

THE PEOPLE'S LIBRARY

POEMS, 1833—1865

ROBERT BROWNING

EDITORIAL NOTE

Robert Browning was the son of a banker
and poet. He was born at Camberwell
on the 7th May, 1812, and died at a very
young age. He devoted his life to a
profession, but devoted his spare time
to be a poet and writer. His
first collection of poems was published in
1833. This was not his first attempt at
poetry, but his father had given him
a volume of poems, written in 1824.
In the winter of 1833 he went to
Paris. He returned to London through
Italy, where he saw Venice for the first
time. It was then proposed that he
should print his poems in pamphlet
form. The result, a few years later,
was *Paracelsus*, in eight numbers.
One of these numbers contained
"Paracelsus," the most famous poem
of the time. His wife went to France
with him. Browning returned to England
shortly after his wife's death in 1861,
and for the two following years he
lived a life of retirement. *The Ring and the Book*,
published in 1868, added to the
reputation of his name. Although
written only by a single hand,
it was only by a single hand,
and it was not until the year
passed that he secured the attention
of the wider reading public, and
became famous. Robert Browning
died at Venice in 1889, and was
buried in the Poets' Corner, West
minster Abbey.



EDITOR'S NOTE

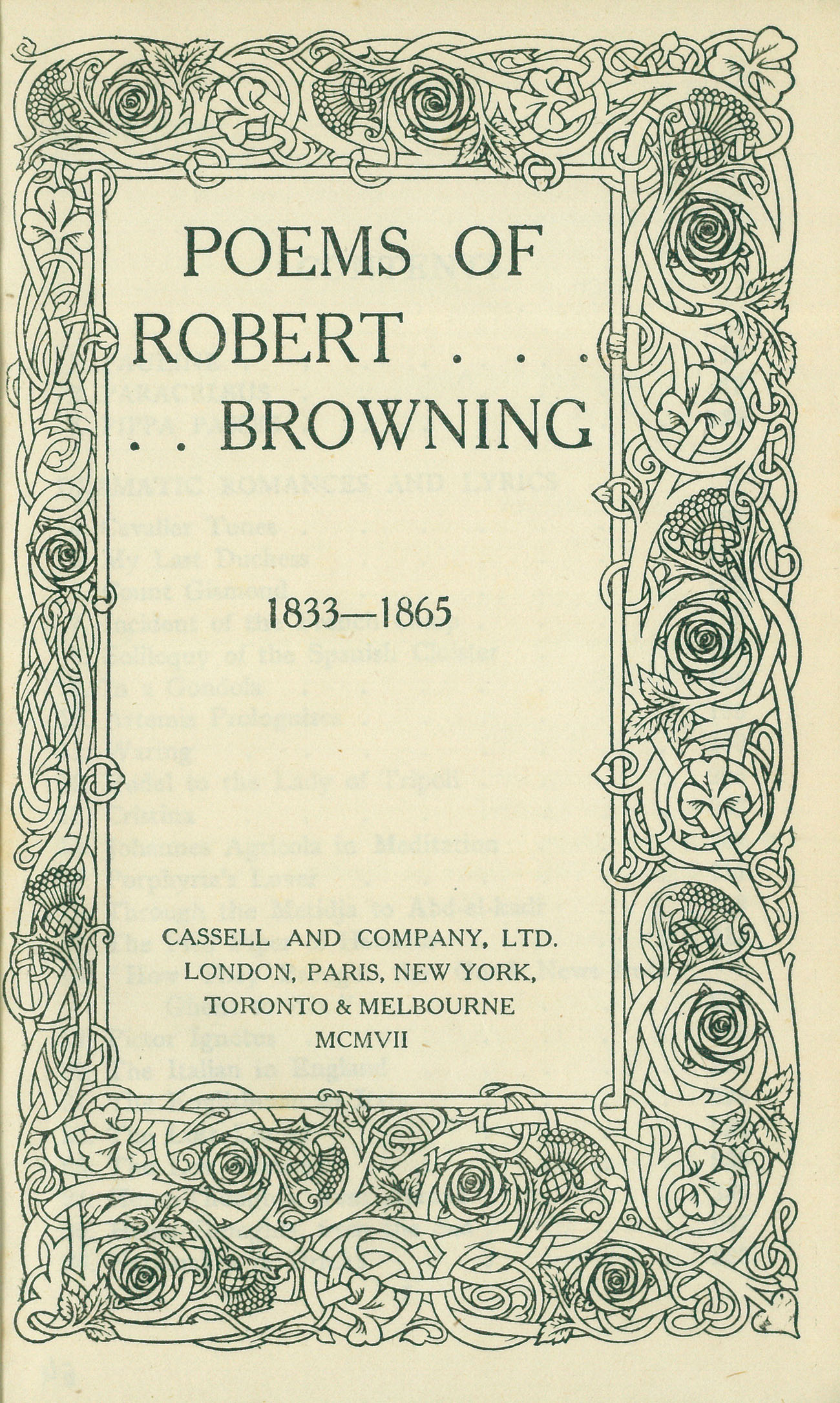
Robert Browning was the son of a Bank of England clerk. He was born at Camberwell on the 7th May, 1812, and while quite a boy began to write verse. He declined to adopt a profession, but declared from the first that he had intended to be a poet and nothing else.

His earliest publication was *Pauline*, which appeared anonymously in January, 1833. This was not his first essay in literature, for his father had printed for him privately a volume of poems, *Incondita*, in 1824.

In the winter of 1833 he went to Russia. He returned to London through Italy, where he saw Venice for the first time. It was then proposed that he should print his poems in pamphlet form. The result, a few years later, was *Bells and Pomegranates*, in eight numbers (1841-46). One of these famous pamphlets contained *Pippa Passes*.

In 1846 Browning, then practically unknown, married the most famous poetess of the time, Elizabeth Barrett. The poet and his wife went to Florence, where they made their home. Browning returned to England shortly after his wife's death in 1861, and for the two following years he lived a life of seclusion. *The Ring and the Book*, published in 1868-69, added to the increasing lustre of his name. Although praised for his previous works, it was only by a select group of admirers, and it was not until this work appeared that he secured the attention of the wider reading public, and became famous.

Robert Browning died at Venice in 1889, and was buried in the Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.



POEMS OF
ROBERT . . .
. . . BROWNING

1833—1865

CASSELL AND COMPANY, LTD.
LONDON, PARIS, NEW YORK,
TORONTO & MELBOURNE
MCMVII

POEMS OF
ROBERT
BROWNING

1833-1862

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Plus de six ans qu'il est
en cette espèce de situation.

M. de

EXTRAITS D'UNE LETTRE

Non facile, non...
allicet...
sunt...
aut...

