

“ The captains ranged before him, one, his
 hand

“ Made baby points at, gained the chief
 command.

“ And day by day more beautiful he grew

“ In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,

“ While young Greek sculptors, gazing on
 the child,

“ Became with old Greek sculpture reconciled.

“ Already sages laboured to condense

“ In easy tomes a life’s experience :

“ And artists took grave counsel to impart

“ In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their
 art—

“ To make his graces prompt as blossoming

“ Of plentifully-watered palms in spring :

“ Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the
 throne,

“ For beauty, knowledge, strength, should
 stand alone,

“ And mortals love the letters of his name.”

—Stop ! Have you turned two pages ? Still
 the same.

New reign, same date. The scribe goes on
 to say

How that same year, on such a month and
 day,

“ John the Pannonian, groundedly believed

“ A blacksmith’s bastard, whose hard hand
 reprieved

“ The Empire from its fate the year before,—

“ Came, had a mind to take the crown, and
 wore

“ The same for six years (during which the
 Huns

“ Kept off their fingers from us), till his sons

“ Put something in his liquor”—and so forth.

Then a new reign. Stay—“ Take at its just
 worth ”

(Subjoins an annotator) “ what I give

“ As hearsay. Some think, John let Protus
 live

“ And slip away. ’Tis said, he reached
 man’s age

“ At some blind northern court ; made, first
 a page,

“ Then tutor to the children ; last, of use

“ About the hunting-stables. I deduce

“ He wrote the little tract ‘ On worming
 dogs,’

“ Whereof the name in sundry catalogues

“ Is extant yet. A Protus of the race

“ Is rumoured to have died a monk in
 Thrace,—

“ And if the same, he reached senility.”

Here’s John the Smith’s rough-hammered
 head. Great eye,

Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can
 To give you the crown-grasper. What a
 man !

THE STATUE AND THE BUST.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure¹—
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

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

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

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

¹ Neck and shoulder of a horse.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on
her
Till the final catafalk² repassed.

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

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

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

² The stage or scaffolding for a coffin whilst
in the church.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What if we break from the Arno bowers,
 "And try if Petraja, cool and green,
 "Cure last night's fault with this morning's
 flowers?"

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

"But, alas ! my lady leaves the South ;
 "Each wind that comes from the Apennine
 "Is a menace to her tender youth :

"Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
 "If she quits her palace twice this year,
 "To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly
 fear.

"Moreover Petraja is cold this spring :
 "Be our feast to-night as usual here !"

And then to himself—"Which night shall
 bring

"Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—
 "Or I am the fool, and thou art the king !

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor
 cool—

"For to-night the Envoy arrives from France
 "Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my
 tool.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And to press a point while these oppose
Were simple policy ; better wait :
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

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

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

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

So weeks grew months, years ; gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a
dream ;

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

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

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

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

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

VOL. I.

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

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

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

"To say, 'What matters it at the end ?
"I did no more while my heart was warm
"Than does that image, my pale-faced
friend.'

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

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

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

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

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

The Duke had sighed like the simplest
wretch

In Florence, "Youth—my dream escapes !
"Will its record stay ?" And he bade them
fetch

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

2 E

"John of Douay¹ shall effect my plan,
 "Set me on horseback here aloft,
 "Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

"In the very square I have crossed so oft :
 "That men may admire, when future suns
 "Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow stay brave
 in bronze—

"Admire and say, 'When he was alive
 "'How he would take his pleasure once !'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive
 "To listen the while, and laugh in my to-ri-b
 "At idleness which aspires to strive."

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

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

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

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

I hear you reproach, "But delay was best,
 "For their end was a crime."—Oh, a crime
 will do
 As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

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

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

¹ Giovanni of Bologna, a sculptor.

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

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

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

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

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

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER.

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.
 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
 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,
 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,
 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.

But passion sometimes would prevail,
 Nor could to-night's gray 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.
 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.
 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,
 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.
 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
 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 !
 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 !

"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK
 TOWER CAME."

(See *Edgar's* song in "LEAR.")

I.

My first thought was, he lied in every
 word,
 That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
 Askance to watch the working of his lie

On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
 Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
 Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

II.

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

III.

If at his counsel I should turn aside
 Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
 Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
 I did turn as he pointed : neither pride
 Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
 So much as gladness that some end might
 be.

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

While some discuss if near the other graves
 Be room enough for this, and when a day
 Suits best for carrying the corpse away,

With care about the banners, scarves and staves :

And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

VII.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band"—to wit,

The knights who to the Dark Tower's search
addressed

Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed
best,

And all the doubt was now—should I
be fit?

