

"What put you on my trace, a foreigner,  
 "Supposed in Arezzo,—and assuredly safe  
 "Except for an oversight: who told you, pray?"  
 "Why, naturally your wife!" Down Guido drops  
 O' the horse he rode,—they have to steady and stay.  
 At either side the brute that bore him, bound,  
 So strange it seemed his wife should live and speak!  
 She had prayed—at least so people tell you now—  
 For but one thing to the Virgin for herself,  
 Not simply, as did Pietro 'mid the stabs,—  
 Time to confess and get her own soul saved—  
 But time to make the truth apparent, truth  
 For God's sake, lest men should believe a lie:  
 Which seems to have been about the single prayer  
 She ever put up, that was granted her.  
 With this hope in her head, of telling truth,—  
 Being familiarised with pain, beside,—  
 She bore the stabbing to a certain pitch  
 Without a useless cry, was flung for dead  
 On Pietro's lap, and so attained her point.  
 Her friends subjoin this—have I done with them?—  
 And cite the miracle of continued life  
 (She was not dead when I arrived just now)  
 As attestation to her probity.  
 Does it strike your Excellency? Why, your Highness,  
 The self-command and even the final prayer,  
 Our candour must acknowledge explainable  
 As easily by the consciousness of guilt.  
 So, when they add that her confession runs  
 She was of wifehood one white innocence  
 In thought, word, act, from first of her short life

To last of death  
 That God this,  
 She is chat that s  
 Anyway to on  
 Comments much  
 "Patience  
 "I hear to  
 "Sinner t  
 walk:  
 "I have pi  
 a child  
 Guido's fr  
 "Just  
 "Prodigio  
 hour  
 "Confirms  
 sult  
 "Of a life  
 the cl  
 "Having  
 earth  
 "She bra  
 gains  
 "Two end  
 heave  
 "First se  
 sore  
 "By the  
 answer  
 "For the  
 summ  
 "The pas  
 ished  
 "What be  
 this?  
 "Then,—  
 utter  
 "On Guic  
 dark,  
 "The low  
 doub  
 "Thus, t  
 love  
 "And ha  
 no st  
 "To pay  
 hold.  
 But ther  
 thru  
 "Confess  
 sion,  
 "Confess

Should Dives count on me at this time  
 As just the understander of a tale  
 And not immoderate in respect  
*Utrique sic parati*. Sir, I will  
 "Here," (in the fortune of the  
 fifteen,  
 So good a pedagogue is passing  
 "Here, wait, do service,—serve  
 to serve!  
 "And, in due time, I will be  
 all,  
 "The recognition of my service  
 "Next year I'm only sixteen—  
 wait."

I waited thirty years, may it please  
 Court:  
 Saw meanwhile many a fortune  
 dung  
 Hop, skip, jump o'er my shoulder  
 make him wings  
 And fly aloft,—succeeded, in the  
 phrase.  
 Everyone soon or late comes to  
 Rome:  
 Stand still here, you'll see all  
 succeed.  
 Why, look you, so and so, the  
 here,  
 My father's lacquey's son was  
 school,  
 Doctored and dosed this  
 That,  
 Salvaged the last Pope his  
 ate sore,  
 Soon bought land as he would  
 names it now:  
 I grasp bell at his grille-pipe  
 Traverse the half-mile  
 term,  
 A cypress, and a statue, the  
 three,—  
 Delivered message from my  
 With variety at home? the  
 I'm barred from, who hear  
 my shoe.  
 My father's chaplain's popes  
 berlain,—  
 Nothing less, please you—  
 all the same,  
 —He does not see me though I  
 hour  
 At his staircase—hand  
 brace of busts  
 A noseless Sylla, Marcellus  
 match.

he middle life,  
 the east-wind,  
 ad of Promise,  
 it might play  
 r,—be content  
 ly a nobleman,  
 her great and

ater and richer  
 ck till first and  
 ish in the day,  
 getting old," I

added away, our  
 a sister off, at  
 both my brothers

are, nor, bat-  
 wl with neither  
 ist keep me and

s air is good to  
 locks of thrushes  
 s little and lasts

ate sore,  
 Soon bought land as he would  
 names it now:  
 I grasp bell at his grille-pipe  
 Traverse the half-mile  
 term,  
 A cypress, and a statue, the  
 three,—  
 Delivered message from my  
 With variety at home? the  
 I'm barred from, who hear  
 my shoe.  
 My father's chaplain's popes  
 berlain,—  
 Nothing less, please you—  
 all the same,  
 —He does not see me though I  
 hour  
 At his staircase—hand  
 brace of busts  
 A noseless Sylla, Marcellus  
 match.

me; each face  
 "I play no  
 see in loss, with-  
 e watchers of his  
 punctious at the  
 breathe free once  
 venture polite ad-

How, Sir? So scant of heart and  
 hope indeed?  
 "Retire with neither cross nor pile  
 from play?—  
 "So incurious, so short-casting?—  
 give your chance  
 "To a younger, stronger, bolder spirit  
 belike,  
 "Just when luck turns and the fine  
 throw sweeps all?"  
 Such was the chorus: and its good-will  
 meant—  
 "See that the loser leave door hand-  
 somely!  
 "There 's an ill look,—it 's sinister,  
 spoils sport,  
 "When an old bruised and battered  
 year-by-year  
 "Fighter with fortune, not a penny in  
 poke,  
 "Reels down the steps of our establish-  
 ment  
 "And staggers on broad daylight and  
 the world,  
 "In shagrag beard and doleful doub-  
 let, drops  
 "And breaks his heart on the outside:  
 people prate  
 "Such is the profit of a trip upstairs!"  
 "Contrive he side forth, baulked of  
 the blow  
 "Best dealt by way of moral, bidding  
 down  
 "No curse but blessings rather on our  
 heads  
 "For some poor prize he bears at tattered  
 breast,  
 "Some palpable sort of kind of good  
 to set  
 "Over and against the grievance:  
 give him quick!"  
 Whereon protested Paul, "Go hang  
 yourselves!  
 "Leave him to me. Count Guido and  
 brother of mine,  
 "A word in your ear! Take courage  
 since faint heart  
 "Ne'er won . . . aha, fair lady, don't  
 men say?  
 "There 's a sors, there 's a right Vir-  
 gilian dip!  
 "Do you see the happiness o' the hint?  
 At worst,  
 "If the Church want no more of you,  
 the Court  
 "No more, and the Camp as little, the  
 ingrates,—come,  
 "Count you are counted: still you 've  
 coat to back,

Should Dives count on me at dinner-time  
 As just the understander of a joke  
 And not immoderate in repartee.  
*Utrique sic paratus*, Sirs, I said  
 "Here," (in the fortitude of years  
 fifteen,  
 So good a pedagogue is penury)  
 "Here, wait, do service,—serving and  
 to serve!  
 "And, in due time, I nowise doubt at  
 all,  
 "The recognition of my serviee comes.  
 "Next year I'm only sixteen. I can  
 wait."

I waited thirty years, may it please the  
 Court:  
 Saw meanwhile many a denizen o' the  
 dung  
 Hop, skip, jump o'er my shoulder,  
 make him wings  
 And fly aloft,—succeed, in the usual  
 phrase.  
 Everyone soon or late comes round by  
 Rome:  
 Stand still here, you 'll see all in turn  
 succeed.  
 Why, look you, so and so, the physician  
 here,  
 My father's lacquey's son we sent to  
 school,  
 Doctored and dosed This Eminence and  
 That,  
 Salvaged the last Pope his certain obstinate  
 sore,  
 Soon bought land as became him,  
 names it now:  
 I grasp bell at his griffin-guarded gate,  
 Traverse the half-mile avenue,—a  
 term,  
 A cypress, and a statue, three and  
 three,—  
 Delivered message from my Monsignor,  
 With varlety at lounge i' the vestibule  
 I 'm barred from, who bear mud upon  
 my shoe.  
 My father's chaplain's nephew, Chamberlain,—  
 Nothing less, please you!—courteous  
 all the same,  
 —He does not see me though I wait an  
 hour  
 At his staircase-landing 'twixt the  
 brace of busts,  
 A noseless Sylla, Marius maimed to  
 match,

My father gave him for a hexastich  
 Made on my birth-day,—but he sends  
 me down,  
 To make amends, that relic I prize  
 most—  
 The unburnt end o' the very candle,  
 Sirs,  
 Purfled with paint so prettily round  
 and round,  
 He carried in such state last Peter's-  
 day,—  
 In token I, his gentleman and squire,  
 Had held the bridle, walked his man-  
 aged mule  
 Without a tittup the procession  
 through.  
 Nay, the official,—one you know, sweet  
 lords!—  
 Who drew the warrant for my transfer  
 late  
 To the New Prisons from Tordinona,—  
 he  
 Graciously had remembrance—"Franc-  
 cesc . . . ha?  
 "His sire, now—how a thing shall  
 come about!—  
 "Paid me a dozen florins above the fee,  
 "For drawing deftly up a deed of sale  
 "When troubles fell so thick on him,  
 good heart,  
 "And I was prompt and pushing! By  
 all means! [lie,—  
 "At the New Prisons be it his son shall  
 "Anything for an old friend!" and  
 thereat  
 Signed name with triple flourish under-  
 neath.  
 These were my fellows, such their for-  
 tunes now,  
 While I—kept fasts and feasts innum-  
 erable,  
 Matins and vespers, functions to no end  
 I' the train of Monsignor and Eminence,  
 As gentleman-squire, and for my zeal's  
 reward  
 Have rarely missed a place at the table-  
 foot  
 Except when some Ambassador, or such  
 like,  
 Brought his own people. Brief, one  
 day I felt  
 The tick of time inside me, turning-  
 point  
 And slight sense there was now enough  
 of this:  
 That I was near my seventh climac-  
 teric,



Hard upon, if not over, the middle life,  
And, although fed by the east wind,  
fulsome—fine

With foretaste of the Land of Promise,  
still

My gorge gave symptom it might play  
me false ;

Better not press it further,—be content  
With living and dying only a nobleman,  
Who merely had a father great and  
rich,

Who simply had one greater and richer  
yet,

And so on back and back till first and  
best

Began i' the night ; I finish in the day.  
" The mother must be getting old," I  
said ;

" The sisters are well wedded away, our  
name

" Can manage to pass a sister off, at  
need,

" And do for dowry : both my brothers  
thrive—

" Regular priests they are, nor, bat-  
like, 'bide

" 'Twixt flesh and fowl with neither  
privilege.

" My spare revenue must keep me and  
mine.

" I am tired : Arezzo's air is good to  
breathe ;

" Vittiano,—one limes flocks of thrushes  
there ;

" A leathern coat costs little and lasts  
long :

" Let me bid hope good-bye, content at  
home ! "

Thus, one day, I disbosomed me and  
bowed.

Whereat began the little buzz and  
thrill

O' the gazers round me ; each face  
brightened up :

As when at your Casino, deep in dawn,  
A gamester says at last, " I play no  
more,

" Forego gain, acquiesce in loss, with-  
draw

" Anyhow : " and the watchers of his  
ways,

A trifle struck compunctious at the  
word,

Yet sensible of relief, breathe free once  
more,

Break up the ring, venture polite ad-  
vice—

" How, Sir ? So scant of heart and  
hope indeed ?

" Retire with neither cross nor pile  
from play ?—

" So incurious, so short-casting ?—  
give your chance

" To a younger, stronger, bolder spirit  
belike,

" Just when luck turns and the fine  
throw sweeps all ? "

Such was the chorus : and its good-will  
meant—

" See that the loser leave door hand-  
somerly !

" There 's an ill look,—it 's sinister,  
spoils sport,

" When an old bruised and battered  
year-by-year

" Fighter with fortune, not a penny in  
poke, [ment

" Reels down the steps of our establish-  
ment

" And staggers on broad daylight and  
the world,

" In shagrag beard and doleful doub-  
let, drops

" And breaks his heart on the outside :  
people prate

" " Such is the profit of a trip upstairs ! "

" Contrive he sidle forth, baulked of  
the blow

" Best dealt by way of moral, bidding  
down [heads

" No curse but blessings rather on our  
For some poor prize he bears at tat-  
tered breast,

" Some palpable sort of kind of good  
to set

" Over and against the grievance :  
give him quick ! "

Whereon protested Paul, " Go hang  
yourselves !

" Leave him to me, Count Guido and  
brother of mine,

" A word in your ear ! Take courage  
since faint heart

" Ne'er won . . . aha, fair lady, don't  
men say ?

" There 's a *sors*, there 's a right Vir-  
gilian dip !

" Do you see the happiness o' the hint ?  
At worst,

" If the Church want no more of you,  
the Court

" No more, and the Camp as little, the  
ingrates,—come,

" Count you are counted : still you 've  
coat to back,

" Not cloth of gold and tissue, as we hoped,  
 " But cloth with sparks and spangles on its frieze  
 " From Camp, Court, Church, enough to make a shine,  
 " Entitle you to carry home a wife  
 " With the proper dowry, let the worst betide!  
 " Why, it was just a wife you meant to take!"

Now, Paul's advice was weighty :  
 priests should know :  
 And Paul apprised me, ere the week was out,  
 That Pietro and Violante, the easy pair,  
 The cits enough, with stomach to be more,  
 Had just the daughter and exact the sum  
 To truck for the quality of myself :  
 " She 's young,  
 " Pretty and rich : you're noble, classic, choice.  
 " Is it to be a match ? " " A match," said I.  
 Done! He proposed all, I accepted all,  
 And we performed all. So I said and did  
 Simply. As simply followed, not at first  
 But with the outbreak of misfortune, still  
 One comment on the saying and doing — " What ?  
 " No blush at the avowal you dared buy  
 " A girl of age beseems your granddaughter,  
 " Like ox or ass ? Are flesh and blood a ware ?  
 " Are heart and soul a chattel ? "  
 Softly, Sirs !  
 Will the Court of its charity teach poor me  
 Anxious to learn, of any way i' the world,  
 Allowed by custom and convenience, save  
 This same which, taught from my youth up, I trod ?  
 Take me along with you ; where was the wrong step ?  
 If what I gave in barter, style and state  
 And all that hangs to Franceschini-hood,

Were worthless,—why, society goes to ground,  
 Its rules are idiot's-rambling. Honour of birth,—  
 If that thing has no value, cannot buy  
 Something with value of another sort,  
 You 've no reward nor punishment to give  
 I' the giving or the taking honour ; straight  
 Your social fabric, pinnacle to base,  
 Comes down a-clatter like a house of cards.  
 Get honour, and keep honour free from flaw,  
 Aim at still higher honour,—gabble o' the goose !  
 Go bid a second blockhead like myself  
 Spend fifty years in guarding bubbles of breath,  
 Soapsuds with air i' the belly, gilded brave,  
 Guarded and guided, all to break at touch  
 O' the first young girl's hand and first old fool's purse !  
 All my privation and endurance, all  
 Love, loyalty and labour dared and did,  
 Fiddle-de-dee !—why, doer and darer both,—  
 Count Guido Franceschini had hit the mark [effect,  
 Far better, spent his life with more  
 As a dancer or a prizier, trades that pay !  
 On the other hand, bid this buffoonery cease,  
 Admit that honour is a privilege,  
 The question follows, privilege worth what ?  
 Why, worth the market-price,—now up, now down,  
 Just so with this as with all other ware :  
 Therefore essay the market, sell your name,  
 Style and condition to who buys them best !  
 " Does my name purchase," had I dared inquire,  
 " Your niece, my lord ? " there would have been rebuff  
 Though courtesy, your Lordship cannot else—  
 " Not altogether ! Rank for rank may stand :  
 " But I have wealth beside, you—poverty ;



"Your scale flies up there: bid a second bid,  
 "Rank too and wealth too!" Reasoned like yourself!  
 But was it to you I went with goods to sell?  
 This time 'twas my scale quietly kissed the ground,  
 Mere rank against mere wealth—some youth beside,  
 Some beauty too, thrown into the bargain, just  
 As the buyer likes or lets alone. I thought  
 To deal o' the square: others find fault, it seems:  
 The thing is, those my offer most concerned,  
 Pietro, Violante, cried they fair or foul?  
 What did they make o' the terms? Preposterous terms?  
 Why then accede so promptly, close with such  
 Nor take a minute to chaffer? Bargain struck,  
 They straight grew bilious, wished their money back, [I,  
 Repented them, no doubt: why, so did  
 So did your Lordship, if town-talk be true,  
 Of paying a full farm's worth for that piece  
 By Pietro of Cortona—probably  
 His scholar Ciro Ferri may have re-touched—  
 You caring more for colour than design—  
 Getting a little tired of cupids too.  
 That's incident to all the folk who buy!  
 I am charged, I know, with gilding fact by fraud;  
 I falsified and fabricated, wrote  
 Myself down roughly richer than I prove,  
 Rendered a wrong revenue,—grant it all!  
 Mere grace, mere coquetry such fraud,  
 I say:  
 A flourish round the figures of a sum  
 For fashion's sake, that deceives nobody.  
 The veritable back-bone, understood  
 Essence of this same bargain, blank and bare,  
 Being the exchange of quality for wealth.—

What may such fancy-flights be?  
 Flecks of oil  
 Flirted by chapmen where plain dealing grates.  
 I may have dripped a drop—"My name I sell;  
 "Not but that I too boast my wealth"—  
 —as they,  
 "—We bring you riches; still our ancestor  
 "Was hardly the rapsallion, folks saw flogged,  
 "But heir to we know who, were rights of force!"  
 They knew and I knew where the back-bone lurked  
 I' the writhings of the bargain, lords, believe!  
 I paid down all engaged for, to a doit,  
 Delivered them just that which, their life long,  
 They hungered in the hearts of them to gain—  
 Incorporation with nobility thus  
 In word and deed: for that they gave me wealth.  
 But when they came to try their gain, my gift,  
 Quit Rome and qualify for Arezzo, take  
 The tone o' the new sphere that absorbed the old,  
 Put away gossip Jack and goody Joan  
 And go become familiar with the Great,  
 Greatness to touch and taste and handle now,—  
 Why, then,—they found that all was vanity,  
 Vexation, and what Solomon describes!  
 The old abundant city-fare was best,  
 The kindly warmth o' the commons, the glad clap [grin  
 Of the equal on the shoulder, the frank  
 Of the underling at all so many spoons  
 Fire-new at neighbourly treat,—best, best and best  
 Beyond compare!—down to the loll itself  
 O' the pot-house settle,—better such a bench  
 Than the stiff crucifixion by my dais  
 Under the piece-meal damask canopy  
 With the coroneted coat of arms a-top!  
 Poverty and privation for pride's sake,  
 All they engaged to easily brave and bear,—

With the fit upon them and their  
 brains a-work,—  
 Proved unendurable to the sobered sots.  
 A banished prince, now, will exude a  
 juice  
 And salamander-like support the flame :  
 He dines on chestnuts, chucks the husks  
 to help  
 The broil o' the brazier, pays the due  
 baioc,  
 Goes off light-hearted : his grimace  
 begins  
 At the funny humours of the christen-  
 ing feast  
 Of friend the money-lender,—then he's  
 touched  
 By the flame and frizzles at the babe to  
 kiss !  
 Here was the converse trial, opposite  
 mind :  
 Here did a petty nature split on rock  
 Of vulgar wants predestinate for such—  
 One dish at supper and weak wine to  
 boot !  
 The prince had grinned and borne :  
 the citizen shrieked,  
 Summoned the neighbourhood to at-  
 test the wrong,  
 Made noisy protest he was murdered,  
 —stoned  
 And burned and drowned and hanged,  
 —then broke away, [rest.  
 He and his wife, to tell their Rome the  
 And this you admire, you men o' the  
 world, my lords ?  
 This moves compassion, makes you  
 doubt my faith ?  
 Why, I appeal to . . sun and moon ?  
 Not I !  
 Rather to Plautus, Terence, Boccac-  
 cio's Book,  
 My townsman, frank Ser Franco's  
 merry Tales,—  
 To all who strip a vizard from a face,  
 A body from its padding, and a soul  
 From froth and ignorance it styles it-  
 self,—  
 If this be other than the daily hap  
 Of purblind greed that dog-like still  
 drops bone,  
 Grasps shadow, and then howls the case  
 is hard !  
 So much for them so far : now for my-  
 self,  
 My profit or loss ! the matter : married  
 am I :

Text whereon friendly censors burst to  
 preach.  
 Ay, at Rome even, long ere I was left  
 To regulate her life for my young bride  
 Alone at Arezzo, friendliness outbroke  
 (Sifting my future to predict its fault)  
 " Purchase and sale being thus so  
 plain a point,  
 " How of a certain soul bound up, may-  
 be,  
 " I' the barter with the body and money-  
 bags ?  
 " From the bride's soul what is it you  
 expect ? "  
 Why, loyalty and obedience,—wish  
 and will  
 To settle and suit her fresh and plastic  
 mind  
 To the novel, nor disadvantageous  
 mould !  
 Father and mother shall the woman  
 leave,  
 Cleave to the husband, be it for weal or  
 woe :  
 There is the law : what sets this law  
 aside  
 In my particular case ? My friends  
 submit  
 " Guide, guardian, benefactor,—fee,  
 faw, fum, [old,  
 " The fact is you are forty-five years  
 " Nor very comely even for that age :  
 " Girls must have boys." Why, let  
 girls say so then,  
 Nor call the boys and men, who say  
 the same,  
 Brute this and beast the other as they  
 do !  
 Come, cards on table ! When you  
 chant us next  
 Epithalamium full to overflow  
 With praise and glory of white woman-  
 hood,  
 The chaste and pure—troll no such lies  
 o'er lip !  
 Put in their stead a crudity or two,  
 Such short and simple statement of the  
 case  
 As youth chalks on our walls at spring  
 of year !  
 No ! I shall still think nobler of the  
 sex,  
 Believe a woman still may take a man  
 For the short period that his soul wears  
 flesh,  
 And, for the soul's sake, understand  
 the fault



Of armour frayed by fighting. Tush,  
it tempts  
One's tongue too much! I'll say—the  
law 's the law:  
With a wife I look to find all wifeliness,  
As when I buy, timber and twig, a  
tree—  
I buy the song o' the nightingale inside.

Such was the pact: Pompilia from the  
first  
Broke it, refused from the beginning  
day  
Either in body or soul to cleave to mine,  
And published it forthwith to all the  
world.  
No rupture,—you must join ere you  
can break,—  
Before we had cohabited a month  
She found I was a devil and no man,—  
Made common cause with those who  
found as much,  
Her parents, Pietro and Violante,—  
moved  
Heaven and earth to the rescue of all  
three.  
In four months' time, the time o' the  
parents' stay,  
Arezzo was a-ringing, bells in a blaze,  
With the unimaginable story rife  
I' the mouth of man, woman and child  
—to wit  
My misdemeanour. First the lighter  
side,  
Ludicrous face of things,—how very  
poor  
The Franceschini had become at last,  
The meanness and the misery of each  
shift [meet.  
To save a soldo, stretch and make ends  
Next, the more hateful aspect,—how  
myself  
With cruelty beyond Caligula's  
Had stripped and beaten, robbed and  
murdered them,  
The good old couple, I decoyed, abused,  
Plundered and then cast out, and hap-  
pily so,  
Since,—in due course the abominable  
comes,—  
Woe worth the poor young wife left  
lonely here!  
Repugnant in my person as my mind,  
I sought,—was ever heard of such re-  
venge?  
—To lure and bind her to so cursed a  
couch,

Such co-embrace with sulphur, snake  
and toad,  
That she was fain to rush forth, call the  
stones  
O' the common street to save her, not  
from hate  
Of mine merely, but . . . must I  
burn my lips  
With the blister of the lie? . . . the  
satyr-love  
Of who but my own brother, the young  
priest,  
Too long enforced to Lenten fare belike,  
Now tempted by the morsel tossed  
him full  
I' the trencher where lay bread and  
herbs at best.  
Mark, this yourselves say!—this, none  
disallows,  
Was charged to me by the universal  
voice  
At the instigation of my four-months'  
wife!—  
And then you ask "Such charges so  
preferred,  
" (Truly or falsely, here concerns us not)  
" Pricked you to punish now if not be-  
fore?—  
" Did not the harshness double itself,  
the hate  
" Harden?" I answer "Have it your  
way and will!" [then?  
Say my resentment grew apace: what  
Do you cry out on the marvel? When  
I find  
That pure smooth egg which, laid with-  
in my nest,  
Could not but hatch a comfort to us all,  
Issues a cockatrice for me and mine,  
Do you stare to see me stamp on it?  
Swans are soft:  
Is it not clear that she you call my wife,  
That any wife of any husband, caught  
Whetting a sting like this against his  
breast,—  
Speckled with fragments of the fresh-  
broke shell,  
Married a month and making outcry  
thus,—  
Proves a plague-prodigy to God and  
man?  
She married: what was it she married  
for,  
Counted upon and meant to meet  
thereby?  
"Love" suggests some one, "love, a  
little word

"Whereof we have not heard one syllable."

So, the Pompilia, child, girl, wife, in one,

Wanted the beating pulse, the rolling eye,

The frantic gesture, the devotion due  
From Thyrsis to Neera! Guido's love—

Why not Provençal roses in his shoe,  
Plume to his cap, and trio of guitars  
At casement, with a bravo close beside?  
Good things all these are, clearly claimable

When the fit price is paid the proper way.

Had it been some friend's wife, now,  
threw her fan

At my foot, with just this pretty scrap  
attached,

"Shame, death, damnation—fall these  
as they may,

"So I find you, for a minute! Come  
this eve!"

—Why, at such sweet self-sacrifice,—  
who knows?

I might have fired up, found me at my  
post,

Ardent from head to heel, nor feared  
catch cough.

Nay, had some other friend's . . . say,  
daughter, tripped [me,

Upstairs and tumbled flat and frank on  
Bareheaded and barefooted, with loose  
hair

And garments all at large,—cried  
"Take me thus!"

"Duke So-and-So, the greatest man in  
Rome—

"To escape his hand and heart have I  
broke bounds,

"Traversed the town and reached  
you!"—Then, indeed,

The lady had not reached a man of ice!  
I would have rummaged, ransacked at  
the word

Those old odd corners of an empty  
heart

For remnants of dim love the long  
used,

And dusty crumbings of romance!  
But here,

We talk of just a marriage, if you  
please—

The every-day conditions and no more;  
Where do these bind me to bestow one

drop

Of blood shall dye my wife's true-love-  
knot pink?

Pompilia was no pigeon, Venus' pet,  
That shuffled from between her press-  
ing paps

To sit on my rough shoulder,—but a  
hawk,

I bought at a hawk's price and carried  
home

To do hawk's service—at the Rotunda,  
say,

Where, six o' the callow nestlings in a  
row,

You pick and choose and pay the price  
for such.

I have paid my pound, await my pen-  
ny's worth,

So, hoodwink, starve and properly  
train my bird,

And, should she prove a haggard,—  
twist her neck!

Did I not pay my name and style, my  
hope

And trust, my all? Through spending  
these amiss

I am here! 'T is scarce the gravity of  
the Court

Will blame me that I never piped a  
tune,

Treated my falcon-gentle like my finch.  
The obligation I incurred was just

To practise mastery, prove my master-  
ship:—

Pompilia's duty was—submit herself,  
Afford me pleasure, perhaps cure my  
bile.

Am I to teach my lords what marriage  
means,

What God ordains thereby and man  
fulfils

Who, docile to the dictate, treads the  
house?

My lords have chosen the happier part  
with Paul

And neither marry nor burn,—yet  
priestliness

Can find a parallel to the marriage-  
bond

In its own blessed special ordinance  
Whereof indeed was marriage made  
the type:

The Church may show her insubordin-  
ate,

As marriage her refractory. How of  
the Monk

Who finds the claustral regimen too  
sharp



After the first month's essay ? What's the mode  
 With the Deacon who supports indifferently  
 The rod o' the Bishop when he tastes its smart  
 Full four weeks ? Do you straight-way slacken hold  
 Of the innocents, the all-unwary ones  
 Who, eager to profess, mistook their mind ?—  
 Remit a fast-day's rigour to the Monk  
 Who fancied Francis' manna meant roast quails,  
 Concede the Deacon sweet society,  
 He never thought the Levite-rule renounced,—  
 Or rather prescribe short chain and sharp scourge  
 Corrective of such peccant humours ? This—  
 I take to be the Church's mode, and mine.  
 If I was over-harsh,—the worse i' the  
 Who did not win from harshness as she ought,  
 Wanted the patience and persuasion, lore  
 Of love, should cure me and console herself.  
 Put case that I mishandle, flurry and fright  
 My hawk through clumsiness in sportsmanship,  
 Twitch out five pens where plucking one would serve—  
 What, shall she bite and claw to mend the case ?  
 And, if you find I pluck five more for that,  
 Shall you weep "How he roughs the turtle there ?"  
 Such was the starting ; now of the further step.  
 In lieu of taking penance in good part,  
 The Monk, with hue and cry, summons a mob  
 To make a bonfire of the convent, say,—  
 And the Deacon's pretty piece of virtue (save  
 The ears o' the Court ! I try to save my head)  
 Instructed by the ingenuous postulant,  
 Taxes the Bishop with adultery, (mud  
 Needs must pair off with mud, and filth with filth)—

Such being my next experience : who knows not—  
 The couple, father and mother of my wife,  
 Returned to Rome, published before my lords,  
 Put into print, made circulate far and wide  
 That they had cheated me who cheated them ?  
 Pompilia, I supposed their daughter, drew  
 Breath first 'mid Rome's worst rankness, through the deed  
 Of a drab and a rogue, was bye-blow bastard-babe  
 Of a nameless strumpet, passed off, palmed on me  
 As the daughter with the dowry. Daughter ? Dirt  
 O' the kennel ! Dowry ? Dust o' the street ! Naught more,  
 Naught less, naught else but—oh—ah—assuredly  
 A Franceschini and my very wife !  
 Now take this charge as you will, for false or true,—  
 This charge, preferred before your very selves  
 Who judge me now,—I pray you, adjudge again,  
 Classing it with the cheats or with the lies,  
 By which category I suffer most !  
 But of their reckoning, theirs who dealt with me  
 In either fashion,—I reserve my word,  
 Justify that in its place ; I am now to say,  
 Whichever point o' the charge might poison most,  
 Pompilia's duty was no doubtful one.  
 You put the protestation in her mouth  
 "Henceforward and forevermore, avault  
 "Ye fiends, who drop disguise and glare revealed  
 "In your own shape, no longer father mine  
 "Nor mother mine ! Too nakedly you hate  
 "Me whom you looked as if you loved once,—me  
 "Whom, whether true or false, your tale now damns,  
 "Divulged thus to my public infamy,  
 "Private perdition, absolute overthrow,

- " For, hate my husband to your hearts' content,  
 " I, spoil and prey of you from first to last,  
 " I who have done you the blind service, lured  
 " The lion to your pit-fall,—I, thus left  
 " To answer for my ignorant bleating there,  
 " I should have been remembered and withdrawn  
 " From the first o' the natural fury, not flung loose  
 " A proverb and a byeword men will mouth  
 " At the cross-way, in the corner, up and down  
 " Rome and Arezzo,—there, full in my face,  
 " If my lord, missing them and finding me,  
 " Content himself with casting his reproach  
 " To drop i' the street where such impostors die.  
 " Ah, but—that husband, what the wonder were !—  
 " If, far from casting thus away the rag  
 " Smeared with the plague, his hand had chanced upon,  
 " Sewn to his pillow by Locusta's wile,—  
 " Far from abolishing, root, stem and branch,  
 " The misgrowth of infectious mistletoe  
 " Foisted into his stock for honest graft,—  
 " If he, repudiate not, renounce nowise,  
 " But, guarding, guiding me, maintain my cause  
 " By making it his own, (what other way ?)  
 " —To keep my name for me, he call it his,  
 " Claim it of who would take it by their lie,—  
 " To save my wealth for me—or babe of mine  
 " Their lie was framed to beggar at the birth—  
 " He bid them loose grasp, give our gold again :  
 " Refuse to become partner with the pair  
 " Even in a game which, played adroitly, gives  
 " Its winner life's great wonderful new chance,—
- " Of marrying, to wit, a second time,—  
 " Ah, did he do thus, what a friend were he !  
 " Anger he might show,—who can stamp out flame  
 " Yet spread no black o' the brand ?—yet, rough albeit  
 " In the act, as whose bare feet feel embers scorch,  
 " What grace were his, what gratitude were mine !"  
 Such protestation should have been my wife's.  
 Looking for this, do I exact too much ?  
 Why, here's the,—word for word so much, no more,—  
 Avowal she made, her pure spontaneous speech  
 To my brother the Abate at first blush,  
 Ere the good impulse had begun to fade—  
 So did she make confession for the pair,  
 So pour forth praises in her own behalf.  
 " Ay, the false letter," interpose my lords—  
 " The simulated writing,—'t was a trick :  
 " You traced the signs, she merely marked the same,  
 " The product was not hers but yours." Alack,  
 I want no more impulsion to tell truth  
 From the other trick, the torture inside there !  
 I confess all—let it be understood—  
 And deny nothing ! If I baffle you so,  
 Can so fence, in the plenitude of right,  
 That my poor lathen dagger puts aside  
 Each pass o' the Bilboa, beats you all the same,—  
 What matters inefficiency of blade ?  
 Mine and not hers the letter,—conceded, lords !  
 Impute to me that practice !—take as proved  
 I taught my wife her duty, made her see  
 What it behoved her see and say and do,  
 Feel in her heart and with her tongue declare,  
 And, whether sluggish or recalcitrant,  
 Forced her to take the right step, I myself  
 Marching in mere marital rectitude !  
 And who finds fault here, say the tale be true ?



Would not my lords commend the  
 priest whose zeal  
 Seized on the sick, morose or moribund,  
 By the palsy-smitten finger, made it  
 cross  
 His brow correctly at the critical time ?  
 —Or answered for the inarticulate  
 babe  
 At baptism, in its stead declared the  
 faith,  
 And saved what else would perish un-  
 professed ?  
 True, the incapable hand may rally yet,  
 Renounce the sign with renovated  
 strength,—  
 The babe may grow up man and Molin-  
 ist,—  
 And so Pompilia, set in the good path  
 And left to go alone there, soon might  
 see  
 That too frank-forward, all too simple-  
 strait  
 Her step was, and decline to tread the  
 rough,  
 When here lay, tempting foot, the mea-  
 dow-side,  
 And there the coppice called with sing-  
 ing-birds !  
 Soon she discovered she was young  
 and fair,  
 That many in Arezzo knew as much,—  
 Yes, this next cup of bitterness, my  
 lords,  
 Had to begin go filling, drop by drop,  
 Its measure up of full disgust for me,  
 Filtered into by every noisome drain—  
 Society's sink toward which all mois-  
 ture runs.  
 Would not you prophesy—"She on  
 whose brow is stamped  
 "The note of the imputation that we  
 know,—  
 "Rightly or wrongly mothered with a  
 whore,—  
 "Such an one, to disprove the frightful  
 charge,  
 "What will she but exaggerate chas-  
 tity,  
 "Err in excess of wifeness, as it were,  
 "Renounce even levities permitted  
 youth,  
 "Though not youth struck to age by a  
 thunderbolt ?  
 "Cry 'wolf' i' the sheepfold, where 's  
 the sheep dares bleat,  
 "Knowing the shepherd listens for a  
 growl ?"

So you expect. How did the devil  
 decree ?  
 Why, my lords, just the contrary of  
 course !  
 It was in the house from the window, at  
 the church  
 From the hassock,—where the theatre  
 lent its lodge,  
 Or staging for the public show left  
 space,—  
 That still Pompilia needs must find  
 herself  
 Launching her looks forth, letting looks  
 reply  
 As arrows to a challenge ; on all sides  
 Ever new contribution to her lap,  
 Till one day, what is it knocks at my  
 clenched teeth  
 But the cup full, curse-collected all for  
 me ?  
 And I must needs drink, drink this gal-  
 lant's praise,  
 That minion's prayer, the other fop's  
 reproach,  
 And come at the dregs to—Caponsac-  
 chi ! Sirs,  
 I,—chin deep in a marsh of misery,  
 Struggling to extricate my name and  
 fame  
 And fortune from the marsh would  
 drown them all,  
 My face the sole unstrangled part of  
 me,—  
 I must have this new gadfly in that  
 face, [too !  
 Must free me from the attacking lover  
 Men say I battled ungracefully enough—  
 Was harsh, uncouth and ludicrous be-  
 yond  
 The proper part o' the husband : have  
 it so !  
 Your lordships are considerate at least—  
 You order me to speak in my defence  
 Plainly, expect no quavering tuneful  
 trills  
 As when you bid a singer solace you,—  
 Nor look that I shall give it, for a grace,  
*Stans pede in uno*—you remember  
 well  
 In the one case, 't is a plainsong too  
 severe,  
 This story of my wrongs,—and that I  
 ache  
 And need a chair, in the other. Ask  
 you me  
 Why, when I felt this trouble flap my  
 face,

"For, hate my husband to your hearts' content,  
 "I, spoil and prey of you from first to last,  
 "I who have done you the blind service, lured  
 "The lion to your pit-fall,—I, thus left  
 "To answer for my ignorant bleating there,  
 "I should have been remembered and withdrawn  
 "From the first o' the natural fury, not flung loose  
 "A proverb and a byeword men will mouth  
 "At the cross-way, in the corner, up and down  
 "Rome and Arezzo,—there, full in my face,  
 "If my lord, missing them and finding me,  
 "Content himself with casting his reproach  
 "To drop i' the street where such impostors die.  
 "Ah, but—that husband, what the wonder were I—  
 "If, far from casting thus away the rag  
 "Smeared with the plague, his hand had chanced upon,  
 "Sewn to his pillow by Locusta's wife,—  
 "Far from abolishing, root, stem and branch,  
 "The misgrowth of infectious mistletoe  
 "Foisted into his stock for honest graft,—  
 "If he, repudiate not, renounce nowise,  
 "But, guarding, guiding me, maintain my cause  
 "By making it his own, (what other way?)  
 "—To keep my name for me, he call it his,  
 "Claim it of who would take it by their lie,—  
 "To save my wealth for me—or babe of mine  
 "Their lie was framed to beggar at the birth—  
 "He bid them loose grasp, give our gold again:  
 "Refuse to become partner with the pair  
 "Even in a game which, played adroitly, gives  
 "Its winner life's great wonderful new chance,—

"Of marrying,  
 "Ah, did he do  
 "he!  
 "Anger he  
 "stamp out  
 "Yet spread n  
 "yet, rough  
 "In the act,  
 "embers so  
 "What grace  
 "were mint  
 "Such protestat  
 "wife's.  
 "Looking for th  
 "Why, here's t  
 "much, no  
 "Avowal she ma  
 "speech  
 "To my brother  
 "Ere the good  
 "fade—  
 "So did she mak  
 "So pour forth  
 "Ay, the fals  
 "lords—  
 "The simulac  
 "trick:  
 "You traced  
 "marked th  
 "The product  
 "Alack,  
 "I want no mor  
 "From the other  
 "there!  
 "I confess all—  
 "And deny not  
 "Can so fence, i  
 "That my poor  
 "Each pass o' t  
 "the same,  
 "What matters  
 "Mine and not  
 "ceded, lor  
 "Impute to me  
 "proved  
 "I taught my  
 "see  
 "What it behov  
 "do,  
 "Feel in her he  
 "declare,  
 "And, whether  
 "Forced her to  
 "self  
 "Marching in  
 "And who finds  
 "be true?

"I divided from our  
 "m anyhow."  
 "w,—I see my lords  
 "—would I could do  
 "ase expect my bile  
 "ch blame me: now,  
 "urged my flesh  
 "e bonds. By your  
 "reet Sirs!  
 "in the public place;  
 "e,—with such news,  
 "the sombre gallery,  
 "ie old mother in bed  
 "hat cold, the finer  
 "i-law had found in-  
 "ng misery away  
 "de with dog and gun  
 "the coarse bread,  
 "rid with the toad's-  
 "ent,—I broke silence  
 "manfully meet the  
 "rst o' the truth, end,  
 "ce!  
 "ly beaten here,—  
 "ate vulgar couple,—  
 "e measured forces,  
 "e,  
 "spoil and prey from  
 "y name,—'t is nailed  
 "eirs,  
 "angeling is anyway  
 "s they plan they exe-  
 "id I lose all—even to  
 "ss,—they have the  
 "awhile to hook me  
 "fish and find the bait  
 "They even have their child or change-  
 "ling back  
 "To trade with, turn to account a  
 "second time.  
 "The brother, presumably might tell  
 "a tale  
 "Or give a warning,—he, too, flies the  
 "field,  
 "And with him vanish help and hope  
 "of help.  
 "They have caught me in the cavern  
 "where I fell,  
 "Covered my loudest cry for human aid  
 "With this enormous paving-stone of  
 "shame. [clay?  
 "Well, are we demigods or merely  
 "Is success still attendant on desert?  
 "Is this, we live on, heaven and the  
 "final state,  
 "Or earth which means probation to  
 "the end?  
 "Why claim escape from man's pre-  
 "destined lot  
 "Of being beaten and baffled?—  
 "God's decree,  
 "In which I, bowing bruised head, ac-  
 "quiesce,  
 "One of us Franceschini fell long since  
 "I' the Holy Land, betrayed, tradition  
 "runs,  
 "To Paynim by the feigning of a girl  
 "He rushed to free from ravisher, and  
 "found  
 "Lay safe enough with friends in am-  
 "buscade  
 "Who flayed him while she clapped her  
 "hands and laughed:  
 "Let me end, falling by a like device.  
 "It will not be so hard. I am the last  
 "O' my line which will not suffer any  
 "more.  
 "I have attained to my full fifty years,  
 "(About the average of us all, 'tis said,  
 "Though it seems longer to the un-  
 "lucky man)  
 "—Lived through my share of life;  
 "let all end here,  
 "Me and the house and grief and  
 "shame at once.  
 "Friends my informants,—I can bear  
 "your blow!"  
 "And I believe 't was in no unmeet  
 "match  
 "For the stoic's mood, with something  
 "like a smile,  
 "That, when morose December roused  
 "me next,



- In three months letters thence admon-  
ished me,  
"Your plan for the divorce is all mis-  
take.  
"It would hold, now, had you, taking  
thought to wed  
"Rachel of the blue eye and golden  
hair,  
"Found swarth-skinned Leah cumber  
couch next day :  
"But Rachel, blue-eyed golden-haired  
aright,  
"Proving to be only Laban's child,  
not Lot's,  
"Remains yours all the same for ever  
more.  
"No whit to the purpose is your plea :  
you err  
"I' the person and the quality—no-  
wise  
"In the individual,—that 's the case in  
point !  
"You go to the ground,—are met by a  
cross-suit  
"For separation, of the Rachel here,  
"From bed and board,—she is the  
injured one,  
"You did the wrong and have to an-  
swer it.  
"As for the circumstance of imprison-  
ment  
"And colour it lends to this your new  
attack,  
"Never fear, that point is considered  
too !  
"The durance is already at an end ;  
"The convent-quiet preyed upon her  
health,  
"She is transferred now to her parents'  
house  
"—No-parents, when that cheats and  
plunders you,  
"But parentage again confessed in full,  
"When such confession pricks and  
plagues you more—  
"As now—for, this their house is not  
the house  
"In Via Vittoria wherein neighbours'  
watch  
"Might incommode the freedom of  
your wife,  
"But a certain villa smothered up in  
vines  
"At the town's edge by the gate i' the  
Pauline way,  
"Out of eye-reach, out of ear-shot, little  
and lone,
- "Whither a friend,—at Civita, we  
hope,  
"A good half-dozen hours' ride off,—  
might, some eve,  
"Betake himself, and whence ride back,  
some morn,  
"Nobody the wiser : but be that as it  
may, [now.  
"Do not afflict your brains with trifles  
"You have still three suits to manage,  
all and each  
"Ruinous truly should the event play  
false.  
"It is indeed the likelier so to do,  
"That brother Paul, your single prop  
and stay,  
"After a vain attempt to bring the  
Pope  
"To set aside procedures, sit himself  
"And summarily use prerogative,  
"Afford us the infallible finger's tact  
"To disentwine your tangle of affairs,  
"Paul,—finding it moreover past his  
strength  
"To stem the irruption, bear Rome's  
ridicule  
"Of . . . since friends must speak . .  
to be round with you . .  
"Of the old outwitted husband,  
wronged and wroth,  
"Pitted against a brace of juveniles—  
"A brisk priest who is versed in Ovid's  
art  
"More than his Summa, and a game-  
some wife  
"Able to act Corinna without book,  
"Beside the waggish parents who  
played dupes  
"To dupe the duper—(and truly  
divers scenes  
"Of the Arezzo palace, tickle rib  
"And tease eye till the tears come, so  
we laugh ;  
"Nor wants the shock at the inn its  
comic force,  
"And then the letters and poetry—  
*merum sal !*)  
"—Paul, finally, in such a state of  
things,  
"After a brief temptation to go jump  
"And join the fishes in the Tiber,  
drowns  
"Sorrow another and a wiser way :  
"House and goods, he has sold all off,  
is gone,  
"Leaves Rome,—whether for France  
or Spain, who knows ?

"Or Britain almost divided from our orb.  
 "You have lost him anyhow."  
 Now,—I see my lords  
 Shift in their seat,—would I could do the same!  
 They probably please expect my bile was moved  
 To purpose, nor much blame me: now, they judge,  
 The fiery titillation urged my flesh  
 Break through the bonds. By your pardon, no, sweet Sirs!  
 I got such missives in the public place;  
 When I sought home,—with such news, mounted stair  
 And sat at last in the sombre gallery,  
 ('T was autumn, the old mother in bed betimes,  
 Having to bear that cold, the finer frame  
 Of her daughter-in-law had found intolerable—  
 The brother, walking misery away  
 O' the mountain-side with dog and gun belike)  
 As I supped, ate the coarse bread, drank the wine  
 Weak once, now acrid with the toad's-head-squeeze,  
 My wife's bestowment,—I broke silence thus:  
 "Let me, a man, manfully meet the fact,  
 "Confront the worst o' the truth, end, and have peace!  
 "I am irremediably beaten here,—  
 "The gross illiterate vulgar couple,—bah!  
 "Why, they have measured forces, mastered mine,  
 "Made me their spoil and prey from first to last.  
 "They have got my name,—'t is nailed now fast to theirs,  
 "The child or changeling is anyway my wife;  
 "Point by point as they plan they execute,  
 "They gain all, and I lose all—even to the lure  
 "That led to loss,—they have the wealth again  
 "They hazarded awhile to hook me with,  
 "Have caught the fish and find the bait entire:

"They even have their child or changing back  
 "To trade with, turn to account a second time.  
 "The brother, presumably might tell a tale  
 "Or give a warning,—he, too, flies the field,  
 "And with him vanish help and hope of help.  
 "They have caught me in the cavern where I fell,  
 "Covered my loudest cry for human aid  
 "With this enormous paving-stone of shame. [clay?  
 "Well, are we demigods or merely  
 "Is success still attendant on desert?  
 "Is this, we live on, heaven and the final state,  
 "Or earth which means probation to the end?  
 "Why claim escape from man's predestined lot  
 "Of being beaten and baffled?—God's decree,  
 "In which I, bowing bruised head, acquiesce.  
 "One of us Franceschini fell long since  
 "I' the Holy Land, betrayed, tradition runs,  
 "To Paynims by the feigning of a girl  
 "He rushed to free from ravisher, and found  
 "Lay safe enough with friends in ambushade  
 "Who flayed him while she clapped her hands and laughed:  
 "Let me end, falling by a like device.  
 "It will not be so hard. I am the last  
 "O' my line which will not suffer any more.  
 "I have attained to my full fifty years,  
 "(About the average of us all, 'tis said,  
 "Though it seems longer to the unlucky man)  
 "—Lived through my share of life; let all end here,  
 "Me and the house and grief and shame at once.  
 "Friends my informants,—I can bear your blow!"  
 And I believe 't was in no unmeet match  
 For the stoic's mood, with something like a smile,  
 That, when morose December roused me next,



I took into my hand, broke seal to read  
The new epistle from Rome. "All  
to no use !

"Whate'er the turn next injury take,"  
smiled I,

"Here 's one has chosen his part and  
knows his cue.

"I am done with, dead now ; strike  
away, good friends !

"Are the three suits decided in a  
trice ?

"Against me,—there's no question !  
How does it go ?

"Is the parentage of my wife demon-  
strated

"Infamous to her wish ? Parades  
she now

"Loosed of the cincture that so irked  
the loin ?

"Is the last penny extracted from my  
purse

"To mulct me for demanding the first  
pound

"Was promised in return for value  
paid ?

"Has the priest, with nobody to court  
beside,

"Courtied the Muse in exile, hitched  
my hap

"Into a rattling ballad-rhyme which,  
bawled

"At tavern-doors, wakes rapture  
everywhere,

"And helps cheap wine down throat  
this Christmas time,

"Beating the bagpipes ? Any or all of  
these !

"As well, good friends, you cursed my  
palace here

"To its old cold stone face,—stuck  
your cap for crest

"Over the shield that 's extant in the  
Square,—

"Or spat on the statue's cheek, the im-  
patient world

"Sees cumber tomb-top in our family  
church :

"Let him creep under covert as I shall  
do,

"Half-below ground already indeed.  
Good-bye !

"My brothers are priests, and childless  
so ; that's well—

"And, thank God most for this, no  
child leave I—

"None after me to bear till his heart  
break

"The being a Franceschini and my  
son ! "

"Nay," said the letter, "but you have  
just that !

"A babe, your veritable son and heir—  
Lawful,—'t is only eight months

since your wife

"Left you,—so, son and heir, your  
babe was born

"Last Wednesday in the villa,—you  
see the cause

"For quitting Convent without beat  
of drum,

"Stealing a hurried march to this re-  
treat

"That's not so savage as the Sisterhood  
To slips and stumbles : Pietro's heart

is soft, [pair

"Violante leans to pity's side,—the  
"Ushered you into life a bouncing boy :

"And he's already hidden away and  
safe

"From any claim on him you mean to  
make—

"They need him for themselves,—  
don't fear, they know

"The use o' the bantling,—the nerve  
thus laid bare

"To nip at, new and nice, with finger-  
nail ! "

Then I rose up like fire, and fire-like  
roared.

What, all is only beginning not ending  
now ?

The worm which wormed its way from  
skin through flesh

To the bone and there lay biting, did  
its best,

What, it goes on to scrape at the bone's  
self,

Will wind to inmost marrow and mad-  
den me ?

There 's to be yet my representative,  
Another of the name shall keep dis-  
played

The flag with the ordure on it, brandish  
still

The broken sword has served to stir a  
jakes ?

Who will he be, how will you call the  
man ?

A Franceschini,—when who cut my  
purse,

Filched my name, hemmed me round,  
hustled me hard

As rogues at a fair some fool they strip i' the midst,	On forehead and curse me who could not save !
When these count gains, vaunt pillage presently :—	Rather be the town-talk true, Square's jest, street's jeer
But a Caponsacchi, oh, be very sure !	True, my own inmost heart's confes- sion true,
When what demands its tribute of ap- plause	And he's the priest's bastard and none of mine !
Is the cunning and impudence o' the pair of cheats,	Ay, there was cause for flight, swift flight and sure !
The lies and lust o' the mother, and the brave	The husband gets unruly, breaks all bounds
Bold carriage of the priest, worthily crowned	When he encounters some familiar face, Fashion of feature, brow and eyes and lips
By a witness to his feat i' the following age,—	Where he least looked to find them,— time to fly !
And how this threefold cord could hook and fetch	This bastard then, a nest for him is made, [flesh—
And land leviathan that king of pride !	As the manner is of vermin, in my
Or say, by some mad miracle of chance,	Shall I let the filthy pest buzz, flap and sting,
Is he indeed my flesh and blood, this babe ?	Busy at my vitals and, nor hand nor foot
Was it because fate forged a link at last	Lift, but let be, lie still and rot resigned ?
Betwixt my wife and me, and both alike	No, I appeal to God,—what says Him- self,
Found we had henceforth some one thing to love,	How lessons Nature when I look to learn ?
Was it when she could damn my soul indeed	Why, that I am alive, am still a man
She unlatched door, let all the devils o' the dark	With brain and heart and tongue and right hand too—
Dance in on me to cover her escape ?	Nay, even with friends, in such a cause as this,
Why then, the surplusage of disgrace, the spilt	To right me if I fail to take my right.
Over and above the measure of infamy,	No more of law ; a voice beyond the law
Failing to take effect on my coarse flesh	Enters my heart, <i>Quis est pro Domino ?</i>
Seasoned with scorn now, saturate with shame,—	Myself, in my own Vittiano, told the tale
Is saved to instil on and corrode the brow,	To my own serving-people summoned there :
The baby-softness of my first-born child—	Told the first half of it, scarce heard to end
The child I had died to see though in a dream,	By judges who got done with judgment quick
The child I was bid strike out for, beat the wave	And clamoured to go execute her 'hest—
And baffle the tide of troubles where I swam,	Who cried " Not one of us that dig your soil
So I might touch shore, lay down life at last	" And dress your vineyard, prune your olive-trees,
At the feet so dim and distant and divine	" But would have brained the man de- bauched our wife,
Of the apparition, as 't were Mary's babe	" And staked the wife whose last al- lured the man,
Had held, through night and storm, the torch aloft,—	
Born now in very deed to bear this brand	



" And paunched the Duke, had it been possible,  
 " Who ruled the land, yet barred us such revenge ! "  
 I fixed on the first whose eyes caught mine, some four,  
 Resolute youngsters with the heart still fresh,  
 Filled my purse with the residue o' the coin  
 Uncaught-up by my wife whom haste made blind,  
 Donned the first rough and rural garb I found,  
 Took whatsoever weapon came to hand,  
 And out we flung and on we ran or reeled  
 Romeward, I have no memory of our way,  
 Only that, when at intervals the cloud Of horror about me opened to let in life,  
 I listened to some song in the ear, some snatch  
 Of a legend, relic of religion, stray  
 Fragment of record very strong and old  
 Of the first conscience, the anterior right,  
 The God's-gift to mankind, impulse to quench  
 The antagonistic spark of hell and tread  
 Satan and all his malice into dust,  
 Declare to the world the one law, right is right.  
 Then the cloud re-encompassed me, and so  
 I found myself, as on the wings of winds,  
 Arrived : I was at Rome on Christmas Eve.  
  
 Festive bells—everywhere the Feast o' the Babe,  
 Joy upon earth, peace and good will to man !  
 I am baptized. I started and let drop  
 The dagger. " Where is it, His promised peace ? "  
 Nine days o' the Birth-Feast did I pause and pray  
 To enter into no temptation more.  
 I bore the hateful house, my brother's once,  
 Deserted,—let the ghost of social joy  
 Mock and make mouths at me from empty room

And idle door that missed the master's step,—  
 Bore the frank wonder of incredulous eyes,  
 As my own people watched without a word,  
 Waited, from where they huddled round the hearth  
 Black like all else, that nod so slow to come—  
 I stopped my ears even to the inner call  
 Of the dread duty, heard only the song  
 " Peace upon earth," saw nothing but the face  
 O' the Holy Infant and the halo there  
 Able to cover yet another face  
 Behind it, Satan's which I else should see.  
 But, day by day, joy waned and withered off :  
 The Babe's face, premature with peak and pine,  
 Sank into wrinkled ruinous old age,  
 Suffering and death, then mist-like disappeared,  
 And showed only the Cross at end of all,  
 Left nothing more to interpose 'twixt me  
 And the dread duty,—for the angel's song,  
 " Peace upon earth," louder and louder pealed  
 " O Lord, how long, how long be un-avenged ? "  
 On the ninth day, this grew too much for man.  
 I started up—" Some end must be ! "  
 At once,  
 Silence : then, scratching like a death-watch-tick,  
 Slowly within my brain was syllabled,  
 " One more concession, one decisive way  
 " And but one, to determine thee the truth,—  
 " This way, in fine, I whisper in thy ear :  
 " Now doubt, anon decide, thereupon act ! "  
 " This is a way, thou whisperest in my ear !  
 " I doubt, I will decide, then act," said I—  
 Then beckoned my companions : " Time is come ! "  
 And so, all yet uncertain save the will

To do right, and the daring aught save  
 leave  
 Right undone, I did find myself at  
 last  
 I' the dark before the villa with my  
 friends,  
 And made the experiment, the final  
 test,  
 Ultimate chance that ever was to be  
 For the wretchedness inside. I  
 knocked—pronounced  
 The name, the predetermined touch  
 for truth,  
 "What welcome for the wanderer?  
 Open straight—"  
 To the friend, physician, friar upon his  
 rounds,—  
 Traveller belated, beggar lame and  
 blind?—  
 No, but—"to Caponsacchi!" And  
 the door  
 Opened.

And then,—why, even then, I  
 think,  
 I' the minute that confirmed my worst  
 of fears,  
 Surely,—I pray God that I think  
 aright!—  
 Had but Pompilia's self, the tender  
 thing  
 Who once was good and pure, was once  
 my lamb  
 And lay in my bosom, had the well-  
 known shape  
 Fronted me in the door-way,—stood  
 there faint  
 With the recent pang, perhaps, of giv-  
 ing birth  
 To what might, though by miracle,  
 seem my child,—  
 Nay more, I will say, had even the  
 aged fool [age  
 Pietro, the dotard, in whom folly and  
 Wrought, more than enmity or male-  
 volence,  
 To practise and conspire against my  
 peace,—  
 Had either of these but opened, I had  
 paused.  
 But it was she the hag, she that brought  
 hell  
 For a dowry with her to her husband's  
 house,  
 She the mock-mother, she that made  
 the match  
 And married me to perdition, spring  
 and source

O' the fire inside me that boiled up  
 from heart  
 To brain and hailed the Fury gave it  
 birth,—  
 Violante Comparini, she it was,  
 With the old grin amid the wrinkles  
 yet,  
 Opened: as if in turning from the  
 Cross,  
 With trust to keep the sight and save  
 my soul,  
 I had stumbled, first thing, on the ser-  
 pent's head  
 Coiled with a leer at foot of it.

There was the end!  
 Then was I rapt away by the impulse,  
 one  
 Immeasurable everlasting wave of a  
 need  
 To abolish that detested life. 'T was  
 done:  
 You know the rest and how the folds o'  
 the thing,  
 Twisting for help, involved the other  
 two  
 More or less serpent-like: how I was  
 mad,  
 Blind, stamped on all, the earth-  
 worms with the asp,  
 And ended so.

You came on me that night,  
 Your officers of justice,—caught the  
 crime  
 In the first natural frenzy of remorse?  
 Twenty miles off, sound sleeping as a  
 child  
 On a cloak i' the straw which promised  
 shelter first,  
 With the bloody arms beside me,—  
 was it not so?  
 Wherefore not? Why, how else should  
 I be found?  
 I was my own self, had my sense again,  
 My soul safe from the serpents. I could  
 sleep:  
 Indeed and, dear my lords, I shall  
 sleep now,  
 Spite of my shoulder, in five minutes'  
 space,  
 When you dismiss me, having truth  
 enough!  
 It is but a few days are passed, I find,  
 Since this adventure. Do you tell me,  
 four?  
 Then the dead are scarce quiet where  
 they lie,  
 Old Pietro, old Violante, side by side



At the church Lorenzo,—oh, they  
know it well!

So do I. But my wife is still alive,  
Has breath enough to tell her story yet,  
Her way, which is not mine, no doubt  
at all.

And Caponsacchi, you have summoned  
him,—

Was he so far to send for? Not at  
hand?

I thought some few o' the stabs were in  
his heart,

Or had not been so lavish,—less had  
served.

Well, he too tells his story,—florid  
prose

As smooth as mine is rough. You see,  
my lords,

There will be a lying intoxicating smoke  
Born of the blood,—confusion prob-  
ably,—

For lies breed lies—but all that rests  
with you!

The trial is no concern of mine; with  
me

The main of the care is over: I at least  
Recognise who took that huge burthen  
off,

Let me begin to live again. I did  
God's bidding and man's duty, so,  
breathe free;

Look you to the rest! I heard Him-  
self prescribe,

That great Physician, and dared lance  
the core

Of the bad ulcer; and the rage abates,  
I am myself and whole now: I prove  
cured

By the eyes that see, the ears that hear  
again,

The limbs that have relearned their  
youthful play,

The healthy taste of food and feel of  
clothes

And taking to our common life once  
more,

All that now urges my defence from  
death.

The willingness to live, what means it  
else?

Before,—but let the very action speak!  
Judge for yourselves, what life seemed  
worth to me

Who, not by proxy but in person,  
pitched

Head-foremost into danger as a fool  
That never cares if he can swim or no—

So he but find the bottom, braves the  
brook.

No man omits precaution, quite ne-  
glects

Secresy, safety, schemes not how re-  
treat,

Having schemed he might advance.  
Did I so scheme?

Why, with a warrant which 't is ask  
and have,

With horse thereby made mine without  
a word,

I had gained the frontier and slept safe  
that night.

Then, my companions,—call them what  
you please,

Slave or stipendiary,—what need of  
one

To me whose righthand did its owner's  
work?

Hire an assassin yet expose yourself?  
As well buy glove and then thrust  
naked hand

I' the thorn-bush. No, the wise man  
stays at home,

Sends only agents out, with pay to  
earn:

At home, when they come back,—he  
straight discards

Or else disowns. Why use such tools  
at all

When a man's foes are of his house,  
like mine,

Sit at his board, sleep in his bed?  
Why noise,

When there 's the *acquetta* and the  
silent way?