PAULINE

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION

1833

ad...
quod...
sunt...
aut...
non...
sed...
quia...

London, January 1833
W. K. James and Son, 11, New Street, London
W. K. James and Son, 11, New Street, London
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W. K. James and Son, 11, New Street, London

Non facile...
ad...
quod...
sunt...
aut...
non...
sed...
quia...

Plus ne suis ce que j'ai été,
Et ne le sçaurois jamais être.

MAROT.

NON dubito, quin titulus libri nostri raritate suâ quamplurimos alliciat ad legendum: inter quos nonnulli obliquæ opinionis, mente languidi, multi etiam maligni, et in ingenium nostrum ingrati accedent, qui temerariâ suâ ignorantia, vix conspecto titulo clamabunt: Nos vetita docere, hæresium semina jacere: piis auribus offendiculo, præclaris ingeniis scandalo esse: . . . adeò conscientia suæ consulentes, ut nec Apollo, nec Musæ omnes, neque Angelus de cœlo me ab illorum execratione vindicare queant: quibus et ego nunc consulo, ne scripta nostra legant, nec intelligant, nec meminerint: nam noxia sunt, venenosa sunt: Acherontis ostium est in hoc libro, lapides loquitur, caveant, ne cerebrum illis excutiat. Vos autem, qui æquâ mente ad legendum venitis, si tantam prudentiæ discretionem adhibueritis, quantam in melle legendo apes, jam securi legite. Puto namque vos et utilitatis haud parùm et voluptatis plurimùm accepturos. Quod si qua repereritis, quæ vobis non placeant, mittite illa, nec utimini. NAM ET EGO VOBIS ILLA NON PROBO, SED NARRO. Cætera tamen propterea non respuite. . . . Ideo, si quid liberius dictum sit, ignoscite adolescentiæ nostræ, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui.—*H. Cor. Agrippa, De Occult. Phil.*

LONDON, *January* 1833.

V. A. XX.

PAULINE

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION

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

I had been spared this shame, if I had sate
By thee for ever, from the first, in place
Of my wild dreams of beauty and of good,
Or with them, as an earnest of their truth.
No thought nor hope, having been shut from thee,
No vague wish unexplained—no wandering aim

Sent back to bind on Fancy's wings, and seek
 Some strange fair world, where it might be a law ;
 But doubting nothing, had been led by thee,
 Thro' youth, and saved, as one at length awaked,
 Who has slept thro' a peril. Ah ! vain, vain !

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

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

Distinct from theirs—that I am sad—and fain
Would give up all to be but where I was ;
Not high as I had been, if faithful found—
But low and weak, yet full of hope, and sure
Of goodness as of life—that I would lose
All this gay mastery of mind, to sit
Once more with them, trusting in truth and love.
And with an aim—not being what I am.
Oh, Pauline ! I am ruined ! who believed
That tho' my soul had floated from its sphere
Of wide dominion into the dim orb
Of self—that it was strong and free as ever :—
It has conformed itself to that dim orb,
Reflecting all its shades and shapes, and now
Must stay where it alone can be adored.
I have felt this in dreams—in dreams in which
I seemed the fate from which I fled ; I felt
A strange delight in causing my decay ;
I was a fiend, in darkness chained for ever
Within some ocean-cave ; and ages rolled,
Till thro' the cleft rock, like a moonbeam, came
A white swan to remain with me ; and ages
Rolled, yet I tired not of my first joy
In gazing on the peace of its pure wings.
And then I said, “ It is most fair to me,
“ Yet its soft wings must sure have suffered change
“ From the thick darkness—sure its eyes are dim—
“ Its silver pinions must be cramped and numbed
“ With sleeping ages here ; it cannot leave me,
“ For it would seem, in light, beside its kind,
“ Withered—tho' here to me most beautiful.”
And then I was a young witch, whose blue eyes,
As she stood naked by the river springs,
Drew down a god—I watched his radiant form
Growing less radiant—and it gladdened me ;
Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine
Upon my knees, singing to me of heaven,
He turned to look at me, ere I could lose
The grin with which I viewed his perishing.
And he shrieked and departed, and sat long
By his deserted throne—but sunk at last,
Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and curled
Around him, “ I am still a god—to thee.”
Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall,
For all the wandering and all the weakness
Will be a saddest comment on the song.
And if, that done, I can be young again.
I will give up all gained as willingly
As one gives up a charm which shuts him out

From hope, or part, or care, in human kind.
 As life wanes, all its cares, and strife, and toil,
 Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees
 Which grew by our youth's home—the waving mass
 Of climbing plants, heavy with bloom and dew—
 The morning swallows with their songs like words,—
 All these seem clear and only worth our thoughts.
 So aught connected with my early life—
 My rude songs or my wild imaginings,
 How I look on them—most distinct amid
 The fever and the stir of after years !

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

Sun-treader—life and light be thine for ever ;
 Thou art gone from us—years go by—and spring
 Gladdens, and the young earth is beautiful,
 Yet thy songs come not—other bards arise,
 But none like thee—they stand—thy majesties,
 Like mighty works which tell some Spirit there
 Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
 Till, its long task completed, it hath risen
 And left us, never to return : and all
 Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain.
 The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,
 But thou art still for me, as thou hast been
 When I have stood with thee, as on a throne
 With all thy dim creations gathered round
 Like mountains,—and I felt of mould like them,
 And creatures of my own were mixed with them,
 Like things half-lived, catching and giving life.
 But thou art still for me, who have adored,
 Tho' single, panting but to hear thy name,
 Which I believed a spell to me alone,
 Scarce deeming thou wert as a star to men—
 As one should worship long a sacred spring
 Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long grasses cross,
 And one small tree embowers droopingly,
 Joying to see some wondering insect won,
 To live in its few rushes—or some locust

To pasture on its boughs—or some wild bird
 Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air,
 And then should find it but the fountain-head,
 Long lost, of some great river—washing towns
 And towers, and seeing old woods which will live
 But by its banks, untrod of human foot,
 Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering
 In light as some thing lieth half of life
 Before God's foot—waiting a wondrous change
 —Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or stay
 Its course in vain, for it does ever spread
 Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,
 Being the pulse of some great country—so
 Wert thou to me—and art thou to the world.
 And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret,
 That I am not what I have been to thee :
 Like a girl one has loved long silently,
 In her first loveliness, in some retreat,
 When first emerged, all gaze and glow to view
 Her fresh eyes, and soft hair, and lips which bleed
 Like a mountain berry. Doubtless it is sweet
 To see her thus adored—but there have been
 Moments, when all the world was in his praise,
 Sweeter than all the pride of after hours.
 Yet, Sun-treader, all hail !—from my heart's heart
 I bid thee hail !—e'en in my wildest dreams,
 I am proud to feel I would have thrown up all
 The wreathes of fame which seemed o'erhanging me,
 To have seen thee, for a moment, as thou art.