VIII.

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

IX.

For mark ! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a last
view

O'er the safe road, 'twas gone ; grey plain all
round :

Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on ; nought else remained to do.

X.

So, on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature ; nothing
throve :

For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove !
But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You'd think ; a burr had been a treasure-
trove.

XI.

No ! penury, inertness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's
portion. " See
" Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,

" It nothing skills : I cannot help my case :
" 'Tis the Last Judgment's fire must cure
this place,
" Calcine its clods and set my prisoners
free."

XII.

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped ;
the bents

Were jealous else. What made those holes
and rents

In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as
to baulk

All hope of greenness ? 'tis a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

XIII.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy ; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up
with blood.

One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there :

Thrust out past service from the devil's
stud !

XIV.

Alive ? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck
a-strain,

And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane ;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such
woe ;

I never saw a brute I hated so ;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

XV.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier
sights,

Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art :
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

XVI.

Not it ! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold

An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

XVII.

Giles then, the soul of honour—there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest man should dare (he said) he
durst.

Good—but the scene shifts—fough! what
hangman hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!

XVIII.

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

XIX.

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

XX.

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

XXI.

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

XXII.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!
Who were the strugglers, what war did
they wage,

Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a plash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

XXIII.

The fight must so have seemed in that fell
cirque.

What penned them there, with all the plain
to choose?

No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the
Turk

Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

XXIV.

And more than that—a furlong on—why,
there!

What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

XXV.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a
wood,

Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere
earth

Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds
mirth,

Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood—
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black
dearth.

XXVI.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the
soil's

Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII.

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

XXVIII.

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

XXIX.

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

XXX.

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

XXXI.

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
 The round squat turret, blind as the fool's
 heart,
 Built of brown stone, without a counter-
 part
 In the whole world. The tempest's mock-
 ing elf
 Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
 He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

XXXII.

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

XXXIII.

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

XXXIV.

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

LURIA;
A TRAGEDY.
 1846.

I DEDICATE THIS LAST ATTEMPT FOR THE PRESENT AT DRAMATIC POETRY
 TO A GREAT DRAMATIC POET;
 "WISHING WHAT I WRITE MAY BE READ BY HIS LIGHT:"
 IF A PHRASE ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED,
 BY NOT THE LEAST WORTHY OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,
 TO SHAKESPEARE,
 MAY BE APPLIED HERE, BY ONE WHOSE SOLE PRIVILEGE IS IN
 A GRATEFUL ADMIRATION,
 TO WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

LONDON: 1846.

LURIA.

PERSONS.

LURIA, a Moor, *Commander of the Florentine Forces.*
 HUSAIN, a Moor, *his friend.*
 PUCCIO, the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA'S chief officer.
 BRACCIO, *Commissary of the Republic of Florence.*
 JACOPO (LAPO), *his secretary.*
 TIBURZIO, *Commander of the Pisans.*
 DOMIZIA, a noble Florentine lady.

SCENE.—LURIA'S Camp between
 Florence and Pisa.

TIME, 14--.

ACT I.

MORNING.

BRACCIO, *as dictating to his Secretary;*
 PUCCIO *standing by.*

Braccio [to PUCCIO]. Then, you join battle
 in an hour?

Puccio.
 Luria, the captain.

Not I;

Braccio [to the Secretary]. "In an hour, the battle."

[*To PUCCIO.*] Sir, let your eye run o'er this loose digest,

And see if very much of your report
 Have slipped away through my civilian phrase.
 Does this instruct the Signory aright
 How army stands with army?

Puccio [taking the paper]. All seems here:
 —That Luria, seizing with our city's force
 The several points of vantage, hill and plain,

Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side,
 And, baffling the Lucchese arrived too late,
 Must, in the battle he delivers now,
 Beat her best troops and first of chiefs.

Braccio. So sure?
 Tiburzio's a consummate captain too!

Puccio. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in his hand.

Braccio [to the Secretary]. "The Signory hold Pisa in their hand."

Your own proved soldiership's our warrant,
 sir:

So, while my secretary ends his task,
 Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,
 To post with it to Florence!

Puccio [returning the paper]. All seems here ;

Unless . . . Ser Braccio, 'tis my last report !
Since Pisa's outbreak, and my overthrow,
And Luria's hastening at the city's call
To save her, as he only could, no doubt ;
Till now that she is saved or sure to be,—
Whatever you tell Florence, I tell you :
Each day's note you, her Commissary, make
Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.

