

" His crown at such a juncture ! Still,
if hold
" Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain
enfold
" The neck of . . . who but this same
Ecelin
" That must recoil when the best days
begin !
" Recoil ? that 's nought ; if the re-
coiler leaves
" His name for me to fight with, no one
grieves : [lock
" But he must interfere, forsooth, un-
" His cloister to become my stumbling-
block
" Just as of old ! Ay, ay, there 't is
again—
" The land's inevitable Head—explain
" The reverences that subject us !
Count
" These Ecelins now ! Not to say as
fount,
" Originating power of thought,—from
twelve
" That drop i' the trenches they joined
hands to delve,
" Six shall surpass him, but . . . why,
men must twine
" Somehow with something ! Ecelin 's
a fine
" Clear name ! 'Twere simpler, doubt-
less, twine with me
" At once : our cloistered friend's
capacity
" Was of a sort ! I had to share my-
self
" In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked
elf
" That 's forced illume 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 de-
volved
" On me, 't was Tito's word : I have
to lay
" For once my plan, pursue my plan my
way,
" Prompt nobody, and render an ac-
count
" 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, Boni-
face
" Compose a right-arm Hohenstauf-
fen's race
" Must break ere govern Lombardy. I
point
" How easy 't were to twist, once out of
joint,
" The socket from the bone :—my Az-
zo's stare
" Meanwhile ! for I, this idle strap to
wear, [end
" Shall—fret myself abundantly, what
" To serve ? There's left me twenty
years to spend
" —How better than my old way ?
Had I one
" Who laboured overthrow my work—
a son
" Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,
" To root my pines up and then poison
me,
" Suppose—'t were worth while frus-
trate that ! Beside,
" Another life 's ordained me : the
world's tide
" Rolls, and what hope of parting from
the press
" Of waves, a single wave through wear-
iness
" Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore ?
" My life must be lived out in foam and
roar,

"No question. Fifty years the province held
 "Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,
 "He in the midst—who leaves this quaint stone place,
 "These trees a year or two, then not a trace
 "Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues
 "Like this poor minstrel with the foolish songs—
 "To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?
 "—Flowers one may tease, that never grow extinct.
 "Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where
 "I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair,
 "To overawe the aloes; and we trod
 "Those flowers, how call you such?—into the sod;
 "A stately foreigner—a world of pain
 "To make it thrive, arrest rough winds—all vain!
 "It would decline; these would not be destroyed:
 "And now, where is it? where can you avoid
 "The flowers? I frighten children twenty years
 "Longer!—which way, too, Ecelin appears
 "To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth
 "Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth:
 "They feel it at Vicenza! Fate, fate, fate,
 "My fine Taurello! Go you, promulgate
 "Friedrich's decree, and here 's shall aggrandise
 "Young Ecelin—your Prefect's badge! a prize
 "Too precious, certainly.
 "How now? Compete
 "With my old comrade? shuffle from their seat
 "His children? Paltry dealing! Don't I know
 "Ecelin? now, I think, and years ago!
 "What 's changed—the weakness? did not I compound
 "For that, and undertake to keep him sound

"Despite it? Here 's Taurello hankering
 "After a boy's preferment—this plaything
 "To carry, Bacchus!" And he laughed.

Remark

Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark
 Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort
 Fail: while these last are ever stopping short—
 (So much they should—so little they can do!)
 The careless tribe see nothing to pursue
 If they desist; meantime their scheme succeeds.
 Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds
 Methodic with Taurello; so, he turned,
 Enough amused by fancies fairly earned
 Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,
 And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck,—
 To his own petty but immediate doubt
 If he could pacify the League without
 Conceding Richard; just to this was brought
 That interval of vain discursive thought!
 As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit
 Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot
 Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black
 Enormous watercourse which guides him back
 To his own tribe again, where he is king;
 And laughs because he guesses, numbering
 The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch
 Of the first lizard wrested from its couch
 Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips
 To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,
 And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert blast)
 That he has reached its boundary, at last
 May breathe;—thinks o'er enchantments of the South
 Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth,

Eyes, nails and hair; but, these enchantments tried
 In fancy, puts them soberly aside
 For truth, projects a cool return with friends,
 The likelihood of winning mere amends
 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. "T is your Cause:
 "What makes a Ghibellin? There should be laws—
 " (Remember how my youth escaped! I trust
 "To you for manhood, Palma; tell me just
 "As any child)—there must be laws at work
 "Explaining this. Assure me, good may lurk
 "Under the bad,—my multitude has part
 "In your designs, their welfare is at heart
 "With Salinguerra, to their interest
 "Refer the deeds he dwelt on,—so divest
 "Our conference of much that scared me. Why
 "Affect that heartless tone to Tito? I
 "Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind
 "This morn, a recreant to my race—mankind

"O'erlooked till now: why boast my spirit's force,
 "—Such force denied its object? why divorce
 "These, then admire my spirit's flight the same
 "As though it bore up, helped some half-orbed flame
 "Else quenched in the dead void, to living space?
 "That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace,
 "Why vaunt so much my unincumbered dance,
 "Making a feat's facilities enhance
 "Its marvel? But I front Taurello, one [done
 "Of happier fate, and all I should have
 "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 Guef, the Ghibellin may be to curse—
 "I have done nothing, but both sides do worse
 "Than nothing. Nay, to me, forgotten, left
 "Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left
 "The notion of a service—ha? What lured
 "Me here, what mighty aim was I assured
 "Must move Taurello? What if there remained
 "A cause, intact, distinct from these, ordained
 "For me, its true discoverer?"
 Some one pressed
 Before them here, a watcher, to suggest
 The subject for a ballad: "They must know
 "The tale of the dead worthy, long ago
 "Consul of Rome—that's long ago for us,
 "Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus
 "In the world's corner—but too late, no doubt,
 "For the brave time he sought to bring about.
 "—Not know Crescentius Nomentanus?" Then
 He cast about for terms to tell him, when
 Sordello disavowed it, how they used
 Whenever their Superior introduced
 A novice to the Brotherhood—"for I
 "Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
 "Appointed too," quoth he, "till innocent
 "Bade me relinquish, to my small content,
 "My wife or my brown sleeves")—some brother spoke
 Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke
 The edict issued, after his demise,

Which blotted fame alike and effigies,
 All out except a floating power, a name
 Including, tending to produce the same
 Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least
 Within that brain, though to a vulgar priest
 And a vile stranger,—two not worth a slave
 Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho,—fortune gave
 The rule there: so, Crescentius, haply 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
 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's step had spurned,
 And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress
 The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress
 Of adverse fortune bent. "They crucified
 "Their Consul in the Forum; and abide
 "E'er since such slaves at Rome, that I —(for I
 "Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
 "Appointed)—I had option to keep wife
 "Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife
 "Lose both. A song of Rome!"
 And Rome, indeed,
 Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,
 The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,
 Looked an established point of light
 whence rays

Traversed the world ; for, all the clustered homes
Beside of men, seemed bent on being
Romes
In their degree ; the question was, how
each
Should most resemble Rome, clean out
of reach.
Nor, of the great Two, either principle,
Struggled to change—but to possess—
Rome, still,
Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.
Let Rome advance !
Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignorance—
How could he doubt one moment ?
Rome's the Cause !
Rome of the Pandects, all the world's
new laws—
Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo ;
New structures, that inordinately glow,
Subdued, brought back to harmony,
made ripe
By many a relic of the archetype
Extant for wonder ; every upstart
church
That hoped to leave old temples in the
lurch,
Corrected by the Theatre forlorn
That,—as a mundane shell, its world
late born,—
Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints
combined,
Rome typifies the scheme to put mankind
Once more in full possession of their
rights.
" Let us have Rome again ! On me it
lights
" To build up Rome—on me, the first
and last :
" For such a future was endured the
past ! "
And thus, in the 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.

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 blink-
ard trips
At his mooned sandal. " Leave to
lead the brawls
" Here i' the atria ? " No, friend !
He that sprawls
On ought but a stibadium . . . 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 loop-
hole ? Brave !
They ask to feel the sun shine, see the
grass
Grow, hear the larks sing ? Dead art
thou, alas,
And I am dead ! But here's our son
excels
At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells
Oak and devises rafters, dreams and
shapes
His dream into a door-post, just escapes
The mystery of hinges. Lie we both
Perdue another age. The goodly
growth
Of brick and stone ! Our building-pelt
was rough,

But that descendant's garb suits well
enough

A portico-contriver. Speed the years—
What's time to us? At last, a city
rears

Itself! nay, enter—what's the grave to
us?

Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry
thus

The head! Successively sewer, forum,
cirque—

Last age, an aqueduct was counted
work,

But now they tire the artificer upon
Blank alabaster, black obsidian,

—Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgur-
ant,

And mother Venus' kiss-creased nip-
ples pant

Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed
Above the baths. What difference
betwixt

This Rome and ours—resemblance
what, between

That scurvy dumb-show and this
pageant sheen—

These Romans and our rabble? Use
thy wit!

The work marched: step by step,—a
workman fit

Took each, nor too fit,—to one task,
one time,—

No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,
When just the substituting osier lithe
For brittle bulrush, sound wood for
soft withe,

To further loam-and-roughcast-work a
stage,—

Exacts an architect, exacts an age:
No tables of the Mauritanian tree

For men whose maple-log 's their lux-
ury!

That way was Rome built. "Better"
(say you) "merge

"At once all workmen in the demiurge,
"All epochs in a lifetime, every task

"In one!" So should the sudden
city bask

I' the day—while those we'd feast
there, want the knack

Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from
speck and brack,

Distinguish not rare peacock from vile
swan,

Nor Mareotic juice from Cæcuban.
"Enough of Rome! 'T was happy to
conceive

"Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate be-
reave

"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 arche-
type,

"Last of my dreams and loveliest,
depart!"

And then a low voice wound into his
heart:

"Sordello!" (low as some old Pytho-
ness

Conceding to a Lydian King's distress
The cause of his long error—one mis-
take

Of her past oracle) "Sordello, wake!
"God has conceded two sights to a
man—

"One, of men's whole work, time's
completed plan,

"The other, of the minute's work,
man's first

"Step to the plan's completeness:
what 's dispersed

"Save hope of that supreme step which,
descried

"Earliest, was meant still to remain
untried

"Only to give you heart to take your
own

"Step, and there stay—leaving the rest
alone?

"Where is the vanity? Why count
as one

"The first step, with the last step?
What is gone

"Except Rome's 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?

- " As if a cloud enveloped him while
fought
" Under its shade, grim prizes,
thought with thought
" At dead-lock, agonizing he, until
" The victor thought leap radiant up,
and Will,
" The slave with folded arms and droop-
ing 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 [tears
" Have men to wear away in smiles and
" 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, Bar-
baross,
" 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 St. Francis preach-
ing peace
" Yonder ! God's Truce—or trick to
supersede
" The very Use of Strength, is safe.
Indeed
" We trench upon the future. Who is
found
" To take next step, next age—trail
o'er the ground—
" Shall I say, gourd-like ?—not the
flower's display
" Nor the root's prowess, but the plen-
teous way
" O' the plant—produced by joy and
sorrow, whence
" Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest
thence ?
" Knowledge by stress of merely
Knowledge ? No—
" E'en were Sordello ready to forego
" His life for this, 't were overleaping
work
" Some one has first to do, howe'er it
irk,
" Nor stay 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 pil-
lars blench
" Merely, start back again—perchance
have been
" Taken for buttresses : crash every
screen,
" Hammer the tenons better, and en-
gage
" A gang about your work, for the next
age

- " Or two, of Knowledge, part by
Strength and part
" By Knowledge! Then, indeed, per-
chance may start
" Sordello on his race—would time di-
vulge
" 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 be-
hind:
" 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
descrie
" 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 faulch'on,
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 Rich-
ard, how
" ' Polt-foot,' sang they, ' was in a pit-
fall now,'
" Cheering each other from the engine-
mounts,—
" That crippled sprawling 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 [hide
" The engine in his coat of raw sheep's
" A double watch in the noon sun; and
see
" Lucchino, beauty, with the favours
free,
" Trim hacqueton, spruce beard and
scented hair,
" Campaigning it for the first time—
cut there
" In two already, boy enough to crawl
" For latter orpine round the southern
wall,
" Tomà, where Richard's kept, because
that whore
" Marfisa, the fool never saw before,
" Sickened for flowers this wearisomest
siege:
" And Tiso's wife—men liked their
pretty liege,

"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 be-
 low
 Made moody music augural of woe
 From the pine barrier)—"What if, now
 the scene
 "Draws to a close, yourself have really
 been
 "—You, plucking purples in Goito's
 moss
 "Like edges of a trabea (not to cross
 "Your consul-humour) or dry aloes-
 shafts
 "For fasces, at Ferrara—he, fate
 wafts,
 "This very age, her whole inheritance
 "Of opportunities? Yet you advance
 "Upon the last! Since talking is your
 trade,
 "There's Salinguerra left you to per-
 suade:
 "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, how-
 e'er it irk,
 "Thus help!" He shook the foolish
 aloes-haulm [calm
 Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded
 To the appointed presence. The large
 head
 Turned on its socket; "And your
 spokesman," said
 The large voice, "is Elcorte's happy
 sprout?
 "Few such"—(so finishing a speech
 no doubt
 Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)
 "—My sober councils have diversified.
 "Elcorte's son! good: forward as
 you may,
 "Our lady's minstrel with so much to
 say!"
 The hesitating sunset floated back,
 Rosily traversed in the wonted track
 The chamber, from the lattice o'er the
 girth

Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in
 earth
 Opposite,—outlined sudden, spur to
 crest,
 That solid Salinguerra, and caressed
 Palma's contour; 't was day looped
 back night's pall;
 Sordello had a chance left spite of all,
 And much he made of the convincing
 speech
 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 accompt,
 Once proved its debtor? Who'd sup-
 pose, before
 This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore,
 At duty's instance could demean him-
 self
 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 Hon-
orius 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 ask-
ance
Protract the ignominious years beyond
To dream in—time to hope and time
despond,
Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice
As saved a trouble; he might, at his
choice,
One way or other, idle life out, drop
No few smooth verses by the way—for
prop,
A thyrsus, these sad people, all the
same,
Should pick up, and set store by,—far
from blame,
Plant o'er his hearse, convinced his
better part
Survived him. "Rather tear men out
the heart
"Of the truth!"—Sordello muttered,
and renewed
His propositions for the Multitude.

But Salinguerra, who at this attack
Had thrown great breast and ruffling
corslet back
To hear the better, smilingly resumed
His task; beneath, the carroch's
warning boomed;
He must decide with Tito; courteously
He turned then, even seeming to agree
With his admonisher—"Assist the
Pope,
"Extend Guelf domination, fill the
scope
"Of the Church, thus based on All, by
All, for All—
"Change Secular to Evangelical"—
Echoing his very sentence: all seemed
lost,
When suddenly he looked up, laugh-
ingly almost,
To Palma: "This opinion of your
friend's—
"For instance, would it answer Pal-
ma's ends?
"Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit
our Strength"—
(Here he drew out his baldric to its
length)
—"To the Pope's Knowledge—let our
captive slip,
"Wide to the walls throw ope our gates,
equip
"Azzo with . . . what I hold here?
Who'll subscribe
"To a trite censure of the minstrel
tribe
"Henceforward? or pronounce, as
Heinrich used,
"Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads
for the joust!"
—"When Constance, for his couplets,
would promote
"Alcarno, from a parti-coloured coat,
"To holding her lord's stirrup in the
wars.
"Not that I see where couplet-making
jars
"With common sense: at Mantua I
had borne
"This chanted, better than their most
forlorn
"Of bull-baits,—that's indisputable!"
Brave!
Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt
shall save!
All's at an end: a Troubadour suppose
Mankind will class him with their
friends or foes?

A puny uncouth ailing vassal think
The world and him bound in some
special link ?

Abrupt the visionary tether burst.
What were rewarded here, or what
amerced

If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream
Deservingly, got tangled by his theme
So far as to conceit the knack or gift
Or whatsoe'er it be, of verse, might lift
The globe, a lever like the hand and
head

Of—"Men of Action," as the Jongleurs
said,

—"The Great Men," in the people's
dialect ?

And not a moment did this scorn
affect [once,

Sordello : scorn the poet ? They, for
Asking "what was," obtained a full
response.

Bid Naddo think at Mantua, he had but
To look into his promptuary, put
Finger on a set thought in a set speech :
But was Sordello fitted thus for each
Conjecture ? Nowise ; since within
his soul,

Perception brooded unexpressed and
whole.

A healthy spirit like a healthy frame
Craves aliment in plenty—all the same,
Changes, assimilates its aliment.

Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent ?
Next day no formularies more you saw
Than figs or olives in a sated maw.

'T is Knowledge, whither such percep-
tions tend ;

They lose themselves in that, means to
an end,

The many old producing some one new,
A last unlike the first. If lies are true,
The Caliph's wheel-work man of brass
receives

A meal, munched millet grains and let-
tuce leaves

Together in his stomach rattle loose ;
You find them perfect next day to pro-
duce :

But ne'er expect the man, on strength
of that,

Can roll an iron camel-collar flat
Like Haroun's self ! I tell you, what
was stored

Bit by bit through Sordello's life, out-
poured

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 un-
skilled

"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 [meed—

"Shamed now, my right to my especial
"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,
 "T is not the royalty, ye witness
 quail,
 "But one deposed who, caring not
 exert
 "Its proper essence, trifled malapert
 "With accidents instead—good things
 assigned
 "As heralds of a better thing behind—
 "And, worthy through display of
 these, put forth
 "Never the inmost all-surpassing
 worth
 "That constitutes him king precisely
 since
 "As yet no other spirit may evince
 "Its like: the power he took most
 pride to test,
 "Whereby all forms of life had been
 professed
 "At pleasure, forms already on the
 earth,
 "Was but a means to power beyond,
 whose birth
 "Should, in its novelty, be king-
 ship'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, nor the proto-
 plast
 "Of nature: what would come of be-
 ing free,
 "By action to exhibit tree for tree,
 "Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or
 prove earth bore
 "One veritable man or woman more?
 "Means to an end, such proofs are:
 what the end?
 "Let essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend—
 "Never contract. Already you in-
 clude
 "The multitude; then let the multi-
 tude
 "Include yourself; and the result
 were new:
 "Themselves before, the multitude
 turn you.
 "This were to live and move and have,
 in them,
 "Your being, and secure a diadem
 "You should transmit (because no
 cycle years
 "Beyond itself, but on itself returns)
 "When, the full sphere in wane, the
 world o'erlaid
 "Long since with you, shall have in
 turn obeyed
 "Some orb still prouder, some dis-
 player, still
 "More potent than the last, of human
 will,
 "And some new king depose the old.
 Of such
 "Am I—whom pride of this elates too
 much?
 "Safe, rather say, 'mid troops of peers
 again;
 "I, with my words, hailed brother of
 the train
 "Deeds once sufficed: for, let the
 world roll back,
 "Who fails, through deeds howe'er
 diverse, re-track
 "My purpose still, my task? A teem-
 ing 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 unexpressed
 " 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, [lock
 " The earnest faces. What shall I un-
 " By song ? behold me prompt, what-e'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 Ag'lulph
 " 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 hither-to
 " Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct
 " Each nature to its farthest, or obstruct
 " At soonest, in the world : light, thwarted, breaks
 " A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,
 " Or shadow, massed, freezes to gloom : behold
 " How such, with fit assistance to unfold,
 " Or obstacles to crush them, disengage
 " Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make, war wage,
 " In presence of you all ! Myself, implied
 " Superior now, as, by the platform's side,
 " I bade them do and suffer,—would last content
 " The world . . . no—that's too far ! I circumvent
 " A few, my masque contented, and to these
 " Offer unveil the last of mysteries—