And if thou livest—if thou lovest, spirit !
 Remember me, who set this final seal
 To wandering thought—that one so pure as thou
 Could never die. Remember me, who flung
 All honor from my soul—yet paused and said,
 “ There is one spark of love remaining yet,
 “ For I have nought in common with him—shapes
 “ Which followed him avoid me, and foul forms
 “ Seek me, which ne'er could fasten on his mind ;
 “ And tho' I feel how low I am to him,
 “ Yet I aim not even to catch a tone
 “ Of all the harmonies which he called up,
 “ So one gleam still remains, altho' the last.”
 Remember me—who praise thee e'en with tears,
 For never more shall I walk calm with thee ;
 Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,
 A melody, some wond'rous singer sings,
 Which, though it haunt men oft in the still eve,
 They dream not to essay ; yet it no less,

But more is honored. I was thine in shame,
 And now when all thy proud renown is out,
 I am a watcher, whose eyes have grown dim
 With looking for some star—which breaks on him,
 Altered, and worn, and weak, and full of tears.

Autumn has come—like Spring returned to us,
 Won from her girlishness—like one returned
 A friend that was a lover—nor forgets
 The first warm love, but full of sober thoughts
 Of fading years ; whose soft mouth quivers yet
 With the old smile—but yet so changed and still !
 And here am I the scoffer, who have probed
 Life's vanity, won by a word again
 Into my old life—for one little word
 Of this sweet friend, who lives in loving me,
 Lives strangely on my thoughts, and looks, and words,
 As fathoms down some nameless ocean thing
 Its silent course of quietness and joy.
 O dearest, if indeed, I tell the past,
 May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream ;
 Or if it linger—my lost soul too soon
 Sinks to itself, and whispers, we shall be
 But closer linked—two creatures whom the earth
 Bears singly—with strange feelings, unrevealed
 But to each other ; or two lonely things
 Created by some Power, whose reign is done,
 Having no part in God, or his bright world,
 I am to sing ; whilst ebbing day dies soft,
 As a lean scholar dies, worn o'er his book,
 And in the heaven stars steal out one by one,
 As hunted men steal to their mountain watch.
 I must not think—lest this new impulse die
 In which I trust. I have no confidence,
 So I will sing on—fast as fancies come
 Rudely—the verse being as the mood it paints.

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

I am made up of an intensest life,
 Of a most clear idea of consciousness
 Of self—distinct from all its qualities,

From all affections, passions, feelings, powers ;
And thus far it exists, if tracked in all,
But linked in me, to self-supremacy,
Existing as a centre to all things,
Most potent to create, and rule, and call
Upon all things to minister to it ;
And to a principle of restlessness
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all—
This is myself ; and I should thus have been,
Though gifted lower than the meanest soul.

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

A mind like this must dissipate itself,
But I have always had one lode-star ; now,
As I look back, I see that I have wasted,
Or progressed as I looked toward that star—
A need, a trust, a yearning after God,
A feeling I have analysed but late,
But it existed, and was reconciled
With a neglect of all I deemed his laws,
Which yet, when seen in others, I abhorred.
I felt as one beloved, and so shut in
From fear—and thence I date my trust in signs
And omens—for I saw God every where ;
And I can only lay it to the fruit
Of a sad after-time that I could doubt
Even his being—having always felt
His presence—never acting from myself,
Still trusting in a hand that leads me through
All dangers ; and this feeling still has fought
Against my weakest reason and resolves.

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

These make myself—for I have sought in vain
To trace how they were formed by circumstance,
For I still find them—turning my wild youth

Where they alone displayed themselves, converting
All objects to their use—now see their course !

They came to me in my first dawn of life,
Which passed alone with wisest ancient books,
All halo-girt with fancies of my own,
And I myself went with the tale—a god,
Wandering after beauty—or a giant,
Standing vast in the sunset—an old hunter,
Talking with gods—or a high-crested chief,
Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos ;—
I tell you, nought has ever been so clear
As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives.
I had not seen a work of lofty art,
Nor woman's beauty, nor sweet nature's face,
Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those
On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea :
The deep groves, and white temples, and wet caves—
And nothing ever will surprise me now—
Who stood besides the naked Swift-footed,
Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.
An' strange it is, that I who could so dream,
Should e'er have stooped to aim at aught beneath—
Aught low, or painful, but I never doubted ;
So as I grew, I rudely shaped my life
To my immediate wants, yet strong beneath
Was a vague sense of power folded up—
A sense that tho' those shadowy times were past,
Their spirit dwelt in me, and I should rule.

Then came a pause, and long restraint chained down
My soul, till it was changed. I lost myself,
And were it not that I so loathe that time,
I could recall how first I learned to turn
My mind against itself ; and the effects,
In deeds for which remorse were vain, as for
The wanderings of delirious dream ; yet thence
Came cunning, envy, falsehood, which so long
Have spotted me—at length I was restored,
Yet long the influence remained ; and nought
But the still life I led, apart from all,
Which left my soul to seek its old delights,
Could e'er have brought me thus far back to peace.
As peace returned, I sought out some pursuit :
And song rose—no new impulse—but the one
With which all others best could be combined.
My life has not been that of those whose heaven
Was lampless, save where poesy shone out ;
But as a clime, where glittering mountain-tops,

And glancing sea, and forests steeped in light,
 Give back reflected the far-flashing sun ;
 For music, (which is earnest of a heaven,
 Seeing we know emotions strange by it,
 Not else to be revealed,) is as a voice,
 A low voice calling Fancy, as a friend,
 To the green woods in the gay summer time.
 And she fills all the way with dancing shapes,
 Which have made painters pale ; and they go on
 While stars look at them, and winds call to them,
 As they leave life's path for the twilight world,
 Where the dead gather. This was not at first,
 For I scarce knew what I would do. I had
 No wish to paint, no yearning—but I sang.

And first I sang, as I in dream have seen,
 Music wait on a lyrist for some thought,
 Yet singing to herself until it came.
 I turned to those old times and scenes, where all
 That's beautiful had birth for me, and made
 Rude verses on them all ; and then I paused—
 I had done nothing, so I sought to know
 What mind had yet achieved. No fear was mine
 As I gazed on the works of mighty bards,
 In the first joy at finding my own thoughts
 Recorded, and my powers exemplified,
 And feeling their aspirings were my own.
 And then I first explored passion and mind ;
 And I began afresh ; I rather sought
 To rival what I wondered at, than form
 Creations of my own ; so much was light
 Lent back by others, yet much was my own.