No youngster am I longer, to my cost ;
Therefore while Florence gloried in her choice
And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria, still,
As if zeal, courage, prudence, conduct, faith,
Had never met in any man before,
I saw no pressing need to swell the cry.

But now, this last report and I have done :
So, ere to-night comes with its roar of praise,
'Twere not amiss if some one old i' the trade
Subscribed with, " True, for once rash
counsel's best.

" This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful race,
" This boy to whose untried sagacity,
" Raw valour, Florence trusts without reserve
" The charge to save her,—justifies her choice ;
" In no point has this stranger failed his friends.
" Now praise ! " I say this, and it is not here.

Braccio [to the Secretary]. Write, " Puccio,
superseded in the charge,

" By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,
" And no reward our Signory can give
" Their champion but he'll back it cheerfully."
Aught more ? Five minutes hence, both
messengers ! [Puccio goes.

Braccio [after a pause, and while he slowly
tears the paper into shreds]. I think . . .
(pray God, I hold in fit contempt
This warfare's noble art and ordering,
And,—once the brace of prizeurs fairly matched,
Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife as
good,—

Spit properly at what men term their skill !—)
Yet here I think our fighter has the odds.
With Pisa's strength diminished thus and thus,
Such points of vantage in our hands and such,
Lucca still off the stage, too,—all's assured :
Luria must win this battle. Write the Court,
That Luria's trial end and sentence pass !

Secretary. Patron,—

Braccio. Ay, Lapo ?

Secretary. If you trip, I fall ;
'Tis in self-interest I speak—

Braccio. Nay, nay,
You overshoot the mark, my Lapo ! Nay !
When did I say pure love's impossible ?
I make you daily write those red cheeks thin,
Load your young brow with what concerns
it least,

And, when we visit Florence, let you pace
The Piazza by my side as if we talked,
Where all your old acquaintances may see :
You'd die for me, I should not be surprised.
Now then !

Secretary. Sir, look about and love yourself !
Step after step, the Signory and you
Tread gay till this tremendous point's to pass ;
Which pass not, pass not, ere you ask your-
self,—

Bears the brain steadily such draughts of fire,
Or too delicious may not prove the pride
Of this long secret trial you dared plan,
Dare execute, you solitary here,
With the grey-headed toothless fools at home,
Who think themselves your lords, such slaves
are they ?

If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,
Declare the treason, claim its penalty,—
And sudden out of all the blaze of life,
On the best minute of his brightest day,
From that adoring army at his back,
Thro' Florence' joyous crowds before his face,
Into the dark you beckon Luria . . .

Braccio. Then—
Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people vaunt,
We of the other craft and mystery,
May we not smile demure, the danger past ?

Secretary. Sir, no, no, no,—the danger,
and your spirit
At watch and ward ? Where's danger on
your part,

With that thin flitting instantaneous steel
'Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-force
world ?

If Luria, that's to perish sure as fate,
Should have been really guiltless after all ?

Braccio. Ah, you have thought that ?

Secretary. Here I sit, your scribe,
And in and out goes Luria, days and nights;
This Puccio comes; the Moor his other friend,
I usain; they talk—that's all feigned easily;
He speaks (I would not listen if I could),
Reads, orders, counsels:—but he rests some-
times,—

I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched an hour
On the lynx-skins yonder; hold his bared
black arms

Into the sun from the tent-opening; laugh
When his horse drops the forage from his teeth
And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish songs.
That man believes in Florence, as the saint
Tied to the wheel believes in God.

Braccio. How strange!
You too have thought that!

Secretary. Do but you think too,
And all is saved! I only have to write,
“The man seemed false awhile, proves true
at last,

“Bury it”—so I write the Signory—
“Bury this trial in your breast for ever,
“Blot it from things or done or dreamed about!
“So Luria shall receive his meed to-day
“With no suspicion what reverse was near,—
“As if no meteoric finger hushed
“The doom-word just on the destroyer's lip,
“Motioned him off, and let life's sun fall
straight.”

Braccio [looks to the wall of the tent]. Did
he draw that?

Secretary. With charcoal, when the watch
Made the report at midnight; Lady Domizia
Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you re-
member;

That is his fancy how a Moorish front
Might join to, and complete, the body,—a
sketch,—

And again where the cloak hangs, yonder in
the shadow.