Clearly my life was valueless.

But now

Health is returned, and sanity of soul  
Nowise indifferent to the body's harm.

I find the instinct bids me save my  
life;

My wits, too, rally round me; I pick up  
And use the arms that strewed the  
ground before,

Unnoticed or spurned aside: I take  
my stand,

Make my defence. God shall not lose  
a life

May do Him further service, while I  
speak

And you hear, you my judges and last  
hope!

You are the law: 't is to the law I look.  
I began life by hanging to the law,

To the law it is I hang till life shall end,  
My brother made appeal to the Pope,  
't is true.

To stay proceedings, judge my cause  
himself

Nor trouble law,—some fondness of  
conceit

That rectitude, sagacity sufficed  
The investigator in a case like mine,  
Dispensed with the machine of law.

The Pope  
Knew better, set aside my brother's  
plea [cause

And put me back to law,—referred the  
*Ad judices meos*,—doubtlessly did well.  
Here, then, I clutch my judges,—I  
claim law—

Cry, by the higher law whereof your  
law

O' the land is humbly representative,—  
Cry, on what point is it, where either  
accuse.

I fail to furnish you defence? I stand  
Acquitted, actually or virtually,  
By every intermediate kind of court  
That takes account of right or wrong in  
man.

Each unit in the series that begins  
With God's throne, ends with the tri-  
bunal here.

God breathes, not speaks, his verdicts,  
felt not heard.

Passed on successively to each court I call

Man's conscience, custom, manners, all  
that make

More and more effort to promulgate,  
mark

God's verdict in determinable words,  
Till last come human jurists—solidify  
Fluid result,—what 's fixable lies  
forged.

Statute,—the residue escapes in fume,  
Yet hangs aloft, a cloud, as palpable  
To the finer sense as word the legist  
welds.

Justinian's Pandects only make precise  
What simply sparkled in men's eyes  
before,

Twisted in their brow or quivered on  
their lip,

Waited the speech they called but would  
not come.

These courts then, whose decree your  
own confirms,—

Take my whole life, not this last act  
alone,

Look on it by the light reflected thence !  
What has Society to charge me with ?  
Come, unreservedly, —favour nor fear, —  
I am Guido Franceschini, am I not ?  
You know the courses I was free to  
take ?

I took just that which let me serve the Church.

I gave it all my labour in body and  
soul

Till these broke down i' the service.  
"Specify?"

Well, my last patron was a Cardinal. I left him unconvicted of a fault—

Was even helped, by way of gratitude,  
Into the new life that I left him for,  
This very misery of the marriage,—he  
Made it, kind soul, so far as in him lay—  
Signed the deed where you yet may see  
his name.

He is gone to his reward,—dead, being  
my friend

Who could have helped here also,—  
that, of course!

So far, there's my acquittal, I suppose.  
Then comes the marriage itself—no  
question, lords,

Of the entire validity of that !  
In the extremity of distress, 't is true,  
For after-reasons, furnished abund-  
antly,

I wished the thing invalid, went to you  
Only some months since, set you duly  
forth

My wrong and prayed your remedy,  
that a cheat

Should not have force to cheat my  
whole life long.

"Annul a marriage? 'T is impossible!"

"Though ring about your neck be  
brass not gold,

"Needs must it clasp, gangrene you all  
the same!" [far,

Well, let me have the benefit, just so  
O' the fact announced,—my wife then  
is my wife,

I have allowance for a husband's right.  
I am charged with passing right's due  
bound,—such acts

As I thought just, my wife called cruelty,  
Complained of in due form,—convoked  
no court

Of common gossipry, but took her  
wrongs—

And not once, but so long as patience served—



To the town's top, jurisdiction's pride  
 of place,  
 To the Archbishop and the Governor.  
 These heard her charge with my reply,  
 and found  
 That futile, this sufficient: they dismissed  
 The hysteric querulous rebel, and confirmed  
 Authority in its wholesome exercise,  
 They, with directest access to the facts.  
 "—Ay, for it was their friendship favoured you,  
 " Hereditary alliance against a breach  
 " I' the social order: prejudice for the name  
 " Of Franceschini!"—So I hear it said:  
 But not here. You, lords, never will you say  
 " Such is the nullity of grace and truth,  
 " Such the corruption of the faith, such lapse [ists  
 " Of law, such warrant have the Molin-  
 " For daring reprehend us as they do,—  
 " That we pronounce it just a common case,  
 " Two dignitaries, each in his degree  
 " First, foremost, this the spiritual head, and that  
 " The secular arm o' the body politic,  
 " Should, for mere wrong's love and injustice' sake,  
 " Side with, aid and abet in cruelty  
 " This broken beggarly noble,—bribed perhaps  
 " By his watered wine and mouldy crust of bread—  
 " Rather than that sweet tremulous flower-like wife  
 " Who kissed their hands and curled about their feet  
 " Looking the irresistible loveliness  
 " In tears that takes man captive, turns " . . . enough!  
 Do you blast your predecessors?  
 What forbids  
 Posterity to trebly blast yourselves  
 Who set the example and instruct their tongue?  
 You dreaded the crowd, succumbed to the popular cry,  
 Or else, would nowise seem defer thereto  
 And yield to public clamour though i' the right!

You ridded your eye of my unseemliness,  
 The noble whose misfortune wearied you—  
 Or, what 's more probable, made common cause  
 With the cleric section, punished in myself  
 Maladroit uncomplaisant laity,  
 Defective in behaviour to a priest  
 Who claimed the customary partnership  
 I' the house and the wife. Lords, any lie will serve!  
 Look to it,—or allow me freed so far!  
 Then I proceed a step, come with clean hands  
 Thus far, re-tell the tale told eight months since.  
 The wife, you allow so far, I have not wronged,  
 Has fled my roof, plundered me and decamped  
 In company with the priest her paramour:  
 And I gave chase, came up with, caught the two  
 At the wayside inn where both had spent the night,  
 Found them in flagrant fault, and found as well,  
 By documents with name and plan and date,  
 The fault was furtive then that's flagrant now,  
 Their intercourse a long established crime.  
 I did not take the license law's self gives  
 To slay both criminals o' the spot at the time,  
 But held my hand,—preferred play prodigy  
 Of patience which the world calls cowardice,  
 Rather than seem anticipate the law  
 And cast discredit on its organs,—you—  
 So, to your bar I brought both criminals,  
 And made my statement: heard their counter-charge  
 Nay,—their corroboration of my tale,  
 Nowise disputing its allegements, not I' the main, not more than nature's decency  
 Compels men to keep silence in this kind,—

Only contending that the deeds  
 avowed  
 Would take another colour and bear  
 excuse.  
 You were to judge between us ; so you  
 did.  
 You disregard the excuse, you breathe  
 away  
 The colour of innocence and leave  
 guilt black,  
 " Guilty " is the decision of the court,  
 And that I stand in consequence un-  
 touched,  
 One white integrity from head to heel.  
 Not guilty ? Why then did you pun-  
 ish them ?  
 True, punishment has been inade-  
 quate—  
 'T is not I only, not my friends that  
 joke,  
 My foes that jeer, who echo " inade-  
 quate "—  
 For, by a chance that comes to help for  
 once, [judged  
 The same case simultaneously was  
 At Arezzo, in the province of the Court  
 Where the crime had beginning but not  
 end.  
 They then, deciding on but half o' the  
 crime,  
 The effraction, robbery,—features of the  
 fault  
 I never cared to dwell upon at Rome,—  
 What was it they adjudged as penalty  
 To Pompilia,—the one criminal o' the  
 pair  
 Amenable to their judgment, not the  
 priest  
 Who is Rome's ? Why, just imprison-  
 ment for life  
 I' the Stinche. There was Tuscany's  
 award  
 To a wife that robs her husband : you  
 at Rome  
 Having to deal with adultery in a wife  
 And, in a priest, breach of the priestly  
 vow,  
 Give gentle sequestration for a month  
 In a manageable Convent, then release,  
 You call imprisonment, in the very  
 house  
 O' the very couple, the sole aim and  
 end  
 Of the culprits' crime was—there to  
 reach and rest  
 And there take solace and defy me :  
 well,—

This difference 'twixt their penalty and  
 yours  
 Is immaterial : make your penalty  
 less—  
 Merely that she should henceforth  
 wear black gloves  
 And white fan, she who wore the  
 opposite—  
 Why, all the same the fact o' the thing  
 subsists. [may,  
 Reconcile to your conscience as you  
 Be it on your own heads, you pro-  
 nounced one half  
 O' the penalty for heinousness like hers  
 And his, that 's for a fault at Carnival  
 Of comfit-pelting past discretion's law,  
 Or accident to handkerchief in Lent  
 Which falls perversely as a lady kneels  
 Abruptly, and but half conceals her  
 neck !  
 I acquiesce for my part,—punished,  
 though  
 By a pin-point scratch, means guilty :  
 guilty means  
 —What have I been but innocent  
 hitherto ?  
 Anyhow, here the offence, being pun-  
 ished, ends.  
 Ends ?—for you deemed so, did you  
 not, sweet lords ?  
 That was throughout the veritable aim  
 O' the sentence light or heavy,—to re-  
 dress  
 Recognised wrong ? You righted me,  
 I think ?  
 Well then,—what if I, at this last of all,  
 Demonstrate you, as my whole plead-  
 ing proves,  
 No particle of wrong received thereby  
 One atom of right ?—that cure grew  
 worse disease ?  
 That in the process you call " justice  
 done "  
 All along you have nipped away just  
 inch  
 By inch the creeping climbing length of  
 plague  
 Breaking my tree of life from root to  
 branch,  
 And left me, after all and every act  
 Of your interference,—lightened of  
 what load ?  
 At liberty wherein ? Mere words and  
 wind !  
 " Now I was saved, now I should feel  
 no more



To the town's top, jurisdiction's pride  
 of place,  
 To the Archbishop and the Governor.  
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 and found  
 That futile, this sufficient: they dismissed  
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 Then I proceed a step,  
 hands  
 Thus far, re-tell the t  
 months since.  
 The wife, you allow so  
 wronged,  
 Has fled my roof, plus  
 decamped  
 In company with the  
 mour:  
 And I gave chase, came  
 the two  
 At the wayside inn w  
 spent the night,  
 Found them in flagrante  
 as well,  
 By documents with nam  
 date,  
 The fault was furtive t  
 grant now,  
 Their intercourse a lo  
 crime.  
 I did not take the license  
 To slay both criminals  
 the time,  
 But held my hand,—  
 prodigy  
 Of patience which the  
 cowardice,  
 Rather than seem antic  
 And cast discredit on its o  
 So, to your bar I broug  
 inals,  
 And made my statement  
 counter-charge  
 Nay,—their corroboration  
 Nowise disputing its all  
 I' the main, not more  
 decency  
 Compels men to keep s  
 kind,—

play at tarocs, and arbit  
 itude of fan-mounts: all  
 whit the advantage of a  
 the promising pupil,—  
 tention to the Countess  
 one; 't is her mother  
 roast,  
 here, and puts in a word:  
 -morrow morning after  
 rash promise to preach,  
 week!  
 ped you the Archbishop  
 when one grieves to tell  
 as treat the subject of the  
 wn masterly handling it  
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 p  
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 and somebody helps you,  
 on't prove so indispens-  
 e, sit more loose i' the  
 grow  
 y attendance morn and  
 ust a haven midway  
 ventual harbour,—make  
 crack cordage! And  
 be  
 resence, a genteel man-  
 tact at every pore of  
 mp of learning, Brother  
 Slouch, our piece of  
 and try suit the Car-  
 clump-clumped, beads  
 n hand,  
 't is meat for man and  
 "How both flopped down, prayed  
 blessing on bent pate  
 "Bald many an inch beyond the ton-  
 sure's need,  
 "Never once dreaming, the two moony  
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 "There's nothing moves his Emin-  
 ence so much  
 "As—far from all this awe at sancti-  
 tude—  
 "Heads that wag, eyes that twinkle,  
 modified mirth  
 "At the closet-lectures on the Latin  
 tongue  
 "A lady learns so much by, we know  
 where.  
 "Why, body o' Bacchus, you should  
 crave his rule  
 "For pauses in the elegiac couplet,  
 chasma  
 "Permissible only to Catullus! There!  
 "Now go do duty: brisk, break Pris-  
 cian's head  
 "By reading the day's office—there's  
 no help.  
 "You've Ovid in your poke to plaster  
 that;  
 "Amen's at the end of all: then sup  
 with me!"  
 Well, after three or four years of this  
 life,  
 In prosecution of my calling, I  
 Found myself at the theatre one night  
 With a brother Canon, in a mood and  
 mind  
 Proper enough for the place, amused or  
 no:  
 When I saw enter, stand, and seat her-  
 self  
 A lady, young, tall, beautiful, strange  
 and sad.  
 It was as when, in our cathedral once,  
 As I got yawningly through matin-  
 song.  
 I saw *facchini* bear a burden up,  
 Base it on the high-altar, break away  
 A board or two, and leave the thing in-  
 side  
 Lofty and lone: and lo, when next I  
 looked,  
 There was the Rafael! I was still one  
 stare,  
 When—"Nay, I'll make her give you  
 back your gaze"—  
 Said Canon Conti; and at the word he  
 tossed

- " Should I know ?—that there grows  
from out the old  
" Quite a new word that means the  
very same—  
" And o'er the hard place slide they  
with a smile.  
" Giuseppe Maria Caponsacchi mine,  
" Nobody wants you in these latter  
days  
" To prop the Church by breaking your  
back-bone,—  
" As the necessary way was once, we  
know,  
" When Dioclesian flourished and his  
like ;  
" That building of the buttress-work  
was done [bide,  
" By martyrs and confessors : let it  
" Add not a brick, but, where you see a  
chink,  
" Stick in a sprig of ivy or root a rose  
" Shall make amends and beautify the  
pile !  
" We profit as you were the painfulest  
" O' the martyrs, and you prove your-  
self a match  
" For the cruellest confessor ever was,  
" If you march boldly up and take  
your stand  
" Where their blood soaks, their bones  
yet strew the soil,  
" And cry ' Take notice, I the young  
and free  
" ' And well-to-do i' the world, thus  
leave the world,  
" ' Cast in my lot thus with no gay  
young world  
" ' But the grand old Church : she  
tempts me of the two ! '   
" Renounce the world ? Nay, keep  
and give it us !  
" Let us have you, and boast of what  
you bring.  
" We want the pick o' the earth to  
practise with,  
" Not its offscouring, halt and deaf  
and blind  
" In soul and body. There 's a rubble-  
stone  
" Unfit for the front o' the building,  
stuff to stow  
" In a gap behind and keep us weather-  
tight ;  
" There 's porphyry for the prominent  
place. Good lack !  
" Saint Paul has had enough and to  
spare, I trow,
- " Of ragged run-away Onesimus :  
" He wants the right hand with the  
signet-ring  
" Of King Agrippa, now, to shake and  
use.  
" I have a heavy scholar cloistered up,  
" Close under lock and key, kept at his  
task  
" Of letting Fenelon know the fool he is,  
" In a book I promise Christendom  
next Spring,  
" Why, if he covets so much meat, the  
clown,  
" As a lark's wing next Friday, or,  
any day,  
" Diversion beyond catching his own  
fleas,  
" He shall be properly swinged, I  
promise him.  
" But you, who are so quite another  
paste  
" Of a man,—do you obey me ? Cul-  
tivate  
" Assiduous, that superior gift you  
have  
" Of making madrigals—(who told  
me ? Ah !)  
" Get done a Marinesque Adoniat  
straight  
" With a pulse o' the blood a-pricking,  
here and there,  
" That I may tell the lady, ' And he's  
ours ! ' "
- So I became a priest : those terms  
changed all,  
I was good enough for that, nor cheated  
so ;  
I could live thus and still hold head  
erect.  
Now you see why I may have been be-  
fore  
A fribble and coxcomb, yet, as priest,  
break word  
Nowise, to make you disbelieve me  
now.  
I need that you should know my truth.  
Well, then,  
According to prescription did I live,  
—Conformed myself, both read the bre-  
viary  
And wrote the rhymes, was punctual to  
my place  
I' the Pieve, and as diligent at my post  
Where beauty and fashion rule. I  
throve apace,  
Sub-deacon, Canon, the authority



For delicate play at tarocs, and arbiter  
 O' the magnitude of fan-mounts: all  
 the while  
 Wanting no whit the advantage of a  
 hint  
 Benignant to the promising pupil,—  
 thus:  
 "Enough attention to the Countess  
 now,  
 "The young one; 't is her mother  
 rules the roast,  
 "We know where, and puts in a word:  
 go pay  
 "Devoir to-morrow morning after  
 mass!  
 "Break that rash promise to preach,  
 Passion-week!  
 "Has it escaped you the Archbishop  
 grunts  
 "And snuffles when one grieves to tell  
 his Grace  
 "No soul dares treat the subject of the  
 day  
 "Since his own masterly handling it  
 (ha, ha!)  
 "Five years ago,—when somebody  
 could help  
 "And touch up an odd phrase in time  
 of need,  
 "(He, he!)—and somebody helps you,  
 my son!  
 "Therefore, don't prove so indispens-  
 able  
 "At the Pieve, sit more loose i' the  
 seat, nor grow  
 "A fixture by attendance morn and  
 eve!  
 "Arezzo 's just a haven midway  
 Rome—  
 "Rome 's the eventual harbour,—make  
 for port,  
 "Crowd sail, crack cordage! And  
 your cargo be  
 "A polished presence, a genteel man-  
 ner, wit  
 "At will, and tact at every pore of  
 you!  
 "I sent our lump of learning, Brother  
 Clout,  
 "And Father Slouch, our piece of  
 piety,  
 "To see Rome and try suit the Car-  
 dinal.  
 "Thither they clump-clumped, beads  
 and book in hand,  
 "And ever since 't is meat for man and  
 maid

"How both flopped down, prayed  
 blessing on bent pate  
 "Bald many an inch beyond the ton-  
 sure's need,  
 "Never once dreaming, the two moony  
 dolts,  
 "There 's nothing moves his Emin-  
 ence so much  
 "As—far from all this awe at sancti-  
 tude—  
 "Heads that wag, eyes that twinkle,  
 modified mirth  
 "At the closet-lectures on the Latin  
 tongue  
 "A lady learns so much by, we know  
 where.  
 "Why, body o' Bacchus, you should  
 crave his rule  
 "For pauses in the elegiac couplet,  
 chasms  
 "Permissible only to Catullus! There!  
 "Now go do duty: brisk, break Pris-  
 cian's head  
 "By reading the day's office—there 's  
 no help.  
 "You 've Ovid in your poke to plaster  
 that;  
 "Amen 's at the end of all: then sup  
 with me!"

Well, after three or four years of **this**  
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In prosecution of my calling, I  
 Found myself at the theatre one night  
 With a brother Canon, in a mood and  
 mind  
 Proper enough for the place, amused or  
 no:  
 When I saw enter, stand, and seat her-  
 self  
 A lady, young, tall, beautiful, strange  
 and sad.  
 It was as when, in our cathedral once,  
 As I got yawningly through matin-  
 song,  
 I saw *facchini* bear a burden up,  
 Base it on the high-altar, break away  
 A board or two, and leave the thing in-  
 side  
 Lofty and lone: and lo, when next I  
 looked,  
 There was the Rafael! I was still one  
 stare,  
 When—"Nay, I'll make her give you  
 back your gaze"—  
 Said Canon Conti; and at the word he  
 tossed

A paper-twist of comfits to her lap,  
 And dodged and in a trice was at my  
 back  
 Nodding from over my shoulder. Then  
 she turned,  
 Looked our way, smiled the beautiful  
 sad strange smile.  
 "Is not she fair? 'T is my new coun-  
 sin," said he:  
 "The fellow lurking there i' the black  
 o' the box  
 "Is Guido, the old scapegrace: she 's  
 his wife,  
 "Married three years since: how his  
 Countship sulks!  
 "He has brought little back from Rome  
 beside,  
 "After the bragging, bullying. A fair  
 face,  
 "And—they do say—a pocket-full of  
 gold  
 "When he can worry both her parents  
 dead.  
 "I don't go much there, for the cham-  
 ber 's cold  
 "And the coffee pale. I got a turn at  
 first  
 "Paying my duty,—I observed they  
 crouched  
 "—The two old frightened family  
 spectres, close  
 "In a corner, each on each like mouse  
 on mouse  
 "I' the cat's cage: ever since, I stay at  
 home.  
 "Hallo, there 's Guido, the black,  
 mean and small,  
 "Bends his brows on us—please to  
 bend your own  
 "On the shapely nether limbs of Light-  
 skirts there  
 "By way of a diversion! I was a fool  
 "To fling the sweetmeats. Prudence,  
 for God's love!  
 "To-morrow I'll make my peace, e'en  
 tell some fib,  
 "Try if I can't find means to take you  
 there."  
 That night and next day did the gaze  
 endure,  
 Burnt to my brain, as sunbeam thro'  
 shut eyes,  
 And not once changed the beautiful sad  
 strange smile.  
 At vespers Conti leaned beside my seat  
 I' the choir,—part said, part sung—  
 "In ex-cel-sis—

"All 's to no purpose: I have louted  
 low,  
 "But he saw you staring—*quia sub-*  
 don't incline  
 "To know you nearer: him we would  
 not hold  
 "For Hercules,—the man would lick  
 your shoe  
 "If you and certain efficacious friends  
 "Managed him warily,—but there 's  
 the wife:  
 "Spare her, because he beats her, as  
 it is,  
 "She 's breaking her heart quite fast  
 enough—*jam tu—*  
 "So, be you rational and make amends  
 "With little Light-skirts yonder—in  
*secula*  
 "*Secu-lo-o-o-o-rum.* Ah, you rogue!  
 Everyone knows  
 "What great dame she makes jealous  
 one against one,  
 "Play, and win both!"  
 Sirs, ere the week was out,  
 I saw and said to myself "Light-skirts  
 hides teeth  
 "Would make a dog sick,—the great  
 dame shows spite  
 "Should drive a cat mad: 't is but  
 poor work this—  
 "Counting one's fingers till the son-  
 net 's crowned.  
 "I doubt much if Marino really be  
 "A better bard than Dante after all  
 " 'T is more amusing to go pace at eve  
 "I' the Duomo,—watch the day's last  
 gleam outside  
 "Turn, as into a skirt of God's own  
 robe,  
 "Those lancet-windows' jewelled mir-  
 acle,—  
 "Than go eat the Archbishop's orto-  
 lans,  
 "Digest his jokes. Luckily Lent is  
 near:  
 "Who cares to look will find me in my  
 stall  
 "At the Pieve, constant to this faith at  
 least—  
 "Never to write a canzonet any more."  
 So, next week, 't was my patron spoke  
 abrupt,  
 In altered guise, "Young man, can it  
 be true  
 "That after all your promise of sound  
 fruit,



" You have kept away from Countess young or old  
 " And gone play truant in church all day long ?  
 " Are you turning Molinist ? " I answered quick  
 " Sir, what if I turned Christian ? It might be.  
 " The fact is, I am troubled in my mind,  
 " Beset and pressed hard by some novel thoughts.  
 " This your Arezzo is a limited world ;  
 " There's a strange Pope,—'t is said, a priest who thinks.  
 " Rome is the port, you say : to Rome I go.  
 " I will live alone, one does so in a crowd,  
 " And look into my heart a little."  
 " Lent  
 " Ended,"—I told friends,—" I shall go to Rome."

One evening I was sitting in a muse  
 Over the opened " Summa," darkened round  
 By the mid-March twilight, thinking how my life  
 Had shaken under me,—broke short indeed  
 And showed the gap 'twixt what is, what should be,—  
 And into what abysm the soul may slip,  
 Leave aspiration here, achievement there,  
 Lacking omnipotence to connect extremes—  
 Thinking moreover . . oh, thinking if you like,  
 How utterly dissociated was I  
 A priest and celibate, from the sad strange wife  
 Of Guido,—just as an instance to the point,  
 Naught more,—how I had a whole store of strengths  
 Eating into my heart, which craved employ,  
 And she, perhaps, need of a finger's help,—  
 And yet there was no way in the wide world  
 To stretch out mine and so relieve myself—  
 How when the page o' the " Summa " preached its best,

Her smile kept glowing out of it, as to mock  
 The silence we could break by no one word,—  
 There came a tap without the chamber-door,  
 And a whisper, when I bade who tapped speak out,  
 And, in obedience to my summons, last  
 In glided a masked muffled mystery,  
 Laid lightly a letter on the opened book,  
 Then stood with folded arms and foot demure,  
 Pointing as if to mark the minutes' flight.

I took the letter, read to the effect  
 That she, I lately flung the comfits to,  
 Had a warm heart to give me in exchange,  
 And gave it,—loved me and confessed it thus,  
 And bade me render thanks by word of mouth,  
 Going that night to such a side o' the house  
 Where the small terrace overhangs a street  
 Blind and deserted, not the street in front :  
 Her husband being away, the surly patch,  
 At his villa of Vittiano.

" And you ? "—I asked :  
 " What may you be ? "—" Count Guido's kind of maid—  
 " Most of us have two functions in his house.  
 " We all hate him, the lady suffers much,  
 " 'T is just we show compassion, furnish aid,  
 " Specially since her choice is fixed so well.  
 " What answer may I bring to cheer the sweet  
 " Pompilia ? "

Then I took a pen and wrote.  
 " No more of this ! That you are fair, I know :  
 " But other thoughts now occupy my mind.  
 " I should not thus have played the insensible  
 " Once on a time. What made you,—may one ask,—

"Marry your hideous husband? 'T  
was a fault,  
"And now you taste the fruit of it.  
Farewell."

"There!" smiled I as she snatched  
it and was gone—

"There, let the jealous miscreant,—  
Guido's self,

"Whose mean soul grins through this  
transparent trick,—

"Be baulked so far, defrauded of his  
aim!

"What fund of satisfaction to the  
knave,

"Had I kicked this his messenger down  
stairs,

"Trussed to the middle of her impud-  
ence,

"Setting his heart at ease so! No,  
indeed!

"There's the reply which he shall turn  
and twist

"At pleasure, snuff at till his brain  
grow drunk,

"As the bear does when he finds a  
scented glove

"That puzzles him,—a hand and yet  
no hand,

"Of other perfume than his own foul  
paw!

"Last month, I had doubtless chosen  
to play the dupe,

"Accepted the mock-invitation, kept  
"The sham appointment, cudgel be-  
neath cloak,

"Prepared myself to pull the appoint-  
er's self

"Out of the window from his hiding-  
place [ger

"Behind the gown of this part-messen-  
"Part-mistress who would personate  
the wife.

"Such had seemed once a jest permis-  
sible:

"Now, I am not i' the mood."

Back next morn brought  
The messenger, a second letter in hand.

"You are cruel, Thyrsis, and Myrtilla  
moans

"Neglected but adores you, makes re-  
quest

"For mercy: why is it you dare not  
come?

"Such virtue is scarce natural to your  
age:

"You must love someone else; I  
hear you do,

"The Baron's daughter or the Advo-  
cate's wife,

"Or both,—all's one, would you make  
me the third—

"I take the crumbs from table grate-  
fully

"Nor grudge who feasts there. Faith!  
I blush and blaze!

"Yet if I break all bounds, there's  
reason sure,

"Are you determinedly bent on Rome?  
"I am wretched here, a monster tor-  
tures me:

"Carry me with you! Come and say  
you will!

"Concert this very evening! Do not  
write!

"I am ever at the window of my room  
"Over the terrace, at the *Ave*. Come!"

I questioned—lifting half the woman's  
mask

To let her smile loose. "So, you gave  
my line

"To the merry lady?" "She kissed  
off the wax,

"And put what paper was not kissed  
away,

"In her bosom to go burn: but merry,  
no!

"She wept all night when evening  
brought no friend, [breast;

"Alone, the unkind missive at her  
"Thus Philomel, the thorn at her  
breast too,

"Sings" . . . "Writes this second  
letter?" "Even so!

"Then she may peep at vespers forth?"  
—"What risk

"Do we run o' the husband?"—  
"Ah,—no risk at all!

"He is more stupid even than jealous.  
Ah—

"That was the reason? Why, the  
man's away!

"Beside, his bugbear is that friend of  
yours,

"Fat little Canon Conti. He fears  
him—

"How should he dream of you? I  
told you truth—

"He goes to the villa at Vittiano—'t is  
"The time when Spring-sap rises in  
the vine—



"Spends the night there. And then  
his wife 's a child,  
"Does he think a child outwits him?  
A mere child:  
"Yet so full grown, a dish for any duke.  
"Don't quarrel longer with such cates,  
but come!"

I wrote "In vain do you solicit me.  
"I am a priest: and you are wedded  
wife,  
"Whatever kind of brute your hus-  
band prove.  
"I have scruples, in short. Yet  
should you really show  
"Sign at the window . . . but nay,  
best be good!  
"My thoughts are elsewhere."—"Take  
her that!"

—"Again

"Let the incarnate meanness, cheat  
and spy,  
"Mean to the marrow of him, make his  
heart  
"His food, anticipate hell's worm once  
more!  
"Let him watch shivering at the win-  
dow—ay,  
"And let this hybrid, this his light-of-  
love  
"And lackey-of-lies,—a sage eco-  
nomy,—  
"Paid with embracings for the rank  
brass coin,—  
"Let her report and make him chuckle  
o'er  
"The break-down of my resolution  
now,  
"And lour at disappointment in good  
time! [turns,  
"—So tantalize and so enrage by  
"Until the two fall each on the other  
like  
"Two famished spiders, as the coveted  
fly  
"That toys long, leaves their net and  
them at last!"  
And so the missives followed thick and  
fast  
For a month, say,—I still came at  
every turn  
On the soft sly adder, endlong 'neath  
my tread.  
I was met i' the street, made sign to in  
the church,  
A slip was found i' the door-sill, scrib-  
bled word

"Twixt page and page o' the prayer-  
book in my place:  
A crumpled thing dropped even before  
my feet,  
Pushed through the blind, above the  
terrace-rail,  
As I passed, by day, the very window  
once.  
And ever from corners would be peer-  
ing up  
The messenger, with the self-same de-  
mand  
"Obdurate still, no flesh but adamant?  
"Nothing to cure the wound, assuage  
the throe  
"O' the sweetest lamb that ever loved  
a bear?"  
And ever my one answer in one tone—  
"Go your ways, temptress! Let a  
priest read, pray,  
"Unplagued of vain talk, visions not  
for him!  
"In the end, you 'll have your will and  
ruin me!"

One day, a variation: thus I read:  
"You have gained little by timidity.  
"My husband has found out my love  
at length,  
"Sees cousin Conti was the stalking-  
horse,  
"And you the game he covered, poor  
fat soul!  
"My husband is a formidable foe,  
"Will stick at nothing to destroy you.  
Stand  
"Prepared, or better, run till you reach  
Rome!  
"I bade you visit me, when the last  
place  
"My tyrant would have turned suspi-  
cious at,  
"Or cared to seek you in, was . . . why  
say, where?  
"But now all 's changed: beside, the  
season 's past  
"At the villa,—wants the master's eye  
no more.  
"Anyhow, I beseech you, stay away  
"From the window! He might well  
be posted there."

I wrote—"You raise my courage, or  
call up  
"My curiosity, who am but man.  
"Tell him he owns the palace, not the  
street

" Under—that 's his and yours and mine alike.

" If it should please me pad the path this eve,

" Guido will have two troubles, first to get

" Into a rage and then get out again.

" Be cautious, though : at the *Ave* ! "

You of the Court !

When I stood question here and reached this point

O' the narrative,—search notes and see and say

If some one did not interpose with smile

And sneer, " And prithee why so confident

" That the husband must, of all needs, not the wife,

" Fabricate thus,—what if the lady loved ?

" What if she wrote the letters ? "

Learned Sir,

I told you there 's a picture in our church.

Well, if a low-browed verger sidled up Bringing me, like a blotch, on his prod's point,

A transfixed scorpion, let the reptile writhe,

And then said, " See a thing that Rafael made—

" This venom issued from Madonna's mouth ! "—

I should reply, " Rather, the soul of you

" Has issued from your body, like from like,

" By the way of ordure-corner ! "

But no less,

I tired of the same black teasing lie Obtruded thus at every turn ; the pest

Was far too near the picture, anyhow : One does Madonna service, making

clowns Remove their dung-heap from the sacristy.

" I will to the window, as he tempts," said I :

" Yes, whom the easy love has failed allure, [thinks.

" This new bait of adventure may,—he

" While the imprisoned lady keeps afar,

" There will they lie in ambush, heads alert,

" Kith, kin, and Count mustered to bite my heel.

" No mother nor brother viper of the brood

" Shall scuttle off without the instructive bruise ! "

So, I went : crossed street and street : " The next street's turn,

" I stand beneath the terrace, see, above,

" The black of the ambush-window. Then, in place

" Of hand's throw of soft prelude over lute

" And cough that clears way for the ditty last,"—

I began to laugh already—" he will have

" ' Out of the hole you hide in, on to the front,

" ' Count Guido Franceschini, show yourself !

" ' Hear what a man thinks of a thing like you,

" ' And after, take this foulness in your face ! ' "

The words lay living on my lip, I made The one turn more—and there at the

window stood, Framed in its black square length, with

lamp in hand, Pompilia ; the same great, grave, grief-

full air As stands i' the dusk, on altar that I

know, Left alone with one moonbeam in her

cell, Our Lady of all the Sorrows. Ere I

knelt— Assured myself that she was flesh and

blood— She had looked one look and vanished.

I thought—" Just so :

" It was herself, they have set her there to watch—

" Stationed to see some wedding-band go by,

" On fair pretence that she must bless the bride,

" Or wait some funeral with friends wind past,

" And crave peace for the corpse that claims its due.

" She never dreams they used her for a

snare, " And now withdraw the bait has

served its turn.



" Well done, the husband, who shall fare the worse ! "

And on my lip again was—" Out with thee,

" Guido ! " When all at once she re-appeared ;

But, this time, on the terrace overhead, So close above me, she could almost touch

My head if she bent down ; and she did bend,

While I stood still as stone, all eye, all ear.

She began—" You have sent me letters, Sir :

" I have read none, I can neither read nor write ;

" But she you gave them to, a woman here,

" One of the people in whose power I am,

" Partly explained their sense, I think, to me

" Obligated to listen while she inculcates

" That you, a priest, can dare love me, a wife,

" Desire to live or die as I shall bid, (She makes me listen if I will or no)

" Because you saw my face a single time.

" It cannot be she says the thing you mean ;

" Such wickedness were deadly to us both :

" But good true love would help me now so much—

" I tell myself, you may mean good and true.

" You offer me, I seem to understand,

" Because I am in poverty and starve,

" Much money, where one piece would save my life.

" The silver cup upon the altar-cloth

" Is neither yours to give nor mine to take ;

" But I might take one bit of bread therefrom,

" Since I am starving, and return the rest,

" Yet do no harm : this is my very case.

" I am in that strait, I may not abstain

" From so much of assistance as would bring

" The guilt of theft on neither you nor me ;

" But no superfluous particle of aid.

" I think, if you will let me state my case,

" Even had you been so fancy-fevered here,

" Not your sound self, you must grow healthy now—

" Care only to bestow what I can take.

" That it is only you in the wide world,

" Knowing me nor in thought nor word nor deed,

" Who, all unprompted save by your own heart,

" Come proffering assistance now,—were strange

" But that my whole life is so strange : as strange

" It is, my husband whom I have not wronged

" Should hate and harm me. For his own soul's sake,

" Hinder the harm ! But there is something more,

" And that the strangest : it has got to be

" Somehow for my sake too, and yet not mine,

" —This is a riddle—for some kind of sake

" Not any clearer to myself than you,

" And yet as certain as that I draw breath,—

" I would fain live, not die—oh no, not die !

" My case is, I was dwelling happily

" At Rome with those dear Comparini, called

" Father and mother to me ; when at once

" I found I had become Count Guido's wife :

" Who then, not waiting for a moment, changed

" Into a fury of fire, if once he was

" Merely a man : his face threw fire at mine,

" He laid a hand on me that burned all peace.

" All joy, all hope, and last all fear away,

" Dipping the bough of life, so pleasant once,

" In fire which shrivelled leaf and bud alike,

" Burning not only present life but past,

" Which you might think was safe beyond his reach.

" He reached it, though, since that be-  
 loved pair,  
 " My father once, my mother all those  
 years,  
 " That loved me so, now say I dreamed  
 a dream  
 " And bid me wake, henceforth no  
 child of theirs,  
 " Never in all the time their child at all.  
 " Do you understand ? I cannot : yet  
 so it is.  
 " Just so I say of you that proffer help :  
 " I cannot understand what prompts  
 your soul.  
 " I simply needs must see that it is so,  
 " Only one strange and wonderful thing  
 more.  
 " They came here with me, those two  
 dear ones, kept  
 " All the old love up, till my husband,  
 till  
 " His people here so tortured them,  
 they fled.  
 " And now, is it because I grow in flesh  
 " And spirit one with him their tor-  
 turer,  
 " That they, renouncing him, must cast  
 off me ?  
 " If I were graced by God to have a  
 child,  
 " Could I one day deny God graced  
 me so ?  
 " Then, since my husband hates me, I  
 shall break  
 " No law that reigns in this-fell house  
 of hate,  
 " By using—letting have effect so  
 much  
 " Of hate as hides me from that whole  
 of hate  
 " Would take my life which I want and  
 must have—  
 " Just as I take from your excess of  
 love  
 " Enough to save my life with, all I  
 need.  
 " The Archbishop said to murder me  
 were sin : [death  
 " My leaving Guido were a kind of  
 " With no sin,—more death, he must  
 answer for.  
 " Hear now what death to him and  
 life to you  
 " I wish to pay and owe. Take me to  
 Rome !  
 " You go to Rome, the servant makes  
 me hear.

" Take me as you would take a dog, I  
 think,  
 " Masterless left for strangers to mal-  
 treat :  
 " Take me home like that—leave me in  
 the house  
 " Where the father and the mother are ;  
 and soon  
 " They'll come to know and call me by  
 my name,  
 " Their child once more, since child I  
 am, for all  
 " They now forget me, which is the  
 worst o' the dream—  
 " And the way to end dreams is to  
 break them, stand,  
 " Walk, go : then help me to stand,  
 walk and go !  
 " The Governor said the strong should  
 help the weak :  
 " You know how weak the strongest  
 women are.  
 " How could I find my way there by  
 myself ? [hear—  
 " I cannot even call out, make them  
 " Just as in dreams : I have tried and  
 proved the fact.  
 " I have told this story and more to  
 good great men,  
 " The Archbishop and the Governor :  
 they smiled.  
 " ' Stop your mouth, fair one ! '—pres-  
 ently they frowned,  
 " ' Get you gone, disengage you from  
 our feet ! '  
 " I went in my despair to an old priest,  
 " Only a friar, no great man like these  
 two,  
 " But good, the Augustinian, people  
 name  
 " Romano,—he confessed me two  
 months since :  
 " He fears God, why then needs he fear  
 the world ?  
 " And when he questioned how it came  
 about  
 " That I was found in danger of a sin—  
 " Despair of any help from provid-  
 ence,—  
 " ' Since, though your husband out-  
 rage you,' said he,  
 " ' That is a case too common, the  
 wives die  
 " ' Or live, but do not sin so deep as  
 this '—  
 " Then I told—what I never will tell  
 you—



"How, worse than husband's hate, I  
had to bear  
"The love,—soliciting to shame called  
love,—  
"Of his brother,—the young idle  
priest i' the house  
"With only the devil to meet there.  
'This is grave—  
" 'Yes, we must interfere: I counsel,  
—write  
" 'To those who used to be your par-  
ents once,  
" 'Of dangers here, bid them convey  
you hence!'  
" 'But,' said I, 'when I neither read  
nor write?'  
"Then he took pity and promised 'I  
will write.'  
"If he did so,—why, they are dumb or  
dead:  
"Either they give no credit to the tale,  
"Or else, wrapped wholly up in their  
own joy  
"Of such escape, they care not who  
cries, still  
"I' the clutches. Anyhow, no word  
arrives, [ness  
"All such extravagance and dreadful-  
"Seems incident to dreaming, cured  
one way,—  
"Wake me! The letter I received  
this morn,  
"Said—if the woman spoke your very  
sense—  
" 'You would die for me: ' I can be-  
lieve it now:  
"For now the dream gets to involve  
yourself.  
"First of all, you seemed wicked and  
not good,  
"In writing me those letters: you  
came in  
"Like a thief upon me. I this morning  
said  
"In my extremity, entreat the thief!  
"Try if he have in him no honest touch!  
"A thief might save me from a mur-  
derer.  
" 'T was a thief said the last kind word  
to Christ:  
"Christ took the kindness and forgave  
the theft:  
"And so did I prepare what I now say.  
"But now, that you stand and I see  
your face,  
"Though you have never uttered  
word yet,—well, I know,

"Here too has been dream-work, delu-  
sion too,  
"And that at no time, you with the  
eyes here,  
"Ever intended to do wrong by me,  
"Nor wrote such letters therefore. It  
is false,  
"And you are true, have been true,  
will be true.  
"To Rome then,—when is it you take  
me there?  
"Each minute lost is mortal. When?  
—I ask."

I answered "It shall be when it can be.  
"I will go hence and do your pleasure,  
find  
"The sure and speedy means of travel,  
then  
"Come back and take you to your  
friends in Rome.  
"There wants a carriage, money and  
the rest,—  
"A day's work by to-morrow at this  
time.  
"How shall I see you and assure es-  
cape?"

She replied, "Pass, to-morrow at this  
hour.

"If I am at the open window, well:  
"If I am absent, drop a handkerchief  
"And walk by! I shall see from  
where I watch,  
"And know that all is done. Return  
next eve,  
"And next, and so till we can meet and  
speak!"  
"To-morrow at this hour I pass," said  
I.

She was withdrawn.

Here is another point  
I bid you pause at. When I told thus  
far,  
Some one said, subtly, "Here at least  
was found  
"Your confidence in error,—you per-  
ceived  
"The spirit of the letters, in a sort,  
"Had been the lady's, if the body  
should be  
"Supplied by Guido: say, he forged  
them all!  
"Here was the unforged fact—she sent  
for you,  
"Spontaneously elected you to help,  
"—What men call, loved you: Guido  
read her mind,

"He reached it, though, since that beloved pair,  
 "My father once, my mother all those years,  
 "That loved me so, now say I dreamed a dream  
 "And bid me wake, henceforth no child of theirs,  
 "Never in all the time their child at all.  
 "Do you understand? I cannot: yet so it is.  
 "Just so I say of you that proffer help:  
 "I cannot understand what prompts your soul,  
 "I simply needs must see that it is so,  
 "Only one strange and wonderful thing more.  
 "They came here with me, those two dear ones, kept  
 "All the old love up, till my husband, till  
 "His people here so tortured them, they fled.  
 "And now, is it because I grow in flesh  
 "And spirit one with him their torturer,  
 "That they, renouncing him, must cast off me?  
 "If I were graced by God to have a child,  
 "Could I one day deny God graced me so?  
 "Then, since my husband hates me, I shall break  
 "No law that reigns in this fell house of hate,  
 "By using—letting have effect so much  
 "Of hate as hides me from that whole of hate  
 "Would take my life which I want and must have—  
 "Just as I take from your excess of love  
 "Enough to save my life with, all I need.  
 "The Archbishop said to murder me were sin:  
 "My leaving Guido were a kind of sin,  
 "With no sin,—more death, he must answer for.  
 "Hear now what death to him and life to you  
 "I wish to pay and owe. Take me to Rome!  
 "You go to Rome, the servant makes me hear.

"Take me as think,  
 "Masterless I treat:  
 "Take me he the house  
 "Where the I and soon  
 "They'll com my nam  
 "Their child am, for  
 "They now worst o'  
 "And the v break th  
 "Walk, go: walk an  
 "The Gover help the  
 "You know women  
 "How coul myself?  
 "I cannot  
 "Just as in proved  
 "I have to good g  
 "The Arch they sh  
 "Stop you ently t  
 "Get you our fe  
 "I wentin two,  
 "Only a fr  
 "But goo name  
 "Romano her is another point  
 "He fears the w  
 "And wh about  
 "That I v  
 "Despair denc  
 "Since, rage  
 "That wiv  
 "Or liv this  
 "Then you

"It cannot last.  
 "Misfortune at the  
 "You be? God suffice  
 "There was a road-  
 "In first to my own  
 "a, being a girl,  
 "my faults, I inter-  
 "hat fault to confess  
 "d—' You should be-  
 "being needs must  
 "ong!"  
 "lid and no priest but  
 "I and killed here on  
 "n husband and his  
 "t were in sin I died?  
 "d to seem to harm  
 "he punished sin of  
 "e and lust of cruelty,  
 "him bid a farming-  
 "a lamb once to the  
 "eat it, meaning that  
 "cries, and so come,  
 "ght,  
 "trap: he practised  
 "ever were his gain  
 "might become prey  
 "dy between our two  
 "nd my pain,—why,  
 "uch need to make a  
 "rth an effort, that my  
 "ome a snare, prove  
 "d—strangers—or un-  
 "now? I sought re-  
 "at—  
 "I think, or else from,—dare I say,  
 "some cause  
 "Such as is put into a tree, which turns  
 "Away from the north wind with what  
 "nest it holds,—  
 "The woman said that trees so turn:  
 "now, friend,  
 "Tell me, because I cannot trust my-  
 "self!  
 "You are a man: what have I done  
 "amiss?"  
 "You must conceive my answer,—I for-  
 "get—  
 "Taken up wholly with the thought, per-  
 "haps,  
 "This time she might have said,—might,  
 "did not say—  
 "You are a priest." She said, "my  
 "friend."  
 "Day wore,  
 "We passed the places, somehow the  
 "calm went,  
 "Again the restless eyes began to rove  
 "In new fear of the foe mine could not  
 "see:  
 "She wandered in her mind,—addressed  
 "me once  
 "Gaetano!"—that is not my name:  
 "whose name?  
 "I grew alarmed, my head seemed turn-  
 "ing too:  
 "I quickened pace with promise now,  
 "now threat:  
 "Bade drive and drive, nor any stopping  
 "more.  
 "Too deep i' the thick of the struggle,  
 "struggle through!  
 "Then drench her in repose though  
 "death's self pour  
 "The plenitude of quiet,—help us, God,  
 "Whom the winds carry!"  
 "Suddenly I saw  
 "The old tower, and the little white-  
 "walled clump  
 "Of buildings and the cypress-tree or  
 "two,—  
 "Already Castelnovo—Rome!" I  
 "cried,  
 "As good as Rome,—Rome is the next  
 "stage, think!  
 "This is where travellers' hearts are  
 "wont to beat.  
 "Say you are saved, sweet lady!"  
 "Up she woke.  
 "The sky was fierce with colour from the  
 "sun



" Trust me, alight here and take brief repose !

" We are out of harm's reach, past pursuit : go sleep

" If but an hour ! I keep watch, guard the while

" Here in the doorway." But her whole face changed,

The miserygrew again about her mouth,  
The eyes burned up from faintness, like the fawn's

Tired to death in the thicket, when she feels

The probing spear o' the huntsman.  
" Oh, no stay ! "

She cried, in the fawn's cry, " On to Rome, on, on—

" Unless 't is you who fear,—which cannot be ! "

We did go on all night ; but at its close  
She was troubled, restless, moaned low,  
talked at whites

To herself, her brow on quiver with the dream :

Once, wide awake, she menaced, at arms' length

Waved away something— " Never again with you !

" My soul is mine, my body is my soul's :

" You and I are divided ever more

" In soul and body : get you gone ! "

Then I—

" Why, in my whole life I have never prayed !

" Oh, if the God, that only can, would help !

" Am I his priest with power to cast out fiends ?

" Let God arise and all his enemies

" Be scattered ! " By morn, there was peace, no sigh

Out of the deep sleep.

When she woke at last,  
I answered the first look—" Scarce twelve hours more,

" Then, Rome ! There probably was no pursuit,

" There cannot now be peril : bear up brave !

" Just some twelve hours to press through to the prize—

" Then, no more of the terrible journey ! " " Then,

" No more o' the journey : if it might but last !

" Always, my life-long, thus to journey still !

" It is the interruption that I dread,—

" With no dread, ever to be here and thus !

" Never to see a face nor hear a voice !

" Yours is no voice ; you speak when you are dumb ;

" Nor face, I see it in the dark. I want

" No face nor voice that change and grow unkind."

That I liked, that was the best thing she said.

In the broad day, I dared entreat,  
" Descend ! "

I told a woman, at the garden-gate  
By the post-house, white and pleasant in the sun,

" It is my sister,—talk with her apart !

" She is married and unhappy, you perceive ;

" I take her home because her head is hurt ;

" Comfort her as you women understand ! "

So, there I left them by the garden-wall,

Paced the road, then bade put the horses to,

Came back, and there she sat : close to her knee,

A black-eyed child still held the bowl of milk,

Wondered to see how little she could drink, [lay.

And in her arms the woman's infant

She smiled at me " How much good this has done !

" This is a whole night's rest and how much more !

" I can proceed now, though I wish to stay.

" How do you call that tree with the thick top

" That holds in all its leafy green and gold

" The sun now like an immense egg of fire ? "

(It was a million-leaved mimosa.)  
" Take

" The babe away from me and let me go ! "

And in the carriage " Still a day, my friend !

" And perhaps half a night, the woman fears.

" I pray it finish since it cannot last.  
 " There may be more misfortune at the close,  
 " And where will you be ? God suffice me then ! "  
 And presently—for there was a road-side-shrine—  
 " When I was taken first to my own church  
 " Lorenzo in Lucina, being a girl,  
 " And bid confess my faults, I interposed  
 " ' But teach me what fault to confess and know ! '  
 " So, the priest said—' You should be-think yourself :  
 " ' Each human being needs must have done wrong ! '  
 " Now, be you candid and no priest but friend—  
 " Were I surprised and killed here on the spot,  
 " A runaway from husband and his home,  
 " Do you account it were in sin I died ?  
 " My husband used to seem to harm me, not . . .  
 " Not on pretence he punished sin of mine,  
 " Nor for sin's sake and lust of cruelty,  
 " But as I heard him bid a farming-man [wood  
 " At the villa take a lamb once to the  
 " And there ill-treat it, meaning that the wolf  
 " Should hear its cries, and so come, quick be caught,  
 " Enticed to the trap : he practised thus with me  
 " That so, whatever were his gain thereby,  
 " Others than I might become prey and spoil.  
 " Had it been only between our two selves,—  
 " His pleasure and my pain,—why, pleasure him  
 " By dying, nor such need to make a coil !  
 " But this was worth an effort, that my pain  
 " Should not become a snare, prove pain threefold  
 " To other people—strangers—or unborn—  
 " How should I know ? I sought release from that—

" I think, or else from,—dare I say, some cause  
 " Such as is put into a tree, which turns  
 " Away from the north wind with what nest it holds,—  
 " The woman said that trees so turn : now, friend,  
 " Tell me, because I cannot trust myself !  
 " You are a man : what have I done amiss ? "  
 You must conceive my answer,—I forget—  
 Taken up wholly with the thought, perhaps,  
 This time she might have said,—might, did not say—  
 " You are a priest," She said, " my friend."

Day wore,  
 We passed the places, somehow the calm went,  
 Again the restless eyes began to rove  
 In new fear of the foe mine could not see :  
 She wandered in her mind,—addressed me once  
 " Gaetano ! "—that is not my name : whose name ?  
 I grew alarmed, my head seemed turning too :  
 I quickened pace with promise now, now threat :  
 Bade drive and drive, nor any stopping more.  
 " Too deep i' the thick of the struggle, struggle through !  
 " Then drench her in repose though death's self pour  
 " The plenitude of quiet,—help us, God,  
 " Whom the winds carry ! "

Suddenly I saw  
 The old tower, and the little white-walled clump  
 Of buildings and the cypress-tree or two,—  
 " Already Castelnovo—Rome ! " I cried,  
 " As good as Rome,—Rome is the next stage, think !  
 " This is where travellers' hearts are wont to beat.  
 " Say you are saved, sweet lady ! " Up she woke.  
 The sky was fierce with colour from the sun



Setting. She screamed out "No, I must not die!

"Take me no farther, I should die: stay here!

"I have more life to save than mine!"  
She swooned.

We seemed safe: what was it foreboded so?

Out of the coach into the inn I bore  
The motionless and breathless pure and pale

Pompilia,—bore her through a pitying group

And laid her on a couch, still calm and cured

By deep sleep of all woes at once.  
The host

Was urgent "Let her stay an hour or two!

"Leave her to us, all will be right by morn!"

Oh, my foreboding! But I could not choose.

I paced the passage, kept watch all night long.

I listened,—not one movement, not one sigh.

"Fear not: she sleeps so sound!"  
they said—but I

Feared, all the same, kept fearing more and more,

Found myself throb with fear from head to foot,

Filled with a sense of such impending woe,

That, at first pause of night, pretence of grey,

I made my mind up it was morn.—  
"Reach Rome,

"Lest hell reach her! A dozen miles to make,

"Another long breath, and we emerge!"  
I stood

I' the courtyard, roused the sleepy grooms. "Have out

"Carriage and horse, give haste, take gold!"—said I. [morn,—

While they made ready in the doubtful 'T was the last minute,—needs must I ascend

And break her sleep; I turned to go.

And there  
Faced me Count Guido, there posed the mean man

As master,—took the field, encamped his rights,

Challenged the world: there leered new triumph, there

Scowled the old malice in the visage bad  
And black o' the scamp. Soon triumph

supplied the tongue  
A little, malice glued to his dry throat,

And he part howled, part hissed . . .  
oh, how he kept

Well out o' the way, at arm's length and to spare!—

"My salutation to your priesthood!  
What?

"Matutinal, busy with book so soon  
"Of an April day that 's damp as tears that now

"Deluge Arezzo at its darling's flight?—  
" 'T is unfair, wrongs femininity at large,

"To let a single dame monopolize  
"A heart the whole sex claims, should share alike:

"Therefore I overtake you, Canon!  
Come!

"The lady,—could you leave her side so soon?

"You have not yet experienced at her hands

"My treatment, you lay down undrugged, I see!

"Hence this alertness—hence no death-in-life

"Like what held arms fast when she stole from mine.

"To be sure, you took the solace and repose

"That first night at Foligno!—news about

"O' the road by this time,—men regaled me much,

"As past them I came halting after you,

"Vulcan pursuing Mars, as poets sing,—  
"Still at the last here pant I, but arrive,

"Vulcan—and not without my Cyclops too,

"The Commissary and the unpoisoned arm

"O' the Civil Force, should Mars turn mutineer.

"Enough of fooling: capture the culprits, friend!

"Here is the lover in the smart disguise

"With the sword,—he is a priest, so mine lies still:

"There upstairs hides my wife the runaway,

" His leman: the two plotted, poisoned first,  
 " Plundered me after, and eloped thus far  
 " Where now you find them. Do your duty quick!  
 " Arrest and hold him! That 's done: now catch her!"  
 During this speech of that man,—well, I stood  
 Away, as he managed,—still, I stood as near  
 The throat of him,—with these two hands, my own,—  
 As now I stand near yours, Sir,—one quick spring,  
 One great good satisfying gripe, and lo!  
 There had he lain abolished with his lie, Creation purged o' the miscreate, man redeemed,  
 A spittle wiped off from the face of God!  
 I, in some measure, seek a poor excuse  
 For what I left undone, in just this fact  
 That my first feeling at the speech I quote  
 Was—not of what a blasphemy was dared,  
 Not what a bag of venom'd purulence  
 Was split and noisome,—but how splendidly  
 Mirthful, what ludicrous a lie was launched!  
 Would Molière's self wish more than hear such man  
 Call, claim such woman for his own, his wife,  
 Even though, in due amazement at the boast,  
 He had stammered, she moreover was divine?  
 She to be his,—were hardly less absurd  
 Than that he took her name into his mouth,  
 Licked, and then let it go again, the beast,  
 Signed with his slaver, Oh, she poisoned him,  
 Plundered him, and the rest! Well, what I wished  
 Was, that he would but go on, say once more  
 So to the world, and get his meed of men,  
 The fist's reply to the filth. And while I mused,  
 The minute, oh the misery, was gone!

On either idle hand of me there stood  
 Really an officer, nor laughed i' the least.  
 They rendered justice to his reason, laid  
 Logic to heart, as 't were submitted them  
 " Twice two makes four."  
 " And now, catch her!"—he cried.  
 That sobered me. " Let myself lead the way—  
 " Ere you arrest me, who am somebody,  
 " And, as you hear, a priest and privileged,—  
 " To the lady's chamber! I presume you—men  
 " Expert, instructed how to find out truth,  
 " Familiar with the guise of guilt. Detect  
 " Guilt on her face when it meets mine, then judge  
 " Between us and the mad dog howling there!"  
 Up we all went together, in they broke  
 O' the chamber late my chapel. There she lay, [eve,  
 Composed as when I laid her, that last  
 O' the couch, still breathless, motionless, sleep's self,  
 Wax-white, seraphic, saturate with the sun  
 O' the morning that now flooded from the front  
 And filled the window with a light like blood.  
 " Behold the poisoner, the adulteress,  
 "—And feigning sleep too! Seize, bind!"—Guido hissed.  
 She started up, stood erect, face to face  
 With the husband: back he fell, was buttressed there  
 By the window all a-flame with morning-red,  
 He the black figure, the opprobrious blur  
 Against all peace and joy and light and life.  
 " Away from between me and hell!"  
 —she cried:  
 " Hell for me, no embracing any more!  
 " I am God's, I love God, God—whose knees I clasp,  
 " Whose utterly most just award I take,



'But bear no more love-making devils :  
hence ! "

I may have made an effort to reach  
her side

From where I stood i' the door-way,—  
anyhow

I found the arms, I wanted, pinioned  
fast,

Was powerless in the clutch to left and  
right

O' the rabble pouring in, rascality  
Enlisted, rampant on the side of hearth  
Home and the husband,—pay in pros-  
pect too !

They heaped themselves upon me.—  
" Ha !—and him

" Also you outrage ? Him, too, my  
sole friend,

" Guardian and saviour ? That I  
balk you of,

" Since—see how God can help at last  
and worst ! "

She sprung at the sword that hung be-  
side him, seized,

Drew, brandished it, the sunrise burned  
for joy

O' the blade, " Die," cried she, " devil,  
in God's name ! "

Ah, but they all closed round her, twelve  
to one,

—The unmanly men, no woman-  
mother made,

Spawned somehow ! Dead-white and  
disarmed she lay.

No matter for the sword, her word suf-  
ficed

To spike the coward through and  
through : he shook,

Could only spit between the teeth—  
" You see ?

" You hear ? Bear witness, then !  
Write down . . . but, no—

" Carry these criminals to the prison-  
house,

" For first thing ! I begin my search  
meanwhile

" After the stolen effects, gold, jewels,  
plate,

" Money and clothes, they robbed me of  
and fled :

" With no few amorous pieces, verse  
and prose,

" I have much reason to expect to  
find."

When I saw, that,—no more than the  
first mad speech,

Made out the speaker mad and a laugh-  
ing-stock,

So neither did this next device explode  
One listener's indignation,—that a

scribe  
Did sit down, set himself to write in-  
deed,

And sundry knaves began to peer and  
pry

In corner and hole,—that Guido,  
wiping brow

And getting him a countenance, was  
fast

Losing his fear, beginning to strut free  
O' the stage of his exploit, snuff here,

sniff there,—  
I took the truth in, guessed sufficiently

The service for the moment—" What  
I say,

" Slight at your peril ! We are aliens  
here,

" My adversary and I, called noble  
both ;

" I am the nobler, and a name men  
know. [court

" I could refer our cause to our own  
" In our own country, but prefer appeal

" To the nearer jurisdiction. Being a  
priest,

" Though in a secular garb,—for rea-  
sons good

" I shall adduce in due time to my  
peers,—

" I demand that the Church I serve,  
decide

" Between us, right the slandered lady  
there.

" A Tuscan noble, I might claim the  
Duke :

" A priest, I rather choose the Church,  
—bid Rome

" Cover the wronged with her inviolate  
shield."

There was no refusing this : they bore  
me off,

They bore her off, to separate cells o'  
the same

Ignoble prison, and, separate, thence  
to Rome.

Pompilia's face, then and thus, looked  
on me

The last time in this life : not one sight  
since,

Never another sight to be ! And yet  
I thought I had saved her. I appealed

to Rome :

It seems I simply sent her to her death.  
You tell me she is dying now, or dead ;  
I cannot bring myself to quite believe  
This is a place you torture people in :  
What if this your intelligence were just  
A subtlety, an honest wile to work  
On a man at unawares ? 'T were  
worthy you.

No, Sirs, I cannot have the lady dead !  
That erect form, flashing brow, fulgur-  
ant eye,

That voice immortal (oh, that voice of  
hers !)

That vision in the blood-red daybreak  
—that

Leap to life of the pale electric sword  
Angels go armed with,—that was not  
the last

O' the lady ! Come, I see through it,  
you find— [said

Know the manœuvre ! Also herself  
I had saved her : do you dare say she  
spoke false ?

Let me see for myself if it be so !

Though she were dying, a priest might  
be of use,

The more when he 's a friend too,—she  
called me

Far beyond " friend." Come, let me  
see her—indeed

It is my duty, being a priest : I hope  
I stand confessed, established, proved a  
priest ?