I paused again—a change was coming on,
 I was no more a boy—the past was breaking
 Before the coming, and like fever worked.
 I first thought on myself—and here my powers
 Burst out. I dreamed not of restraint, but gazed
 On all things : schemes and systems went and came,
 And I was proud (being vainest of the weak),
 In wandering o'er them, to seek out some one
 To be my own ; as one should wander o'er
 The white way for a star.

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

Who sent forth hopes and longings for their sake,
 Clothed in all passion's melodies, which first
 Caught me, and set me, as to a sweet task,
 To gather every breathing of his songs.
 And woven with them there were words, which seemed
 A key to a new world ; the muttering
 Of angels, of some thing unguessed by man.
 How my heart beat, as I went on, and found
 Much there ! I felt my own mind had conceived,
 But there living and burning ; soon the whole
 Of his conceptions dawned on me ; their praise
 Is in the tongues of men ; men's brows are high
 When his name means a triumph and a pride ;
 So my weak hands may well forbear to dim
 What then seemed my bright fate : I threw myself
 To meet it. I was vowed to liberty,
 Men were to be as gods, and earth as heaven.
 And I—ah ! what a life was mine to be,
 My whole soul rose to meet it. Now, Pauline,
 I shall go mad if I recall that time.

O let me look back, e'er I leave for ever
 The time, which was an hour, that one waits
 For a fair girl, that comes a withered hag.
 And I was lonely,—far from woods and fields,
 And amid dullest sights, who should be loose
 As a stag—yet I was full of joy—who lived
 With Plato—and who had the key to life.
 And I had dimly shaped my first attempt,
 And many a thought did I build up on thought,
 As the wild bee hangs cell to cell—in vain ;
 For I must still go on : my mind rests not.

'Twas in my plan to look on real life,
 Which was all new to me ; my theories
 Were firm, so I left them, to look upon
 Men, and their cares, and hopes, and fears, and joys ;
 And, as I pondered on them all, I sought
 How best life's end might be attained—an end
 Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

And suddenly, without heart-wreck, I awoke
 As from a dream—I said, 'twas beautiful,
 Yet but a dream ; and so adieu to it.
 As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow
 Strange towers, and walled gardens, thick with trees,
 Where singing goes on, and delicious mirth,
 And laughing fairy creatures peeping over,
 And on the morrow, when he comes to live

For ever by those springs, and trees, fruit-flushed
 And fairy bowers—all his search is vain.
 Well I remember . . .
 First went my hopes of perfecting mankind,
 And faith in them—then freedom in itself,
 And virtue in itself—and then my motives' ends,
 And powers and loves ; and human love went last.
 I felt this no decay, because new powers
 Rose as old feelings left—wit, mockery,
 And happiness ; for I had oft been sad,
 Mistrusting my resolves : but now I cast
 Hope joyously away—I laughed and said,
 “ No more of this ”—I must not think ; at length
 I look'd again to see how all went on.

My powers were greater—as some temple seemed
 My soul, where nought is changed, and incense rolls
 Around the altar—only God is gone,
 And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat !
 So I passed through the temple ; and to me
 Knelt troops of shadows ; and they cried, “ Hail, king !
 “ We serve thee now, and thou shalt serve no more !
 “ Call on us, prove us, let us worship thee ! ”
 And I said, “ Are ye strong—let fancy bear me
 “ Far from the past.”—And I was borne away
 As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,
 O'er deserts, towers, and forests, I being calm ;
 And I said, “ I have nursed up energies,
 “ They will prey on me.” And a band knelt low,
 And cried, “ Lord, we are here, and we will make
 “ A way for thee—in thine appointed life
 “ O look on us ! ” And I said, “ Ye will worship
 “ Me ; but my heart must worship too.” They shouted,
 “ Thyself—thou art our king ! ” So I stood there
 Smiling * * * * *

And buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit
 With which I looked out how to end my days ;
 I felt once more myself—my powers were mine ;
 I found that youth or health so lifted me,
 That, spite of all life's vanity, no grief
 Came nigh me—I must ever be light-hearted ;
 And that this feeling was the only veil
 Betwixt me and despair : so if age came,
 I should be as a wreck linked to a soul
 Yet fluttering, or mind-broken, and aware
 Of my decay. So a long summer morn
 Found me ; and e'er noon came, I had resolved
 No age should come on me, ere youth's hopes went,

For I would wear myself out—like that morn
 Which wasted not a sunbeam—every joy
 I would make mine, and die ; and thus I sought
 To chain my spirit down, which I had fed
 With thoughts of fame. I said, the troubled life
 Of genius seen so bright when working forth
 Some trusted end, seems sad, when all in vain—
 Most sad, when men have parted with all joy
 For their wild fancy's sake, which waited first,
 As an obedient spirit, when delight
 Came not with her alone, but alters soon,
 Coming darkened, seldom, hasting to depart,
 Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.

But I shall never lose her ; she will live
 Brighter for such seclusion—I but catch
 A hue, a glance of what I sing ; so pain
 Is linked with pleasure, for I ne'er may tell
 The radiant sights which dazzle me ; but now
 They shall be all my own, and let them fade
 Untold—others shall rise as fair, as fast.
 And when all's done, the few dim gleams transferred,—
 (For a new thought sprung up—that it were well
 To leave all shadowy hopes, and weave such lays
 As would encircle me with praise and love ;
 So I should not die utterly—I should bring
 One branch from the gold forest, like the night
 Of old tales, witnessing I had been there,)—
 And when all's done, how vain seems e'en success,
 And all the influence poets have o'er men !
 'Tis a fine thing that one, weak as myself,
 Should sit in his lone room, knowing the words
 He utters in his solitude shall move
 Men like a swift wind—that tho' he be forgotten,
 Fair eyes shall glisten when his beauteous dreams
 Of love come true in happier frames than his.
 Ay, the still night brought thoughts like these, but
 morn

Came, and the mockery again laughed out
 At hollow praises, and smiles, almost sneers ;
 And my soul's idol seemed to whisper me
 To dwell with him and his unhonoured name—
 And I well knew my spirit, that would be
 First in the struggle, and again would make
 All bow to it ; and I would sink again.

And then know that this curse will come on us,
 To see our idols perish—we may wither,
 Nor marvel—we are clay ; but our low fate

Should not extend them, whom trustingly
 We sent before into Time's yawning gulf,
 To face what e'er may lurk in darkness there—
 To see the painter's glory pass, and feel
 Sweet music move us not as once, or worst,
 To see decaying wits ere the frail body
 Decays. Nought makes me trust in love so really,
 As the delight of the contented lowness
 With which I gaze on souls I'd keep for ever
 In beauty—I'd be sad to equal them ;
 I'd feed their fame e'en from my heart's best blood,
 Withering unseen, that they might flourish still.