Braccio. He loves that woman.

Secretary. She is sent the spy
Of Florence,—spies on you as you on him:
Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,
Is surely safe. What shall I write?

Braccio. I see—
A Moorish front, nor of such ill design!

Lapo, there's one thing plain and positive;
Man seeks his own good at the whole world's
cost.

What? If to lead our troops, stand forth our
chiefs,

And hold our fate, and see us at their beck,
Yet render up the charge when peace return,
Have ever proved too much for Florentines,
Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—
If in the struggle when the soldier's sword
Should sink its point before the statist's pen,
And the calm head replace the violent hand,
Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
Before ambition with unvarying fate,
Till Florence' self at last in bitterness

Be forced to own such falls the natural end,
And, sparing further to expose her sons
To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,
Declare, “The foreigner, one not my child,
“Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach
height by height

“The glory, then descend into the shame;
“So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
“And punishment the easier task for me:”
—If on the best of us such brand she set,
Can I suppose an utter alien here,
This Luria, our inevitable foe,
Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
Born free from many ties that bind the rest
Of common faith in Heaven or hope on earth,
No past with us, no future,—such a spirit
Shall hold the path from which our staunchest
broke,

Stand firm where every famed precursor fell?
My Lapo, I will frankly say, these proofs
So duly noted of the man's intent,
Are for the doting fools at home, not me.

The charges here, they may be true or false:
—What is set down? Errors and oversights,

A dallying interchange of courtesies
With Pisa's General,—all that, hour by hour,
Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us,
Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts,
Now overhazard, overcaution now;
Even that he loves this lady who believes
She outwits Florence, and whom Florence
posted

By my procurement here, to spy on me,

Lest I one minute lose her from my sight—
She who remembering her whole House's
fall,

That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,
Now labours to make Luria (poor device
As plain) the instrument of her revenge
—That she is ever at his ear to prompt
Inordinate conceptions of his worth,
Exorbitant belief in worth's reward,
And after, when sure disappointment follows,
Proportionable rage at such a wrong—
Why, all these reasons, while I urge them
most,

Weigh with me less than least—as nothing
weigh.

Upon that broad man's-heart of his, I go :
On what I know must be, yet, while I live,
Shall never be, because I live and know.

Brute-force shall not rule Florence ! Intellect
May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies :
But intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
And intellect's tradition so kept up.

Till the good come—'twas intellect that ruled,
Not brute-force bringing from the battle-field

The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces
We lent it there to lure its grossness on ;
All which it took for earnest and kept safe
To show against us in our market-place,
Just as the plumes and tags and swordsman's-
gear

(Fetched from the camp where, at their
foolish best,

When all was done they frightened nobody)
Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,
With our own warrant and allowance. No !
The whole procedure's overcharged,—its end
In too strict keeping with the bad first step.
To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration ?
Well then, to perish for a single fault,
Let that be simple justice ! There, my
Lapo !

A Moorish front ill suits our Duomo's body :
Blot it out—and bid Luria's sentence come !

[LURIA, who, with DOMIZIA, has
entered unobserved at the close of
the last phrase, now advances.

Luria. And Luria, Luria, what of Luria
now ?

Braccio. Ah, you so close, sir? Lady
Domizia too?

I said it needs must be a busy moment
For one like you : that you were now i' the
thick

Of your duties, doubtless, while we idlers
sat . . .

Luria. No—in that paper,—it was in that
paper

What you were saying !

Braccio. Oh—my day's despatch !

I censure you to Florence : will you see ?

Luria. See your despatch, your last, for
the first time ?

Well, if I should, now? For in truth,
Domizia,

He would be forced to set about another,
In his sly cool way, the true Florentine,
To mention that important circumstance.
So, while he wrote I should gain time, such
time !

Do not send this !

Braccio. And wherefore ?

Luria. These Lucchese

Are not arrived—they never will arrive !
And I must fight to-day, arrived or not,
And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure :
And then will be arriving his Lucchese,
But slowly, oh so slowly, just in time
To look upon my battle from the hills,
Like a late moon, of use to nobody !
And I must break my battle up, send forth,
Surround on this side, hold in check on that.
Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
You make me send for fresh instructions home,
—Incompleteness, incompleteness !

Braccio. Ah, we scribes !

Why, I had registered that very point,
The non-appearance of our foes' ally,
As a most happy fortune ; both at once
Were formidable : singly faced, each falls.

Luria. So, no great battle for my Floren-
tines !