- " Man's inmost life shall have yet freer play :
- " Once more I cast external things away,
- " And natures composite, so decompose
- " That " . . . Why, he writes *Sordello* !
- " How I rose,
- " And how have you advanced ! since evermore
- " Yourselves effect what I was fain before
- " Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,
- " What I leave bare yourselves can now invest.
- " How we attain to talk as brothers talk,
- " In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk
- " From discontinuing old aids. To-day
- " Takes in account the work of Yesterday :
- " His not the world a Past now, its adept
- " Consults ere he dispense with or accept
- " New aids ? a single touch more may enhance,
- " A touch less turn to insignificance
- " Those structures' symmetry the past has strewed
- " The world with, once so bare. Leave the mere rude
- " Explicit details ! 't is but brother's speech
- " We need, speech where an accent's change gives each
- " The other's soul—no speech to understand
- " By former audience : need was then to expand,
- " Expatiate—hardly were we brothers ! true—
- " Nor I lament my small remove from you,
- " Nor reconstruct what stands already. Ends
- " Accomplished turn to means : my art intends
- " New structure from the ancient : as they changed
- " The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged
- " The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright
- " As in his desert, by some simple bright
- " Clay cinerary pitcher—Thebes as Rome,
- " Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome
- " From earth's reputed consummations razed
- " A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed
- " Above. Ah, whose that fortune ? Ne'ertheless
- " E'en he must stoop contented to express
- " No tithe of what's to say—the vehicle
- " Never sufficient : but his work is still
- " For faces like the faces that select
- " The single service I am bound effect,—
- " 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
- " 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,
 "Trevelle, Villarazzi, Puissolo,
 "Cartiglione, Loria!—all go,
 "And with them go my hopes. 'T is
 lost, then! "Lost
 "This eve, our crisis, and some pains it
 cost
 "Procuring; thirty years—as good I'd
 spent
 "Like our admonisher! But each his
 bent
 "Pursues: no question one might live
 absurd
 "Oneself this while, by deed as he by
 word,
 "Persisting to obtrude an influence
 where
 "T is made account of, much as . . .
 nay, you fare
 "With twice the fortune, youngster!—
 I submit,
 "Happy to parallel my waste of wit
 "With the renowned Sordello's: you
 decide
 "A course for me. Romano may
 abide
 "Romano,—Bacchus! After all, what
 dearth
 "Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth?
 "Say there's a prize in prospect, must
 disgrace
 "Betide competitors, unless they style
 "Themselves Romano? Were it
 worth my while
 "To try my own luck! But an ob-
 scure place
 "Suits me—there wants a youth to
 bustle, stalk
 "And attitudinize—some fight, more
 talk,
 "Most flaunting badges—how, I might
 make clear [here
 "Since Friedrich's very purposes lie
 "—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 garni-
 ture,
 "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 de-
 clare—
 (So like a nature made to serve, excel
 In serving, only feel by service well!)
 —That he would make Sordello that
 and more.
 "As good a scheme as any! What's
 to pore
 "At in my face?" he asked—"ponder
 instead
 "This piece of news; you are Rom-
 ano'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 con-
voy's flight,
- " Cut off a moment, coiled inside the
flame
- " That wallowed like a dragon at his
game
- " The toppling city through—San Bia-
gio rocks !
- " And wounded lies in her delicious
locks
- " Retrude, the frail mother, on her
face,
- " None of her wasted, just in one em-
brace
- " Covering her child : when, as they
lifted her, [mightier
- " Cleaving the tumult, mighty,
- " And mightiest Taurello's cry out-
broke,
- " Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves
the smoke,
- " Midmost to cheer his Mantuans on-
ward—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
- " 'T was Salinguerra's for his child :
scorn, hate,
- " Rage startled her from Ecelin—too
late !
- " Then was the moment !—rival's foot
had spurned
- " Never that brow to earth ! Ere
sense returned—
- " The act conceived, adventured and
complete,
- " They bore away to an obscure retreat
- " Mother and child—Retrude's self not
slain "
- (Not even here Taurello moved) " though
pain
- " Was fled ; and what assured them
most 't was fled,
- " All pain, was, if they raised the pale
hushed head
- " 'T would turn this way and that,
waver awhile,
- " And only settle into its old smile—
- " (Graceful as the disquieted water-
flag
- " Steadying itself, remarked they, in
the quag
- " On either side their path)—when
suffered look
- " Down on her child. They marched :
no sign once shook
- " The company's close litter of crossed
spears
- " Till, as they reached Goito, a few
tears
- " Slipped in the sunset from her long
black lash, [rash ;
- " And she was gone. So far the action
- " 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 con-
trived

"To hide from him Taurello's infant
 lived,
 "Lest, by revealing that, himself
 should mar
 "Romano's fortunes. And, a crime
 so far,
 "Palma received that action: she was
 told
 "Of Salinguerra's nature, of his cold
 "Calm acquiescence in his lot! But
 free
 "To impart the secret to Romano, she
 "Engaged to repossess Sordello of
 "His heritage, and hers, and that way
 doff
 "The mask, but after years, long
 years: while now,
 "Was not Romano's sign-mark on that
 brow?"
 Across Taurello's heart his arms
 were locked:
 And when he did speak 't was as if he
 mocked
 The minstrel, "who had not to move,"
 he said,
 "Nor stir—should fate defraud him of
 a shred
 "Of his son's infancy? much less of
 his youth!"
 (Laughingly all this)—"which to aid,
 in truth, [grown
 "Himself, reserved on purpose, had not
 "Old, not too old—'t was best they
 kept alone
 "Till now, and never idly met till
 now;"
 —Then, in the same breath, told Sor-
 dello 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 Guefs, a despicable monk re-
 coils
 "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 cun-
 ning has preserved
 "Samminiato—that's a central place
 "Secures us Florence, boy,—in Pisa's
 case, [ours,
 "By land as she by sea; with Pisa
 "And Florence, and Pistoia, one de-
 vours
 "The land at leisure! Gloriously dis-
 persed—
 "Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza
 first
 "That flanked us (ah, you know not!)
 in the March;
 "On these we pile, as keystone of our
 arch,

" Romagna and Bologna, whose first span
 " Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan ;
 " Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure ! " . . .
 So he proceeded : half of all this, pure
 Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,
 But what was undone he felt sure to do,
 As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away
 The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm play—
 Need of the sword now ! That would soon adjust
 Aught wrong at present ; to the sword intrust
 Sordello's whiteness, undersize : 't was plain
 He hardly rendered right to his own brain—
 Like a brave hound, men educate to pride
 Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,
 As though he could not, gift by gift, match men !
 Palma had listened patiently : but when
 'T was time expostulate, attempt withdraw
 Taurello from his child, she, without awe
 Took off his iron arms from, one by one,
 Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done,
 Made him avert his visage and relieve Sordello (you might see his 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 commence
 One of Sordello's poems, a pretence
 For speaking, some poor rhyme of " Elys' hair
 " And head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear,
 " So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks
 " Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks
 " Sun-blanced the livelong summer " —from his worst
 Performance, the Goito, as his first :
 And that at end, conceiving from the brow
 And open mouth no silence would serve now,
 Went on to say the whole world loved that man
 And, for that matter, thought his face, tho' wan,
 Eclipsed the Count's—he sucking in each phrase
 As if an angel spoke. The foolish praise [made
 Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees,
 Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,
 A crown, an aureole : there must she remain
 (Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain
 As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)
 To get the best look at, in fittest niche
 Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed her brow,
 —" Lauded her father for his treason now,"
 He told her, " only, how could one suspect
 " The wit in him ?—whose clansman, recollect,
 " Was ever Salinguerra—she, the same,
 " Romano and his lady—so, might claim
 " To know all, as she should "—and thus begun

Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on
schemes, "not one
"Fit to be told that foolish boy," he
said,
"But only let Sordello Palma wed,
"—Then!"

"T was a dim long narrow place at
best:

Midway a sole grate showed the fiery
West,

As shows its corpse the world's end
some split tomb—

A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom,
Faced Palma—but at length Taurello
set

Her free; the grating held one ragged
jet

Of fierce gold fire: he lifted her within
The hollow underneath—how else be-
gin

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 un-
checked

Monotony made out from his quick talk
And the recurring noises of his walk;

—Somewhat too much like the o'er-
charged assent

Of two resolved friends in one danger
blent, [heart;

Who hearten each the other against
Boasting there's nought to care for,
when, apart

The boaster, all's to care for. He, be-
side

Some shape not visible, in power and
pride

Approached, out of the dark, ginglyly
near,

Nearer, passed close in the broad light,
his ear

Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples
full-fraught,

Just a snatch of the rapid speech you
caught,

And on he strode into the opposite
dark,

Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a
spark

I' the stone, and whirl of some loose
embossed thong

That crashed against the angle 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 ascer-
tain

That, Friedrich's Prefecture sur-
mounted, left

By this alone in Italy, they cleft
Asunder, crushed together, at com-
mand

Of none, were free to break up Hilde-
brand,

Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charle-
magne—

But garnished, Strength with Know-
ledge, "if we deign

"Accept that compromise and stoop to
give

"Rome law, the Cæsar's Representa-
tive."

Enough, that the illimitable flood
Of triumphs after triumphs, understood

In its faint reflux (you shall hear) suf-
ficed

Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed
Him on till, these long quiet in their
graves,

He found 't was looked for that a whole
life's braves

Should somehow be made good; so,
weak and worn,

Must stagger up at Milan, one 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, suc-
cess,
Concerned not Palma, passion's votar-
ess)
Triumph at height, and thus Sordello
crowned—
Above the passage suddenly a sound
Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks
Taurello, bids
With large involuntary asking lids,
Palma interpret. " 'T is his own foot-
stamp—
"Your hand! His summons! Nay,
this idle damp
"Befits not!" Out they two reeled
dizzily.
"Visconti's strong at Milan," resumed
he,
In the old, somewhat insignificant
way
(Was Palma wont, years afterward, to
say)
As though the spirit's flight, sustained
thus far,
Dropped at that very instant. Gone
they are—
Palma, Taurello; Eglamor anon,
Ecelin,—only Naddo 's never gone!
—Labours, this moonrise, what the
Master meant
"Is Squarcialupo speckled?—puru-
lent,
"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-see . . .
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 immen-
sity; [sky
"Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet
"Orsea, too little for their quietude:"
And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's
mood
Confirmed its speciousness, while eve
slow sank [bank
Down the near terrace to the farther
And only one spot left out of the night
Glimmered upon the river opposite—
A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray,
And star for star, one richness where
they mixed
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary splendours folded in
To die. Nor turned he till Ferrara's
din
(Say, the monotonous speech from a
man's lip [slip
Who lets some first and eager purpose
In a new fancy's birth; the speech
keeps on
Though elsewhere its informing soul be
gone)
—Aroused him, surely offered succour.
Fate [tate
Paused with this eve; ere she precipi-
Herself,—put off strange after-thoughts
awhile,
That voice, those large hands, that
portentous smile,—
What help to pierce the future as the
past,
Lay in the plaining city?
And at last
The main discovery and prime concern,
All that just now imported him to
learn,
His truth, like yonder slow moon to
complete [feet,
Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his
Lighted his old life's every shift and
change,
Effort with counter-effort; nor the
range
Of each looked wrong except wherein it
checked
Some other—which of these could he
suspect,

Prying into them by the sudden blaze ?
 The real way seemed made up of all the
 ways—
 Mood after mood of the one mind in
 him ;
 Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,
 Of a transcendent all-embracing sense
 Demanding only outward influence,
 A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his
 soul,
 Power to uplift his power,—this moon's
 control
 Over the sea-depths,—and their mass
 had swept
 Onward from the beginning and still
 kept
 Its course : but years and years the
 sky above
 Held none, and so, untasked of any
 love,
 His sensitiveness idled, now 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 pre-
 tence
 To strength not half his own, yet had
 some core [fore
 Within, submitted to some moon, be-
 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-sus-
 tained, afar,—

And meanwhile nurse the dream of be-
 ing blest
 By winning it to notice and invest
 Their souls with alien glory, some one
 day
 Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape
 always,
 Round to the perfect circle—soon or
 late,
 According as themselves are formed to
 wait ;
 Whether mere human beauty will suf-
 fice
 —The yellow hair and the luxurious
 eyes,
 Or human intellect seem best, or each
 Combine in some ideal form past reach
 On earth, or else some shade of these,
 some aim,
 Some love, hate even, take their place,
 the same,
 And may be served—all this they do
 not lose,
 Waiting for death to live, nor idly
 choose
 What must be Hell—a progress thus
 pursued [food
 Through all existence, still above the
 That's offered them, still towering
 beyond
 The widened range, in virtue of their
 bond
 Of sovereignty. Not that a Palma's
 Love,
 A Salinguerra's Hate, would equal
 prove
 To swaying all Sordello : wherefore
 doubt
 That love meet for such strength, some
 moon without
 Would match his sea ?—or fear, Good
 manifest,
 Only the Best breaks faith ?—Ah but
 the Best
 Somehow eludes us ever, still might be
 And is not ! Crave we gems ? No
 penury
 Of their material round us ! Pliant
 earth
 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 ! Ask 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 be-
 yond
 These men !—and thus, perchance, are
 over-fond
 In arguing, from Good the Best, from
 force
 Divided—force combined, an ocean's
 course
 From this our sea whose mere intestine
 pants
 Might seem at times sufficient to our
 wants.
 —External power ? If none be ade-
 quate
 And he stand forth ordained (a prouder
 fate)
 A law to his own sphere ?—need to
 remove
 All incompleteness, for that law, that
 love ?
 Nay, if all other laws be such, though
 veiled
 In mercy to each vision that had failed
 If unassisted by its want,—for lure,
 Embodied ? Stronger vision could
 endure
 The unbodied want : no bauble for a
 truth !
 The People were himself ; and, by the
 ruth
 At their condition, was he less impelled
 To alter the discrepancy beheld,
 Than if, from the sound Whole, a sickly
 Part
 Subtracted were transformed, decked
 out with art,
 Then palmed on him as alien woe—the
 Guelf
 To succour, proud that he forsook him-
 self ?
 No ! All's himself ; all service, there-
 fore, 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
 upreared,

" The buckler wielded handsomely as
 now !
 " But view your escort, bear in mind
 your vow,
 " Count the pale tracts of sand to pass
 ere that,
 " And, if you hope we struggle through
 the flat,
 " Put lance and buckler by ! Next
 half-month lacks
 " Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe
 " To cleave this dismal brake of
 prickly-pear
 " Which bristling holds Cydippe by the
 hair,
 " Lames barefoot Agathon : this
 felled, we'll try
 " The picturesque achievements by
 and by—
 " Next life ! "
 Ay, rally, mock, O People, urge
 Your claims !—for thus he ventured,
 to the verge,
 Push a vain mummery which perchance
 distrust
 Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust
 Likewise : accordingly the Crowd—
 (as yet
 He had unconsciously contrived forget
 I' the whole, to dwell o' the points . . .
 one 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 ; up
 rose 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
 'T were service to impart—can truth
 be seized,

Settled forthwith, and, of the captive eased,
 Its captor find fresh prey, since this aint
 So happily, no gesture 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 carion 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 disspread
 So rarely, that 't is like at no one time
 Of the world's story has not truth, the prime
 Of truth, the very truth which, loosed, had hurled
 The world's course right, been really in the world
 —Content the while with some mean spark by dint
 Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint
 Of buried fire, which, rip its breast, would stream
 Sky-ward!

Sordello's miserable gleam
 Was looked for at the moment: he would dash
 This badge, and all it brought, to earth, —abash
 Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest

The Kaiser from his purpose,—would attest
 His own belief, in any case. Before
 He dashes it however, think once more!
 For, were that little, truly service?
 "Ay,
 " 'T the end, no doubt; but meantime?
 Plain you spy
 " Its ultimate effect, but many flaws
 " Of vision blur each intervening cause.
 " Were the day's fraction clear as the life's sum
 " Of service, Now as filled as the To-come
 " With evidence of good—nor too minute
 " A share to vie with evil! No dispute,
 " 'T were fittest maintain the Guelfs in rule:
 " That makes your life's work: but you have to school
 " Your day's work on these natures circumstanced
 " Thus variously, which yet, as each advanced
 " Or might impede the Guelf rule, must be moved
 " Now, for the Then's sake,—hating what you loved,
 " Loving old hatreds! Nor if one man bore
 " Brand upon temples while his fellow wore
 " The aureole, would it task you to decide:
 " But, portioned duly out, the future vied
 " Never with the unparcelled present! Smite
 " Or spare so much on warrant all so slight?
 " The present's complete sympathies to break,
 " Aversions bear with, for a future's sake
 " So feeble? Tito ruined through one speck,
 " The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck?
 " This were work, true, but work performed at cost
 " Of other work; aught gained here, elsewhere lost.
 " For a new segment spoil an orb half-done?

- " Rise with the People one step, and
sink—one ?
- " Were it but one step, less than the
whole face
- " Of things, your novel duty bids
erase !
- " Harms to abolish ! What, the pro-
phet saith,
- " The minstrel singeth vainly then ?
Old faith, [harms,
- " Old courage, only borne because of
- " 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 sea-
sons' strife
- " With tree and flower,—the hideous
animal life,
- " (Of which who seeks shall find a grin-
ning 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 morn-
ing'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 Ghi-
bellin !'
- " 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 heaven
- " Up one obstruction more, and com-
mon leave
- " What was peculiar, by such act des-
troy
- " Itself ; a partial death is every joy ;
- " The sensible escape, enfranchisement
- " Of a sphere's essence : once the
vexed—content,
- " The cramped—at large, the growing
circle—round,
- " All's to begin again—some novel
bound
- " To break, some new enlargement to
entreat ;
- " The sphere though larger is not more
complete.
- " Now for Mankind's experience : who
alone
- " Might style the unobstructed world
his own ?
- " Whom palled Goito with its perfect
things ?
- " Sordello's self : whereas for Mankind
springs [posed.
- " Salvation by each hindrance inter-
- " They climb ; life's view is not at once
disclosed
- " To creatures caught up, on the sum-
mit left,
- " Heaven plain above them, yet of
wings bereft :
- " But lower laid, as at the mountain's
foot.
- " So, range on range, the girdling for-
ests 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 em-
brace
- " 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 :
 Beneath
 " Soon sates the looker—look Above,
 and Death
 " Tempts ere a tithe of Life be tasted.
 Live
 " First, and die soon enough, Sordello !
 Give
 " Body and spirit the first right they
 claim,
 " And pasture thee on a voluptuous
 shame
 " That thou, a pageant-city's denizen,
 " Art neither vilely lodged midst Lom-
 bard men—
 " Canst force joy out of sorrow, seem
 to truck
 " Thine attributes away for sordid
 muck,
 " Yet manage from that very muck
 educer
 " Gold ; then subject nor scruple, to
 thy cruce
 " The world's discardings ! Though
 real ingots pay
 " Thy pains, the clods that yielded
 them are clay
 " To all save thee,—would clay re-
 main, though quenched
 " Thy purging-fire ; who 's robbed
 then ? Had you wrenched
 " An ampler treasure forth !—As 't is,
 they crave
 " A share that ruins you and will not
 save
 " Them. Why should sympathy com-
 mand 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 emancipated ; men's
 road
 " Is one, men's times of travel many ;
 thwart
 " No enterprising soul's precocious
 start
 " Before the general march ! If slow
 or fast
 " All straggle up to the same point at
 last,
 " Why grudge your having gained, a
 month ago,
 " The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels
 in blow,
 " While they were landlocked ? Speed
 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
 " Of life ! Together let wrath, hatred,
 lust,
 " All tyrannies in every shape, be
 thrust
 " Upon this Now, which time may rea-
 son out
 " As mischiefs, far from benefits, no
 doubt ;
 " But long ere then Sordello will have
 slipped
 " 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,
 " 'T is but one pang—one blood-drop
 to the bowl

- " Which brimful tempts the sluggish
asp uncowl
" At last, stains ruddily the dull red
cape,
" And, kindling orbs grey as the unripe
grape
" Before, avails forthwith to disen-
trance
" 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 pro-
foundlier 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 superber spectacle
" Before me ? What may serve for
sun, what still
" Wander a moon above me ? What
else wind
" About me like the pleasures left be-
hind,
" 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 exhaust-
less for my sake
" In brave resource : but whether bids
she slake
" My thirst at this first rivulet, or count
" No draught worth lip save from the
rocky fount
" Above i' the clouds, while here she's
provident
" Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft
tree-tent
" Guards, with its face of reate and
sedge, nor fail
" The silver globules and gold-spark-
ling grail
" At bottom ? Oh, 't were too absurd
to slight
" For the hereafter the to-day's de-
light !
" 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 can-
not choose
" But set aside life, why should I re-
fuse
" The gift ? I take it—I, for one, en-
gage
" Never to falter through my pilgrim-
age—
" Nor end it howling that the stock or
stone
" Were enviable, truly : I, for one,
" Will praise the world, you style mere
anteroom
" To the palace—be it so ! shall I as-
sume
"—My foot the courtly gait, my
tongue the trope,
" My mouth the smirk, before the doors
fly ope
" One moment ? What ? with guar-
ders row on row,
" Gay swarms of varletty that come
and go,
" Pages to dice with, waiting-girls un-
lace
" The plackets of, pert claimants help
displace,
" Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for,—
laugh
" At yon sleek parasite, break his own
staff

- " 'Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's
shoulder,—why,
" Admitted to the presence by and by,
" Should thought of having lost these
make me grieve
" Among new joys I reach, for joys I
leave ?
" Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-
stone,
" Are floor-work there ! But do I let
alone
" That black-eyed peasant in the vesti-
bule
" Once and for ever ?—Floor-work ?
No such fool !
" Rather, were heaven to forestal
earth, I'd say
" I, is it, must be blessed ? Then, my
own way
" Bless me ! Give firmer arm and
fleeter foot,
" I'll thank you : but to no mad wings
transmute
" These limbs of mine—our greensward
was so soft !
" Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud
aloft :
" We feel the bliss distinctlier, having
thus
" Engines subservient, not mixed up
with us.
" Better move palpably through hea-
ven : nor, freed
" Of flesh, forsooth, from space to
space proceed
" 'Mid flying synods of worlds ! No :
in heaven's marge
" Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his
targe [game
" Solid with stars—the Centaur at his
" 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, re-
vealed
" So oft a better life this life concealed,
" And which sage, champion, martyr,
through each path
" Have hunted fearlessly—the horrid
bath,
" The crippling-irons and the fiery
chair.
" 'T was well for them ; let me become
aware
- " As they, and I relinquish life, too !
Let
" What masters life disclose itself !
Forget
" Vain ordinances, I have one appeal—
" I feel, am what I feel, know what I
feel ;
" So much is truth to me. What Is,
then ? Since
" One object, viewed diversely, may
evince
" Beauty and ugliness—this way at-
tract,
" That way repel,—why gloze upon the
fact ?
" Why must a single of the sides be
right ?
" What bids choose this and leave the
opposite ?
" Where 's abstract Right for me ?—
in youth endued
" With Right still present, still to be
pursued, [rife
" Thro' all the interchange of circles,
" 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 dis-
solved,
So seemed Sordello's closing-truth
evolved
By his flesh-half's break up ; the sud-
den 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 wreaked 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,—
 Scarce the one minute for enjoying here,—
 The soul must needs instruct her weak compeer,
 Run o'er its capabilities and wring
 A joy thence, 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
Exceeded, so was incomplete for, each
Single sphere—Time. But does our
knowledge reach

No farther ? Is the cloud of hindrance
broke

But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,
Its loves and hates, as now when death
lets soar

Sordello, self-sufficient as before,
Though during the mere space that
shall elapse

'Twixt his enthrallment in new bonds,
perhaps ?