Pauline, my sweet friend, thou dost not forget
 How this mood swayed me, when thou first wert mine,
 When I had set myself to live this life,
 Defying all opinion. Ere thou camest
 I was most happy, sweet, for old delights
 Had come like birds again ; music, my life,
 I nourished more than ever, and old lore
 Loved for itself, and all it shows—the king
 Treading the purple calmly to his death,
 —While round him, like the clouds of eve, all dusk,
 The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,
 Pile the dim outline of the coming doom,
 —And him sitting alone in blood, while friends
 Are hunting far in the sunshine ; and the boy,
 With his white breast and brow and clustering curls
 Streaked with his mother's blood, and striving hard
 To tell his story ere his reason goes.
 And when I loved thee, as I've loved so oft,
 Thou lovedst me, and I wondered, and looked in
 My heart to find some feeling like such love,
 Believing I was still what I had been ;
 And soon I found all faith had gone from me,
 And the late glow of life—changing like clouds,
 'Twas not the morn-blush widening into day,
 But evening, coloured by the dying sun
 While darkness is quick hastening :—I will tell
 My state as though 'twere none of mine—despair
 Cannot come near me—thus it is with me.
 Souls alter not, and mine must progress still ;
 And this I knew not when I flung away
 My youth's chief aims. I ne'er supposed the loss
 Of what few I retained ; for no resource
 Awaits me—now behold the change of all.
 I cannot chain my soul, it will not rest
 In its clay prison ; this most narrow sphere—
 It has strange powers, and feelings, and desires,

Which I cannot account for, nor explain,
 But which I stifle not, being bound to trust
 All feelings equally—to hear all sides :
 Yet I cannot indulge them, and they live,
 Referring to some state or life unknown. . . .

My selfishness is satiated not,
 It wears me like a flame ; my hunger for
 All pleasure, howso'er minute, is pain ;
 I envy—how I envy him whose mind
 Turns with its energies to some one end !
 To elevate a sect, or a pursuit,
 However mean—so my still baffled hopes
 Seek out abstractions ; I would have but one
 Delight on earth, so it were wholly mine ;
 One rapture all my soul could fill—and this
 Wild feeling places me in dream afar,
 In some wide country, where the eye can see
 No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn
 With shining towers and dwellings. I grow mad
 Well-nigh, to know not one abode but holds
 Some pleasure—for my soul could grasp them all,
 But must remain with this vile form. I look
 With hope to age at last, which quenching much,
 May let me concentrate the sparks it spares.

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

And thus I know this earth is not my sphere,
 For I cannot so narrow me, but that
 I still exceed it ; in their elements
 My love would pass my reason—but since here
 Love must receive its object from this earth,
 While reason will be chainless, the few truths
 Caught from its wanderings have sufficed to quell
 All love below ;—then what must be that love

Which, with the object it demands, would quell
 Reason, tho' it soared with the seraphim?
 No—what I feel may pass all human love,
 Yet fall far short of what my love should be;
 And yet I seem more warped in this than aught
 For here myself stands out more hideously.
 I can forget myself in friendship, fame,
 Or liberty, or love of mighty souls.

But I begin to know what thing hate is—
 To sicken, and to quiver, and grow white,
 And I myself have furnished its first prey.
 All my sad weaknesses, this wavering will,
 This selfishness, this still decaying frame . . .
 But I must never grieve while I can pass
 Far from such thoughts—as now—Andromeda!
 And she is with me—years roll, I shall change,
 But change can touch her not—so beautiful
 With her dark eyes, earnest and still, and hair
 Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze;
 And one red-beam, all the storm leaves in heaven,
 Resting upon her eyes and face and hair,
 As she awaits the snake on the wet beach,
 By the dark rock, and the white wave just breaking
 At her feet; quite naked and alone,—a thing
 You doubt not, nor fear for, secure that God
 Will come in thunder from the stars to save her.
 Let it pass—I will call another change.
 I will be gifted with a wond'rous soul,
 Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,
 And in the wane of life; yet only so
 As to call up their fears, and there shall come
 A time requiring youth's best energies;
 And straight I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,
 And I rise triumphing over my decay.

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

There's some vile juggle with my reason here—
 I feel I but explain to my own loss
 These impulses—they live no less the same.
 Liberty! what though I despair—my blood
 Rose not at a slave's name prouder than now,
 And sympathy obscured by sophistries.

Why have not I sought refuge in myself,
But for the woes I saw and could not stay—
And love!—do I not love thee, my Pauline?

I cherish prejudice, lest I be left
Utterly loveless—witness this belief
In poets, tho' sad change has come there too;
No more I leave myself to follow them:
Unconsciously I measure me by them.
Let me forget it; and I cherish most
My love of England—how her name—a word
Of her's in a strange tongue makes my heart beat! . . .

Pauline, I could do any thing—not now—
All's fever—but when calm shall come again—
I am prepared—I have made life my own—
I would not be content with all the change
One frame should feel—but I have gone in thought
Thro' all conjuncture—I have lived all life
When it is most alive—where strangest fate
New shapes it past surmise—the tales of men
Bit by some curse—or in the grasp of doom
Half-visible and still increasing round,
Or crowning their wide being's general aim. . . .

These are wild fancies, but I feel, sweet friend,
As one breathing his weakness to the ear
Of pitying angel—dear as a winter flower;
A slight flower growing alone, and offering
Its frail cup of three leaves to the cold sun,
Yet joyous and confiding, like the triumph
Of a child—and why am I not worthy thee?

I can live all the life of plants, and gaze
Drowsily on the bees that flit and play,
Or bare my breast for sunbeams which will kill,
Or open in the night of sounds, to look
For the dim stars; I can mount with the bird,
Leaping airily his pyramid of leaves
And twisted boughs of some tall mountain tree,
Or rise cheerfully springing to the heavens—
Or like a fish breathe in the morning air
In the misty sun-warm water—or with flowers
And trees can smile in light at the sinking sun,
Just as the storm comes—as a girl would look
On a departing lover—most serene.

Pauline, come with me—see how I could build
A home for us, out of the world ; in thought—
I am inspired—come with me, Pauline !