No crowning deed, decisive and complete,
For all of them, the simple as the wise,
Old, young, alike, that do not understand
Our wearisome pedantic art of war,
By which we prove retreat may be success,

Delay—best speed,—half loss, at times,—
whole gain :

They want results : as if it were their fault !
And you, with warmest wish to be my friend,
Will not be able now to simply say

“Your servant has performed his task—
enough !

“You ordered, he has executed : good !

“Now walk the streets in holiday attire,

“Congratulate your friends, till noon strikes
fierce,

“Then form bright groups beneath the
Duomo’s shade !”

No, you will have to argue and explain,
Persuade them, all is not so ill in the end,
Tease, tire them out ! Arrive, arrive,
Lucchese !

Domizia. Well, you will triumph for the
past enough,

Whatever be the present chance ; no service
Falls to the ground with Florence : she awaits
Her saviour, will receive him fittingly.

Luria. Ah Braccio, you know Florence !

Will she, think you,

Receive one . . . what means “fittingly
receive” ?

—Receive compatriots, doubtless—I am none :
And yet Domizia promises so much !

Braccio. Kind women still give men a
woman’s prize.

I know not o’er which gate most boughs will
arch,

Nor if the Square will wave red flags or blue.

I should have judged, the fullest of rewards
Our state gave Luria, when she made him
chief

Of her whole force, in her best captain’s place.

Luria. That, my reward ? Florence on
my account

Relieved Ser Puccio?—mark you, my reward !
And Puccio’s having all the fight’s true joy—

Goes here and there, gets close, may fight,
himself,

While I must order, stand aloof, o’ersee.

That was my calling, there was my true place !

I should have felt, in some one over me,

Florence impersonate, my visible head,

As I am over Puccio,—taking life

Directly from her eye ! They give me you :

But do you cross me, set me half to work ?

I enjoy nothing—though I will, for once !

Decide, shall we join battle ? may I wait ?

Braccio. Let us compound the matter ;
wait till noon :

Then, no arrival,—

Luria. Ah, noon comes too fast !

I wonder, do you guess why I delay

Involuntarily the final blow

As long as possible ? Peace follows it !

Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads

Come out again, the penetrating eyes ;

As if a spell broke, all’s resumed, each art

You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile.

’Gainst the glad heaven, o’er the white
palace-front

The interrupted scaffold climbs anew ;

The walls are peopled by the painter’s brush ;

The statue to its niche ascends to dwell.

The present noise and trouble have retired

And left the eternal past to rule once more ;

You speak its speech and read its records
plain,

Greece lives with you, each Roman breathes
your friend :

But Luria—where will then be Luria’s place ?

Domizia. Highest in honour, for that past’s
own sake,

Of which his actions, sealing up the sum

By saving all that went before from wreck,

Will range as part, with which be worshipped
too.

Luria. Then I may walk and watch you
in your streets,

Lead the smooth life my rough life helps no
more,

So different, so new, so beautiful—

Nor fear that you will tire to see parade

The club that slew the lion, now that crooks

And shepherd-pipes come into use again ?

For very lone and silent seems my East

In its drear vastness : still it spreads, and still

No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere—

Not ever more ! Well, well, to-day is ours !

Domizia [to BRACCIO]. Should he not
have been one of us ?

Luria. Oh, no !

Not one of you, and so escape the thrill
Of coming into you, of changing thus,—
Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts
The boundless unrest of the savage heart !
The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land,
Breaks there and buries its tumultuous
strength ;

Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile :
Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,
In rapture of assent, subdued and still,
'Neath those strange banks, those unimagined
skies.

Well, 'tis not sure the quiet lasts for ever !
Your placid heads still find rough hands new
work ;

Some minute's chance—there comes the need
of mine :

And, all resolved on, I too hear at last.

Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser
Braccio !

You hold my strength ; 'twere best dispose of it :
What you created, see that you find food for—
I shall be dangerous else !

Braccio. How dangerous, sir ?

Luria. There are so many ways, Domizia
warns me,

And one with half the power that I possess,
—Grows very formidable. Do you doubt ?
Why, first, who holds the army . . .

Domizia. While we talk,
Morn wears ; we keep you from your proper
place,

The field.

Luria. Nay, to the field I move no more ;
My part is done, and Puccio's may begin :
I cannot trench upon his province longer
With any face.—You think yourselves so safe ?
Why, see—in concert with Tiburzio, now—
One could . . .

Domizia. A trumpet !