Must life be ever just escaped, which
should

Have been enjoyed ?—nay, might
have been and would,

Each purpose ordered right—the soul's
no whit

Beyond the body's purpose under it—
Like yonder breadth of watery heaven,
a bay,

And that sky-space of water, ray for ray
And star for star, one richness where
they mixed

As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary 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—and every quality
Save some sole and immutable Great
and Good

And Beauteous whither fate has loosed
its hood

To follow ? Never may some soul see
All

—The Great Before and After, and the
Small

Now, yet be saved by this the simplest
lore,

And take the single course prescribed
before,

As the king-bird with ages on his
plumes

Travels to die in his ancestral glooms ?
But where descry the Love that shall
select

That course ? Here is a soul whom, to
affect,

Nature has plied with all her means,
from trees

And flowers e'en to the Multitude !—
and these,

Decides he save or no ? One word to
end !

Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend
And speak for you. Of a Power above
you still

Which, utterly incomprehensible,
Is out of rivalry, which thus you can
Love, tho' unloving all conceived by
man—

What need ! And of—none the minutest
dut

To that out-nature, nought that would
instruct

And so let rivalry begin to live—
But of a Power its representative

Who, being for authority the same,
Communication different, should claim

A course, the first chose and this last
revealed—

This Human clear, as that Divine concealed—

What utter need !

What has Sordello found ?

Or can his spirit go the mighty round,
 End where poor Eglamor begun?—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 thresh-
 old, 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 't is eve,
 he bit,
 Twirled so, and filed all day: the
 mansion 's fit,
 God counselled for. As easy guess the
 word
 That passed betwixt them, and become
 the third
 To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax
 Him with one fault—so, no remem-
 brance racks
 Of the stone maidens and the font of
 stone
 He, creeping through the crevice, leaves
 alone.
 Alas, my friend, alas Sordello, whom
 Anon they laid within that old font-
 tomb,
 And, yet again, alas!
 And now is 't worth
 Our while bring back to mind, much
 less set forth
 How Salinguerra extricates himself

Without Sordello? Ghibellin and
 Guelf
 May fight their fiercest out? If
 Richard sulked
 In durance or the Marquis paid his
 mulct,
 Who cares, Sordello gone? The up-
 shot, sure,
 Was peace; our chief made some frank
 overture
 That prospered; compliment fell thick
 and fast
 On its disposer, and Taurello passed
 With foe and friend for an outstripping
 soul,
 Nine days at least. Then,—fairly
 reached the goal,—
 He, by one effort, blotted the great
 hope
 Out of his mind, nor further tried to
 cope
 With Este, that mad evening's style,
 but sent
 Away the Legate and the League, con-
 tent
 No blame at least the brothers had in-
 curred,
 —Dispatched a message to the Monk,
 he heard [at,
 Patiently first to last, scarce shivered
 Then curled his limbs up on his wolf-
 skin mat
 And ne'er spoke more,—informed the
 Ferrarese
 He but retained their rule so long as
 these
 Lingered in pupilage,—and last, no
 mode
 Apparent else of keeping safe the road
 From Germany direct to Lombardy
 For Friedrich,—none, that is, to guar-
 antee
 The faith and promptitude of who
 should next
 Obtain Sofia's dowry,—sore per-
 plexed—
 (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 Eg-
 na's post—
 "Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich
 knock?")

Himself espoused the Lady of the
 Rock
 In pure necessity, and, so destroyed
 His slender last of chances, quite made
 void
 Old prophecy, and spite of all the
 schemes
 Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's
 dreams,
 Was sucked into Romano. And so
 hushed
 He up this evening's work that, when
 't was brushed
 Somehow against by a blind chronicle
 Which, chronicling whatever woe befell
 Ferrara, noted this the obscure woe
 Of "Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo
 "Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his
 sire,"
 The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could
 but admire
 Which of Sofia's five was meant.
 The chaps
 Of earth's dead hope were tardy to
 collapse,
 Obliterated not the beautiful
 Distinctive features at a crash: but
 dull
 And duller these, next year, as Guefs
 withdrew
 Each to his stronghold. Then (se-
 curely 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 re-
 sult
 In blood and blaze? (So hard to in-
 tercept
 Sordello till his plain withdrawal!)
 Stepped, [the nick
 Then its new lord on Lombardy. I'
 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 hence-
 forth

Was wholly his—Taurello sinking back
 From temporary station to a track
 That suited. News received of this
 acquist,
 Friedrich did come to Lombardy: who
 missed
 Taurello then? Another year: they
 took
 Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook
 For refuge, and, when hundreds two or
 three
 Of Guefs 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 [pute
 Better through age, his parts still in re-
 Subtle—how else?—but hardly so
 astute
 As his contemporaneous friends pro-
 fessed;
 Undoubtedly a brawler: for the rest,
 Known by each neighbour, and al-
 lowed for, let
 Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret
 Men who had missed their boyhood's
 bugbear: "trap
 "The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey
 flap
 "A battered pinion!"—was the word.
 In fine,
 One flap too much and Venice's marine
 Was meddled with; no overlooking
 that!
 She captured him in his Ferrara, fat
 And florid at a banquet, more by fraud
 Than force, to speak the truth; there's
 slender laud
 Ascribed you for assisting eighty years
 To pull his death on such a man; fate
 shears
 The life-cord prompt enough whose last
 fine threads
 You fritter: so, presiding his board-
 head,
 The old smile, your assurance all went
 well

With Friedrich (as if he were like to
 tell !)
 In rushed (a plan contrived before) our
 friends,
 Made some pretence at fighting, some
 amends
 For the shame done his eighty years—
 (apart
 The principle, none found it in his heart
 To be much angry with Taurello)—
 gained
 Their galleys with the prize, and what
 remained
 But carry him to Venice for a show ?
 —Set him, as 't were, down gently—
 free to go
 His gait, inspect our square, pretend
 observe
 The swallows soaring their eternal curve
 'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens
 Gathered importunately, fives and
 tens,
 To point their children the Magnifico,
 All but a monarch once in firm-land, go
 His gait among them now—"it took,
 indeed,
 "Fully this Ecelin to supersede
 "That man," remarked the seniors.
 Singular !
 Sordello's inability to bar
 Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly
 brought [aught
 About by his strange disbelief that
 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
 Hildebrand
 (So far from obsolete !) made Lombards
 band

Together, cross their coats as for Christ's
 cause,
 And saving Milan win the world's ap-
 plause.
 Ecelin perished : and I think grass
 grew
 Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù
 By San Zenon where Alberic in turn
 Saw his exasperated captors burn
 Seven children and their mother ;
 then, regaled
 So far, tied on to a wild horse, was
 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 !
 Chirrup the contumacious grass-
 hopper,
 Rustles the lizard and the cushats
 chirre
 Above the ravage : there, at deep of
 day
 A week since, heard I the old Canon
 say
 He saw with his own eyes a barrow
 burst
 And Alberic's huge skeleton unheard
 Only five years ago. He added,
 "June's
 "The month for carding off our first
 cocoons
 "The silkworms fabricate"—a double
 news,
 Nor he nor I could tell the worthier.
 Choose !
 And Naddo gone, all 's gone ; not
 Eglamor !
 Believe, I knew the face I waited for,
 A guest my spirit of the golden courts !
 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 be-
 haved—
 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
 For him to take,—we suffer at this day
 Because of: Ecelin had pushed away
 Its chance ere Dante could arrive and
 take
 That step Sordello spurned, for the
 world's sake:
 He did much—but Sordello's chance
 was gone.
 Thus, had Sordello dared that step
 alone,
 Apollo had been compassed—'t was a
 fit
 He wished should go to him, not he to it
 —As one content to merely be sup-
 posed
 Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he
 dozed
 Really at home—one who was chiefly
 glad
 To have achieved the few real deeds he
 had,
 Because that way assured they were
 not worth
 Doing, so spared from doing them
 henceforth—
 A tree that covets fruitage and yet
 tastes
 Never itself, itself. Had he embraced
 Their cause then, men had plucked
 Hesperian fruit
 And, praising that, just thrown him in
 to boot
 All he was anxious to appear, but
 scarce
 Solicitous to be. A sorry farce
 Such life is, after all! Cannot I say
 He lived for some one better thing?
 this way.—
 Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless
 hill
 By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,
 Morning just up, higher and higher
 runs
 A child barefoot and rosy. 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 camo-
 mile.
 Up and up goes he, singing all the while
 Some unintelligible words to beat
 The lark, God's poet, swooning at his
 feet,
 So worsted is he at "the few fine locks
 "Stained like pale honey oozed from
 topmost rocks
 Sunblanched the livelong summer,"
 —all that 's left
 Of the Goito lay! And thus bereft,
 Sleep and forget, Sordello! In effect
 He sleeps, the feverish poet—I suspect
 Not utterly companionless; but,
 friends,

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? 'T is 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, forsooth,
 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, outbreak
 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 twelve-month'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?
 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,—fancies watch unroll
 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 re-
poses :
And therefore, till the shrub-house
door uncloses,
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 eye-
lash ;
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 ancles 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 pre-
vents
My being Luigi ? While that mossy
lair
Of lizards through the winter-time, is
stirred
With each to each imparting sweet in-
tents
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, [charm ;
And schemed for, safe in love as with a
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 will
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.*]

L.—MORNING. *Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house. LUCA'S Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour, the German SEBALD.*

Seb. [*sings.*] *Let the watching lids wink!*

Day's a-blaze with eyes, think!

Deep into the night, drink!

Otti. 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 it full morning?

Oh, don't speak then!

Seb. 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!

Otti. 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!

Seb. 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 yester-eve,

Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's mark
In the dust on the sill.
Otti. Oh, shut the lattice, pray!
Seb. 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!
Otti. Best never speak of it.
Seb. 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."
Otti. Assuredly if I repented
The deed—
Seb. Repent? Who should repent, or why?
What puts that in your head? Did I once say
That I repented?
Otti. No, I said the deed . . .
Seb. "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 . . .
Otti. Here is the wine;
I brought it when we left the house above,
And glasses too—wine of both sorts.
Black? White then?
Seb. But am not I his cut-throat?
What are you?
Otti. 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*?
Seb. 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?
Otti. 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.
Seb. 'Faith, he is not alive
To fondle you before my face.
Otti. Do you
Fondle me then! Who means to take your life
For that, my *Sebald*?
Seb. 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?
Otti. Love!
Seb. 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?

Otti. 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 . . .

Seb. "A thing"—there again—"a
thing!"

Otti. 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 't is 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 . . ."

Seb. Off, off—take your hands off
mine!

'T is the hot evening—off! oh, morn-
ing is it?

Otti. 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.

Seb. 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.

Otti. 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.

Seb. 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 dispatch my business and be-
gone.

I would . . .

Otti. See!

Seb. 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 venturous 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!

Otti. My poor lost friend!

Seb. He gave me
Life, nothing less: what if he did re-
proach

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?

'T is 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?

Otti. 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 then!

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?"

Seb. 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!

Otti. And when I ventured to receive you here,

Made you steal hither in the mornings—
Seb. When

I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,

Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread

To a yellow haze?

Otti. Ah—my sign was, the sun
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree

Nipped by the first frost.

Seb. You would always laugh
At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass

Over my ancles.

Otti. Then our crowning night!

Seb. The July night?

Otti. The day of it too, Sebald!
When heaven's pillars seemed o'er-bowed 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.

Seb. How it came!

Otti. Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;

Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;

And ever and anon some bright white
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 venture,

Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke

The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Seb. Yes!

Otti.—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!

Seb. Slower, Ottima!

Otti. And as we lay—

Seb. 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!

Otti. 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?

Seb. How did we ever rise?
Was 't that we slept? Why did it end?

Otti. 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!

Seb. I kiss you now, dear Ottima,
now and now!

This way? Will you forgive me—be
once more

My great queen?

Otti. Bind it thrice about my brow;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's
arbitress,

Magnificent in sin. Say that!

Seb. 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.

Seb. God 's in his heaven! Do you
hear that? Who spoke?

You, you spoke!

Otti. 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 hearts-
ease . . . Sh!

She does not hear: call you out louder!

Seb. Leave me!
Go, get your clothes on—dress those
shoulders!

Otti. Sebald?

Seb. Wipe off that paint! I hate
you.

Otti. Miserable!

Seb. 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 to-
gether,

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!

Otti. Speak to me—not of me!

Seb.—That round great full-orbed
face, where not an angle

Broke the delicious indolence—all
broken!

Otti. To me—not of me! Ungrate-
ful, perjured cheat!

A coward too: but ingrate 's worse than
all!

Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cring-
ing lie!

Leave me! Betray me! I can see
your drift!

A lie that walks and eats and drinks!

Seb. My God!

Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-
blades—

I should have known there was no
blood beneath!

Otti. You hate me then? You hate
me then?

Seb. To think

She would succeed in her absurd at-
tempt,

And fascinate by sinning, and 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!

Otti. —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!

Seb. 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:

They—they go—whirls from a black fiery sea!

Otti. 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 Pos-sagno.

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 Stud. All here! Only our poet's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino! 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 epithaph 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 intelligibly.—*Æsculapius, an Epic Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phæbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throat. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures...*

3rd Stud. 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 Stud. 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 Stud. 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 Pos-sagno 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?

Gott. 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 Stud. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gott. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

4th Stud. 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!

Gott. See here! “He has been accustomed,” 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 Stud. 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 Stud. Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watch! his disportings at Posagno, 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 Stud. Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

1st Stud. 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 "hairlike-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 monitress: 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 Stud. Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly, speak within yourselves!

5th Stud. 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 Stud. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off.

6th Stud. And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

Gott. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

1st Stud. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

6th Stud. 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?

Gott. How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

1st Stud. 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. *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: 't is 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!

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!

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 moonbeam

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
 When cast in bronze—an Almaign
 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
 relief"—
 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 [art:
 For better nature's birth by means of
 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,—con-
 dense 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, surprised
 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-dilat-
 ing 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, per-
 haps,
 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
 Englishman

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 love 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.*

For once, when I loved, I would en-
lace

Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and
face

Of her I loved, in one embrace—

As if by mere love I could love im-
ensely!

And 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 in-
tensely!

But now I am wiser, know better the
fashion

How passion seeks aid from its oppo-
site passion:

And if I see cause to love more, hate
more

Than ever man loved, ever hated be-
fore—

*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 Lut-

wyche 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, bind-
ing her tresses,*

*"'T is only a page that carols un-
seen,*

*"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,*

*"'T is only a page that carols un-
seen,*

"Fitting your hawks their jesses!")
[PIPPA, passes

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl
sang forth?

Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who
renounced

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 wor-
shipper,

The blessing or the blessed 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 out-
ward things

Fastened their image on its passive-
ness:

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

Without me, from their hooting. Oh,
to hear

God's voice plain as I heard it first, be-
fore

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 loiter-
ing 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 sour face because I bring

¹ " He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and
on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on
the unjust."

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
grig, 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 Koe-
nigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled
because there's a sort of bleak hungry
sun there), you might remark over a
venerable house-porch, a certain Chal-
dee inscription ; and brief as it is, a
mere glance at it used absolutely to
change the mood of every bearded pas-
senger. In they turned, one and all ;
the young and lightsome, with no irre-
verent pause, the aged and decrepit,
with a sensible alacrity : 't was the
Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck
with curiosity, I lost no time in learn-
ing Syriac—(these are vowels, you
dogs,—follow my stick's end in the
mud—*Celavent, 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-po-
cussed Egypt's land with fly and locust,*"
—or, " *How to Jonah sounded harsh-
ish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,*"
—or, " *How the angel meeting Balaam,
Straight his ass returned a salaam.*"
In no wise ! " *Shackabrach—Boach
—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver,
Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen
Goods !*" So, talk to me of the reli-
gion 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, Hell-
ward 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 pocket-full of
zwanzigers) . . . *To pay the Stygian
Ferry !*

1st Pol. 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 Pol. 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.

Blup. 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 Pol. 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 Pol. 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 Pol. 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 deposed 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. *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 other-
wise ?

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 them-
selves,

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, sparerlier 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

That had a right to come first and see
ebb

The crimson wave that drifts the sun
away—

Those crescent moons with notched
and burning 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 sum-
mer nights—

Gone are they, but I have them in my
soul !

Mother. (He will not go !)

Luigi. You smile at me ? 'T is
true,—

Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghash-
liness,

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 cop-
 pice yonder
 In search of a distorted ash ?—I find
 The wry spoilt 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 thickliest 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 provinces . . .
 (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 pomps
 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 upturned

As if life were one long and sweet surprise:

In June she comes.

Luigi. We were to see together The Titan 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, thick-set 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.*

*'T is said, a Python scared one day
The breathless city, till he came,
With forked 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?

'T is 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 mumbling
 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 dunghill 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 wasp ;—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 lamp-
reys

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 heartfull now : some seed

At least is sure to strike,

And yield—what you'll not pluck in-
deed,

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. *Inside the Palace by the*
Duomo. MONSIGNOR, dismissing
his Attendants.

Mon. Thanks, friends, many thanks !
I chiefly desire life now, that I may
recompense every one of you. Most I

know something of already. What, a
repass prepared ? *Benedicto benedica-*
tur . . . 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 't was full summer at
Messina, as we priests used to cross in
procession the great square on Assump-
tion 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.

Inten. Uguccio—

Mon. . . '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.

Inten. Do you choose this especial
night to question me ?

Mon. 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 Decem-
ber, I find him . . .

Inten. 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.

Mon. 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?

Inten. Is Correggio a painter?

Mon. 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!

Inten. 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?

Mon. Ugo!

Inten. 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?

Mon. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

Inten. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

Mon. 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 inter-

dict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Inten. No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

Mon. 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 villianous 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 off-scouring 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!

Inten. What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

Mon.—Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say . . .

Inten. "Forgive us our trespasses?"

Mon. 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.

Inten. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Mon. 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 brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the tringing 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!

Inten. 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.

Mon. Liar!

Inten. 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!

Mon. I see through the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Inten. 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 Bluplocks, 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.

*Mon. (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!*

PIPPA'S Chamber again. She enters it.

*The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in its 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 the
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 d'd
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 in-
spect*

*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!*

*Bluph . . . 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 [shame*

*If silly talk like ours should put to
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 de-
parted*

*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 wit-
 ness

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 pro-
 nouncing !

"See this heightened colour too,
 "For she swilled Breganze wine
 "Till her nose turned deep carmine ;
 "'T was 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 al-
 lowed !

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 bats' sleek sisterhoods
 Full complines with gallantry :
 Then, owls and bats, crows 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 bed-side.]

And border Ottima'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

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.

PERSONS

VICTOR AMADEUS, First King of Sardinia. | POLYXENA, Wife of Charles.
 CHARLES EMMANUEL, his Son, Prince of | D'ORMEA, Minister.
 Piedmont.

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-I.

FIRST YEAR, 1730.—KING
VICTOR

PART I.

CHARLES, POLYXENA.

Cha. You think so? Well, I do not.

Pol. My beloved,

All must clear up; we shall be happy yet:

This cannot last for ever—oh, may change

To-day or any day!

Cha. —May change? Ah yes—May change!

Pol. Endure it, then.

Cha. 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?

Pol. 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!

Cha. 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.

'T was 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 . . .

Pol. You have told me, Charles!

Cha. 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!

Pol. I know—

Cha. 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, forsooth,
 With such an one, while lordly Philip rode
 By him their Turin through? But he was punished,
 And must put up with—me! 'T was 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, [pent
 How could I but grow dizzy in their 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 't is his child
 "He spurns?" And so I suffered—scarcely suffered
 Since I had you at length!
Pol. —To serve in place
 Of monarch, minister and mistress, Charles!

Cha. But, once that crown obtained, then was 't not like
 Our lot would alter? "When he rests, takes breath,
 "Glances around, and sees who'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!
Pol. 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 kingcraft, or he'll find
 Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.
 I bear this—not that there's so much to bear.
Cha. 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 creep-hole 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!
Pol. Come—
 Is it agreed that we forego complaint
 Even at Turin, yet complain we here
 At Rivoli? 'T were 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 pursuiv-
ant,

The sable cloak and silver cross ; such
pomp

Bodes . . what -now, Charles ? Can
you conceive ?

Cha. Not I.

Pol. A matter of some moment—

Cha. 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 ?

Pol. Tush !

D'Ormea's contrivance !

Cha. Ay, how otherwise

Should the young Prince serve for the
old King's foil ?

—So that the simplest courtier may
remark

'T were idle raising parties for a Prince
Content to linger D'Ormea's laughing-
stock.

Something, 't is 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.

Pol. 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.

Cha. Flattery !

Pol. 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 !

Cha. Ah 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'O. [Aside.] Here ! So, King Vic-
tor

Spoke truth for once : and who 's or-
dained, but I

To make that memorable ? Both in
call,

As he declared ! Were 't better gnash
the teeth,

Or laugh outright now ?

Cha. [To POL.] What's his visit
for ?

D'O. [Aside.] I question if they even
speak to me.

Pol. [To CHA.] Face the man ! He'll
suppose you fear him, else.

[Aloud.] The Marquis bears the King's
command, no doubt ?

D'O. [Aside.] Precisely !—If I threat-
ened him, perhaps ?

Well, this at least is punishment
enough !

Men used to promise punishment would come.