My punishment had motive that, a  
priest

I, in a laic garb, a mundane mode,  
Did what were harmlessly done other-  
wise.

I never touched her with my finger-tip  
Except to carry her to the couch, that  
eve,

Against my heart, beneath my head,  
bowed low,

As we priests carry the paten : that is  
why

—To get leave and go see her of your  
grace—

I have told you this whole story over  
again.

Do I deserve grace ? For I might lock  
lips,

Laugh at your jurisdiction : what have  
you

To do with me in the matter ? I sup-  
pose

You hardly think I donned a bravo's  
dress

To have a hand in the new crime ; on  
the old,

Judgment 's delivered, penalty im-  
posed,

I was chained fast at Civita hand and  
foot—

She had only you to trust to, you and  
Rome,

Rome and the Church, and no pert  
meddling priest

Two days ago, when Guido, with the  
right,

Hacked her to pieces. One might well  
be wroth ;

I have been patient, done my best to  
help :

I come from Civita and punishment  
As friend of the court—and for pure

friendship's sake  
Have told my tale to the end,—nay,

not the end—  
For, wait—I'll end—not leave you that  
excuse !

When we were parted,—shall I go on  
there ?

I was presently brought to Rome—  
yes, here I stood

Opposite yonder very crucifix—

And there sat you and you, Sirs, quite  
the same.

I heard charge, and bore question, and  
told tale

Noted down in the book there,—turn  
and see

If, by one jot or tittle, I vary now !

I' the colour the tale takes, there's  
change perhaps ;

'T is natural, since the sky is different,  
Eclipse in the air now ; still, the out-  
line stays.

I showed you how it came to be my  
part

To save the lady. Then your clerk  
produced

Papers, a pack of stupid and impure  
Banalities called letters about love—

Love, indeed,—I could teach who  
styled them so,

Better, I think, though priest and love-  
less both !

" —How was it that a wife, young, in-  
nocent,

" And stranger to your person, wrote  
this page ?"—

" —She wrote it when the Holy Father  
wrote



"The bestiality that posts thro' Rome,  
 "Put in his mouth by Pasquin."—  
 "Nor perhaps  
 "Did you return these answers, verse  
 and prose,  
 "Signed, sealed and sent the lady?  
 There's your hand!"  
 "—This precious piece of verse, I  
 really judge  
 "Is meant to copy my own character,  
 "A clumsy mimic; and this other  
 prose,  
 "Not so much even; both rank for-  
 gery:  
 "Verse, quotha? Bembo's verse!  
 When Saint John wrote  
 "The tract '*De Tribus*,' I wrote this  
 to match."  
 "—How came it, then, the documents  
 were found  
 "At the inn on your departure?"—  
 "I opine,  
 "Because there were no documents to  
 find  
 "In my presence,—you must hide be-  
 fore you find.  
 "Who forged them, hardly practised  
 in my view;  
 "Who found them, waited till I turned  
 my back."  
 "—And what of the clandestine visits  
 paid,  
 "Nocturnal passage in and out the  
 house  
 "With its lord absent? 'T is alleged  
 you climbed . . ."  
 "—Flew on a broomstick to the man i'  
 the moon!  
 "Who witnessed or will testify this  
 trash?"  
 "—The trusty servant, Margherita's  
 self,  
 "Even she who brought you letters,  
 you confess,  
 "And, you confess, took letters in  
 reply:  
 "Forget not we have knowledge of the  
 facts!"  
 "—Sirs, who have knowledge of the  
 facts, defray  
 "The expenditure of wit I waste in  
 vain,  
 "Trying to find out just one fact of all!  
 "She who brought letters from who  
 could not write,  
 "And took back letters to who could  
 not read,—

"Who was that messenger, of your  
 charity?"  
 "—Well, so far favours you the cir-  
 cumstance  
 "That this same messenger . . . how  
 shall we say? . . .  
 "*Sub imputatione meretricis*  
 "*Laborat*,—which makes accusation  
 null:  
 "We waive this woman's:—naught  
 makes void the next.  
 "Borsi, called Venerino, he who drove,  
 "O' the first night when you fled away,  
 at length  
 "Deposes to your kissings in the coach,  
 "—Frequent, frenetic . . . "When  
 deposed he so?"  
 "After some weeks of sharp imprison-  
 ment . . ."  
 "—Granted by friend the Governor, I  
 engage—"  
 "—For his participation in your flight!  
 "At length his obduracy melting made  
 "The avowal mentioned . . . "Was  
 dismissed forthwith  
 "To liberty, poor knave, for recom-  
 pense.  
 "Sirs, give what credit to the lie you  
 can!  
 "For me, no word in my defence I  
 speak,  
 "And God shall argue for the lady!"  
 So  
 Did I stand question, and make an-  
 swer, still [lief,  
 With the same result of smiling disbe-  
 Polite impossibility of faith  
 In such affected virtue in a priest;  
 But a showing fair play, an indulgence,  
 even,  
 To one no worse than others after all—  
 Who had not brought disgrace to the  
 order, played  
 Discreetly, ruffled gown nor ripped the  
 cloth  
 In a bungling game at romps: I have  
 told you, Sirs—  
 If I pretended simply to be pure  
 Honest and Christian in the case,—ab-  
 surd!  
 As well go boast myself above the needs  
 O' the human nature, careless how  
 meat smells,  
 Wine tastes,—a saint above the smack!  
 But once  
 Abate my crest, own flaws i' the flesh,  
 agree

To go with the herd, be hog no more nor less,  
 Why, hogs in common herd have common rights—  
 I must not be unduly borne upon,  
 Who had just romanced a little, sown wild oats,  
 But 'scaped without a scandal, flagrant fault.  
 My name helped to a mirthful circumstance :  
 " Joseph " would do well to amend his plea :  
 Undoubtedly—some toying with the wife,  
 But as for ruffian violence and rape,  
 Potiphar pressed too much on the other side !  
 The intrigue, the elopement, the disguise,—well charged !  
 The letters and verse looked hardly like the truth.  
 Your apprehension was—of guilt enough  
 To be compatible with innocence,  
 So, punished best a little and not too much.  
 Had I struck Guido Franceschini's face,  
 You had counselled me withdraw for my own sake,  
 Baulk him of bravo-hiring. Friends came round,  
 Congratulated, " Nobody mistakes !  
 " The pettiness o' the forfeiture defines  
 " The peccadillo : Guido gets his share :  
 " His wife is free of husband and hook-nose,  
 " The mouldy viands and the mother-in-law.  
 " To Civita with you and amuse the time,  
 " Travesty us ' *De Raptu Helenæ* !'  
 " A funny figure must the husband cut  
 " When the wife makes him skip,—too ticklish, eh ?  
 " Do it in Latin, not the Vulgar, then !  
 " Sazons—we'll copy and send his Eminence !  
 " Mind—one iambus in the final foot !  
 " He'll rectify it, be your friend for life !"  
 Oh, Sirs, depend on me for much new light  
 Thrown on the justice and religion here  
 By this proceeding, much fresh food for thought !

And I was just set down to study these  
 In relegation, two short days ago,  
 Admiring how you read the rules, when,  
 \* \* clap,  
 A thunder comes into my solitude—  
 I am caught up in a whirlwind and cast here,  
 Told of a sudden, in this room where so late  
 You dealt out law adroitly, that those scales, [from,  
 I meekly bowed to, took my allotment  
 Guido has snatched at, broken in your hands,  
 Metes to himself the murder of his wife,  
 Full measure, pressed down, running over now !  
 Can I assist to an explanation ?—Yes,  
 I rise in your esteem, sagacious Sirs,  
 Stand up a renderer of reasons, not  
 The officious priest would personate Saint George  
 For a mock Princess in undragoned days.  
 What, the blood startles you ? What, after all  
 The priest who needs must carry sword on thigh  
 May find imperative use for it ? Then, there was  
 A Princess, was a dragon belching flame,  
 And should have been a Saint George also ? Then,  
 There might be worse schemes than to break the bonds  
 At Arezzo, lead her by the little hand,  
 Till she reached Rome, and let her try to live ?  
 But you were the law and the gospel,—would one please  
 Stand back, allow your faculty elbow-room ?  
 You blind guides who must needs lead eyes that see !  
 Fools, alike ignorant of man and God !  
 What was there here should have perplexed your wit  
 For a wink of the owl-eyes of you ?  
 How miss, then,  
 What 's now forced on you by this flare of fact—  
 As if Saint Peter failed to recognise Nero as no apostle, John or James,  
 Till some one burned a martyr, made a torch  
 O' the blood and fat to show his features by !



Could you fail read this cartulary aright  
 On head and front of Franceschini  
 there,  
 Large-lettered like hell's masterpiece of  
 print,—  
 That he, from the beginning pricked at  
 heart  
 By some lust, letch of hate against his  
 wife,  
 Plotted to plague her into overt sin  
 And shame, would slay Pompilia body  
 and soul,  
 And save his mean self—miserably  
 caught  
 I' the quagmire of his own tricks,  
 cheats and lies?  
 —That himself wrote those papers,—  
 from himself  
 To himself,—which, i' the name of me  
 and her,  
 His mistress-messenger gave her and  
 me,  
 Touching us with such pustules of the  
 soul  
 That she and I might take the taint,  
 be shown  
 To the world and shuddered over,  
 speckled so?  
 —That the agent put her sense into my  
 words,  
 Made substitution of the thing she  
 hoped,  
 For the thing she had and held, its op-  
 posite,  
 While the husband in the background  
 bit his lips  
 At each fresh failure of his precious  
 plot?  
 —That when at the last we did rush  
 each on each,  
 By no chance but because God willed it  
 so—  
 The spark of truth was struck from out  
 our souls—  
 Made all of me, desried in the first  
 glance,  
 Seem fair and honest and permissible  
 love  
 O' the good and true—as the first glance  
 told me  
 There was no duty patent in the world  
 Like daring try be good and true my-  
 self,  
 Leaving the shows of things to the  
 Lord of Show  
 And Prince o' the Power of the Air.  
 Our very flight,

Even to its most ambiguous circum-  
 stance,  
 Irrefragably proved how futile,  
 false . . .  
 Why, men—men and not boys—boys  
 and not babes—  
 Babes and not beasts—beasts and not  
 stocks and stones!—  
 Had the liar's lie been true one pin-  
 point speck,  
 Were I the accepted suitor, free o' the  
 place,  
 Disposer of the time, to come at a call  
 And go at a wink as who should say me  
 nay,—  
 What need of flight, what were the gain  
 therefrom  
 But just damnation, failure or suc-  
 cess?  
 Damnation pure and simple to her the  
 wife  
 And me the priest—who bartered pri-  
 vate bliss  
 For public reprobation, the safe shade  
 For the sunshine which men see to pelt  
 me by:  
 What other advantage,—we who led  
 the days  
 And nights alone i' the house,—was  
 flight to find?  
 In our whole journey did we stop an  
 hour,  
 Diverge a foot from strait road till we  
 reached  
 Or would have reached—but for that  
 fate of ours—  
 The father and mother, in the eye of  
 Rome,  
 The eye of yourselves we made aware  
 of us  
 At the first fall of misfortune? And  
 indeed  
 You did so far give sanction to our  
 flight,  
 Confirm its purpose, as lend helping  
 hand,  
 Deliver up Pompilia not to him  
 She fled, but those the flight was ven-  
 tured for.  
 Why then could you, who stopped  
 short, not go on  
 One poor step more, and justify the  
 means,  
 Having allowed the end?—not see and  
 say  
 "Here's the exceptional conduct that  
 should claim

"To be exceptionally judged on rules  
 "Which, understood, make no excep-  
 tion here"—

Why play instead into the devil's  
 hands

By dealing so ambiguously as gave  
 Guido the power to intervene like me,  
 Prove one exception more? I saved  
 his wife

Against law: against law he slays her  
 now:

Deal with him!

I have done with being judged.  
 I stand here guiltless in thought, word  
 and deed,

To the point that I apprise you,—in  
 contempt

For all misapprehending ignorance  
 O' the human heart, much more the  
 mind of Christ,—

That I assuredly did bow, was blessed  
 By the revelation of Pompilia. There!  
 Such is the final fact I fling you, Sirs,  
 To mouth and mumble and misinter-  
 pret: there!

"The priest 's in love," have it the  
 vulgar way!

Unpriest me, rend the rags o' the vest-  
 ment, do— [dare—

Degrade deep, disenfranchise all you  
 Remove me from the midst, no longer  
 priest

And fit companion for the like of you—  
 Your gay Abati with the well-turned  
 leg

And rose i' the hat-rim, Canons, cross at  
 neck

And silk mask in the pocket of the  
 gown,

Brisk bishops with the world's musk  
 still unbrushed

From the rochet; I'll no more of these  
 good things:

There 's a crack somewhere, something  
 that 's unsound

I' the rattle!

For Pompilia—be advised,  
 Build churches, go pray! You will  
 find me there,

I know, if you come,—and you will  
 come, I know.

Why, there 's a Judge weeping! Did  
 not I say

You were good and true at bottom?  
 You see the truth—

I am glad I helped you: she helped me  
 just so.

But for Count Guido,—you must coun-  
 sel there!

I bow my head, bend to the very dust,  
 Break myself up in shame of faultiness.

I had him one whole moment, as I said—  
 As I remember, as will never out

O' the thoughts of me,—I had him in  
 arm's reach

There,—as you stand, Sir, now you  
 cease to sit,—

I could have killed him ere he killed his  
 wife,

And did not: he went off alive and  
 well

And then effected this last feat—  
 through me!

Me—not through you—dismiss that  
 fear! 'T was you

Hindered me staying here to save her,  
 —not [him

From leaving you and going back to  
 And doing service in Arezzo. Come,

Instruct me in procedure! I con-  
 ceive—

In all due self-abasement might I  
 speak—

How you will deal with Guido: oh, not  
 death!

Death, if it let her life be: otherwise  
 Not death,—your lights will teach you  
 clearer! I

Certainly have an instinct of my own  
 I' the matter: bear with me and weigh  
 its worth!

Let us go away—leave Guido all alone  
 Back on the world again that knows  
 him now!

I think he will be found (indulge so far!)  
 Not to die so much as slide out of life,  
 Pushed by the general horror and  
 common hate

Low, lower,—left o' the very ledge of  
 things,

I seem to see him catch convulsively  
 One by one at all honest forms of life,

At reason, order, decency and use—  
 To cramp him and get foothold by at  
 least;

And still they disengage them from his  
 clutch.

"What, you are he, then, had Pom-  
 pilia once

"And so forwent her? Take not up  
 with us!"



Could you fail read this cartulary aright  
On head and front of Franceschini  
there,  
Large-lettered like hell's masterpiece of  
print,—  
That he, from the beginning pricked at  
heart  
By some lust, letch of hate against his  
wife,  
Plotted to plague her into overt sin  
And shame, would slay Pompilia body  
and soul,  
And save his mean self—miserably  
caught  
I' the quagmire of his own tricks,  
cheats and lies?  
—That himself wrote those papers,—  
from himself  
To himself,—which, i' the name of me  
and her,  
His mistress-messenger gave her and  
me,  
Touching us with such pustules of the  
soul  
That she and I might take the taint,  
be shown  
To the world and shuddered over,  
speckled so?  
—That the agent put her sense into my  
words,  
Made substitution of the thing she  
hoped,  
For the thing she had and held, its op-  
posite,  
While the husband in the background  
bit his lips  
At each fresh failure of his precious  
plot?  
—That when at the last we did rush  
each on each,  
By no chance but because God willed it  
so—  
The spark of truth was struck from out  
our souls—  
Made all of me, desried in the first  
glance,  
Seem fair and honest and permissible  
love  
O' the good and true—as the first glance  
told me  
There was no duty patent in the world  
Like daring try be good and true my-  
self,  
Leaving the shows of things to the  
Lord of Show  
And Prince o' the Power of the Air.  
Our very flight,

Even to its most  
stance,  
Irrefragably pro-  
false . . .  
Why, men—men  
and not babe  
Babes and not be-  
stocks and st-  
Had the liar's lie  
point speck,  
Were I the accept  
place,  
Disposer of the tir-  
And go at a wink a  
nay,—  
What need of fligh  
therefrom  
But just damnat-  
cess?  
Damnation pure a  
wife  
And me the priest  
vate bliss  
For public reprob-  
For the sunshine w  
me by:  
What other advan-  
the days  
And nights alone  
flight to find?  
In our whole jour-  
hour,  
Diverge a foot from  
reached  
Or would have rea-  
fate of ours—  
The father and mo-  
Rome,  
The eye of yourself  
of us  
At the first fall of  
indeed  
You did so far giv-  
flight,  
Confirm its purpose  
hand,  
Deliver up Pompilia  
She fled, but those t-  
tured for.  
Why then could y-  
short, not go on  
One poor step more  
means,  
Having allowed the ex-  
say  
"Here's the exception  
should claim

much harm as  
Certainly she  
I dare say other-  
elsehood, buying  
nother at a price,  
o as his child:  
babe, give him a  
no and my own,  
woman made his  
—how very false  
of that; and all  
to represent  
ther give your  
(more)  
mine for ever  
get him"—ah,  
use to face!  
roved wrong but  
there lay, she  
ther in her rags,  
with the life and  
and disease at  
what price I  
I should be  
may not that  
one, any one,—  
—call him,—he  
[way,  
asure, went his  
ack by; there  
nnecessary life,  
ll,—and yet a  
be made happy  
to would frown  
God plants us  
It is not that, because a bud is born  
At a wild briar's end, full i' the wild  
beast's way,  
We ought to pluck and put it out of  
reach  
On the oak-tree top,—say, "There the  
bud belongs!"  
She thought, moreover, real lies were—  
lies told  
For harm's sake; whereas this had  
good at heart,  
Good for my mother, good for me, and  
good  
For Pietro who was meant to love a  
babe,  
And needed one to make his life of use,  
Receive his house and land when he  
should die.  
Wrong, wrong and always wrong!  
how plainly wrong!  
For see, this fault kept pricking, as  
faults do,  
All the same at her heart,—this false-  
hood hatched,  
She could not let it go nor keep it fast.  
She told me so,—the first time I was  
found  
Locked in her arms once more after  
the pain,  
When the nuns let me leave them and  
go home,  
And both of us cried all the cares  
away,—  
This it was set her on to make amends,  
This brought about the marriage—  
simply this!  
Do let me speak for her you blame so  
much!  
When Paul, my husband's brother,  
found me out,  
Heard there was wealth for who should  
marry me,  
So, came and made a speech to ask my  
hand  
For Guido,—she, instead of piercing  
straight  
Through the pretence to the ignoble  
truth,  
Fancied she saw God's very finger  
point,  
Designate just the time for planting  
me,  
(The wild briar-slip she plucked to love  
and wear)  
In soil where I could strike real root,  
and grow,  
And get to be the thing I called myself:

With what will be,—that late seems  
 long ago,  
 And, what years should bring round,  
 already come,  
 Till even he withdraws into a dream  
 As the rest do: I fancy him grown  
 great,  
 Strong, stern, a tall young man who  
 tutors me,  
 Frowns with the others "Poor impru-  
 dent child!"  
 "Why did you venture out of the safe  
 street?"  
 "Why go so far from help to that lone  
 house?"  
 "Why open at the whisper and the  
 knock?"

Six days ago when it was New Year's-  
 day,  
 We bent above the fire and talked of  
 him,  
 What he should do when he was grown  
 and great.  
 Violante, Pietro, each had given the  
 arm  
 I leant on, to walk by, from couch to  
 chair  
 And fireside,—laughed, as I lay safe at  
 last,  
 "Pompilia's march from bed to board  
 is made,  
 "Pompilia back again and with a babe,  
 "Shall one day lend his arm and help  
 her walk!"  
 Then we all wished each other more  
 New Years.  
 Pietro began to scheme—"Our cause  
 is gained;  
 "The law is stronger than a wicked  
 man:  
 "Let him henceforth go his way, leave  
 us ours!  
 "We will avoid the city, tempt no  
 more  
 "The greedy ones by feasting and  
 parade,—  
 "Live at the other villa, we know  
 where,  
 "Still farther off, and we can watch  
 the babe  
 "Grow fast in the good air; and wood  
 is cheap  
 "And wine sincere outside the city  
 gate.  
 "I still have two or three old friends  
 will grope

"Their way along the mere half-mile  
 of road,  
 "With staff and lantern on a moonless  
 night  
 "When one needs talk: they'll find  
 me, never fear,  
 "And I'll find them a flask of the old  
 sort yet!"  
 Violante said "You chatter like a  
 crow:  
 "Pompilia tires o' the tattle, and shall  
 to bed:  
 "Do not too much the first day,—  
 somewhat more  
 "To-morrow, and, the next, begin the  
 cape  
 "And hood and coat! I have spun  
 wool enough."  
 Oh what a happy friendly eve was  
 that!

And, next day, about noon, out Pietro  
 went—  
 He was so happy and would talk so  
 much,  
 Until Violante pushed and laughed  
 him forth  
 Sight-seeing in the cold,—“So much  
 to see  
 "I' the churches! Swathe your  
 throat three times!" she cried,  
 "And, above all, beware the slippery  
 ways,  
 "And bring us all the news by supper-  
 time!"  
 He came back late, laid by cloak, staff  
 and hat,  
 Powdered so thick with snow it made  
 us laugh,  
 Rolled a great log upon the ash o' the  
 hearth,  
 And bade Violante treat us to a flask,  
 Because he had obeyed her faithfully,  
 Gone sight-see through the seven, and  
 found no church  
 To his mind like San Giovanni—  
 "There's the fold,  
 "And all the sheep together, big as  
 cats!  
 "And such a shepherd, half the size of  
 life,  
 "Starts up and hears the angel"—  
 when, at the door,  
 A tap: we started up: you know the  
 rest.  
 Pietro at least had done no harm, I  
 know;



Nor even Violante, so much harm as makes  
 Such revenge lawful. Certainly she erred—  
 Did wrong, how shall I dare say otherwise?—  
 In telling that first falsehood, buying me  
 From my poor faulty mother at a price,  
 To pass off upon Pietro as his child :  
 If one should take my babe, give him a name,  
 Say he was not Gaetano and my own,  
 But that some other woman made his mouth  
 And hands and feet,—how very false were that !  
 No good could come of that ; and all harm did.  
 Yet if a stranger were to represent  
 " Needs must you either give your babe to me [more,  
 " And let me call him mine for ever  
 " Or let your husband get him "—ah, my God,  
 That were a trial I refuse to face !  
 Well, just so here : it proved wrong but seemed right  
 To poor Violante—for there lay, she said,  
 My poor real dying mother in her rags,  
 Who put me from her with the life and all,  
 Poverty, pain, shame and disease at once,  
 To die the easier by what price I fetched—  
 Also (I hope) because I should be spared  
 Sorrow and sin,—why may not that have helped ?  
 My father,—he was no one, any one,—  
 The worse, the likelier,—call him,—he who came, [way,  
 Was wicked for his pleasure, went his And left no trace to track by ; there remained  
 Nothing but me, the unnecessary life,  
 To catch up or let fall,—and yet a thing  
 She could make happy, be made happy with,  
 This poor Violante,—who would frown thereat ?  
 Well, God, you see ! God plants us where we grow.

It is not that, because a bud is born  
 At a wild briar's end, full i' the wild beast's way,  
 We ought to pluck and put it out of reach  
 On the oak-tree top,—say, " There the bud belongs ! "  
 She thought, moreover, real lies were—lies told  
 For harm's sake ; whereas this had good at heart,  
 Good for my mother, good for me, and good  
 For Pietro who was meant to love a babe,  
 And needed one to make his life of use,  
 Receive his house and land when he should die.  
 Wrong, wrong and always wrong ! how plainly wrong !  
 For see, this fault kept pricking, as faults do,  
 All the same at her heart,—this falsehood hatched,  
 She could not let it go nor keep it fast.  
 She told me so,—the first time I was found  
 Locked in her arms once more after the pain,  
 When the nuns let me leave them and go home,  
 And both of us cried all the cares away,—  
 This it was set her on to make amends,  
 This brought about the marriage—simply this !  
 Do let me speak for her you blame so much !  
 When Paul, my husband's brother, found me out,  
 Heard there was wealth for who should marry me,  
 So, came and made a speech to ask my hand  
 For Guido,—she, instead of piercing straight  
 Through the pretence to the ignoble truth,  
 Fancied she saw God's very finger point,  
 Designate just the time for planting me,  
 (The wild briar-slip she plucked to love and wear)  
 In soil where I could strike real root, and grow,  
 And get to be the thing I called myself :

For, wife and husband are one flesh,  
 God says,  
 And I, whose parents seemed such and  
 were none,  
 Should in a husband have a husband  
 now,  
 Find nothing, this time, but was what  
 it seemed,  
 —All truth and no confusion any more.  
 I know she meant all good to me, all  
 pain  
 To herself,—since how could it be  
 aught but pain,  
 To give me up, so, from her very breast,  
 The wilding flower-tree-branch that,  
 all those years,  
 She had got used to feel for and find  
 fixed ?  
 She meant well : has it been so ill i'  
 the main ? [judge  
 That is but fair to ask : one cannot  
 Of what has been the ill or well of life,  
 The day that one is dying,—sorrows  
 change  
 Into not altogether sorrow-like ;  
 I do see strangeness but scarce misery,  
 Now it is over, and no danger more.  
 My child is safe ; there seems not so  
 much pain.  
 It comes, most like, that I am just ab-  
 solved,  
 Purged of the past, the foul in me,  
 washed fair,—  
 One cannot both have and not have,  
 you know,—  
 Being right now, I am happy and  
 colour things.  
 Yes, every body that leaves life sees all  
 Softened and bettered : so with other  
 sights :  
 To me at least was never evening yet  
 But seemed far beautifuller than its  
 day,  
 For past is past.

There was a fancy came,  
 When somewhere, in the journey with  
 my friend,  
 We stepped into a hovel to get food ;  
 And there began a yelp here, a bark  
 there,—  
 Misunderstanding creatures that were  
 wroth  
 And vexed themselves and us till we  
 retired.  
 The hovel is life : no matter what dogs  
 bit

Or cats scratched in the hovel I bread  
 from,  
 All outside is lone field, moon and such  
 peace—  
 Flowing in, filling up as with a sea  
 Whereon comes Someone, walks fast  
 on the white,  
 Jesus Christ's self, Don Celestine de  
 clares,  
 To meet me and calm all things back  
 again.  
 Beside, up to my marriage, thirteen  
 years  
 Were, each day, happy as the day was  
 long :  
 This may have made the change too  
 terrible.  
 I know that when Violante told me  
 first  
 The cavalier,—she meant to bring next  
 morn,  
 Whom I must also let take, kiss my  
 hand,—  
 Would be at San Lorenzo the same eve  
 And marry me,—which over, we should  
 go  
 Home both of us without him as before,  
 And, till she bade speak, I must hold  
 my tongue,  
 Such being the correct way with girl-  
 brides,  
 From whom one word would make a  
 father blush,—  
 I know, I say, that when she told me  
 this,  
 —Well, I no more saw sense in what she  
 said  
 Than a lamb does in people clipping  
 wool ;  
 Only lay down and let myself be  
 clipped.  
 And when next day the cavalier who  
 came  
 (Tisbe had told me that the slim young  
 man  
 With wings at head, and wings at feet,  
 and sword  
 Threatening a monster, in our tapestry,  
 Would eat a girl else,—was a cavalier)  
 When he proved Guido Franceschini,—  
 old  
 And nothing like so tall as I myself,  
 Hook-nosed and yellow in a bush of  
 beard,  
 Much like a thing I saw on a boy's  
 wrist,



He called an owl and used for catching  
birds,—  
And when he took my hand and made  
a smile—  
Why, the uncomfortableness of it all  
Seemed hardly more important in the  
case  
Than,—when one gives you, say, a  
coin to spend,—  
Its newness or its oldness ; if the piece  
Weigh properly and buy you what you  
wish,  
No matter whether you get grime or  
glare !  
Men take the coin, return you grapes  
and figs.  
Here, marriage was the coin, a dirty  
piece  
Would purchase me the praise of those  
I loved :  
About what else should I concern my-  
self ?  
So, hardly knowing what a husband  
meant,  
I supposed this or any man would serve,  
No whit the worse for being so uncouth :  
For I was ill once and a doctor came  
With a great ugly hat, no plume thereto,  
Black jerkin and black buckles and  
black sword,  
And white sharp beard over the ruff in  
front,  
And oh so lean, so sour-faced and aus-  
tere !—  
Who felt my pulse, made me put out  
my tongue,  
Then oped a phial, dripped a drop or  
two  
Of a black bitter something,—I was  
cured !  
What mattered the fierce beard or the  
grim face ?  
It was the physic beautified the man,  
Master Malpichi,—never met his match  
In Rome, they said,—so ugly all the  
same !  
However, I was hurried through a  
storm,  
Next dark eve of December's deadest  
day—  
How it rained !—through our street  
and the Lion's-mouth  
And the bit of Corso,—cloaked round,  
covered close,  
I was like something strange or contra-  
band,—

Into blank San Lorenzo, up the aisle,  
My mother keeping hold of me so tight,  
I fancied we were come to see a corpse  
Before the altar which she pulled me  
toward.  
There we found waiting an unpleasant  
priest  
Who proved the brother, not our parish  
friend,  
But one with mischief-making mouth  
and eye,  
Paul, whom I know since to my cost.  
And then  
I heard the heavy church-door lock out  
help  
Behind us : for the customary warmth,  
Two tapers shivered on the altar.  
“ Quick—  
“ Lose no time ! ”—cried the priest.  
And straightway down  
From . . what's behind the altar  
where he hid—  
Hawk-nose and yellowness and bush  
and all,  
Stepped Guido, caught my hand, and  
there was I  
O' the chancel, and the priest had  
opened book,  
Read here and there, made me say  
that and this,  
And after, told me I was now a wife,  
Honoured indeed, since Christ thus  
weds the Church,  
And therefore turned he water into  
wine,  
To show I should obey my spouse like  
Christ. [apart,  
Then the two slipped aside and talked  
And I, silent and scared, got down  
again  
And joined my mother who was weep-  
ing now.  
Nobody seemed to mind us any more,  
And both of us on tiptoe found our way  
To the door which was unlocked by  
this, and wide.  
When we were in the street, the rain  
had stopped,  
All things looked better. At our own  
house-door,  
Violante whispered “ No one syllable  
“ To Pietro ! Girl-brides never breathe  
a word ! ”  
“ —Well treated to a wetting, drag-  
gle-tails ! ”  
Laughed Pietro as he opened—“ Very  
near

"You made me brave the gutter's  
roaring sea  
"To carry off from roost old dove and  
young,  
"Trussed up in church, the cote, by  
me, the kite!  
"What do these priests mean, praying  
folk to death  
"On stormy afternoons, with Christ-  
mas close  
"To wash our sins off nor require the  
rain?"  
Violante gave my hand a timely  
squeeze,  
Madonna saved me from immodest  
speech,  
I kissed him and was quiet, being a  
bride.

When I saw nothing more, the next  
three weeks,  
Of Guido—"Nor the Church sees  
Christ" thought I: [wine  
"Nothing is changed however, wine is  
"And water only water in our house.  
"Nor did I see that ugly doctor since  
"The cure of the illness: just as I was  
cured,  
"I am married,—neither scarecrow will  
return."

Three weeks, I chuckled—"How would  
Giulia stare,  
"And Tecla smile and Tisbe laugh out-  
right,  
"Were it not impudent for brides to  
talk!"—  
Until one morning, as I sat and sang  
At the broidery-frame alone i' the  
chamber,—loud  
Voices, two, three together, sobbings  
too,  
And my name, "Guido," "Paolo,"  
flung like stones  
From each to the other! In I ran to  
see.  
There stood the very Guido and the  
priest  
With sly face,—formal but nowise  
afraid,—  
While Pietro seemed all red and angry,  
scarce  
Able to stutter out his wrath in words;  
And this it was that made my mother  
sob,  
As he reproached her—"You have  
murdered us,

"Me and yourself and this our child  
beside!"  
Then Guido interposed "Murdered  
not,  
"Be it enough your child is now my  
wife!  
"I claim and come to take her." Pa-  
put in,  
"Consider—kinsman, dare I term you  
so?—  
"What is the good of your sagacity  
"Except to counsel in a strait like  
this?  
"I guarantee the parties man and wife  
"Whether you like or loathe it, blessed  
or ban.  
"May spilt milk be put back within  
the bowl—  
"The done thing, undone? You, I  
is, we look  
"For counsel to, you fittest will ad-  
vise!  
"Since milk, though spilt and spoiled  
does marble good,  
"Better we down on knees and scrub  
the floor,  
"Than sigh, 'the waste would make  
syllabub!'  
"Help us so turn disaster to account  
"So predispose the groom, he needs  
shall grace  
"The bride with favour from the very  
first,  
"Not begin marriage an embittered  
man!"  
He smiled,—the game so wholly in his  
hands!  
While fast and faster sobbed Violante  
—"Ay,  
"All of us murdered, past averting  
now!  
"O my sin, O my secret!" and such  
like.  
Then I began to half surmise the truth;  
Something had happened, low, mean,  
underhand,  
False, and my mother was to blame,  
and I  
To pity, whom all spoke of, none ad-  
dressed:  
I was the chattel that had caused a  
crime.  
I stood mute,—those who tangled must  
untie  
The embroilment. Pietro cried "With-  
draw, my child!



"She is not helpful to the sacrifice  
 "At this stage,—do you want the victim by  
 "While you discuss the value of her blood?  
 "For her sake, I consent to hear you talk:  
 "Go, child, and pray God help the innocent!"

I did go and was praying God, when came  
 Violante, with eyes swollen and red enough,  
 But movement on her mouth for make-believe  
 Matters were somehow getting right again.  
 She bade me sit down by her side and hear.  
 "You are too young and cannot understand,  
 "Nor did your father understand at first.  
 "I wished to benefit all three of us,  
 "And when he failed to take my meaning,—why,  
 "I tried to have my way at unaware—  
 "Obtained him the advantage he refused.  
 "As if I put before him wholesome food  
 "Instead of broken victual,—he finds change  
 "I' the viands, never cares to reason why,  
 "But falls to blaming me, would fling the plate  
 "From window, scandalize the neighbourhood,  
 "Even while he smacks his lips,—men's way, my child!  
 "But either you have prayed him unperverse  
 "Or I have talked him back into his wits:  
 "And Paolo was a help in time of need,—  
 "Guido, not much—my child, the way of men!  
 "A priest is more a woman than a man,  
 "And Paul did wonders to persuade.  
 In short,  
 "Yes, he was wrong, your father sees and says;  
 "My scheme was worth attempting:  
 and bears fruit,

"Gives you a husband and a noble name,  
 "A palace and no end of pleasant things.  
 "What do you care about a handsome youth?  
 "They are so volatile, and tease their wives!  
 "This is the kind of man to keep the house.  
 "We lose no daughter,—gain a son, that's all:  
 "For 'tis arranged we never separate,  
 "Nor miss, in our grey time of life, the tints  
 "Of you that colour eve to match with morn,  
 "In good or ill, we share and share alike,  
 "And cast our lots into a common lap,  
 "And all three die together as we lived!  
 "Only, at Arezzo,—that's a Tuscan town,  
 "Not so large as this noisy Rome, no doubt,  
 "But older far and finer much, say folks,—  
 "In a great palace where you will be queen,  
 "Know the Archbishop and the Governor,  
 "And we see homage done you ere we die.  
 "Therefore, be good and pardon!"—  
 "Pardon what?  
 "You know things, I am very ignorant:  
 "All is right if you only will not cry!"

And so an end! Because a blank begins  
 From when, at the word, she kissed me hard and hot,  
 And took me back to where my father leaned  
 Opposite Guido—who stood eyeing him,  
 As eyes the butcher the cast panting ox  
 That feels his fate is come, nor struggles more,—  
 While Paul looked archly on, pricked brow at whites  
 With the pen-point as to punish triumph there,—  
 And said "Count Guido, take your lawful wife  
 "Until death part you!"

All since is on a blank,  
 Over and ended ; a terrific dream.  
 It is the good of dreams—so soon they  
 go !  
 Wake in a horror of heart-beats, you  
 may—  
 Cry, " The dread thing will never from  
 my thoughts ! "  
 Still, a few daylight doses of plain life,  
 Cock-crow and sparrow-chirp, or bleat  
 and bell  
 Of goats that trot by, tinkling, to be  
 milked ;  
 And when you rub your eyes awake  
 and wide,  
 Where is the harm o' the horror ?  
 Gone ! So here.  
 I know I wake,—but from what ?  
 Blank, I say !  
 This is the note of evil : for good lasts.  
 Even when Don Celestine bade " Search  
 and find !  
 " For your soul's sake, remember what  
 is past,  
 " The better to forgive it,"—all in  
 vain !  
 What was fast getting indistinct be-  
 fore,  
 Vanished outright. By special grace  
 perhaps,  
 Between that first calm and this last,  
 four years  
 Vanish,—one quarter of my life, you  
 know.  
 I am held up, amid the nothingness,  
 By one or two truths only—thence I  
 hang,  
 And there I live,—the rest is death or  
 dream,  
 All but those points of my support. I  
 think  
 Of what I saw at Rome once in the  
 Square  
 O' the Spaniards, opposite the Spanish  
 House :  
 There was a foreigner had trained a  
 goat,  
 A shuddering white woman of a beast,  
 To climb up, stand straight on a pile  
 of sticks  
 Put close, which gave the creature  
 room enough :  
 When she was settled there he, one by  
 one,  
 Took away all the sticks, left just the  
 four  
 Whereon the little hoofs did really rest,

There she kept firm, all underneath  
 was air.  
 So, what I hold by, are my prayer to  
 God,  
 My hope, that came in answer to the  
 prayer,  
 Some hand would interpose and save  
 me—hand  
 Which proved to be my friend's hand :  
 and,—best bliss,—  
 That fancy which began so faint at  
 first,  
 That thrill of dawn's suffusion through  
 my dark,  
 Which I perceive was promise of my  
 child,  
 The light his unborn face sent long be-  
 fore,—  
 God's way of breaking the good news  
 to flesh.  
 That is all left now of those four bad  
 years.  
 Don Celestine urged " But remember  
 more !  
 " Other men's faults may help me find  
 your own.  
 " I need the cruelty exposed, ex-  
 plained,  
 " Or how can I advise you to forgive ? "  
 He thought I could not properly forgive  
 Unless I ceased forgetting,—which is  
 true :  
 For, bringing back reluctantly to mind  
 My husband's treatment of me,—by a  
 light [view  
 That 's later than my life-time, I re-  
 And comprehend much and imagine  
 more,  
 And have but little to forgive at last.  
 For now,—be fair and say,—is it not  
 true  
 He was ill-used and cheated of his hope  
 To get enriched by marriage ? Mar-  
 riage gave  
 Me and no money, broke the compact  
 so :  
 He had a right to ask me on those  
 terms,  
 As Pietro and Violante to declare  
 They would not give me : so the bar-  
 gain stood :  
 They broke it, and he felt himself ag-  
 grieved,  
 Became unkind with me to punish  
 them.  
 They said 't was he began deception  
 first,



Nor, in one point whereto he pledged himself,  
 Kept promise : what of that, suppose it were ?  
 Echoes die off, scarcely reverberate  
 For ever,—why should ill keep echoing ill,  
 And never let our ears have done with noise ?  
 Then my poor parents took the violent way  
 To thwart him,—he must needs retaliate,—wrong,  
 Wrong, and all wrong,—better say, all blind !  
 As I myself was, that is sure, who else  
 Had understood the mystery : for his wife  
 Was bound in some sort to help somehow there.  
 It seems as if I might have interposed,  
 Blunted the edge of their resentment so,  
 Since he vexed me because they first vexed him ;  
 “ I will entreat them to desist, submit,  
 “ Give him the money and be poor in peace,—  
 “ Certainly not go tell the world : perhaps  
 “ He will grow quiet with his gains.”

Yes, say

Something to this effect and you do well !  
 But then you have to see first : I was blind.  
 That is the fruit of all such wormy ways,  
 The indirect, the unapproved of God :  
 You cannot find their author's end and aim, [bad,  
 Not even to substitute your good for  
 Your open for the irregular ; you stand  
 Stupefied, profitless, as cow or sheep  
 That miss a man's mind ; anger him just twice  
 By trial at repairing the first fault.  
 Thus, when he blamed me, “ You are a coquette,  
 “ A lure-owl posturing to attract birds,  
 “ You look love-lures at theatre and church,  
 “ In walk, at window ! ”—that, I knew, was false :  
 But why he charged me falsely, whither sought

To drive me by such charge,—how could I know ?  
 So, unaware, I only made things worse.  
 I tried to soothe him by abjuring walk,  
 Window, church, theatre, for good and all,  
 As if he had been in earnest : that, you know,  
 Was nothing like the object of his charge.  
 Yes, when I got my maid to supplicate  
 The priest, whose name she read when she would read  
 Those feigned false letters I was forced to hear  
 Though I could read no word of,—he should cease  
 Writing,—nay, if he minded prayer of mine,  
 Cease from so much as even pass the street  
 Whereon our house looked,—in my ignorance  
 I was just thwarting Guido's true intent ;  
 Which was, to bring about a wicked change  
 Of sport to earnest, tempt a thoughtless man  
 To write indeed, and pass the house, and more,  
 Till both of us were taken in a crime.  
 He ought not to have wished me thus act lies,  
 Simulate folly,—but,—wrong or right, the wish,—  
 I failed to apprehend its drift. How plain  
 It follows,—if I fell into such fault,  
 He also may have overreached the mark,  
 Made mistake, by perversity of brain,  
 In the whole sad strange plot, this same intrigue  
 To make me and my friend unself ourselves, [were !  
 Be other man and woman than we  
 Think it out, you who have the time ! for me,—  
 I cannot say less ; more I will not say.  
 Leave it to God to cover and undo !  
 Only, my dulness should not prove too much !  
 —Not prove that in a certain other point  
 Wherein my husband blamed me,—and you blame,

If I interpret smiles and shakes of head,—  
 I was dull too. Oh, if I dared but speak!  
 Must I speak? I am blamed that I forwent  
 A way to make my husband's favour come.  
 This is true: I was firm, withstood, refused . . .  
 —Women as you are, how can I find the words?

I felt there was just one thing Guido claimed  
 I had no right to give nor he to take;  
 We being in estrangement, soul from soul:  
 Till, when I sought help, the Archbishop smiled,  
 Inquiring into privacies of life,  
 —Said I was blameable—(he stands for God)  
 Nowise entitled to exemption there.  
 Then I obeyed,—as surely had obeyed  
 Were the injunction "Since your husband bids,  
 "Swallow the burning coal he proffers you!"  
 But I did wrong, and he gave wrong advice  
 Though he were thrice Archbishop,—that, I know!  
 Now I have got to die and see things clear.  
 Remember I was barely twelve years old—  
 A child at marriage: I was let alone  
 For weeks, I told you, lived my child-life still  
 Even at Arezzo, when I woke and found  
 First . . . but I need not think of that again—  
 Over and ended! Try and take the sense  
 Of what I signify, if it must be so.  
 After the first, my husband, for hate's sake,  
 Said one eve, when the simpler cruelty  
 Seemed somewhat dull at edge and fit to bear,  
 "We have been man and wife six months almost:  
 "How long is this your comedy to last?  
 "Go this night to my chamber, not your own!"

At which word, I did rush—most true the charge—  
 And gain the Archbishop's house—he stands for God—  
 And fall upon my knees and clasp his feet,  
 Praying him hinder what my estranged soul  
 Refused to bear, though patient of the rest:  
 "Place me within a convent," I implored—  
 "Let me henceforward lead the virgin life  
 "You praise in Her you bid me imitate!"  
 What did he answer? "Folly of ignorance!"  
 "Know, daughter, circumstances make or mar  
 "Virginity,—'t is virtue or 't is vice.  
 "That which was glory in the Mother of God  
 "Had been, for instance, damnable in Eve  
 "Created to be mother of mankind.  
 "Had Eve, in answer to her Maker's speech  
 "'Be fruitful, multiply, replenish earth'—  
 "Pouted 'But I choose rather to remain  
 "'Single'—why, she had spared herself forthwith  
 "Further probation by the apple and snake,  
 "Been pushed straight out of Paradise! For see—  
 "If motherhood be qualified impure,  
 "I catch you making God command Eve sin!  
 "—A blasphemy so like these Molinists',  
 "I must suspect you dip into their books."  
 Then he pursued "'T was in your covenant!"  
 No! There my husband never used deceit.  
 He never did by speech nor act imply  
 "Because of our souls' yearning that we meet  
 "And mix in soul through flesh, which yours and mine  
 "Wear and impress, and make their visible selves,



"—All which means, for the love of you and me,

"Let us become one flesh, being one soul!"

He only stipulated for the wealth;  
Honest so far. But when he spoke as plain—

Dreadfully honest also—"Since our souls

"Stand each from each, a whole world's width between,

"Give me the fleshy vesture I can reach

"And rend and leave just fit for hell to burn!"—

Why, in God's name, for Guido's soul's own sake

Imperilled by polluting mine,—I say, I did resist; would I had overcome!

My heart died out at the Archbishop's smile;

—It seemed so stale and worn a way o' the world,

As though 't were nature frowning—  
"Here is Spring,

"The sun shines as he shone at Adam's fall,

"The earth requires that warmth reach everywhere:

"What, must your patch of snow be saved forsooth

"Because you rather fancy snow than flowers?"

Something in this style he began with me.

Last he said, savagely for a good man,

"This explains why you call your husband harsh,

"Harsh to you, harsh to whom you love. God's Bread!

"The poor Count has to manage a mere child

Whose parents leave untaught the simplest things

"Their duty was and privilege to teach,—

"Goodwives' instruction, gossips' lore: they laugh

"And leave the Count the task,—or leave it me!"

Then I resolved to tell a frightful thing.

"I am not ignorant,—know what I say,  
"Declaring this is sought for hate, not love.

"Sir, you may hear things like almighty God.

"I tell you that my housemate, yes—the priest

"My husband's brother, Canon Girolamo—

"Has taught me what depraved and misnamed love

"Means, and what outward signs denote the sin,

"For he solicits me and says he loves,

"The idle young priest with nought else to do.

"My husband sees this, knows this, and lets be.

"Is it your counsel I bear this beside?"

"—More scandal, and against a priest this time!

"What, 't is the Canon now?"—less snappishly—

"Rise up, my child, for such a child you are,

"The rod were too advanced a punishment!

"Let 's try the honeyed cake. A parable!

"Without a parable spake He not to them."

"There was a ripe round long black toothsome fruit,

"Even a flower-fig, the prime boast of May:

"And, to the tree, said . . either the spirit o' the fig.

"Or, if we bring in men, the gardener, Archbishop of the orchard—had I time

"To try o' the two which fits in best: indeed

"It might be the Creator's self, but then

"The tree should bear an apple, I suppose,— [said

"Well, anyhow, one with authority

"Ripe fig, burst skin, regale the fig-pecker—

"The bird whereof thou art a perquisite!

"Nay,' with a flounce, replied the restif fig,

"I much prefer to keep my pulp myself:

"He may go breakfastless and dinnerless,

"Supperless of one crimson seed, for me!

"So, back she flopped into her bunch of leaves.

## THE RING AND THE BOOK

If I interpret smiles and shakes of head,—  
 I was dull too. Oh, if I dared but speak!  
 Must I speak? I am blamed that I forwent  
 A way to make my husband's favour come.  
 This is true: I was firm, withstood, refused . . .  
 —Women as you are, how can I find the words?

I felt there was just one thing Guido claimed  
 I had no right to give nor he to take;  
 We being in estrangement, soul from soul:  
 Till, when I sought help, the Archbishop smiled,  
 Inquiring into privacies of life,  
 —Said I was blameable—(he stands for God)  
 Nowise entitled to exemption there.  
 Then I obeyed,—as surely had obeyed  
 Were the injunction "Since your husband bids,  
 "Swallow the burning coal he proffers you!"  
 But I did wrong, and he gave wrong advice  
 Though he were thrice Archbishop,—that, I know!  
 Now I have got to die and see things clear.  
 Remember I was barely twelve years old—  
 A child at marriage: I was let alone  
 For weeks, I told you, lived my child-life still  
 Even at Arezzo, when I woke and found  
 First . . . but I need not think of that again—  
 Over and ended! Try and take the sense  
 Of what I signify, if it must be so.  
 After the first, my husband, for hate's sake,  
 Said one eve, when the simpler cruelty  
 Seemed somewhat dull at edge and fit to bear,  
 "We have been man and wife six months almost:  
 "How long is this your comedy to last?  
 "Go this night to my chamber, not your own!"

At which word, I did the charge—  
 And gain the Arch stands for God  
 And fall upon my feet,  
 Praying him hinder soul  
 Refused to bear, the rest:  
 "Place me within plore—  
 "Let me henceforth life  
 "You praise in H taste!"  
 What did he a ignorance!  
 "Know, daughter or mar  
 "Virginity,—'tis  
 "That which was of God  
 "Had been, for i Eve  
 "Created to be n  
 "Had Eve, in a speech  
 "Be fruitful, earth"—  
 "Pouted 'But I main  
 "'Single'—why, self forthwit  
 "Further probat snake,  
 "Been pushed a dise! For  
 "If motherhood  
 "I catch you m Eve sin!  
 "—A blasphemy ists',  
 "I must suspect books."  
 Then he pursued nant!"

No! There my deceit.  
 He never did by "Because of our we meet  
 "And mix in sou yours and m  
 "Wear and imp visible selves  
 "I tell you that my housemate, yes—the priest  
 "My husband's brother, Canon Giro-  
 "I taught me what depraved and assumed love  
 "Wrote the sin.  
 "He solicits me and says he loves, the little young priest with nought else to do.  
 "My husband sees this, knows this, and lets be.  
 "Is it your counsel I bear this be-  
 "—More scandal, and against a priest this time!  
 "What, 'tis the Canon now?"—less surpiously—  
 "Now up, my child, for such a child you are,  
 "The red were too advanced a punish-ment!  
 "Let's try the honeyed cake. A Without a parable spake He not to them."  
 "There was a ripe round long black nutcase fruit,  
 "From a dower-fig, the prime boast of the tree, said . . . either the spirit of the fig,  
 "Or 'twas we bring in men, the gardener, kinship of the orchard—had I time  
 "By the two which fits in best: said  
 "It might be the Creator's self, but then  
 "We should bear an apple, I suppose— [said  
 "Well, anyhow, one with authority the fig, burst skin, regale the fig-  
 "The kind whereof thou art a per-  
 "son!"  
 "With a sounce, replied the said fig,  
 "I much prefer to keep my pulp my-  
 "self:  
 "And mix in sou I may go breakfastless and din-  
 "yours and m  
 "Wear and imp of one crimson seed, for  
 "visible selves  
 "Back she dropped into her bunch of leaves.

I you,—next, "Even suppose you altered,—there's your hate,  
 I found my "To ask for: hate of you two dearest ones  
 ace where he "I shall find liker love than love found here,  
 as he who,— "If husbands love their wives. Take me away  
 es had given "And hate me as you do the gnats and fleas,  
 e they wanted "Even the scorpions! How I shall rejoice!  
 t me want a "Write that and save me!" And he promised—wrote  
 s, if they kept Or did not write; things never changed at all:  
 hen mine, so He was not like the Augustinian here!  
 ny husband's Last, in a desperation I appealed  
 oke the word To friends, whoever wished me better days,  
 f fled To Guillichini, that's of kin,— "What, I—  
 say,—scarce "Travel to Rome with you? A flying gout  
 icker close be- "Bids me deny my heart and mind my leg!"  
 already there, Then I tried Conti, used to brave—  
 k for shrug and laugh back  
 The louring thunder when his cousin scowled  
 him and, for At me protected by his presence:  
 emember what "You—  
 the people call "Who well know what you cannot save me from,—  
 cessed my sin "Carry me off! What frightens you, a priest?"  
 could not be He shook his head, looked grave—  
 "Above my strength!  
 "Guido has claws that scratch, shows feline teeth;  
 "A formidabler foe than I dare fret:  
 "Give me a dog to deal with, twice the size!  
 "Of course I am a priest and Canon [too,  
 "But . . . by the bye . . . though both, not quite so bold,  
 "As he, my fellow-Canon, brother-priest,  
 "The personage in such ill odour here  
 "Because of the reports—pure birth o' the brain—  
 "Our Caponsacchi, he's your true Saint George  
 "To slay the monster, set the Princess free,  
 "And have the whole High-Altar to himself;



Had been a something let drop on the sly  
 In prattle by Margherita, "Soon enough  
 "Gaieties end, now Easter's past: a week,  
 "And the Archbishop gets him back to Rome,—  
 "Every one leaves the town for Rome, this Spring,—  
 "Even Caponsacchi, out of heart and hope,  
 "Resigns himself and follows with the flock."  
 I heard this drop and drop like rain outside  
 Fast-falling through the darkness while she spoke:  
 So had I heard with like indifference,  
 "And Michael's pair of wings will arrive first  
 "At Rome to introduce the company,  
 "Will bear him from our picture where he fights  
 "Satan,—expect to have that dragon loose  
 "And never a defender!"—my sole thought  
 Being still, as night came, "Done, another day!  
 "How good to sleep and so get nearer death!"—  
 When, what, first thing at daybreak, pierced the sleep  
 With a summons to me? Up I sprang alive,  
 Light in me, light without me, everywhere  
 Change! A broad yellow sunbeam was let fall  
 From heaven to earth,—a sudden draw-bridge lay,  
 Along which marched a myriad merry motes,  
 Mocking the flies that crossed them and recrossed  
 In rival dance, companions new-born too.  
 On the house-eaves, a dripping shag of weed  
 Shook diamonds on each dull grey lattice-square,  
 As first one, then another bird leapt by,  
 And light was off, and lo was back again,  
 Always with one voice,—where are two such joys?—

The blessed building-sparrow! I stepped forth,  
 Stood on the terrace,—o'er the roofs, such sky!  
 My heart sang, "I too am to go away,  
 "I too have something I must care about,  
 "Carry away with me to Rome, to Rome!  
 "The bird brings hither sticks and hairs and wool,  
 "And nowhere else i' the world; what fly breaks rank,  
 "Falls out of the procession that befits,  
 "From window here to window there, with all  
 "The world to choose,—so well he knows his course?  
 "I have my purpose and my motive too,  
 "My march to Rome, like any bird or fly!  
 "Had I been dead! How right to be alive!  
 "Last night I almost prayed for leave to die,  
 "Wished Guido all his pleasure with the sword  
 "Or the poison,—poison, sword, was but a trick,  
 "Harmless, may God forgive him the poor jest!  
 "My life is charmed, will last till I reach Rome!  
 "Yesterday, but for the sin,—ah, nameless be  
 "The deed I could have dared against myself!  
 "Now—see if I will touch an unripe fruit,  
 "And risk the health I want to have and use!  
 "Not to live, now, would be the wickedness,—  
 "For life means to make haste and go to Rome  
 "And leave Arezzo, leave all woes at once!"

Now, understand here, by no means mistake!  
 Long ago had I tried to leave that house  
 When it seemed such procedure would stop sin;  
 And still failed more the more I tried—at first

The Archbishop, as I told you,—next,  
our lord  
The Governor,—indeed I found my  
way,  
I went to the great palace where he  
rules,  
Though I knew well 't was he who,—  
when I gave  
A jewel or two, themselves had given  
me,  
Back to my parents,—since they wanted  
bread,  
They who had never let me want a  
nosegay,—he  
Spoke of the jail for felons, if they kept  
What was first theirs, then mine, so  
doubly theirs,  
Though all the while my husband's  
most of all !  
I knew well who had spoke the word  
wrought this :  
Yet, being in extremity, I fled  
To the Governor, as I say,—scarce  
opened lip  
When—the cold cruel snicker close be-  
hind—  
Guido was on my trace, already there,  
Exchanging nod and wink for shrug and  
smile,  
And I—pushed back to him and, for  
my pains,  
Paid with . . . but why remember what  
is past ?  
I sought out a poor friar the people call  
The Roman, and confessed my sin  
which came  
Of their sin,—that fact could not be  
repressed,—  
The frightfulness of my despair in God :  
And, feeling, through the grate, his  
horror shake,  
Implored him, " Write for me who can-  
not write,  
" Apprise my parents, make them  
rescue me !  
" You bid me be courageous and trust  
God :  
" Do you in turn dare somewhat, trust  
and write  
" Dear friends, who used to be my  
parents once,  
" And now declare you have no part  
in me,  
" This is some riddle I want wit to  
solve,  
" Since you must love me with no dif-  
ference,

" Even suppose you altered,—there 's  
your hate,  
" To ask for : hate of you two dearest  
ones  
" I shall find liker love than love  
found here,  
" If husbands love their wives. Take  
me away  
" And hate me as you do the gnats  
and fleas,  
" Even the scorpions ! How I shall  
rejoice !  
" Write that and save me ! " And he  
promised—wrote  
Or did not write ; things never changed  
at all :  
He was not like the Augustinian here !  
Last, in a desperation I appealed  
To friends, whoever wished me better  
days,  
To Guillichini, that 's of kin,— " What,  
I—  
" Travel to Rome with you ? A flying  
gout  
" Bids me deny my heart and mind my  
leg ! "  
Then I tried Conti, used to brave—  
laugh back  
The louring thunder when his cousin  
scowled  
At me protected by his presence :  
" You—  
" Who well know what you cannot  
save me from,—  
" Carry me off ! What frightens you,  
a priest ? "  
He shook his head, looked grave—  
" Above my strength !  
" Guido has claws that scratch, shows  
feline teeth ;  
" A formidabler foe than I dare fret :  
" Give me a dog to deal with, twice the  
size ! [too,  
" Of course I am a priest and Canon  
" But . . . by the bye . . . though both,  
not quite so bold,  
" As he, my fellow-Canon, brother-  
priest,  
" The personage in such ill odour here  
" Because of the reports—pure birth o'  
the brain—  
" Our Caponsacchi, he's your true Saint  
George  
" To slay the monster, set the Princess  
free,  
" And have the whole High-Altar to  
himself :



"I always think so when I see that piece

"I' the Pieve, that 's his church and mine, you know :

"Though you drop eyes at mention of his name ! "

! That name had got to take a half-grotesque

Half-ominous, wholly enigmatic sense,  
Like any bye-word, broken bit of song  
Born with a meaning, changed by  
mouth and mouth

That mix it in a sneer or smile, as  
chance

Bids, till it now means naught but  
ugliness

And perhaps shame.

—All this intends to say,  
That, over-night, the notion of escape  
Had seemed distemper, dreaming ; and  
the name,—

Not the man, but the name of him,  
thus made

Into a mockery and disgrace,—why,  
she

Who uttered it persistently, had  
laughed,

"I name his name, and there you start  
and wince

"As criminal from the red tongs'  
touch !"—yet now,

Now, as I stood letting morn bathe me  
bright,

Choosing which butterfly should bear  
my news,—

The white, the brown one, or that  
tinier blue,—

The Margherita, I detested so,

In she came—"The fine day, the good  
Spring time !

"What, up and out at window ? That  
is best.

"No thought of Caponsacchi ?—who  
stood there

"All night on one leg, like the sentry  
crane,

"Under the pelting of your water-  
spout—

"Looked last look at your lattice ere  
he leave

"Our city, bury his dead hope at  
Rome ?

"Ay, go to looking-glass and make you  
fine,

"While he may die ere touch one  
least loose hair

"You drag at with the comb in such a  
rage ! "

I turned—"Tell Caponsacchi he may  
come ! "

"Tell him to come ? Ah, but, for  
charity,

"A truce to fooling ! Come ? What  
—come this eve ?

"Peter and Paul ! But I see through  
the trick—

"Yes, come, and take a flower-pot on  
his head

"Flung from your terrace ! No joke,  
sincere truth ? "

How plainly I perceived hell flash and  
fade

O' the face of her,—the doubt that  
first paled joy,

Then, final reassurance I indeed  
Was caught now, never to be free again !

What did I care ?—who felt myself of  
force

To play with the silk, and spurn the  
horsehair-springe.

"But—do you know that I have bade  
him come,

"And in your own name ? I pre-  
sumed so much,

"Knowing the thing you needed in  
your heart,

"But somehow—what had I to show  
in proof ?

"He would not come : half-promised,  
that was all,

"And wrote the letters you refused to  
read.

"What is the message that shall move  
him now ? "

"After the Ave Maria, at first dark,

"I will be standing on the terrace, say !

"I would I had a good long lock of hair

"Should prove I was not lying ! Never  
mind ! "

Off she went—"May he not refuse,  
that's all—

"Fearing a trick ! "

I answered, "He will come."  
And, all day, I sent prayer like incense  
up

To God the strong, God the beneficent,  
God ever mindful in all strife and strait,  
Who, for our own good, makes the need  
extreme,

Till at the last He puts forth might and  
 saves,  
 An old rhyme came into my head and  
 rang  
 Of how a virgin, for the faith of God,  
 Hid herself, from the Paynims that  
 pursued,  
 In a cave's heart; until a thunder-  
 stone,  
 Wrapped in a flame, revealed the  
 couch and prey:  
 And they laughed—"Thanks to light-  
 ning, ours at last!"  
 And she cried "Wrath of God, assert  
 His love!  
 "Servant of God, thou fire, befriend  
 His child!"  
 And lo, the fire she grasped at, fixed its  
 flash,  
 Lay in her hand a calm cold dreadful  
 sword  
 She brandished till pursuers strewed  
 the ground,  
 So did the souls within them die away,  
 As o'er the prostrate bodies, sworded,  
 safe,  
 She walked forth to the solitudes and  
 Christ:  
 So should I grasp the lightning and be  
 saved!