Luria. My Lucchese at last !
Arrived, as sure as Florence stands ! Your
leave ! *[Springs out.]*

Domizia. How plainly is true greatness
charactered

By such unconscious sport as Luria's here,
Strength sharing least the secret of itself !
Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,

Such save the world which none but they
could save,

Yet think whate'er they did, that world
could do.

Braccio. Yes : and how worthy note, that
these same great ones

In hand or head, with such unconsciousness
And all its due entailed humility,

Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,
From taking up whatever tool there be
Effects the whole world's safety or mishap,
Into their mild hands as a thing of course !

The statist finds it natural to lead
The mob who might as easily lead him—
The captain marshals troops born skilled in
war—

Statist and captain verily believe !

While we poor scribes . . . you catch me
thinking now,

That I shall in this very letter write

What none of you are able ! To it, Lapo !

[DOMIZIA goes.]

This last worst all-affected childish fit
Of Luria's, this be-praised unconsciousness,
Convinces me ; the past was no child's play :
It was a man beat Pisa,—not a child.
All's mere dissimulation—to remove
The fear, he best knows we should enter-
tain.

The utmost danger was at hand. Is't written?
Now make a duplicate, lest this should fail,
And speak your fullest on the other side.

Secretary. I noticed he was busily repairing
My half-effacement of his Duomo sketch,
And, while he spoke of Florence, turned to it,
As the Mage Negro king to Christ the babe.
I judge his childishness the mere relapse
To boyhood of a man who has worked lately,
And presently will work, so, meantime,
plays :

Whence, more than ever I believe in him.

Braccio [after a pause]. The sword ! At
best, the soldier, as he says,
In Florence—the black face, the barbarous
name,
For Italy to boast her show of the age,
Her man of men ! To Florence with each
letter !

ACT II.

NOON.

Domizia. Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce thy heart Thro' all its safeguards? Hate is said to help—

Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm ;
And this my hate, made up of many hates,
Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,
And will thee dead : yet do I trust it not.
Nor man's devices nor Heaven's memory
Of wickedness forgot on earth so soon,
But thy own nature,—hell and thee I trust,
To keep thee constant in that wickedness,
Where my revenge may meet thee. Turn
aside

A single step, for gratitude or shame,—
Grace but this Luria,—this wild mass of rage
I have prepared to launch against thee now,—
With other payment than thynoblest found,—
Give his desert for once its due reward,—
And past thee would my sure destruction roll.
But thou, who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,
It cannot be thou wilt except this Moor
From the accustomed fate of zeal and truth :
Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
And then—I reach thee. Old and trained,
my sire

Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,
Die awe-struck and submissive, when at last
The strange blow came for the expected
wreath ;

And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment
To exile, never to return,—they say,
Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul,
As if some natural law had changed,—how
else

Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing
thus,
Judge Porzio's actions worthy such reward ?
But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
—Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on
hour,

In which no way of getting his fair fame
From their inexplicable charges free,

Was found, save pouring forth the impatient
blood

To show its colour whether false or no !
My brothers never had a friend like me
Close in their need to watch the time, then
speak,

—Burst with a wakening laughter on their
dream,

Cry, “ Florence was all falseness, so, false
here ! ”

And show them what a simple task re-
mained—

To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God's
name

The city wedded to the wickedness.

None stood by them as I by Luria stand.

So, when the stranger cheated of his due

Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,

Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy
throat

For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,
Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died !

He comes—his friend—black faces in the
camp

Where moved those peerless brows and eyes
of old.

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Domizia. Well, and the movement—is it
as you hope ?

'Tis Lucca ?

Luria. Ah, the Pisan trumpet merely !
Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive.

Domizia. Whom I withdraw before ; tho'
if I lingered

You could not wonder, for my time fleets fast.
The overtaking night brings such reward !

And where will then be room for me ? Yet,
praised,

Remember who was first to promise praise,
And envy those who also can perform !

[*Goes.*

Luria. This trumpet from the Pisans ?—

Husain. In the camp ;

A very noble presence—Braccio's visage

On Puccio's body—calm and fixed and good ;

A man I seem as I had seen before :

Most like, it was some statue had the face.

Luria. Admit him ! This will prove the last delay.

Husain. Ay, friend, go on, and die thou going on !

Thou heardest what the grave woman said but now :

To-night rewards thee. That is well to hear ; But stop not therefore : hear it, and go on !

Luria. Oh, their reward and triumph and the rest

They round me in the ears with, all day long ? All that, I never take for earnest, friend !