Cha. Deliver the King's message, Marquis!

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ah—

So anxious for his fate? [*Aloud.*] A word, my Prince,

Before you see your father—just one word

Of counsel!

Cha. Oh, your counsel certainly! Polyxena, the Marquis counsels us!

Well, Sir? Be brief, however!

D'O. What? You know As much as I?—preceded me, most like,

In knowledge! So! ('T is in his eye, beside—

His voice: he knows it, and his heart's on flame [*self,*

Already! You surmise why you, my-Del Borgo, Spava, fifty nobles more, Are summoned thus?

Cha. 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'O. [*Passing the table whereon a paper lies, exclaims, as he glances at it, "Spain!"*

Pol. [*Aside to CHA.*] Tarry awhile: what ails the minister?

D'O. Madam, I do not often trouble you.

The Prince loathes, and you loathe me—let that pass!

But since it touches him and you, not me,

Bid the Prince listen!

Pol. [*To CHA.*] Surely you will listen

—Deceit?—Those fingers crumpling up his vest?

Cha. Deceitful to the very fingers' ends!

D'O. [*who has approached them, overlooks 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!

Cha. 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 measure?—When was not any 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'O. 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 forestalled,

Her offer follows; and he promises . . .

Cha. —Promises, sir, when he before agreed

To Austria's offer? *D'O.* 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)
Produce both treaties, and both promises . . .

Cha. How?

D'O. 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!

Cha. Polyxena, you said
All would clear up: all does clear up to me!

D'O. Clear up? 'T is no such thing to envy, then?

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!

Cha. [*Aside.*] No—
Stoop to my father, yes,—D'Ormea, no;

—The King's son, not to the King's counsellor!

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'O. This
To tell! You apprehend me?

Cha. Perfectly.
Further, D'Ormea, you have shown yourself,

For the first time these many weeks and months,

Disposed to do my bidding?

D'O. From the heart!

Cha. Acquaint my father, first, I wait his pleasure:

Next . . . or, I'll tell you at a fitter time.

Acquaint the King!

D'O. [*Aside.*] If I 'scape Victor yet!

First, to prevent this stroke at me: if not,—

Then, to avenge it! [*To CHA.*] Gracious sir, I go. [*Goes.*]

Cha. 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 needed e'en his intervention? No!
No—dull am I, conceded,—but so dull,
Scarcely! Their step decides me.

Pol. How decides?

Cha. You would be freed D'Ormea's eye and hers?

—Could fly the court with me and live content?

So, this it is for which the knights assemble!

The whispers and the closeting of late,
The savageness and insolence of old,
—For this!

Pol. What mean you?

Cha. How? You fail to catch
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 recognise in it no winding up

Of a long plot?

Pol. Why should there be a plot?

Cha. 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.

Pol. In truth?

Cha. They dare not quite dethrone Sardinia's Prince:

But they may descant on my dulness 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.

Pol. Pause ! I dare not think
So ill of Victor.

Cha. Think no ill of him !

Pol.—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 !

Cha. Ah—

You dare not then renounce the splendid Court

For one whom all the world despises ?
Speak !

Pol. 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 !

Cha. 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 !

Pol. Why, it may be !—if he desire to wed

That woman, call legitimate her child.

Cha. 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.

Pol. And I too breathe.

Cha. Come, my Polyxena !

KING VICTOR : Part II.

Enter KING VICTOR, bearing the regalia on a cushion, from his apartment. He calls loudly.

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 un-

learned

When past the use,—“ just this once
more ” (I thought)

“ Use it with Spain and Austria hap-
pily,

“ 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
 Feared 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'Or-
 mea, 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'O. Sir,
 He does attend. The crown prepared!
 —it seems
 That you persist in your resolve.
 Who 's come?
 The chancellor and the chamberlain?
 My knights?
 D'O. The whole Annunziata.—If,
 my liege,
 Your fortune had not tottered worse
 than now . . .
 Vic. 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; ment:
 Then let Del Borgo read the Instru-
 On which, I enter.
 D'O. 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?
 Vic. 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'O. But why with me
 Break faith—with one ally, your best,
 break faith?
 Vic. When first I stumbled on you,
 Marquis—'t was
 At Mondovi—a little lawyer's clerk . . .
 D'O. 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!
 Vic. I was about to notice, had you
 not
 Prevented me, that since that great
 town kept
 With its chicane D'Ormea's satchel
 stuffed
 And D'Ormea's self sufficiently re-
 cluse, ment
 He missed a sight,—my naval arma-
 When I burned Toulon. How the
 skiff exults
 Upon the galliot's 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
 Think to escape the sea's black trough
 in turn?
 Apply this: you have been my minis-
 ter
 —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'O. Ah, you so much despise me ?

Vic. 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.

Vic. [*changing his tone.*] Are you
instructed ? Do

My order, point by point ! About it,
sir !

D'O. 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 !

Cha. [*Aside.*] Must I be told
The Prince was supplicated for—by
him ?

Vic. [*to D'O.*] Apprise Del Borgo,
Spava and the rest,
Our son attends them ; then return.

D'O. One word !

Cha. [*Aside.*] A moment's pause and
they would drive me hence,

I do believe !

D'O. [*Aside.*] Let but the boy be
firm !

Vic. You disobey ?

Cha. [*to D'O.*] You do not disobey

Me, at least ? Did you promise that
or no ?

D'O. Sir, I am yours : what would
you ? Yours am I !

Cha. When I have said what I shall
say, 't is 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
yourself :

That 's over now. Go, ne'er to come
again !

D'O. As son, the father—father as,
the son !

My wits ! My wits ! [*Goes.*

Vic. [*Seated.*] And you, what meant
you, pray,

Speaking thus to D'Ormea ?

Cha. Let us not

Weary ourselves with D'Ormea !
Those few words [*say.*

Have half unsettled what I came to
His presence vexes to my very soul.

Vic. One called to manage a king-
dom, Charles, needs heart

To bear up under worse annoyances
Than seems D'Ormea—to me, at least.

Cha. [*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 de-
mand ?

Vic. For God's sake, what has night
brought forth ? Pronounce

The . . what's your word ?—result !
Cha. 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, believe !

As 't is, sir, I am spared both toil and
sneer.

These are the papers.

Vic. Well, sir ? I suppose
You hardly burned them. Now for
your result !

Cha. I never should have done great things of course,
But . . . oh my father, had you loved me more!

Vic. 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 [*each*,
May have the power of loving, all and
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!

Cha. 'Tis well I am a subject then, not you.

Vic. [*Aside.*] D'Ormea has told him everything.

[*Aloud.*] Aha!

'apprehend you: when all 's said, you take

Your private station to be prized beyond

My own, for instance?

Cha. —Do and ever did
So take it: 't is the method you pursue
That grieves . . .

Vic. These words! Let me express, my friend,

Your thoughts. You penetrate what I supposed

Secret. D'Ormea plies his trade betimes!

I purpose to resign my crown to you.

Cha. To me?

Vic. Now in that chamber.

Cha. You resign
The crown to me?

Vic. 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.

Cha. 'T is 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?

Vic. This to me?

I hardly know you!

Cha. 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, [*vels*,
And his experience and his Macchia-

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!

Vic. But you know me, it seems; so, learn in brief

My pleasure. This assembly is convened . . .

Cha. Tell me, that woman put it in your head!

You were not sole contriver of the scheme,

My father!

Vic. 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.

Cha. Farewell!
'T were 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'O. [*Aside.*] Ha, sure he's changed
again—
Means not to fall into the cunning trap!
Then Victor, I shall yet escape you,
Victor!

*Vic. [suddenly placing the crown up-
on the head of CHARLES.*

D'Ormea, your King!

[*To CHARLES.*] My son, obey me!
Charles,

Your father, clearer-sighted than your-
self,

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'O.*]
Come this side!

D'O. [*as CHARLES turns from him to
VICTOR.*] You persist?

Vic. Yes—I conceive the gesture's
meaning. 'Faith,

He almost seems to hate you: how is
that? [*now?*]

Be re-assured, my Charles! Is 't over
Then, Marquis, tell the new King what
remains

To do! A moment's work. Del Bor-
go reads

The Act of Abdication out, you sign it,
Then I sign; after that, come back to
me.

D'O. Sir, for the last time, pause!

Vic. Five minutes longer
I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hes-
itate—

And I'll so turn those minutes to
account

That . . . Ay, you recollect me!
[*Aside.*] Could I bring

My foolish mind to undergo the read-
ing

That Act of Abdication!

[*As CHARLES motions D'ORMEA to
precede him.*

Thanks, dear Charles!

[*CHARLES and D'ORMEA retire.*

Vic. A novel feature in the boy,—in-
deed

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, be-
side:"

And, "true," says Spain, "'t were
harsh to visit that

"Upon the Prince." Then came 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 despond-
ing fits,

No Charles at each cross turn entreat-
ing 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'O. "King Charles!" What then
may you be?

Vic. 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'O. 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, Sar-
dinia,
—Now, "any little place's Count"—
Vic. Proceed!
D'O. 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 na-
tions 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 re-
turn)—
To him you trust thus for the
moment . . . Trust him? How?
My poor man, merely a prime-minister,
Make me know where my trust errs!
D'O. In his fear,
His love, his—but discover for your-
self
What you are weakest, trusting in!
Vic. 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'O. 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.
Vic. Stay with my son—protect the
weaker side!
D'O. Ay, to be tossed the people like
a rag,
And flung by them for Spain and Aus-
tria's sport,
Abolishing the record of your part
In all this perfidy!
Vic. Prevent, beside,
My own return!
D'O. That's half prevented now!
'T will go hard but you find a wondrous
charm
In exile, to discredit me. The Alps,
Silk-mills to watch, vines asking vigil-
ance—
Hounds open for the stag, your hawk's
a-wing—
Brave days that wait the Louis of the
South,
Italy's Janus!
Vic. So, the lawyer's clerk
Won't tell me that I shall repent!
D'O. You give me
Full leave to ask if you repent?
Vic. Whene'er
Sufficient time elapse for that, you
judge!
[Shouts inside "KING CHARLES."
D'O. Do you repent?
Vic. [after a slight pause.] . . . I've
kept them waiting? Yes!
Come in, complete the Abdication, sir!

[They go out.]

Enter POLYXENA.

Pol. 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, untrammelled 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: 't is 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 yesternight

As his grey eyes seemed widening into black

Because I praised him, then how will he look?

Farewell, you stripped and whited mulberry-trees

Bound 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!

Cha. He!

I am King now.

Pol. 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?

Cha. Have I done wrong? Yes, for you were not by!

Pol. Tell me from first to last.

Cha. 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

[*King.*

Tend upward: I am grown Sardinia's

Pol. Now stop: was not this Victor, Duke of Savoy

At ten years old?

Cha. He was.

Pol. And the Duke spent Since then, just four-and-fifty years in toil

To be—what?

Cha. King.

Pol. Then why unking himself?

Cha. Those years are cause enough.

Pol. The only cause?

Cha. Some new perplexities.

Pol. Which you can solve

Although he cannot?

Cha. He assures me so.

Pol. And this he means shall last—how long?

Cha. How long?

Think you I fear the perils I confront? He's praising me before the people's face—

My people!

Pol. Then he's changed—grown kind, the King?

Where can the trap be?

Cha. 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!

Pol. Ah, it opens then

Before you, all you dreaded formerly? You are rejoiced to be a king, my

Charles?

Cha. 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!

Pol. Once I had found my share in
triumph, Charles,

Or death.

Cha. But you are I! But you I call
To take, Heaven's proxy, vows I ten-
dered Heaven

A moment since, I will deserve the
crown!

Pol. 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.

'T is he must show me.

Vic. 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 Chambery, who dozes while she
reigns.

Pol. Most grateful shall we now be,
talking least

Of gratitude—indeed of anything
That hinders what yourself must need
to say

To Charles.

Cha. Pray speak, sir!

Vic. 'Faith, not much to say:
Only what shows itself, you once in the
point

Of sight. You are 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'er-sweep 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!

Cha. No: straight on shall I go,
Truth helping; win with it or die with
it.

Vic. '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 terri-
tory

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, tho' Europe wait
the while.

Pol. Nay, sir,—at Chambery, away
for ever,

As soon you will be, 't is farewell we bid
you:

Turn these few fleeting moments to
account!

'T is just as though it were a death.

Vic. Indeed!

Pol. [*Aside.*] Is the trap there?

Cha. Ay, call this parting—death!
The sacredder your memory becomes.

If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back
My father?

Vic. I mean . . .

Pol. [*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 !)

Cha. That people is now part of me.

Vic. 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 !

Pol. No jot

You yield !

Cha. 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.

Vic. [*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.

Cha. 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.

Vic. Betimes indeed. Not now, Charles ! You require

A host of papers on it.

D'O. [*coming forward.*] Here they are.

[*To Cha.*] I was the 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.

Vic. [*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 !

Pol. [*Aside.*] His minister thrust on us !

Cha. [*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, [field

They quit me in the vast and untried 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'O. I did not offer you My service—would that I could serve

you, sir !

As for the Spanish matter . . .

Vic. But dispatch At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,

Before 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.

Cha. [*reading*] A miserable fifty thousand crowns !

Vic. Oh quite enough for country gentlemen !

Beside the exchequer happens . . . but find out

All that, yourself!

Cha. [still reading.] "Count Tende"
—what means this?

Vic. 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'O. —The Marchioness Sebastian
takes

The name of Spigno.

Cha. How, sir?

Vic. [to D'ORMEA.] Fool! All that
Was for my own detailing. [To
CHARLES.] That anon!

Cha. [to D'ORMEA.] Explain what
you have said, sir!

D'O. 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.

Pol. [Aside.] With us
The minister—with him the mistress!

Cha. [to VICTOR.] No—
Tell me you have not taken her—that
woman

To live with, past recall!

Vic. And where 's the crime . . .

Pol. [to CHARLES.] True, sir, this is
a matter past recall

And past your cognizance. A day be-
fore,

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.

Cha. [after a pause.] The Spanish
claim, D'Ormea!

Vic. Why, my son,
I took some ill-advised . . . one's age,

in fact,

Spoils everything: though I was over-
reached,

A younger brain, we'll trust, may extri-
cate

Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Or-
mea,

Inform the King!

D'O. [without regarding VICTOR, and
leisurely.]

B.R.

Thus stands the case with Spain:
When first the Infant Carlos claimed
his proper

Succession to the throne of Tuscany . . .
Vic. I tell you that stands over!

Let that rest!
There is the policy!

Cha. [to D'ORMEA.] Thus much I
know,

And more—too much: the remedy?
D'O. Of course!

No glimpse of one.
Vic. No remedy at all!

It makes the remedy itself—time makes
it.

D'O. [to CHARLES.] But if . . .
Vic. [still more hastily.] In fine, I

shall take care of that:
And, with another project that I

have . . .
D'O. [turning on him.] Oh, since

Count Tende means to take again
King Victor's crown!—

Pol. [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!

'T is in you—in your nature—and the
shame 's

Not half the shame 't would grow to
afterwards!

Cha. Polyxena!
Pol. A word recalls the knights—

Say it!—What's promising and what's
the past?

Say you are still King Victor!
D'O. Better say

The Count repents, in brief!
[VICTOR rises.]

Cha. With such a crime
I have not charged you, sir!

Pol. Charles turns from me!

SECOND YEAR, 1731.—KING CHARLES

PART I

Enter QUEEN POLYXENA and D'OR-
MEA.—A pause.

Pol. And now, sir, what have you to
say?

D'O. Count Tende . . .

S

Pol. 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'O. Good ! Count Tende . . .

Pol. I, who mistrust you, shall acquaint King Charles
Who even more mistrusts you.

D'O. Does he so ?

Pol. Why should he not ?

D'O. 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—

Pol. By truthfulness.

D'O. Exactly ; that shows I had nought to do

With pacifying them. Our foreign perils

Also exceed my means to stay : but here

'T is 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.

Pol. When ?

D'O. 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.

Pol. [*reading the papers he presents.*]

If this should prove a plot 'twixt you and Victor ?

You seek annoyances to give pretext
For what you say you fear !

D'O.

Oh, possibly !

I go for nothing. Only show King Charles

That thus Count Tende purposes return,

And style me his inviter, if you please !

Pol. 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'O.

Keep safe

Those papers : or, to serve me, leave no proof

I thus have counselled ! when the Count returns,

And the King abdicates, 't will stead me little

To have thus counselled.

Pol.

The King abdicate !

D'O. 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'O. All's lost !

Pol. Oh, surely not King Charles !

He's changed—

That's not this year's care-burthened voice and step :

'T is last year's step, the Prince's voice !

D'O.

I know.

Enter CHARLES—D'ORMEA *retiring a little.*

Cha. 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 !

Pol. How, Charles ?

Cha. 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—'t was 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
Appeared the justly-angered Powers,
destroyed

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'O. [*Aside.*] I shall merely stipulate

For an experienced headsman.
Cha. 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 dispatch the Count his
news ;

'T is gone to Chambery a week ago—
And here am I : do I deserve to feel

Your warm white arms around me ?
D'O. [*Coming forward.*] He

knows that ?
Cha. What, in Heaven's name,

means this ?
D'O. 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.
Cha. Are you crazed,

D'Ormea ? Here ? For what ? As
well return

To take his crown !
D'O. He will return for that.

Cha. [*to POLYXENA.*] You have not
listened to this man ?

Pol. He spoke
About your safety—and I listened.

[*He disengages himself from her arms.*]
Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] What

Apprised you of the Count's intentions?
D'O. Me ?

His heart, sir ; you may not be used to
read

Such evidence however ; therefore read
[*Pointing to POLYXENA's papers.*]

My evidence.
Cha. [*to POLYXENA.*] Oh, worthy

this of you !
And of your speech I never have for-

gotten,
Though I professed forgetfulness ;

which haunts me
As if I did not know how false it was ;

Which made me toil unconscious !
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 recognise Polyxena—
Oh worthy, to revive, and tenfold

worse,
That plague ! D'Ormea at your ear,

his slanders
Still in your hand ! Silent ?

Pol. As the wronged are.
Cha. 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'O. The when and where and how
belong

To me. 'T is sad work, but I deal in
such.

You oftentimes serve yourself ; I'd serve
you here :

Use makes me not so squeamish. In a
word,

Since the first hour he went to Cham-
bery,

Of his seven servants, five have I
suborned.

Cha. You hate my father ?
D'O. 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 for-

ward

Already. Are your guards here?

Cha. Well for you
They are not! [*To POL.*] Him I knew
of old, but you—

To hear that pickthank, further his
designs! [*To D'O.*]

Guards?—were they here, I'd bid
them, for your trouble,

Arrest you.

D'O. 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. [*duty*]

Again I tender you my charge—its
Would bid me press you read those
documents.

Here, sir! [*Offering his badge of office.*]

Cha. [*taking it*] The papers also!

Do you think
I dare not read them?

Pol. Read them, sir!

Cha. 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'O. Even say, Chamberly!

'T is vacant, I surmise, by this.

Cha. You prove

Your words or pay their forfeit, sir.
Go there!

Polyxena, one chance to rend 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!

Pol. Ah, Charles!

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] Precede me, sir!

D'O. 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.

Vic. 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 mid-
night

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 be-
fore 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?

'T is this relentless noonday-lighted
chamber,

Lighted like life but silent as the grave,
That disconcerts me. There the change
must strike.

No silence last year! Some one flung
doors wide

(Those two great doors which scrutin-
ize 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 out-
worn for wounds,

Is stumbling on from frontier town to
town,

Begging a pittance that may help him
find

His Turin out; what scorn and laugh-
ter follow

The coin you fling into his cap! And
last,

Some bright morn, how men crowd
about the midst

Of 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.

Cha. Just as I thought! A miser-
able 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.*

Vic. [after a pause.] Not at Evian.
Charles?

What 's this? Why do you run to
close the doors?

No welcome for your father?
Cha. [Aside.] Not his voice!

What would I give for one imperious
tone

Of the old sort! That 's gone for ever.
Vic. Must

I ask once more . . .
Cha. 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.

Vic. I received advices Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter,

Dated from Evian baths . . .

Cha. 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—

Vic. Charles ?

Cha. —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 ?

Vic. 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 !

Cha. —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 !

Vic. [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 ?

Cha. I should say simply—leaving out the why

And how—you made me swear to keep that crown

And as you then intended . . .

Vic. 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 further. 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 . . .

Cha. 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.

Vic. 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 hold 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 his sake, therefore, as of those he
rules . . .

Cha. Our sakes are one; and that,
you could not say,

Because my answer would present it-
self

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.

Vic. [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 will sit still
And see you throw all power to the

populace—

See my Sardinia, that has stood 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?

Cha. You could not. Bitterer curses
than your curse

Have I long since denounced upon my-
self

If I misused my power. In fear of
these

I entered on those measures—will abide
By them: so, I should say, Count

Tende . . .

Vic. No!

But no! But if, my Charles, your—
more than old—

Half-foolish father urged these argu-
ments,

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—

Cha. My father!

Vic. 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 im-
pregnable,

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 you

may choose!

—If I must totter up and down the
streets

My sires built, where myself have in-
troduced

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 dot-
age!—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.

*Pol. [advancing and withdrawing
CHARLES—to VICTOR.]*

In this conjuncture 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 . . .

D'O. Do you repent, sir?

Vic. [*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 showed in answering his peevish
suit.

What can he need to sue for? Bravely,
D'Ormea,

Have you 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 would be
granted

To buttress up my ruinous old pile!
But you remembered properly the list

Of wise precautions I took when I gave
Nearly as much away—to reap the
fruits

I might have looked for!