And still, as the day wore, the trouble  
 grew  
 Whereby I guessed there would be born  
 a star,  
 Until at an intense throe of the dusk,  
 I started up, was pushed, I dare to say,  
 Out on the terrace, leaned and looked  
 at last  
 Where the deliverer waited me: the  
 same  
 Silent and solemn face, I first descried  
 At the spectacle, confronted mine once  
 more.

So was that minute twice vouchsafed  
 me, so  
 The manhood, wasted then, was still at  
 watch  
 To save me yet a second time: no  
 change  
 Here, though all else changed in the  
 changing world!

I spoke on the instant, as my duty  
 bade,  
 In some such sense as this, whatever  
 the phrase.

"Friend, foolish words were borne  
 from you to me;  
 "Your soul behind them is the pure  
 strong wind,  
 "Not dust and feathers which its  
 breath may bear:  
 "These to the witless seem the wind it-  
 self,  
 "Since proving thus the first of it they  
 feel,  
 "If by mischance you blew offence my  
 way,  
 "The straws are dropt, the wind de-  
 sists no whit,  
 "And how such strays were caught up  
 in the street  
 "And took a motion from you, why in-  
 quire?  
 "I speak to the strong soul, no weak  
 disguise.  
 "If it be truth,—why should I doubt  
 it truth?—  
 "You serve God specially, as priests  
 are bound,  
 "And care about me, stranger as I am,  
 "So far as wish my good,—that mir-  
 acle  
 "I take to intimate He wills you serve  
 "By saving me,—what else can He  
 direct?  
 "Here is the service. Since a long  
 while now,  
 "I am in course of being put to death:  
 "While death concerned nothing but  
 me, I bowed  
 "The head and bade, in heart, my hus-  
 band strike.  
 "Now I imperil something more, it  
 seems,  
 "Something that 's trulier me than  
 this myself,  
 "Something I trust in God and you to  
 save.  
 "You go to Rome, they tell me: take  
 me there,  
 "Put me back with my people!"

He replied—

The first word I heard ever from his  
 lips,  
 All himself in it,—an eternity  
 Of speech, to match the immeasurable  
 depths  
 O' the soul that then broke silence—"I  
 am yours."  
 So did the star rise, soon to lead my  
 step,



Lead on, nor pause before it should  
stand still  
Above the House o' the Babe,—my  
babe to be,  
That knew me first and thus made me  
know him,  
That had his right of life and claim  
on mine,  
And would not let me die till he was  
born,  
But pricked me at the heart to save us  
both,  
Saying "Have you the will? Leave  
God the way!"  
And the way was Caponsacchi—  
"mine," thank God!  
He was mine, he is mine, he will be  
mine.

No pause i' the leading and the light!  
I know,  
Next night there was a cloud came,  
and not he:  
But I prayed through the darkness till  
it broke  
And let him shine. The second night,  
he came.

"The plan is rash; the project des-  
perate:  
"In such a flight needs must I risk  
your life,  
"Give food for falsehood, folly or mis-  
take,  
"Ground for your husband's rancour  
and revenge"—  
So he began again, with the same face.  
I felt that, the same loyalty—one star  
Turning now red that was so white be-  
fore—  
One service apprehended newly: just  
A word of mine and there the white  
was back!

"No, friend, for you will take me! 'Tis  
yourself  
"Risk all, not I,—who let you, for I  
trust  
"In the compensating great God:  
enough!  
"I know you: when is it that you will  
come?"

"To-morrow at the day's dawn."  
Then I heard  
What I should do: how to prepare for  
flight  
And where to fly.

That night my husband bade  
—"You, whom I loathe, beware you  
break my sleep  
"This whole night! Couch beside me  
like the corpse  
"I would you were!" The rest you  
know, I think—  
How I found Caponsacchi and escaped.

And this man, men call sinner? Jesus  
Christ!  
Of whom men said, with mouths Thy-  
self mad'st once,  
"He hath a devil"—say he was Thy  
saint,  
My Caponsacchi! Shield and show—  
unshroud  
In Thine own time the glory of the soul  
If aught obscure,—if ink-spot, from  
vile pens  
Scribbling a charge against him—(I was  
glad  
Then, for the first time, that I could  
not write)—  
Flirted his way, have flecked the blaze!

For me,  
'Tis otherwise: let men take, sift my  
thoughts  
—Thoughts I throw like the flax for  
sun to bleach!  
I did think, do think, in the thought  
shall die,  
That to have Caponsacchi for my guide,  
Ever the face upturned to mine, the  
hand  
Holding my hand across the world,—a  
sense  
That reads, as only such can read, the  
mark  
God sets on woman, signifying so  
She should—shall peradventure—be  
divine;  
Yet 'ware, the while, how weakness  
mars the print  
And makes confusion, leaves the thing  
men see,  
—Not this man,—who from his own  
soul, re-writes  
The obliterated charter,—love and  
strength  
Mending what's marred: "So kneels  
a votarist,  
"Weeds some poor waste traditionary  
plot  
"Where shrine once was, where temple  
yet may be,

"Purging the place but worshipping  
the while,  
"By faith and not by sight, sight clear-  
est so,—  
"Such way the saints work,"—says  
Don Celestine.  
But I, not privileged to see a saint  
Of old when such walked earth with  
crown and palm,  
If I call "saint" what saints call some-  
thing else—  
The saints must bear with me, impute  
the fault  
To a soul i' the bud, so starved by ig-  
norance,  
Stinted of warmth, it will not blow this  
year  
Nor recognise the orb which Spring-  
flowers know.  
But if meanwhile some insect with a  
heart  
Worth floods of lazy music, spendthrift  
joy—  
Some firefly renounced Spring for my  
dwarfed cup,  
Crept close to me with lustre for the  
dark,  
Comfort against the cold,—what  
though excess  
Of comfort should miscall the creature  
—sun?  
What did the sun to hinder while harsh  
hands  
Petal by petal, crude and colourless,  
Tore me? This one heart brought me  
all the Spring!

Is all told? There's the journey: and  
where's time  
To tell you how that heart burst out in  
shine?  
Yet certain points do press on me too  
hard.  
Each place must have a name, though  
I forget:  
How strange it was—there where the  
plain begins  
And the small river mitigates its flow—  
When eve was fading fast, and my soul  
sank,  
And he divined what surge of bitter-  
ness,  
In overtaking me, would float me back  
Whence I was carried by the striding  
day—  
So,— "This grey place was famous  
once," said he—

And he began that legend of the place  
As if in answer to the unspoken fear,  
And told me all about a brave man  
dead,  
Which lifted me and let my soul go on!  
How did he know too,—at that town's  
approach  
By the rock-side,—that in coming near  
the signs,  
Of life, the house-roofs and the church  
and tower,  
I saw the old boundary and wall o' the  
world  
Rise plain as ever round me, hard and  
cold,  
As if the broken circlet joined again,  
Tightened itself about me with no  
break,—  
As if the town would turn Arezzo's  
self,—  
The husband there,—the friends my  
enemies,  
All ranged against me, not an avenue  
I try, but would be blocked and drive  
me back  
On him,—this other, . . . oh the heart  
in that!  
Did not he find, bring, put into my  
arms  
A new-born babe?—and I saw faces  
beam  
Of the young mother proud to teach me  
joy, [prise  
And gossips round expecting my sur-  
At the sudden hole through earth that  
lets in heaven.  
I could believe himself by his strong  
will  
Had woven around me what I thought  
the world  
We went along in, every circumstance,  
Towns, flowers and faces, all things  
helped so well!  
For, through the journey, was it natural  
Such comfort should arise from first to  
last?  
As I look back, all is one milky way;  
Still bettered more, the more remem-  
bered, so  
Do new stars bud while I but search  
for old,  
And fill all gaps i' the glory, and grow  
him—  
Him I now see make the shine every-  
where.  
Even at the last when the bewildered  
flesh,



The cloud of weariness about my soul  
 Clogging too heavily, sucked down all  
 sense,—  
 Still its last voice was, "He will watch  
 and care ;  
 "Let the strength go, I am content :  
 he stays !"  
 I doubt not he did stay and care for all—  
 From that sick minute when the head  
 swam round,  
 And the eyes looked their last and died  
 on him,  
 As in his arms he caught me and, you  
 say,  
 Carried me in, that tragical red eve,  
 And laid me where I next returned to  
 life  
 In the other red of morning, two red  
 plates  
 That crushed together, crushed the time  
 between,  
 And are since then a solid fire to me,—  
 When in, my dreadful husband and the  
 world  
 Broke,—and I saw him, master, by  
 hell's right,  
 And saw my angel helplessly held back  
 By Guards that helped the malice—the  
 lamb prone,  
 The serpent towering and triumphant  
 —then  
 Came all the strength back in a sudden  
 swell,  
 I did for once see right, do right, give  
 tongue  
 The adequate protest : for a worm  
 must turn  
 If it would have its wrong observed by  
 God.  
 I did spring up, attempt to thrust aside  
 That ice-block 'twixt the sun and me,  
 lay low  
 The neutraliser of all good and truth.  
 If I sinned so,—never obey voice more  
 O' the Just and Terrible, who bids us—  
 "Bear !"  
 Not—"Stand by, bear to see my angels  
 bear !"  
 I am clear it was on impulse to serve  
 God  
 Not save myself,—no—nor my child  
 unborn !  
 Had I else waited patiently till now ?—  
 Who saw my old kind parents, silly-  
 sooth  
 And too much trustful, for their worst  
 of faults,

Cheated, brow-beaten, stripped and  
 starved, cast out  
 Into the kennel : I remonstrated,  
 Then sank to silence, for,—their woes  
 at end,  
 Themselves gone,—only I was left to  
 plague.  
 If only I was threatened and belied,  
 What matter ? I could bear it and did  
 bear ;  
 It was a comfort, still one lot for all :  
 They were not persecuted for my sake  
 And I, estranged, the single happy one.  
 But when at last, all by myself I stood  
 Obeying the clear voice which bade me  
 rise,  
 Nor for my own sake but my babe  
 unborn,  
 And take the angel's hand was sent to  
 help—  
 And found the old adversary athwart  
 the path—  
 Not my hand simply struck from the  
 angel's, but  
 The very angel's self made foul i' the  
 face  
 By the fiend who struck there,—that I  
 would not bear,  
 That only I resisted ! So, my first  
 And last resistance was invincible.  
 Prayers move God ; threats, and  
 nothing else, move men !  
 I must have prayed a man as he were  
 God  
 When I implored the Governor to right  
 My parents' wrongs : the answer was a  
 smile.  
 The Archbishop,—did I clasp his feet  
 enough,  
 Hide my face hotly on them, while I  
 told  
 More than I dared make my own  
 mother know ?  
 The profit was—compassion and a jest.  
 This time, the foolish prayers were done  
 with, right  
 Used might, and solemnized the sport  
 at once.  
 All was against the combat : vantage,  
 mine ?  
 The runaway avowed, the accomplice-  
 wife,  
 In company with the plan-contriving  
 priest ?  
 Yet, shame thus rank and patent, I  
 struck, bare,  
 At foe from head to foot in magic mail,

And off it withered, cobweb-armoury  
Against the lightning! 'T was truth  
singed the lies  
And saved me, not the vain sword nor  
weak speech!

You see, I will not have the service fail!  
I say, the angel saved me: I am safe!  
Others may want and wish, I wish nor  
want

One point o' the circle plainer, where I  
stand

Traced round about with white to front  
the world.

What of the calumny I came across,  
What o' the way to the end?—the end  
crowns all.

The judges judged aright i' the main,  
gave me

The uttermost of my heart's desire, a  
truce

From torture and Arezzo, balm for hurt  
With the quiet nuns,—God recom-  
pense the good!

Who said and sang away the ugly past.  
And, when my final fortune was re-  
vealed,

What safety while, amid my parents'  
arms,

My babe was given me! Yes, he saved  
my babe:

It would not have peeped forth, the  
bird-like thing,

Through that Arezzo noise and  
trouble: back

Had it returned nor ever let me see!  
But the sweet peace cured all, and let  
me live

And give my bird the life among the  
leaves

God meant him! Weeks and months  
of quietude,

I could lie in such peace and learn so  
much—

Begin the task, I see how needful now,  
Of understanding somewhat of my  
past,—

Know life a little, I should leave so  
soon.

Therefore, because this man restored  
my soul,

All has been right; I have gained my  
gain, enjoyed

As well as suffered,—nay, got fore-  
taste too

Of better life beginning where this  
ends—

All through the breathing-while allowed  
me thus,

Which let good premonitions reach my  
soul

Unthwarted, and benignant influence  
flow

And interpenetrate and change my  
heart,

Uncrossed by what was wicked,—nay,  
unkind.

For, as the weakness of my time drew  
nigh,

Nobody did me one disservice more,  
Spoke coldly or looked strangely, broke  
the love

[born,  
I lay in the arms of, till my boy was  
Born all in love, with naught to spoil  
the bliss

A whole long fortnight: in a life like  
mine

A fortnight filled with bliss is long and  
much.

All women are not mothers of a boy,  
Though they live twice the length of  
my whole life,

And, as they fancy, happily all the  
same.

There I lay, then, all my great fort-  
night long,

As if it would continue, broaden out  
Happily more and more, and lead to  
heaven:

Christmas before me,—was not that a  
chance?

I never realised God's birth before—  
How he grew likest God in being born.

This time I felt like Mary, had my babe  
Lying a little on my breast like hers.

So all went on till, just four days ago—  
The night and the tap.

O it shall be success  
To the whole of our poor family! My  
friends

. . . Nay, father and mother,—give me  
back my word!

They have been rudely stripped of life,  
disgraced

Like children who must needs go  
clothed too fine,

Carry the garb of Carnival in Lent:  
If they too much affected frippery,

They have been punished and submit  
themselves,

Say no word: all is over, they see God  
Who will not be extreme to mark their  
fault



Or He had granted respite : they are safe.

For that most woeful man my husband once,

Who, needing respite, still draws vital breath,

I—pardon him ? So far as lies in me, I give him for his good the life he takes, Praying the world will therefore acquiesce.

Let him make God amends,—none, none to me

Who thank him rather that, whereas strange fate

Mockingly styled him husband and me wife,

Himself this way at least pronounced divorce,

Blotted the marriage-bond : this blood of mine

Flies forth exultingly at any door, Washes the parchment white, and thanks the blow.

We shall not meet in this world nor the next,

But where will God be absent ? In His face

Is light, but in His shadow healing too : Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed !

And as my presence was importunate,—My earthly good, temptation and a snare,—

Nothing about me but drew somehow down

His hate upon me,—somewhat so excused

Therefore, since hate was thus the truth of him,—

May my evanishment for evermore Help further to relieve the heart that cast

Such object of its natural loathing forth !

So he was made ; he nowise made himself :

I could not love him, but his mother did.

His soul has never laid beside my soul ; But for the unresisting body,—thanks ! He burned that garment spotted by the flesh !

Whatever he touched is rightly ruined : plague

It caught, and disinfection it had craved

Still but for Guido ; I am saved through him

So as by fire ; to him—thanks and farewell !

Even for my babe, my boy, there's safety thence—

From the sudden death of me, I mean : we poor

Weak souls, how we endeavour to be strong !

I was already using up my life,—This portion, now, should do him such a good,

This other go to keep off such an ill ! The great life ; see, a breath and it is gone !

So is detached, so left all by itself The little life, the fact which means so much.

Shall not God stoop the kindlier to His work,

His marvel of creation, foot would crush,

Now that the hand He trusted to receive

And hold it, lets the treasure fall perforce ?

The better ; He shall have in orphanage

His own way all the clearer : if my babe

Outlive the hour—and he has lived two weeks—

It is through God who knows I am not by. [black,

Who is it makes the soft gold hair turn And sets the tongue, might lie so long at rest,

Trying to talk ? Let us leave God alone !

Why should I doubt He will explain in time

What I feel now, but fail to find the words ?

My babe nor was, nor is, nor yet shall be

Count Guido Franceschini's child at all—

Only his mother's, born of love not hate !

So shall I have my rights in after-time. It seems absurd, impossible to-day ;

So seems so much else not explained but known.

Ah ! Friends, I thank and bless you every one !

No more now : I withdraw from earth  
and man  
To my own soul, compose myself for  
God.

Well, and there is more ! Yes, my end  
of breath

Shall bear away my soul in being true !  
He is still here, not outside with the  
world,

Here, here, I have him in his rightful  
place !

'T is now, when I am most upon the  
move,

I feel for what I verily find—again  
The face, again the eyes, again, through  
all,

The heart and its immeasurable love  
Of my one friend, my only, all my own,  
Who put his breast between the spears  
and me.

Ever with Caponsacchi ! Otherwise  
Here alone would be failure, loss to me—  
How much more loss to him, with life  
debarred

From giving life, love locked from love's  
display,

The day-star stopped its task that  
makes night morn !

O lover of my life, O soldier-saint,  
No work begun shall ever pause for  
death ! [more

Love will be helpful to me more and  
I' the coming course, the new path I  
must tread,

My weak hand in thy strong hand,  
strong for that !

Tell him that if I seem without him  
now,

That's the world's insight ! Oh, he  
understands !

He is at Civita—do I once doubt  
The world again is holding us apart ?

He had been here, displayed in my be-  
half

The broad brow that reverberates the  
truth,

And flashed the word God gave him,  
back to man !

I know where the free soul is flown !  
My fate

Will have been hard for even him to  
bear :

Let it confirm him in the trust of God,  
Showing how holily he dared the deed !

And, for the rest,—say, from the deed,  
no touch

Of harm came, but all good, all happi-  
ness,

Not one faint fleck of failure ! Why  
explain ?

What I see, oh, he sees and how much  
more !

Tell him,—I know not wherefore the  
true word

Should fade and fall unuttered at the  
last—

It was the name of him I sprang to  
meet

When came the knock, the summons  
and the end.

" My great heart, my strong hand are  
back again ! "

I would have sprung to these, beckoning  
across

Murder and hell gigantic and distinct  
O' the threshold, posted to exclude me  
heaven :

He is ordained to call and I to come !  
Do not the dead wear flowers when  
dressed for God ?

Say,—I am all in flowers from head to  
foot !

Say,—not one flower of all he said and  
did,

Might seem to flit unnoticed, fade un-  
known,

But dropped a seed has grown a bal-  
sam-tree

Whereof the blossoming perfumes the  
place

At this supreme of moments ! He is a  
priest ;

He cannot marry therefore, which is  
right :

I think he would not marry if he could.  
Marriage on earth seems such a coun-  
terfeit,

Mere imitation of the inimitable :

In heaven we have the real and true  
and sure.

'T is there they neither marry nor are  
given

In marriage but are as the angels :

right,  
Oh how right that is, how like Jesus

Christ

To say that ! Marriage-making for  
the earth,

With gold so much,—birth, power,  
repute so much,

Or beauty, youth so much, in lack of  
these !

Be as the angels rather, who, apart



Or He had granted respite: they are safe.

For that most woeful man my husband once,  
Who, needing respite, still draws vital breath,

I—pardon him? So far as lies in me,  
I give him for his good the life he takes,  
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Shaming truth so!

I wonder, all the same,  
Not so much at those peasants' lack of heart:

But—Guido Franceschini, nobleman,  
Bear pain no better! Everybody knows

It used once, when my father was a boy,

To form a proper, nay, important point  
I the education of our well-born youth

To take the torture handsomely at need,

Without confessing in this clownish guise.

Each noble had his rack for private use  
And would, for the diversion of a guest

Bid it be set up in the yard of arms  
To take thereon his hour of exercise:

Command the variety stretch, strain their best,  
While friends looked on, admired my lord

'Mid tugging which had caused an ear to roar.  
Men are no longer men!

No longer Farinacci,—And advocate  
If I one more time fly from point proposed!

So, Vindicatio,—here begins the same!

Honoris causa; so we make our stand  
Honour in us had injury, we shall prove.

Or if we fail to prove such injury  
More than misprision of the fact,—win then?

It is enough, authorities declare,  
If the result, the deed in question

Be caused by confidence that injury  
Is veritable and no figment: since

What, though proved fancy afterwards, seemed fact

At the time, they argue shall cause result.

That which we do, persuaded of good,  
For what we do, hold justifiable:

The casuists bid: man, bound to do his best,  
They would not have him leave that best undone

And mean to do the worst,—though fuller light  
Show best was worst and worst would have been best.

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Making his master and all men admire.  
Indubitably, then, that master's self  
Favoured by circumstance, had done the same

Or else stood clear rebuked by his own beast.

*Adeo, ut qui honorem spernit, thus,*  
Who values his own honour not a straw—

*Et non recuperare curat, nor*  
Labours by might and main to salve its wound,

*Se ulciscendo, by revenging him,*  
*Nil differat a belluis, is a brute,*  
*Quinimo irrationabilior*

*Ipsimet belluis, nay, contrariwise,*  
Much more irrational than brutes themselves,

Should be considered, *reputetur! How?*  
If a poor animal feel honour smart,  
Taught by blind instinct nature plants in him,

Shall man,—confessed creation's master-stroke,  
Nay, intellectual glory, nay, a god,  
Nay, of the nature of my Judges here,—

Shall man prove the insensible, the block,  
The bolt o' the earth he crawls on to disgrace?

(Come, that's both solid and poetic)—man  
Derogate, live for the low tastes alone,  
Mean creeping cares about the animal life?

May Giga have remembered, nothing stings  
Fried liver out of its monotony  
Of richness like a root of fennel, chopped

Fine with the parsley: parsley-sprigs, I said—  
Was there need I should say " and fennel too? "

But no, she cannot have been so obtuse!  
To our argument! The fennel will be chopped.

From beast to man next mount we—ay but, mind,  
Still mere man, not yet Christian,—that, in time!

Not too fast, mark you! 'Tis on Heathen grounds

We next defend our act: then, fairly urge—

Shaming truth so !

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Without confessing in this clownish  
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And would, for the diversion of a guest,  
Bid it be set up in the yard of arms,  
To take thereon his hour of exercise,—  
Command the varletry stretch, strain  
their best,

While friends looked on, admired my  
lord could smile

'Mid tugging which had caused an ox  
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Men are no longer men !

—And advocates

No longer Farinacci, let men add,  
If I one more time fly from point pro-  
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best undone

And mean to do the worst,—though  
fuller light

Show best was worst and worst would  
have been best.

Act by the present light, they ask of  
man.

*Ultra quod hic non agitur*, besides  
It is not anyway our business here,

*De probatione adulterii*,  
To prove what we thought crime was  
crime indeed,

*Ad irrogandum panam*, and require  
Its punishment : such nowise do we  
seek :

*Sed ad effectum*, but 't is our concern,  
*Excusandi*, here to simply find excuse,  
*Occisorem*, for who did the killing-work,  
*Et ad illius defensionem*, (mark  
The difference !) and defend the man,  
just that.

*Quo casu levior probatio*

*Exuberaret*, to which end far lighter  
proof

Suffices than the prior case would  
claim :

It should be always harder to convict,  
In short, than to establish innocence.

Therefore we shall demonstrate first of  
all

That Honour is a gift of God to man  
Precious beyond compare,—which nat-  
ural sense

Of human rectitude and purity,—  
Which white, man's soul is born with,  
brooks no touch :

Therefore, the sensitivest spot of all,  
Woundable by a wafture breathed from  
black,

Is,—honour within honour, like the eye  
Centred i' the ball,—the honour of our  
wife.

Touch us o' the pupil of our honour,  
then,

Not actually,—since so you slay out-  
right,—

But by a gesture simulating touch,  
Presumable mere menace of such  
taint,

This were our warrant for eruptive ire  
" To whose dominion I impose no end."

(Virgil, now, should not be too difficult  
To Cinoncino,—say the early books . . .

Pen, truce to further gambols ! *Posci-  
mur* !)

Nor can revenge of injury done here  
To the honour proved the life and soul  
of us,

Be too excessive, too extravagant :  
Such wrong seeks and must have com-  
plete revenge.



Show we this, first, on the mere natural ground :

Begin at the beginning, and proceed  
Incontrovertibly. Theodoric,  
In an apt sentence Cassiodorus cites,  
Propounds for basis of all household  
law—

I hardly recollect it, but it ends,  
" Bird mates with bird, beast genders  
with his like,

" And brooks no interference : " bird  
and beast ?

The very insects . . . if they wive or  
no,

How dare I say when Aristotle doubts ?

But the presumption is they likewise  
wive,

At least the nobler sorts ; for take the  
bee

As instance,—copying King Solomon,—  
Why that displeasure of the bee to  
aught

That savours of incontinency, makes  
The unchaste a very horror to the hive ?  
Whence comes it bees obtain the  
epithet

Of *castæ apes* ? notably " the chaste ? "

Because, ingeniously saith Scaliger,  
(The young one—see his book of Table-  
talk)

" Such is their hatred of immodest act,  
" They fall upon the offender, sting to  
death."

I mind a passage much confirmative  
I' the Idyllist (though I read him Latin-  
ised) [unfit

" Why " asks a shepherd, " is this bank  
" For celebration of our vernal loves ? "

" Oh swain," returns the wiser shep-  
herdess,

" Bees swarm here, and would quick  
resent our warmth ! "

Only cold-blooded fish lack instinct  
here,

Nor gain nor guard connubiality :  
But beasts, quadrupedal, mammiferous,  
Do credit to their beasthood : witness  
him,

That Ælian cites, the noble elephant,  
(Or if not Ælian, somebody as sage)  
Who seeing much offence beneath his  
nose,

His master's friend exceed in courtesy  
The due allowance to that master's  
wife,

Taught them good manners and killed  
both at once,

Making his master and all men admire.  
Indubitably, then, that master's self  
Favoured by circumstance, had done  
the same

Or else stood clear rebuked by his own  
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*Adeo, ut qui honorem spernit*, thus,  
Who values his own honour not a  
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Much more irrational than brutes  
themselves,

Should be considered, *reputetur* ! How ?  
If a poor animal feel honour smart,

Taught by blind instinct nature plants  
in him,

Shall man,—confessed creation's mas-  
ter-stroke,

Nay, intellectual glory, nay, a god,  
Nay, of the nature of my Judges here,—

Shall man prove the insensible, the  
block,

The bolt o' the earth he crawls on to  
disgrace ?

(Come, that 's both solid and poetic)—  
man

Derogate, live for the low tastes alone,  
Mean creeping cares about the animal  
life ?

May Gigia have remembered, nothing  
stings

Fried liver out of its monotony  
Of richness like a root of fennel,  
chopped

Fine with the parsley : parsley-sprigs,  
I said—

Was there need I should say " and fen-  
nel too ? "

But no, she cannot have been so obtuse !  
To our argument ! The fennel will be  
chopped.

From beast to man next mount we—ay  
but, mind,

Still mere man, not yet Christian,—  
that, in time !

Not too fast, mark you ! 'Tis on  
Heathen grounds

We next defend our act : then, fairly  
urge—

If this were done of old, in a green tree,  
 Allowed in the Spring rawness of our  
 kind,  
 What may be licensed in the Autumn  
 dry,  
 And ripe, the latter harvest-tide of  
 man ?  
 If, with his poor and primitive half-  
 lights,  
 The Pagan, whom our devils served for  
 gods,  
 Could stigmatize the breach of mar-  
 riage-vow  
 As that which blood, blood only might  
 efface,—  
 Absolve the husband, outraged, whose  
 revenge  
 Anticipated law, plied sword himself,—  
 How with the Christian in full blaze  
 of day ?  
 Shall not he rather double penalty,  
 Multiply vengeance, than, degenerate,  
 Let privilege be minished, droop,  
 decay ?  
 Therefore set forth at large the ancient  
 law !  
 Superabundant the examples be  
 To pick and choose from. The Athen-  
 ian Code,  
 Solon's, the name is serviceable,—then,  
 The Laws of the Twelve Tables, that  
 fifteenth,—  
 " Romulus " likewise rolls out round  
 and large.  
 The Julian ; the Cornelian ; Gracchus'  
 Law :  
 So old a chime, the bells ring of them-  
 selves !  
 Spreti can set that going if he please,  
 I point you, for my part, the belfry out,  
 Intent to rise from dusk, *diluculum*,  
 Into the Christian day shall broaden  
 next.  
 First, the fit compliment to His Holi-  
 ness  
 Happily reigning : then sustain the  
 point—  
 All that was long ago declared as law  
 By the early Revelation stands con-  
 firmed  
 By Apostle and Evangelist and Saint,—  
 To wit—that Honour is the supreme  
 good.  
 Why should I baulk Saint Jerome of his  
 phrase ?  
*Ubi honor non est*, where no honour is,

*Ibi contemptus est* ; and where con-  
 tempt,  
*Ibi injuria frequens* ; and where that  
 The frequent injury, *ibi et indignatio*  
 And where the indignation, *ibi quies*  
*Nulla* ; and where there is no quietude  
 Why, *ibi*, there, the mind is often cast  
 Down from the heights where it pre-  
 posed to dwell,  
*Mens a proposito sæpe dejicitur*.  
 And naturally the mind is so cast down  
 Since harder 't is, *quum difficilius*  
*Iram cohibere*, to coerce one's wrath  
*Quam miracula facere*, than work mira-  
 acles,—  
 Saint Gregory smiles in his First Dis-  
 course :  
 Whence we infer, the ingenuous soul  
 the man  
 Who makes esteem of honour and re-  
 putation  
 Whenever honour and repute are  
 touched,  
 Arrives at term of fury and despair,  
 Loses all guidance from the reason's  
 check :  
 As in delirium, or a frenzy-fit,  
 Nor fury nor despair he satiates,—nor  
 Not even if he attain the impossible,  
 O'erturn the hinges of the universe  
 To annihilate—not whoso caused the  
 smart  
 Solely, the author simply of his pain,  
 But the place, the memory, *vituperium*  
 O' the shame and scorn : *quia*,—says  
 Solomon,  
 (The Holy Spirit speaking by his mouth  
 In Proverbs, the sixth chapter near the  
 end)  
 —Because, the zeal and fury of a man,  
*Zelus et furor viri*, will not spare,  
*Non parcat*, in the day of his revenge,  
*In die vindictæ*, nor will acquiesce,  
*Nec acquiescet*, through a person's  
 prayers,  
*Cujusdam precibus,—nec suscipiet*,  
 Nor yet take, *pro redemptione*, for  
 Redemption, *dona plurium*, gifts of  
 friends,  
 Nor money-payment to compound for  
 ache.  
 Who recognises not my client's case ?  
 Whereto, as strangely consentaneous  
 here,  
 Adduce Saint Bernard in the Epistle  
 writ  
 To Robertulus, his nephew : Too much  
 grief



*Dolor quippe nimius non deliberat,*  
Does not excogitate propriety,  
*Non verecundatur,* nor knows shame at  
all,

*Non consulit rationem,* nor consults  
Reason, *non dignitatis metuit*  
*Dammum,* nor dreads the loss of dig-  
nity ;

*Modum et ordinem,* order and the mode,  
*Ignorat,* it ignores : why, trait for trait,  
Was ever portrait limned so like the  
life ?

(By Cavalier Maratta, shall I say ?  
I hear he 's first in reputation now.)  
Yes, that of Samson in the Sacred  
Text :

That's not so much the portrait as the  
man !

Samson in Gaza was the antetype  
Of Guido at Rome : for note the Naza-  
rite !

Blinded he was,—an easy thing to bear,  
Intrepidly he took imprisonment,  
Gyves, stripes and daily labour at the  
mill :

But when he found himself, i' the pub-  
lic place,  
Destined to make the common people  
sport,

[tus  
Disdain burned up with such an impe-  
l' the breast of him that, all of him on  
fire,

*Moriatur,* roared he, let my soul's self  
die,

*Anima mea,* with the Philistines !  
So, pulled down pillar, roof, and death  
and all,

*Multosque plures interfecit,* ay,  
And many more he killed thus, *morians,*  
Dying, *quam vivus,* than in his whole  
life,

*Occiderat,* he ever killed before.  
Are these things writ for no example,  
Sirs ?

One instance more, and let me see who  
doubts !

Our Lord Himself, made up of man-  
suetude,

Sealing the sum of sufferance up, re-  
ceived

Opprobrium, contumely and buffeting  
Without complaint : but when He  
found Himself

Touched in His honour never so little  
for once,

Then outbroke indignation pent be-  
fore—

" *Honorem meum nemini dabo !* " " No,  
" My honour I to nobody will give ! "  
And certainly the example so hath  
wrought,

That whosoever, at the proper worth,  
Apprises worldly honour and repute,  
Esteems it nobler to die honoured man  
Beneath Mannaia, than live centuries  
Disgraced in the eye o' the world. We  
find Saint Paul

No recreant to this faith delivered once :  
" Far worthier were it that I died,"  
cries he,

*Expedit mihi magis mori,* " than  
" That any one should make my glory  
void,"

*Quam ut gloriam meam quis evacuet !*  
See, *ad Corinthienses* : whereupon  
Saint Ambrose makes a comment with  
much fruit,

Doubtless my Judges long since laid to  
heart,  
So I desist from bringing forward here—  
(I can't quite recollect it.)

Have I proved

*Satis superque,* both enough and to  
spare,

That Revelation old and new admits  
The natural man may effervesce in ire,  
O'erflood earth, o'erfroth heaven with  
foamy rage,

At the first puncture to his self-respect ?  
Then, Sirs, this Christian dogma, this  
law-bud

Full-blown now, soon to bask the  
absolute flower

Of Papal doctrine in our blaze of day,—  
Bethink you, shall we miss one promise-  
streak,

One doubtful birth of dawn crepuscular,  
One dew-drop comfort to humanity,  
Now that the chalice teems with  
noonday wine ?

Yea, argue Molinists who bar revenge—  
Referring just to what makes out our  
case !

Under old dispensation, argue they,  
The doom of the adulterous wife was  
death,

Stoning by Moses' law. " Nay, stone  
her not, [Lord ;

" Put her away ! " next legislates our  
And last of all, " Nor yet divorce a  
wife ! "

Ordains the Church, " she typifies our-  
self,

The Bride no fault shall cause to fall  
from Christ."

Then, as no jot nor tittle of the Law  
Has passed away—which who pre-  
sumes to doubt?

As not one word of Christ is rendered  
vain—

Which, could it be though heaven and  
earth should pass?

—Where do I find my proper punish-  
ment

For my adulterous wife, I humbly ask  
Of my infallible Pope,—who now remits  
Even the divorce allowed by Christ in  
lieu

Of lapidation Moses licensed me?

The Gospel checks the Law which  
throws the stone,

The Church tears the divorce-bill Gos-  
pel grants,

The wife sins and enjoys impunity!

What profits me the fulness of the days,

The final dispensation, I demand,

Unless Law, Gospel, and the Church  
subjoin

"But who hath barred thee primitive  
revenge,

"Which, like fire damped and dammed  
up, burns more fierce? [man,

"Use thou thy natural privilege of

"Else wert thou found like those old  
ingrate Jews,

"Despite the manna-banquet on the  
board,

"A-longing after melons, cucumbers

"And such like trash of Egypt left be-  
hind!"

(There was one melon, had improved  
our soup,

But did not Cinoncinio need the rind

To make a boat with? So I seem to  
think.)

Law, Gospel and the Church—from  
these we leap

To the very last revelation, easy rule  
Befitting the well-born and thorough-  
bred

O' the happy day we live in,—not the  
dark

O' the early rude and acorn-eating race.

"Behold," quoth James, "we bridle  
in a horse

"And turn his body as we would there-  
by!"

Yea, but we change the bit to suit the  
growth,

And rasp our colt's jaw with a rugged  
spike

We hasten to remit our managed steed  
Who wheels round at persuasion of a  
touch.

Civilisation bows to decency,  
The acknowledged use and wont, the  
manners,—mild

But yet imperative law,—which make  
the man.

Thus do we pay the proper compliment  
To rank, and that society of Rome,

Hath so obliged us by its interest,

Taken our client's part instinctively,

As unaware defending its own cause.

What *dictum* doth Society lay down

I' the case of one who hath a faithless  
wife?

Wherewithal should the husband  
cleanse his way?

Be patient and forgive? Oh, language  
fails—

Shrinks from depicting his punish-  
ment!

For if wronged husband raise not hue  
and cry,

*Quod si maritus de adulterio non*

*Conquereretur*, he's presumed a—foh!

*Presumitur leno*: so, complain he must.

But how complain? At your tri-  
bunal, lords?

Far weightier challenge suits your sense,  
I wot!

You sit not to have gentlemen propose  
Questions gentility can itself discuss.

Did not you prove that to our brother  
Paul?

The Abate, *quum judicialiter*

*Prosequeretur*, when he tried the law,

*Guidonis causam*, in Count Guido's case,

*Accidit ipsi*, this befell himself,

*Quod risum moverit et cachinnos*, that

He moved to mirth and cachinnation,  
all

Or nearly all, *fere in omnibus*

*Etiam sensatis et cordatis*, men

Strong-sensed, sound-hearted, nay, the  
very Court,

*Ipsismet in iudicibus*, I might add,

*Non tamen dicam*. In a cause like this,

So multiplied were reasons *pro* and *con*,

Delicate, intertwined and obscure,

That law were shamed to lend a finger-  
tip

To unravel, readjust the hopeless twine,

While, half-a-dozen steps outside the  
Court,



There stood a foolish trifler with a tool  
A-dangle to no purpose by his side,  
Had clearly cut the tangle in a trice.  
*Asserunt enim unanimiter*  
Doctores, for the Doctors all assert,  
Thus husbands, *quod mariti*, must be  
held

*Viles, cornuti reputantur*, wife  
And branching forth a florid infamy,  
*Si propriis manibus*, if with their own  
hands,  
*Non sumunt*, they take not straightway  
revenge,

*Vindictam*, but expect the deed be done  
By the Court—*expectant illam fieri*  
*Perjudices, qui summopere rident*, which  
Gives an enormous guffaw for reply,  
*Et cachinnantur*. For he ran away,  
*Deliquit enim*, just that he might  
'scape

The censure of both counsellors and  
crowd,

*Ut vulgi et Doctorum evitaret*  
*Censuram*, and lest so he superadd  
To loss of honour ignominy too,  
*Et sic ne istam quoque ignominiam*  
*Amisso honori superadderet*.

My lords, my lords, the inconsiderate  
step [all!

Was—we referred ourselves to law at  
Twit me not with, "Law else had pun-  
ished you!"

Each punishment of the extra-legal  
step,

To which the high-born preferably re-  
vert,

Is ever for some oversight, some slip  
I' the taking vengeance, not for ven-  
geance' self.

A good thing done unhandsomely turns  
ill;

And never yet lacked ill the law's re-  
buke.

For pregnant instance, let us contem-  
plate

The luck of Leonardus,—see at large  
Of Sicily's Decisions sixty-first.

This Leonard finds his wife is false:  
what then?

He makes her own son snare her, and  
entice

Out of the town-walls to a private walk,  
Wherein he slays her with cominodity.

They find her body half-devoured by  
dogs:

Leonard is tried, convicted, punished,  
sent

To labour in the galleys seven years  
long:

Why? For the murder? Nay, but  
for the mode!

*Malus modus occidendi*, ruled the  
Court,

An ugly mode of killing, nothing more!  
Another fructuous sample,—see "*De*

*Re*  
"*Criminali*," in Matthæus' divine  
piece.

Another husband, in no better plight,  
Simulates absence, thereby tempts the  
wife;

On whom he falls, out of sly ambuscade,  
Backed by a brother of his, and both of  
them

Armed to the teeth with arms that law  
had blamed.

*Nimis dolose*, overwilily,  
*Fuisse operatum*, was it worked,

Pronounced the law: had all been  
fairly done [did,

Law had not found him worthy, as she  
Of four years' exile. Why cite more?  
Enough

Is good as a feast—(unless a birthday-  
feast

For one's Cinuccio: so, we'll finish  
here)

My lords, we rather need defend our-  
selves

Inasmuch as for a twinkling of an eye  
We hesitatingly appealed to law,—

Rather than deny that, on mature  
advice,

We blushing bethought us, bade re-  
venge

Back to the simple proper private way  
Of decent self-dealt gentlemanly death.

Judges, there is the law, and this be-  
side,

The testimony! Look to it!  
Pause and breathe!

So far is only too plain; we must  
watch,

Bottini will scarce hazard an attack  
Here: let 's anticipate the fellow's

play,  
And guard the weaker places—warily

ask,  
What if considerations of a sort,

Reasons of a kind, arise from out the  
strange

Peculiar unforeseen new circumstance  
Of this our (candour owns) abnormal

act,

To bar the right of us revenging so ?  
 " Impunity were otherwise your meed :  
 " Go slay your wife and welcome,"—  
     may be urged,—  
 " But why the innocent old couple  
     slay,  
 " Pietro, Violante ? You may do  
     enough,  
 " Not too much, not exceed the golden  
     mean :  
 " Neither brute-beast nor Pagan, Gen-  
     tile, Jew,  
 " Nor Christian, no nor votarist of the  
     mode,  
 " Were free at all to push revenge so  
     far !"

No, indeed ? Why, thou very sciolist !  
 The actual wrong, Pompilia seemed to  
     do,

Was virtual wrong done by the parents  
     here—

Imposing her upon us as their child—  
 Themselves allow : then, her fault was  
     their fault,

Her punishment be theirs accordingly !  
 But wait a little, sneak not off so soon !  
 Was this cheat solely harm to Guido,  
     pray ?

The precious couple you call innocent,—  
 Why, they were felons that law failed  
     to clutch,

*Qui ut fraudarent*, who that they might  
     rob,

*Legitime vocatos*, folks law called,  
*Ad fidei commissum*, true heirs to the  
     Trust,

*Partum supposuerunt*, feigned this  
     birth,

*Immemores reos factos esse*, blind  
 To the fact that, guilty, they incurred  
     thereby,

*Ultimi supplicii*, hanging or aught  
     worse.

Do you blame us that we turn law's  
     instruments

Not mere self-seekers,—mind the public  
     weal,

Nor make the private good our sole con-  
     cern ?

That having—shall I say—secured a  
     thief,

Not simply we recover from his pouch  
 The stolen article our property,  
 But also pounce upon our neighbour's  
     purse

We opportunely find reposing there,

And do him justice while we right our-  
     selves ?

He owes us, for our part, a drubbing  
     say,

But owes our neighbour just a dance i'  
     the air

Under the gallows : so we throttle him.  
 The neighbour 's Law, the couple are  
     the Thief,

We are the over-ready to help Law—  
 Zeal of her house hath eaten us up : for  
     which,

Can it be, Law intends to eat up us,  
*Crudum Priamum*, devour poor Priam  
     raw,

('T was Jupiter's own joke) with babes  
     to boot,

*Priamique pisinnos*, in Homeric phrase ?  
 Shame !—and so ends the period  
     prettily.

But even,—prove the pair not culp-  
     able,

Free as unborn babe from connivance  
     at,

Participation in, their daughter's fault :  
 Ours the mistake. Is that a rare  
     event ?

*Non semel*, it is anything but rare,  
*In contingentia facti*, that by chance,  
*Impunes evaserunt*, go scot-free,  
*Qui*, such well-meaning people as our-  
     selves,

*Iusto dolore moti*, who aggrrieved  
 With cause, *apposuerunt manus*, lay  
 Rough hands, *in innocentes*, on wrong  
     heads.

Cite we an illustrative case in point :  
*Mulier Smirnea quædam*, good my  
     lords,

A gentlewoman lived in Smyrna once,  
*Virum et filium ex eo conceptum*, who  
 Both husband and her son begot by  
     him,

Killed, *interfecerat, ex quo*, because,  
*Vir filium suum perdiderat*, her spouse  
 Had been beforehand with her, killed  
     her son,

*Matrimonii primi*, of a previous bed.  
*Deinde accusata*, then accused,  
*Apud Dolabellam*, before him that sat  
 Proconsul, *nec duabus cædibus*

*Contaminatam liberare*, nor  
 To liberate a woman doubly-dyed  
 With murder, *voluit*, made he up his  
     mind,

*Nec condemnare*, nor to doom to death.



*Iusto dolore impulsam*, one impelled  
By just grief, *sed remisit*, but sent her

up  
*Ad Areopagum*, to the Hill of Mars,  
*Sapientissimorum judicum*  
*Catum*, to that assembly of the sage  
Paralleled only by my judges here;  
*Ubi, cognita de causa*, where, the cause  
Well weighed, *responsum est*, they gave  
reply,

*Ut ipsa et accusator*, that both sides  
O' the suit, *redirent*, should come back  
again,

*Post centum annos*, after a hundred  
years,

For judgment; *et sic*, by which sage  
decree,

*Duplici parricidio rea*, one  
Convicted of a double parricide,  
*Quamvis etiam innocentem*, though in  
truth

Out of the pair, one innocent at least  
She, *occidisset*, plainly had put to death,  
*Undequaque*, yet she altogether  
'scaped,

*Evasit impunis*. See the case at length  
In Valerius, fittingly styled *Maximus*,  
That eighth book of his Memorable  
Facts.

Nor Cyriacus cites beside the mark:  
*Similiter uxor quæ mandaverat*,  
Just so, a lady who had taken care,  
*Homicidium viri*, that her lord be killed,  
*Ex denegatione debiti*,  
For denegation of a certain debt,  
*Matrimonialis*, he was loth to pay,  
*Fuit pecuniaria mulcta*, was  
Amerced in a pecuniary mulct,  
*Punita, et ad pœnam*, and to pains,  
*Temporalem*, for a certain space of time,  
*In monasterio*, in a convent.

Ay,

*In monasterio!* How he manages  
In with the ablative, the accusative!  
I had hoped to have hitched the vil-  
lain into verse

For a gift, this very day, a complete list  
O' the prepositions each with proper  
case,

Telling a story, long was in my head.  
What prepositions take the accusa-  
tive?

*Ad* to or at—*who saw the cat?*—down to  
*Ob*, for, because of, *keep her claws off!*  
Ah,

Law in a man takes the whole liberty!

The muse is fettered,—just as Ovid  
found!

And now, sea widens and the coast is  
clear.

What of the dubious act you bade ex-  
cuse?

Surely things brighten, brighten, till at  
length

Remains—so far from act that needs  
defence—

Apology to make for act delayed

One minute, let alone eight mortal  
months

Of hesitation! "Why procrastinate?"  
(Out with it my Bottinius, ease thy-  
self!)

"Right, promptly done, is twice right:  
right delayed

"Turns wrong. We grant you should  
have killed your wife,

"But on the moment, at the meeting  
her

"In company with the priest: then  
did the tongue

"O' the Brazen Head give licence,  
'Time is now!'

"You make your mind up: 'Time is  
past' it peals.

"Friend, you are competent to mas-  
tery

"O' the passions that confessedly ex-  
plain

"An outbreak,—yet allow an interval,  
"And then break out as if time's clock  
still clanged.

"You have forfeited your chance, and  
flat you fall

"Into the commonplace category

"Of men bound to go softly all their  
days,

"Obeying law."

Now, which way make response?  
What was the answer Guido gave, him-  
self?

—That so to argue came of ignorance  
How honour bears a wound: "For,  
wound," said he,

"My body, and the smart is worst at  
first.

"While, wound my soul where honour  
sits and rules,

"Longer the sufferance, stronger grows  
the pain,

"'T is *ex incontinenti*, fresh as first."  
But try another tack, calm common  
sense

By way of contrast : as—Too true, my lords !

We did demur, awhile did hesitate :

Yet husband sure should let a scruple speak

Ere he slay wife,—for his own safety, lords !

Carpers abound in this misjudging world.

Moreover, there 's a nicety in law

That seems to justify them should they carp :

Suppose the source of injury a son,—  
Father may slay such son yet run no risk :

Why graced with such a privilege ?  
Because

A father so incensed with his own child,  
Or must have reason, or believe he has :

*Quia semper*, seeing that in such event,  
*Presumitur*, the law is bound suppose,

*Quod capiat pater*, that the sire must take,

*Bonum consilium pro filio*,

The best course as to what befits his boy,

Through instinct, *ex instinctu*, of mere love,

*Amoris*, and, *paterni*, fatherhood ;

*Quam confidentiam*, which confidence,

*Non habet*, law declines to entertain,

*De viro*, of the husband : where has he

An instinct that compels him love his wife ?

Rather is he presumably her foe :

So, let him ponder long in this bad world

Ere do the simplest act of justice,

But

Again—and here we brush Bottini's breast—

Object you, " See the danger of delay !

" Suppose a man murdered my friend last month :

" Had I come up and killed him for his pains

" In rage, I had done right, allows the law :

" I meet him now and kill him in cold blood,

" I do wrong, equally allows the law :

" Wherein do actions differ, yours and mine ? "

*In plenitudine intellectus es ?*

Hast thy wits, Fisc ? To take such slayer's life,

Returns it life to thy slain friend at all ?  
Had he stolen ring instead of stabbing friend,—

To-day, to-morrow or next century,  
Meeting the thief, thy ring upon his thumb,

Thou justifiably hadst wrung it thence :  
So, couldst thou wrench thy friend's life back again,

Though prisoned in the bosom of his foe,

Why, law would look complacent on thy rush.

Our case is, that the thing we lost, we found :

The honour, we were robbed of eight months since,

Being recoverable at any day

By death of the delinquent. Go thy ways !

Ere thou hast learned law, will be much to do,

As said the rustic while he shod the goose.

Nay, if you urge me, interval was none !  
From the inn to the villa—blank or

else a bar

Of adverse and contrarious incident

Solid between us and our just revenge !

What with the priest who flourishes his blade,

The wife who like a fury flings at us,

The crowd—and then the capture, the appeal

To Rome, the journey there, the journey thence, [ites,

The shelter at the House of Convert-

The visits to the Villa, and so forth,

Where was one minute left us all this while

To put in execution that revenge

We planned o' the instant ?—as it were, plumped down

A round sound egg, o' the spot, some eight months since,

Rome, more propitious than our nest, should hatch !

Object not, " You reached Rome on Christmas-eve,

" And, despite liberty to act at once,

" Waited a week—indecorous delay ! "

Hath so the Molinism-canker, lords,  
Eaten to the bone ? Is no religion left ?

No care for aught held holy by the Church ?



What, would you have us skip and miss  
those Feasts

O' the Natal Time, must we go prose-  
cute

Secular business on a sacred day?

Should not the merest charity expect,  
Setting our poor concerns aside for  
once,

We hurried to the song matutinal  
I' the Sistine, and pressed forward for  
the Mass

The Cardinal that 's Camerlengo  
chants,

Then rushed on to the blessing of the  
Hat

And Rapier, which the Pope sends to  
what prince

Has done most detriment to the Infidel—

And thereby whet our courage if 't  
were blunt?

Meantime, allow we kept the house a  
week,

Suppose not we were idle in our mew:  
Picture Count Guido raging here and  
there—

" ' Money ? ' I need none—' Friends ? '  
The word is null.

" Match me the white was on that  
shield of mine

" Borne at " . . . wherever might be  
shield to bear ;

" I see my grandsire, he who fought so  
well

" At " . . . here find out and put in  
time and place

Of what might be a fight his grandsire  
fought :

" I see this—I see that— "

See to it all,  
Or I shall scarce see lamb's fry in an  
hour !

—Nod to the uncle, as I bid advance  
The smoking dish, " This, for your  
tender teeth !

" Behoves us care a little for our kin—  
" You, Sir,—who care so much for  
cousinship

" As come to your poor loving nephew's  
feast ! "

He has the reversion of a long lease yet—  
Land to bequeath ! He loves lamb's  
fry, I know !

Here fall to be considered those same  
six

Qualities ; what Bottini needs must  
call

So many aggravations of our crime,  
Parasite-growth upon mere murder's  
back.

We summarily might dispose of such  
By some off-hand and jaunty fling,  
some skit—

" So, since there's proved no crime to  
aggravate,

" A fico for your aggravations, Fisc ! "  
No,—handle mischief rather,—play  
with spells

Were meant to raise a spirit, and laugh  
the while

We show that did he rise we are his  
match !

Therefore, first aggravation : we made  
up—

Over and above our simple murdering  
selves—

A regular assemblage of armed men,  
*Coadunatio armatorum*,—ay,

Unluckily it was the very judge

Who sits in judgment on our cause to-  
day

That passed the law as Governor of  
Rome :

" Four men armed,"—though for law-  
ful purpose, mark !

Much more for an acknowledged crime,  
—" shall die."

We five were armed to the teeth, meant  
murder too ?

Why, that 's the very point that saves  
us, Fisc !

Let me instruct you. Crime nor done  
nor meant,—

You punish still who arm and con-  
gregate :

For why have used bad means to a  
good end ?

Crime being meant not done,—you  
punish still [upon,

The means to crime, you haply pounce  
Though circumstance have baulked you  
of their end :

But crime not only compassed but com-  
plete,

Meant and done too ? Why, since  
you have the end,

Be that your sole concern, nor mind  
those means

No longer to the purpose ! Murdered  
we ?

(—Which, that our luck was in the  
present case,

By way of contrast : as—Too true, my lords !  
 We did demur, awhile did hesitate :  
 Yet husband sure should let a scruple speak  
 Ere he slay wife,—for his own safety, lords !  
 Carpers abound in this misjudging world.  
 Moreover, there 's a nicety in law  
 That seems to justify them should they carp :  
 Suppose the source of injury a son,—  
 Father may slay such son yet run no risk :  
 Why graced with such a privilege ?  
 Because  
 A father so incensed with his own child,  
 Or must have reason, or believe he has :  
*Quia semper*, seeing that in such event,  
*Presumitur*, the law is bound suppose,  
*Quod capiat pater*, that the sire must take,  
*Bonum consilium pro filio*,  
 The best course as to what befits his boy,  
 Through instinct, *ex instinctu*, of mere love,  
*Amoris*, and, *paterni*, fatherhood ;  
*Quam confidentiam*, which confidence,  
*Non habet*, law declines to entertain,  
*De viro*, of the husband : where has he  
 An instinct that compels him love his wife ?  
 Rather is he presumably her foe :  
 So, let him ponder long in this bad world  
 Ere do the simplest act of justice,

But  
 Again—and here we brush Bottini's breast—  
 Object you, " See the danger of delay !  
 " Suppose a man murdered my friend last month :  
 " Had I come up and killed him for his pains  
 " In rage, I had done right, allows the law :  
 " I meet him now and kill him in cold blood,  
 " I do wrong, equally allows the law :  
 " Wherein do actions differ, yours and mine ? "  
*In plenitudine intellectus es ?*  
 Hast thy wits, Fisc ? To take such slayer's life,

Returns it life  
 Had he stole friend,—  
 To-day, to-m  
 Meeting the thumb,  
 Thou justitia  
 So, couldst life-bac  
 Though pris  
 foe,  
 Why, law v  
 thy rus  
 Our case is,  
 found :  
 The honour  
 month  
 Being reco  
 By death  
 ways !  
 Ere thou h  
 to do,  
 As said th  
 goose.

Nay, if you  
 From the  
 else a  
 Of advers  
 Solid betw  
 What with  
 blade  
 The wife  
 The crow  
 appe  
 To Rome  
 ney  
 The shel  
 The visit  
 Where w  
 whil  
 To put in  
 We plan  
 plur  
 A round  
 eigh  
 Rome,  
 sho  
 Object  
 Ch  
 " And,  
 " Wait  
 Hath s  
 Eaten  
 let  
 No ca  
 Cl

Haste we to conclude  
 Of the other points that favour, leave  
 some few  
 For Spreni ; such as the delapsion  
 youth :  
 One of them falls short, by some means  
 of age  
 Fit to be managed by the gallow ;  
 May plead exemption from our law  
 award,  
 Being foreigners, subjects of the G  
 duke—  
 I spare that bone to Spreni and cover  
 Myself the juicier breast of argum  
 Flung the breast-blade if the law  
 the Fisc,  
 Who furnished me the tid-bit : he m  
 needs  
 Play off his armoury and rack the  
 And they, at instance of the rack  
 fessed  
 All four unanimously did resolve  
 That night of the murder, in broad m  
 utes snatched  
 Behind the back of Guido as he sh  
 That, since he had not kept his prom  
 ise, paid  
 The money for the murder on the spot  
 And, reaching home again, might ne  
 ignore  
 The past or pay it in improper  
 They one and all resolved, these lay  
 ful friends,  
 They would inaugurate the murder  
 light,  
 Having recruited strength with wine  
 rest,  
 By killing Guido as he lay asleep  
 Pillowed by wallet which contain  
 their fee.

I thank the Fisc for knowledge of the  
 fact :  
 What fact could hope to make man  
 manifest  
 Their rectitude, Guido's integrity  
 For who fails recognise apparent  
 That these poor rustics bore no  
 hate,  
 Malice nor yet uncharitableness  
 Against the people they had put to  
 death ?  
 In them, did such an act reward  
 All done was to deserve their  
 pay,  
 Obtain the bread they earned by  
 of brow :

*Orbari*, that he chose to lose his child,  
*Quam illa incederet*, rather than she  
 walk  
 The ways an, *inhonesta*, child disgraced,  
*Licet non sponte*, though against her  
 will.  
*Occidit*—killed them, I reiterate—  
*In propria domo*, in their own abode,  
*Ut adultera et parentes*, that each wretch,  
*Conscii agnoscerent*, might both see and  
 say,  
*Nullum locum*, there's no place, *nul-*  
*lumque esse*  
*Asylum*, nor yet refuge of escape,  
*Impenetrabilem*, shall serve as bar,  
*Honori laeso*, to the wounded one  
 In honour ; *neve ibi opprobria*  
*Continuarentur*, killed them on the spot  
 Moreover, dreading lest within those  
 walls  
 The opprobrium peradventure be pro-  
 longed,  
*Et domus quæ testis fuit turpium*,  
 And that the domicile which witnessed  
 crime, [ment :  
*Esset et prænâ*, might watch punish-  
*Occidit*, killed, I round you in the ears,  
*Quia alio modo*, since by other mode,  
*Non poterat ejus existimatio*,  
 There was no possibility his fame,  
*Læsa*, gashed griesly, *tam enormiter*,  
*Ducere cicatrices*, might be healed :  
*Occidit ut exemplum præberet*  
*Uxoribus*, killed her so to lesson wives  
*Jura conjugii*, that the marriage-oath,  
*Esse servanda*, must be kept henceforth :  
*Occidit denique*, killed her, in a word,  
*Ut pro posse honestus viveret*,  
 That he, please God, might creditably  
 live,  
*Sin minus*, but if fate willed otherwise,  
*Proprii honoris*, of his outraged fame,  
*Offensi*, by Mannaia, if you please,  
*Commiseranda victima caderet*,  
 The pitiable victim he should fall !

Done ! I' the rough, i' the rough ! But  
 done ! And, lo,  
 Landed and stranded lies my very own,  
 My miracle, my monster of defence—  
 Leviathan into the nose whereof  
 I have put fish-hook, pierced his jaw  
 with thorn,  
 And given him to my maidens for a  
 play !  
 I' the rough,—to-morrow I review my  
 piece,



Haste we to conclude :  
 Of the other points that favour, leave  
 some few  
 For Spreti ; such as the delinquents'  
 youth :  
 One of them falls short, by some months,  
 of age  
 Fit to be managed by the gallows ; two  
 May plead exemption from our law's  
 award,  
 Being foreigners, subjects of the Gran-  
 duke—  
 I spare that bone to Spreti and reserve  
 Myself the juicier breast of argument—  
 Flinging the breast-blade i' the face o'  
 the Fisc,  
 Who furnished me the tid-bit : he must  
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 Play off his armoury and rack the  
 And they, at instance of the rack, con-  
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 That, since he had not kept his prom-  
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 The money for the murder on the spot,  
 And, reaching home again, might even  
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 The past or pay it in improper coin,  
 They one and all resolved, these hope-  
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 They would inaugurate the morrow's  
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 Having recruited strength with needful  
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 What fact could hope to make more  
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 For who fails recognise apparent here,  
 That these poor rustics bore no envy,  
 hate,  
 Malice nor yet uncharitableness  
 Against the people they had put to  
 death ?  
 In them, did such an act reward itself ?  
 All done was to deserve their simple  
 pay,  
 Obtain the bread they earned by sweat  
 of brow :  
 Missing this pay, they missed of every-  
 thing—  
 Hence claimed it, even at expense of  
 life  
 To their own lord, so little warped  
 were they  
 By prepossession, such the absolute  
 Instinct of equity in rustic souls !  
 While he the Count, the cultivated  
 mind,  
 He, wholly rapt in his serene regard  
 Of honour, as who contemplates the sun  
 And hardly minds what tapers blink  
 below,  
 He, dreaming of no argument for death  
 Except the vengeance worthy noble  
 hearts,  
 Would he so desecrate the deed for-  
 sooth,  
 Vulgarise vengeance, as defray its cost  
 By money dug out of the dirty earth,  
 Mere irritant, in Maro's phrase, to ill ?  
 What though he lured base minds by  
 lucre's hope,—  
 The only motive they could masticate,  
 Milk for babes, not strong meat which  
 men require ?  
 The deed done, those coarse hands were  
 soiled enough,  
 He spared them the pollution of the  
 pay.  
 So much for the allegement, thine, my  
 Fisc,  
*Quo nil absurdius*, than which naught  
 more mad,  
*Excogitari potest*, may be squeezed  
 From out the cogitative brain of thee !  
 And now, thou excellent the Governor !  
 (Push to the peroration) *cæterum*  
*Enixe supplico*, I strive in prayer,  
*Ut dominis meis*, that unto the Court,  
*Benigna fronte*, with a gracious brow,  
*Et oculis serenis*, and mild eyes,  
*Perpendere placeat*, it may please them  
 weigh,  
*Quod dominus Guido*, that our noble  
 Count,  
*Occidit*, did the killing in dispute,  
*Ut ejus honor tumultatus*, that  
 The honour of him buried fathom-deep  
 In infamy, in *infamia*, might arise,  
*Resurgeret*, as ghosts break sepulchre !  
*Occidit*, for he killed, *uxorem*, wife,  
*Quia illi fuit*, since she was to him,  
*Opprobrio*, a disgrace and nothing more !  
*Et genitores*, killed her parents too,

*Qui*, who, *postposita verecundia*,  
Having thrown off all sort of decency,  
*Filium repudiavit*, had renounced  
Their daughter, *atque declarare non*  
*Erubuerunt*, nor felt blush tinge cheek,  
Declaring, *meretricis genitam*  
*Esse*, she was the offspring of a drab,  
*Ut ipse dehonestaretur*, just  
That so himself might lose his social  
rank!