Well would it suit us,—their triumphal arch Or storied pillar,—thee and me, the Moors ! But gratitude in those Italian eyes—

That, we shall get ?

Husain. It is too cold an air.

Our sun rose out of yonder mound of mist : Where is he now ? So, I trust none of them.

Luria. Truly ?

Husain. I doubt and fear. There stands a wall

'Twixt our expansive and explosive race And those absorbing, concentrating men. They use thee.

Luria. And I feel it, Husain ! yes, And care not—yes, an alien force like mine Is only called to play its part outside Their different nature ; where its sole use seems

To fight with and keep off an adverse force, As alien,—which repelled, mine too withdraws :

Inside, they know not what to do with me. Thus I have told them laughingly and oft, But long since am prepared to learn the worst.

Husain. What is the worst ?

Luria. I will forestall them, Husain, Will speak the destiny they dare not speak—Banish myself before they find the heart.

I will be first to say, " The work rewards ! " " I know, for all your praise, my use is over, " " So may it prove !—meanwhile 'tis best I go, " " Go carry safe my memories of you all " " To other scenes of action, newer lands."— Thus leaving them confirmed in their belief They would not easily have tired of me. You think this hard to say ?

Husain. Say or not say, So thou but go, so they but let thee go !

This hating people, that hate each the other, And in one blandness to us Moors unite— Locked each to each like slippery snakes, I say,

Which still in all their tangles, hissing tongue And threatening tail, ne'er do each other harm ;

While any creature of a better blood, They seem to fight for, while they circle safe And never touch it,—pines without a wound, Withers away beside their eyes and breath.

See thou, if Puccio come not safely out Of Braccio's grasp, this Braccio sworn his foe, As Braccio safely from Domizia's toils

Who hates him most ! But thou, the friend of all,

. . . Come out of them !

Luria. The Pisan trumpet now !

Husain. Breathe free—it is an enemy, no friend ! { *Goes.*

Luria. He keeps his instincts, no new culture mars

Their perfect use in him ; just so the brutes Rest not, are anxious without visible cause, When change is in the elements at work, Which man's trained senses fail to apprehend. But here,—he takes the distant chariot wheel For thunder, festal flame for lightning's flash, The finer traits of cultivated life For treachery and malevolence : I see !

Enter TIBURZIO.

Luria. Quick, sir, your message ! I but wait your message

To sound the charge. You bring no overture For truce ? I would not, for your General's sake,

You spoke of truce : a time to fight is come, And, whatso'er the fight's event, he keeps His honest soldier's-name to beat me with, Or leaves me all himself to beat, I trust !

Tiburzio. I am Tiburzio.

Luria. You ? 'Tis—yes . . . Tiburzio !

You were the last to keep the ford i' the valley From Puccio, when I threw in succours there

Why, I was on the heights—through the defile
Ten minutes after, when the prey was lost !
You wore an open skull-cap with a twist
Of water-reeds—the plume being hewn away ;
While I drove down my battle from the
heights,
I saw with my own eyes !

Tiburzio. And you are Luria
Who sent my cohort, that laid down its arms
In error of the battle-signal's sense,
Back safely to me at the critical time—
One of a hundred deeds. I know you.
Therefore

To none but you could I . . .

Luria. No truce, Tiburzio !

Tiburzio. Luria, you know the peril
imminent

On Pisa,—that you have us in the toils,
Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts
The rage of her implacablest of foes
From Pisa : if we fall to-day, she falls.
Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, 'tis too late.
You have so plainly here the best of it,
That you must feel, brave soldier as you
are,

How dangerous we grow in this extreme,
How truly formidable by despair.
Still, probabilities should have their weight :
The extreme chance is ours, but, that chance
failing,

You win this battle. Wherefore say I this ?
To be well apprehended when I add,
This danger absolutely comes from you.
Were you, who threaten thus, a Floren-
tine . . .

Luria. Sir, I am nearer Florence than her
sons.

I can, and have perhaps obliged the State,
Nor paid a mere son's duty.

Tiburzio. Even so.
Were you the son of Florence, yet endued
With all your present nobleness of soul,
No question, what I must communicate
Would not detach you from her.

Luria. Me, detach ?

Tiburzio. Time urges. You will ruin
presently
Pisa, you never knew, for Florence's sake

You think you know. I have from time to
time

Made prize of certain secret missives sent
From Braccio here, the Commissary, home :
And knowing Florence otherwise, I piece
The entire chain out, from these its scattered
links.