Cha. Thanks, sir: degrade me,
So you remain yourself! Adieu!

Vic. I'll not
Forget it for the future, nor presume
Next time to slight such mediators!

Nay—
Had I first moved them both to inter-
cede,

I might secure a chamber in Moncaglier
—Who knows?

Cha. Adieu!

Vic. You bid me this adieu

With the old spirit?

Cha. Adieu!

Vic. Charles—Charles!

Cha. Adieu!

[VICTOR goes.]

Cha. You were mistaken, Marquis, as
you hear!

'T was for another purpose the Count
came.

The Count desires Moncaglier. Give
the order!

D'O. [*leisurely.*] Your minister has
lost your confidence,

Asserting late, for his own purposes,
Count Tende would . . .

Cha. [*flinging his badge back.*] Be
still the minister!

And give a loose to your insulting joy;
It irks me more thus stifled than ex-
pressed:

Loose it!

D'O. There's none to loose, alas!—
I see

I never am to die a martyr.

Pol. Charles!

Cha. 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 ?

'T was 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'O. [*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 . . .

Cha. Well, sir ?

D'O. —That I, perchance,
May utter also what, another time,

Would irk much,—it may prove less
irksome now.

Cha. What would you utter ?

D'O. That I from my soul
Grieve at to-night's event : for you I

grieve,
E'en grieve for . . .

Cha. Tush, another time for talk !
My kingdom is in imminent danger ?

D'O. Let
The Count communicate with France—

its King,
His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for

this,
Though for no other war.

Cha. First for the levies :
What forces can I muster presently ?

[D'ORMEA delivers papers which
CHARLES inspects.

Cha. Good—very good. Montorio
. . . how is this ?

—Equips me double the old comple-
ment

Of soldiers ?

D'O. Since his land has been
relieved

From double impost, this he manages :
But under the late monarch . . .

Cha. Peace ! I know.

Count Spava has omitted mentioning
What proxy is to head these troops of
his.

D'O. Count Spava means to head his
troops himself.

Something to fight for now ; " Where-
as," says he,

" Under the sovereign's father " . . .
Cha. It would seem

That all my people love me.

D'O. Yes.
[To POLYXENA while CHARLES
continues 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 pre-
cisely 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 !

Cha. [*to Attendants.*] Bring the re-
galia forth !

Quit the room ! And now, Marquis,
answer me !

Why should the King of France invade
my realm ?

D'O. Why ? Did I not acquaint
your Majesty

An hour ago ?

Cha. I choose to hear again
What then I heard.

D'O. 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.

Cha. And your reason
For saying this ? [way !

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ay, just his father's
[To CH.] The Count wrote yesterday to
your forces' Chief,

Rhebinder—made demand of help—

Cha. To try
Rhebinder—he 's of alien blood : aught
else ?

D'O. Receiving a refusal,—some
hours after,

The Count called on Del Borgo to deliver

The Act of Abdication : he refusing,
Or hesitating, rather—

Cha. What ensued ?

D'O. At midnight, only two hours
since, at Turin,

He rode in person to the citadel

With one attendant, to the Soccorso
gate,

And bade the governor, San Remi,
open—

Admit him.

Cha. For a purpose I divine.

These three were faithful, then ?

D'O. They told it me :

And I—

Cha. Most faithful—

D'O. Tell it you—with this
Moreover of my own : if, an hour
hence,

You have not interposed, the Count
will be

On his road to France for succour.

Cha. 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'O. I give my counsel,—and the
only one.

A month since, I besought you to em-
ploy

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
household

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.

Cha. Deliver those three papers.

Pol. [while CHARLES inspects them—
to D'ORMEA.]

Your measures are not over-harsh, sir :
France

Will hardly be deterred from her in-
tents

By these.

D'O. If who proposes might dispose,
I could soon satisfy you. Even these,
Hear what he 'll say at my presenting !

Cha. [who has signed them.] There !
About the warrants ! You 've my sig-
nature.

What turns you pale ? I do my duty
by you

In acting boldly thus on your advice.

D'O. [reading them separately.] Ar-
rest the people I suspected merely ?

Cha. Did you suspect them ?

D'O. Doubtless : but—but—sir,
This Forquiere 's governor of Turin,
And Rivarol and he have influence over
Half of the capital ! Rabella, too ?

Why, sir—

Cha. Oh, leave the fear to me !

D'O. [still reading.] You bid me
Incarcerate the people on this list ?

Sir—

Cha. But you never bade arrest
those men,

So close related to my father too,

On trifling grounds ?

D'O. 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 ?

Cha. You seem to think
A venial crime this plot against me.

Well ?

D'O. [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 ! Pre-
vent it

You, madam ! I have served you, am
prepared

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 !

Cha. Here is a man to talk of fickle-
ness !

He stakes his life upon my father's
falsehood ;

I bid him . . .

D'O. Not you! Were he trebly false,

You do not bid me . . .

Cha. Is 't not written there?

I thought so: give—I'll set it right.

D'O. 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?

Cha. Just one word!

You bring him, taken in the act of flight,

Or else your life is forfeit.

D'O. Ay, to Turin.

I bring him, and to-morrow?

Cha. 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!

Pol. Charles—

Cha. 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 likest 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'O. You hear the sovereign's mandate, Count *Perugia*?

Obey me! As your diligence, expect Reward! All follow to *Montcagliet*!

Cha. [*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?

Pol. These means Of our defence—these measures of precaution?

Cha. It must be the best way: I should have else

Withered beneath his scorn.

Pol. What would you say?

Cha. Why, you don't think I mean to keep the crown,

Polyxena?

Pol. You then believe the story

In spite of all—that Victor's coming?
Cha. 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 you '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—'t is 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!
Pol. Charles, hear me!
Cha. —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:
 Bid me endure all his caprices; take me
 From this mad post above him!
Pol. 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?
Cha. [*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—
Pol. But if your measures take effect,
 D'Ormea true to you?
Cha. 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!
Pol. [*seizing his hand.*] King Charles!
 Pause here upon this strip of time
 Allotted you out of eternity!
 Crowns are from God: in his name you ho'd 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 't is,
no doubt,

Something of stain will ever rest on
you;

No one will rightly know why you re-
fused

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. 'T will 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 happi-
ness?

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.

Vic. At last I speak; but once—
that once, to you!

'T is you I ask, not these your varletry,
Who 's King of us?

Cha. [from his seat.] Count Tende . .
Vic. 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 dis-
composed.

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!
Cha. 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!

Vic. [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. 'T is 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' rival,

And now . . .

Cha. [putting the crown on him, to the rest.] The King speaks, yet none kneels, I think!

Vic. 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

'Twixt my day's sunrise and its fiery fall?

And who were by me when I died but they?

D'Ormea there!

Cha. What means he?

Vic. 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 immured

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!

Cha. Mistrust me? Help!

Vic. Past help, past reach!

'T is in the heart—you cannot reach the heart:

This broke mine, that I did believe, you, Charles,

Would have denied and so disgraced me.

Pol. 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,

'T was 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.

Cha. [to POLYX.] I love you now indeed!

[To VICTOR.] You never knew me!

Vic. Hardly till this moment, When I seem learning many other things

Because the time for using them is past. If 't were 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—'t was 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

In a late edition were collected and redistributed the pieces first published in 1842, 1845 and 1855, respectively, under the titles of "Dramatic Lyrics," "Dramatic Romances," and "Men and Women." It is not worth while to disturb this arrangement.

Part of the Poems were inscribed to my dear friend John Kenyon : I hope the whole may obtain the honour of an association with his memory.

R. B.

CAVALIER TUNES ¹

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
treasonous parles !
Cavaliers, up ! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take
nor sup
Till you're—

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

III

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

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

¹ Such Poems as the majority in this volume might also come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of "Dramatic Pieces," being, though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine.—R. B.

IV

Then, God for King Charles ! Pym
and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pesti-
lent carles !
Hold by the right, you double your
might ;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for
the fight,
*(Chorus) March we along, fifty-
score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen,
singing this song !*

II. GIVE A ROUSE

I

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

II

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

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

III

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

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

III. BOOT AND SADDLE

I

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

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

II

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd
say;
Many's the friend there, will listen and
pray
"God's luck to gallants that strike up
the lay—

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

III

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Round-
heads' array:
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by
my fay,

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

IV

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, hon-
est and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering,
"Nay!
"I've better counsellors; what coun-
sel 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
freemen,

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
footpath 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 glim-
mer 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 know-
ledge 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 gal-
loping 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
changing 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

'T was 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 Duffeld, '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,

- E.P.

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 mas-
ter, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes
which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in gallop-
ing 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 shud-
dered 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-spire
sprang 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.

T

IX

Taen 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,
Til 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 com-
mon consent)
Was no more than his due who brought
good news from Ghent.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR

1842.

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—
Trough 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
Stops 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
Of the hole, where up the bubbles listen,
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 mo-
tion,
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

I

HERE's the garden she walked across,
Arm in my arm, such a short while since:
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!
She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
As back with that murmur the wicket swung;

For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

II

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

III

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

IV

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

V

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
Stay as you are and be loved for ever!
Bud, if I kiss you 't is that you blow not,
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!
For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,

Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle—
Is not the dear mark still to be seen ?

VI

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

II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

I

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

II

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the 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 Stone-
henge ;
Added up the mortal amount ;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

III

Yonder 's a plum-tree with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but
sage ;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the middle age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;
When he'd be private, there might
he spend

Hours alone in his lady's chamber :
Into this crevice I dropped our
friend.

IV

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
—I knew, at the bottom, rain-drip-
pings stagnate ;
Next a handful of blossoms I plucked
To bury him with, my bookshelf's
magnate ;
Then I went in-doors, brought out a
loaf,
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chab-
lis ;
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 lætis,*
Cantate ! quoth I, as I got a rake,
And up I fished his delectable trea-
tise.

VI

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

VII

How did he like it when the live crea-
tures
Tickled and toused and browsed him
all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious fea-
tures,
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 trou-
sers 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-
elf, *sufficit* !
See the snug niche I have made on my
shelf !
A's book shall prop you up, B's shall
cover you,
Here 's C to be grave with, or D to
be gay,
And with E on each side, and F right
over you,
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-
day !

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH
CLOISTER

I

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhor-
rence !
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 trim-
ming ?
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
Dave 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 burn-
ished,
Laid with care on our own shelf !
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 't is fit to touch our chaps—
Marked with L for our initial !
(He-he ! There his lily snaps !)

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

There's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails :

If I trip him just a-dying,
 Sure of heaven as sure can be,
 Spin him round and send him flying
 Off to hell, a Manichee ?

VIII

Jr, my scrofulous French novel
 On grey paper with blunt type !
 Simply glance at it, you grovel
 Hand and foot in Belial's gripe :
 If I double down its pages
 At the woeful sixteenth print,
 When he gathers his greengages,
 Ope a sieve and slip it in 't ?

IX

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

THE LABORATORY

[ANCIEN RÉGIME.]

I

Now that I, tying thy glass mask
 tightly,
 May gaze thro' these faint smokes curl-
 ing 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 plea-
 sures !
 To carry pure death in an earring, a
 casket,
 A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree-bas-
 ket !

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
 min'on 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 for-
tune'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 avaunt !
This poor wretched 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 pos-
sessed
" 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
scurge."

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 car-
 essed. . . .

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
 No 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
 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 no-
 thing?

But I can't tell (there 's my weak-
 ness)
 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 mid-
 nights,
 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 't is 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?

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 the 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, 't is the sparrows' good-night twitter
 About your cottage eaves!

II

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

III

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

IV

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
 Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—
 Your voice, when you wish the snow-drops 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 in 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 prais-
ing ;
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 bookshelf, 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 be-
 side ?

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 and 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 geran-
 ium'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
 understand.

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,
 wielding far
 Peace or war.

II

Now—the country does not even boast
 a tree,
 As you see,
 To distinguish slopes of verdure, cer-
 tain 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'erspreads
 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 re-
 mains
 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 undistin-
 guished 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
 Till 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 rillels 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 :
'T is 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 !
'T is 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 !
'T was 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—
'T was 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 ?
 'T is 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 unripped,—
 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 it 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, some-
 thing to hear, at least !
 There, the whole day long, one's life is
 a perfect feast ;
 While up at a villa one lives, I main-
 tain it, no more than a beast.

III

Well now, look at our villa ! stuck
 like the horn of a bull
 Just on a mountain's edge as bare as
 the creature's skull,
 Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly
 a leaf to pull !
 —I scratch my own, sometimes, to see
 if the hair 's turned wool.

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,
'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall
have withered well off the heights:
You've the brown ploughed land be-
fore, 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 dash
On the horses with curling fish-tails,
that prance and paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in the conch—
fifty gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds
round her waist in a sort of sash.

VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing 's
to see though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like
death's lean lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they
mix in the corn and mingle,

Or thrird 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 opening your eyes in the city, the
blessed church-bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off, than the
diligence rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it
costs you never a pin.
By and by there's the travelling doctor
gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up
the market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-pic-
ture—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 pro-
cession! our Lady borne smiling
and smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles,
and seven swords stuck in her
heart!
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum,
tootle-te-tootle the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it 's
the greatest pleasure in life.

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 flap 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 TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

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, 't is
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 St. Mark's is, where the Doges
used to wed the sea with rings?

III

Ay, because the sea 's the street there;
and 't is 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 plain-
tive, sixths diminished sigh on
sigh,
Told them something? Those suspen-
sions, 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 your 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, creak-
ing 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 fruit-
age, 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 fel-
lows 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 after-
noons,
By a gift God grants me now and
then,
In the mild decline of those suns like
moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her
men.

V

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

VI

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

VII

For oh, this world and the wrong it
 does!
 They are safe in heaven with their
 backs to it,
 The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum
 and buzz
 Round the works of, you of the little
 wit!
 Do their eyes contract to the earth's
 old scope,
 Now that they see God face to face,
 And have all attained to be poets, I
 hope?
 'T is their holiday now, in any case.

VIII

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

IX

And here where your praise might yield
 returns,
 And a handsome word or two give
 help,
 Here, after your kind, the mastiff gins
 And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
 What, not a word for Stefano there,
 Of brow once prominent and starry,
 Called Nature's Ape and the world's
 despair
 For his peerless painting? (see
 Vasari.)

X

There stands the Master. Study, my
 friends,
 What a man's work comes to! So
 he plans it,
 Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
 For the toiling and moiling, and
 then, *sic transit*!
 Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
 With upturned eye while the hand is
 busy,
 Not sidling a glance at the coin of their
 neighbour!
 'T is looking downward 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 can-
 not be;
 Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
 And grew content in your poor de-
 gree
 With your little power, by those sta-
 tues' 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 Alex-
ander.

XIV

So, testing your weakness by their
strength,
Your meagre charms by their
rounded beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and
length,
You learned—to submit is a mortal's
duty.
—When I say "you" 't is the common
soul,
The collective, I mean: the race of
Man
That receives life in parts to live in a
whole,
And grow here according to God's
clear plan.

XV

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

XVI

To-day's brief passion limits their
range;
It seethes with the morrow for us
and more.
They are perfect—how else? they
shall never change:
We are faulty—why not? we have
time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us; we are rough-hewn, no-
wise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once
invested
With all they can teach, we shall see
them abolished.

XVII

'T is a life-long toil till our lump be
leaven—
The better! What 's come to per-
fection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall prac-
tise 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 laugh-
ter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
Shall Man, such step within his endea-
vour,
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-ac-
quainters,
"And paint man, man, whatever
the issue!
"Make new hopes shine through the
flesh they fray,
"New fears aggrandise the rags and
tatters:
"To bring the invisible full into play!
"Let the visible go to the dogs—
what matters?"

XX

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon
and glory
For daring so much, before they well
did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old; 't is no
idle quiddit.

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

XXI

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

XXII

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

XXIII

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and
dewy;
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
My painter—who but Cimabue?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirland-
ajo,
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
raped,

Blocked up, knocked out, or white-
washed o'er:
—No getting again what the church
has grasped!
The works on the wall must take their
chance;
"Works never conceded to Eng-
land's thick clime!"
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV

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

XXVI

Not that I expect the great Bigordi
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric
bellicose;
Nor the wronged Lippino; and not a
word I
Say of a scrap of Frà Angelico's:
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco,
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven
with a sad eye?
Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Mon-
aco?

XXVII

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

XXVIII

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and
swaddling barret

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

XXIX

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

XXX

No matter for these! But Giotto,
you,
Have you allowed, as the town-
tongues babble it,—
Oh, never! it shall not be counted
true—
That a certain precious little tablet
Which 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 Ognissanti ?)
Patient on altar-step planting a weary
toe!
Nay, I shall have it yet! *Detur
amanti!*
My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a plati-
tude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian
Sofi's eye!
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and pro-
phesy?

XXXII

When the hour grows ripe, and a cer-
tain dotard
Is pitched, no parcel that needs in-
voicing,
To the worse side of the Mont Saint
Gothard,
We shall begin by way of rejoicing;
None of that shooting the sky (blank
cartridge),
Nor a civic guard, all plumes and
lacquer,
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a part-
ridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII

This time we'll shoot better game and
bag 'em hot—
No mere display at the stone of
Dante,
But a kind of sober Witanagemot
(Ex: "Casa Guidi," *quod videas
ante*)
Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to
Florence,
How art may return that departed
with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the
Lorraine's,
And bring us the days of Orgagna
hither!

XXXIV

How we shall prologuize, how we shall
perorate,
Utter fit things upon art and history,
Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood
at zero rate
Make of the want of the age no
mystery;
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show—monarchy ever its uncouth
cub licks
Out of the bear's shape into Chimæra's,
While Pure Art's birth is still the re-
public'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 Cam-
buscan,
And turn the Bell-tower's *alt to alt-
issimo* :

And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia

The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence,
Italy.

XXXVI

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,

Like the golden hope of the world,
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 beanflowers' 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 cicalas die of drouth,

And one sharp tree—'t is a cypress—stands,

By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'er-crusted,

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 frescoes' 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 brush-wood 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
 recapture
 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 assur-
 ance the King liveth yet,
 " Shall our lip with the honey be bright,
 with the water be wet.
 " For out of the black mid-tent's si-
 lence, a space of three days,
 " Not a sound hath escaped to thy ser-
 vants, 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 ser-
 vant ! " And no voice replied.
 At the first I saw nought but the black-
 ness ; 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 cen-
 tre, that goes to each side ;
 He relaxed not a muscle, but hung
 there as, caught in his pangs
 And waiting his change, the king-ser-
 pent 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
noontide—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 folding 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 jerboa a-musing out-
side 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 chil-
dren, one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our
reapers, their wine-song, when
hand

Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good
friendship, and great hearts ex-
pand

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 dwell-
ing.—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 tent shook, for mighty Saul
shuddered: and sparkles 'gan dart

From the jewels that woke in his tur-
ban 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 leap-
ing 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 warb-
ling so softly and well.

"How good is man's life, the mere liv-
ing! 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 wit-
 ness, ' Let one more attest,
 " ' I have lived, seen God's hand thro'
 a lifetime, and all was for best !'
 " Then they sung thro' their tears in
 strong triumph, not much, but the
 rest.
 " And thy brothers, the help and the
 contest, the working whence grew
 " Such result as, from seething grape-
 bundles, the spirit strained true :
 " And the friends of thy boyhood—
 that boyhood of 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 !
 " On one head, all the beauty and
 strength, love and rage (like the
 throe
 " That, a-work in the rock, helps its
 labour and lets the gold go)
 " High ambition and deeds which sur-
 pass 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 stopp'd,
 And waited the thing that should
 follow. Then Saul, who hung
 propped
 By the tent's cross-support in the cen-
 tre, was struck by his name.
 Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy
 summons goes right to the aim,
 And some mountain, the last to with-
 stand 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 breast-
 plate,—leaves grasp of the sheet ?

Fold on fold all at once it crowds thun-
 derously down to his feet,
 And there fronts you, stark, black, but
 alive yet, your mountain of old,
 With his rents, the successive bequeath-
 ings 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 ver-
 dure, again hold the nest
 Of the dove, tempt the goat and its
 young to the green on his crest
 For their food in the ardours of sum-
 mer. 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 des-
 pair.
 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 : 't was 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
 intensely : 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 re-
 stored him ?—Song filled to the
 verge
 His cup with the wine of this life, press-
 ing all that it yields
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and the
 beauty : beyond, on what fields,
 Glean a vintage more potent and per-
 fect to brighten the eye
 And bring blood to the lip, and com-
 mend 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 wide
Which had come long ago on the pas-
ture, 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 or-
dained to be passed with my flocks,
"Let me people at least, with my fan-
cies, 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 mindedst 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 win-
ter. 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'er-
come thee, thou still shalt enjoy
"More indeed, than at first when in-
conscious, 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 pro-
duced not, must everywhere trace
"The results of his past summer-
prime,—so, each ray of thy will,
"Every flash of thy passion and prow-
ess, long over, shall thrill
"Thy whole people the countless, with
ardour, till they too give forth
"A like cheer to their sons, who in
turn, fill the South and the North
"With the radiance thy deed was the
germ of. Carouse in the past!
"But the license of age has its limit;
thou diest at last:
"As the lion when age dims his eye-
ball, the rose at her height,
"So with man—so his power and his
beauty 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 half, they'll affirm, is com-
prised there! Which fault to
amend,
" In the grove with his kind grows the
cedar, whereon they shall spend
" (See, in tablets 't is 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
comment. The river's a-wave
" With smooth paper-reeds grazing
each other when prophet-winds
rave :
" So the pen gives unborn generations
their due and their part
" In thy being! Then, first of the
mighty, thank God that thou art!"