Night, and one single ridge of narrow path
Between the sullen river and the woods
Waving and muttering—for the moonless night
Has shaped them into images of life,
Like the upraising of the giant-ghosts,
Looking on earth to know how their sons fare.
Thou art so close by me, the roughest swell
Of wind in the tree-tops hides not the panting
Of thy soft breasts ; no—we will pass to morning—
Morning—the rocks, and vallies, and old woods.
How the sun brightens in the mist, and here,—
Half in the air, like creatures of the place,
Trusting the element—living on high boughs
That swing in the wind—look at the golden spray,
Flung from the foam-sheet of the cataract,
Amid the broken rocks—shall we stay here
With the wild hawks ?—no, ere the hot noon come
Dive we down—safe ;—see this our new retreat
Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs,
Dark, tangled, old and green—still sloping down
To a small pool whose waters lie asleep
Amid the trailing boughs turned water plants
And tall trees over-arch to keep us in,
Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts,
And in the dreamy water one small group
Of two or three strange trees are got together,
Wondering at all around—as strange beasts herd
Together far from their own land—all wildness—
No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants pave all,
And tongues of bank go shelving in the waters,
Where the pale-throated snake reclines his head,
And old grey stones lie making eddies there ;
The wild mice cross them dry-shod—deeper in—
Shut thy soft eyes—now look—still deeper in :
This is the very heart of the woods—all round,
Mountain-like, heaped above us ; yet even here
One pond of water gleams—far off the river
Sweeps like a sea, barred out from land ; but one—
One thin clear sheet has over-leaped and wound
Into this silent depth, which gained, it lies
Still, as but let by sufferance ; the trees bend
O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl,
And thro' their roots long creeping plants stretch out
Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling ; farther on,
Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have combined

To narrow it ; so, at length, a silver thread
 It winds, all noiselessly, thro' the deep wood,
 Till thro' a cleft way, thro' the moss and stone,
 It joins its parent-river with a shout.
 Up for the glowing day—leave the old woods :
 See, they part, like a ruined arch, the sky !
 Nothing but sky appears, so close the root
 And grass of the hill-top level with the air—
 Blue sunny air, where a great cloud floats, laden
 With light, like a dead whale that white birds pick,
 Floating away in the sun in some north sea.
 Air, air—fresh life-blood—thin and searching air—
 The clear, dear breath of God, that loveth us :
 Where small birds reel and winds take their delight.
 Water is beautiful, but not like air.
 See, where the solid azure waters lie,
 Made as of thickened air, and down below,
 The fern-ranks, like a forest spread themselves,
 As tho' each pore could feel the element ;
 Where the quick glancing serpent winds his way—
 Float with me there, Pauline, but not like air.
 Down the hill—stop—a clump of trees, see, set
 On a heap of rocks, which look o'er the far plains,
 And envious climbing shrubs would mount to rest,
 And peer from their spread boughs. There they wave,
 looking

At the muleteers, who whistle as they go
 To the merry chime of the morning bells, and all
 The little smoking cots, and fields, and banks,
 And copses, bright in the sun ; my spirit wanders.
 Hedge-rows for me—still, living, hedge-rows, where
 The bushes close, and clasp above, and keep
 Thought in—I am concentrated—I feel ;—
 But my soul saddens when it looks beyond ;
 I cannot be immortal, nor taste all.
 O God ! where does this tend—these struggling aims ! *

* Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne soit pas toujours parfaitement compris dans ce qui reste à lire de cet étrange fragment—mais il est moins propre que tout autre à éclaircir ce qui de sa nature ne peut jamais être que songe et confusion. D'ailleurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant à mieux co-ordonner certaines parties l'on ne courrait pas le risque de nuire au seul mérite auquel une production si singulière peut prétendre—celui de donner une idée assez précise du genre qu'elle n'a fait que ébaucher.—Ce début sans prétention, ce remuement des passions qui va d'abord en accroissant et puis s'appaise par degrés, ces élans de l'ame, ce retour soudain sur soi-même.—Et par dessus tout, la tournure d'esprit toute particulière de mon ami rendent les changemens presque impossibles. Les raisons qu'il fait valoir ailleurs, et d'autres encore plus puissantes,

What would I have ? what is this "sleep," which seems
 To bound all ? can there be a "waking" point
 Of crowning life ? The soul would never rule—
 It would be first in all things—it would have
 Its utmost pleasure filled,—but that complete
 Commanding for commanding sickens it.
 The last point that I can trace is, rest beneath
 Some better essence than itself—in weakness ;
 This is "myself"—not what I think should be,
 And what is that I hunger for but God ?
 My God, my God ! let me for once look on thee
 As tho' nought else existed : we alone.
 And as creation crumbles, my soul's spark
 Expands till I can say, "Even from myself
 "I need thee, and I feel thee, and I love thee ;
 "I do not plead my rapture in thy works
 "For love of thee—or that I feel as one
 "Who cannot die—but there is that in me
 "Which turns to thee, which loves, or which should
 love."

Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress ?
 Why have I laboured to put out my life ?
 Is it not in my nature to adore,
 And e'en for all my reason do I not
 Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him ?—*Now.*
 Can I forego the trust that he loves me ?
 Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . .
 O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed,
 I have denied thee calmly—do I not
 Pant when I read of thy consummate deeds,
 And burn to see thy calm, pure truths out-flash

ont fait trouver grâce à mes yeux pour cet écrit qu'autrement je
 lui eusse conseillé de jeter au feu—Je n'en crois pas moins au grand
 principe de toute composition—à ce principe de Shakespeare, de
 Raffaele, de Beethoven, d'où il suit que la concentration des idées
 est dûe bien plus à leur conception, qu'à leur mise en execution . . .
 j'ai tout lieu de craindre que la première de ces qualités ne soit encore
 étrangère à mon ami—et je doute fort qu'un redoublement de
 travail lui fasse acquérir la seconde. Le mieux serait de brûler ceci ;
 mais que faire ?

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

PAULINE.

The brightest gleams of earth's philosophy?
Do I not shake to hear aught question thee? . . .

If I am erring save me, madden me,
Take from me powers, and pleasures—let me die
Ages, so I see thee: I am knit round
As with a charm, by sin and lust and pride,
Yet tho' my wandering dreams have seen all shapes
Of strange delight, oft have I stood by thee—
Have I been keeping lonely watch with thee,
In the damp night by weeping Olivet,
Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less—
Or dying with thee on the lonely cross—
Or witnessing thy bursting from the tomb!