*Cujus mentem*, and which daughter's  
heart and soul,  
They, *perverterunt*, turned from the  
right course,

*Et ad illicitos amores non*  
*Dumtaxat pellexerunt*, and to love  
Not simply did alluringly incite,  
*Sed vi obedientiæ*, but by force  
O' the duty, *filialis*, daughters owe,  
*Coegerunt*, forced and drove her to the  
deed:

*Occidit*, I repeat he killed the clan,  
*Ne scilicet amplius in dedecore*,  
Lest peradventure longer life might  
trail,

*Viveret*, link by link his turpitude,  
*Inviset consanguineis*, hateful so  
To kith and kindred, *a nobilibus*  
*Notatus*, shunned by men of quality,  
*Relictus ab amicis*, left i' the lurch  
By friends, *ab omnibus derisus*, turned  
A common hack-block to try edge of  
jokes.

*Occidit*, and he killed them here in  
Rome,

*In Urbe*, the Eternal City, Sirs,  
*Nempe quæ alias spectata est*,  
The appropriate theatre which wit-  
nessed once,

*Matronam nobilem*, Lucretia's self,  
*Abluere pudicitiae maculas*,  
Wash off the spots of her pudicity,  
*Sanguine proprio*, with her own pure  
blood;

*Quæ vidit*, and which city also saw,  
*Patrem*, Virginius, *undequaque*, quite,  
*Impunem*, with no sort of punishment,  
Nor, *et non i' laudatum*, lacking praise,  
*Sed pollutentem parricidio*,  
Imbrue his hands with butchery, *filia*,  
Of chaste Virginia, to avail a rape,  
*Ne raperetur ad stupra*; so to heart,  
*Tanti illi cordi fuit*, did he take,  
*Suspicio*, the mere fancy men might  
have,

*Honoris amittendi*, of fame's loss,  
*Ut potius voluerit filia*

*Orbari*, that he chose to lose his child,  
*Quam illa incederet*, rather than she  
walk

The ways an, *inhonesta*, child disgraced,  
*Licet non sponte*, though against her  
will.

*Occidit*—killed them, I reiterate—  
*In propria domo*, in their own abode,  
*Ut adultera et parentes*, that each wretch,  
*Conscii agnoscerent*, might both see and  
say,

*Nullum locum*, there's no place, *nil-  
lumque esse*

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My miracle, my monster of defence—  
Leviathan into the nose whereof

I have put fish-hook, pierced his jaw  
with thorn,

And given him to my maidens for a  
play!

I' the rough,—to-morrow I review my  
piece,



Tame here and there undue floridity,—  
 It's hard: you have to plead before  
 these priests  
 And poke at them with Scripture, or  
 you pass  
 For heathen and, what's worse, for  
 ignorant  
 O' the quality o' the Court and what it  
 likes  
 By way of illustration of the law:  
 To-morrow stick in this, and throw out  
 that,  
 And, having first ecclesiasticised,  
 Regularise the whole, next emphasise,  
 Then latinise and lastly Cicero-ise,  
 Giving my Fisc his finish. There's  
 my speech—  
 And where's my fry, and family and  
 friends?  
 Where's that old Hyacinth I mean to  
 hug  
 Till he cries out, "*Jam satis!* Let me  
 breathe!"  
 Oh, what an evening have I earned to-  
 day!  
 Hail, ye true pleasures, all the rest are  
 false!  
 Oh, the old mother, oh, the fattish wife!  
 Rogue Hyacinth shall put on paper  
 toque,  
 And wrap himself around with mam-  
 ma's veil  
 Done up to imitate papa's black robe,  
 (I'm in the secret of the comedy,—  
 Part of the program leaked out long  
 ago!)  
 And call himself the Advocate o' the  
 Poor,  
 Mimic Don father that defends the  
 Count,  
 And for reward shall have a small full  
 glass  
 Of manly red rosolio to himself,  
 —Always provided that he conjugate  
*Bibo*, I drink, correctly—nor be found  
 Make the *perfectum*, *bipsi*, as last year!  
 How the ambitious do so harden heart  
 As lightly hold by these home-sancti-  
 tudes,  
 To me is matter of bewilderment—  
 Bewilderment! Because ambition's  
 range  
 Is nowise tethered by domestic tie:  
 Am I refused an outlet from my home  
 To the world's stage?—whereon a man  
 should play  
 The man in public, vigilant for law,

Zealous for truth, a credit to his kind,  
 Nay,—through the talent so employed  
 as yield  
 The Lord his own again with usury,—  
 A satisfaction, yea, to God Himself!  
 Well, I have modelled me by Agur's  
 wish,  
 "Remove far from me vanity and lie."  
 "Feed me with food convenient for  
 me!" What  
 I' the world should a wise man require  
 beyond?  
 Can I but coax the good fat little wife  
 To tell her fool of a father of the prank  
 His scapegrace nephew played this  
 time last year  
 At Carnival,—he could not choose, I  
 think,  
 But modify that inconsiderate gift  
 O' the cup and cover (somewhere in the  
 will  
 Under the pillow, someone seems to  
 guess)  
 —Correct that clause in favour of a boy  
 The trifle ought to grace with name en-  
 graved  
 (Would look so well produced in years  
 to come  
 To pledge a memory when poor  
 papa  
 Latin and law are long since laid at  
 rest)  
*Hyacintho dono dedit avus*,—why,  
 The wife should get a necklace for her  
 pains,  
 The very pearls that made Violante  
 proud,  
 And Pietro pawned for half their value  
 once,—  
 Redeemable by somebody—*ne sit*  
*Marita quæ rotundioribus*  
*Onusta mammis . . . baccis ambulet*,  
 Her bosom shall display the big round  
 balls,  
 No braver should be borne by wedded  
 wife!  
 With which Horatian promise I con-  
 clude.  
 Into the pigeon-hole with thee, my  
 speech!  
 Off and away, first work then play,  
 play, play!  
 Bottini, burn your books, you blazing  
 ass!  
 Sing "*Tra-la-la*, for, lambkins, we must  
 live!"

IX

JURIS DOCTOR JOHANNES-BAPTISTA BOTTINIUS,

FISCI ET REV. CAM. APOSTOL. ADVOCATUS.

HAD I God's leave, how I would alter things!

If I might read instead of print my speech,—

Ay, and enliven speech with many a flower

Refuses obstinately blow in print  
As wildings planted in a prim parterre,—

This scurvy room were turned an immense hall;

Opposite, fifty judges in a row;  
This side and that of me, for audience—

Rome:  
And, where yon window is, the Pope should be—

Watch, curtained, but yet visibly enough.

A buzz of expectation! Through the crowd,

Jingling his chain and stumping with his staff,

Up comes an usher, louts him low,  
"The Court

"Requires the allocution of the Fisc!"

I rise, I bend, I look about me, pause  
O'er the hushed multitude! I count—

One, two—

Have ye seen, Judges, have ye, lights of law,—

When it may hap some painter, much in vogue

Throughout our city nutritive of arts,  
Ye summon to a task shall test his worth,

And manufacture, as he knows and can,  
A work may decorate a palace-wall,

Afford my lords their Holy Family,—  
Hath it escaped the acumen of the Court

How such a painter sets himself to paint?

Suppose that Joseph, Mary and her Babe

A-journeying to Egypt prove the piece:  
Why, first he sedulously practiseth,

This painter,—girding loin and lighting lamp,—

On what may nourish eye, make facile hand;

Getteth him studies (styled by draughts, men so)

From some assistant corpse of Jew or Turk

Or, haply, Molinist, he cuts and carves,—  
This Luca or this Carlo or the like:

To him the bones their inmost secret yield,

Each notch and nodule signify their use,  
On him the muscles turn, in triple tier,

And pleasantly entreat the entrusted man,—

"Familiarise thee with our play that  
"Thus, and thus lowers again, leg, arm

and foot!"

—Ensuring due correctness in the nude.  
Which done, is all done? Not a whit,

ye know!  
He,—to art's surface rising from her depth,—

If some flax-poll'd soft-bearded sire be found,

Maysimulate a Joseph, (happy chance!)  
Linneth exact each wrinkle of the brow,

Loseth no involution, cheek or chap,  
Till lo, in black and white, the senior lives!

Is it a young and comely peasant-nurse  
That poseth? (be the phrase accorded me!)

Each feminine delight of florid lip,  
Eyes brimming o'er and brow bowed

down with love,  
Marmoreal neck and bosom uberous,—

Glad on the paper in a trice they go  
To help his notion of the Mother-Maid:

Methinks I see it, chalk a little stumped!  
Yea and her babe—that flexure of soft

limbs,  
That budding face imbued with dewy sleep,

Contribute each an excellence to Christ.  
Nay, since he humbly lent companion-

ship,  
Even the poor ass, unpannied and elate

Stands, perks an ear up, he a model too;

While clouted shoon, staff, scrip and water-gourd,—

Aught may betoken travel, heat and haste,—

No jot nor tittle of these but in its turn  
Ministers to perfection of the piece:

Till now, such piece before him, part by part,—



Such prelude ended,—pause our painter may,  
Submit his fifty studies one by one,  
And in some sort boast "I have served my lords."

But what? And hath he painted once this while?

Or when ye cry "Produce the thing required,

"Show us our picture shall rejoice its niche,

"Thy Journey through the Desert done in oils!"—

What, doth he fall to shuffling 'mid his sheets,

Fumbling for first this, then the other  
Consigned to paper,—"studies," bear the term!

And stretch a canvas, mix a pot of paste,

And fasten here a head and there a tail,  
(The ass hath one, my Judges!) so dove-tail

Or, rather, ass-tail in, piece sorrily out—  
By bits of reproduction of the life—

The picture, the expected Family?  
I trow not! do I miss with my conceit

The mark, my lords?—not so my lords were served!

Rather your artist turns abrupt from these,

And preferably buries him and broods  
(Quite away from aught vulgar and exten-  
tern)

On the inner spectrum, filtered through the eye,

His brain-deposit, bred of many a drop,  
*E pluribus unum*: and the wiser he!

For in that brain,—their fancy sees at work,

Could my lords peep indulged,—results alone,

Not processes which nourish the result,  
Would they discover and appreciate,—life

Fed by digestion, not raw food itself,  
No gobbets but smooth comfortable chyme

Secreted from each snapped-up crudity,—

Less distinct, part by part, but in the whole

Truer to the subject,—the main central truth

And soul o' the picture, would my Judges spy,—

Not those mere fragmentary studied facts

Which answer to the outward frame and flesh—

Not this nose, not that eyebrow, the other fact

Of man's staff, woman's stole or infant's clout,

But lo, a spirit-birth conceived of flesh,  
Truth rare and real, not transcripts, fact and false.

The studies—for his pupils and himself!

The picture be for our eximious Rome  
And—who knows?—satisfy its Governor,

Whose new wing to the villa he hath bought

(God give him joy of it) by Caperna soon

('T is bruited) shall be glowing with the  
Of who hath long surpassed the Florentine,

The Urbinate and . . . what if I dared add,

Even his master, yea the Cortonese,—  
I mean the accomplished *Ciro Ferri*.

Sirs!

(—Did not he die? I'll see before I print.)

End we exordium, Phœbus plucks my ear!

Thus then, just so and no whit otherwise,

Have I,—engaged as I were *Ciro's* self,  
To paint a parallel, a Family,

The patriarch *Pietro* with his wise old wife

To boot (as if one introduced *Saint Anne*

By bold conjecture to complete the group)

And juvenile *Pompilia* with her babe,  
Who, seeking safety in the wilderness,

Were all surprised by *Herod*, while outstretched

In sleep beneath a palm-tree by a spring,

And killed—the very circumstance I paint,

Moving the pity and terror of my lords—  
Exactly so have I, a month at least,

Your *Fiscal*, made me cognisant of facts,

Searched out, pried into, pressed the meaning forth

Of every piece of evidence in point,  
How bloody Herod slew these innocents,—

Until the glad result is gained, the group  
Demonstrably presented in detail,  
Their slumber and his onslaught,—like as life.

Yea and, availing me of help allowed  
By law, discreet provision lest my lords  
Be too much troubled by effrontery,—  
The rack, law plies suspected crime withal—

(Law that hath listened while the lyrist sang

"*Lene tormentum ingenio admove,*"  
Gently thou joggest by a twinge the wit,

"*Plerumque duro,*" else were slow to blab!)

Through this concession my full cup runs o'er:

The guilty owns his guilt without reserve.

Therefore by part and part I clutch my case

Which, in entirety now,—momentous task,—

My lords demand, so render them I must,

Since, one poor pleading more and I have done.

But shall I ply my papers, play my proofs,

Parade my studies, fifty in a row,  
As though the Court were yet in pupilage

And not the artist's ultimate appeal?  
Much rather let me soar the height prescribed

And, bowing low, proffer my picture's self!

No more of proof, disproof,—such virtue was,

Such vice was never in Pompilia, now!  
Far better say "Behold Pompilia!"

—(for

I leave the family as unmanageable,  
And stick to just one portrait, but life-size.)

Hath calumny imputed to the fair  
A blemish, mole on cheek or wart on chin,

Much more, blind hidden horrors best unnamed?

Shall I descend to prove you, point by point,

Never was knock-knee known nor splay-foot found

In Phryne? (I must let the portrait go,

Content me with the model, I believe)—  
—I prove this? An indignant sweep of hand,

Dash at and doing away with drapery,  
And,—use your eyes, Athenians, smooth she smiles!

Or,—since my client can no longer smile,

And more appropriate instances abound,—

What is this Tale of Tarquin, how the slave

Was caught by him, preferred to Collatine?

Thou, even from thy corpse-clothes virginal,

Look'st the lie dead, Lucretia!

Thus at least

I, by the guidance of antiquity,  
(Our one infallible guide) now operate,

Sure that the innocency shown is safe;  
Sure, too, that, while I plead, the echoes cry

(Lend my weak voice thy trump, sonorous Fame!)

"Monstrosity the Phrynean shape shall mar,

"Lucretia's soul comport with Tarquin's lie,

"When thistles grow on vines or thorns yield figs,

"Or oblique sentence leave this judgment-seat!"

A great theme: may my strength be adequate!

For—paint Pompilia, dares my feebleness?

How did I unaware engage so much  
—Find myself undertaking to produce

A faultless nature in a flawless form?  
What's here? Oh, turn aside nor dare the blaze

Of such a crown, such constellation, say,

As jewels here thy front, Humanity!  
First, infancy, pellucid as a pearl;

Then, childhood—stone which, dew-drop at the first,

(An old conjecture) sucks, by dint of gaze,

Blue from the sky and turns to sapphire so:



Yet both these gems eclipsed by, last  
and best,  
Womanliness and wifehood opaline,  
Its milk-white pallor,—chastity,—suf-  
fused  
With here and there a tint and hint of  
flame,—  
Desire,—the lapidary loves to find.  
Such jewels bind conspicuously thy  
brow,  
Pompilia, infant, child, maid, woman,  
wife—  
Crown the ideal in our earth at last !  
What should a faculty like mine do  
here ?  
Close eyes, or else, the rashlier hurry  
hand !

Which is to say,—lose no time but be-  
gin !  
*Sermocinando ne declamem*, Sirs,  
*Ultra clepsydrum*, as our preachers say,  
Lest I exceed my hour-glass. Where-  
upon,  
As Flaccus prompts, I dare the epic  
plunge—  
Begin at once with marriage, up till  
when  
Little or nothing would arrest your  
love,  
In the careful life o' the lady ; lamb  
and lamb,  
How do they differ ? Know one, you  
know all  
Manners of maidenhood : mere maiden  
she,  
And since all lambs are like in more  
than fleece,  
Prepare to find that, lamb-like, she too  
frisks—  
O' the weaker sex, my lords, the weaker  
sex !  
To whom, the Teian teaches us, for  
gift,  
Not strength,—man's dower,—but  
beauty, nature gave,  
“ Beauty in lieu of spears, in lieu of  
shields ! ”  
And what is beauty's sure concomitant,  
Nay, intimate essential character,  
But melting wiles, deliciousest deceits,  
The whole redoubted armoury of love ?  
Therefore of vernal pranks, dishevel-  
lings  
O' the hair of youth that dances April  
in,  
And easily-imagined Hebe-slips

O'er sward which May makes over-  
smooth for foot—  
These shall we pry into ?—or wiselier  
wink,  
Though numerous and dear they may  
have been ?

For lo, advancing Hymen and his  
pomp !  
*Discedunt nunc amores*, loves, farewell !  
*Maneat amor*, let love, the sole, remain !  
Farewell to dewiness and prime of life !  
Remains the rough determined day :  
dance done,  
To work, with plough and harrow !  
What comes next ?  
'Tis Guido henceforth guides Pompilia's  
step,  
Cries “ No more friskings o'er the food-  
ful glebe,  
“ Else, ‘ware the whip ! ” Accord-  
ingly,—first crack  
O' the thong,—we hear that his young  
wife was barred,  
*Cohibita fuit*, from the old free life,  
*Vitam liberio rem ducere*.  
Demur we ? Nowise : heifer brave  
the hind ?  
We seek not there should lapse the  
natural law,  
The proper piety to lord and king  
And husband : let the heifer bear the  
yoke !  
Only, I crave he cast not patience off,  
This hind ; for deem you she endures  
the whip,  
Nor winces at the goad, nay, restive,  
kicks ?  
What if the adversary's charge be just,  
And all untowardly she pursue her way  
With groan and grunt, though hind  
strike ne'er so hard ?  
If petulant remonstrance made appeal,  
Unseasonable, o'erprotracted,—if  
Important challenge taxed the public  
ear [served  
When silence more decorously had  
For protestation,—if Pompilian plaint  
Wrought but to aggravate Guidonian  
ire,—  
Why, such mishaps, ungainly though  
they be,  
Ever companion change, are incident  
To altered modes and novelty of life :  
The philosophic mind expects no less,  
Smilingly knows and names the crisis,  
sits

Waiting till old things go and new  
arrive.

Therefore, I hold a husband but inept  
Who turns impatient at such transit-  
time,  
As if this running from the rod would  
last!

Since, even while I speak, the end is  
reached

Success awaits the soon-disheartened  
man,

The parents turn their backs and leave  
the house,

The wife may wail but none shall inter-  
vene,

He hath attained his object, groom and  
bride

Partake the nuptial bower no soul to  
see,

Old things are passed and all again is  
new,

Over and gone the obstacles to peace,  
*Novorum*—tenderly the Mantuan turns  
The expression, some such purpose in  
his eye—

*Nascitur ordo!* Every storm is laid,  
And forth from plain each pleasant  
herb may peep,  
Each bloom of wifehood in abeyance  
late:

(Confer a passage in the Canticles.)

But what if, as 't is wont with plant  
and wife,

Flowers,—after a suppression to good  
end,

Still, when they do spring forth,—  
sprout here, spread there,

Anywhere likelier than beneath the  
foot

O' the lawful good-man gardener of the  
ground?

He dug and dibbled, sowed and wa-  
tered,—still

'T is a chance wayfarer shall pluck the  
increase.

Just so, respecting persons not too  
much,

The lady, foes allege, put forth each  
charm

And proper floweret of femininity  
To whosoever had a nose to smell

Or breast to deck: what if the charge  
be true?

The fault were graver had she looked  
with choice,

Fastidiously appointed who should  
grasp,

Who, in the whole town, go without the  
prize!

To nobody she destined donative,  
But, first come was first served, the  
accuser saith

Put case her sort of . . in this kind . .  
escapes

Were many and oft and indiscriminate—  
Impute ye as the action were prepen-  
se,

The gift particular, arguing malice so?  
Which butterfly of the wide air shall  
brag

"I was preferred to Guido"—when 'tis  
clear

The cup, he quaffs at, lay with olent  
breast

Open to gnat, midge, bee and moth as  
well?

One chalice entertained the company;  
And if its peevish lord object the mora,  
Mistake, misname such bounty in a  
wife,

Haste we to advertise him—charm of  
cheek,

Lustre of eye, allowance of the lip,  
All womanly components in a spouse.  
These are no household-bread each  
stranger's bite

Leaves by so much diminished for the  
mouth

O' the master of the house at supper-  
time:

But rather like a lump of spice they lie,  
Morsel of myrrh, which scents the  
neighbourhood

Yet greets its lord no lighter by a grain.

Nay, even so, he shall be satisfied!  
Concede we there was reason in his  
wrong,

Grant we his grievance and content the  
man!

For lo, Pompilia, she submits herself;  
Ere three revolving years have crowned  
their course,

Off and away she puts this same re-  
proach

Of lavish bounty, inconsiderate gift  
O' the sweet of wifehood stored to other  
ends:

No longer shall he blame "She none  
excludes,"

But substitute "She laudably sees all,  
"Searches the best out and selects the  
same."



For who is here, long sought and latest found,  
 Waiting his turn unmoved amid the whirl,  
 " *Constans in levitate*,"—Ha, my lords ?  
 Calm in his levity,—indulge the quip !—  
 Since 'tis a Levite bears the bell away,  
 Parades him henceforth as Pompilia's choice.  
 'Tis no ignoble object, husband !  
 Doubt'st ?  
 When here comes tripping Flaccus with his phrase  
 " Trust me, no miscreant singled from the mob,  
 " *Crede non illum tibi de scelestis*  
 " *Plebe delectum*," but a man of mark,  
 A priest, dost hear ? Why then, submit thyself !  
 Priest, ay and very phoenix of such fowl,  
 Well-born, of culture, young and vigorous,  
 Comely too, since precise the precept points—  
 On the selected Levite be there found  
 Nor mole nor scar nor blemish, lest the mind  
 Come all uncandid through the thwarting flesh !  
 Was not the son of Jesse ruddy, sleek,  
 Pleasant to look on, pleasant every way ?  
 Since well he smote the harp and sweetly sang,  
 And danced till Abigail came out to see,  
 And seeing smiled and smiling ministered  
 The raisin-cluster and the cake of figs,  
 With ready meal refreshed the gifted youth,  
 Till Nabal, who was absent shearing sheep,  
 Felt heart sink, took to bed (discreetly done—  
 They might have been beforehand with him else)  
 And died—would Guido had behaved as well !  
 But ah, the faith of early days is gone,  
*Heu prisca fides !* Nothing died in him  
 Save courtesy, good sense and proper trust,  
 Which, when they ebb from souls they should o'erflow,  
 Discover stub, weed, sludge and ugliness.

(The Pope, you know, is Neapolitan  
 And relishes a sea-side simile.)  
 Deserted by each charitable wave,  
 Guido, left high and dry, shows jealous now !  
 Jealous avouched, paraded : tax the fool  
 With any peccadillo, he responds  
 " Truly I beat my wife through jealousy,  
 " Imprisoned her and punished otherwise,  
 " Being jealous : now would threaten, sword in hand,  
 " Now manage to mix poison in her sight,  
 " And so forth : jealously I dealt, in fine."  
 Concede the fact and what remains to prove ?  
 Have I to teach my masters what effect  
 Hath jealousy and how, befooling men,  
 It makes false true, abuses eye and ear,  
 Turns the mist adamant, loads with sound  
 Silence, and into void and vacancy  
 Crowds a whole phalanx of conspiring foes ?  
 Therefore who owns " I watched with jealousy [world ! ]"  
 " My wife " adds " for no reason in the  
 What need that who says " madman " should remark  
 " The thing he thought a serpent proved an eel ? "—  
 Perchance the right Comacchian, six foot length,  
 And not an inch too long for that same pie  
 (Master Arcangeli has heard of such)  
 Whose succulence makes fasting bearable ;  
 Meant to regale some moody splenetic  
 Who pleases to mistake the donor's gift,  
 And spies—I know not what Lernaean snake  
 I' the luscious Lenten creature, stamps forsooth  
 The daintiness in the dust.  
 Enough ! Prepare,  
 His lunes announced, for downright lunacy !  
*Insanit homo*, threat succeeds to threat,  
 And blow redoubles blow,—his wife, the block.  
 But, if a block, shall not she jar the hand

That buffets her? The injurious idle  
stone  
Rebounds and fits the head of him who  
flung.  
Causeless rage breeds, i' the wife now,  
rageful cause,  
Tyranny wakes rebellion from its sleep.  
Religion, say I?—rather, self-defence,  
Laudable wish to live and see good  
days,  
Pricks our Pompilia on to fly the foe  
By any means, at any price,—nay,  
more,  
Nay, most of all, i' the very interest  
Of the foe that, baffled of his blind  
desire  
At any price, is truest victor so.  
Shall he effect his crime and lose his  
soul?  
No, dictates duty to a loving wife.  
Far better that the unconsummated blow,  
Adroitly baulked by her, should back  
again,  
Correctively admonish his own pate!

Crime then,—the Court is with me?—  
she must crush;  
How crush it? By all efficacious  
means;  
And these,—why, what in woman should  
they be?  
“With horns the bull, with teeth the  
lion fights,  
“To woman,” quoth the lyrist quoted  
late,  
“Nor teeth, nor horns, but beauty,  
Nature gave!”  
Pretty i' the Pagan! Who dares blame  
the use  
Of the armoury thus allowed for  
natural,—  
Exclaim against a seeming-dubious  
play  
O' the sole permitted weapon, spear and  
shield  
Alike, resorted to i' the circumstance  
By poor Pompilia? Grant she some-  
what plied  
Arts that allure, the magic nod and  
wink,  
The witchery of gesture, spell of word,  
Whereby the likelier to enlist this  
friend,  
Yet stranger, as a champion on her  
side?  
Such, being but mere man, ('t was all  
she knew),

Must be made sure by beauty's silken  
bond,  
The weakness that subdues the strong,  
and bows  
Wisdom alike and folly. Grant the  
tale  
O' the husband, which is false, for  
proved and true  
To the letter,—or the letters, I should  
say,  
The abominations he professed to find  
And fix upon Pompilia and the priest,—  
Allow them hers—for though she could  
not write,  
In early days of Eve-like innocence  
That plucked no apple from the know-  
ledge-tree,  
Yet, at the Serpent's word, Eve plucks  
and eats  
And knows—especially how to read  
and write:  
And so Pompilia,—as the move o' the  
maw,  
Quoth Persius, makes a parrot bid  
“Good-day!”  
A crow salute the concave, and a pie  
Endeavour at proficiency in speech,—  
So she, through hunger after fellow-  
ship,  
May well have learned, though late,  
to play the scribe:  
As indeed, there 's one letter on the list  
Explicitly declares did happen here.  
“You thought my letters could be none  
of mine,”  
She tells her parents—“mine, who  
wanted skill;  
“But now I have the skill, and write,  
you see!”  
She needed write love-letters, so she  
learned,  
“*Negatas artifex sequi voces*”—though  
This letter nowise 'scapes the common  
lot,  
But lies i' the condemnation of the rest,  
Found by the husband's self who  
forged them all.  
Yet, for the sacredness of argument,  
For this once an exemption shall it  
plead—  
Anything, anything to let the wheels  
Of argument run glibly to their goal!  
Concede she wrote (which were pre-  
posterous)  
This and the other epistle,—what of it?  
Where does the figment touch her can-  
did fame?



For who is here, long sought and latest  
 found,  
 Waiting his turn unmoved amid the  
 whirl,  
 " *Constans in levitate*,"—Ha, my lords ?  
 Calm in his levity,—indulge the quip !—  
 Since 'tis a Levite bears the bell away,  
 Parades him henceforth as Pompilia's  
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 A priest, dost hear ? Why then, sub-  
 mit thyself !  
 Priest, say and very phoenix of such  
 fowl,  
 Well-born, of culture, young and vigor-  
 ous,  
 Comely too, since precise the precept  
 points—  
 On the selected Levite be there found  
 Nor mole nor scar nor blemish, lest the  
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 Come all uncandid through the thwart-  
 ing flesh !  
 Was not the son of Jesse ruddy, sleek,  
 Pleasant to look on, pleasant every  
 way ?  
 Since well he smote the harp and  
 sweetly sang,  
 And danced till Abigail came out to see,  
 And seeing smiled and smiling minis-  
 tered  
 The raisin-cluster and the cake of figs,  
 With ready meal refreshed the gifted  
 youth,  
 Till Nabal, who was absent shearing  
 sheep,  
 Felt heart sink, took to bed (discreetly  
 done—  
 They might have been beforehand with  
 him else)  
 And died—would Guido had behaved  
 as well !  
 But ah, the faith of early days is gone,  
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 Which, when they ebb from souls they  
 should o'erflow,  
 Discover stub, weed, sludge and ugliness.

(The Pope, you know,  
 And relishes a sea-side  
 Deserted by each cha-  
 Guido, left high and dry  
 now !  
 Jealous avouched, par-  
 fool  
 With any peccadillo, h-  
 " Truly I beat my wife th-  
 " Imprisoned her and  
 wise,  
 " Being jealous : now  
 sword in hand,  
 " Now manage to mix  
 sight,  
 " And so forth : jealous  
 fine."  
 Concede the fact and w-  
 prove ?  
 Have I to teach my mas-  
 Hath jealousy and how,  
 It makes false true, abus-  
 Turns the mist adamant  
 sound  
 Silence, and into void an-  
 Crowds a whole phalanx  
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 Therefore who owns " I  
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 " My wife " adds " for m-  
 What need that who say  
 should remark  
 " The thing he thought as  
 an eel ?"—  
 Perchance the right Co-  
 foot length,  
 And not an inch too long  
 pie  
 (Master Arcangeli has he  
 Whose succulence makes  
 able ;  
 Meant to regale some m-  
 Who pleases to mistake th-  
 And spies—I know not  
 snake  
 I' the luscious Lenten cre-  
 forsooth  
 The dainty in the dust.  
 Enough  
 His lunces announced, I  
 lunacy !  
*Insanit homo*, threat succ-  
 And blow redoubles blo-  
 the block.  
 But, if a block, shall no  
 hand

uch as at the end pro-  
 she picked way by devi-  
 ed, no dubiety at all !  
 success, yet, all the same,  
 ely will suggestion prick—  
 Pompilia gained the right  
 s path, no doubtful patch  
 y head nor sacrificed my  
 in a peril, show mistrust  
 els set to guard the inno-  
 r hold by obvious vulgar  
 em and subterfuge, ex-  
 but still no less a foil, a  
 with high, and good with  
 inked ?  
 I view some ancient bas-  
 ids Hesione thrust out by  
 's hand has chained her to  
 er's from the virgin plucked  
 t, [watch,  
 e distance both distressful  
 ar and nearer comes the  
 g orc.  
 at, white and perfect to the  
 : till Jove despatch some  
 od ;  
 t,—impatient of celestial  
 's son should brandish at  
 east,—  
 b, disguise her dainty limbs  
 pitch,  
 elude the purblind monster !  
 k succeeds, but 't is an ugly  
 needs have been no trick !"

My answer ? Faugh !  
 congrue ! Too absurdly put !  
 m ego teneo contrariam,  
 maintain, had no alternative.  
 ens were bound with brass,—  
 far at least

(No feast like that thou didst not ask  
 me to,  
 Arcangeli,—I heard of thy regale !)  
 With the unblamed Æthiop,—Her-  
 cules spun wool  
 I' the lap of Omphale, while Virtue  
 shrieked—  
 The brute came paddling all the faster.  
 You  
 Of Troy, who stood at distance, where's  
 the aid  
 You offered in the extremity ? Most  
 and least,  
 Gentle and simple, here the Governor,  
 There the Archbishop, everywhere the  
 friends,  
 Shook heads and waited for a miracle,  
 Or went their way, left Virtue to her  
 fate.  
 Just this one rough and ready man  
 leapt forth !  
 —Was found, sole anti-Fabius (dare I  
 say)  
 To restore things, with no delay at all,  
*Qui, haud cunctando, rem restituit* ! He,  
 He only, Caponsacchi 'mid a crowd,  
 Caught Virtue up, carried Pompilia off  
 Thro' the gaping impotence of sym-  
 pathy  
 In ranged Arezzo : what you take for  
 pitch,  
 Is nothing worse, belike, than black and  
 blue,  
 Mere evanescent proof that hardy  
 hands  
 Did yeoman's service, cared not where  
 the gripe  
 Was more than duly energetic :  
 bruised,  
 She smarts a little, but her bones are  
 saved [sleek.  
 A fracture, and her skin will soon show  
 How it disgusts when weakness, false-  
 refined,  
 Censures the honest rude effective  
 strength,—  
 When sickly dreamers of the impos-  
 sible  
 Decry plain sturdiness which does the  
 feat  
 With eyes wide open !

Did occasion serve,  
 I could illustrate, if my lords allow ;  
*Quid vetat*, what forbids, I aptly ask  
 With Horace, that I give my anger  
 vent,

Dumb lip consort with desecrated brow,  
 Silence become historiographer,  
 And thou—thine own Cornelius Tacitus!  
 But virtue, barred, still leaps the barrier, lords!  
 —Still, moon-like, penetrates the encroaching mist  
 And bursts, all broad and bare, on night, ye know!  
 Surprised, then, in the garb of truth, perhaps,  
 Pompilia, thus opposed, breaks obstacle,  
 Springs to her feet, and stands Thalassian-pure,  
 Confronts the foe,—nay, catches at his sword  
 And tries to kill the intruder, he complains.  
 Why, so she gave her lord his lesson back,  
 Crowned him, this time, the virtuous woman's way,  
 With an exact obedience; he brought sword,  
 She drew the same, since swords are meant to draw.  
 Tell not me 'tis sharp play with tools on edge! [here.  
 It was the husband chose the weapon  
 Why did not he inaugurate the game  
 With some gentility of apophthegm  
 Still pregnant on the philosophic page,  
 Some captivating cadence still a-lisp  
 O' the poet's lyre? Such spells subdue the surge,  
 Make tame the tempest, much more mitigate  
 The passions of the mind, and probably  
 Had moved Pompil'ia to a smiling blush.  
 No, he must needs prefer the argument  
 O' the blow: and she obeyed, in duty bound,  
 Returned him buffet ratiocinative—  
 Ay, in the reasoner's own interest,  
 For wife must follow whither husband leads,  
 Vindicate honour as himself prescribes,  
 Save him the very way himself bids save!  
 No question but who jumps into a quag  
 Should stretch forth hand and pray one  
 "Pull me out  
 "By the hand!" such were the customary cry:  
 But Guido pleased to bid "Leave hand alone!"

"Join both feet, rather, jump upon my head,  
 "I extricate myself by the rebound!"  
 And dutifully as enjoined she jumped—  
 Drew his own sword and menaced his own life,  
 Anything to content a wilful spouse.  
 And so he was contented—one must do  
 Justice to the expedient which succeeds,  
 Strange as it seem: at flourish of the blade,  
 The crowd drew back, stood breathless and abashed,  
 Then murmured "This should be no wanton wife,  
 "No conscience-stricken creature, caught i' the act,  
 "And patiently awaiting our first stone:  
 "But a poor hard-pressed all-bewildered thing,  
 "Has rushed so far, misguidedly perhaps,  
 "Meaning no more harm than a frightened sheep.  
 "She sought for aid; and if she made mistake  
 "I' the man could aid most, why—so mortals do:  
 "Even the blessed Magdalen mistook  
 "Far less forgivably: consult the place—  
 "Supposing him to be the gardener,  
 "'Sir,' said she, and so following."  
 Why more words?  
 Forthwith the wife is pronounced innocent:  
 What would the husband more than gain his cause,  
 And find that honour flash in the world's eye,  
 His apprehension was lest soil had smirched?  
 So, happily the adventure comes to close  
 Whereon my fat opponent grounds his charge  
 Preposterous: at mid-day he groans  
 "How dark!"  
 Listen to me, thou Archangelic swine!  
 Where is the ambiguity to blame,  
 The flaw to find in our Pompilia? Safe  
 She stands, see! Does thy comment follow quick



" Safe, inasmuch as at the end proposed ;  
 " But thither she picked way by devious path—  
 " Stands dirtied, no dubiety at all !  
 " I recognise success, yet, all the same,  
 " Importunately will suggestion prick—  
 " What, had Pompilia gained the right to boast  
 " " No devious path, no doubtful patch was mine,  
 " " I saved my head nor sacrificed my foot ? '  
 " Why, being in a peril, show mistrust  
 " Of the angels set to guard the innocent ?  
 " Why rather hold by obvious vulgar help  
 " Of stratagem and subterfuge, excused  
 " Somewhat, but still no less a foil, a fault,  
 " Since low with high, and good with bad is linked ?  
 " Methinks I view some ancient bas-relief.  
 " There stands Hesione thrust out by Troy,  
 " Her father's hand has chained her to a crag,  
 " Her mother's from the virgin plucked the vest, [watch,  
 " At a safe distance both distressful  
 " While near and nearer comes the snorting orc.  
 " I look that, white and perfect to the end,  
 " She wait till Jove despatch some demigod ;  
 " Not that,—impatient of celestial club  
 " Alcmena's son should brandish at the beast,—  
 " She daub, disguise her dainty limbs with pitch,  
 " And so elude the purblind monster !  
 Ay,  
 " The trick succeeds, but 't is an ugly trick,  
 " Where needs have been no trick ! "

(No feast like that thou didst not ask me to,  
 Arcangeli,—I heard of thy regale !)  
 With the unblamed Æthiop,—Hercules spun wool  
 I' the lap of Omphale, while Virtue shrieked—  
 The brute came paddling all the faster.  
 You  
 Of Troy, who stood at distance, where's the aid  
 You offered in the extremity ? Most and least,  
 Gentle and simple, here the Governor,  
 There the Archbishop, everywhere the friends,  
 Shook heads and waited for a miracle,  
 Or went their way, left Virtue to her fate.  
 Just this one rough and ready man leapt forth !  
 —Was found, sole anti-Fabius (dare I say)  
 To restore things, with no delay at all,  
*Qui, haud cunctando, rem restituit !* He,  
 He only, Caponsacchi 'mid a crowd,  
 Caught Virtue up, carried Pompilia off Thro' the gaping impotence of sympathy  
 In ranged Arezzo : what you take for pitch,  
 Is nothing worse, belike, than black and blue,  
 Mere evanescent proof that hardy hands  
 Did yeoman's service, cared not where the gripe  
 Was more than duly energetic : bruised,  
 She smarts a little, but her bones are saved [sleek.  
 A fracture, and her skin will soon show  
 How it disgusts when weakness, false-refined,  
 Censures the honest rude effective strength,—  
 When sickly dreamers of the impossible  
 Decry plain sturdiness which does the feat  
 With eyes wide open !

My answer ? Faugh !  
*Nimis incongrue !* Too absurdly put !  
*Sententiam ego teneo contrariam.*  
 Trick, I maintain, had no alternative.  
 The heavens were bound with brass,—  
 Jove far at least

Did occasion serve,  
 I could illustrate, if my lords allow ;  
*Quid vetat*, what forbids, I aptly ask  
 With Horace, that I give my anger vent,

While I let breathe, no less, and re-  
create

The gravity of my Judges, by a tale—  
A case in point—what though an apo-  
logue

Graced by tradition,—possibly a fact ?  
Tradition must precede all scripture,  
words

Serve as our warrant ere our books can  
be :

So, to tradition back we needs must go  
For any fact's authority : and this  
Hath lived so far (like jewel hid in  
muck)

O' the page of that old lying vanity  
Called "Sepher Toldoth Yeschu :"  
God be praised,

I read no Hebrew,—take the thing on  
trust :

But I believe the writer meant no good  
(Blind as he was to truth in some re-  
spects)

To our pestiferous and schismatic . .  
well,

My lords' conjecture be the touchstone,  
show

The thing for what it is ! The author  
lacks

Discretion, and his zeal exceeds : but  
zeal,—

How rare in our degenerate day !  
Enough !

Here is the story,—fear not, I shall  
chop

And change a little, else my Jew would  
press

All too unmannerly before the Court.

It happened once,—begins this foolish  
Jew,

Pretending to write Christian history,—  
That three, held greatest, best and  
worst of men,

Peter and John and Judas, spent a day  
In toil and travel through the country-  
side

On some sufficient business—I suspect,  
Suppression of some Molinism i' the  
bud.

Foot-sore and hungry, dropping with  
fatigue,

They reached by nightfall a poor lonely  
grange,

Hôtel or inn : so, knocked and en-  
tered there.

"Your pleasure, great ones ?"—  
"Shelter, rest and food !"

For shelter, there was one bare room  
above ;

For rest therein, three beds of bundled  
straw :

For food, one wretched starveling fowl,  
no more—

Meat for one mouth, but mockery for  
three.

"You have my utmost." How should  
supper serve ?

Peter broke silence. "To the spit  
with fowl !"

"And while 't is cooking, sleep !—  
since beds there be,

"And, so far, satisfaction of a want.

"Sleep we an hour, awake at supper-  
time,

"Then each of us narrate the dream he  
had,

"And he whose dream shall prove the  
happiest, point

"The clearliest out the dreamer as or-  
dained

"Beyond his fellows to receive the  
fowl,

"Him let our shares be cheerful tribute  
to,

"His the entire meal, may it do him  
good !"

Who could dispute so plain a conse-  
quence ?

So said, so done : each hurried to his  
straw,

Slept his hour's-sleep and dreamed his  
dream, and woke.

"I," commenced John, "dreamed  
that I gained the prize

"We all aspire to : the proud place was  
mine,

"Throughout the earth and to the end  
of time

"I was the Loved Disciple : mine the  
meal !"

"But I," proceeded Peter, "dreamed,  
a word

"Gave me the headship of our com-  
pany,

"Made me the Vicar and Vice-regent,  
gave

"The keys of Heaven and Hell into  
my hand,

"And o'er the earth, dominion : mine  
the meal !"

"While I," submitted in soft under-  
tone

The Iscariot—sense of his unworthi-  
ness



Turning each eye up to the inmost  
white—

With long-drawn sigh, yet letting both  
lips smack,

"I have had just the pitifullest dream  
That ever proved man meanest of his  
mates,

"And born foot-washer and foot-wiper,  
nay

"Foot-kisser to each comrade of you  
all!

"I dreamed I dreamed; and in that  
mimic dream

"(Impalpable to dream as dream to  
fact)

"Methought I meanly chose to sleep  
no wink

"But wait until I heard my brethren  
breathe;

"Then stole from couch, slipped noise-  
less to the door,

"Slid downstairs, furtively approached  
the hearth,

"Found the fowl duly brown, both  
back and breast,

"Hissing in harmony with the cricket's  
chirp,

"Grilled to a point; said no grace but  
fell to,

"Nor finished till the skeleton lay bare.  
"In penitence for which ignoble dream,

"Lo, I renounce my portion cheerfully!  
"Fie on the flesh—be mine the ether-  
ial gust,

"And yours the sublunary susten-  
ance! [poor!

"See, that whate'er be left, ye give the  
Down the two scuttled, one on other's  
heel,

Stung by a fell surmise; and found,  
alack,

A goodly savour, both the drumstick-  
bones,

And that which henceforth took the  
appropriate name

O' the merry-thought, in memory of  
the fact

That to keep wide awake is our best  
dream.

So,—as was said once of Thucydides  
And his sole joke, "The lion, lo, hath  
laughed!"—

Just so, the Governor and all that's  
great

I' the city, never meant that Inno-  
cence

Should starve thus while Authority sat  
at meat.

They meant to fling a bone at ban-  
quet's end,

Wished well to our Pompilia—in their  
dreams,

Nor bore the secular sword in vain—  
asleep:

Just so the Archbishop and all good  
like him

Went to bed meaning to pour oil and  
wine

I' the wounds of her, next day,—but  
long ere day,

They had burned the one and drunk the  
other: while

Just so, again, contrariwise, the priest  
Sustained poor Nature in extremity  
By stuffing barley-bread into her  
mouth,

Saving Pompilia (grant the parallel)  
By the plain homely and straightfor-  
ward way

Taught him by common-sense. Let  
others shriek

"Oh what refined expedients did we  
dream

"Proved us the only fit to help the  
fair!"

He cried "A carriage waits, jump in  
with me!"

And now, this application pardoned,  
lords,—

This recreative pause and breathing-  
while,—

Back to beseeemingness and gravity!  
For Law steps in: Guido appeals to  
Law,

Demands she arbitrate,—does well for  
once.

O Law, of thee how neatly was it said  
By that old Sophocles, thou hast thy  
seat

I' the very breast of Jove, no meanlier  
throned!

Here is a piece of work now, hitherto  
Begun and carried on, concluded near,  
Without an eye-glance cast thy scap-  
tre's way;

And, lo the stumbling and discomfit-  
ure!

Well may you call them "lawless,"  
means men take

To extricate themselves through  
mother-wit

When tangled haply in the toils of life!

Guido would try conclusions with his  
foe,

Whoe'er the foe was and whate'er the  
offence ;

He would recover certain dowry-dues :  
Instead of asking Law to lend a hand,  
What pother of sword drawn and pistol  
cocked,

What peddling with forged letters and  
paid spies,

Politic circumvention !—all to end  
As it began—by loss of the fool's head,  
First in a figure, presently in a fact.  
It is a lesson to mankind at large.

How other were the end, would men be  
sage

And bear confidingly each quarrel  
straight,

O Law, to thy recipient mother-knees !  
How would the children light come and  
prompt go,

This, with a red-cheeked apple for re-  
ward,

The other, peradventure red-cheeked  
too

I' the rear, by taste of birch for punish-  
ment.

No foolish brawling murders any more !  
Peace for the household, practice for  
the Fisc,

And plenty for the exchequer of my  
lords !

Too much to hope, in this world : in the  
next,

Who knows ? Since, why should sit  
the Twelve enthroned

To judge the tribes, unless the tribes be  
judged ?

And 't is impossible but offences come :  
So, all 's one lawsuit, all one long leet-  
day !

Forgive me this digression—that I  
stand

Entranced awhile at Law's first beam,  
outbreak

O' the business, when the Count's good  
angel bade

" Put up thy sword, born enemy to  
the ear,

" And let Law listen to thy difference !"  
And Law does listen and compose the  
strife,

Settle the suit, how wisely and how  
well !

On our Pompilia, faultless to a fault,  
Law bends a brow maternally severe,

Implies the worth of perfect chastity,  
By fancying the flaw she cannot find.  
Superfluous sifting snow, nor helps nor  
harms :

'T is safe to censure levity in youth,  
Tax womanhood with indiscretion,  
sure !

Since toys, permissible to-day, become  
Follies to-morrow : prattle shocks in  
church :

And that curt skirt which lets a maiden  
skip,

The matron changes for a trailing robe,  
Mothers may risk thus much with half-  
shut eyes

Nodding above their spindles by the  
fire,

On the chance to hit some hidden fault,  
else safe.

Just so, Law hazarded a punishment—  
If applicable to the circumstance,

Why, well—if not so apposite, well too.  
" Quit the gay range o' the world," I

hear her cry,  
" Enter, in lieu, the penitential pound :

" Exchange the gauds of pomp for  
ashes, dust :—

" Leave each mollitious haunt of lux-  
ury,

" The golden-garnished silken-couched  
alcove, [tempts

" The many-columned terrace that so  
" Feminine soul put foot forth, nor  
stop ear

" To fluttering joy of lover's serenade,  
" Leave these for cellular seclusion ;

mask  
" And dance no more, but fast and  
pray ; avaunt—

" Be burned, thy wicked townsman's  
sonnet-book !

" Welcome, mild hymnal by . . .  
some better scribe !

" For the warm arms, were wont enfold  
thy flesh,

" Let wire-shirt plough and whip-cord  
discipline "

If such an exhortation proved, per-  
chance,

Inapplicable, words bestowed in waste,  
What harm, since law has store, can

spend nor miss ?

And so, our paragon submits herself,  
Goes at command into the holy house

And, also at command, comes out  
again ;



For, could the effect of such obedience  
 prove  
 Too certain, too immediate? Being  
 healed,  
 Go blaze abroad the matter, blessed  
 one!  
 Art thou sound forthwith? Speedily  
 vacate  
 The step by pool-side, leave Bethesda  
 free  
 To patients plentifully posted round,  
 Since the whole need not the physician!  
 Brief,  
 She may betake her to her parents'  
 place.  
 Welcome her, father, with wide arms  
 once more,  
 Motion her, mother, to thy breast  
 again!  
 For why? The law relinquishes its  
 charge,  
 Grants to your dwelling-place a prison's  
 style,  
 But gives you back Pompilia; golden  
 days,  
*Redeunt Saturnia regna!* Six weeks  
 slip, [home  
 And she is domiciled in house and  
 As though she thence had never budged  
 at all.  
 And thither let the husband, joyous—  
 ay,  
 But contrite also—quick betake him-  
 self,  
 Proud that his dove which lay among  
 the pots  
 Hath mewed those dingy feathers,—  
 moulted now,  
 Shows silver bosom clothed with yel-  
 low gold.  
 Quick, he shall tempt her to the perch  
 she fled,  
 Bid to domestic bliss the truant back!  
 O let him not delay! Time fleets how  
 fast,  
 And opportunity, the irrevocable,  
 On e flown will flout him! Is the  
 furrow traced?  
 If field with corn ye fail preoccupy,  
 Darnel for wheat and thistle-beards for  
 grain,  
*Infelix lolium, carduus horridus,*  
 Will grow apace in combination prompt,  
 Defraud the husbandman of his desire.  
 Already—hist—what murmurs 'mon-  
 ish now

The laggard?—doubtful, nay, fantastic  
 bruit  
 Of such an apparition, such return  
*Interdum*, to anticipate the spouse,  
 Of Caponsacchi's very self! 'Tis said  
 When nights are lone and company is  
 rare,  
 His visitations brighten winter up.  
 If so they did—which nowise I believe—  
 How can I?—proof abounding that the  
 priest,  
 Once fairly at his relegation-place  
 Never once left it—still, admit he stole  
 A midnight march, would fain see friend  
 again,  
 Find matter for instruction in the past,  
 Renew the old adventure in such chat  
 As cheers a fireside! He was lonely  
 too,  
 He, too, must need his recreative hour.  
 Should it amaze the philosophic mind  
 If one, was wont the empurpled cup to  
 quaff,  
 Have feminine society at will,  
 Being debarred abruptly from all drink  
 Save at the spring which Adam used  
 for wine,  
 Dread harm to just the health he hoped  
 to guard, [lady?  
 And, meaning abstinence, gain ma-  
 Ask Tozzi, now physician to the Pope!  
 "Little by little break"—(I hear he  
 bids  
 Master Arcangeli my antagonist,  
 Who loves good cheer—and may in-  
 dulse too much—  
 So I explain the logic of the plea  
 Wherewith he opened our proceedings  
 late)—  
 "Little by little break a habit, Don!  
 "Become necessity to feeble flesh!"  
 And thus, nocturnal taste of intercourse  
 (Which never happened,—but, suppose  
 it did)  
 May have been used to dishabituate  
 By sip and sip this drainer to the dregs  
 O' the draught of conversation,—heady  
 stuff,  
 Brewage which broached, it took two  
 days and nights  
 To properly discuss o' the journey, Sirs!  
 Such is the second-nature, men call use,  
 That undelightful objects get to charm  
 Instead of chafe: the daily colocynth  
 Tickles the palate by repeated dose,  
 Old sores scratch kindly, the ass makes  
 a push,

Although the mill-yoke wound be  
 smarting yet,  
 For mill-door bolted on a holiday—  
 And must we marvel if the impulse urge  
 To talk the old story over now and  
 then,  
 The hopes and fears, the stoppage and  
 the haste,—  
 Subjects of colloquy to surfeit once ?  
 "Here did you bid me twine a rosy  
 wreath !"  
 "And there you paid my lips a com-  
 pliment !"  
 "There you admired the tower could  
 be so tall !"  
 "And there you likened that of Leban-  
 on  
 "To the nose o' the beloved !"—  
 Trifles—still,  
 "*Forsan et hæc olim*,"—such trifles  
 serve  
 To make the minutes pass in winter-  
 time.

Husband, return then, I re-counsel  
 thee !  
 For, finally, of all glad circumstance  
 Should make a prompt return impera-  
 tive,  
 What i' the world awaits thee, dost  
 suppose ?  
 O' the sudden, as good gifts are wont  
 befall,  
 What is the hap of the unconscious  
 Count ? [a-tilt,  
 That which lights bonfire and sets cask  
 Dissolves the stubborn'st heart in jol-  
 lity.  
 O admirable, there is born a babe,  
 A son, an heir, a Franceschini last  
 And best o' the stock ! Pompilia,  
 thine the palm !  
 Repaying incredulity with faith,  
 Ungenerous thrift of each marital debt  
 With bounty in profuse expenditure,  
 Pompilia will not have the old year end  
 Without a present shall ring in the  
 new—  
 Bestows upon her parsimonious lord  
 An infant for the apple of his eye,  
 Core of his heart, and crown completing  
 life,  
 The *summum bonum* of the earthly lot !  
 "We," saith ingeniously the sage, "are  
 born  
 "Solely that others may be born of  
 us."

So, father, take thy child, for thine  
 that child,  
 Oh nothing doubt ! In wedlock born,  
 law holds  
 Baseness impossible, since "*filius est  
 Quem nuptiæ demonstrant*," twits the  
 text  
 Whoever dares to doubt.

Yet doubt he dares !  
 O faith where art thou flown from out  
 the world ?  
 Already on what an age of doubt we  
 fall !  
 Instead of each disputing for the prize,  
 The babe is bandied here from that to  
 this.  
 Whose the babe ? "*Cujum pecus ?*"  
 Guido's lamb ?  
 "*An Melibæi ?*" Nay, but of the  
 priest !  
 "*Non sed Ægonis !*" Someone must  
 be sire :  
 And who shall say, in such a puzzling  
 strait,  
 If there were not vouchsafed some  
 miracle  
 To the wife who had been harassed and  
 abused  
 More than enough by Guido's family  
 For non-production of the promised  
 fruit [mand,  
 Of marriage ? What if Nature, I de-  
 Touched to the quick by taunts upon  
 her sloth,  
 Had roused herself, put forth recondite  
 power,  
 Bestowed this birth to vindicate her  
 sway ?  
 Like to the favour, Maro memorised,  
 Was granted Aristæus when his hive  
 Lay empty of the swarm, not one more  
 bee—  
 Not one more babe to Franceschini's  
 house—  
 And lo, a new birth filled the air with  
 joy,  
 Sprung from the bowels of the gener-  
 ous steed !  
 Just so a son and heir rejoiced the  
 Count !  
 Spontaneous generation, need I prove  
 Were facile feat to Nature at a pinch ?  
 Let whoso doubts, steep horsehair  
 certain weeks,  
 In water, there will be produced a  
 snake ;



A second product of the horse, which horse

Happens to be the representative—  
Now that I think on 't—of Arezzo's self

The very city our conception blessed !  
Is not a prancing horse the City arms ?  
What saneeye sees not such coincidence?  
*Cur ego*, boast thou, my Pompilia, then,  
*Desperem fieri sine conjuge*  
Maler—how well the Ovidian distich suits !—

*Et parere intacto dummodo*  
*Casta viro ?* but language baffles here.  
Note, further, as to mark the prodigy,  
The babe in question neither took the name

Of Guido, from the sire presumptive, nor

Giuseppe, from the sire potential, but  
Gaetano—last saint of the hierarchy,  
And newest namer for a thing so new :  
What other motive could have prompted choice ?

Therefore be peace again : exult, ye hills !

Ye vales rejoicingly break forth in song !

*Incipe, parve puer*, begin, small boy,  
*Risu cognoscere patrem*, with a smile  
To recognise thy parent ! Nor do thou

Boggle, oh parent, to return the grace—  
*Nec anceps hære, pater, puero*  
*Cognoscendo*—one might well eke out the prayer !

In vain ! The perverse Guido doubts his eyes,

Distrusts assurance, lets the devil drive ;

Because his house is swept and garnished now,

He, having summoned seven like himself,

Must hurry thither, knock and enter in,  
And make the last worse than the first, indeed !

Is he content ? We are. No further blame

O' the man and murder ! They were stigmatized

Befittingly : the Court heard long ago  
My mind o' the matter, which, outpouring full,

Has long since swept, like surge i' the simile

Of Homer, overborne both dyke and dam,

And whelmed alike client and advocate :

His fate is sealed, his life as good as gone,

On him I am not tempted to waste word.

Yet though my purpose holds,—which was and is

And solely shall be to the very end,  
To draw the true *effigiem* of a saint,

Do justice to perfection in the sex,—  
Yet, let not some gross pamperer o' the flesh

And niggard in the spirit's nourishment,

Whose feeding hath offuscated his wit  
Rather than law,—he never had, to lose—

Let not such advocate object to me  
I leave my proper function of attack !

" What 's this to Bacchus ? "—(in the classic phrase,

Well used, for once) he hiccups probably.

O Advocate o' the Poor, thou born to make

Their blessing void—*beati pauperes* !  
By painting saintship I depicture sin,

Beside the pearl, I prove how black the jet,

And through Pompilia's virtue, Guido's [crime,

Back to her, then,—with but one beauty more,

End we our argument,—one crowning grace

Pre-eminent 'mid agony and death.  
For to the last Pompilia played her part,

Used the right means to the permissible end,

And, wily as an eel that stirs the mud  
Thick overhead, so baffling spearman's thrust,

She, while he stabbed her, simulated death,

Delayed, for his sake, the catastrophe,  
Obtained herself a respite, four days' grace,

Whereby she told her story to the world,

Enabled me to make the present speech,  
And, by a full confession, saved her soul.

Yet hold, even here would malice leer its last,

Gurgle its choked remonstrance :  
snake, hiss free !

Oh, that 's the objection ? And to  
whom ?—not her

But me, forsooth—as, in the very act  
Of both confession and, what followed  
close,

Subsequent talk, chatter and gossipry,  
Babble to sympathizing he and she  
Whoever chose besiege her dying bed,—  
As this were found at variance with  
my tale,

Falsified all I have adduced for truth,  
Admitted not one peccadillo here,  
Pretended to perfection, first and last,  
O' the whole procedure—perfect in the  
end,

Perfect i' the means, perfect in every-  
thing,

Leaving a lawyer nothing to excuse,  
Reason away and show his skill about !  
—A flight, impossible to Adamic flesh,  
Just to be fancied, scarcely to be  
wished,

And, anyhow, unpleadable in court !  
" How reconcile " gasps Malice " that  
with this ? "

Your " this," friend, is extraneous to  
the law,  
Comes of men's outside meddling, the  
unskilled

Interposition of such fools as press  
Out of their province. Must I speak  
my mind ?

Far better had Pompilia died o' the  
spot

Than found a tongue to wag and shame  
the law,

Shame most of all herself,—did friend-  
ship fail,

And advocacy lie less on the alert.  
Listen how these protect her to the end !

Do I credit the alleged narration ? No !  
Lied our Pompilia then, to laud her-  
self ?

Still, no ;—clear up what seems dis-  
crepancy ?

The means abound,—art 's long, though  
time is short,

So, keeping me in compass, all I urge  
Is—since, confession at the point of  
death,

*Nam in articulo mortis*, with the Church  
Passes for statement honest and sin-  
cere,

*Nemo presumitur reus esse*,—then,

If sure that all affirmed would be be-  
lieved,

'T was charity, in one so circumstanced,  
To spend her last breath in one effort  
more

For universal good of friend and foe,  
And,—by pretending utter innocence,  
Nay, freedom from each foible we for-  
give,—

Re-integrate—not solely her own fame,  
But do the like kind office for the priest  
Whom the crude truth might treat less  
courteously,

Indeed, expose to peril, abbreviate  
The life and long career of usefulness  
Presumably before him : while her  
lord,

Whose fleeting life is forfeit to the law,—  
What mercy to the culprit if, by just

The gift of such a full certificate  
Of his immitigable guiltiness,  
She stifled in him the absurd conceit  
Of murder as it were a mere revenge !

—Stopped confirmation of that jeal-  
ousy

Which, had she but acknowledged the  
first flaw,

The faintest foible, might embolden  
him

To battle with his judge, baulk peni-  
tence,

Bar preparation for impending fate.  
Whereas, persuade him he has slain a  
saint

Who sinned not in the little she did sin,  
You urge him all the brisklier to repent  
Of most and least and aught and every-  
thing !

Next,—if this view of mine, content ye  
not,

Lords, nor excuse the genial falsehood  
here,

'T is come to our *Triarii*, last resource,  
We fall back on the inexpugnable,  
Submit you,—she confessed before she  
talked !