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 ser-
vant, thy word was my word,—
Still be with me, who then at the sum-
mit 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
marvels last night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments,
alone with my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory
evanish like sleep!
For I wake in the grey dewy covert,
while Hebron upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his
shoulder, and Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sun-
shine.

XV

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the mon-
arch, 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 com-
posure, 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 com-
munion; 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, dese-
crate, never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop till,
stayed by the pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and gar-
ments, 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 for-
ward. 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 so-
lace: 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
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 alto-
gether, as good, ages hence,
" As this moment,—had love but the
warrant, love's heart to dispense !"

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No
harp more—no song more ! out-
broke—

XVII

- " I have gone the whole round of crea-
tion : I saw and I spoke :
" I, a work of God's hand for that pur-
pose, received in my brain
" And pronounced on the rest of his
handwork—returned him again
" His creation's approval or censure : I
spoke as I saw.
" I report, as a man may of God's work
—all's love, yet all's law.
" Now I lay down the judgeship he lent
me. Each faculty tasked
" To perceive him, has gained an abyss,
where a dew-drop was asked.
" Have I knowledge ? confounded it
shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
" Have I forethought ? how purblind,
how blank, to the Infinite Care !
" Do I task any faculty highest, to
image success ?
" 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.
" And thus looking within and around
me, I ever renew
" (With that stoop of the soul which in
bending 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 experi-
ence, this deity known,
" I shall dare to discover some pro-
vince, some gift of my own.
" There 's a faculty pleasant to exer-
cise, 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'erake
" 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 com-
pete with it ? Here, the parts
shift ?
" Here, the creature surpass the Crea-
tor,—the end, what Began ?
" Would I fain in my impotent yearn-
ing do all for this man,
" And dare doubt he alone shall not
help him, who yet alone can ?
" Would it ever have entered my mind,
the bare will, much less power,
" To bestow on this Saul what I sang
of, the marvellous dower
" Of the life he was gifted and filled
with ? to make such a soul,
" Such a body, and then such an earth
for insphering the whole ?
" And doth it not enter my mind (as
my warm tears attest)
" These good things being given, to go
on, and give one more, the
best ?
" Ay, to save and redeem and restore
him, maintain at the height
" This perfection,—succeed with life's
dayspring, death's minute of night ?
" Interpose at the difficult minute,
snatch Saul, the 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 re-
pose, by the struggles in this.

XVIII

"I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest, 't is 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;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!
 "See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
 "Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
 "To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—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, uttermost crown—
 "And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
 "One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
 "Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
 "As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
 "Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!
 "He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
 "'T is 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!"

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;
 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!"

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 even-
 ings 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 ex-
 tends
 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

I follow wherever I am led,
 Knowing so well the leader's hand :
 Oh woman-country, wooed not we'll,
 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
 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-needed 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 toad-stools 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:
 'T is 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 our 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, 't was 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 ex-
 pands,
 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
 'T is 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 we crossed be-
 fore,
 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, the 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 be-
 tween,
 And find her soul as when friends
 confer,
 Friends—lovers that might have been.

XLI

For my heart had a touch of the wood-
 land-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 dwell-
 ing-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 very 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 born 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, the earth has gained by one man more,
 And the gain of earth must be Heaven's gain too;
 And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
 When 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—'t is 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 ;
't is 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 be-
side,
" 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, mimick-
ing 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 needst the little solace, thou the
strong ?
Watch out thy 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 at-
tach
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 cor-
onal,
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 door-way'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 tantaliz'd 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, 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
glope
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
Of the wound, since wound must be ?

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.
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.

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 task-master'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
Ground its teeth to let me pass !

ONE WAY OF LOVE

I

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves,
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may
pass.
She will not turn aside ? Alas !
Let them lie. Suppose they die ?
The chance was they might take her eye.

II

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute !
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music ? So !
Break the string ; fold music's wing :
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing !

III

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion—heaven or hell ?
She will not give me heaven ? 'T is
well !
Lose who may—I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they !

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
't were,—
"If I tire of your June, will she greatly
care ?"

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-rider,
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 faces lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion ? I will try it there.

IX

As,—why must one, for the love fore-
gone,
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
'T would 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 Boulevart break again
To warmth and light and bliss ?

III

I know ! the world proscribes not love ;
Allows my finger to caress
Your lips' contour and downiness,
Provided it supply a glove.
The world's good word !—the Insti-
tute !
Guizot receives Montalembert !
Eh ? Down the court three lam-
pions 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 per-
fume !
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 't is twilight, you see,—with such
suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to
importune !

LIFE IN A LOVE

ESCAPE me ?
Never—
Beloved !
While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other
pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear :
It seems too much like a fate, indeed !
Though I do my best I shall scarce
succeed.

But what if I fail of my purpose here ?
 It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
 To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
 And baffled, get up 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 be-
 side
 " 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 pas-
 sion,
 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 yearn-
 ing.

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 thier 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 embroilment,
 Heaven with snaky hell, in torture and entoilment ?

III

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

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

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

Ah, " forgive " you bid him ? While God's champion lives,

Wrong shall be resisted : dead, why, he
forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere
you begin him ;
Evil stands not crowned on earth,
while breath is in him.

X

Once more—Will the wronger, at this
last of all,
Dare to say, " I did wrong," rising in
his fall ?
No ?—Let go, then ! Both the fight-
ers 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 have
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, dis-
carding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits
and opes its door.

III

I would not look up thither past thy
head
Because the door opes, like that
child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face in-
stead,
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 gar-
ment'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 sup-
pressed.

V

How soon all wordly 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 be-
fore 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 con-
tent

—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 magnifi-
cent)

VIII

And since he did not work thus earn-
estly

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 ex-
tend
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 unclothe at last,
I know, and let out all the beauty:
My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

IV

That day, the earth's feast-master's
brow

Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
 Others give best at first, but thou
 "Forever set'st our table praising,
 "Keep'st the good wine till now!"

V

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
 With few or none to watch and wonder:
 I'll say—a fisher, on the sand
 By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
 A netful, brought to land.

VI

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
 Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
 Whereof one drop worked miracles,
 And coloured like Astarte's eyes
 Raw silk the merchant sells?

VII

And each bystander of them all
 Could criticize, and quote tradition
 How depths of blue sublimed some pall
 —To get which, pricked a king's ambition;
 Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,
 The sea has only just o'er-whispered!
 Live welks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
 As if they still the water's lisp heard
 Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX

Enough to furnish Solomon
 Such hangings for his cedar-house,
 That, when gold-robed he took the throne
 In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
 Might swear his presence shone

X

Most like the centre-spike of gold
 Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb
 What time, with ardours manifold,
 The bee goes singing to her groom,
 Drunken and overbold.

XI

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
 Till cunning come to pound and squeeze

And clarify,—refine to proof
 The liquor filtered by degrees,
 While the world stands aloof.

XII

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,
 And priced and saleable at last!
 And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes
 combine
 To paint the future from the past,
 Put blue into their line.

XIII

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle
 eats:
 Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns
 his cup:
 Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
 Both gorge. Who fished the murex
 up?
 What porridge had John Keats?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA

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 mourn-
 tainous fugues?
 See, we're alone in the loft,—

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 Jurion 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!

I layed 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, 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, 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.

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, O Sieve!

XVII

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

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!

XIX

What with affirming, denying,
 Holding, risposting, subjoining,
 All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance I'm trying . . .
 There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
 Under those spider-webs lying!

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?"

XXI

I for man's effort am zealous:
 Prove me such censure unfounded!
 Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—
 Hopes 't was 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'ershroud stars and roses,
 Cherub and trophy and garland;
 Nothings grow something which quietly closes
 Heaven's earnest eye: not a glimpse of the far land
 Gets through our comments and glozes.

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 clef?
 'Faith, 't is 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 *meá pœná*
 (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*.

XXIX

While in the roof, if I'm right there,
... Lo you, the wick in the socket !
Hallo, you sacristan, shows 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 morn-
ing-prayers, [cares
And find a poor devil has ended his
At the foot of your rotten-runged
rat-riddled stairs ?
Do I carry the moon in my pocket ?

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

A TRAGEDY

1843

PERSONS

The Grand-Master's Prefect.
The Patriarch's Nuncio.
The Republic's Admiral.
LOYS DE DREUX, Knight-Novice.

Initiated Druses—DJABAL, KHALIL, AN-
AEL, 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,—*

Kar. The moon is carried off in
purple fire :

Day breaks at last ! Break glory,
with the day,

On Djabal's dread 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 Found-
er's flesh,

As he resumes our Founder's function !
Ragh. —Death

Sweep to the Christian Prefect that en-
slaved

So long us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea !

Ay. 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 !

Kar. 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,

'T is 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 . . .

Ay. Who shout . . .

Ragh. 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.*]

Kar. Hold!

Ay. —Mine, I say;
And mine shall it continue!

Kar. Just this fringe!
Take anything beside! Lo, spire on
spire,

Curl serpentwise wreathed columns to
the top

Of 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 de-
light,

Floats wide, then falls again as if its
slave,

The scented air, took heart now, and
anon

Lost heart to buoy its breadths of gor-
geousness

Above the gloom they droop in—all
the porch

Is jewelled o'er with frostwork charac-
tery;

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!

Ay. Ha, wouldst thou, dog-fox?
Help!

—Three hand-breadths of gold fringe,
my son was set

To twist, the night he died!

Kar. 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!

Ragh. [*interposing.*] Each ravage for
himself!

Booty enough! On, Druses! Be
there found

Blood and a heap behind us; with us,
Djabal

Turned Hakeem; and before us, Le-
banon!

Yields the porch? Spare not! There
his minions dragged

Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Pre-
fect's couch!

Ayoob! Thy son, to soothe the Pre-
fect'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.*

Kha. 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, per-
chance,

Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's
dreaded shape,—

Dispute you for these gauds?

Ay. How say'st thou, Khalil?
Doubtless our Master prompts thee!

Take the fringe,
Old Karshook! I supposed it was a
day . . .

Kha. For pillage?

Kar. Harken, Khalil! Never
spoke

A boy so like a song-bird; we avouch
thee

Prettiest of all our Master's instru-
ments

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 be-
lieved,

His bound ourselves, him moon by moon
obeyed,

Kept silence till this daybreak—so,
may claim

Reward : who grudges me my claim ?

Ay. To-day

Is not as yesterday !

Ragh. Stand off !

Kha. 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 ! Hound ! must the earth

Vomit her plagues on us thro' thee ?—and thee ?

Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault !

Kha. 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 ?

Druses. 'T was even thus, years ago.

Kha. 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 ?

Kar. And why else rend we down, wrench up, rase 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.

Kha. Say I not ?

You, fitted to the Order's purposes,

Your Sheikhs cut off, your very garb proscribed,

Yet must 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 con-signed

(Pursuant to 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 flit

Bird-like about his brow ?

Druses. We saw—we heard !

Djabal is Hakeem, the incarnate Dread,

The phantasm Khalif, King of Prodigies !

Kha. And as he said hath not our
 Khalif done,
 And so disposed events (from land to
 land
 Passing invisibly) that when, this morn,
 The pact of villainy complete, there
 comes
 This Patriarch's Nuncio with this Mas-
 ter'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 Ven-
 ice' flag;
 That Venice which, the Hospitallers'
 foe,
 Grants us from Candia escort home at
 price
 Of our relinquished isle, Rhodes counts
 her own— [stand
 Venice, whose promised argosies should
 Toward the 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!

Kar. 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, whene'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 aspirest,
 Forbidden such or such an honour,—
 say,
 Would silence serve so amply?

Kha. Karshook thinks
 I covet honours? Well, nor idly
 thinks!

Honours? I have demanded of them
 all
 The greatest!

Kar. I supposed so.

Kha. Judge yourselves!

Turn, thus: 't is in the alcove at the
 back
 Of yonder columned porch, whose en-
 trance 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...
Kar. For what
 Shall the Bride's brother vainly sue?

Kha. 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 your-
 selves; since, near
 As I approach him, nearer as I trust
 Soon to approach our Master, he re-
 veals
 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 mys-
 tery,
 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.

Kar. Loys? Is not Loys gone
For ever?

Ayoob. Loys, the Frank Knight, re-
turned?

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!

Kha. Peace!

Thou, Karshook, with thy company,
receive

The Prefect as appointed: see, all
keep

The wonted show of servitude: an-
nounce

His entry here by the accustomed peal
Of trumpets, then await the further
pleasure

Of Djabal! (Loys back, whom 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!

Saidst 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!

Kha. 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!

Kha. Joy!

Summon our people, Raghib! Bid all
forth!

Tell them the long-kept secret, old and
young!

Set free the captives, 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 linea-
ments,

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!* 'T is 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?

Kha. [*Aside to KAR.*] Loys, in
truth! Yet Djabal cannot err!

Kar. [*to KHA.*] 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

Strikes 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 overseas:
 The timidest shall have in me no Prefect
 To cower at thus! [*Aloud.*] I asked for Djabal—
Kar. [*Aside.*] Better
 One lured him, ere he can suspect, inside
 The corridor; 't were easy to dispatch
 A youngster. [*To Loys.*] Djabal passed
 Some minutes since
 Thro' yonder porch, and . . .
Kha. [*Aside.*] Hold! What, him
 dispatch?
 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?
Kha. [*advancing.*] Djabal has in-
 tercourse 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?)—"Intercourse
 "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,
 Plausiblist stories . . .
Kha. Stories, say you?—Ah,
 The quaint attire!
Loys. My dress for the last time!
 How sad I cannot make you under-
 stand,
 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 Hospitaller's vest to-day!
Kha. The Nuncio we await? What
 brings you back
 From Rhodes, Sir Loys?
Loys. How you island-tribe
 Forget the world 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.
Kha. 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, 2. Knight
 ere eve
 Am I; bound, like the rest, to yield
 my wealth
 To the common stock, to live in chas-
 tity,
 (We Knights espouse alone our Order's
 fame)
 —Change this gay weed for the black
 white-crossed gown,
 And fight to death against the Infidel
 —Not, therefore, against you, you
 Christians with
 Such partial difference only as befits
 The peaceffullest of tribes! But Kha-
 lil, prithee,
 Is not the Isle brighter than wont to-
 day?
Kha. Ah, the new sword!

Loys. See now! You handle sword
As 't were a camel-staff! Pull!
That 's my motto,
Annealed "*Pro fide*," on the blade in
blue.

Kha. No curve in it? Surely a
blade should curve!

Loys. Straight from the wrist!
Loose—it should poise itself!

Kha. [*waving with irrepressible ex-
ultation the sword.*] We are a na-
tion, 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!

Kha. At noon seek Djabal in the
Prefect's Chamber,

And find . . . [*Aside.*] Nay, 't is 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
proceed 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 my-
self

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 villainous career?
The princely Synod! All I dared re-
quest

Was his dismissal; and they gra-
ciously

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 em-
brace,

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.

Dja. 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 ven-
geance—this

Required, forsooth, no mere man's
faculty,

Nor less than Hakeem's? The per-
suading 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 immin-
ent

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,
avaunt

Falsehood! Thou shalt not keep thy
hold on me!

—Nor even get a hold on me! 'T is
now—

This day—hour—minute—'t is as here
I stand [fect,

On the accursed threshold of the Pre-
That I am found deceiving and de-
ceived!

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;

"My mother'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 Pre-
fect here,

"The Druses here, all here, but Ha-
keem's self,

"The Khalif of the thousand prophe-
cies,

"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 una-
bused,

"—Who, thus surrounded, slay for you
and them

"The Prefect, lead to Lebanon? No
Khalif,

"But Sheikh once more! Mere Dja-
bal—not" . . .

Enter KHALIL hastily.

Kha. —God Hakeem!

'T is 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 !

Dja. [*Aside.*] Adored !—but I re-
nounce it utterly !

Kha. Already are they instituting
choirs

And dances to the Khalif, as of old
'T is chronicled thou badst them.

Dja. [*Aside.*] I abjure it !
'T is not mine—not for me !

Kha. 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 sup-
posed

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 ! 'T is my
office

Just to announce what well thou
know'st—but thus

Thou bidst me. At this self-same mo-
ment 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 . . .

Dja. [*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 ! "

Kha. [*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 Ha-

keem's yet,
Though but till I have spoken this, per-
chance.

Dja. [*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 . . .

Kha. . . . Fain would see thee,
speak with thee,

Before thou change, discard this Dja-
bal'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.

Dja. [*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 ?

Kha. All at the signal pant to flock
around

That banner of a brow !
Dja. [*Aside.*] And when they flock,

Confess them this : and after, for re-
ward,

Be chased with howlings to her fect
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
proceeds

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
prostration

Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life

Of this detested . . .

Does he come, you say,

This Prefect? All's in readiness?

Kha. The sword,
The sacred robe, the Khalif's mystic
tiar,

Laid up so long, are all disposed beside
The Prefect's chamber.

Dja. —Why did you despair?

Kha. 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—’t was, “Be silent, or worse
fare!

“Endure till time's slow cycle prove
complete;

“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!

Dja. You think so?

Kha. 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 talk
to thee!

Dja. 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—con-
fess,

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!

When should my first child's-careless-
ness have stopped

If not when I, whose lone youth hurried
past

Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses'
sake,

At length recovered 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 des-
troy! [*Goes.*

*Enter ANAEL, and MAANI, who is as-
sisting to array her in the ancient
dress of the Druses.*

An. Those saffron vestures of the
tabret-girls!

Comes Djabal, think you?

Maa. Doubtless Djabal comes.

An. Dost thou snow-swathe thee
kinglier, Lebanon,

Than in my dreams?—Nay, all the
tresses off

My forehead! Look I lovely so? He
says

That I am lovely.

Maa. Lovely: nay, that hangs
Awry.

- An.* 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 ?
Maa. Content, my child.
An. Oh mother, tell me more of him !
 He comes
 Even now—tell more, fill up my soul with him !
Maa. And did I not . . . yes, surely . . . tell you all ?
An. What will be changed in Djabal when the Change
 Arrives ? Which feature ? Not his eyes !
Maa. 'T is writ
 Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove the dark
 Superbly.
An. 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 discourse to me
 In that enforced still fashion, word on word !
 'T is the old current which must swell thro' that,
 For what least tone, Maani, could I lose ?
 'T is 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 . . . proceed !
Maa. 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, [lead
 He was lost Hakeem clothed in flesh to
 His children home anon, now veiled to work
 Great purposes : the Druses now would change !
An. 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 stand as if to tell
 me
 I am not, yet forbears. Why else re-
 vert
 To one theme ever?—how mere human
 gifts
 Suffice him in myself—whose worship
 fades,
 Whose awe goes ever off at his ap-
 proach,
 As now, who when he comes . . .
 [DJABAL enters.] Oh why is it
 I cannot kneel to you?

Dja. Rather, 't is I
 Should kneel to you, my Anael!

An. Even so!

For never seem you—shall I speak the
 truth?—
 Never a God to me! 'T is 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 I will kneel!

Dja. [preventing her.] No—no!

[Feeling the khandjar as he
 raises her.

Ha, have you chosen . . .

An. 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 attri-
 butes
 'In him, by me whose heart at his ap-
 proach
 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
 Of any merely mortal presence? Doubt
 Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now?
 How shall I meet the rapture presently,
 With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed?
 Dja. [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. [itself]
 Could I take down the prop-work, in
 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 re-
 placed
 The old support thus silently with-
 drawn!
 But no; the beauteous fabric crushes
 too.
 'T is 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 re-
turn—
Have convoy to their birth-place back,
whoe'er
The leader be, myself or any Druse—
Venice is pledged to that: 't is for my-
self,
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 my-
self?
He cannot bar their passage from the
Isle;
What would his death be but my own
reward?
Then, mine I will forego. It is fore-
gone!
Let him escape with all my House's
blood!
Ere he can reach land, Djabal dis-
appears,
And Hakeem, Anael loved, shall, fresh
as first,
Live in her memory, keeping her sub-
lime
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 dis-
posed
Safely at last at Rhodes, and . . .

Enter KHALIL.

Kha. Loys greets thee!
Dja. Loys? To drag me back?
It cannot be!
An. [*Aside.*] Loys! Ah, doubt may
not be stifled so!
Kha. 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!
Dja. —And asks for me?
Kha. 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!
Dja. [*Aside.*] Shame winds me with
her tether round and round!
An. [*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!
Dja. [*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, [clash
And calling me his Khalif-God, will
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!
An. Please you?
Dja. 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.
An. [*Aside.*] As I divined: he bids
me save myself,
Offers me a probation—I accept!
Let me see Loys!
Loys. [*Without.*] Djabal!
An. [*Aside.*] 'T is his voice.
The smooth Frank trifler 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 !
Dja. He comes.
 Khalil, along with me ! while Anael
 waits
 Till I return once more—and but once
 more !

ACT III

ANAEL and LOYS.

An. Here leave me ! Here I wait
 another. 'T was
 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 !

An. 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 . . .

An. 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 Dja-
 bal ? 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 acknow-
 ledge ? No,

She sees into my heart's core ! What
 is it

Feeds either cheek with red, as June
 some rose ?

Why turns she from me ? Ah fool,
 over-fond

To dream I could call up . . .
 What never dream

Yet feigned ! 'T is love ! Oh Anael
 speak to me !

Djabal—
An. 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 !
An. 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 companion-
ship
With those who graciously bestowed
on me

The very opportunities I turn
Against them! Let me not see Djabal
now!

An. 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.*]

An. 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 pre-
ference,

No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is ab-
sorbed!