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

And now, my Pauline, I am thine for ever!
I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up
Deserting me: and old shades gathering on;
Yet while its last light waits, I would say much,
And chiefly, I am glad that I have said
That love which I have ever felt for thee,
But seldom told; our hearts so beat together,
That speech is mockery, but when dark hours come;
And I feel sad; and thou, sweet, deem'st it strange;
A sorrow moves me, thou canst not remove.
Look on this lay I dedicate to thee,
Which thro' thee I began, and which I end,
Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell
That I am thine, and more than ever now—
That I am sinking fast—yet tho' I sink,
No less I feel that thou hast brought me bliss,
And that I still may hope to win it back.
Thou know'st, dear friend, I could not think all calm,
For wild dreams followed me, and bore me off,
And all was indistinct. Ere one was caught
Another glanced: so dazzled by my wealth,
Knowing not which to leave nor which to choose,
For all my thoughts so floated, nought was fixed—
And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
Who shadowed out the stages of all life,
And so thou badest me tell this my first stage;—
'Tis done: and even now I feel all dim the shift
Of thought. These are my last thoughts; I discern

Faintly immortal life, and truth, and good.
 And why thou must be mine is, that e'en now,
 In the dim hush of night—that I have done—
 With fears and sad forebodings: I look thro'
 And say, "E'en at the last I have her still,
 "With her delicious eyes as clear as heaven,
 "When rain in a quick shower has beat down mist,
 "And clouds float white in the sun like broods of swans."
 How the blood lies upon her cheek, all spread
 As thinned by kisses; only in her lips
 It wells and pulses like a living thing,
 And her neck looks, like marble misted o'er
 With love-breath, a dear thing to kiss and love,
 Standing beneath me—looking out to me,
 As I might kill her and be loved for it.

Love me—love me, Pauline, love nought but me;
 Leave me not. All these words are wild and weak,
 Believe them not, Pauline. I stooped so low
 But to behold thee purer by my side,
 To show thou art my breath—my life—a last
 Resource—an extreme want: never believe
 Aught better could so look to thee, nor seek
 Again the world of good thoughts left for me.
 There were bright troops of undiscovered suns.
 Each equal in their radiant course. There were
 Clusters of far fair isles, which ocean kept
 For his own joy, and his waves broke on them
 Without a choice. And there was a dim crowd
 Of visions, each a part of the dim whole.
 And a star left his peers and came with peace
 Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for him.
 And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship,
 And the crew wandered in its bowers, and plucked
 Its fruits, and gave up all their hopes for home.
 And one dream came to a pale poet's sleep,
 And he said, "I am singled out by God,
 "No sin must touch me." I am very weak,
 But what I would express is,—Leave me not,
 Still sit by me—with beating breast, and hair
 Loosened—watching earnest by my side,
 Turning my books, or kissing me when I
 Look up—like summer wind. Be still to me
 A key to music's mystery, when mind fails,
 A reason, a solution and a clue.
 You see I have thrown off my prescribed rules:
 I hope in myself—and hope, and pant, and love—
 You'll find me better—know me more than when

You loved me as I was. Smile not ; I have
 Much yet to gladden you—to dawn on you.

No more of the past—I'll look within no more—
 I have too trusted to my own wild wants—
 Too trusted to myself—to intuition.
 Draining the wine alone in the still night,
 And seeing how—as gathering films arose,
 As by an inspiration life seemed bare
 And grinning in its vanity, and ends
 Hard to be dreamed of, stared at me as fixed,
 And others suddenly became all foul,
 As a fair witch turned an old hag at night.
 No more of this—we will go hand in hand,
 I will go with thee, even as a child,
 Looking no further than thy sweet commands.
 And thou hast chosen where this life shall be—
 The land which gave me thee shall be our home,
 Where nature lies all wild amid her lakes
 And snow-swathed mountains, and vast pines all girt
 With ropes of snow—where nature lies all bare,
 Suffering none to view her but a race
 Most stunted and deformed—like the mute dwarfs
 Which wait upon a naked Indian queen.
 And there (the time being when the heavens are thick
 With storms) I'll sit with thee while thou dost sing
 Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird
 Who crieth as he flies for perfect joy,
 Or telling me old stories of dead knights.
 Or I will read old lays to thee—how she,
 The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave
 With power to love, and to be loved, and live.
 Or we will go together, like twin gods
 Of the infernal world, with scented lamp
 Over the dead—to call and to awake—
 Over the unshaped images which lie
 Within my mind's cave—only leaving all
 That tells of the past doubts. So when spring comes,
 And sunshine comes again like an old smile,
 And the fresh waters, and awakened birds,
 And budding woods await us—I shall be
 Prepared, and we will go and think again,
 And all old loves shall come to us—but changed
 As some sweet thought which harsh words veiled before ;
 Feeling God loves us, and that all that errs,
 Is a strange dream which death will dissipate ;
 And then when I am firm we'll seek again
 My own land, and again I will approach

My old designs, and calmly look on all
 The works of my past weakness, as one views
 Some scene where danger met him long before.
 Ah ! that such pleasant life should be but dreamed !

But whate'er come of it—and tho' it fade,
 And tho' ere the cold morning all be gone
 As it will be ;—tho' music wait for me,
 And fair eyes and bright wine, laughing like sin,
 Which steals back softly on a soul half saved ;
 And I be first to deny all, and despise
 This verse, and these intents which seem so fair :
 Still this is all my own, this moment's pride,
 No less I make an end in perfect joy.
 E'en in my brightest time, a lurking fear
 Possessed me. I well knew my weak resolves,
 I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep
 Over its treasures—as one half afraid
 To make his riches definite—but now
 These feelings shall not utterly be lost,
 I shall not know again that nameless care,
 Lest leaving all undone in youth, some new
 And undreamed end reveal itself too late :
 For this song shall remain to tell for ever,
 That when I lost all hope of such a change,
 Suddenly Beauty rose on me again.
 No less I make an end in perfect joy,
 For I, having thus again been visited,
 Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits,
 And tho' this weak soul sink, and darkness come,
 Some little word shall light it up again,
 And I shall see all clearer and love better ;
 I shall again go o'er the tracts of thought,
 As one who has a right ; and I shall live
 With poets—calmer—purer still each time,
 And beauteous shapes will come to me again,
 And unknown secrets will be trusted me,
 Which were not mine when wavering—but now
 I shall be priest and lover, as of old.

Sun-treader, I believe in God, and truth,
 And love ; and as one just escaped from death
 Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel
 He lives indeed—so, I would lean on thee ;
 Thou must be ever with me—most in gloom
 When such shall come—but chiefly when I die,
 For I seem dying, as one going in the dark

To fight a giant—and live thou for ever,
 And be to all what thou hast been to me—
 All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts of me,
 Know my last state is happy—free from doubt,
 Or touch of fear. Love me and wish me well!

RICHMOND,
 October 22, 1832.

PARACELSUS

PERSONS

AMÉDÉE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR
FESTUS and MICHAËL, his friends
of MONTPELLIER

PARACELSUS

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

1835

R. B. J.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAËL

LONDON: Black & White, 1835.

Paracelsus. Come close to me, dear friends; all closer:
this!