The sacrament obliterates the sin :  
What is not,—was not, in a certain  
sense.

Let Molinists distinguish, " Souls  
washed white

" Were red once, still show pinkish to  
the eye ! "

We say, abolishment is nothingness  
And nothingness has neither head nor  
tail

End nor beginning ;—better estimate



Exorbitantly, than disparage aught  
Of the efficacy of the act, I hope !

*Solvuntur tabulæ ?* May we laugh and  
go ?

Well,—not before (in filial gratitude  
To Law, who, mighty mother, waves  
adieu)

We take on us to vindicate Law's self—  
For,—yea, Sirs,—curb the start, cur-  
tail the stare !—

Remains that we apologize for haste  
I' the Law, our lady who here bristles  
up

" And my procedure ? Did the Court  
mistake ?

" (Which were indeed a misery to  
think)

" Did not my sentence in the former  
stage

" O' the business bear a title plain  
enough ?

" *Decretum* "—I translate it word for  
word—

" " Decreed : the priest, for his com-  
plicity

" " I' the flight and deviation of the  
dame,

" As well as for unlawful intercourse,  
" " Is banished three years : ' crime and  
penalty,

" Declared alike. If he be taxed with  
guilt

" How can you call Pompilia innocent ?  
" If they be innocent, have I been  
just ? "

Gently, O mother, judge men !—whose  
mistake

Is in the poor misapprehensiveness.  
The *Titulus* a-top of your decree

Was but to ticket there the kind of  
charge

You in good time would arbitrate upon.  
Title is one thing,—arbitration's self,

*Probatio*, quite another possibly.  
*Subsistit*, there holds good the old re-  
sponse,

*Responsio tradita*, we must not stick,  
*Quod non sit attendendus Titulus*,

To the Title, *sed Probatio*, but to Proof,  
*Resultans ex processu*, and result

O' the Trial, and the style of punish-  
ment,

*Et pœna per sententiam imposita* :  
All is tentative, till the sentence come,  
Mere indication of what men expect,

And nowise an assurance they shall  
find.

Lords, what if we permissibly relax  
The tense bow, as the law-god Phœbus  
bids,

Relieve our gravity at close of speech ?  
I. traverse Rome, feel thirsty, need a  
draught,

Look for a wine-shop, find it by the  
bough

Projecting as to say " Here wine is  
sold ! "

So much I know,—" sold : " but what  
sort of wine ?

Strong, weak, sweet, sour, home-made  
or foreign drink ?

That much must I discover by myself.  
" Wine is sold," quoth the bough, " but  
good or bad,

" Find, and inform us when you smack  
your lips ! "

Exactly so, Law hangs her title forth,  
To show she entertains you with such  
case

About such crime : come in ! she  
pours, you quaff.

You find the Priest good liquor in the  
main,

But heady and provocative of brawls.  
Remand the residue to flask once more,  
Lay it low where it may deposit lees,

I' the cellar : thence produce it pres-  
ently,

Three years the brighter and the better !  
Thus,

Law's son, have I bestowed my filial  
help.

And thus I end, *tenax propositi* ;  
Point to point as I purposed have I  
drawn

Pompilia, and implied as terribly  
Guido : so, gazing, let the world crown  
Law—

Able once more, despite my impotence,  
And helped by the acumen of the  
Court,

To eliminate, display, make triumph  
truth !

What other prize than truth were worth  
the pains ?

There 's my oration—much exceeds in  
length

That famed Panegyric of Isocrates,  
They say it took him fifteen years to  
pen.

Gurgle its choked remonstrance:  
snake, hiss free!  
Oh, that 's the objection? And to  
whom?—not her  
But me, forsooth—as, in the very act  
Of both confession and, what followed  
close,  
Subsequent talk, chatter and gossipry,  
Babble to sympathizing he and she  
Whoever chose besiege her dying bed,—  
As this were found at variance with  
my tale,  
Falsified all I have adduced for truth,  
Admitted not one peccadillo here,  
Pretended to perfection, first and last,  
O' the whole procedure—perfect in the  
end,  
Perfect i' the means, perfect in every-  
thing,  
Leaving a lawyer nothing to excuse,  
Reason away and show his skill about!  
—A flight, impossible to Adamic flesh,  
Just to be fancied, scarcely to be  
wished,  
And, anyhow, unpleadable in court!  
"How reconcile" gasps Malice "that  
with this?"

Your "this," friend, is extraneous to  
the law,  
Comes of men's outside meddling, the  
unskilled  
Interposition of such fools as press  
Out of their province. Must I speak  
my mind?  
Far better had Pompilia died o' the  
spot  
Than found a tongue to wag and shame  
the law,  
Shame most of all herself,—did friend-  
ship fail,  
And advocacy lie less on the alert.  
Listen how these protect her to the end!  
Do I credit the alleged narration? No!  
Lied our Pompilia then, to laud her-  
self?  
Still, no;—clear up what seems dis-  
crepancy?  
The means abound,—art 's long, though  
time is short,  
So, keeping me in compass, all I urge  
Is—since, confession at the point of  
death,  
Nam in articulo mortis, with the Church  
Passes for statement honest and sin-  
cere,  
Nemo presumitur reus esse,—then,

If sure that all a-  
lieved,  
'T was charity, in  
To spend her last  
more  
For universal goo  
And,—by preten  
Nay, freedom fro  
give,—  
Re-integrate—not  
But do the like kin  
Whom the crude  
courteously,  
Indeed, expose to  
The life and long  
Presumably befo  
lord,  
Whose fleeting life  
What mercy to the  
The gift of such a  
Of his immitigabl  
She stifled in him  
Of murder as it we  
—Stopped confirm  
ousy  
Which, had she bu  
first flaw,  
The faintest foibl  
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is arm frocked which, bare, the  
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f hope  
hat,—convicted of such crime as  
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not away save with a worldling's  
lood,—  
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the portentous brothers of the  
nan  
eritably priests, protected each  
do his murder in the Church's  
pale,  
e Paul, Canon Girolamo!  
is the man proves irreligious  
ll mankind, religion's parasite!  
may forsooth plead dinned ear,  
jaded sense,  
vice o' the watcher who bides near  
the bell,  
as sound because the clock is vigil-  
ant,  
cares not whether it be shade or  
shine,  
ng out day and night to all men  
else!  
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niche himself  
versely 'neath the tower where  
Time's own tongue  
as undertakes to sermonise the  
world?  
ay, but because the solemn is safe  
too,  
e belfry proves a fortress of a sort,  
s other uses than to teach the hour,  
rns sunscreen, paravent and ombri-  
fuge  
whoso seeks a shelter in its pale,  
Ay, and attractive to unwary folk  
ho gaze at storied portal, statued  
spire,  
ad go home with full head but empty  
purse  
or dare suspect the sacristan the  
thief!  
hall Judas,—hard upon the donor's  
heel,  
o filch the fragments of the basket,—  
plead  
le was too near the preacher's mouth,  
nor sat  
attent with fifties in a company?

No,—closer to promulgated decree,  
Clearer the censure of default. Pro-  
ceed!  
I find him bound, then, to begin life  
well;  
Fortified by propitious circumstance,  
Great birth, good breeding, with the  
Church for guide.  
How lives he? Cased thus in a coat of  
proof,  
Mailed like a man-at-arms, though all  
the while  
A puny starveling,—does the breast  
pant big.  
The limb swell to the limit, emptiness  
Strive to become solidity indeed?  
Rather, he shrinks up like the ambiguo-  
ous fish,  
Detaches flesh from shell and outside  
show,  
And steals by moonlight (I have seen  
the thing)  
In and out, now to prey and now to  
skulk.  
Armour he boasts when a wave breaks  
on beach,  
Or bird stoops for the prize: with peril  
igh,—  
The man (f rank, the much-befriended  
man,  
The man almost affiliate to the Church,  
Such is to deal with, let the world be-  
ware!  
Does the world recognise, pass pru-  
dently?  
Do tides abate and sea-fowl hunt i' the  
deep?  
Already is the slug from out its mew,  
Ignobly faring with all loose and free,  
Sand-fly and slush-worm at their gar-  
bage-feast,  
A naked blotch no better than they all:  
Guido has dropped nobility, slipped  
the Church,  
Plays trickster if not cut-purse, body  
and soul  
Prostrate among the filthy feeders—  
faugh!  
And when Law takes him by surprise  
at last,  
Catches the foul thing on its carrion-  
prey,  
Behold, he points to shell left high and  
dry,  
Pleads "But the case out yonder is my-  
self!"



Tatters all too contaminate for use,  
Have no renewing : He, the Truth, is,  
too,

The Word. We men, in our degree,  
may know

There, simply, instantaneously, as here  
After long time and amid many lies,  
Whatever we dare think we know in-  
deed

—That I am I, as He is He,—what  
else ?

But be man's method for man's life at  
least !

Wherefore, Antonio Pignatelli, thou  
My ancient self, who wast no Pope so  
long

But studied God and man, the many  
years

I' the school, i' the cloister, in the dio-  
cese

Domestic, legate-rule in foreign lands,—  
Thou other force in those old busy days  
Than this grey ultimate decrepitude,—  
Yet sensible of fires that more and  
more

Visit a soul, in passage to the sky,  
Left naked than when flesh-robe was  
new—

Thou, not Pope but the mere old man  
o' the world,

Supposed inquisitive and dispassionate,  
Wilt thou, the one whose speech I  
somewhat trust,

Question the after-me, this self now  
Pope,

Hear his procedure, criticise his work ?  
Wise in its generation is the world.

This is why Guido is found reprobate.  
I see him furnished forth for his career,  
On starting for the life-chance in our  
world,

With nearly all we count sufficient  
help : [frame,

Body and mind in balance, a sound  
A solid intellect : the wit to seek,  
Wisdom to choose, and courage where-  
withal

To deal with whatsoever circumstance  
Should minister to man, make life suc-  
ceed.

Oh, and much drawback ! what were  
earth without ?

Is this our ultimage stage, or starting-  
place

To try man's foot, if it will creep or  
climb,

'Mid obstacles in seeming, points that  
prove

Advantage for who vaults from low to  
high

And makes the stumbling-block a step-  
ping-stone ?

So, Guido, born with appetite, lacks  
food,

Is poor, who yet could deftly play-off  
wealth,

Straitened, whose limbs are restless till  
at large :

And, as he eyes each outlet of the  
cirque,

The narrow penfold for probation,  
pines

After the good things just outside the  
grate,

With less monition, fainter conscience-  
twitch,

Rarer-instinctive qualm at the first  
feel

Of the unseemly greed and grasp un-  
due,

Than nature furnishes the main man-  
kind,—

Making it harder to do wrong than  
right [ear

The first time, careful lest the common  
Break measure, miss the outstep of  
life's march.

Wherein I see a trial fair and fit

For one else too unfairly fenced about,

Set above sin, beyond his fellows here,  
Guarded from the arch-tempter, all  
must fight,

By a great birth, traditionary name,  
Diligent culture, choice companionship,  
Above all, conversancy with the faith  
Which puts forth for its base of doc-  
trine just

" Man is born nowise to content him-  
self

" But please God." He accepted such  
a rule,

Recognised man's obedience ; and the  
Church,

Which simply is such rule's embodi-  
ment,

He clave to, he held on by,—nay, in-  
deed,

Near pushed inside of, deep as laymen  
durst,

Professed so much of priesthood as  
might sue

For priest's-exemption where the lay-  
man sinned,—

Got his arm frocked which, bare, the  
 law would bruise.  
 Hence, at this moment, what 's his last  
 resource,  
 His extreme stay and utmost stretch  
 of hope  
 But that,—convicted of such crime as  
 law  
 Wipes not away save with a worldling's  
 blood,—  
 Guido, the three-parts consecrate, may  
 'scape ?  
 Nay, the portentous brothers of the  
 man  
 Are veritably priests, protected each  
 May do his murder in the Church's  
 pale,  
 Abate Paul, Canon Girolamo !  
 This is the man proves irreligiousest  
 Of all mankind, religion's parasite !  
 This may forsooth plead din'd ear,  
 jaded sense,  
 The vice o' the watcher who bides near  
 the bell,  
 Sleeps sound because the clock is vigil-  
 ant,  
 And cares not whether it be shade or  
 shine,  
 Doling out day and night to all men  
 else !  
 Why was the choice o' the man to  
 niche himself  
 Perversely 'neath the tower where  
 Time's own tongue  
 Thus undertakes to sermonise the  
 world ?  
 Why, but because the solemn is safe  
 too,  
 The belfry proves a fortress of a sort,  
 Has other uses than to teach the hour,  
 Turns sunscreen, paravent and ombri-  
 fuge  
 To whoso seeks a shelter in its pale,  
 —Ay, and attractive to unwary folk  
 Who gaze at storied portal, statued  
 spire,  
 And go home with full head but empty  
 purse  
 Nor dare suspect the sacristan the  
 thief !  
 Shall Judas,—hard upon the donor's  
 heel,  
 To filch the fragments of the basket,—  
 plead  
 He was too near the preacher's mouth,  
 nor sat  
 Attent with fifties in a company ?

No,—closer to promulgated decree,  
 Clearer the censure of default. Pro-  
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 I find him bound, then, to begin life  
 well ;  
 Fortified by propitious circumstance,  
 Great birth, good breeding, with the  
 Church for guide.  
 How lives he ? Cased thus in a coat of  
 proof,  
 Mailed like a man-at-arms, though all  
 the while  
 A puny starveling,—does the breast  
 pant big.  
 The limb swell to the limit, emptiness  
 Strive to become solidity indeed ?  
 Rather, he shrinks up like the ambig-  
 uous fish,  
 Detaches flesh from shell and outside  
 show,  
 And steals by moonlight (I have seen  
 the thing)  
 In and out, now to prey and now to  
 skulk.  
 Armour he boasts when a wave breaks  
 on beach,  
 Or bird stoops for the prize : with peril  
 igh,—  
 The man of rank, the much-befriended  
 man,  
 The man almost affiliate to the Church,  
 Such is to deal with, let the world be-  
 ware !  
 Does the world recognise, pass pru-  
 dently ?  
 Do tides abate and sea-fowl hunt i' the  
 deep ?  
 Already is the slug from out its mew,  
 Ignobly faring with all loose and free,  
 Sand-fly and slush-worm at their gar-  
 bage-feast,  
 A naked blotch no better than they all :  
 Guido has dropped nobility, slipped  
 the Church,  
 Plays trickster if not cut-purse, body  
 and soul  
 Prostrate among the filthy feeders—  
 faugh !  
 And when Law takes him by surprise  
 at last,  
 Catches the foul thing on its carrion-  
 prey,  
 Behold, he points to shell left high and  
 dry,  
 Pleads " But the case out yonder is my-  
 self ! "



Nay, it is thou, Law prongs amid thy  
peers,  
Congenial vermin; that was none of  
thee,  
Thine outside,—give it to the soldier-  
crab!

For I find this black mark impinge the  
man,  
That he believes in just the vile of life.  
Low instinct, base pretension, are these  
truth?

Then, that aforesaid armour, probity  
He figures in, is falsehood scale on scale;  
Honour and faith,—a lie and a disguise,  
Probably for all livers in this world,  
Certainly for himself! All say good  
words

To who will hear, all do thereby bad  
deeds

To who must undergo; so thrive man-  
kind!

See this habitual creed exemplified  
Most in the last deliberate act; as last,  
So, very sum and substance of the soul  
Of him that planned and leaves one  
perfect piece,

The sin brought under jurisdiction now,  
Even the marriage of the man: this  
act

I sever from his life as sample, show  
For Guido's self, intend to test him by,  
As, from a cup filled fairly at the fount,  
By the components we decide enough  
Or to let flow as late, or staunch the  
source.

He purposes this marriage, I remark,  
On no one motive that should prompt  
thereto—

Farthest, by consequence, from ends  
alleged

Appropriate to the action; so they  
were:

The best, he knew and feigned, the  
worst he took.

Not one permissible impulse moves the  
man,

From the mere liking of the eye and ear,  
To the true longing of the heart that  
loves,

No trace of these: but all to instigate,  
Is what sinks man past level of the  
brute,

Whose appetite if brutish is a truth.  
All is the lust for money: to get gold—  
Why, lie, rob, if it must be, murder!

Make

Body and soul wring gold out, lured  
within

The clutch of hate by love, the trap's  
pretence!

What good else get from bodies and  
from souls?

This got, there were some life to lead  
thereby,

—What, where or how, appreciate  
those who tell

How the toad lives: it lives,—enough  
for me!

To get this good,—with but a groan or  
so,

Then, silence of the victims,—were the  
feat.

He foresaw, made a picture in his  
mind,—

Of father and mother stunned and echo-  
less

To the blow, as they lie staring at fate's  
jaws

Their folly danced into, till the woe fell;  
Edged in a month by strenuous cruelty

From even the poor nook whence they  
watched the wolf

Feast on their heart, the lamb-like child  
his prey;

Plundered to the last remnant of their  
wealth,

(What daily pittance pleased the plun-  
derer dole)

Hunted forth to go hide head, starve  
and die,

So leave the pale awe-stricken wife,  
past hope

Of help i' the world now, mute and  
motionless,

His slave, his chattel, to use and then  
destroy:

All this, he bent mind how to bring  
about,

Put this in act and life, as painted  
plain,

And have success, the crown of earthly  
good,

In this particular enterprise of man,  
A marriage—undertaken in God's face

With all those lies so opposite God's  
truth,

For ends so other than man's end.

Thus schemes  
Guido, and thus would carry out his  
scheme:

But when an obstacle first blocks the  
path,

When he finds there is no monopoly  
Of lies and trick i' the tricking lying  
world,—

That sorry timid natures, even this sort  
O' the Comparini, want nor trick nor lie  
Proper to the kind,—that as the gor-  
crow treats

The bramble-finch so treats the finch  
the moth,

And the great Guido is minutely  
matched

By this same couple,—whether true or  
false

The revelation of Pompilia's birth,  
Which in a moment brings his scheme  
to nought,—

Then, he is piqued, advances yet a  
stage,

Leaves the low region to the finch and  
fly,

Soars to the zenith whence the fiercer  
fowl

May dare the inimitable swoop. I see.  
He draws now on the curious crime,  
the fine

Felicity and flower of wickedness ;  
Determines, by the utmost exercise  
Of violence, made safe and sure by  
craft,

To satiate malice, pluck one last arch-  
pang

From the parents, else would triumph  
out of reach,

By punishing their child, within reach  
yet,

Who nowise could have wronged,  
thought, word or deed,

I' the matter that now moves him. So  
plans he,

Always subordinating (note the point!)  
Revenge, the manlier sin, to interest

The meaner,—would pluck pang forth,  
but unclench

No gripe in the act, let fall no money-  
piece.

Hence a plan for so plaguing, body and  
soul,

His wife, so putting, day by day and  
hour by hour,

The untried torture to the untouched  
place,

As must precipitate an end foreseen,  
Goad her into some plain revolt, most  
like

Plunge upon patent suicidal shame,  
Death to herself, damnation by re-  
bound

To those whose hearts he, holding hers,  
holds still :

Such a plan as, in its completeness,  
shall

Ruin the three together and alike,  
Yet leave himself in luck and liberty,

No claim renounced, no right a forfeit-  
ure,

His person unendangered, his good  
fame

Without a flaw, his pristine worth in-  
tact,—

While they, with all their claims and  
rights that cling,

Shall forthwith crumble off him every  
side,

Scorched into dust, a plaything for the  
winds.

As when, in our Campagna, there is  
fired

The nest-like work that lets a peasant  
house ;

And, as the thatch burns here, there,  
everywhere,

Even to the ivy and wild vine, that  
bound

And blessed the hut where men were  
happy once,

There rises gradual, black amid the  
blaze,

Some grim and unscathed nucleus of  
the nest,—

Some old malicious tower, some ob-  
scene tomb

They thought a temple in their ignor-  
ance,

And clung about and thought to lean  
upon—

There laughs it o'er their ravage,—  
where are they ?

So did his cruelty burn life about,  
And lay the ruin bare in dreadfulness,

Try the persistency of torment so  
O' the wife, that, at some fierce ex-  
tremity,

Some crisis brought about by fire and  
flame,

The patient stung to frenzy should  
break loose,

Fly anyhow, find refuge anywhere,  
Even in the arms of who might front  
her first,

No monster but a man—while nature  
shrieked

" Or thus escape, or die ! " The spasm  
arrived,

Not the escape by way of sin,—O God,



Who shall pluck sheep Thou holdest,  
 from Thy hand ?  
 Therefore she lay resigned to die,—so  
 far  
 The simple cruelty was foiled. Why  
 then,  
 Craft to the rescue, craft should supple-  
 ment  
 Cruelty and show hell a masterpiece !  
 Hence this con-ummate lie, this love-  
 intrigue,  
 Unmanly simulation of a sin,  
 With place and time and circumstance  
 to suit—  
 These letters false beyond all forgery—  
 Not just handwriting and mere author-  
 ship,  
 But false to body and soul they figure  
 forth—  
 As though the man had cut out shape  
 and shape  
 From fancies of that other Aretine,  
 To paste below—incorporate the filth  
 With cherub faces on a missal-page !  
 Whereby the man so far attains his end  
 That strange temptation is permitted,  
 —see !  
 Pompilia, wife, and Caponsacchi, priest,  
 Are brought together as nor priest nor  
 wife  
 Should stand, and there is passion in  
 the place,  
 Power in the air for evil as for good,  
 Promptings from heaven and hell, as if  
 the stars  
 Fought in their courses for a fate to be.  
 Thus stand the wife and priest, a spec-  
 tacle,  
 I doubt not, to unseen assemblage  
 there.  
 No lamp will mark that window for a  
 shrine,  
 No tablet signalise the terrace, teach  
 New generations which succeed the old,  
 The pavement of the street is holy  
 ground ;  
 No bard describe in verse how Christ  
 prevailed  
 And Satan fell like lightning ! Why  
 repine ?  
 What does the world, told truth, but lie  
 the more ?  
 A second time the plot is foiled ; nor,  
 now,  
 By corresponding sin for countercheck,

No wile and trick to baffle trick and  
 wile,—  
 The play of the parents ! Here the  
 blot is blanchèd  
 By God's gift of a purity of soul  
 That will not take pollution, ermine-  
 like  
 Armed from dishonour by its own soft  
 snow.  
 Such was this gift of God who showed  
 for once  
 How He would have the world go  
 white : it seems  
 As a new attribute were born of each  
 Champion of truth, the priest and wife  
 I praise,—  
 As a new safeguard sprang up in de-  
 fence  
 Of their new noble nature : so a thorn  
 Comes to the aid of and completes the  
 rose—  
 Courage to wit, no woman's gift nor  
 priest's, [right.  
 I' the crisis ; might leaps vindicating  
 See how the strong aggressor, bad and  
 bold,  
 With every vantage, preconcerts sur-  
 prise,  
 Flies of a sudden at his victim's throat  
 In a byeway,—how fares he when face  
 to face  
 With Caponsacchi ? Who fights, who  
 fears now ?  
 There quails Count Guido, armed to the  
 chattering teeth,  
 Cowers at the steadfast eye and quiet  
 word  
 O' the Canon at the Pieve ! There  
 skulks crime  
 Behind law called in to back cowardice !  
 While out of the poor trampled worm  
 the wife,  
 Springs up a serpent !  
 But anon of these !  
 Him I judge now,—of him proceed to  
 note,  
 Failing the first, a second chance be-  
 friends  
 Guido, gives pause ere punishment  
 arrive.  
 The law he called, comes, hears, adjudi-  
 cates,  
 Nor does amiss i' the main,—secludes  
 the wife  
 From the husband, respites the op-  
 pressed one, grants

Probation to the oppressor, could he know

The mercy of a minute's fiery purge !  
The furnace-coals alike of public scorn,  
Private remorse, heaped glowing on his head,

What if,—the force and guile, the ore's alloy,

Eliminate, his baser soul refined—  
The lost be saved even yet, so as by fire ?

Let him, rebuked, go softly all his days  
And, when no graver musings claim their due,

Meditate on a man's immense mistake  
Who, fashioned to use feet and walk, deigns crawl—

Takes the unmanly means—ay, though to end

Man scarce should make for, would but reach thro' wrong,—

May sin, but must not needs shame manhood so :

Since fowlers hawk, shoot, nay and snare the game,

And yet eschew vile practice, nor find sport

In torch-light treachery or the luring owl.

But how hunts Guido ? Why, the fraudulent trap—

Late spurned to ruin by the indignant feet

Of fellows in the chase who loved fair play—

Here he picks up the fragments to the least,

Lades him and hies to the old lurking-place

Where haply he may patch again, refit  
The mischief, file its blunted teeth anew,

Make sure, next time, a snap shall break the bone.

Craft, greed and violence complot revenge :

Craft, for its quota, schemes to bring about

And seize occasion and be safe withal :  
Greed craves its act may work both far and near,

Crush the tree, branch and trunk and root beside,

Whichever twig or leaf arrests a streak  
Of possible sunshine else would coin itself,

And drop down one more gold piece in the path.

Violence stipulates " Advantage provid,  
" And safety sure, be pain the overplus !

" Murder with jagged knife ! Cut but tear too !

" Foiled oft, starved long, glut malice for amends ! "

And, last, craft schemes,—scheme sorrowful and strange

As though the elements, whom mercy checked,

Had mustered hate for one eruption more,

One final deluge to surprise the Ark  
Cradled and sleeping on its mountain-top :

The outbreak-signal—what but the dove's coos

Back with the olive in her bill for news  
Sorrow was over ? 'T is an infant's birth,

Guido's first born, his son and heir, that gives

The occasion : other men cut free their souls

From care in such a case, fly up in thanks

To God, reach, recognise His love for once :

Guido cries " Soul, at last the mire is " Lie there in likeness of a money-bag,

" This babe's birth so pins down past moving now,

" That I dare cut adrift the lives I late  
" Scrupled to touch lest thou escape with them !

" These parents and their child my wife,—touch one

" Lose all ! Their rights determined on a head

" I could but hate, not harm, since from each hair

" Dangled a hope for me : now—chance and change !

" No right was in their child but passes now

" To that child's child and through such child to me.

" I am the father now,—come what, come will,

" I represent my child ; he comes between—

" Cuts sudden off the sunshine of this life

" From those three : why, the gold is in his curls !



"Not with old Pietro's, Violante's  
 head,  
 "Not his grey horror, her more hideous  
 black—  
 "Go these, devoted to the knife!"  
 'T is done:  
 Wherefore should mind misgive, heart  
 hesitate?  
 He calls to counsel, fashions certain  
 four  
 Colourless natures counted clean till  
 now,  
 —Rustic simplicity, uncorrupted youth,  
 Ignorant virtue! Here's the gold o'  
 the prime  
 When Saturn ruled, shall shock our  
 leaden day—  
 The clown abash the courtier! Mark  
 it, bards!  
 The courtier tries his hand on clown-  
 ship here,  
 Speaks a word, names a crime, appoints  
 a price,—  
 Just breathes on what, suffused with all  
 himself,  
 Is red-hot henceforth past distinction  
 now  
 I' the common glow of hell. And thus  
 they break  
 And blaze on us at Rome, Christ's  
 Birthnight-eve!  
 Oh angels that sang erst "On the earth,  
 peace!"  
 "To man, good will!"—such peace  
 finds earth to-day!  
 After the seventeen hundred years, so  
 man  
 Wills good to man, so Guido makes  
 complete  
 His murder! what is it I said?—cuts  
 loose  
 Three lives that hitherto he suffered  
 cling,  
 Simply because each served to nail  
 secure,  
 By a corner of the money-bag, his soul—  
 Therefore, lives sacred till the babe's  
 first breath  
 O'erweights them in the balance,—off  
 they fly!  
 So is the murder managed, sin con-  
 ceived  
 To the full: and why not crowned with  
 triumph too?  
 Why must the sin, conceived thus,  
 bring forth death?

I note how, within hair's-breadth of  
 escape,  
 Impunity and the thing supposed suc-  
 cess,  
 Guido is found when the check comes,  
 the change,  
 The monitory touch o' the tether—felt  
 By few, not marked by many, named  
 by none  
 At the moment, only recognised aright  
 I' the fulness of the days, for God's, lest  
 sin  
 Exceed the service, leap the line: such  
 check—  
 A secret which this life finds hard to  
 keep,  
 And, often guessed, is never quite re-  
 vealed.  
 Guido must needs trip on a stumbling-  
 block  
 Too vulgar, too absurdly plain i' the  
 path!  
 Study this single oversight of care,  
 This hebetude that mars sagacity,  
 Forgetfulness of what the man best  
 knew!  
 Here is a stranger who, with need to  
 fly,  
 Needs but to ask and have the means  
 of flight.  
 Why, the first urchin tells you, to leave  
 Rome,  
 Get horses, you must show the warrant,  
 just  
 The banal scrap, clerk's scribble, a fair  
 word buys,  
 Or foul one, if a ducat sweeten word,—  
 And straight authority will back de-  
 mand,  
 Give you the pick o' the post-house!—  
 in such wise,  
 The resident at Rome for thirty years,  
 Guido, instructs a stranger! And  
 himself  
 Forgets just this poor paper scrap,  
 wherewith  
 Armed, every door he knocks at opens  
 wide  
 To save him: horsed and manned,  
 with such advance  
 O' the hunt behind, why 't were the  
 easy task  
 Of hours told on the fingers of one hand,  
 To reach the Tuscan Frontier, laugh at  
 home,  
 Light-hearted with his fellows of the  
 place,—

Prepared by that strange shameful judgment, that  
 Satire upon a sentence just pronounced  
 By the Rota and confirmed by the Granduke,—  
 Ready in a circle to receive their peer,  
 Appreciate his good story how, when Rome,  
 The Pope-King and the populace of priests  
 Made common cause with their confederate  
 The other priestling who seduced his wife,  
 He, all unaided, wiped out the affront  
 With decent bloodshed and could face his friends,  
 Frolic it in the world's eye. Ay, such tale  
 Missed such applause, all by such oversight !  
 So, tired and footsore, those blood-flustered five  
 Went reeling on the road through dark and cold,  
 The few permissible miles, to sink at length,  
 Wallow and sleep in the first wayside straw,  
 As the other herd quenched, i' the wash o' the wave,  
 —Each swine, the devil inside him : so slept they,  
 And so were caught and caged—all through one trip,  
 Touch of the fool in Guido the astute !  
 He curses the omission, I surmise,  
 More than the murder. Why, thou fool and blind,  
 It is the mercy-stroke that stops thy fate,  
 Hamstrings and holds thee to thy hurt,  
 —but how ?  
 On the edge o' the precipice ! One minute more,  
 Thou hadst gone farther and fared worse, my son,  
 Fathoms down on the flint and fire beneath !  
 Thy comrades each and all were of one mind  
 Straightway, thy murder done, to murder thee  
 In turn, because of promised pay withheld.  
 So, to the last, greed found itself at odds

With craft in thee, and, proving conqueror,  
 Had sent thee, the same night that crowned thy hope,  
 Thither where, this same day, I see thee not,  
 Nor, through God's mercy, need, to-morrow, see.  
 Such I find Guido, midmost blotch of black  
 Discernible in this group of clustered crimes  
 Huddling together in the cave they call  
 Their palace, outraged day thus penetrates.  
 Around him ranged, now close and now remote,  
 Prominent or obscure to meet the needs  
 O' the mage and master, I detect each shape  
 Subsidiary i' the scene nor loathed the less,  
 All alike coloured, all descried akin  
 By one and the same pitchy furnace stirred  
 At the centre : see, they lick the master's hand,—  
 This fox-faced horrible priest, this brother-brute  
 The Abate,—why, mere wolfishness looks well, [flame,  
 Guido stands honest in the red o' the  
 Beside this yellow that would pass for white,  
 This Guido, all craft but no violence,  
 This copier of the mien and gait and garb  
 Of Peter and Paul, that he may go disguised,  
 Rob halt and lame, sick folk i' the temple-porch !  
 Armed with religion, fortified by law,  
 A man of peace, who trims the mid-night lamp  
 And turns the classic page—and all for craft,  
 All to work harm with, yet incur no scratch !  
 While Guido brings the struggle to a close,  
 Paul steps back the due distance, clear o' the trap  
 He builds and baits. Guido I catch and judge ;  
 Paul is past reach in this world and my time :



That is a case reserved. Pass to the next,  
 The boy of the brood, the young Giralmo  
 Priest, Canon, and what more? nor wolf nor fox,  
 But hybrid, neither craft nor violence  
 Wholly, part violence part craft: such cross  
 Tempts speculation—will both blend one day,  
 And prove hell's better product? Or subside  
 And let the simple quality emerge,  
 Go on with Satan's service the old way?  
 Meanwhile, what promise,—what performance too!  
 For there's a new distinctive touch, I see,  
 Lust—lacking in the two—hell's own blue tint [man  
 That gives a character and marks the More than a match for yellow and red.  
 Once more,  
 A case reserved: why should I doubt? Then comes  
 The gaunt grey nightmare in the furthest smoke,  
 The hag that gave these three abortions birth,  
 Unmotherly mother and unwomanly Woman, that near turns motherhood to shame,  
 Womanliness to loathing: no one word, No gesture to curb cruelty a whit  
 More than the she-pard thwarts her playsome whelps  
 Trying their milk-teeth on the soft o' the throat  
 O' the first fawn, flung, with those beseeching eyes,  
 Flat in the covert! How should she but couch,  
 Lick the dry lips, unsheathe the blunted claw,  
 Catch 'twixt her placid eyewinks at what chance  
 Old bloody half-forgotten dream may flit,  
 Born when herself was novice to the taste,  
 The while she lets youth take its pleasure. Last,  
 These God-abandoned wretched lumps of life,  
 These four companions,—country-folk this time,

Not tainted by the unwholesome civic breath,  
 Much less the curse o' the court! Mere striplings too,  
 Fit to do human nature justice still! Surely when impudence in Guido's shape  
 Shall propose crime and proffer money's-worth  
 To these stout tall bright-eyed and black-haired boys,  
 The blood shall bound in answer to each cheek  
 Before the indignant outcry break from lip!  
 Are these i' the mood to murder, hardly loosed  
 From healthy autumn-finish, the ploughed glebe,  
 Grapes in the barrel, work at happy end,  
 And winter come with rest and Christmas play?  
 How greet they Guido with his final task— [more  
 (As if he but proposed "One vineyard  
 "To dig, ere frost come, then relax indeed!")  
 "Anywhere, anyhow and anyway,  
 "Murder me some three people, old and young,  
 "Ye never heard the names of,—and be paid  
 "So much!" And the whole four accede at once.  
 Demur? As cattle would, bid march or halt!  
 Is it some lingering habit, old fond faith I' the lord of the land, instructs them,  
 —birthright-badge  
 Of feudal tenure claims its slaves again? Not so at all, thou noble human heart!  
 All is done purely for the pay,—which, earned,  
 And not forthcoming at the instant, makes  
 Religion heresy, and the lord o' the land  
 Fit subject for a murder in his turn.  
 The patron with cut throat and rifled purse,  
 Deposited i' the roadside-ditch, his due, Nought hinders each good fellow trudging home,  
 The heavier by a piece or two in poke, And so with new zest to the common life,

Mattock and spade, plough-tail and  
waggon-shaft,  
Till some such other piece of luck be-  
tide,  
Who knows? Since this is a mere  
start in life,  
And none of them exceeds the twen-  
tieth year.

Nay, more i' the background, yet?  
Unnoticed forms  
Claim to be classed, subordinately vile?  
Complacent lookers-on that laugh,—  
perchance

Shake head as their friend's horse-play  
grows too rough  
With the mere child he manages amiss—  
But would not interfere and make bad  
worse

For twice the fractious tears and  
prayers: thou know'st  
Civility better, Marzi-Medici,  
Governor for thy kinsman the Gran-  
duke!

Fit representative of law, man's lamp  
I' the magistrate's grasp full-flare, no  
rushlight-end

Sputtering 'twixt thumb and finger of  
the priest!

Whose answer to these Comparini's cry  
Is a threat,—whose remedy of Pom-  
pilia's wrong

A shrug o' the shoulder, a facetious  
word

Or wink, traditional with Tuscan wits,  
To Guido in the doorway. Laud to  
law! [he

The wife is pushed back to the husband,  
Who knows how these home-squab-  
blings persecute

People who have the public good to  
mind,

And work best with a silence in the  
court!

Ah, but I save my word at least for  
thee,

Archbishop, who art under me in the  
Church,

As I am under God,—thou, chosen by  
both

To do the shepherd's office, feed the  
sheep—

How of this lamb that panted at thy  
foot

While the wolf pressed on her within  
crook's reach?

Wast thou the hireling that did turn  
and flee?

With thee at least anon the little word!

Such denizens o' the cave now cluster  
round

And heat the furnace sevenfold: time  
indeed

A bolt from heaven should cleave roof  
and clear place,

Transfix and show the world, suspiring  
flame,

The main offender, scar and brand the  
rest

Hurrying, each miscreant to his hole:  
then flood

And purify the scene with outside day—

Which yet, in the absolute drench of  
dark,

Ne'er wants a witness, some stray  
beauty-beam

To the despair of hell.

First of the first,  
Such I pronounce Pompilia, then as  
now

Perfect in whiteness—stoop thou down,  
my child,

Give one good moment to the poor old  
Pope

Heart-sick at having all his world to  
blame—

Let me look at thee in the flesh as erst,  
Let me enjoy the old clean linen garb,

Not the new splendid vesture! Armed  
and crowned,

Would Michael, yonder, be, nor crowned  
nor armed,

The less pre-eminent angel? Every-  
where

I see in the world the intellect of man,  
That sword, the energy his subtle spear,

The knowledge which defends him like  
a shield—

Everywhere; but they make not up,  
I think,

The marvel of a soul like thine, earth's  
flower

She holds up to the softened gaze of  
God!

It was not given Pompilia to know  
much,

Speak much, to write a book, to move  
mankind,

Be memorised by who records my time.  
Yet if in purity and patience, if

In faith held fast despite the plucking  
fiend,



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 O' the first fawn, flung, with those be-  
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 Flat in the covert! How should she  
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 Lick the dry lips, unsheathe the  
 blunted claw,  
 Catch 'twixt her placid eyewinks at  
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 Old bloody half-forgotten dream may  
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 The while she lets youth take its  
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 These four companions,—country-folk  
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Not tainted  
 breath,  
 Much less th  
 stripling  
 Fit to do h  
 Surely when  
 shape  
 Shall propose  
 worth  
 To these st  
 black-ha  
 The blood sh  
 cheek  
 Before the  
 from lip  
 Are these i' th  
 loosed  
 From heal  
 ploughed  
 Grapes in th  
 end,  
 And winter co  
 mas play  
 How greet th  
 task—  
 (As if he but)  
 "To dig, ere  
 indeed!"  
 "Anywhere, a  
 "Murder me  
 and youn  
 "Ye never he  
 be paid  
 "So much!"  
 accede at  
 Demur? As  
 or halt!  
 Is it some linge  
 I' the lord of t  
 —birthrig  
 Of feudal tenu  
 Not so at all, t  
 All is done pur  
 earned,  
 And not forth  
 makes  
 Religion heres  
 land  
 Fit subject for  
 The patron wi  
 purse,  
 Deposited i' the  
 Nought hinders  
 ing home,  
 The heavier by  
 And so with n  
 life,

polish virgins disobey and sleep,  
 it wonder? But the wise that  
 watch, this time  
 lamps and buy lutes, exchange oil  
 for wine,  
 mystic Spouse betrays the Bride-  
 groom here.  
 our last resource, then! Since all  
 flesh is weak,  
 i weaknesses together, we get  
 strength:  
 individual weighed, found wanting,  
 try  
 re institution, honest artifice  
 ereby the units grow compact and  
 firm:  
 h props the other, and so stand is  
 made  
 our embodied cowards that grow  
 brave.  
 s Monastery called of Convertites,  
 ant to help women because these  
 helped Christ,—  
 hing existent only while it acts,  
 es as designed, else a nonentity,  
 r what is an idea unrealised?—  
 ompilia is consigned to these for help.  
 ey do help; they are prompt to tes-  
 tify  
 her pure life and saintly dying days.  
 ie dies, and lo, who seemed so poor,  
 proves rich!  
 hat does the body that lives through  
 helplessness  
 o women for Christ's sake? The kiss  
 turns bite,  
 he dove's note changes to the crow's  
 cry: judge!  
 Seeing that this our Convent claims of  
 right  
 What goods belong to those we suc-  
 cour, be  
 "The same proved women of dishonest  
 life,—  
 "And seeing that this Trial made ap-  
 pear  
 "Pompilia was in such predicament,—  
 "The Convent hereupon pretends to  
 said  
 "Succession of Pompilia, issues writ,  
 "And takes possession by the Fisc's  
 advice."  
 Such is their attestation to the cause  
 Of Christ, who had one saint at least,  
 they hoped:  
 But, is a title-deed to filch, a corpse  
 To slander, and an infant-heir to cheat?

Christ must give up his gains then!  
 They unsay  
 All the fine speeches,—who was saint is  
 whore.  
 Why, Scripture yields no parallel for  
 this!  
 The soldiers only threw dice for Christ's  
 coat;  
 We want another legend of the Twelve  
 Disputing if it was Christ's coat at all,  
 Claiming as prize the woof of price—for  
 why?  
 The Master was a thief, purloined the  
 same,  
 Or paid for it out of the common bag!  
 Can it be this is end and outcome, all  
 I take with me to show as stewardship's  
 fruit,  
 The best yield of the latest time, this  
 year  
 The seventeen-hundredth since God  
 died for man?  
 Is such effect proportionate to cause?  
 And still the terror keeps on the increase  
 When I perceive . . . how can I blink  
 the fact?  
 That the fault, the obduracy to good,  
 Lies not with the impracticable stuff  
 Whence man is made, his very nature's  
 fault,  
 As if it were of ice, the moon may gild  
 Not melt, or stone, 't was meant the  
 sun should warm  
 Not make bear flowers,—nor ice nor  
 stone to blame:  
 But it can melt, that ice, and bloom,  
 that stone,  
 Impossible to rule of day and night!  
 This terrifies me, thus compelled per-  
 ceive,  
 Whatever love and faith we looked  
 should spring  
 At advent of the authoritative star,  
 Which yet lie sluggish, curdled at the  
 source,—  
 These have leapt forth profusely in old  
 time,  
 These still respond with promptitude  
 to-day,  
 At challenge of—what unacknowledged  
 powers  
 O' the air, what uncommissioned me-  
 teors, warmth  
 By law, and light by rule should super-  
 sede?  
 For see this priest, this Caponsacchi,  
 stung

Has had its way i' the world where God  
should rule.

Ay, but for this irrelevant circumstance  
Of inquisition after blood, we see  
Pompilia lost and Guido saved: how  
long?

For his whole life: how much is that  
whole life?

We are not babes, but know the minute's worth,

And feel that life is large and the world  
small,

So, wait till life have passed from out  
the world.

Neither does this astonish at the end,  
That, whereas I can so receive and trust,  
Men, made with hearts and souls the  
same as mine,

Reject and disbelieve,—subordinate  
The future to the present,—sin, nor  
fear.

This I refer still to the foremost fact,  
Life is probation and this earth no goal  
But starting-point of man: compel  
him strive,

Which means, in man, as good as reach  
the goal,—

Why institute that race, his life, at all?  
But this does overwhelm me with surprise,

Touch me to terror,—not that faith,  
the pearl,

Should be let lie by fishers wanting  
Nor, seen and handled by a certain few  
Critical and contemptuous, straight  
consigned

To shore and shingle for the pebble it  
proves,—

But that, when haply found and known  
and named

By the residue made rich for evermore,  
These,—ay, these favoured ones, should  
in a trice

Turn, and with double zest go dredge  
for whelks,

Mud-worms that make the savoury  
soup. Enough

O' the disbelievers, see the faithful few!  
How do the Christians here deport  
them, keep

Their robes of white unspotted by the  
world?

What is this Aretine Archbishop, this  
Man under me as I am under God,  
This champion of the faith, I armed  
and decked,

Pushed forward, put upon a pinnacle,  
To show the enemy his victor,—see!  
What 's the best fighting when the  
couple close?

Pompilia cries, "Protect me from the  
fiend!"

"No, for thy Guido is one heady,  
strong,

"Dangerous to disquiet: let him bide!  
"He needs some bone to mumble, help  
amuse

"The darkness of his den with: so, the  
fawn

"Which limps up bleeding to my foot  
and lies,

"—Come to me, daughter,—thus I  
throw him back!"

Have we misjudged here, over-armed  
the knight,

Given gold and silk where the plain  
steel serves best,

Enfeebled whom we sought to fortify,  
Made an archbishop and undone a  
saint?

Well then, descend these heights, this  
pride of life,

Sit in the ashes with the barefoot monk  
Who long ago stamped out the worldly  
sparks.

Fasting and watching, stone cell and  
wire scourge,

—No such indulgence as unknits the  
strength—

These breed the tight nerve and tough  
cuticle,

Let the world's praise or blame run  
rillet-wise

Off the broad back and brawny breast,  
we know!

He meets the first cold sprinkle of the  
world

And shudders to the marrow, "Save  
this child?"

"Oh, my superiors, oh, the Archbishop  
here!

"Who was it dared lay hand upon the  
ark

"His betters saw fall nor put finger  
forth?

"Great ones could help yet help not:  
why should small?

"I break my promise: let her break  
her heart!"

These are the Christians not the world-  
lings, not

The sceptics, who thus battle for the  
faith!



If foolish virgins disobey and sleep,  
 What wonder? But the wise that  
 watch, this time  
 Sell lamps and buy lutes, exchange oil  
 for wine,  
 The mystic Spouse betrays the Bride-  
 groom here.  
 To our last resource, then! Since all  
 flesh is weak,  
 Bind weaknesses together, we get  
 strength:  
 The individual weighed, found wanting,  
 try  
 Some institution, honest artifice  
 Whereby the units grow compact and  
 firm:  
 Each props the other, and so stand is  
 made  
 By our embodied cowards that grow  
 brave.  
 The Monastery called of Convertites,  
 Meant to help women because these  
 helped Christ,—  
 A thing existent only while it acts,  
 Does as designed, else a nonentity,  
 For what is an idea unrealised?—  
 Pompilia is consigned to these for help.  
 They do help; they are prompt to tes-  
 tify  
 To her pure life and saintly dying days.  
 She dies, and lo, who seemed so poor,  
 proves rich!  
 What does the body that lives through  
 helpfulness  
 To women for Christ's sake? The kiss  
 turns bite,  
 The dove's note changes to the crow's  
 cry: judge!  
 "Seeing that this our Convent claims of  
 right  
 "What goods belong to those we suc-  
 cour, be  
 "The same proved women of dishonest  
 life,—  
 "And seeing that this Trial made ap-  
 pear  
 "Pompilia was in such predicament,—  
 'The Convent hereupon pretends to  
 said  
 "Succession of Pompilia, issues writ,  
 "And takes possession by the Fisc's  
 advice."  
 Such is their attestation to the cause  
 Of Christ, who had one saint at least,  
 they hoped:  
 But, is a title-deed to filch, a corpse  
 To slander, and an infant-heir to cheat?

Christ must give up his gains then!  
 They unsay  
 All the fine speeches,—who was saint is  
 whore.  
 Why, Scripture yields no parallel for  
 this!  
 The soldiers only threw dice for Christ's  
 coat;  
 We want another legend of the Twelve  
 Disputing if it was Christ's coat at all,  
 Claiming as prize the woof of price—for  
 why?  
 The Master was a thief, purloined the  
 same,  
 Or paid for it out of the common bag!  
 Can it be this is end and outcome, all  
 I take with me to show as stewardship's  
 fruit,  
 The best yield of the latest time, this  
 year  
 The seventeen-hundredth since God  
 died for man?  
 Is such effect proportionate to cause?  
 And still the terror keeps on the increase  
 When I perceive . . . how can I blink  
 the fact?  
 That the fault, the obduracy to good,  
 Lies not with the impracticable stuff  
 Whence man is made, his very nature's  
 fault,  
 As if it were of ice, the moon may gild  
 Not melt, or stone, 't was meant the  
 sun should warm  
 Not make bear flowers,—nor ice nor  
 stone to blame:  
 But it can melt, that ice, and bloom,  
 that stone,  
 Impossible to rule of day and night!  
 This terrifies me, thus compelled per-  
 ceive,  
 Whatever love and faith we looked  
 should spring  
 At advent of the authoritative star,  
 Which yet lie sluggish, curdled at the  
 source,—  
 These have leapt forth profusely in old  
 time,  
 These still respond with promptitude  
 to-day,  
 At challenge of—what unacknowledged  
 powers  
 O' the air, what uncommissioned me-  
 teors, warmth  
 By law, and light by rule should super-  
 sede?  
 For see this priest, this Caponsacchi,  
 stung

At the first summons,—“ Help for hon-  
our's sake,  
“ Play the man, pity the oppressed ! ”  
—no pause,  
How does he lay about him in the midst,  
Strike any foe, right wrong at any risk,  
All blindness, bravery and obedience !  
—blind ?  
Ay, as a man would be inside the sun,  
Delirious with the plenitude of light  
Should interfuse him to the finger-  
ends—  
Let him rush straight, and how shall he  
go wrong ?  
Where are the Christians in their pan-  
oply ?  
The loins we girt about with truth, the  
breasts  
Righteousness plated round, the shield  
of faith,  
The helmet of salvation, and that sword  
O' the Spirit, even the word of God,—  
where these ?  
Slunk into corners ! Oh, I hear at once  
Hubbub of protestation ! “ What, we  
monks,  
“ We friars, of such an order, such a  
rule,  
“ Have not we fought, bled, left our  
martyr-mark  
“ At every point along the boundary-  
line  
“ Twixt true and false, religion and  
the world,  
“ Where this or the other dogma of our  
Church [myself,  
“ Called for defence ? ” And I, despite  
How can I but speak loud what truth  
speaks low,  
“ Or better than the best, or nothing  
serves !  
“ What boots deed, I can cap and cover  
straight  
“ With such another doughtiness to  
match,  
“ Done at an instinct of the natural  
man ? ”  
Immolate body, sacrifice soul too,—  
Do not these publicans the same ?  
Outstrip !  
Or else stop race, you boast run neck  
and neck,  
You with the wings, they with the feet,  
—for shame !  
Oh, I remark your diligence and zeal !  
Five years long, now, rounds faith into  
my ears,

“ Help thou, or Christendom is done to  
death ! ”  
Five years since, in the Province of To-  
kien,  
Which is in China as some people know,  
Maigrot, my Vicar Apostolic there,  
Having a great qualm, issues a decree.  
Alack, the converts use as God's name,  
not  
*Tien-chu* but plain *Tien* or else mere  
*Shang-ti*,  
As Jesuits please to fancy politic,  
While, say Dominicans, it calls down  
fire,—  
For *Tien* means heaven, and *Shang-ti*,  
supreme prince,  
While *Tien-chu* means the lord of hea-  
ven : all cry,  
“ There is no business urgent for des-  
patch  
“ As that thou send a legate, specially  
“ Cardinal Tournon, straight to Peking,  
there [ence ! ”  
“ To settle and compose the differ-  
So have I seen a potentate all fume  
For some infringement of his realm's  
just right,  
Some menace to a mud-built straw-  
thatched farm  
O' the frontier, while inside the main-  
land lie,  
Quite undisputed—for in solitude,  
Whole cities plague may waste or fam-  
ine sap :  
What if the sun crumble, the sands en-  
croach,  
While he looks on sublimely at his ease ?  
How does their ruin touch the empire's  
bound ?  
And is this little all that was to be ?  
Where is the gloriously-decisive change,  
The immeasurable metamorphosis  
Of human clay to divine gold, we looked  
Should, in some poor sort, justify the  
price ?  
Had a mere adept of the Rosy Cross  
Spent his life to consummate the Great  
Work,  
Would not we start to see the stuff it  
touched  
Yield not a grain more than the vulgar  
got  
By the old smelting-process years ago ?  
If this were sad to see in just the sage  
Who should profess so much, perform  
no more,



What is it when suspected in that Power  
 Who undertook to make and made the  
 world,  
 Devised and did effect man, body and  
 soul,  
 Ordained salvation for them both, and  
 yet . . .  
 Well, is the thing we see, salvation ?

I

Put no such dreadful question to myself,  
 Within whose circle of experience burns  
 The central truth, Power, Wisdom,  
 Goodness,—God :

I must outlive a thing ere know it dead :  
 When I outlive the faith there is a sun,  
 When I lie, ashes to the very soul,—  
 Some one, not I, must wail above the  
 heap,

"He died in dark whence never morn  
 arose."

While I see day succeed the deepest  
 night—

How can I speak but as I know?—my  
 speech

Must be, throughout the darkness, "It  
 will end :"

"The light that did burn, will burn !"  
 Clouds obscure— [bright ?

But for which obscurity all were  
 Too hastily concluded ! Sun-suffused,  
 A cloud may soothe the eye made blind  
 by blaze,—

Better the very clarity of heaven :  
 The soft streaks are the beautiful and  
 dear.

What but the weakness in a faith sup-  
 plies

The incentive to humanity, no strength  
 Absolute, irresistible, comports ?

How can man love but what he yearns  
 to help ?

And that which men think weakness  
 within strength,

But angels know for strength and  
 stronger yet—

What were it else but the first things  
 made new,

But repetition of the miracle,  
 The divine instance of self-sacrifice  
 That never ends and aye begins for  
 man ?

So, never I miss footing in the maze,  
 No,—I have light nor fear the dark at  
 all.

But are mankind not real, who pace  
 outside

My petty circle, the world measured  
 me ?

And when they stumble even as I  
 stand, [cry,

Have I a right to stop ears when they  
 As they were phantoms, took the clouds  
 for crags,

Tripped and fell, where the march of  
 man might move ?

Beside, the cry is other than a ghost's,  
 When out of the old time there pleads  
 some bard,

Philosopher, or both and—whispers  
 not,

But words it boldly. "The inward  
 work and worth

"Of any mind, what other mind may  
 judge

"Save God who only knows the thing  
 He made,

"The veritable service He exacts ?

"It is the outward product men ap-  
 praise. [aloft :

"Behold, an engine hoists a tower  
 "I looked that it should move the  
 mountain too !"

"Or else 'Had just a turret toppled  
 down,

"Success enough!—may say the  
 Machinist

"Who knows what less or more result  
 might be : [do,

"But we, who see that done we cannot  
 "A feat beyond man's force,' we men  
 must say.

"Regard me and that shake I gave the  
 world !

"I was born, not so long before Christ's  
 birth,

"As Christ's birth haply did precede  
 thy day,—

"But many a watch, before the star  
 of dawn :

"Therefore I lived,—it is thy creed  
 affirms,

"Pope Innocent, who art to answer  
 me !—

"Under conditions, nowise to escape,  
 "Whereby salvation was impossible.

"Each impulse to achieve the good and  
 fair,

"Each aspiration to the pure and true,  
 "Being without a warrant or an aim,

"Was just as sterile a felicity  
 "As if the insect, born to spend his life

"Soaring his circles, stopped them to  
 describe

- " (Painfully motionless in the mid-air)  
 " Some word of weighty counsel for  
   man's sake,  
 " Some ' Know thyself ' or ' Take the  
   golden mean !'  
 " —Forwent his happy dance and the  
   glad ray,  
 " Died half an hour the sooner and was  
   dust.  
 " I, born to perish like the brutes, or  
   worse,  
 " Why not live brutishly, obey my law ?  
 " But I, of body as of soul complete,  
 " A gymnast at the games, philosopher  
 " I' the schools, who painted, and made  
   music,—all  
 " Glories that met upon the tragic stage  
 " When the Third Poet's tread sur-  
   prised the Two,—  
 " Whose lot fell in a land where life was  
   great  
 " And sense went free and beauty lay  
   profuse,  
 " I, untouched by one adverse circum-  
   stance,  
 " Adopted virtue as my rule of life,  
 " Waived all reward, and loved for  
   loving's sake,  
 " And, what my heart taught me, I  
   taught the world,  
 " And have been teaching now two  
   thousand years,  
 " Witness my work,—plays that should  
   please, forsooth !  
 " They might please, they may dis-  
   please, they shall teach,  
 " ' For truth's sake,' so I said, and did,  
   and do.  
 " Five hundred years ere Paul spoke,  
   Felix heard,—  
 " How much of temperance and right-  
   eousness, [for,  
 " Judgment to come, did I find reason  
 " Corroborate with my strong style  
   that spared  
 " No sin, nor swerved the more from  
   branding brow  
 " Because the sinner was called Zeus  
   and God ?  
 " How nearly did I guess at that Paul  
   knew ?  
 " How closely come, in what I repre-  
   sent  
 " As duty, to his doctrine yet a blank ?  
 " And as that limner not untruly limns  
 " Who draws an object round or square,  
   which square
- " Or round seems to the unassisted eye,  
 " Though Galileo's tube display the  
   same  
 " Oval or oblong,—so, who controverts  
 " I rendered rightly what proves  
   wrongly wrought  
 " Beside Paul's picture ? Mine was  
   true for me.  
 " I saw that there are, first and above  
   all,  
 " The hidden forces, blind necessities,  
 " Named Nature, but the thing's self  
   unconceived :  
 " Then follow,—how dependent upon  
   these,  
 " We know not, how imposed above  
   ourselves,  
 " We well know,—what I name the  
   gods, a power  
 " Various or one ; for great and strong  
   and good  
 " Is there, and little, weak and bad  
   there too,  
 " Wisdom and folly : say, these make  
   no God,—  
 " What is it else that rules outside man's  
   self ?  
 " A fact then,—always, to the naked  
   eye,—  
 " And, so, the one revelation possible  
 " Of what were unimagined else by man.  
 " Therefore, what gods do, man may  
   criticise,  
 " Applaud, condemn,—how should he  
   fear the truth ?  
 " But likewise have in awe because of  
   power,  
 " Venerate for the main munificence,  
 " And give the doubtful deed its due  
   excuse  
 " From the acknowledged creature of a  
   day [bold  
 " To the Eternal and Divine. Thus,  
 " Yet self-mistrusting, should man bear  
   himself,  
 " Most assured on what now concerns  
   him most—  
 " The law of his own life, the path he  
   prints,—  
 " Which law is virtue and not vice, I  
   say,—  
 " And least inquisitive where least  
   search skills,  
 " I' the nature we best give the clouds  
   to keep.  
 " What could I paint beyond a scheme  
   like this



- " Out of the fragmentary truths where  
light  
" Lay fitful in a tenebrific time ?  
" You have the sunrise now, joins truth  
to truth,  
" Shoots life and substance into death  
and void ;  
" Themselves compose the whole we  
made before :  
" The forces and necessity grow God,—  
" The beings so contrarious that  
seemed gods,  
" Prove just His operation manifold  
" And multiform, translated, as must  
be,  
" Into intelligible shape so far  
" As suits our sense and sets us free to  
feel :  
" What if I let a child think, childhood-  
long,  
" That lightning, I would have him  
spare his eye,  
" Is a real arrow shot at naked orb ?  
" The man knows more, but shuts his  
lids the same :  
" Lightning's cause comprehends nor  
man nor child.  
" Why then, my scheme, your better  
knowledge broke,  
" Presently readjusts itself, the small  
" Proportioned largelier, parts and  
whole named new :  
" So much, no more two thousand  
years have done !  
" Pope, dost thou dare pretend to pun-  
ish me, [night,  
" For not desecrating sunshine at mid-  
" Me who crept all-fours, found my  
way so far—  
" While thou rewardest teachers of the  
truth,  
" Who miss the plain way in the blaze  
of noon,—  
" Though just a word from that strong  
style of mine,  
" Grasped honestly in hand as guiding-  
staff,  
" Had pricked them a sure path across  
the bog,  
" That mire of cowardice and slush of  
lies  
" Wherein I find them wallow in wide  
day ? "
- How should I answer this Euripides ?  
Paul,—t is a legend,—answered Sene-  
ca,
- But that was in the day-spring ; noon  
is now  
We have got too familiar with the light.  
Shall I wish back once more that thrill  
of dawn ?  
When the whole truth-touched man  
burned up, one fire ?  
—Assured the trial, fiery, fierce, but  
fleet,  
Would, from his little heap of ashes,  
lend  
Wings to the conflagration of the world  
Which Christ awaits ere He make all  
things new—  
So should the frail become the perfect,  
rapt  
From glory of pain to glory of joy ; and  
so,  
Even in the end,—the act renouncing  
earth,  
Lands, houses, husbands, wives and  
children here,—  
Begin that other act which finds all,  
lost,  
Regained, in this time even, a hundred-  
fold,  
And, in the next time, feels the finite  
love  
Blent and embalmed with its eternal  
life.  
So does the sun ghastlily seem to sink  
In those north parts, lean all but out of  
life,  
Desist a dread mere breathing-stop,  
then slow  
Reassert day, begin the endless rise.  
Was this too easy for our after-stage ?  
Was such a lighting-up of faith, in life,  
Only allowed initiate, set man's step  
In the true way by help of the great  
glow ?  
A way wherein it is ordained he walk,  
Bearing to see the light from heaven  
still more [earth,  
And more encroached on by the light of  
Tentatives earth puts forth to rival  
heaven,  
Earthly incitements that mankind  
serve God.  
For man's sole sake, not God's and  
therefore man's,  
Till at last, who distinguishes the sun  
From a mere Druid fire on a far mount ?  
More praise to him who with his subtle  
prism  
Shall decompose both beams and name  
the true.