And for a love like this, the God who
saves

My race, selects me for his bride?
One way!—

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. [*to himself.*] No moment is to
waste then; 't is 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!

An. Djabal, I am thine!

Dja. Mine? Djabal's?—As if Ha-
keem had not been?

An. Not Djabal's? Say first, do
you read my thought?

Why need I speak, if you can read my
thought?

Dja. I do not, I have said a thousand
times.

An. (My secret's safe, I shall sur-
prise 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 hell

"To them; this august form will fol-
low me,

"Mix with the waves his voice will,—I
have him;

"And they, the Prefect; Oh, my hap-
piness

"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 mo-
ment's bliss

"I shall forget my people pine for
home—

"They pass and they repass with pal-
lid eyes!"

I vowed at once a certain vow; this
vow—

Not to embrace you till my tribe was
saved.

Embrace me!

Dja. [*Apart.*] And she loved me!
Nought remained

But that! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect
dead?

An. 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!

Dja. [avoiding her.] I come for that
—to say

Such an occasion is at hand: 't is like
I leave you—that we part, my Anael,
—part

For ever!

An. We part? Just so! I have
succumbed,—

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:"
't was dead.

Dja. 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.

Kha. He 's here! The Prefect!
Twenty guards,

No more—no sign he dreams of danger.
All

Awaits thee only. Ayoob, Karshook,
keep

Their posts—wait but the deed's accom-
plishment

To join us with thy Druses to a man!

Still holds his course the Nuncio—near
and near

The fleet from Candia steering!

Dja. [Aside]. All is lost!
—Or won?

Kha. And I have laid the sacred
robe,

The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch
—the place

Commanded. Thou wilt hear the Pre-
fect's trumpet.

Dja. Then I keep Anael,—him then,
past recall,

I slay—'t is forced on me! As I began
I must conclude—so be it!

Kha. 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!

An. [Aside.] And 't is now that
Djabal

Would leave me—in the glory meet
for him!

Dja. As glory, I would yield the deed
to you [be

Or any Druse; what peril there may
I keep. [Aside.] All things conspire to
hound me on!

Not now, my soul, draw back, at least!
Not now!

The course is plain, howe'er obscure all
else.

Once offer this tremendous sacrifice,
Prevent what else will be irreparable,
Secure these transcendental helps, re-
gain

The Cedars—then let all dark clear it-
self!

I slay him!

Kha. Anael, and no part for us!
[To DJA.] Hast thou possessed her
with . . .

Dja. [to AN.] 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 æry thing :
What is there in his death ?

An. My brother said,
Is there no part in it for us ?

Dja. 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, [fore,

When Ayoob shall receive, but not be-
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 !

Kha. What sign ? and who the
bearer ?

Dja. 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 ! 'T is the Pre-
fect's chamber !

Anael, keep you the ring—give you the
sign !

(It holds her safe amid the stir.) You
will

Be faithful ?

An. [taking the ring.] I would fain
be worthy of you !

[Trumpet without.
Kha. He comes !

Dja. And I too come !
An. One word, but one !

Say, shall you be exalted at the deed ?
Then ? On the instant ?

Dja. I exalted ? What ?
He, there—we, thus—our wrongs re-
venged, our tribe

Set free ? Oh, then shall I, assure your-
self,

Shall you, shall each of us, be in his
death

Exalted !
Kha. He is here !

Dja. 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
beheld . . .

Pref. 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 . . .
Pref. Trade in the dear Druses ?

Blood and sweat traffic ? Spare what
yesterday

We had 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?
Pref. 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 [self—
These savage wizards, and reward my-
Loys. The Knights who so repudiate your crime?
Pref. 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 sileuter 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 arrangement, 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 [lying.
By Murcia, where my three fat manors 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—yet will unveil you!
Pref. 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
Inculcate 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!

Pref. Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,

And that son's wealth, the father's influence, too, [Loys,

And the young arm, we'll even say, my
—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.

Pref. Thank you it does not! Pardon this last flash:

I bear a sober visage presently
With the disinterested Nuncio here—

His purchase-money safe at Murcia, 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,

The same 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!

ACT IV

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. 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 foot-
step! 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! [ANAEEL screams.] So slow to feel

'T is 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 't is, I have to do !

An. With mine !

Dja. Blood—Anael ?

An. Djabal, 't is thy deed !

It must be ! I had hoped to claim it mine—

Be worthy thee—but I must needs confess

'T was not I, but thyself . . not I have . . Djabal !

Speak to me !

Dja. Oh, my punishment !

An. 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 :

'T was but a moment's work, thou saidst—perchance

It may have been so ! Well, it is thy deed !

Dja. It is my deed !

An. 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 ! 'T is 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 ! 'T is the small groan

Of a child—no worse ! Bestow the new life, then !

Too swift it cannot be, too strange, surpassing !

[*Following him up and down.*

Now ! Change us both ! Change me and change thou !

Dja. [*sinks on his knees.*] Thus ! Behold my change ! You have done nobly ! I !—

An. Can Hakeem kneel ?

Dja. No Hakeem, and scarce Djabal !

I have spoken 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 !

An. [*to herself.*] Did I strike once, or twice, or many times ?

Dja. I came to lead my tribe where, bathed in glooms,

Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep : Anael, I saw my tribe : I said, " With-

out

" A miracle this cannot be "—I said " Be there a miracle ! "—for I saw

you !

An. His head lies south the portal !

Dja. —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, [me !

I hoped : I said Heaven had accepted *An.* 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 !

Dja. 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?

An. [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!

Bow 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!

Dja. Whither come?

An. At once—

Lest 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!

Dja.

Where come?

An. 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!

Dja. 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. [this; Hear me! The argosies touch land by

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!

An. Thou wilt feign Hakeem then?

Dja. [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.

'T is 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, 't is Hakeem saves you! In! Behold
 Your Prefect!

Enter LOYS. DJABAL hides the khand-jar 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 't is there
 He meets the Nuncio? Well! Now, a surprise—
 He there—

Dja. 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, confronted

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 throw 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—

Dja. Anael?

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 embrace.

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! 'T is a long devised
Conspiracy: the whole tribe is involved.
He is their Khalif—'t is on that pre-
tence—

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 ap-
prised

The Nuncio. As 't was said, we find
this Djabal

Here where we take him.

Dja. [*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 race,
With . . . but thou know'st—on that
tale's truth I pledged

My faith before the Chapter: what art
thou?

Dja. *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

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

Belie the Druses? Do they share thy
crime?

Those thou professest of our Breton
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!
Dja. 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 tribe are we.
Enough

For thee, 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 con-
cede?

—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?

Dja. 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? 'T is well!

Dja. Loys, I have 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! 'T is 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

Of 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!

Thou art

Strong in thy cause, then!—dost out-brave 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 [*this,*

By him, nor seek appeal! Promise me 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!

Dja. 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 Leba-
non! My manufacture 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?—"Leba-
non?" (My daughter—my daugh-
ter!)—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 disemboгуing 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 ye! 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 out-
let? None?

The wizards stop each avenue? Keep
close!)

[*To the Druses.*] As if one came to a
son's house, I say,

So did 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
glozing 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 of the earth,
 Could triumph, that have been successively
 Exploded, laughed to scorn, all nations through:
 “*Romaioi, Ioudaioite kai proselutoi,*
 “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 [gift
 That so much love was wasted—every 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.
Kha. 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 me but the truth?
 Art thou the only fond one of thy tribe?
 'T is I interpret for thy tribe!
Kha. Oh, this
 Is the expected Nuncio! Druses, hear—
 Endure ye this? Unworthy to partake
 The glory Hakeem gains you! While I speak,
 The ships touch land: who makes for Lebanon?

They plant the winged lion in these halls!

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] If it be true! Venice?—Oh, never true!

Yet Venice would so gladly thwart our Knights,

And fain get footing here, stand close by Rhodes!

Oh, to be duped this way!

Kha. Ere he appear And lead you gloriously, repent, I say!

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] Nor any way to stretch the arch-wizard stark

Ere the Venetians come? Cut off the head,

The trunk were easily stilled. [*To the Druses.*] He? Bring him forth!

Since so you needs will have it, I assent!

You'd judge him, say you, on the spot? confound

The sorcerer in his very circle? Where's

Our short black-bearded sallow friend who said

He'd earn the Patriarch's guerdon by one stab?

Bring Djabal forth at once!

Druses. Ay, bring him forth! The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and silk,

And we're the Patriarch's children—true men, we!

Where is the glory? Show us all the glory!

Kha. You dare not so insult him! What, not see . . .

(I tell thee, Nuncio, these are uninstruc-

ted, Untrusted—they know nothing of our Khalif!)

—Not see that if he lets a doubt arise

It is but to give yourselves the chance of seeming

To have some influence in your own Return!

That all may say ye would have trusted him

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 DJA.*] Here are thy people! Keep thy word to me!

Dja. 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 DJA.*] 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 . . .

Dja. . . 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—with-
draw

Her warrant of the deed which rein-
states

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: 't is 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 sum-
moned 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 . . .

Dja. Let who moves perish at my
foot!

Kha. 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!

Dja. What Druse

Accused me, as he saith? I bid each
bone

Crumble within that Druse! None,
Loys, none

Of my own people, as thou saidst,
have raised

A voice against me.

Nuncio. [Aside.] Venice to come!
Death!

Dja. [continuing.] Confess and go
unscathed, however false!

Seest thou my Druses, Luke? I would
submit [fess!

To thy pure malice did one Druse con-
fess—
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 your-
selves,

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 cher-
ished; all,

Explicitly as late 't was spoken to
these

My servants: I absolve and pardon
thee.

Loys. Thou hast the dagger ready,
Djabal ?
Dja. Speak,
Recreant !
Druses. Stand back, fool ! farther !
Suddenly
You shall see some huge serpent glide
from under
The empty vest, or down will thunder
crash !
Back ! Khalil !
Kha. I go back ? Thus go I back !
[To AN.] Unveil ! Nay, thou shalt
face the Khalif ! 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 ! [crime—
Dared I think thee a partner in his
That blood could soil that hand ? nay,
't is 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 !
Dja. 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, Breton'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 AN.] 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 ! 'T is not
by gifts
I put aside this Djabal : we'll 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 DJA.] Now speak—now, quick on
this that I have said,—
Thou with the blood, speak if thou art
a man !
Dja. [to AN.] And was it thou be-
trayedst me ? 'T is well !
I have deserved this of thee, and sub-
mit.
Nor 't is much evil thou inflictest : life
Ends here. The cedars shall not wave
for us :
For there was crime, and must be pun-
ishment. [thee
See fate ! By thee I was seduced ! by
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 predom-
inant,
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 !
An. Djabal !
Dja. 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!

An. My Djabal!

Dja. 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!

An. HAKEEM! *[She falls dead.*

*[The Druses scream, grovelling
before him.]*

Ah Hakeem!—not on me thy wrath!
Biamrallah, pardon! never doubted I!
Ha, dog, how sayest thou?

*[They surround and seize the NUN-
cio and his Guards. Loys
flings himself upon the body of
ANAEL, on which DJABAL con-
tinues to gaze as stupefied.]*

Nuncio. Caitives! Have ye eyes?
Whips, racks should teach you! What,
his fools? his dupes?

Leave me! unhand me!

Kha. *[approaching DJABAL timidly.]*

Save her for my sake!

She was already thine; she would have
shared

To-day thine exaltation: think, this
day *[thee!]*

Her hair was plaited thus because of
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!

Kha. *[bending over ANAEL'S body.]*

Just restore her life!

So little does it! there—the eyelids
tremble!

'T was not my breath that made them:
and the lips

Move of themselves. I could restore
her life!

Hakeem, we have forgotten—have pre-
sumed

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,
Anaël?—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 prom-
ised

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!

Dja. *[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, his 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

Where now ye stand erect!—Not grand enough? [beasts]

—What more could be conceded to such As of you, so sunk and base as you, Than a mere man?—A man among such beasts

Was miracle enough: yet him you doubt,

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!

Dja. Druses! we shall henceforth be far away— [cedars—]

Out of mere mortal ken—above the 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!

Dja. [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,—

perchance,

One thought of him who thus, to bid thee speed,

His last word to the living speaks! This done, [first]

Resume thy course, and, first amid the 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.]

Dja. [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

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 Ret. 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 pour-suivant?

But there's no breeding in a man of you

Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,

Old Gerard!
Ger. Save your courtesies, my friend.

Here is my place.

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

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?

Ger. What then?

2nd Ret. 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 Ret. I'll wager he has let Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred, swim

Over the falls and gain the river!

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

4th Ret. Let Gerard be! He's coarse-grained, like h's carved

black cross-bow stock.

Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look! [now,

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

1st Ret. 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 Ret. He's only bowing, fool! The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

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

3rd Ret. I don't see wherefore
Richard, and his troop
Of silk and silver varlets there, should
find

Their perfumed selves so indispensable
On high days, holidays! Would it so
disgrace

Our family, if I, for instance, stood—
In my right hand a cast of Swedish
hawks,

A leash of greyhounds in my left?—

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

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

1st Ret. Oh Walter, groom, our
horses, do they match
The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the
six—

They paw the ground—Ah Walter!
and that brute

Just on his haunches by the wheel!

6th Ret. Ay—Ay!
You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces: what's a horse
to you?

D' ye mark that beast they've slid into
the midst

So cunningly?—then, Philip, mark
this further;

No leg has he to stand on!

1st Ret. No? That's comfort.

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

The Earl at least! Come, there's a
proper man,

I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole
or Swede,

Has got a starrier eye.

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

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

5th Ret. Here's Lord Tresham's
self!

There now—there's what a nobleman
should be!

He's older, graver, loftier, he's more
like

A House's head!

2nd Ret. But you'd not have a
boy

—And what's the Earl beside?—pos-
sess too soon
That stateliness?

1st Ret. Our master takes his
hand—

Richard and his white staff are on the
move—

Back fall our people—(tsh!—there's
Timothy

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 com-
pany

Close round them—in they go! [*Jump-
ing 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 Ret. My father drove his father
first to court,

After his marriage-day—ay, did he!

2nd Ret. God bless
Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the
Earl!

Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!

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

2nd Ret. [*Aside*]. He's vexed, now,
that he let the show escape!

[*To GER.*] Remember that the Earl
returns this way.

Ger. That way?

2nd Ret. Just so.

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

2nd Ret. Old Gerard
Will die soon—mind I said, it! He was
used

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 a point decorous and such square
by rule—

He knew such niceties, no herald more:
And now—you see his humour: die he
will!

2nd Ret. 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 Ret. I !—

4th Ret. I !—

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,

Some hint of how the parley goes inside !
Prosperity to the great House once more !

Here's the last drop !

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

SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN, AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN.

Tresh. 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 !—

Mer. Thanks !

Tresh. —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 avour more, nor that the least,

—to think

The welcome I should give ;—'t is given ! My lord,

My only brother, Austin—he's the king's.

Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—be-trothed

To Austin : all are yours.

Mer. 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 't is 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 ?

Guen. [*apart to AUS.*] Why, this is loving, Austin !

Aus. He's so young !

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

He never had obtained an entrance here,

Were all this fear and trembling needed.

Aus. Hush !

He reddens.

Guen. Mark him, Austin ; that's true love !

Ours must begin again.

Tresh. 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.

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

Tresh. My best of words
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.

Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

Mer. 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 eyass 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.

Guen. [*aside to Aus.*] 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 irrever-
ent talk

Be lessoned for the future !

Tresh. 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 con-
stancy,

How pure yet passionate, how calm
yet kind,

How grave yet joyous, how reserved
yet free

As light where friends are—how im-
bued with lore

The world most prizes, yet the simplest,
yet

The . . one might know I talked of
Mildred—thus

We brothers talk !

Mer. I thank you.
Tresh. 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

Prefers your suit to her as 't were its
own.

Can I say more ?

Mer. No more—thanks, thanks
—no more !

Tresh. This matter then discussed. . .

Mer. —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 !

Tresh. With less regret 't is suffered,
that again

We meet, I hope, so shortly.

Mer. 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.
Tresh. So soon

As I am made acquainted with her
thoughts lean—

On your proposal—howsoever they
A messenger shall bring you the result.

Mer. You cannot bind me more to
you, my lord.

Farewell till we renew . . I trust, re-
new

A converse ne'er to disunite again.
Tresh. So may it prove !

Mer. You, lady, you, sir, take
My humble salutation !

Guen. and Aus. Thanks !
Tresh. 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 "

Guen. That way you'd take, friend Austin? What a shame

I was your cousin, tamely from the first

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

Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?

The Earl's a fool.

Aus. Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

Tresh. (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?

Guen. He's young.

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

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

Austin, how old is she?

Guen. There's tact for you!

I mean that being young was good excuse

If one should tax him . .

Tresh. Well?

Guen. —With lacking wit.

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

Guen. 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 cheek.

"I'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . .

Tresh. . . "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!

Guen. Austin, how we must—!

Tresh. Must what? Must speak truth,

Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him!

I challenge you!

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

Tresh. What's urgent we obtain Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—

Next day at furthest.

Guen. Ne'er instruct me!

Tresh. 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.

Guen. 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— [Well,

I think I brought him to contrition!—
I have not done such things, (all to
deserve

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

To be dismissed so coolly!

Mil. Guendolen!
What have I done? That could sug-
gest . . .

Guen. 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 Guen-
dolen's

Ill-timed misplaced attempted smart-
nesses—

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 meed?

Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes!
Mil. My brother—

Did he . . . you said that he received
him well?

Guen. If I said only "well" I said
not much—

Oh, stay—which brother?

Mil. Thorold! who—who else?

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

Nay, hear me out—with us he's even
gentler

Than we are with our birds. Of this
great House

The least retainer that e'er caught his
glance

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. [ment;

He has desert, and that, acknowledg-
Is he content?

Mil. You wrong him, Guendolen.

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

The light of his interminable line,
An ancestry with men all paladins,
And woman all . . .

Mil. Dear Guendolen, 't is late!
When yonder purple pane the climbing
moon

Pierces, I know 't is midnight.

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

One come audaciously to graft himself
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
No slightest spot in such an one . . .

Mil. Who finds
A spot in Mertoun?

Guen. Not your brother; there-
fore,

Not the whole world.

Mil. I am weary, Guendolen.—
Bear with me!

Guen. I am foolish.

Mil. Oh no, kind—
But I would rest.

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

Mil. Brown hair.

Guen. Brown? why it is brown—
how could you know that?

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

Guen. Forgive me—sleep the sound-
lier for me!

[*Going, she turns suddenly.*
Mildred!

Perdition! all 's discovered! Thorold
finds

—That the Earl's greatest of all grand-
mothers

Was grander daughter still—to that
fair dame

Whose garter slipped down at the
famous dance! [*Goes.*

Mil. Is she—can she be really gone
at last?

My heart! I shall not reach the window.
Needs

Must I have sinned much, so to suffer!

[*She lifts the small lamp which is
suspended 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
consent

Of all the world and *Thorold*, *Mertoun's*
bride!

Too late! 'T is sweet to think of,
sweeter still

To hope for, that this blessed end
soothes up

The curse of the beginning; but I know
It comes too late: 't will sweetest be of
all

To dream my soul away and die upon.
[*A noise without.*

The voice! Oh why, why glided sin
the snake

Into the paradise Heaven meant us
both?

[*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 tune-
less,

"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!

Mil. Sit, Henry—do not take my
hand!

Mer. 'T is mine.

The meeting that appalled us both so
much

Is ended.

Mil. What begins now?

Mer. Happiness
Such as the world contains not.

Mil. That is it.

Our happiness would, as you say, ex-
ceed

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!

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

Compelled myself—if not to speak un-
truth,

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?"

Mil. Sin has surprised us; so will punishment.

Mer. No—me alone, who sinned alone!

Mil. The night

You likened our past life to—was it storm

Throughout to you then, Henry?

Mer. 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. 'T was day with me—

Perpetual dawn with me.

Mil. Come what, come will,

You have been happy: take my hand!

Mer. [after a pause.] How good Your brother is! I figured him a cold—

Shall I say, haughty man?

Mil. They told me all.

I know all.

Mer. It will soon be over.

Mil. Over?

Oh, what is over? what must I live through

And say, " 't is over?" Is our meeting over?

Have I received in presence of them all 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 [spot

In its birth even! some fierce leprous 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 men round some cursed fount

That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll not

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

This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace

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

Mer. 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.

Mil. I'll meet their faces, Henry!

Mer. When? to-morrow! Get done with it!

Mil. Oh Henry, not to-morrow! Next day! I never shall prepare my

words And looks and gestures sooner.—How you must

Despise me!

Mer. 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?

Mil. Dear Henry!

Mer. 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
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!

Mil. 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!

Mer. 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 figh'-mark and device!

Mildred, I love you and you love me!

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

Mer. This is not our last meeting?

Mil. One night more.

Mer. And then—think, then!

Mil. Then, no sweet courtship-days,

No dawning consciousness of love for us,

No strange and palpitating births of sense

From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,

Reserves and confidences: morning's over!

Mer. How else should love's perfected noontide follow?

All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

Mil. So may it be! but—
You are cautious, love?

Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?

Mer. Oh, trust me! Then our final meeting's fixed?

To-morrow night?

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

His foot is on the yew-tree bough; the turf

Receives him: now the moonlight as he runs

Embraces him—but he must go—is gone.

Ah, once again he turns—thanks,
thanks, my love!
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.

This way! In, Gerard, quick!

[*As GERARD enters, TRESHAM
secures the door.*]

Now speak! or, wait—
I'll bid you speak directly.