Your trial occupies the Signory ;
They sit in judgment on your conduct now.
When men at home inquire into the acts
Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .
Brief, they are Florentines ! You, saving
them,
Seek but the sure destruction saviours find.

Luria. Tiburzio !

Tiburzio. All the wonder is of course.
I am not here to teach you, nor direct,
Only to loyally apprise—scarce that.
This is the latest letter, sealed and safe,
As it left here an hour ago. One way
Of two thought free to Florence, I command.
The duplicate is on its road ; but this,—
Read it, and then I shall have more to say.

Luria. Florence !

Tiburzio. Now, were yourself a
Florentine,

This letter, let it hold the worst it can,
Would be no reason you should fall away.
The mother city is the mother still,
And recognition of the children's service
Her own affair ; reward—there's no reward !
But you are bound by quite another tie.

Nor nature shows, nor reason, why at first
A foreigner, born friend to all alike,
Should give himself to any special State
More than another, stand by Florence' side
Rather than Pisa ; 'tis as fair a city
You war against as that you fight for—famed
As well as she in story, graced no less
With noble heads and patriotic hearts :
Nor to a stranger's eye would either cause,
Stripped of the cumulative loves and hates
Which take importance from familiar view,
Stand as the right and sole to be upheld.
Therefore, should the preponderating gift
Of love and trust, Florence was first to throw,
Which made you hers, not Pisa's, void the
scale,—

Old ties dissolving, things resume their place
 And all begins again. Break seal and read !
 At least let Pisa offer for you now !
 And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice—
 Though for myself I lose, in gaining you,
 This last fight and its opportunity ;
 The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
 Or in the turn of battle dying so
 That shame should want its extreme bitter-
 ness.

Luria. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa now
 As I for Florence . . . say my chance were
 yours !

You read this letter, and you find . . . no,
 no !

Too mad !

Tiburzio. I read the letter, find they pur-
 pose

When I have crushed their foe, to crush me :
 well ?

Luria. You, being their captain, what is
 it you do ?

Tiburzio. Why, as it is, all cities are alike ;
 As Florence pays you, Pisa will pay me.

I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,
 As you, or more : my weak head, they will say,
 Prompted this last expedient, my faint heart

Entailed on them indelible disgrace,
 Both which defects ask proper punishment.

Another tenure of obedience, mine !

You are no son of Pisa's : break and read !

Luria. And act on what I read ? What
 act were fit ?

If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
 In Florence, who to me stands for mankind,

—If that break up and, disimprisoning
 From the abyss . . . Ah friend, it cannot be !

You may be very sage, yet—all the world
 Having to fail, or your sagacity,

You do not wish to find yourself alone !
 What would the world be worth ? Whose

love be sure ?
 The world remains : you are deceived !

Tiburzio. Your hand !
 I lead the vanguard.—If you fall, beside,

The better : I am left to speak ! For me,
 This was my duty, nor would I rejoice

If I could help, it misses its effect ;

And after all you will look gallantly
 Found dead here with that letter in
 breast.

Luria. Tiburzio—I would see these
 once

And test them ere I answer finally !
 At your arrival let the trumpet sound :

If mine return not then the wonted cry
 It means that I believe—am Pisa's !

Tiburzio.

Luria. My heart will have it be
 true ! My blood

Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.
 If he had stopt into my watch-tent, night

And the wild desert full of foes around,
 I should have broke the bread and give
 salt

Secure, and, when my hour of watch was
 Taken my turn to sleep between his kn

Safe in the untroubled brow and honest c
 Oh world, where all things pass and n

abides,
 Oh life, the long mutation—is it so ?

Is it with life as with the body's change
 —Where, e'en tho' better follow, good

pass,
 Nor manhood's strength can mate with
 hood's grace,

Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find streng
 But silently the first gift dies away,

And though the new stays, never both at o
 Life's time of savage instinct o'er with m

It fades and dies away, past trusting mor.
 As if to punish the ingratitude

With which I turned to grow in these n
 lights,

And learned to look with European eyes.
 Yet it is better, this cold certain way,

Where Braccio's brow tells nothing, Pucci
 mouth,

Domizia's eyes reject the searcher : yes !
 For on their calm sagacity I lean,

Their sense of right, deliberate choice of goc
 Sure, as they know my deeds, they deal with n

Yes, that is better—that is best of all !
 Such faith stays when mere wild belief wou

go.