In such sense, who is last proves first  
 indeed ;  
 For how could saints and martyrs fail  
 see truth  
 Streak the night's blackness ? Who is  
 faithful now,  
 Untwists heaven's pure white from the  
 yellow flare  
 O' the world's gross torch, without a  
 foil to help  
 Produce the Christian act, so possible  
 When in the way stood Nero's cross and  
 stake,—  
 So hard now that the world smiles  
 " Rightly done !  
 " It is the politic, the thrifty way,  
 " Will clearly make you in the end re-  
 turns  
 " Beyond our fool's-sport and improvi-  
 dence :  
 " We fools go thro' the cornfield of this  
 life,  
 " Pluck ears to left and right and swal-  
 low raw,  
 " —Nay, tread, at pleasure, a sheaf  
 underfoot,  
 " To get the better at some poppy-  
 flower,—  
 " Well aware we shall have so much  
 wheat less  
 " In the eventual harvest : you mean-  
 time  
 " Waste not a spike,—the richlier will  
 you reap !  
 " What then ? There will be always  
 garnered meal  
 " Sufficient for our comfortable loaf,  
 " While you enjoy the undiminished  
 prize ! "  
 Is it not this ignoble confidence,  
 Cowardly hardihood, that dulls and  
 damps,  
 Makes the old heroism impossible ?  
 Unless . . . what whispers me of times  
 to come ?  
 What if it be the mission of that age,  
 My death will usher into life, to shake  
 This torpor of assurance from our creed,  
 Re-introduce the doubt discarded,  
 bring  
 The formidable danger back, we drove  
 Long ago to the distance and the dark ?  
 No wild beast now prowls round the in-  
 fant camp ;  
 We have built wall and sleep in city  
 safe :

But if the earthquake try the towers,  
 that laugh  
 To think they once saw lions rule out-  
 side,  
 Till man stand out again, pale, resolute,  
 Prepared to die,—that is, alive at last ?  
 As we broke up that old faith of the  
 world,  
 Have we, next age, to break up this the  
 new—  
 Faith, in the thing, grown faith in the  
 report—  
 Whence need to bravely disbelieve re-  
 port  
 Through increased faith in thing reports  
 belie ?  
 Must we deny,—do they, these Molin-  
 ists,  
 At peril of their body and their soul,—  
 Recognised truths, obedient to some  
 truth  
 Unrecognised yet, but perceptible ?—  
 Correct the portrait by the living face,  
 Man's God, by God's God in the mind  
 of man ?  
 Then, for the few that rise to the new  
 height,  
 The many that must sink to the old  
 depth,  
 The multitude found fall away ! A  
 few,  
 E'en ere the new law speak clear, keep  
 the old,  
 Preserve the Christian level, call good  
 good  
 And evil evil, (even though rased and  
 blank  
 The old titles stand,) thro' custom,  
 habitude,  
 And all they may mistake for finer  
 sense  
 O' the fact than reason warrants,—as  
 before,  
 They hope perhaps, fear not impos-  
 sibly.  
 Surely some one Pompilia in the world  
 Will say " I know the right place by  
 foot's feel,  
 " I took it and tread firm there ; where-  
 fore change ? "  
 But what a multitude will fall, per-  
 chance,  
 Quite through the crumbling truth sub-  
 jacent late,  
 Sink to the next discoverable base,  
 Rest upon human nature, take their  
 stand



On what is fact, the lust and pride of  
 life!  
 The mass of men, whose very souls  
 even now  
 Seem to need re-creating,—so they  
 slink  
 Worm-like into the mud light now lays  
 bare,—  
 Whose future we dispose of with shut  
 eyes  
 "They are baptized,—grafted, the bar-  
 ren twigs,  
 "Into the living stock of Christ: may  
 bear  
 "One day, till when they lie death-  
 like, not dead,"—  
 Those who with all the aid of Christ lie  
 thus,  
 How, without Christ, whither, unaided,  
 sink?  
 What but to this rehearsed before my  
 eyes?  
 Do not we end, the century and I?  
 The impatient antimasque treads close  
 on kibe  
 O' the very masque's self it will mock,  
 —on me,  
 Last lingering personage, the impa-  
 tient mime  
 Pushes already,—will I block the way?  
 Will my slow trail of garments ne'er  
 leave space  
 For pantaloons, sock, plume and cas-  
 tanet?  
 Here comes the first experimentalist  
 In the new order of things,—he plays a  
 priest;  
 Does he take inspiration from the  
 Church,  
 Directly make her rule his law of life?  
 Not he: his own mere impulse guides  
 the man—  
 Happily sometimes, since ourselves  
 admit  
 He has danced, in gaiety of heart, i'  
 the main  
 The right step in the maze we bade him  
 foot.  
 What if his heart had prompted to break  
 loose  
 And mar the measure? Why, we  
 must submit  
 And thank the chance that brought him  
 safely through.  
 Will he repeat the prodigy? Perhaps.  
 Can he teach others how to quit them-  
 selves,

Prove why this step was right, while  
 that were wrong?  
 How should he? "Ask your hearts  
 as I asked mine,  
 "And get discreetly through the mor-  
 rice so;  
 "If your hearts misdirect you,—quit  
 the stage,  
 "And make amends,—be there amends  
 to make."  
 Such is, for the Augustine that was  
 once,  
 This Canon Caponsacchi we see now.  
 "And my heart answers to another  
 tune,"  
 Puts in the Abate, second in the suite,  
 "I have my taste too, and tread no  
 such step!  
 "You choose the glorious life, and may,  
 for me,  
 "Who like the lowest of life's appe-  
 tites,—  
 "What you judge,—but the very truth  
 of joy  
 "To my own apprehension which must  
 judge.  
 "Call me knave and you get yourself  
 called fool!  
 "I live for greed, ambition, lust, re-  
 venge;  
 "Attain these ends by force, guile:  
 hypocrite, [nised  
 "To-day, perchance to-morrow recog-  
 "The rational man, the type of com-  
 mon sense."  
 There 's Loyola adapted to our time!  
 Under such guidance Guido plays his  
 part,  
 He also influencing in due turn  
 These last clods where I track intelli-  
 gence  
 By any glimmer, those four at his beck  
 Ready to murder any, and, at their  
 own,  
 As ready to murder him,—these are  
 the world!  
 And, first effect of the new cause of  
 things,  
 There they lie also duly,—the old pair  
 Of the weak head and not so wicked  
 heart,  
 And the one Christian mother, wife  
 and girl,  
 —Which three gifts seem to make an  
 angel up,—  
 The first foot of the dance is on their  
 heads!

Still, I stand here, not off the stage  
 though close  
 On the exit: and my last act, as my  
 first,  
 I owe the scene, and Him who armed  
 me thus  
 With Paul's sword as with Peter's key.  
 I smite  
 With my whole strength once more,  
 then end my part,  
 Ending, so far as man may, this of-  
 fence.  
 And when I raise my arm, what plucks  
 my sleeve?  
 Who stops me in the righteous func-  
 tion,—foe  
 Or friend? O, still as ever, friends are  
 they  
 Who, in the interest of outraged truth,  
 Deprecate such rough handling of a lie!  
 The facts being proved and incontest-  
 able,  
 What is the last word I must listen to?  
 Is it "Spare yet a term this barren  
 stock,  
 "We pray thee dig about and dung  
 and dress  
 "Till he repent and bring forth fruit  
 even yet?"  
 Is it "So poor and swift a punishment  
 "Shall throw him out of life with all  
 that sin?"  
 "Let mercy rather pile up pain on pain  
 "Till the flesh expiate what the soul  
 pays else?"  
 Nowise! Remonstrance on all sides  
 begins  
 Instruct me, there 's a new tribunal  
 now  
 Higher than God's,—the educated  
 man's!  
 Nice sense of honour in the human  
 breast  
 Supersedes here the old coarse oracle—  
 Confirming handsomely a point or so  
 Wherein the predecessor worked aright  
 By rule of thumb: as when Christ said,  
 —when, where?  
 Enough, I find it in a pleading here,—  
 "All other wrongs done, patiently I  
 take:  
 "But touch my honour and the case is  
 changed!  
 "I feel the due resentment,—*nemini*  
 "*Honorem trado*, is my quick retort."  
 Right of Him, just as if pronounced to-  
 day!

Still, should the old authority be mute,  
 Or doubtful, or in speaking clash with  
 new,  
 The younger takes permission to decide.  
 At last we have the instinct of the  
 world  
 Ruling its household without tutelage,  
 And while the two laws, human and  
 divine,  
 Have busied finger with this tangled  
 case,  
 In the brisk junior pushes, cuts the  
 knot,  
 Pronounces for acquittal. How it  
 trips  
 Silverly o'er the tongue! "Remit the  
 death!"  
 "Forgive, . . well, in the old way, if  
 thou please,  
 "Decency and the relics of routine  
 "Respected,—let the Count go free as  
 air!  
 "Since he may plead a priest's im-  
 munity,—  
 "The minor orders help enough for  
 that,  
 "With Farinacci's licence,—who de-  
 cides [man,  
 "That the mere implication of such  
 "So privileged, in any cause, before  
 "Whatever court except the Spiritual,  
 "Straight quashes the procedure,—  
 quash it, then!  
 "It proves a pretty loophole of escape  
 "Moreover, that, beside the patent  
 fact  
 "O' the law's allowance, there 's in-  
 volved the weal  
 "O' the Popedom: a son's privilege at  
 stake,  
 "Thou wilt pretend the Church's in-  
 terest,  
 "Ignore all finer reasons to forgive!  
 "But herein lies the proper cogency—  
 "(Let thy friends teach thee while thou  
 tellest beads)  
 "That in this case the spirit of culture  
 speaks,  
 "Civilisation is imperative.  
 "To her shall we remand all delicate  
 points  
 "Henceforth, nor take irregular advice  
 "O' the sly, as heretofore: she used to  
 hint  
 "Apologies when law was out of sorts  
 "Because a saucy tongue was put to  
 rest,



- " An eye that roved was cured of arrogance :  
 " But why be forced to mumble under breath  
 " What soon shall be acknowledged the plain fact,  
 " Outspoken, say, in thy successor's time ?  
 " Methinks we see the golden age return !  
 " Civilisation and the Emperor  
 " Succeed thy Christianity and Pope.  
 " One Emperor then, as one Pope now : meanwhile,  
 " She anticipates a little to tell thee  
 " Take  
 " ' Count Guido's life, and sap society,  
 " ' Whereof the main prop was, is, and shall prove  
 " '—Supremacy of husband over wife !'  
 " Shall the man rule i' the house, or may his mate  
 " Because of any plea dispute the same ?  
 " Oh, pleas of all sorts shall abound, be sure,  
 " If once allowed validity,—for, harsh  
 " And savage, for, inept and silly-sooth,  
 " For, this and that, will the ingenious sex  
 " Demonstrate the best master e'er graced slave :  
 " And there 's but one short way to end the coil,—  
 " By giving right and reason steadily  
 " To the man and master : then the wife submits.  
 " There it is broadly stated,—nor the time  
 " Admits we shift—a pillar ? nay, a stake  
 " Out of its place i' the tenement, one touch  
 " Whereto may send a shudder through the heap  
 " And bring it toppling on our heads perchance.  
 " Moreover, if this breed a qualm in thee,  
 " Give thine own feelings play for once,—deal death ?  
 " Thou, whose own life winks o'er the socket-edge,  
 " Would'st thou it went out in such ugly snuff  
 " As dooming sons to death, though justice bade ?
- " Why, on a certain feast, Barabbas' self  
 " Was set free not to cloud the general cheer.  
 " Neither shalt thou pollute thy Sabbath close !  
 " Mercy is safe and graceful. How one hears  
 " The howl begin, scarce the three little taps  
 " O' the silver mallet ended on thy brow,—  
 " ' His last act was to sacrifice a Count  
 " ' And thereby screen a scandal of the Church !  
 " ' Guido condemned, the Canon justified  
 " ' Of course,—delinquents of his cloth go free !'  
 " And so the Luthers and the Calvins come,  
 " So thy hand helps Molinos to the chair  
 " Whence he may hold forth till doom's day on just  
 " These *petit-maitre* priestlings,—in the choir,  
 " *Sanctus et Benedictus*, with a brush  
 " Of soft guitar-strings that obey the thumb,  
 " Touched by the bedside, for accompaniment !  
 " Does this give umbrage to a husband : Death  
 " To the fool, and to the priest impunity !  
 " But no impunity to any friend  
 " So simply over-loyal as these four  
 " Who made religion of their patron's cause,  
 " Believed in him and did his bidding straight,  
 " Asked not one question but laid down the lives  
 " This Pope took,—all four lives together made  
 " Just his own length of days,—so dead they lie,  
 " As these were times when loyalty 's a drug,  
 " And zeal in a subordinate too cheap  
 " And common to be saved when we spend life !  
 " Come, 't is too much good breath we waste in words :  
 " The pardon, Holy Father ! Spare grimace,

Still, I stand here, not off the stage  
though close  
On the exit: and my last act, as my  
first,  
I owe the scene, and Him who armed  
me thus  
With Paul's sword as with Peter's key.  
I smite  
With my whole strength once more,  
then end my part,  
Ending, so far as man may, this of-  
fence.  
And when I raise my arm, what plucks  
my sleeve?  
Who stops me in the righteous func-  
tion,—foe  
Or friend? O, still as ever, friends are  
they  
Who, in the interest of outraged truth,  
Deprecate such rough handling of a lie!  
The facts being proved and incontest-  
able,  
What is the last word I must listen to?  
Is it "Spare yet a term this barren  
stock,  
"We pray thee dig about and dung  
and dress  
"Till he repent and bring forth fruit  
even yet?"  
Is it "So poor and swift a punishment  
"Shall throw him out of life with all  
that sin?  
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Higher than God's,—the educated  
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Supersedes here the old coarse oracle—  
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Pope!  
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says: 't is truth; he  
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Therefore to suppress such  
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the truth! Your self-styled  
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A thief—and how thieves hate the  
wolves we know:  
Damage to theft, damage to thrift, all's  
one!  
The red hand is sworn foe of the black  
jaw!  
That's only natural, that's right  
enough:  
But why the wolf should compliment  
the thief  
With the shepherd's title, bark out life  
in thanks,  
And, spiteless, lick the prong that spits  
him,—eh,  
Cardinal? My Abate, scarcely thus!  
There, let my sheepskin-garb, a curse  
on 't, go—  
Leave my teeth free if I must show my  
shag!  
Repent? What good shall follow? If  
I pass  
Twelve hours repenting, will that fact  
hook fast  
The thirteenth at the horrid dozen's  
end?  
If I fall forthwith at your feet, gnash,  
tear,  
Foam, rave, to give your story the due  
grace,  
Will that assist the engine half-way  
back  
Into its hiding-house?—boards, shak-  
ing now,  
Bone against bone, like some old skele-  
ton bat  
That wants, now winter's dead, to wake  
and prey!  
Will howling put the spectre back to  
sleep?  
Ah, but I misconceive your object, Sirs!  
Since I want new life like the creature,—  
life  
Being done with here, begins i' the  
world away:  
I shall next have "Come, mortals, and  
be judged!"  
There's but a minute betwixt this and  
then:  
So, quick, be sorry since it saves my  
soul!  
Sirs, truth shall save it, since no lies as-  
sist!  
Hear the truth, you, whatever you style  
yourselves,  
Civilisation and society!  
Come, one good grapple, I with all the  
world!



- He execrates my crime,—good !—sees  
hell yawn  
One inch from the red plank's end  
which I press,—  
Nothing is better ! What's the consequence ?  
How does a Pope proceed that knows  
his cue ?  
Why, leaves me linger out my minute  
here,  
Since close on death come judgment  
and the doom,  
Nor cribs at dawn its pittance from a  
sheep  
Destined ere dewfall to be butcher's-  
meat !  
Think, Sirs, if I had done you any harm,  
And you require the natural revenge,  
Suppose, and so intend to poison me,  
—Just as you take and slip into my  
draught [scores,  
The paperful of powder that clears  
You notice on my brow a certain blue :  
How you both overset the wine at once !  
How you both smile ! " Our enemy  
has the plague !  
" Twelve hours hence he 'll be scraping  
his bones bare  
" Of that intolerable flesh, and die,  
" Frenzied with pain : no need for poison  
here !  
" Step aside and enjoy the spectacle ! "  
Tender for souls are you, Pope Innocent !  
Christ's maxim is—one soul outweighs  
the world :  
Respite me, save a soul, then, curse the  
world !  
" No," venerable sire, I hear you smirk,  
" No : for Christ's gospel changes  
names, not things,  
" Renews the obsolete, does nothing  
more !  
" Our fire-new gospel is retinkered law,  
" Our mercy, justice,—Jove's re-  
christened God,—  
" Nay, whereas, in the popular conceit,  
" 'T is pity that old harsh Law some-  
how limps,  
" Lingers on earth, although Law's day  
be done,—  
" Else would benignant Gospel inter-  
pose,  
" Not furtively as now, but bold and  
frank  
" O'erflutter us with healing in her  
wings,—
- " Law is all harshness, Gospel were all  
love !—  
" We like to put it, on the contrary,—  
" Gospel takes up the rod which Law  
lets fall ;  
" Mercy is vigilant when justice sleeps :  
" Does Law let Guido taste the Gospel-  
grace ?  
" The secular arm allow the spiritual  
power  
" To act for once ?—what compliment  
so fine  
" As that the Gospel handsomely be  
harsh,  
" Thrust back Law's victim on the nice  
and coy ? "  
Yes, you do say so,—else you would for-  
give  
Me, whom Law dares not touch but  
tosses you !  
Do n't think to put on the professional  
face !  
You know what I know,—casuists as  
you are,  
Each nerve must creep, each hair start,  
sting and stand,  
At such illogical inconsequence !  
Dear my friends, do but see ! A mur-  
der's tried,  
There are two parties to the cause :  
I 'm one,  
—Defend myself, as somebody must do :  
I have the best o' the battle : that's a  
fact, [side :  
Simple fact,—fancies find no place be-  
What though half Rome condemned  
me ? Half approved :  
And, none disputes, the luck is mine at  
last,  
All Rome, i' the main, acquits me :  
whereupon  
What has the Pope to ask but " How  
finds Law ? "  
" I find," replies Law, " I have erred  
this while :  
" Guilty or guiltless, Guido proves a  
priest,  
" No layman : he is therefore yours,  
not mine :  
" I bound him : loose him, you whose  
will is Christ's ! "  
And now what does this Vicar of the  
Lord,  
Shepherd o' the flock,—one of whose  
charge bleats sore  
For crook's help from the quag wherein  
it drowns ?

Law suffers him put forth the crumpled  
end,—  
His pleasure is to turn staff, use the  
point,  
And thrust the shuddering sheep he  
calls a wolf,  
Back and back, down and down to  
where hell gapes !  
" Guiltless," cries Law—" Guilty " cor-  
rects the Pope !  
" Guilty," for the whim's sake !  
" Guilty," he somehow thinks,  
And anyhow says : ' t is truth ; he  
dares not lie !  
Others should do the lying. That's  
the cause  
Brings you both here : I ought in de-  
cency  
Confess to you that I deserve my fate,  
Am guilty, as the Pope thinks,—ay, to  
the end,  
Keep up the jest, lie on, lie ever, lie  
I' the latest gasp of me ! What rea-  
son, Sirs ?  
Because to-morrow will succeed to-day  
For you, though not for me : and if I  
stick  
Still to the truth, declare with my last  
breath,  
I die an innocent and murdered man,—  
Why, there 's the tongue of Rome will  
wag apace  
This time to-morrow.—don't I hear  
the talk !  
" So, to the last he proved impenitent ?  
" Pagans have said as much of mar-  
tyred saints !  
" Law demurred, washed her hands of  
the whole case.  
" Prince Somebody said this, Duke  
Something, that.  
" Doubtless the man's dead, dead  
enough, don't fear !  
" But, hang it, what if there have been  
a spice,  
" A touch of . . . eh ? You see, the  
Pope 's so old, [slips  
" Some of us add, obtuse,—age never  
" The chance of shoving youth to face  
death first ! "  
And so on. Therefore to suppress such  
talk  
You two come here, entreat I tell you  
lies,  
And end, the edifying way. I end,  
Telling the truth ! Your self-styled  
shepherd thieves !

A thief—and how thieves hate the  
wolves we know :  
Damage to theft, damage to thrift, all's  
one !  
The red hand is sworn foe of the black  
jaw !  
That's only natural, that's right  
enough :  
But why the wolf should compliment  
the thief  
With the shepherd's title, bark out life  
in thanks,  
And, spiteless, lick the prong that spits  
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on 't, go—  
Leave my teeth free if I must show my  
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Repent ? What good shall follow ? If  
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Twelve hours repenting, will that fact  
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If I fall forthwith at your feet, gnash,  
tear,  
Foam, rave, to give your story the due  
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Will that assist the engine half-way  
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Into its hiding-house ?—boards, shak-  
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Bone against bone, like some old skele-  
ton bat  
That wants, now winter 's dead, to wake  
and prey !  
Will howling put the spectre back to  
sleep ?  
Ah, but I misconceive your object, Sirs !  
Since I want new life like the creature,—  
life  
Being done with here, begins i' the  
world away :  
I shall next have " Come, mortals, and  
be judged ! "  
There 's but a minute betwixt this and  
then :  
So, quick, be sorry since it saves my  
soul !  
Sirs, truth shall save it, since no lies as-  
sist !  
Hear the truth, you, whatever you style  
yourselves,  
Civilisation and society !  
Come, one good grapple, I with all the  
world !



Dying in cold blood is the desperate thing ;  
 The angry heart explodes, bears off in blaze  
 The indignant soul, and I'm combustion-ripe.  
 Why, you intend to do your worst with me !  
 That 's in your eyes ! You dare no more than death,  
 And mean no less. I must make up my mind !  
 So Pietro,—when I chased him here and there,  
 Morsel by morsel cut away the life  
 I loathed,—cried for just respite to confess  
 And save his soul : much respite did I grant !  
 Why grant me respite who deserve my doom ?  
 Me—who engaged to play a prize, fight you,  
 Knowing your arms, and foil you, trick for trick,  
 At rapier-fence, your match and, maybe, more.  
 I knew that if I chose sin certain sins,  
 Solace my lusts out of the regular way  
 Prescribed me, I should find you in the path,  
 Have to try skill with a redoubted foe ;  
 You would lunge, I would parry, and make end.  
 At last, occasion of a murder comes :  
 We cross blades, I, for all my brag, break guard,  
 And in goes the cold iron at my breast,  
 Out at my back, and end is made of me.  
 You stand confessed the adroiter swordsman,—ay,  
 But on your triumph you increase, it seems,  
 Want more of me than lying flat on face :  
 I ought to raise my ruined head, allege  
 Not simply I pushed worse blade o' the pair,  
 But my antagonist dispensed with steel !  
 There was no passage of arms, you looked me low,  
 With brow and eye abolished cut-and-thrust  
 Nor used the vulgar weapon ! This chance scratch,  
 This incidental hurt, this sort of hole

I' the heart of me ? I stumbled, got it so !  
 Fell on my own sword as a bungler may !  
 Yourself proscribe such heathen tools, and trust  
 To the naked virtue : it was virtue stood  
 Unarmed and awed me,—on my brow there burned  
 Crime out so plainly, intolerably, red,  
 That I was fain to cry—" Down to the dust  
 " With me, and bury there brow, brand and all ! "  
 Law had essayed the adventure,—but what 's Law ?  
 Morality exposed the Gorgon-shield !  
 Morality and Religion conquer me.  
 If Law sufficed would you come here, entreat  
 I supplement law, and confess forsooth ?  
 Did not the Trial show things plain enough ?  
 " Ah, but a word of the man's very self  
 " Would somehow put the keystone in its place  
 " And crown the arch ! " Then take the word you want !  
 I say that, long ago, when things began,  
 All the world made agreement, such and such  
 Were pleasure-giving profit-bearing acts,  
 But henceforth extra-legal, nor to be :  
 You must not kill the man whose death would please  
 And profit you, unless his life stop yours  
 Plainly, and need so be put aside :  
 Get the thing by a public course, by law,  
 Only no private bloodshed as of old !  
 All of us, for the good of everyone,  
 Renounced such licence and conformed to law :  
 Who breaks law, breaks pact, therefore, helps himself  
 To pleasure and profit over and above the due,  
 And must pay forfeit,—pain beyond his share :  
 For pleasure is the sole good in the world, [pain,  
 Anyone's pleasure turns to someone's  
 So, let law watch for everyone,—say we,  
 Who call things wicked that give too much joy,

And nickname the reprisal, envy makes,  
Punishment: quite right! thus the  
world goes round.

I, being well aware such pact there was,  
Who in my time have found advantage  
too

In law's observance and crime's pen-  
alty,—

Who, but for wholesome fear law bred  
in friends,

Had doubtless given example long ago,  
Furnished forth some friend's pleasure  
with my pain,

And, by my death, pieced out his scanty  
life,—

I could not, for that foolish life of me,  
Help risking law's infringement,—I  
broke bond,

And needs must pay price,—where-  
fore, here 's my head,

Flung with a flourish! But, repent-  
ance too?

But pure and simple sorrow for law's  
breach

Rather than blunderer's ineptitude?  
Cardinal, no! Abate, scarcely thus!  
'T is the fault, not that I dared try a  
fall

With Law and straightway am found  
undermost,

But that I fail to see, above man's law,  
God's precept you, the Christians, recog-  
nise? [dinal!

Colly my cow! Don't fidget, Car-  
Abate, cross your breast and count  
your beads

And exorcise the devil, for here he  
stands

And stiffens in the bristly nape of neck,  
Daring you drive him hence! You,  
Christians both?

I say, if ever was such faith at all  
Born in the world, by your community  
Suffered to live its little tick of time,

'T is dead of age now, ludicrously dead;  
Honour its ashes, if you be discreet,  
In epitaph only! For, concede its  
death,

Allow extinction, you may boast un-  
checked

What feats the thing did in a crazy land  
At a fabulous epoch,—treat your faith,  
that way,

Just as you treat your relics: "Here's  
a shred

"Of saintly flesh, a scrap of blessed  
bone,

"Raised King Cophetua, who was  
dead, to life

"In Mesopotamy twelve centuries  
since,

"Such was its virtue!"—twangs the  
Sacristan,

Holding the shrine-box up, with hands  
like feet

Because of gout in every finger-joint:  
Does he bethink him to reduce one  
knob,

Allay one twinge by touching what he  
vaunts?

I think he half uncrooks fist to catch fee,  
But, for the grace, the quality of cure,—  
Cophetua was the man put that to  
proof!

Not otherwise, your faith is shrined  
and shown

And shamed at once: you banter while  
you bow!

Do you dispute this? Come, a mon-  
ster-laugh,

A madman's laugh, allowed his Car-  
nival

Later ten days than when all Rome,  
but he,

Laughed at the candle-contest: mine's  
alight,

'T is just it sputter till the puff o' the  
Pope

End it to-morrow and the world turn  
Ash.

Come, thus I wave a wand and bring to  
pass

In a moment, in the twinkle of an eye,  
What but that—feigning everywhere  
grows fact,

Professors turn possessors, realise  
The faith they play with as a fancy now,  
And bid it operate, have full effect

On every circumstance of life, to-day,  
In Rome,—faith's flow set free at foun-  
tain-head!

Now, you 'll own, at this present when  
I speak,

Before I work the wonder, there 's no  
man

Woman or child in Rome, faith's foun-  
tain-head,

But might, if each were minded, realise  
Conversely unbelief, faith's opposite—

Set it to work on life unflinchingly,  
Yet give no symptom of an outward  
change:

Why should things change because men  
disbelieve?



What's incompatible, in the whited  
 tomb,  
 With bones and rottenness one inch be-  
 low ?  
 What saintly act is done in Rome to-  
 day  
 But might be prompted by the devil,—  
 "is"  
 I say not,—<sup>"</sup> has been, and again may  
 be,—  
 I do say, full i' the face o' the crucifix  
 You try to stop my mouth with ! Off  
 with it !  
 Look in your own heart, if your soul  
 have eyes !  
 You shall see reason why, though faith  
 were fled,  
 Unbelief still might work the wires and  
 move  
 Man, the machine, to play a faithful  
 part.  
 Preside your college, Cardinal, in your  
 cape,  
 Or,—having got above his head, grown  
 Pope,—<sup>[feet !]</sup>  
 Abate, gird your loins and wash my  
 Do you suppose I am at loss at all  
 Why you crook, why you cringe, why  
 fast or feast ?  
 Praise, blame, sit, stand, lie or go !—all  
 of it,  
 In each of you, purest unbelief may  
 prompt,  
 And wit explain to who has eyes to see.  
 But, lo, I wave wand, make the false the  
 true !  
 Here 's Rome believes in Christianity !  
 What an explosion, how the fragments  
 fly  
 Of what was surface, mask and make-  
 believe !  
 Begin now,—look at this Pope's-hal-  
 berdier  
 In wasp-like black and yellow foolery !  
 He, doing duty at the corridor,  
 Wakes from a muse and stands con-  
 vinced of sin !  
 Down he flings halbert, leaps the pas-  
 sage-length,  
 Pushes into the presence, pantingly  
 Submits the extreme peril of the case  
 To the Pope's self,—whom in the world  
 beside ?—  
 And the Pope breaks talk with ambas-  
 sador,  
 Bids aside bishop, wills the whole world  
 wait  
 Till he secure that prize, outweighs the  
 world,  
 A soul, relieve the sentry of his qualm !  
 His Altitude the Referendary,—  
 Robed right, and ready for the usher's  
 word  
 To pay devoir,—is, of all times, just  
 then  
 'Ware of a master-stroke of argument  
 Will cut the spinal cord . . . ugh, ugh !  
 . . . I mean,  
 Paralyse Molinism for evermore !  
 Straight he leaves lobby, trundles, two  
 and two,  
 Down steps, to reach home, write if  
 but a word  
 Shall end the impudence : he leaves  
 who likes  
 Go pacify the Pope : there's Christ to  
 serve !  
 How otherwise would men display  
 their zeal ?  
 If the same sentry had the least surmise  
 A powder-barrel 'neath the pavement  
 lay  
 In neighbourhood with what might  
 prove a match,  
 Meant to blow sky-high Pope and pres-  
 ence both—  
 Would he not break through courtiers,  
 rank and file,  
 Bundle up, bear off and save body so,  
 O' the Pope, no matter for his priceless  
 soul ?  
 There 's no fool's-freak here, nought to  
 soundly swinge,  
 Only a man in earnest, you 'll so praise  
 And pay and prate about, that earth  
 shall ring !  
 Had thought possessed the Referend-  
 ary  
 His jewel-case at home was left ajar,  
 What would be wrong in running, robes  
 awry,  
 To be beforehand with the pilferer ?  
 What talk then of indecent haste ?  
 Which means,  
 That both these, each in his degree,  
 would do  
 Just that,—for a comparative nothing's  
 sake,  
 And thereby gain approval and re-  
 ward,—  
 Which, done for what Christ says is  
 worth the world,  
 Procures the doer curses, cuffs and  
 kicks.

I call such difference 'twixt act and act,  
 Sheer lunacy unless your truth on lip  
 Be recognised a lie in heart of you!  
 How do you all act, promptly or in  
 doubt,  
 When there 's a guest poisoned at sup-  
 per-time  
 And he sits chatting on with spot on  
 cheek?  
 " Pluck him by the skirt, and round  
 him in the ears,  
 " Have at him by the beard, warn any-  
 how! "  
 Good, and this other friend that 's cheat  
 and thief  
 And dissolute,—go stop the devil's  
 feast,  
 Withdraw him from the imminent hell-  
 fire!  
 Why, for your life, you dare not tell  
 your friend  
 " You lie, and I admonish you for  
 Christ! "  
 Who yet dare seek that same man at  
 the Mass  
 To warn him—on his knees, and tinkle  
 near,—  
 He left a cask a-tilt, a tap unturned,  
 The Trebbian running: what a grate-  
 ful jump  
 Out of the Church rewards your vigil-  
 ance!  
 Perform that self-same service just a  
 thought  
 More maladroitly,—since a bishop sits  
 At function!—and he budges not, bites  
 lip,—  
 " You see my case: how can I quit my  
 post?  
 " He has an eye to any such default.  
 " See to it, neighbour, I beseech your  
 love! "  
 He and you know the relative worth of  
 things,  
 What is permissible or inopportune.  
 Contort your brows! You know I  
 speak the truth:  
 Gold is called gold, and dross called  
 dross, i' the Book:  
 Gold you let lie and dross pick up and  
 prize!  
 —Despite your muster of some fifty  
 monks  
 And nuns a-maundering here and  
 mumping there,  
 Who could, and on occasion would,  
 spurn dross,

Clutch gold, and prove their faith a  
 fact so far,—  
 I grant you! Fifty times the number  
 squeak  
 And gibber in the madhouse—firm of  
 faith,  
 This fellow, that his nose supports the  
 moon,  
 The other, that his straw hat crowns  
 him Pope:  
 Does that prove all the world outside  
 insane?  
 Do fifty miracle-mongers match the  
 mob [ciple,  
 That acts on the frank faithless prin-  
 Born - baptized - and - bred Christian-  
 atheists, each  
 With just as much a right to judge as  
 you,—  
 As many senses in his soul, or nerves  
 I' neck of him as I,—whom, soul and  
 sense,  
 Neck and nerve, you abolish presently,  
 I being the unit in creation now  
 Who pay the Maker, in this speech of  
 mine,  
 A creature's duty, spend my last of  
 breath  
 In bearing witness, even by my worst  
 fault  
 To the creature's obligation, absolute,  
 Perpetual: my worst fault protests,  
 " The faith  
 " Claims all of me: I would give all she  
 claims,  
 " But for a spice of doubt: the risk 's  
 too rash:  
 " Double or quits, I play, but, all or  
 naught,  
 " Exceeds my courage: therefore, I  
 descend  
 " To the next faith with no dubiety—  
 " Faith in the present life, made last as  
 long  
 " And prove as full of pleasure as may  
 hap,  
 " Whatever pain it cause the world."  
 I 'm wrong?  
 I 've had my life, whate'er I lose: I 'm  
 right?  
 I 've got the single good there was to  
 gain,  
 Entire faith, or else complete unbelief,—  
 Aught between has my loathing and  
 contempt,  
 Mine and God's also, doubtless: ask  
 yourself,



Cardinal, where and how you like a man !  
 Why, either with your feet upon his head,  
 Confessed your caudatory, or at large  
 The stranger in the crowd who caps to you  
 But keeps his distance,—why should he presume ?  
 You want no hanger-on and dropper-off,  
 Now yours, and now not yours but quite his own,  
 According as the sky looks black or bright.  
 Just so I capped to and kept off from faith—  
 You promised trudge behind through fair and foul,  
 Yet leave i' the lurch at the first spit of rain.  
 Who holds to faith whenever rain begins ? [dead,  
 What does the father when his son lies  
 The merchant when his money-bags take wing,  
 The politician whom a rival ousts ?  
 No case but has its conduct, faith prescribes :  
 Where 's the obedience that shall edify ?  
 Why, they laugh frankly in the face of faith  
 And take the natural course,—this rends his hair  
 Because his child is taken to God's breast,  
 That gnashes teeth and raves at loss of trash  
 Which rust corrupts and thieves break through and steal,  
 And this, enabled to inherit earth  
 Through meekness, curses till your blood runs cold !  
 Down they all drop to my low level, ease  
 Heart upon dungy earth that 's warm and soft,  
 And let who will, attempt the altitudes.  
 We have the prodigal son of heavenly sire,  
 Turning his nose up at the fatted calf,  
 Fain to fill belly with the husks we swine  
 Did eat by born depravity of taste !  
 Enough of the hypocrites. But you, Sirs, you—

Who never budged from litter where I lay,  
 And buried snout i' the draff-box while I fed,  
 Cried amen to my creed's one article—  
 " Get pleasure, 'scape pain,—give you preference  
 " To the immediate good, for time is brief,  
 " And death ends good and ill and everything :  
 " What's got is gained, what's gained soon is gained twice,  
 " And,—inasmuch as faith gains most,—feign faith ! "  
 So did we brother-like pass word about :  
 —You, now,—like bloody drunkards but half-drunk,  
 Who fool men yet perceive men find them fools,  
 And that a titter gains the gravest mouth,—  
 O' the sudden you must needs re-introduce  
 Solemnity, must sober undue mirth  
 By a blow dealt your boon companion here  
 Who, using the old licence, dreamed of harm  
 No more than snow in harvest : yet it falls !  
 You check the merriment effectually  
 By pushing your abrupt machine i' the midst,  
 Making me Rome's example : blood for wine !  
 The general good needs that you chop and change !  
 I may dislike the hocus-pocus,—Rome,  
 The laughter-loving people, won't they stare  
 Chap-fallen !—while serious natures sermonise  
 " The magistrate, he beareth not the sword  
 " In vain ; who sins may taste its edge, we see ! "  
 Why my sin, drunkards ? Where have I abused  
 Liberty, scandalised you all so much ?  
 Who called me, who crooked finger till I came,  
 Fool that I was, to join companionship ?  
 I knew my own mind, meant to live my life,  
 Elude your envy, or else make a stand,

Take my own part and sell you my life  
 dear ;  
 But it was " Fie ! No prejudice in the  
 world  
 " To the proper manly instinct ! Cast  
 your lot  
 " Into our lap, one genius ruled our  
 births,  
 " We 'll compass joy by concert ; take  
 with us  
 " The regular irregular way i' the wood ;  
 " You 'll miss no game through riding  
 breast by breast,  
 " In this preserve, the Church's park  
 and pale,  
 " Rather than outside where the world  
 is waste ! "  
 Come, if you said not that, did you say  
 this ?  
 Give plain and terrible warning, " Live,  
 enjoy ?  
 " Such life begins in death and ends in  
 hell !  
 " Dare you bid us assist you to your  
 sins  
 " Who hurry sin and sinners from the  
 earth ?  
 " No such delight for us, why then for  
 you ?  
 " Leave earth, seek heaven or find its  
 opposite ! "  
 Had you so warned me, not in lying  
 words  
 But veritable deeds with tongues of  
 flame,  
 That had been fair, that might have  
 struck a man,  
 Silenced the squabble between soul and  
 sense,  
 Compelled him make his mind up, take  
 one course  
 Or the other, peradventure !—wrong  
 or right,  
 Foolish or wise, you would have been at  
 least  
 Sincere, no question,—forced me  
 choose, indulge  
 Or else renounce my instincts, still play  
 wolf  
 Or find my way submissive to the fold,  
 Be red-crossed on the fleece, one sheep  
 the more.  
 But you as good as bade me wear  
 sheep's wool  
 Over wolf's skin, suck blood and hide  
 the noise  
 By mimicry of something like a bleat,—

Whence it comes that because, despite  
 my care,  
 Because I smack my tongue too loud  
 for once,  
 Drop baaing, here 's the village up in  
 arms !  
 Have at the wolf's throat, you who  
 hate the breed !  
 Oh, were it only open yet to choose—  
 One little time more—whether I'd be  
 free  
 Your foe, or subsidised your friend for-  
 sooth !  
 Should not you get a growl through the  
 white fangs  
 In answer to your beckoning ! Car-  
 dinal,  
 Abate, managers o' the multitude,  
 I'd turn your gloved hands to account,  
 be sure !  
 You should manipulate the coarse rough  
 mob :  
 'Tis you I'd deal directly with, not  
 them,—  
 Using your fears : why touch the thing  
 myself  
 When I could see you hunt and then  
 cry " Shares !  
 " Quarter the carcass or we quarrel ;  
 come,  
 " Here 's the world ready to see justice  
 done ! "  
 Oh, it had been a desperate game, but  
 game  
 Wherein the winner's chance were  
 worth the pains  
 To try conclusions !—at the worst,  
 what's worse  
 Than this Mannaia-machine, each min-  
 ute's talk,  
 Helps push an inch the nearer me ?  
 Fool, fool !  
 You understand me and forgive, sweet  
 Sirs ?  
 I blame you, tear my hair and tell my  
 woe—  
 All's but a flourish, figure of rhetoric !  
 One must try each expedient to save  
 life.  
 One makes fools look foolisher fiftyfold  
 By putting in their place the wise like  
 you  
 To take the full force of an argument  
 Would buffet their stolidity in vain.  
 If you should feel aggrieved by the mere  
 wind



O' the blow that means to miss you and  
 maul them,  
 That's my success! Is it not folly,  
 now,  
 To say with folks, "A plausible de-  
 fence—  
 "We see through notwithstanding,  
 and reject?"  
 Reject the plausible they do, these  
 fools,  
 Who never even make pretence to show  
 One point beyond its plausibility  
 In favour of the best belief they hold!  
 "Saint Somebody-or-other raised the  
 dead:"  
 Did he? How do you come to know  
 as much?  
 "Know it, what need? The story's  
 plausible,  
 "Avouched for by a martyrologist,  
 "And why should good men sup on  
 cheese and leeks  
 "On such a saint's day, if there were no  
 saint?"  
 I praise the wisdom of these fools, and  
 straight  
 Tell them my story—"plausible, but  
 false!"  
 False, to be sure! What else can  
 story be [spouse,  
 That runs—a young wife tired of an old  
 Found a priest whom she fled away  
 with,—both  
 Took their full pleasure in the two-  
 days' flight,  
 Which a grey-headed greyer-hearted  
 pair,  
 (Whose best boast was, their life had  
 been a lie)  
 Helped for the love they bore all liars.  
 Oh,  
 Here incredulity begins! Indeed?  
 Allow then, were no one point strictly  
 true,  
 There 's that i' the tale might seem like  
 truth at least  
 To the unlucky husband,—jaundiced  
 patch,—  
 Jealousy maddens people, why not  
 him?  
 Say, he was maddened, so, forgivable!  
 Humanity pleads that though the wife  
 were true,  
 The priest true, and the pair of liars  
 true,  
 They might seem false to one man in  
 the world!

A thousand gnats make up a serpent's  
 sting,  
 And many sly soft stimulants to wrath  
 Compose a formidable wrong at last,  
 That gets called easily by some one  
 name  
 Not applicable to the single parts,  
 And so draws down a general revenge,  
 Excessive if you take crime, fault by  
 fault. [plays,  
 Jealousy! I have known a score of  
 Were listened to and laughed at in my  
 time  
 As like the everyday-life on all sides,  
 Wherein the husband, mad as a March  
 hare,  
 Suspected all the world contrived his  
 shame;  
 What did the wife? The wife kissed  
 both eyes blind,  
 Explained away ambiguous circum-  
 stance,  
 And while she held him captive by the  
 hand,  
 Crowned his head,—you know what's  
 the mockery,—  
 By half her body behind the curtain.  
 That's  
 Nature now! That's the subject of a  
 piece  
 I saw in Vallombrosa Convent, made  
 Expressly to teach men what marriage  
 was!  
 But say "Just so did I misapprehend!"  
 Or "Just so she deceived me to my  
 face!"  
 And that's pretence too easily seen  
 through!  
 All those eyes of all husbands in all  
 plays,  
 At stare like one expanded peacock-  
 tail,  
 Are laughed at for pretending to be  
 keen  
 While horn-blind: but the moment I  
 step forth—  
 Oh, I must needs o' the sudden prove a  
 lynx  
 And look the heart, that stone-wall,  
 through and through!  
 Such an eye, God's may be,—not yours  
 nor mine.  
 Yes, presently . . what hour is fleet-  
 ing now?  
 When you cut earth away from under  
 me,

I shall be left alone with, pushed beneath  
 Some such an apparitional dread orb;  
 I fancy it go filling up the void  
 Above my mote-self it devours, or what  
 Immensity please wreak on nothingness.  
 Just so I felt once, couching through the dark,  
 Hard by Vittiano; young I was, and gay,  
 And wanting to trap fieldfares: first a spark  
 Tipped a bent, as a mere dew-globule might  
 Any stiff grass-stalk on the meadow,—this  
 Grew fiercer, flamed out full, and proved the sun.  
 What do I want with proverbs, precepts here?  
 Away with man! What shall I say to God?  
 This, if I find the tongue and keep the mind—  
 "Do Thou wipe out the being of me, and smear  
 "This soul from off Thy white of things, I blot!  
 "I am one huge and sheer mistake,—whose fault?  
 "Not mine at least, who did not make myself!"  
 Someone declares my wife excused me so!  
 Perhaps she knew what argument to use  
 Grind your teeth, Cardinal, Abate, writhe!  
 What else am I to cry out in my rage,  
 Unable to repent one particle  
 O' the past? Oh, how I wish some cold wise man  
 Would dig beneath the surface which you scrape,  
 Deal with the depths, pronounce on my desert  
 Groundedly! I want simple sober sense,  
 That asks, before it finishes with a dog,  
 Who taught the dog that trick you hang him for?  
 You both persist to call that act a crime,  
 Sense would call... yes, I do assure you, Sirs, . . .  
 A blunder! At the worst, I stood in doubt

On cross-road, took one path of many paths:  
 It leads to the red thing, we all see now,  
 But nobody at first saw one primrose  
 In bank, one singing-bird in bush, the less,  
 To warn from wayfare: let me prove you that!  
 Put me back to the cross-road, start afresh!  
 Advise me when I take the first false step!  
 Give me my wife: how should I use my wife,  
 Love her or hate her? Prompt my action now!  
 There she stands, there she is alive and pale,  
 The thirteen-years'-old child, with milk for blood,  
 Pompilia Comparini, as at first,  
 Which first is only four brief years ago!  
 I stand too in the little ground-floor room  
 O' the father's house at Via Vittoria: see  
 Her so-called mother,—one arm round the waist  
 O' the child to keep her from the toys—let fall,  
 At wonder I can live yet look so grim,—  
 Ushers her in, with deprecating wave  
 Of the other,—there she fronts me loose, at large,  
 Held only by the mother's finger-tip—  
 Struck dumb, for she was white enough before!  
 She eyes me with those frightened balls of black,  
 As heifer—the old simile comes pat—  
 Eyes tremblingly the altar and the priest:  
 The amazed look, all one insuppressive prayer,—  
 Might she but be set free as heretofore,  
 Have this cup leave her lips unblistered, bear  
 Any cross anywhither anyhow,  
 So but alone, so but apart from me!  
 You are touched? So am I, quite otherwise,  
 If 't is with pity. I resent my wrong,  
 Being a man: we only show man's soul  
 Through man's flesh, she sees mine, it strikes her thus!  
 Is that attractive? To a youth perhaps—



O' the blow that means to miss you and  
maul them,  
That's my success! Is it not folly,  
now,  
To say with folks, "A plausible de-  
fence—  
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(Whose best boast was, their life had  
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Helped for the love they bore all liars.  
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Compose a formidable wrong  
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Not applicable to the single pair  
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through and through!  
Such an eye, God's may be,—not  
nor mine.  
Yes, presently . . . what hour is  
ing now?  
When you cut earth away from  
me,

I it to account  
Browsed on the best, for which you  
brain me, Sirs!  
Be it so! I conceived of life that way,  
And still declare—life, without abso-  
lute use  
Of the actual sweet therein, is death,  
not life.  
Give me,—pay down,—not promise,  
which is air,—  
Something that's out of life and better  
still,  
Make sure reward, make certain pun-  
ishment,  
Entice me, scare me,—I'll forgo this  
life;  
Otherwise, no!—the less that words,  
mere wind,  
Would cheat me of some minutes while  
they plague.  
The fulness of revenge here,—blame  
yourselves  
For this eruption of the pent-up soul  
You prisoned first and played with  
afterward!  
"Deny myself" meant simply pleas-  
ure you,  
The sacred and superior, save the mark!  
You,—whose stupidity and insolence  
I must defer to, soothe at every turn,—  
Whose swine-like snuffling greed and  
grunting lust  
I had to wink at or help gratify,—  
While the same passions,—dared they  
perk in me,  
Me, the immeasurably marked, by God,  
Master of the whole world of such as  
you,—  
I, boast such passions? 'Twas "Sup-  
press them straight!  
"Or stay, we'll pick and choose before  
destroy:  
"Here's wrath in you,—a serviceable  
sword,—  
"Beat it into a ploughshare! What's  
this long [ing-hook,  
"Lance-like ambition? Forge a prun-  
"May be of service when our vines  
grow tall!  
"But—sword used swordwise, spear  
thrust out as spear?  
"Anathema! Suppression is the  
word!"  
My nature, when the outrage was too  
gross,  
Widened itself an outlet over-wide  
By way of answer?—sought its own  
relief

Wises? Ay, my  
—step right  
left and stumbled  
doubt I any more  
a man perfect?  
marriage and no  
you! That's be-  
wn fit guide for  
ce,—I know, none  
nd rolled decorum  
n the gospel-side,—  
Your great experience  
al search and pains  
life's use? When  
at treadeth out the  
ng round and round  
green grass in the  
v o' the world that's  
with your daily dung,  
lump of loathsome-  
of the modes of life,  
life's triumph or de-  
to scheme and how to  
one? You preached  
Take our doctrine up-  
ouse with you! Grind  
aff, and let the green  
and I famished on such  
nad rush at the mill-  
up to the ears in dew,

But makes parade of such officiousness  
 That,—if there 's no love prompts it,—  
     love, the sham,  
 Does twice the service done by love, the  
     true.  
 God bless us liars, where 's one touch of  
     truth  
 In what we tell the world, or world tells  
     us,  
 Of how we like each other? All the  
     same,  
 We calculate on word and deed, nor err,  
 Bid such a man do such a loving act,  
 Sure of effect and negligent of cause,  
 Just as we bid a horse, with cluck of  
     tongue,  
 Stretch his legs arch-wise, crouch his  
     saddled back  
 To foot-reach of the stirrup—all for  
     love,  
 And some for memory of the smart of  
     switch  
 On the inside of the foreleg—what care  
     we?  
 Yet where 's the bond obliges horse to  
     man  
 Like that which binds fast wife to hus-  
     band? God  
 Laid down the law: gave man the  
     brawny arm  
 And ball of fist—woman the beardless  
     cheek  
 And proper place to suffer in the side:  
 Since it is he can strike, let her obey!  
 Can she feel no love? Let her show  
     the more,  
 Sham the worse, damn herself praise-  
     worthily!  
 Who 's that soprano Rome went mad  
     about [straw  
 Last week while I lay rotting in my  
 The very jailor gossiped in his praise—  
 How,—dressed up like Armida, though  
     a man;  
 And painted to look pretty, though a  
     fright,—  
 He still made love so that the ladies  
     swooned,  
 Being an eunuch. "Ah, Rinaldo mine!  
 "But to breathe by thee while Jove  
     slays us both!"  
 All the poor bloodless creature never  
     felt,  
 Si, do, re, mi, fa, squeak and squall—  
     for what?  
 Two gold zecchines the evening! Here's  
     my slave,  
 Whose body and soul depend upon my  
     nod,  
 Can't falter out the first note in the  
     scale  
 For her life! Why blame me if I take  
     the life?  
 All women cannot give men love, for-  
     sooth!  
 No, nor all pullets lay the henwife eggs—  
 Whereat she bids them remedy the  
     fault,  
 Brood on a chalk-ball: soon the nest is  
     stocked—  
 Otherwise, to the plucking and the spit!  
 This wife of mine was of another mood—  
 Would not begin the lie that ends with  
     truth,  
 Nor feign the love that brings real love  
     about:  
 Wherefore I judged, sentenced and  
     punished her.  
 But why particularise, defend the deed?  
 Say that I hated her for no one cause  
 Beyond my pleasure so to do,—what  
     then?  
 Just on as much incitement acts the  
     world,  
 All of you! Look and like! You fa-  
     vour one,  
 Browbeat another, leave alone a  
     third, [rice?  
 Why should you master natural cap-  
 Pure nature! Try—plant elm by ash  
     in file;  
 Both unexceptionable trees enough,  
 They ought to overlean each other, pair  
 At top and arch across the avenue  
 The whole path to the pleasaunce: do  
     they so—  
 Or loathe, lie off abhorrent each from  
     each?  
 Lay the fault elsewhere, since we must  
     have faults:  
 Mine shall have been,—seeing there 's  
     ill in the end  
 Come of my course,—that I fare some-  
     how worse  
 For the way I took,—my fault . . as  
     God 's my judge  
 I see not where the fault lies, that 's the  
     truth!  
 I ought . . oh, ought in my own inter-  
     est  
 Have let the whole adventure go un-  
     tried,  
 This chance by marriage,—or else, try-  
     ing it,



Ought to have turned it to account  
     some one  
 O' the hundred otherwises? Ay, my  
     friend,  
 Easy to say, easy to do,—step right  
 Now you've stepped left and stumbled  
     on the thing,  
 —The red thing! Doubt I any more  
     than you  
 That practice makes man perfect?  
     Give again  
 The chance,—same marriage and no  
     other wife,  
 Be sure I 'll edify you! That's be-  
     cause  
 I 'm practised, grown fit guide for  
     Guido's self.  
 You proffered guidance,—I know, none  
     so well,—  
 You laid down law and rolled decorum  
     out,  
 From pulpit-corner on the gospel-side,—  
 Wanted to make your great experience  
     mine,  
 Save me the personal search and pains  
     so: thanks!  
 Take your word on life's use? When  
     I take his—  
 The muzzled ox that treadeth out the  
     corn,  
 Gone blind in padding round and round  
     one path,—  
 As to the taste of green grass in the  
     field!  
 What do you know o' the world that's  
     trodden flat  
 And salted sterile with your daily dung,  
 Leavened into a lump of loathsomeness?  
 Take your opinion of the modes of life,  
 The aims of life, life's triumph or defeat,  
 How to feel, how to scheme and how to  
     do  
 Or else leave undone? You preached  
     long and loud  
 On high-days, "Take our doctrine up-  
     on trust!  
 "Into the mill-house with you! Grind  
     our corn,  
 "Relish our chaff, and let the green  
     grass grow!"  
 I tried chaff, found I famished on such  
     fare,  
 So made this mad rush at the mill-  
     house-door,  
 Buried my head up to the ears in dew,  
 Browsed on the best, for which you  
     brain me, Sirs!  
 Be it so! I conceived of life that way,  
 And still declare—life, without abso-  
     lute use  
 Of the actual sweet therein, is death,  
     not life.  
 Give me,—pay down,—not promise,  
     which is air,—  
 Something that 's out of life and better  
     still,  
 Make sure, reward, make certain pun-  
     ishment,  
 Entice me, scare me,—I 'll forgo this  
     life;  
 Otherwise, no!—the less that words,  
     mere wind,  
 Would cheat me of some minutes while  
     they plague.  
 The fulness of revenge here,—blame  
     yourselves  
 For this eruption of the pent-up soul  
 You prisoned first and played with  
     afterward!  
 "Deny myself" meant simply plea-  
     sure you,  
 The sacred and superior, save the mark!  
 You,—whose stupidity and insolence  
 I must defer to, soothe at every turn,—  
 Whose swine-like snuffling greed and  
     grunting lust  
 I had to wink at or help gratify,—  
 While the same passions,—dared they  
     perk in me,  
 Me, the immeasurably marked, by God,  
 Master of the whole world of such as  
     you,—  
 I, boast such passions? 'T was "Sup-  
     press them straight!  
 "Or stay, we 'll pick and choose before  
     destroy:  
 "Here 's wrath in you,—a serviceable  
     sword,—  
 "Beat it into a ploughshare! What's  
     this long [ing-hook,  
 "Lance-like ambition? Forge a prun-  
 "May be of service when our vines  
     grow tall!  
 "But—sword used swordwise, spear  
     thrust out as spear?  
 "Anathema! Suppression is the  
     word!"  
 My nature, when the outrage was too  
     gross,  
 Widened itself an outlet over-wide  
 By way of answer?—sought its own  
     relief

With more of fire and brimstone than  
you wished?

All your own doing: preachers, blame  
yourselves!

'Tis I preach while the hourglass runs  
and runs!

God keep me patient! All I say just  
means—

My wife proved, whether by her fault or  
mine,—

That 's immaterial—a true stumbling-  
block

I' the way of me her husband: I but  
plied

The hatchet yourselves use to clear a  
path,

Was politic, played the game you war-  
rant wins,

Plucked at law's robe a-rustle through  
the courts, [shoe

Bowed down to kiss divinity's buckled  
Cushioned i' the church: efforts all

wide the aim!

Procedures to no purpose! Then  
flashed truth!

The letter kills, the spirit keeps alive  
In law and gospel: there be nods and  
winks

Instruct a wise man to assist himself  
In certain matters nor seek aid at all.

"Ask money of me,"—quoth the  
clownish saw,—

"And take my purse! But,—speak-  
ing with respect,—

"Need you a solace for the troubled  
nose?

"Let everybody wipe his own himself!"  
Sirs, tell me free and fair! Had things

gone well

At the wayside inn: had I surprised  
asleep

The runaways, as was so probable,  
And pinned them each to other part-  
ridge-wise,

Through back and breast to breast and  
back, then bade

Bystanders witness if the spit, my  
sword,

Were loaded with unlawful game for  
once—

Would you have interposed to damp  
the glow

Applauding me on every husband's  
cheek?

Would you have checked the cry "A  
judgment, see!

"A warning, note! Be henceforth  
chaste, ye wives,

"Nor stray beyond your proper pre-  
cinct, priests!"

If you had, then your house against  
itself

Divides, nor stands your kingdom any-  
more.

Oh, why, why was it not ordained just  
so?

Why fell not things out so nor other-  
wise?

Ask that particular devil whose task it  
is

To trip the all-but-at perfection,—slur  
The line o' the painter just where paint

leaves off

And life begins,—puts ice into the ode  
O' the poet while he cries "Next stanza  
—fire!"

Inscribes all human effort with one  
word,

Artistry's haunting curse, the Incom-  
plete! [cess.

Being incomplete, the act escaped suc-  
Easy to blame now! Every fool can

swear

To hole in net that held and slipped the  
fish.

But, treat my act with fair unjaundiced  
eye,

What was there wanting to a master-  
piece

Except the luck that lies beyond a man?  
My way with the woman, now proved

grossly wrong,

Just missed of being gravely grandly  
right

And making critics laugh o' the other  
side.

Do, for the poor obstructed artist's sake,  
Go with him over that spoiled work

once more!

Take only its first flower, the ended act  
Now in the dusty pod, dry and defunct!

I march to the Villa, and my men with  
me,

That evening, and we reach the door  
and stand.

I say . . . no, it shoots through me  
lightning-like

While I pause, breathe, my hand upon  
the latch,

"Let me forebode! Thus far, too  
much success:

"I want the natural failure—find it  
where?