[*Seats himself.*]

Now repeat
Firmly and circumstantially the tale
You just now told me; it eludes me;
either

I did not listen, or the half is gone
Away from me. How long have you
lived here?

Here in my house, your father kept our
woods

Before you?

Ger. —As his father did, my lord.
I have been eating, sixty years almost,
Your bread.

Tresh. Yes, yes. You ever were
of all [know,
The servants in my father's house, I
The trusted one. You'll speak the
truth.

Ger. I'll speak
God's truth. Night after night . . .

Tresh. Since when?

Ger. At least
A month—each midnight has some
man access

To Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. Tush, "access"—
No wide words like "access" to me!

Ger. He runs
Along the woodside, crosses to the
South,

Takes the left tree that ends the
avenue . . .

Tresh. The last great yew-tree?

Ger. You might stand upon
The main boughs like a platform.
Then he . . .

Tresh. Quick!

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

—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line
That reaches to the lady's casement—

Tresh. —Which

He enters not! Gerard, some wretched
fool

Dares pry into my sister's privacy!

When such are young, it seems a preci-
ous thing

To have approached,—to merely have
approached,

Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon! He does
not enter?

Gerard?

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

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

Tresh. Leave that name out!
Well?

That lamp?

Ger. —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...

Tresh.—And stay?

Ger. An hour, two hours.

Tresh. And this you saw
Once?—twice?—quick!

Ger. Twenty times.

Tresh. And what brings you
Under the yew-trees?

Ger. The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger

stag
That broke the pale, I saw the man.

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

Ger. But
He came, my lord, the first time he was
seen,

In a great moonlight, light as any day,
From Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. [after a pause.] You have no
cause

—Who could have cause to do my
sister wrong?

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

Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted

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 birth-place too,

Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubts

What it behoved me to 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!

Tresh. No—

No, Gerard!

Ger. Let me go!

Tresh. A man, you say:

What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind? What dress?

Ger. A slouched hat and a large dark foreign cloak

Wraps his whole form; even his face is hid;

But I should judge him young: no hind, be sure!

Tresh. Why?

Ger. He is ever armed: his sword projects

Beneath the cloak.

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

Ger. 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.*

Tresh. Come in! [*She enters.*

Ha Guendolen—good morning.
Guen. Nothing more?

Tresh. What should I say more?

Guen. 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!

Tresh. Who, I?

You laugh at me.

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

In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer
back

Than Arthur's time?

Tresh. When left you Mildred's
chamber?

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

To ask is, how I left her chamber,—
Content yourself, she'll grant this
paragon

Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

Tresh. Send her here!

Guen. Thorold?

Tresh. I mean—acquaint her,
Guendolen,
—But mildly!

Guen. Mildly?

Tresh. 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!

Guen. I'll die

Piecemeal, record that, if there have
not gloomed

Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!

Tresh. 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.

Mil. What book

Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen
Thought you were pale: you are not

pale. That book?

That's Latin surely.

Tresh. 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?

Mil. True love.

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

Of all that love or that profess to love?

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

Tresh. 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
 'T was 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.
Mil. What is this for ?
Tresh. 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 her sacred ? You—for you I mean,
 Shall I speak, shall I not speak ?

Mil. Speak !
Tresh. 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. [tell,"
 Say " There is no such story men could
 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 !
Mil. Thorold, do you devise
 Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
 There be ! 'T is nought to say that I'll endure
 And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge
 Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire :
 But do not plunge me into other guilt !
 Oh, guilt enough ! I cannot tell his name.
Tresh. Then judge yourself ! How should I act ? Pronounce !
Mil. Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus !
 To die here in this chamber by that sword
 Would seem like punishment : so should I glide,
 Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss !
 'T were easily arranged for me : but you—
 What would become of you ?
Tresh. 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 two will somehow wear this one
 day out :
 But with to-morrow hastens here—the
 Earl !
 The youth without suspicion that faces
 come
 From heaven, and hearts from . . .
 whence proceed such hearts ?
 I have dispatched last night at your
 command
 A missive bidding him present himself
 To-morrow—here—thus much is said ;
 the rest
 Is un-erstood as if 't were written
 down—
 " His suit finds favour in your eyes : "
 —now dictate
 This morning's letter that shall coun-
 termand
 Last night's—do dictate that !
Mil. But Thorold—if
 I will receive him as I said ?
Tresh. The Earl ?
Mil. I will receive him.
Tresh. [Starting up.] Ho there !
 Guendolen !
 GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.
 And, Austin, you are welcome, too !
 Look there !
 The woman there !
Aus. and *Guen.* How ? Mildred ?
Tresh. Mildred once !
 Now the receiver night b night, when
 sleep
 Blesses the inmates of her father's
 house,
 —I say, the soft sly wanton that re-
 ceives
 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 eager-
 ness,

To mix with breath as foul ! no loosener
 Of 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 !
Guen. Oh Mildred, look to me, at
 least !
 Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that
 she stands
 Rigid as stone and whiter !
Tresh. You have heard . . .
Guen. Too much ! You must pro-
 ceed no further,
Mil. Yes—
 Proceed ! All's truth. Go from me !
Tresh. 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 re-
 solve.
 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 for-
 gotten ?
 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 be-
tray

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

Of wretched women—all but Mildreds
—t'ed

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.

Aus. Stay, Tresham, we'll accom-
pany you !

Guen. 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 !

Aus. No, Guendolen ! I echo Thor-
old's voice.

She is unworthy to behold . . .
Guen. Us two ?

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

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 yester-
day,

Who said, or thought at least a thou-
sand 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
yourself—

"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 detrac-
tion—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 !
Aus. Look up and take
 My hand, dear Mildred !
Mil. I—I was so young !
 Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I
 had
 No mother ; God forgot me : so I fell.
Guen. Mildred !
Mil. Require no further ! Did I
 dream
 That I could palliate what is done ?
 All's true.
 Now punish me ! A woman takes my
 hand ?
 Let go my hand ! You do not know, I
 see.
 I thought that Thorold told you.
Guen. What is this ?
 Where start you to ?
Mil. 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 ?
Guen. Here, Mildred, we two friends
 of yours will wait
 Your bidding ; be you silent, sleep or
 muse !
 Only, when you shall want your bid-
 ding 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 !
Mil. I believe
 If once I threw my arms about your
 neck
 And sunk my head upon your breast,
 that I
 Should weep again.

Guen. Let go her hand now,
 Austin !
 Wait for me. Pace the gallery and
 think
 On the world's seemings and realities,
 Until I call you. [*AUSTIN goes.*]
Mil. No—I cannot weep.
 No more tears from this brain—no
 sleep—no tears !
 O Guendolen, I love you !
Guen. Yes : and " love "
 Is a short word that says so very much !
 It says that you confide in me.
Mil. Confide !
Guen. Your lover's name, then !
 I've so much to learn,
 Ere I can work in your behalf !
Mil. My friend,
 You know I cannot tell his name.
Guen. At least
 He is your lover ? and you love him
 too ?
Mil. Ah, do you ask me that ?—but
 I am fallen
 So low !
Guen. You love him still, then .
Mil. My sole prop
 Against the guilt that crushes me ! I
 say, young—
 Each night ere I lie down, " I was so
 " I had no mother, and I loved him so ! "
 And then God seems indulgent, and I
 dare
 Trust him my soul in sleep.
Guen. How could you let us
 E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun
 then ?
Mil. There is a cloud around me.
Guen. But you said
 You would receive his suit in spite of
 this ?
Mil. I say there is a cloud . . .
Guen. No cloud to me !
 Lord Mertoun and your lover are the
 same !
Mil. What maddest fancy . . .
Guen [*calling aloud.*] Austin ! (Spare
 your pains—
 When I have got a truth, that truth I
 keep)—
Mil. By all you love, sweet Guen-
 dolen, forbear !
 Have I confided in you . . .
Guen. Just for this !
 Austin !—Oh, not to guess it at the
 first !
 But I did guess it—that is, I divined,

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 !

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

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

To-night ?

Mil. Ah Heaven, he's lost !

Guen. I thought so. Austin !

Enter AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding ?

Aus. Thorold's gone,
 I know not how, across the meadow-
 land.

I watched him till I lost him in the
 skirts

Of the beech-wood.

Guen. Gone ? All thwarts us.

Mil. Thorold too ?

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

Go on the other side ; and then we'll
 seek

Your brother : and I'll tell you, by the
 way,

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 tra-
 versed glades

And dells and bosky paths which used
 to lead

Into green wild-wood depths, be-
 wildering

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 th's 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 wimple—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 't is 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.*

Mer. Not time ! Beat out thy last
 voluptuous beat

Of hope and fear, my heart ! I thought
 the clock

In 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 see

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 reassuring sun may dawn.

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

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

'T was a mad freak of mine. I said I'd
pluck

A branch from the white-blossomed
shrub beneath

The casement there. Take this, and
hold your peace.

Tresh. Into the moonlight yonder,
come with me !

—Out of the shadow !

Mer. I am armed, fool !

Tresh. Yes,

Gr no ? You'll come into the light,
or no ?

My hand is on your throat—refuse !—

Mer. That voice !

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

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

Tresh. You're armed : that's
well.

Your name—who are you ?

Mer. *(Tresham !—she is lost !)*

Tresh. 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 counten-
ance,

The thief is voluble and plausible,
But silently the slave of lust has

crouched

When I have fancied it before a man.

Your name ?

B.P.

Mer. 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.]

Tresh. Mertoun !

[After a pause.] Draw now !

Mer. Hear me

But speak first !

Tresh. 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 't was you

Taught Mildred still to keep that face
and sin.

We should join hands in frantic sym-
pathy

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 !

Mer. Not for my sake,

Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,
And most, for her sake !

Tresh. Ha ha, what should I

Know of your ways ? A miscreant
like yourself,

How must one rouse his ire ? A blow ?
—that's pride

No doubt, to him ! One spurns him,
does one not ?

Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or
spits

Into his face ! Come ! Which, or all
of these ?

Mer. 'Twixt him and me and Mil-

dred, Heaven be judge !

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

[He draws and, after a few passes,

falls.]

Tresh. You are not hurt ?

Mer. You'll hear me now !

B B

Tresh.

But rise !

Mer. 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 ?

Tresh. 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 ?

Mer. My lord—

Tresh. How young he is !

Mer. 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,—
Tresh. Can you stay here till I return with help ?

Mer. 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 then 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 ?

Tresh.

I do

Forgive you.

Mer. Wait and ponder that great word !

Bec use, if you forgive me, I shall hope
To speak to you of—Mildred !

Tresh. Mertoun, haste
And anger have undone us. 'T is 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 !

Mer. Ah, Tresham that a sword-stroke and a drop

Of blood or two, should bring all this about !

Why, 't was my very fear of you, my love

Of you—(what passion like a boy's for one

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 ? day

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
'T is changed above me : yet my eyes

are glazed.

Where ? where ?

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

Ah, Mildred ! What will Mildred do ?
Tresham, her life is bound up in the life

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

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

Tresh. Yes, be satisfied ! That process is begun.

Mer. 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 ! 't is so easy, and you'll 'scape

So much unkindness ! Can I lie at rest, With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds

Done to you ?—heartless men shall have my heart,

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.*]

Tresh. Ho, Gerard !

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN and GUENDOLEN, with lights.

No one speak ! You see what's done.

I cannot bear another voice.

Mer. 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 ?

Tresh. I will bear those words to her.

Mer. Now ?

Tresh. Now. Lift you the body, and leave me

The head.

[*As they have half-raised MERTOUN, he turns suddenly.*]

Mer. I knew they turned me : turn me not from her !

There ! stay you ! there ! [*Dies.*]

Guen. [*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.

Tresh. 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.

Guen. She will die. *Tresh.* 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 !

Aus. Had we but arrived Before you fought !

Tresh. 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.

Aus. Whither bear him ?

Tresh. Oh, to my chamber ! When we meet there next,

We shall be friends.

[*They bear out the body of MERTOUN.*]

Will she die, Guendolen ?

Guen. Where are you taking me ?

Tresh. 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?—
Guen. What is done

Is done. My care is for the living.
Thorold,

Bear up against this burden: more
remains

To set the neck to!

Tresh. 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. MIL-
DRED 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!

'T is 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!

Tresh. [without.] Mildred!

Mil. Come in! Heaven hears
me!

[Enter TRESHAM.] You? alone?
Oh, no more cursing!

Tresh. Mildred, I must sit.
There—you sit!

Mil. Say it, Thorold—do not
look

The curse! deliver all you come to say!
What must become of me? Oh speak
that thought

Which makes your brow and cheek so
pale!

Tresh. My thought?

Mil. All of it! [ago—
Tresh. How we waded—years

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,—

Mil. You call me kindlier by my name

Than even yesterday : what is in that ?

Tresh. It weighs so much upon my mind that I

This morning took an office not my own !

I might . . of course, I must be glad or grieved,

Content or not, at every little thing

That touches you. I may with a wrung heart

Even reprove you, Mildred ; I did more :

Will you forgive me ?

Mil. Thorold ? do you mock ?

Or no . . and yet you bid me . . say that word !

Tresh. Forgive me, Mildred !—are you silent, sweet ?

Mil. [*starting 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 !

Tresh. He bade me tell you . .

Mil. What I do forbid Your utterance of ! So much that

you may tell

And will not—how you murdered him . . but, no !

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

Than bleeding out his life there : must I say

"Indeed," to that ? Enough ! I pardon you.

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

Of this last deed Another's judge : whose doom

I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.

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

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 . . .

Tresh. Death ? You are dying too ? Well said

Of Guendolen ! I dared not hope you'd die :

But she was sure of it.

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

Tresh. Him you loved : And me ?

Mil. 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 !

Tresh. 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 ?

Mil. 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.*]

Tresh. I wish thee joy, beloved ! I
am glad

In thy full gladness !

Guen. [*without.*] Mildred ! Tresham !
[*Entering with AUSTIN.*] Thorold,
I could desist no longer. Ah, she
swoons !

That's well.

Tresh. Oh, better far than that !
Guen. She's dead !

Let me unlock her arms !

Tresh. She threw them thus
About my neck, and blessed me, and
then died :

You'll let them stay now, Guendolen !
Aus. Leave her

And look to him ! What ails you,
Thorold ?

Guen. White

As she, and whiter ! Austin ! quick—
this side !

Aus. A froth is oozing through his
clenched teeth ;

Both lips, where they're not bitten
through, are black :

Speak, dearest Thorold !

Tresh. Something does weigh
down

My neck beside her weight : thanks : I
should fall

But for you, Austin, I believe !—there,
there,

'T will pass away soon !—ah,—I had
forgotten :

I am dying.

Guen. Thorold—Thorold—why
was this ?

Tresh. 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 !

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

Tresh. Already Mildred's face is
peacefuller.

I see you, Austin—feel you : here's my
hand,

Put yours in it—you, Guendolen, yours
too !

You're lord and lady now—you're
Treshams ; name

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 !

Aus. No blot shall come !

Tresh. I said that : yet it did come.
Should it come,

Vengeance is God's, not man's. Re-
member me ! [*Dies.*]

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

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

A PLAY

"Ivy and violet, what do ye here
With blossom and shoot in the warm spring-weather,
Hiding the arms of Monchenci and Vere?"—HANMER.

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.

London, 1844.

PERSONS

COLOMBE OF RAVESTEIN, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves.	VALENCE, Advocate of Cleves.
SABYNE, ADOLF, her Attendants.	PRINCE BERTHOLD, Claimant of the Duchy.
GUIBERT, GAUCELME, MAUFROY, CLUGNET, Courtiers.	MELCHIOR, his Confidant.

PLACE, *The Palace at Juliers.* TIME, 16—.

ACT I

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

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY and other Courtiers, round GUIBERT who is silently reading a paper: as he drops it at the end—

Gui. 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 Oh, miserable lady!

1st Court. Ay, indeed?

2nd Court. Well, Guibert?

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

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

The better for us all: how writes the Prince?

Give me! I'll read it for the common

Gui. 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 conveyed her from Castle Rave-

stein— That sleeps out trustfully its extreme

On the Meuse' quiet bank, where she lived queen

Over the water-buds,—to Juliers' court With joy and bustle. Here again we stand;

Sir Gaucelme's buckle 's constant to his cap:

To-day's much such another sunny day!

Gau. Come, Guibert, this outgrows a jest, I think!

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

Gui. 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.

The Prince's letter; why, of all men else,

Comes it to me?

Adolf. By virtue of your place, Sir Guibert! 'T was the Prince's ex-

press charge, [there

His envoy told us, that the missive Should only reach our lady by the hand

Of whosoever held your place.

Gui. Enough! [ADOLF retires. Then, 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 To find me never in the mood to quit?

—Who asks may have it, with my blessing, and—
 This to present our lady. Who'll accept?
 You,—you,—you? There it lies, and may, for me!
Mau. [a youth, picking up the paper, reads aloud.]
 "Prince Berthold, proved by titles following
 "Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this day
 "To claim his own, with licence from the Pope,
 "The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and France." . . . [judge!
Gau. Sufficient "titles following," I Don't read another! Well,—to claim his own?"
Mau. "—And take possession of the Duchy held
 "Since twelve months, to the true heir's prejudice,
 "By" . . . Colombe, Juliers' mistress, so she thinks,
 And Ravestein's mere lady, as we find!
 Who wants the place and paper?
 Guibert's right.
 I hope to climb a little in the world,—I'd push my fortunes,—but, no more than he,
 Could tell her on this happy day of days,
 That, save the nosegay in her hand, perhaps,
 There's nothing left to call her own.
 Sir Clugnet, [you?
 You famish for promotion; what say
Clug. [an old man.] To give this letter were a sort, I take it,
 Of service: services ask recompense:
 What kind of corner may be Ravestein?
Gui. The castle?—Oh, you'd share her fortunes? Good!
 Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,
 With no such bad remainder of a roof.
Clug. Oh,—but the town?
Gui. Five houses, fifteen huts;
 A church whereto was once a spire, 'tis judged; [thaw.
 And half a dyke, except in time of
Clug. Still, there's some revenue?
Gui. 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, [in;
 Their grateful raftsmen flings a guilder
 —That's if he mean to pass your way next time.
Clug. If not?
Gui. Hang guilders, then—he blesses you!
Clug. What man do you suppose me? Keep your paper!
 And, let me say, it shows no handsome spirit
 To dally with misfortune: keep your place!
Gau. Some one must tell her.
Gui. Some one may: you may!
Gau. Sir Guibert, 't is no trifle turns me sick
 Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine,
 But this goes near it. Where's there news at all? [affirm
 Who'll have the face, for instance, to He never heard, e'en while we crowned the girl,
 That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law;
 That one, confessed her father's cousin's child,
 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 mummary over first: and so the edge [came,
 Was taken off sharp tidings as they
 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 . . .

Gui. [snatching the paper from him.]

By your leave!

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

So much as you expect, this course you'd take,

If she leaves quietly her palace,—well;

But if she died upon its threshold,—no: He'd have the trouble of removing her.

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! [bud:]

His talent's full-blown, ours but in the We'll not advance to his perfection yet—

Will we, Sir Maufroy? See, I've ruined Maufroy

For ever as a courtier!

Gau. 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!

Mau. and others. Eh, Sir Guibert? He's right: that does say something: that's bare truth.

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

Gui. Pooh—is it audience hour?

The vestibule

Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort

That want our privilege of entry here.

Gau. Adolf! [*Re-enter ADOLF.*] Who's outside?

Gui. Oh, your looks suffice!

Nobody waiting?

Mau. [*looking through the door-folds.*]

Scarce our number!

Oui. '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!

Gau. 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-geese settles down, the swallows flee—

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

Don't you feel somewhat chilly?

Gui. That 's their craft?

And last year's crowdiers-round and criers-forth

That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads, [songs!]

Lighted the bonfires, sang the loyal Well 't is my comfort, you could never call me

The People's Friend! The People keep their word—

I keep my place: don't doubt I'll entertain

The People when the Prince comes, and the People

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

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 ex-
tort—

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-
cringings low,

Hand to the heart, and forehead to the
knee,

With grin that shuts the eyes and opes
the mouth—

So tender they their love; and, tender
made,

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. 'T was probably

The suitor.

Gui. Oh, there is one?

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

Gui. 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!

Gui. Why tore?

Adolf. He seeks the Duchess pres-
ence in that trim:

Since daybreak, was he posted here-
abouts

Lest he should miss the moment.

Gui. Where's he now?

Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly,
not more:

They have ado enough to thrust him
back.

Gui. Ay—but my name, I caught?

Adolf. Oh, sir—he said

—What was it?—You had known him
formerly,

And, he believed, would help him did
you guess

He waited now; you promised him as
much:

The old plea! 'Faith, he's back,—re-
news the charge!

[*Speaking at the door.*] So long as the
man parleys, peace outside—

Nor be too ready with your halberts,
there!

Gau. 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 an
his brow

At each repulse—

Gau. 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!

Gui. Too late! He's here.

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

Val. 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? 'T were hard, no listener for
 their wrongs,
 To turn them back upon the old de-
 spair—
 Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring
 thus—
 So, I do—any way you please—im-
 plore!
 If you . . . but how should you re-
 member 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,
 Of 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?
Gui. And who may you be, friend?
Val. Valence of Cleves.
Gui. Valence of . . . not the advo-
 cate 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, Pente-
 cost three years,
 I was so nearly ousted of my land
 By some knaves'-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 . . .
Val. Our city trusted me its miseries,
 And I am come.
Gui. 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?
Val. Straight to the palace-portal,
 sir, I came—
Gui. —And said?—
Val. —That I had brought the
 miseries
 Of a whole city to relieve.
Gui. —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?