" Which thread will have to break and  
 leave a loop  
 " I' the meshy combination, my brain's  
 loom  
 " Wove this long while and now next  
 minute tests ?  
 " Of three that are to catch, two should  
 go free,  
 " One must : all three surprised,—im-  
 possible !  
 " Beside, I seek three and may chance  
 on six,—  
 " This neighbour, t' other gossip,—the  
 babe's birth  
 " Brings such to fireside and folks give  
 them wine,—  
 " 'T is late : but when I break in pres-  
 ently  
 " One will be found outlingering the  
 rest  
 " For promise of a posset,—one whose  
 shout  
 " Would raise the dead down in the cata-  
 combs,  
 " Much more the city-watch that goes  
 its round.  
 " When did I ever turn adroitly up  
 " To sun some brick embedded in the  
 soil,  
 " And with one blow crush all three  
 scorpions there ?  
 " Or Pietro or Violante shambles off—  
 " It cannot be but I surprise my wife—  
 " If only she is stopped and stamped  
 on, good !  
 " That shall suffice : more is improb-  
 able.  
 " Now I may knock ! " And this once  
 for my sake  
 The impossible was effected : I called  
 king,  
 Queen and knave in a sequence, and  
 cards came,  
 All three, three only ! So, I had my  
 way,  
 Did my deed : so, unbrokenly lay bare  
 Each tænia that had sucked me dry of  
 juice,  
 At last outside me, not an inch of ring  
 Left now to writhe about and root it-  
 self  
 I' the heart all powerless for revenge !  
 Henceforth  
 I might thrive : these were drawn and  
 dead and damned.  
 Oh Cardinal, the deep long sigh you  
 heave

When the load 's off you, ringing as it  
 runs  
 All the way down the serpent-stair to  
 hell !  
 No doubt the fine delirium flustered me,  
 Turned my brain with the influx of suc-  
 cess  
 As if the sole need now were to wave  
 wand  
 And find doors fly wide,—wish and  
 have my will,—  
 The rest o' the scheme would care for  
 itself : escape ?  
 Easy enough were that, and poor be-  
 side !  
 It all but proved so,—ought to quite  
 have proved,  
 Since, half the chances had sufficed, set  
 free  
 Anyone, with his senses at command,  
 From thrice the danger of my flight.  
 But, drunk,  
 Redundantly triumphant,—some re-  
 verse  
 Was sure to follow ! There 's no other  
 way  
 Accounts for such prompt perfect fail-  
 ure then  
 And there on the instant. Any day o'  
 the week,  
 A ducat slid discreetly into palm  
 O' the mute post-master, while you  
 whisper him—  
 How you the Count and certain four  
 your knaves,  
 Have just been mauling who was mala-  
 pert,  
 Suspect the kindred may prove trouble-  
 some,  
 Therefore, want horses in a hurry,—  
 that  
 And nothing more secures you any day  
 The pick o' the stable ! Yet I try the  
 trick.  
 Double the bribe, call myself Duke  
 for Count,  
 And say the dead man only was a Jew,  
 And for my pains find I am dealing just  
 With the one scrupulous fellow in all  
 Rome—  
 Just this immaculate official stares,  
 Sees I want hat on head and sword in  
 sheath,  
 Am splashed with other sort of wet  
 than wine,  
 Shrugs shoulder, puts my hand by, gold  
 and all,

Stands on the strictness of the rule o'  
 the road !  
 "Where's the Permission?" Where's  
 the wretched rag  
 With the due seal and sign of Rome's  
 Police,  
 To be had for asking, half-an-hour ago?  
 "Gone? Get another, or no horses  
 hence!"  
 He dares not stop me, we five glare too  
 grim,  
 But hinders,—hacks and hamstrings  
 sure enough,  
 Gives me some twenty miles of miry  
 road  
 More to march in the middle of that  
 night  
 Whereof the rough beginning taxed the  
 strength  
 O' the youngsters, much more mine,  
 such as you see,  
 Who had to think as well as act: dead-  
 beat,  
 We gave in ere we reached the boundary  
 And safe spot out of this irrational  
 Rome,—  
 Where, on dismounting from our steeds  
 next day,  
 We had snapped our fingers at you,  
 safe and sound,  
 Tuscans once more in blessed Tuscany,  
 Where the laws make allowance, un-  
 derstand  
 Civilised life and do its champions  
 right!  
 Witness the sentence of the Rota there,  
 Arezzo uttered, the Granduke con-  
 firmed,  
 One week before I acted on its hint,—  
 Giving friend Guillichini, for his love,  
 The galleys, and my wife your saint,  
 Rome's saint,—  
 Rome manufactures saints enough to  
 know,—  
 Seclusion at the Stinche for her life.  
 All this, that all but was, might all  
 have been,  
 Yet was not! baulked by just a scru-  
 pulous knave  
 Whose palm was horn through hand-  
 ling horses' hoofs  
 And could not close upon my proffered  
 gold!  
 What say you to the spite of fortune?  
 Well,  
 The worst's in store: thus hindered,  
 haled this way

To Rome again by hangdogs, whom  
 find I  
 Here, still to fight with, but my pale  
 frail wife?  
 —Riddled with wounds by one not like  
 to waste  
 The blows he dealt,—knowing ana-  
 tomy,—  
 (I think I told you) one to pick and  
 choose  
 The vital parts! 'T was learning all  
 in vain!  
 She too must shimmer through the  
 gloom o' the grave,  
 Come and confront me—not at judg-  
 ment-seat—  
 Where I could twist her soul, as erst  
 her flesh,  
 And turn her truth into a lie,—but  
 there,  
 O' the death-bed, with God's hand be-  
 tween us both,  
 Striking me dumb, and helping her to  
 speak, [turn  
 Tell her own story her own way, and  
 My plausibility to nothingness!  
 Four whole days did Pompilia keep  
 alive,  
 With the best surgery of Rome agape  
 At the miracle,—this cut, the other  
 slash,  
 And yet the life refusing to dislodge,  
 Four whole extravagant impossible  
 days,  
 Till she had time to finish and persuade  
 Every man, every woman, every child  
 In Rome of what she would: the self-  
 same she  
 Who, but a year ago, had wrung her  
 hands,  
 Reddened her eyes and beat her breasts,  
 rehearsed  
 The whole game at Arezzo, nor availed  
 Thereby to move one heart or raise one  
 hand!  
 When destiny intends you cards like  
 these,  
 What good of skill and preconcerted  
 play?  
 Had she been found dead, as I left her  
 dead,  
 I should have told a tale brooked no  
 reply:  
 You scarcely will suppose me found at  
 fault  
 With that advantage! "What brings  
 me to Rome?"



" Necessity to claim and take my wife :  
 " Better, to claim and take my new-born babe,—  
 " Strong in paternity a fortnight old,  
 " When 't is at strongest : warily I work,  
 " Knowing the machinations of my foe ;  
 " I have companionship and use the night :  
 " I seek my wife and child,—I find—no child  
 " But wife, in the embraces of that priest  
 " Who caused her to elope from me.  
 These two,  
 " Backed by the pandar-pair who watch the while,  
 " Spring on me like so many tiger-cats,  
 " Glad of the chance to end the intruder. I—  
 " What should I do but stand on my defence,  
 " Strike right, strike left, strike thick and threefold, slay,  
 " Not all—because the coward priest escapes.  
 " Last, I escape, in fear of evil tongues,  
 " And having had my taste of Roman law."  
 What's disputable, refutable here ?—  
 Save by just this one ghost-thing half on earth,  
 Half out of it,—as if she held God's hand  
 While she leant back and looked her last at me,  
 Forgiving me (here monks begin to weep)  
 Oh, from her very soul, commending mine [finite,—  
 To heavenly mercies which are in-  
 While fixing fast my head beneath your knife !  
 'T is fate not fortune ! All is of a piece !  
 What was it you informed me of my youths ?  
 My rustic four o' the family, soft swains,  
 What sweet surprise had they in store for me,  
 Those of my very household,—what did Law  
 Twist with her rack-and-cord-con-  
 trivance late  
 From out their bones and marrow ?  
 What but this—  
 Had no one of these several stumbling-  
 blocks

Stopped me, they yet were cherishing a scheme,  
 All of their honest country homespun wit,  
 To quietly next day at crow of cock,  
 Cut my own throat too, for their own behoof,  
 Seeing I had forgot to clear accounts  
 O' the instant, nowise slackened speed for that,—  
 And somehow never might find memory,  
 Once safe back in Arezzo, where things change,  
 And a court-lord needs mind no country lout.  
 Well, being the arch-offender, I die last,—  
 May, ere my head falls, have my eyesight free,  
 Nor miss them dangling high on either hand,  
 Like scarecrows in a hemp-field, for their pains !

And then my Trial,—'t is my Trial that bites  
 Like a corrosive, so the cards are packed,  
 Dice loaded, and my life-stake tricked away !  
 Look at my lawyers, lacked they grace of law,  
 Latin or logic ? Were not they fools to the height,  
 Fools to the depth, fools to the level between,  
 O' the foolishness set to decide the case ?  
 They feign, they flatter ; nowise does it skill,  
 Everything goes against me : deal each judge  
 His dole of flattery and feigning,—why,  
 He turns and tries and snuffs and savours it,  
 As an old fly the sugar-grain, your gift ;  
 Then eyes your thumb and finger, brushes clean  
 The absurd old head of him, and whisks away.  
 Leaving your thumb and finger dirty.  
 Faugh !

And finally, after this long-drawn range  
 Of affront, failure, failure and affront,—  
 This path, twixt crosses leading to a skull,

Paced by me barefoot, bloodied by my palms  
 From the entry to the end,—there 's light at length,  
 A cranny of escape,—appeal may be  
 To the old man, to the father, to the Pope,  
 For a little life—from one whose life is spent,  
 A little pity—from pity's source and seat,  
 A little indulgence to rank, privilege,  
 From one who is the thing personified,  
 Rank, privilege, indulgence, grown beyond  
 Earth's bearing, even, ask Jansenius else !  
 Still the same answer, still no other tune  
 From the cicala perched at the tree-top  
 Than crickets noisy round the root,—  
 't is " Die ! "

Bids Law—" Be damned ! " adds Gospel,—nay,  
 No word so frank,—'t is rather, " Save yourself ! "

The Pope subjoins—" Confess and be absolved !  
 " So shall my credit countervail your shame,  
 " And the world see I have not lost the knack  
 " Of trying all the spirits,—yours, my son,  
 " Wants but a fiery washing to emerge  
 " In clarity ! Come, cleanse you, ease the ache  
 " Of these old bones, refresh our bowels, boy ! "

Do I mistake your mission from the Pope ?  
 Then, bear his Holiness the mind of me !  
 I do get strength from being thrust to wall,  
 Successively wrenched from pillar and from post  
 By this tenacious hate of fortune, hate  
 Of all things in, under, and above earth.  
 Warfare, begun this mean unmanly mode,  
 Does best to end so,—gives earth spectacle  
 Of a brave fighter who succumbs to odds  
 That turn defeat to victory. Stab, I fold  
 My mantle round me ! Rome approves my act :

Applauds the blow which costs me life but keeps  
 My honour spotless : Rome would praise no more  
 Had I fallen, say, some fifteen years ago,  
 Helping Vienna when our Aretines  
 Flocked to Duke Charles and fought Turk Mustafa ;  
 Nor would you two be trembling o'er my corpse  
 With all this exquisite solicitude.  
 Why is it that I make such suit to live ?  
 The popular sympathy that 's round me now  
 Would break like bubble that o'er-comes a fly—  
 Pretty enough while he lies quiet there,  
 But let him want the air and ply the wing,  
 Why, it breaks and bespatters him, what else ?  
 Cardinal, if the Pope had pardoned me,  
 And I walked out of prison through the crowd,  
 It would not be your arm I should dare press !  
 Then, if I got safe to my place again,  
 How sad and sapless were the years to come !  
 I go my old ways and find things grown grey ;  
 You priests leer at me, old friends look askance ;  
 The mob 's in love, I 'll wager, to a man,  
 With my poor young good beauteous murdered wife :  
 For hearts require instruction how to beat,  
 And eyes, on warrant of the story, wax Wanton at portraiture in white and black  
 Of dead Pompilia gracing ballad-sheet,  
 Which, had she died unmurdered and unsung,  
 Would never turn though she paced street as bare  
 As the mad penitent ladies do in France.  
 My brothers quietly would edge me out  
 Of use and management of things called mine ;  
 Do I command ? " You stretched command before ! "  
 Show anger ? " Anger little helped you once ! "  
 Advise ? " How managed you affairs of old ? "  
 My very mother, all the while they gird,



Turns eye up, gives confirmatory groan,—

For unsuccess, explain it how you will,  
Disqualifies you, makes you doubt yourself,

—Much more, is found decisive by your friends.

Beside, am I not fifty years of age?

What new leap would a life take,  
checked like mine

I' the spring at outset? Where's my second chance?

Ay, but the babe . . I had forgot my son,

My heir! Now for a burst of gratitude!

There's some appropriate service to intone,

Some *gaudeamus* and thanksgiving-psalm!

Old, I renew my youth in him, and poor Possess a treasure,—is not that the phrase?

Only I must wait patient twenty years—  
Nourishing all the while, as father ought,

The excrescence with my daily blood of life.

Does it respond to hope, such sacrifice,—  
Grows the wen plump while I myself grow lean?

Why, here 's my son and heir in evidence,

Who stronger, wiser, handsomer than I  
By fifty years, relieves me of each load,—

Tames my hot horse, carries my heavy gun,

Courts my coy mistress,—has his apt advice

On house-economy, expenditure,  
And what not? All which good gifts and great growth

Because of my decline, he brings to bear  
On Guido, but half apprehensive how  
He cumbers earth, crosses the brisk young Count,

Who civilly would thrust him from the scene.

Contrariwise, does the blood-offering fail?

There 's an ineptitude, one blank the more

Added to earth in semblance of my child?

Then, this has been a costly piece of work,

My life exchanged for his!—why he, not I,

Enjoy the world, if no more grace accrue?

Dwarf me, what giant have you made of him?

I do not dread the disobedient son—

I know how to suppress rebellion there,  
Being not quite the fool my father was.

But grant the medium measure of a man,

The usual compromise 'twixt fool and sage,

—You know—the tolerably-obstinate,  
The not-so-much-perverse but you may train,

The true son-servant that, when parent bids

"Go work, son, in my vineyard!"

makes reply

"I go, Sir!"—Why, what profit in your son

Beyond the drudges you might subsidise,

Have the same work from at a paul the head?

Look at those four young precious olive-plants

Reared at Vittiano,—not on flesh and blood,

These twenty years, but black bread and sour wine!

I bade them put forth tender branch, and hook

And hurt three enemies I had in Rome:  
They did my hest as unreluctantly,

At promise of a dollar, as a son  
Adjured by mumping memories of the past!

No, nothing repays youth expended so—

Youth, I say, who am young still,—  
give but leave

To live my life out, to the last I 'd live  
And die conceding age no right of youth!

It is the will runs the renewing nerve  
Through flaccid flesh, would faint before the time.

Therefore no sort of use for son have I—  
Sick, not of life's feast but of steps to climb

To the house where life prepares her feast,—of means

To the end: for make the end attainable

Without the means,—my relish were like yours.

A man may have an appetite enough  
 For a whole dish of robins ready cooked  
 And yet lack courage to face sleet, pad  
     snow,  
 And snare sufficiency for supper.

Thus

The time's arrived when, ancient Ro-  
 man-like,  
 I am bound to fall on my own sword,—  
     why not  
 Say—Tuscan-like, more ancient, better  
     still ?  
 Will you hear truth can do no harm nor  
     good ?  
 I think I never was at any time  
 A Christian, as you nickname all the  
     world,  
 Me among others: truce to nonsense  
     now !  
 Name me, a primitive religionist—  
 As should the aboriginary be  
 I boast myself, Etruscan, Aretine,  
 One sprung,—your frigid Virgil's fieri-  
     est word,—  
 From fauns and nymphs, trunks and  
     the heart of oak,  
 With,—for a visible divinity,—  
 The portent of a Jove Ægiochus  
 Descried 'mid clouds, lightning and  
     thunder, couched  
 On topmost crag of your Capitoline—  
 'Tis in the Seventh Æneid,—what, the  
     Eighth ?  
 Right,—thanks, Abate,—though the  
     Christian 's dumb,  
 The Latinist's vivacious in you yet !  
 I know my grandsire had our tapestry  
 Marked with the motto, 'neath a cer-  
     tain shield  
 His grandson presently will give some  
     gules  
 To vary azure. First we fight for  
     faiths,  
 But get to shake hands at the last of all :  
 Mine 's your faith too,—in Jove Ægi-  
     ochus !  
 Nor do Greek gods, that serve as sup-  
     plement,  
 Jar with the simpler scheme, if under-  
     stood.  
 We want such intermediary race  
 To make communication possible ;  
 The real thing were too lofty, we too  
     low,  
 Midway hang these : we feel their use  
     so plain

In linking height to depth, that we doff  
     hat  
 And put no question nor pry narrowly  
 Into the nature hid behind the names.  
 We grudge no rite the fancy may de-  
     mand ;  
 But never, more than needs, invent,  
     refine,  
 Improve upon requirement, idly wise  
 Beyond the letter, teaching gods their  
     trade,  
 Which is to teach us : we 'll obey when  
     taught. [due ?  
 Why should we do our duty past the  
 When the sky darkens, Jove is wroth,  
     —say prayer !  
 When the sun shines and Jove is glad,  
     —sing psalm !  
 But wherefore pass prescription and  
     devise  
 Blood-offering for sweat service, lend  
     the rod  
 A pungency through pickle of our own ?  
 Learned Abate,—no one teaches you  
 What Venus means and who 's Apollo  
     here !  
 I spare you, Cardinal,—but, though  
     you wince,  
 You know me, I know you, and both  
     know that !  
 So, if Apollo bids us fast, we fast :  
 But where does Venus order we stop  
     sense  
 When Master Pietro rhymes a pleas-  
     antry ?  
 Give alms prescribed on Friday,—but,  
     hold hand  
 Because your foe lies prostrate,—  
     where 's the word  
 Explicit in the book debars revenge ?  
 The rationale of your scheme is just  
 " Pay toll here, there pursue your  
     pleasure free ! "  
 So do you turn to use the medium-  
     powers,  
 Mars and Minerva, Bacchus and the  
     rest,  
 And so are saved propitiating—what ?  
 What all good, all wise and all potent  
     Jove  
 Vexed by the very sins in man, himself  
 Made life's necessity when man he  
     made ?  
 Irrational bunglers ! So, the living  
     truth  
 Revealed to strike Pan dead, ducks  
     low at last,



Prays leave to hold its own and live  
 good days  
 Provided it go masque grotesquely,  
 called  
 Christian not Pagan? Oh, you purged  
 the sky  
 Of all gods save the One, the great and  
 good,  
 Clapped hands and triumphed! But  
 the change came fast:  
 The inexorable need in man for life—  
 Life,—you may mulct and minish to a  
 grain  
 Out of the lump, so the grain left but  
 live,—  
 Laughed at your substituting death for  
 life,  
 And bade you do your worst,—which  
 worst was done  
 —Pass that age styled the primitive  
 and pure  
 When Saint this, Saint that, dutifully  
 starved,  
 Froze, fought with beasts, was beaten  
 and abused  
 And finally ridded of his flesh by fire,  
 Keeping the while unspotted from the  
 world!—  
 Good: but next age, how goes the  
 game, who gives  
 His life and emulates Saint that and  
 this?  
 They mutiny, mutter who knows what  
 excuse?  
 In fine make up their minds to leave the  
 new,  
 Stick to the old,—enjoy old liberty,  
 No prejudice, all the same, if so it please,  
 To the new profession: sin o' the sly,  
 henceforth!  
 Let the law stand: the letter kills, what  
 then?  
 The spirit saves as unmistakeably.  
 Omniscience sees, Omnipotence could  
 stop,  
 All-mercifulness pardons,—it must be,  
 Frown law its fiercest, there 's a wink  
 somewhere.

Such was the logic in this head of mine:  
 I, like the rest, wrote "poison" on my  
 bread;  
 But broke and ate:—said "those that  
 use the sword  
 "Shall perish by the same;" then  
 stabbed my foe.  
 I stand on solid earth, not empty air:

Dislodge me, let your Pope's crook hale  
 me hence!  
 Not he, nor you! And I so pity both,  
 I'll make the speech you want the wit  
 to make:  
 "Count Guido, who reveal our mys-  
 tery,  
 "You trace all issues to the love of life:  
 "We have a life to love and guard, like  
 you.  
 "Why did you put us upon self-de-  
 fence?  
 "You well knew what prompt pass-  
 word would appease  
 "The sentry's ire when folk infringe  
 his bounds,  
 "And yet kept mouth shut: do you  
 wonder then  
 "If, in mere decency, he shot you dead?  
 "He can't have people play such  
 pranks as you  
 "Beneath his nose at noonday, who  
 disdain  
 "To give him an excuse before the  
 world, [camp!'  
 "By crying 'I break rule to save our  
 "Under the old rule, such offence were  
 death;  
 "And so had you heard Pontifex pro-  
 nounce  
 "'Since you slay foe and violate the  
 form,  
 "'That turns to murder, which were  
 sacrifice  
 "'Had you, while, say, law-suiting him  
 to death,  
 "'But raised an altar to the Unknown  
 God,  
 "'Or else the Genius of the Vatican.'  
 "'Why then this pother?—all because  
 the Pope  
 "Doing his duty, cries 'A foreigner,  
 "'You scandalize the natives: here at  
 Rome  
 "'*Romano vivitur more*: wise men here,  
 "'Put the Church forward and efface  
 themselves.  
 "'The fit defence had been,—you  
 stamped on wheat,  
 "'Intending all the time to trample  
 tares,—  
 "'Were fain extirpate, then, the here-  
 tic,  
 "'And now find, in your haste you  
 slew a fool:  
 "'Nor Pietro, nor Violante, nor your  
 wife

A man may have an appetite enough  
For a whole dish of robins ready cooked  
And yet lack courage to face sleet, pad  
snow,  
And snare sufficiency for supper.

Thus  
The time's arrived when, ancient Ro-  
man-like,  
I am bound to fall on my own sword,—  
why not

Say—Tuscan-like, more ancient, better  
still?

Will you hear truth can do no harm nor  
good?

I think I never was at any time  
A Christian, as you nickname all the  
world,

Me among others: truce to nonsense  
now!

Name me, a primitive religionist—  
As should the aboriginal be  
I boast myself, Etruscan, Aretine,  
One sprung,—your frigid Virgil's fieri-  
est word,—

From fauns and nymphs, trunks and  
the heart of oak,

With,—for a visible divinity,—  
The portent of a Jove Ægioculus  
Descried 'mid clouds, lightning and  
thunder, couched

On topmost crag of your Capitoline—  
'Tis in the Seventh Æneid,—what, the  
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Right,—thanks, Abate,—though the  
Christian 's dumb,

The Latinist's vivacious in you yet!  
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Marked with the motto, 'neath a cer-  
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His grandson presently will give some  
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To vary azure. First we fight for  
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But get to shake hands at the last of all:  
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plement,

Jar with the simpler scheme, if under-  
stood.

We want such intermediary race  
To make communication possible;

The real thing were too lofty, we too  
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Midway hang these: we feel their use  
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In linking height to dep-  
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And put no question n  
Into the nature hid bel  
We grudge no rite the  
mand;

But never, more than  
refine,

Improve upon require  
Beyond the letter, teach

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Which is to teach us: w

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" Still the good luck of France to fling

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" Cardinal Bouillon triumphs properly!

" *Palchetti* were erected in the Place,

" And houses, at the edge of the Three

Streets,

" Let their front windows at six dollars

each:

" Anguisciola, that patron of the arts,

" Hired one; our Envoy Contarini too.

" Now for the thing; no sooner the

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" Gone forth,—'t is four-and-twenty

hours ago,—

" Than Acciaïoli and Panciatichi,

" Old friends, indeed compatriots of

the man,

" Being pitched on as the couple pro-

perest

" To intimate the sentence yesternight,

" Were closeted ere cock-crow with the

Count.

" They both report their efforts to dis-

pose

" The unhappy nobleman for ending

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" Despite the natural sense of injury,

" Were crowned at last with a com-

plete success:

" And when the Company of Death

arrived

" At twenty-hours,—the way they

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" We say, at sunset, after dinner-time,—

" The Count was led down, hoisted up

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" Last of the five, as heinouslest, you

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" Yet they allowed one whole car to

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" His intrepidity, nay, nonchalance,

" As up he stood and down he sat him-

self,

" Struck admiration into those who

saw.

" Then the procession started, took the

way

" From the New Prisons by the Pil-

grim's Street,

" The street of the Governo, Pasquin's

Street,



Or composite as good orbs prove, or  
crammed

With worse ingredients than the Worm-  
wood Star.

The act, over and ended, falls and fades :  
What was once seen, grows what is now  
described,

Then talked of, told about, a tinge the  
less

In every fresh transmission ; till it  
melts,

Trickles in silent orange or wan grey  
Across our memory, dies and leaves all  
dark,

And presently we find the stars again.  
Follow the main streaks, meditate the  
mode

Of brightness, how it hastes to blend  
with black !

After that February Twenty-Two,  
Since our salvation, Sixteen-Ninety-  
Eight,

Of all reports that were, or may have  
been,

Concerning those the day killed or let  
live,

Four I count only. Take the first that  
comes.

A letter from a stranger, man of rank,  
Venetian visitor at Rome,—who knows,  
On what pretence of busy idleness ?  
Thus he begins on evening of that day.

" Here are we at our end of Carnival ;  
" Prodigious gaiety and monstrous  
mirth,

" And constant shift of entertaining  
show :

" With influx, from each quarter of the  
globe,

" Of strangers nowise wishful to be last  
" I' the struggle for a good place pres-  
ently

" When that befalls, fate cannot long  
defer.

" The old Pope totters on the verge o'  
the grave :

" You see, Malpichi understood far  
more

" Than Tozzi how to treat the ailments :  
age,

" No question, renders these inveter-  
ate.

" Cardinal Spada, actual Minister,  
" Is possible Pope ; I wager on his head,

" Since those four entertainments of his  
niece

" Which set all Rome a-stare : Pope  
probably—

" Though Colloredo has his backers too,  
" And San Cesario makes one doubt at  
times :

" Altieri will be Chamberlain at most.

" A week ago the sun was warm like  
May,

" And the old man took daily exercise  
" Along the river-side ; he loves to see

" That Custom-house he built upon the  
bank,

" For, Naples-born, his tastes are mari-  
time :

" But yesterday he had to keep in-doors  
" Because of the outrageous rain that  
fell.

" On such days the good soul has faint-  
ing-fits,

" Or lies in stupor, scarcely makes be-  
lieve

" Of minding business, fumbles at his  
beads.

" They say, the trust that keeps his  
heart alive

" Is that, by lasting till December next,  
" He may hold Jubilee a second time,

" And, twice in one reign, ope the Holy  
Doors.

" By the way, somebody responsible  
" Assures me that the King of France  
has writ

" Fresh orders : Fenelon will be con-  
demned :

" The Cardinal makes a wry face  
enough,

" Having a love for the delinquent :  
still,

" He 's the ambassador, must press the  
point.

" Have you a wager too dependent  
here ?

" Now, from such matters to divert  
awhile,

" Hear of to-day's event which crowns  
the week,

" Casts all the other wagers into shade.  
" Tell Dandolo I owe him fifty drops

" Of heart's blood in the shape of gold  
zecchines !

" The Pope has done his worst : I  
have to pay

- " For the execution of the Count, by Jove !
- " Two days since, I reported him as safe,
- " Re-echoing the conviction of all Rome :
- " Who could suspect the one deaf ear—the Pope's ?
- " But prejudices grow insuperable,
- " And that old enmity to Austria, that
- " Passion for France and France's pageant-king
- " (Of which, why pause to multiply the proofs
- " Now scandalously rife in Europe's mouth ?)
- " These fairly got the better in the man
- " Of justice, prudence, and *esprit de corps*,
- " And he persisted in the butchery.
- " Also, 't is said that in his latest walk
- " To that Dogana-by-the-Bank, he built,
- " The crowd,—he suffers question, unrebuked,—
- " Asked, ' Whether murder was a privilege
- " ' Only reserved for nobles like the Count ? '
- " And he was ever mindful of the mob.
- " Martinez, the Cæsarian Minister,
- " —Who used his best endeavours to spare blood,
- " And strongly pleaded for the life ' of one,
- " Urged he, ' I may have dined at table with ! '—
- " He will not soon forget the Pope's rebuff,
- " —Feels the slight sensibly, I promise you !
- " And but for the dissuasion of two eyes
- " That make with him foul weather or fine day,
- " He had abstained, nor graced the spectacle :
- " As it was, barely would he condescend
- " Look forth from the *palchetto* where he sat
- " Under the Pincian : we shall hear of this !
- " The substituting, too, the People's Square
- " For the out-o'-the-way old quarter by the Bridge,
- " Was meant as a conciliatory sop
- " To the mob ; it gave one holiday the more.
- " But the French Embassy might unfurl flag,—
- " Still the good luck of France to fling a foe !
- " Cardinal Bouillon triumphs properly !
- " *Palchetti* were erected in the Place,
- " And houses, at the edge of the Three Streets,
- " Let their front windows at six dollars each :
- " Anguisciola, that patron of the arts,
- " Hired one ; our Envoy Contarini too.
- " Now for the thing ; no sooner the decree
- " Gone forth,—'t is four-and-twenty hours ago,—
- " Than Acciaïoli and Panciatici,
- " Old friends, indeed compatriots of the man,
- " Being pitched on as the couple properest
- " To intimate the sentence yesternight,
- " Were closeted ere cock-crow with the Count.
- " They both report their efforts to dispose
- " The unhappy nobleman for ending well,
- " Despite the natural sense of injury,
- " Were crowned at last with a complete success :
- " And when the Company of Death arrived
- " At twenty-hours,—the way they reckon here,—
- " We say, at sunset, after dinner-time,—
- " The Count was led down, hoisted up on car,
- " Last of the five, as heinous, you know :
- " Yet they allowed one whole car to each man.
- " His intrepidity, nay, nonchalance,
- " As up he stood and down he sat himself,
- " Struck admiration into those who saw.
- " Then the procession started, took the way
- " From the New Prisons by the Pilgrim's Street,
- " The street of the Governo, Pasquin's Street,



- " (Where was stuck up, 'mid other epigrams,  
 " A quatrain . . . but of all that, presently !)  
 " The Place Navona, the Pantheon's Place,  
 " Place of the Column, last the Corso's length,  
 " And so debouched thence at Man-naia's foot  
 " I' the Place o' the People. As is evident,  
 " (Despite the malice,—plainly meant, I fear,  
 " By this abrupt change of locality,—  
 " The Square 's no such bad place to head and hang)  
 " We had the titillation as we sat  
 " Assembled, (quality in conclave, ha ?)  
 " Of, minute after minute, some report  
 " How the slow show was winding on its way.  
 " Now did a car run over, kill a man,  
 " Just opposite a pork-shop numbered Twelve :  
 " And bitter were the outcries of the mob  
 " Against the Pope : for, but that he forbids  
 " The Lottery, why, twelve were Tern Quatern !  
 " Now did a beggar by Saint Agnes, lame  
 " From his youth up, recover use of leg,  
 " Through prayer of Guido as he glanced that way :  
 " So that the crowd near crammed his hat with coin.  
 " Thus was kept up excitement to the last,  
 " —Not an abrupt out-bolting, as of yore,  
 " From Castle, over Bridge and on to block,  
 " And so all ended ere you well could wink !  
 " Guido was last to mount the scaffold-steps  
 " Here also, as atrociouslest in crime.  
 " We hardly noticed how the peasants died,  
 " They dangled somehow soon to right and left,  
 " And we remained all ears and eyes, could give  
 " Ourselves to Guido undividedly,
- " As he harangued the multitude beneath.  
 " He begged forgiveness on the part of God,  
 " And fair construction of his act from men,  
 " Whose suffrage he entreated for his soul,  
 " Suggesting that we should forthwith repeat  
 " A *Pater* and an *Ave*, with the hymn  
 " *Salve Regina Caeli*, for his sake.  
 " Which said, he turned to the confessor, crossed  
 " And reconciled himself, with decency.  
 " Oft glancing at Saint Mary's opposite  
 " Where they possess, and showed in shrine to-day,  
 " The Blessed *Umbilicus* of our Lord,  
 " (A relic 't is believed no other church  
 " In Rome can boast of)—then rose up, as brisk  
 " Knelt down again, bent head, adapted neck,  
 " And, with the name of Jesus on his lips,  
 " Received the fatal blow.
- " The headsman showed  
 " The head to the populace. Must I avouch  
 " We strangers own to disappointment here ?  
 " Report pronounced him fully six feet high,  
 " Youngish, considering his fifty years,  
 " And, if not handsome, dignified at least.  
 " Indeed, it was no face to please a wife !  
 " His friends say, this was caused by the costume :  
 " He wore the dress he did the murder in,  
 " That is, a *just-a-corps* of russet serge,  
 " Black camisole, coarse cloak of baracan  
 " (So they style here the garb of goat's-hair cloth)  
 " White hat and cotton cap beneath, poor Count,  
 " Preservative against the evening dews  
 " During the journey from Arezzo. Well,  
 " So died the man, and so his end was peace ;

" Whence many a moral were to meditate.  
 " Spada,—you may bet Dandolo,—is Pope!  
 " Now for the quatrain!"

No, friend, this will do!  
 You 've sputtered into sparks. What streak comes next?  
 A letter: Don Giacinto Arcangeli,  
 Doctor and Proctor, him I made you mark  
 Buckle to business in his study late,  
 The virtuous sire, the valiant for the truth,  
 Acquaints his correspondent,—Florentine,  
 By name Cencini, advocate as well,  
*Socius* and brother-in-the-devil to match,—  
 A friend of Franceschini, anyhow,  
 And knit up with the bowels of the case,—  
 Acquaints him, (in this paper that I touch)  
 How their joint effort to obtain reprieve  
 For Guido had so nearly nicked the nine  
 And ninety and one over,—he would say,  
 At Tarocs,—or succeeded,—in our phrase.  
 To this Cencini's care I owe the Book,  
 The yellow thing I take and toss once more  
 —How will it be, my four-years'-intimate,  
 When thou and I part company anon?—  
 'T was he, the " whole position of the case,"  
 Pleading and summary, were put before;  
 Discreetly in my Book he bound them all,  
 Adding some three epistles to the point.  
 Here is the first of these, part fresh as penned,  
 The sand, that dried the ink, not rubbed away,  
 Though penned the day whereof it tells the deed:  
 Part—extant just as plainly, you know where,  
 Whence came the other stuff, went, you know how,

To make the ring that's all but round and done.

" Late they arrived, too late, egregious Sir,  
 " Those same justificative points you urge  
 " Might benefit His Blessed Memory  
 " Count Guido Franceschini now with God:  
 " Since the Court,—to state things succinctly,—styled  
 " The Congregation of the Governor,  
 " Having resolved on Tuesday last our cause  
 " I' the guilty sense, with death for punishment,  
 " Spite of all pleas by me deducible  
 " In favour of said Blessed Memory,—  
 " I, with expenditure of pains enough,  
 " Obtained a respite, leave to claim and prove  
 " Exemption from the law's award,—alleged  
 " The power and privilege o' the Clericate:  
 " To which effect a courier was despatched.  
 " But ere an answer from Arezzo came,  
 " The Holiness of our Lord the Pope (prepare!)  
 " Judging it inexpedient to postpone  
 " The execution of such sentence passed,  
 " Saw fit, by his particular chirograph,  
 " To derogate, dispense with privilege,  
 " And wink at any hurt accruing thence  
 " To Mother Church through damage of her son;  
 " Also, to overpass and set aside  
 " That other plea on score of tender age,  
 " Put forth by me to do Pasquini good,  
 " One of the four in trouble with our friend.  
 " So that all five, to-day, have suffered death  
 " With no distinction save in dying,—he,  
 " Decollated by way of privilege,  
 " The rest hanged decently and in order. Thus  
 " Came the Count to his end of gallant man,  
 " Defunct in faith and exemplarity:  
 " Nor shall the shield of his great House lose shine,  
 " Nor its blue banner blush to red thereby.



" This too, should yield sustainment to  
our hearts—

" He had commiseration and respect

" In his decease from universal Rome,

" *Quantum est hominum venustiorum,*

" The nice and cultivated everywhere :

" Though, in respect of me his advocate,

" Needs must I groan o'er my debility,

" Attribute the untoward event o' the  
strife

" To nothing but my own crass ignorance

" Which failed to set the valid reasons  
forth,

" Find fit excuse : such is the fate of  
war !

" May God compensate us the direful  
blow

" By future blessings on his family

" Whereof I lowly beg the next com-  
mands ;

" —Whereeto, as humbly, I confirm my-  
self . . ."

And so forth,—follow name and place  
and date :

On the next leaf—

" *Hactenus senioribus !*

" There, old fox, show the clients t'  
other side

" And keep this corner sacred, I be-  
seech !

" You and your pleas and proofs were  
what folks call

" Pisan assistance, aid that comes too  
late,

" Saves a man dead as nail in post of  
door.

" Had I but time and space for narra-  
tive !

" What was the good of twenty Cleri-  
cates

" When Somebody's thick headpiece  
once was bent

" On seeing Guido's drop into the bag ?

" How these old men like giving youth  
a push !

" So much the better : next push goes  
to him,

" And a new Pope begins the century.

" Much good I get by my superb de-  
fence !

" But argument is solid and subsists,

" While obstinacy and ineptitude

" Accompany the owner to his tomb ;

" What do I care how soon ? Beside,  
folks see !

" Rome will have relished heartily the  
show,

" Yet understood the motives, never  
fear,

" Which caused the indecent change o'  
the People's Place

" To the People's Playground,—stig-  
matize the spite

" Which in a trice precipitated things !

" As oft the moribund will give a kick

" To show they are not absolutely dead,

" So feebleness i' the socket shoots its  
last,

" A spirt of violence for energy !

" But thou, Cencini, brother of my  
breast,

" O fox, whose home is 'mid the tender  
grape,

" Whose couch in Tuscany by Themis'  
throne,

" Subject to no such . . . but I shut  
my mouth

" Or only open it again to say,

" This pother and confusion fairly laid,

" My hands are empty and my satchel  
lank.

" Now then for both the Matrimonial  
Cause

" And the case of Gomez ! Serve them  
hot and hot !

" *Reliqua differamus in crastinum !*

" The impatient estafette cracks whip  
outside :

" Still, though the earth should swallow  
him who swears

" And me who make the mischief, in  
must slip

" —My boy, your godson, fat-chaps  
Hyacinth,

" Enjoyed the sight while Papa plodded  
here.

" I promised him, the rogue, a month  
ago,

" The day his birthday was, of all the  
days,

" That if I failed to save Count Guido's  
head,

" Cinuccio should at least go see it  
chopped

" From trunk—' So, Latinize your  
thanks ! ' quoth I :

" ' That I prefer, *hoc malim,* ' raps me  
out

" The rogue : you notice the subjunc-  
tive ? Ah !

"Accordingly he sat there, bold in box'  
 "Proud as the Pope behind the peacock-fans :  
 "Whereon a certain lady-patroness  
 "For whom I manage things (my boy in front,  
 "Her Marquis sat the third in evidence ;  
 "Boys have no eyes nor ears save for the show)  
 "'This time, Cintino,' was her sportive word,  
 "When whiz and thump went axe and mowed lay man,  
 "And folks could fall to the suspended chat,  
 "'This time, you see, Bottini rules the roast,  
 "'Nor can Papa with all his eloquence  
 "'Be reckoned on to help as heretofore !' [ishly—  
 "Whereat Cinone pouts ; then, spark—  
 "'Papa knew better than aggrieve his Pope,  
 "'And baulk him of his grudge against our Count,  
 "'Else he 'd have argued-off Bottini's . . . what ?  
 "'His nose,—the rogue ! well parried of the boy !  
 "He 's long since out of Cæsar (eight years old)  
 "And as for tripping in Eutropius . . . well,  
 "Reason the more that we strain every nerve  
 "To do him justice, mould a model-mouth,  
 "A Bartolus-cum-Baldo for next age :  
 "For that I purse the pieces, work the brain,  
 "And want both Gomez and the marriage-case,  
 "Success with which shall plaster aught of pate  
 "That 's broken in me by Bottini's flail,  
 "And bruise his own, belike, that wags and brags.  
 "*Adverti supplico humiliter*  
 "*Quod*, don't the fungus see, the fop divine  
 "That one hand drives two horses, left and right ?  
 "With this rein did I rescue from the ditch  
 "The fortune of our Franceschini, keep

"Unsplashed the credit of a noble House,  
 "And set the fashionable cause of Rome  
 "A-prancing till bystanders shouted 'ware !'  
 "The other rein's judicious management  
 "Suffered old Somebody to keep the pace,  
 "Hobblingly play the roadster : who but he  
 "Had his opinion, was not led by the nose  
 "In leash of quibbles strung to look like law !  
 "You 'll soon see,—when I go to pay devoir  
 "And compliment him on confuting me,—  
 "If, by a back-swing of the pendulum,  
 "Grace be not, thick and threefold, consequent !  
 "'I must decide as I see proper, Don !  
 "'The Pope, I have my inward lights for guide.  
 "'Had learning been the matter in dispute,  
 "'Could eloquence avail to gainsay fact,  
 "'Yours were the victory, be comforted !'  
 "Cinuzzo will be the gainer by it all.  
 "Quick then with Gomez, hot and hot next case !"

Follows, a letter, takes the other side.  
 Tall blue-eyed Fisc whose head is capped with cloud,  
 Doctor Bottini,—to no matter who,  
 Writes on the Monday two days afterward.  
 Now shall the honest championship of right,  
 Crowned with success, enjoy at last, unblamed,  
 Moderate triumph ! Now shall eloquence  
 Poured forth in fancied floods for virtue's sake,  
 (The print is sorrowfully dyked and dammed,  
 But shows where fain the unbridled force would flow,  
 Finding a channel)—now shall this refresh  
 The thirsty donor with a drop or two !  
 Here has been truth at issue with a lie :



Let who gained truth the day have  
handsome pride  
In his own prowess ! Eh ? What ails  
the man ?

" Well, it is over, ends as I foresaw :

" Easily proved, Pompilia's innocence !

" Catch them entrusting Guido's guilt  
to me !

" I had, as usual, the plain truth to  
plead.

" I always knew the clearness of the  
stream

" Would show the fish so thoroughly,  
child might prong

" The clumsy monster : with no mud  
to splash,

" Small credit to lynx-eye and light-  
ning-spear !

" This Guido,—(much sport he con-  
trived to make,

" Who at first twist, preamble of the  
cord,

" Turned white, told all, like the pol-  
troon he was !)—

" Finished, as you expect, a penitent,

" Fully confessed his crime, and made  
amends,

" And, edifying Rome last Saturday,

" Died like a saint, poor devil ! That's  
the man

" The gods still give to my antagonist :

" Imagine how Arcangeli claps wing,

" And crows ! ' Such formidable facts  
to face,

" ' So naked to attack, my client here,

" ' And yet I kept a month the Fisc at  
bay,

" ' And in the end had foiled him of the  
prize

" ' By this arch-stroke, this plea of  
privilege,

" ' But that the Pope must gratify his  
whim,

" ' Put in his word, poor old man,—let  
it pass ! '—

" —Such is the cue to which all Rome  
responds.

" What with the plain truth given me  
to uphold,

" And, should I let truth slip, the Pope  
at hand

" To pick up, steady her on legs again,

" My office turns a pleasantry indeed !

" Not that the burly boaster did one jot

" O' the little was to do—young Spre-  
ti's work !

" But for him,—mannikin and dandi-  
prat,

" Mere candle-end and inch of clever-  
ness

" Stuck on Arcangeli's save-all,—but  
for him

" The spruce young Spreti, what is bad  
were worse !

" I looked that Rome should have the  
natural gird

" At advocate with case that proves it-  
self ;

" I knew Arcangeli would grin and  
brag :

" But what say you to one impertinence

" Might move a man ? That monk,  
you are to know,

" That barefoot Augustinian whose  
report

" O' the dying woman's words did det-  
riment

" To my best points it took the fresh-  
ness from,

" —That meddler preached to purpose  
yesterday

" At San Lorenzo as a winding-up

" O' the shows, have proved a treasure  
to the church.

" Out comes his sermon smoking from  
the press :

" Its text—' Let God be true, and  
every man

" ' A liar '—and its application, this,

" The longest-winded of the paragraphs,

" I straight unstitch, tear out and treat  
you with :

" 'T is piping hot and posts through  
Rome to-day.

" Remember it, as I engage to do !

" But if you rather be disposed to see

" In the result of the long trial here,—

" This dealing doom to guilt and doling  
praise

" To innocency,—any proof that truth

" May look for vindication from the  
world,

" Much will you have misread the signs,  
I say.

" God, who seems acquiescent in the  
main

" With those who add ' So will He ever  
sleep '—

" Flutters their foolishness from time  
to time,

- " Puts forth His righthand recognis-  
 ably ;  
 " Even as, to fools who deem He needs  
 must right  
 " Wrong on the instant, as if earth were  
 heaven,  
 " He wakes remonstrance—' Passive,  
 Lord, how long ? ,  
 " Because Pompilia's purity prevails,  
 " Conclude you, all truth triumphs in  
 the end ?  
 " So might those old inhabitants of the  
 ark,  
 " Witnessing haply their dove's safe  
 return,  
 " Pronounce there was no danger all  
 the while  
 " O' the deluge, to the creature's coun-  
 terparts,  
 " Aught that beat wing i' the world,  
 was white or soft,—  
 " And that the lark, the thrush, the cul-  
 ver too,  
 " Might equally have traversed air,  
 found earth,  
 " And brought back olive-branch in  
 unharmed bill.  
 " Methinks I hear the Patriarch's  
 warning voice—  
 " ' Though this one breast, by miracle,  
 return,  
 " ' No wave rolls by, in all the waste,  
 but bears  
 " ' Within it some dead dove-like thing  
 as dear,  
 " ' Beauty made blank and harmles-  
 ness destroyed ! '   
 " How many chaste and noble sister-  
 fames  
 " Wanted the extricating hand, and lie  
 " Strangled, for one Pompilia proud  
 above  
 " The welter, plucked from the world's  
 calumny,  
 " Stupidity, simplicity,—who cares ?  
 " Romans ! An elder race possessed  
 your land  
 " Long ago, and a false faith lingered  
 still,  
 " As shades do, though the morning  
 star be out.  
 " Doubtless, some pagan of the twi-  
 light-day  
 " Has often pointed to a cavern-mouth,  
 " Obnoxious to beholders, hard by  
 Rome,  
 " And said,—nor he a bad man, no, nor  
 fool,—  
 " Only a man, so, blind like all his  
 mates,—  
 " ' Here skulk in safety, lurk, defying  
 law,  
 " ' The devotees to execrable creed,  
 " ' Adoring—with what culture . .  
 Jove, avert  
 " ' Thy vengeance from us worshippers  
 of thee ! . .  
 " ' What rites obscene—their idol-god,  
 an Ass ! '   
 " So went the word forth, so acceptance  
 found,  
 " So century re-echoed century,  
 " Cursed the accursed,—and so, from  
 sire to son,  
 " You Romans cried ' The offscourings  
 of our race  
 " ' Corrupt within the depths there :  
 fitly, fiends  
 " ' Perform a temple-service o'er the  
 dead :  
 " ' Child, gather garment round thee,  
 pass nor pry ! '   
 " So groaned your generations : till the  
 time  
 " Grew ripe, and lightning hath re-  
 vealed, belike,—  
 " ' Thro' crevice peeped into by curious  
 fear,—  
 " Some object even fear could recog-  
 nise  
 " I' the place of spectres ; on the illu-  
 mined wall,  
 " To wit, some nook, tradition talks  
 about,  
 " Narrow and short, a corpse's length,  
 no more :  
 " And by it, in the due receptacle,  
 " The little rude brown lamp of earth-  
 enware,  
 " The cruse, was meant for flowers, but  
 held the blood,  
 " The rough-scratched palm-branch  
 and the legend left  
 " *Pro Christo*. Then the mystery lay  
 clear :  
 " The abhorred one was a martyr all  
 the time,  
 " A saint whereof earth was not worthy.  
 What ?  
 " Do you continue in the old belief ?  
 " Where blackness bides unbroke,  
 must devils be ?  
 " Is it so certain, not another cell



- " O' the myriad that make up the cata-  
 comb,  
 " Contains some saint a second flash  
 would show ?  
 " Will you ascend into the light of day  
 " And, having recognised a martyr's  
 shrine,  
 " Go join the votaries that gape around  
 " Each vulgar god that awes the mar-  
 ket-place ?  
 " Be these the objects of your praising ?  
 See !  
 " In the outstretched right hand of  
 Apollo, there,  
 " Is screened a scorpion : housed amid  
 the folds  
 " Of Juno's mantle, lo, a cockatrice !  
 " Each statue of a god were fitlier styled  
 " Demon and devil. Glorify no brass  
 " That shines like burnished gold in  
 noonday glare,  
 " For fools ! Be otherwise instructed,  
 you !  
 " And preferably ponder, ere ye pass,  
 " Each incident of this strange human  
 play  
 " Privily acted on a theatre,  
 " Was deemed secure from every gaze  
 but God's,—  
 " Till, of a sudden, earthquake lays  
 wall low  
 " And lets the world see the wild work  
 inside,  
 " And how, in petrification of surprise,  
 " The actors stand,—raised arm and  
 planted foot,—  
 " Mouth as it made, eye as it evidenced,  
 " Despairing shriek, triumphant hate,  
 —transfixed,  
 " Both he who takes and she who yields  
 the life.  
 " As ye become spectators of this  
 scene—  
 " Watch obscuration of a fame pearl-  
 pure  
 " In vapoury films, enwoven circum-  
 stance,  
 " —A soul made weak by its pathetic  
 want  
 " Of just the first apprenticeship to sin,  
 " Would thenceforth make the sinning  
 soul secure  
 " From all foes save itself, that 's tru-  
 liest foe,—  
 " For egg turned snake needs fear no  
 serpentry,—  
 " As ye behold this web of circumstance  
 " Deepen the more for every thrill and  
 throe,  
 " Convulsive effort to disperse the films  
 " And disenmesh the fame o' the mar-  
 tyr,—mark  
 " How all those means, the unfriended  
 one pursues,  
 " To keep the treasure trusted to her  
 breast,  
 " Each struggle in the flight from  
 death to life,  
 " How all, by procuration of the powers  
 " Of darkness, are transformed,—no  
 single ray,  
 " Shot forth to show and save the in-  
 most star,  
 " But, passed as through hell's prism,  
 proceeding black  
 " To the world that hates white : as ye  
 watch, I say,  
 " Till dusk and such defacement grow  
 eclipse  
 " By,—marvellous perversity of man !—  
 " The inadequacy and inaptitude  
 " Of that self-same machine, that very  
 law  
 " Man vaunts, devised to dissipate the  
 gloom,  
 " Rescue the drowning orb from cal-  
 lumny, [just,  
 " —Hear law, appointed to defend the  
 " Submit, for best defence, that wick-  
 edness  
 " Was bred of flesh and innate with  
 the bone  
 " Borne by Pompilia's spirit for a  
 space,  
 " And no mere chance fault, passion-  
 ate and brief :  
 " Finally, when ye find,—after this  
 touch  
 " Of man's protection which intends to  
 mar  
 " The last pin-point of light and damn  
 the disc,—  
 " One wave of the hand of God amid  
 the worlds  
 " Bid vapour vanish, darkness flee away,  
 " And leave the vexed star culminate  
 in peace  
 " Approachable no more by earthly  
 mist—  
 " What I call God's hand,—you, per-  
 haps,—this chance  
 " Of the true instinct of an old good  
 man

" Who happens to hate darkness and  
 love light,—  
 " In whom too was the eye that saw,  
 not dim,  
 " The natural force to do the thing he  
 saw,  
 " Nowise abated,—both by miracle,—  
 " All this well pondered,—I demand  
 assent  
 " To the enunciation of my text  
 " In face of one proof more that ' God  
 is true  
 " ' And every man a liar '—that who  
 trusts  
 " To human testimony for a fact  
 " Gets this sole fact—himself is proved  
 a fool;  
 " Man's speech being false, if but by  
 consequence  
 " That only strength is true; while  
 man is weak,  
 " And, since truth seems reserved for  
 heaven not earth,  
 " Should learn to love what he may  
 speak one day.  
 " For me, the weary and the worn, who  
 prompt  
 " To mirth or pity, as I move the  
 mood,—  
 " A friar who glide unnoticed to the  
 grave,  
 " Bare feet, coarse robe and rope-girt  
 waist of mine,—  
 " I have long since renounced your  
 world, ye know:  
 " Yet weigh the worth of worldly prize  
 forgone,  
 " Disinterestedly judge this and that  
 " Good ye account good: but God tries  
 the heart.  
 " Still, if you question me of my con-  
 tent  
 " At having put each human pleasure  
 by,  
 " I answer, at the urgency of truth,  
 " As this world seems, I dare not say I  
 know  
 " —Apart from Christ's assurance  
 which decides—  
 " Whether I have not failed to taste  
 some joy.  
 " For many a dream would fain perturb  
 my choice—  
 " How love, in those the varied shapes,  
 might show  
 " As glory, or as rapture, or as grace:

" How conversancy with the books  
 that teach,  
 " The arts that help,—how, to grow  
 great, in fine,  
 " Rather than simply good, and bring  
 thereby  
 " Goodness to breathe and live, nor,  
 born i' the brain,  
 " Die there,—how these and many an-  
 other gift  
 " May well be precious though abjured  
 by me:  
 " But, for one prize, best meed of  
 mightiest man,  
 " Arch-object of ambition,—earthly  
 praise,  
 " Repute o' the world, the flourish of  
 loud trump,  
 " The softer social fluting,—Oh, for  
 these,  
 " —No, my friends! Fame,—that  
 bubble which, world-wide  
 " Each blows and bids his neighbour  
 lend a breath,  
 " That so he haply may behold thereon  
 " One more enlarged distorted false  
 fool's-face,  
 " Until some glassy nothing grown as  
 big  
 " Send by a touch the imperishable to  
 suds,—  
 " No, in renouncing fame, the loss was  
 light,  
 " Choosing obscurity, the chance was  
 well!"

Didst ever touch such ampollosity  
 As the man's own bubble, let alone its  
 spite?  
 What's his speech for, but just the fame  
 he flouts—  
 How he dares reprehend both high and  
 low?  
 Else had he turned the sentence " God  
 is true  
 " And every man a liar—save the Pope  
 " Happily reigning—my respects to  
 him!"  
 —So, rounded off the period. Molinism  
 Simple and pure! To what pitch get  
 we next?  
 I find that, for first pleasant conse-  
 quence,  
 Gomez, who had intended to appeal  
 From the absurd decision of the Court,  
 Declines, though plain enough his pri-  
 vilege,



To call on help from lawyers any more—  
Resolves the liars may possess the  
world,  
Till God have had sufficiency of both :  
So may I whistle for my job and fee !

But, for this virulent and rabid monk,—  
If law be an inadequate machine,  
And advocacy, so much impotence,  
We shall soon see, my blatant brother !  
That 's

Exactly what I hope to show your sort !  
For, by a veritable piece of luck,  
True providence, you monks round  
period with,  
All may be gloriously retrieved. Per-  
pend !

That Monastery of the Convertites  
Whereto the Court consigned Pompilia  
first,

—Observe, if convertite, why, sinner  
then,

Or where the pertinency of award ?—  
And whither she was late returned to  
die,

—Still in their jurisdiction, mark  
again !—

That thrifty Sisterhood, for perquisite,  
Claims every paul whereof may die pos-  
sessed

Each sinner in the circuit of its walls.  
Now, this Pompilia, seeing that by  
death

O' the couple, all their wealth devolved  
on her,

Straight utilised the respite ere decease  
By regular conveyance of the goods  
She thought her own, to will and to  
devise,—

Gave all to friends, Tighetti and the  
like,

In trust for him she held her son and  
heir,

Gaetano,—trust to end with infancy :  
So willing and devising, since assured  
The justice of the Court would pres-  
ently

Confirm her in her rights and excul-  
pate,

Re-integrate and rehabilitate—  
Station as, through my pleading, now  
she stands.

But here 's the capital mistake : the  
Court

Found Guido guilty,—but pronounced  
no word

About the innocency of his wife :  
I grounded charge on broader base, I  
hope !

No matter whether wife be true or  
false,

The husband must not push aside the  
law,

And punish of a sudden : that 's the  
point !

Gather from out my speech the con-  
trary !

It follows that Pompilia, unrelieved  
By formal sentence from imputed fault,  
Remains unfit to have and to dispose  
Of property, which law provides shall  
lapse :

Wherefore the Monastery claims its due.  
And whose, pray, whose the office, but  
the Fisc's ?

Who but I institute procedure next  
Against the person of dishonest life,  
Pompilia, whom last week I sainted so ?  
I, it is, teach the monk what Scripture  
means,

And that the tongue should prove a two-  
edged sword,

No axe sharp one side, blunt the other  
way.

Like what amused the town at Guido's  
cost !

*Astræa redux !* I've a second chance  
Before the self-same Court o' the Gov-  
ernor

Who soon shall see volte-face and chop,  
change sides !

Accordingly, I charge you on your life,  
Send me with all despatch the judg-  
ment late

O' the Florence Rota Court, confirma-  
tive

O' the prior judgment at Arezzo,  
clenched

Again by the Granducal signature  
Wherein Pompilia is convicted, doomed,  
And only destined to escape through  
flight

The proper punishment. Send me the  
piece,—

I'll work it ! And this foul-mouthed  
friar shall find

His Noah's-dove that brought the olive  
back,

Is turned into the other sooty scout,  
The raven, Noah first of all put forth  
the ark,

And never came back, but ane car-  
cases !

No adequate machinery in law ?  
No power of life and death i' the learned  
tongue ?

Methinks I am already at my speech,  
Startle the world with "Thou, Pom-  
pilia, thus ?

"How is the fine gold of the Temple  
dim !"

And so forth. But the courier bids me  
close,

And clip away one joke that runs  
through Rome,

Side by side with the sermon which I  
send—

How like the heartlessness of the old  
hunks

Arcangeli ! His Count is hardly cold,  
His client whom his blunders sacrificed,  
When somebody must needs describe  
the scene—

How the procession ended at the church  
That boasts the famous relic : quoth  
our brute,

"Why, that's just Martial's phrase for  
'make an end'—

"*Ad umbilicum sic perventum est !*"  
The callous dog,—let who will cut off  
head,

He cuts a joke, and cares no more than  
so !

I think my speech shall modify his  
mirth :

"How is the fine gold dim !"—but  
send the piece !

Alack, Bottini, what is my next word  
But death to all that hope ? The In-  
strument

Is plain before me, print that ends my  
Book

With the definitive verdict of the Court,  
Dated September, six months after-  
ward,

(Such trouble and so long, the old Pope  
gave !)

"In restitution of the perfect fame  
Of dead Pompilia, *quondam* Guido's  
wife,

"And warrant to her representative  
Domenico Tighetti, barred hereby,

"While doing duty in his guardianship,  
From all molesting, all disquietude,

"Each perturbation and vexation  
brought

"Or threatened to be brought against  
the heir

"By the Most Venerable Convent called

"Saint Mary Magdalen o' the Convert-  
ites

"I' the Corso."

Justice done a second time !  
Well judged, Marc Antony, *Locum-  
tenens*

O' the Governor, a Venturini too !  
For which I save thy name,—last of the  
list !

Next year but one, completing his nine  
years

Of rule in Rome, died Innocent my  
Pope

—By some accounts, on his accession-  
day.

If he thought doubt would do the next  
age good,

'T is pity he died unapprised what  
birth by—

His reign may boast of, be remembered  
Terrible Pope, too, of a kind,—Voltaire.

And so an end of all i' the story. Strain  
Never so much my eyes, I miss the  
mark

There lived or died that Gaetano, child  
Of Guido and Pompilia : only find,

Immediately upon his father's death,  
A record in the annals of the town

That Porzia, sister of our Guido, moved  
The Priors of Arezzo and their head

Its Gonfalonier to give loyally  
A public attestation to the right

O' the Franceschini to men's reverence—  
Apparently because of the incident

O' the murder,—there's no mention  
made of crime,

But what else caused such urgency to  
cure

The mob, just then, of chronic greed-  
iness

For scandal, love of lying vanity,  
And appetite to swallow crude reports

That bring annoyance to their betters ?  
—Bane

Which, here, was promptly met by  
antidote.

I like and shall translate the eloquence  
Of nearly the worst Latin ever writ :

"Since antique time whereof the mem-  
ory

"Holds the beginning, to this present  
hour,

"Our Franceschini ever shone, and  
shine,

"Still i' the primary rank, supreme  
amid



"The lustres of Arezzo, proud to own  
 "In this great family—her flag-bearer,  
 "Guide of her steps and guardian  
 against foe,—

"As in the first beginning, so to-day!"  
 There, would you disbelieve stern History,

Trust rather to the babble of a bard?  
 I thought, Arezzo, thou hadst fitter  
 souls,

Petrarch,—nay, Buonarroti at a pinch,  
 To do thee credit as *vexillifer*!  
 Was it mere mirth the Patavinian  
 meant,

Making thee out, in his veracious page,  
 Founded by Janus of the Double Face?

Well, proving of such perfect parentage,  
 Our Gaetano, born of love and hate,  
 Did the babe live or die?—one fain  
 would find!

What were his fancies if he grew a man?  
 Was he proud,—a true scion of the  
 stock,—

Of bearing blazon, shall make bright  
 my Book—

Shield, Azure, on a Triple Mountain, Or,  
 A Palm-tree, Proper, whereunto is  
 tied

A Greyhound, Rampant, striving in  
 the slips?

Or did he love his mother, the base-  
 born,

And fight i' the ranks, unnoticed by  
 the world?

Such then, the final state o' the story.  
 So

Did the Star Wormwood in a blazing  
 fall

Frighten awhile the waters and lie lost:  
 So did this old woe fade from memory,  
 Till after, in the fulness of the days,  
 I needs must find an ember yet un-  
 quenched,

And, breathing, blow the spark to  
 flame. It lives,

If precious be the soul of man to man.  
 So, British Public, who may like me yet,  
 (Marry and amen!) learn one lesson  
 hence

Of many which whatever lives should  
 teach:

This lesson, that our human speech is  
 naught,

Our human testimony false, our fame  
 And human estimation words and wind.

Why take the artistic way to prove so  
 much?

Because, it is the glory and good of Art,  
 That Art remains the one way possible  
 Of speaking truth, to mouths like  
 mine, at least.

How look a brother in the face and say  
 "Thy right is wrong, eyes hast thou  
 yet art blind,

"Thine ears are stuffed and stopped,  
 despite their length,

"And, oh, the foolishness thou count-  
 est faith!"

Say this as silverly as tongue can troll—  
 The anger of the man may be endured,  
 The shrug, the disappointed eyes of  
 him [plague

Are not so bad to bear—but here's the  
 That all this trouble comes of telling  
 truth,

Which truth, by when it reaches him,  
 looks false,

Seems to be just the thing it would sup-  
 plant,

Nor recognisable by whom it left—  
 While falsehood would have done the  
 work of truth.

But Art,—wherein man nowise speaks  
 to men, [truth

Only to mankind,—Art may tell a  
 Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the  
 thought,

Nor wrong the thought, missing the me-  
 diate word.

So may you paint your picture, twice  
 show truth,

Beyond mere imagery on the wall,—  
 So, note by note, bring music from your  
 mind,

Deeper than ever the Andante dived,—  
 So write a book shall mean, beyond the  
 facts,

Suffice the eye and save the soul be-  
 side.

And save the soul! If this intent save  
 mine,—

If the rough ore be rounded to a ring,  
 Render all duty which good ring should  
 do,

And, failing grace, succeed in guardian-  
 ship,—

Might mine but lie outside thine, Lyric  
 Love,

Thy rare gold ring of verse (the poet  
 praised)

Linking our England to his Italy!

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