Close to the heart which, though long time roll by
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,
As now it beats—perchance a long, long time—
At least henceforth your memories shall make
Quiet and fragrant as hearts their home.
Nor shall my memory want a home in yours—
Alas, that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there!
For if you would remember me aught—
As I was born to be—you must forget
All fitted, strange, and crooked waywardness
Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell
Only on moments such as those, dear friends I
—My heart no truer; but my words and ways
More true to it: as Michaël, some months hence,
Will say, "this autumn was a pleasant time,"
For some few sunny days I had overlooked
Its bleak wind, hawking after pining leaves.
Autumn would fain be sunny—I would look
Like my nature's truth; and both are true,
And both beloved for all their frailty!

To fight a giant—and live then for ever,
 And be to all what thou hast been to me—
 All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts of me,
 Know my last state is happy—free from doubt,
 Or touch of fear. Love me and wish me well!

Richmond,
 October 21, 1832.

INSCRIBED TO

AMÉDÉE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

R. B.

LONDON: *March* 15, 1835.

PARACELSUS

PERSONS

AUREOLUS PARACELSUS
FESTUS and MICHAL, his friends
APRILE, an Italian Poet

I.—PARACELSUS ASPIRES

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

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL

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

Close to the heart which, though long time roll by
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,
As now it beats—perchance a long, long time—
At least henceforth your memories shall make
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.
Nor shall my memory want a home in yours—
Alas, that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there !
For if you would remember me aright—
As I was born to be—you must forget
All fitful, strange, and moody waywardness
Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell
Only on moments such as these, dear friends !
—My heart no truer, but my words and ways
More true to it : as Michal, some months hence,
Will say, “ this autumn was a pleasant time,”
For some few sunny days ; and overlook
Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.
Autumn would fain be sunny—I would look
Liker my nature's truth ; and both are frail,
And both beloved for all their frailty !

Michal.

Aureole !

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

Not so ! I am content—more than content—
Nay, Autumn wins you best by this its mute
Appeal to sympathy for its decay !
Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less
Your stained and drooping vines their grapes bow down,
Nor blame those creaking trees bent with their fruit,
That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among !
Then for the winds—what wind that ever raved
Shall vex that ash that overlooks you both,
So proud it wears its berries ? Ah ! at length,
The old smile meet for her, the lady of this
Sequestered nest ! This kingdom, limited
Alone by one old populous green wall,
Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
Grey crickets, and shy lizards, and quick spiders,
Each family of the silver-threaded moss—
Which, look through, near, this way, and it appears
A stubble-field, or a cane-brake—a marsh
Of bulrush whitening in the sun : laugh now !
Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
Looking out, wondering at the world—or best,
Yon painted snail, with his gay shell of dew,
Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps !

Michal. In truth we have lived carelessly and well !

Paracelsus. And shall, my perfect pair—each, trust
me, born
For the other ; nay, your very hair, when mixed,
Is of one hue. For where save in this nook
Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
And wish me prosperous fortune ? Stay ! . . . Whene'er
That plant shall wave its tangles lightly and softly,
As a queen's languid and imperial arm
Which scatters crowns among her lovers, you
Shall be reminded to predict to me
Some great success ! Ah, see ! the sun sinks broad
Behind St. Saviour's : wholly gone, at last !

Festus. Now, Aureole, stay those wandering eyes
awhile !
You are ours to-night at least ; and while you spoke
Of Michal and her tears, the thought came back
That none could leave what he so seemed to love :
But that last look destroys my dream—that look !
As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star !
How far was Würzburg, with its church and spire,

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

Paracelsus. I but spoke
And looked alike from simple joy, to see
The beings I love best, shut in so well
From all rude chances like to be my lot,
That, when afar, my weary spirit,—disposed
To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts
Of them, their pleasant features, looks, and words,—
Need never hesitate, nor apprehend
Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,
Nor have recourse to Fancy's busy aid
To fashion even a wish in their behalf
Beyond what they possess already here ;
But, unobstructed, may at once forget
Itself in them, assured how well they are.
Beside, this Festus knows, he thinks me one
Whom quiet and its charms attract in vain,
One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,
Too fill'd with airy hopes to make account
Of soft delights which free hearts garner up :
Whereas, behold how much our sense of all
That's beauteous proves alike ! When Festus learns
That every common pleasure of the world
Affects me as himself ; that I have just
As varied appetites for joy derived
From common things ; a stake in life, in short,
Like his ; a stake which rash pursuit of aims
That life affords not, would as soon destroy ;—
He may convince himself, that, this in view,
I shall act well advised : and last, because,
Though heaven and earth, and all things, were at stake,
Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting eve !

Festus. True : and the even is deepening, and we sit
As little anxious to begin our talk
As though to-morrow I could open it
As we paced arm in arm the cheerful town
At sun-dawn ; and continue it by fits
(Old Tritheim busied with his class the while)
In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer
Half frightened by the awful tomes around ;
And here at home unbosom all the rest
From even-blush to midnight ; but, to-morrow !
Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind ?
We two were brothers, and henceforth the world
Will rise between us :—all my freest mind ?
'Tis the last night, dear Aureole !

Paracelsus. Oh, say on !
Devise some test of love—some arduous feat

To be performed for you—say on! If night
Be spent the while, the better! Recall how oft
My wondrous plans, and dreams, and hopes, and
fears,

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

Festus. In truth? 'Tis for my proper peace, indeed,
Rather than yours; for vain all projects seem
To stay your course: I said my latest hope
Is fading even now. A story tells
Of some far embassy despatched to buy
The favour of an eastern king, and how
The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust
Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime:
Just so, the value of repose and love,
I meant should tempt you, better far than I
You seem to comprehend—and yet desist
No whit from projects where repose nor love
Have part.

Paracelsus. Once more? Alas! as I forbode!

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

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

That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
Reject God's great commission—and so die!
You bid me listen for your true love's sake:
Yet how has grown that love? Even in a long
And patient cherishing of the selfsame spirit
It now would quell; as though a mother hoped
To stay the lusty manhood of the child
Once weak upon her knees. I was not born
Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank
From aught which marked me out apart from men:
I would have lived their life, and died their death,
Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny:
But you first guided me through doubt and fear,
Taught me to know mankind and know myself;
And now that I am strong and full of hope,
That, from my soul, I can reject all aims
Save those your earnest words made plain to me;
Now, that I touch the brink of my design,
When I would have a triumph in their eyes,

A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,
And Festus ponders gravely!

Festus. When you deign
To hear my purpose . . .

Paracelsus. Hear it? I can say
Beforehand all this evening's conference!
'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses: first,
Or he declares, or I, the leading points
Of our best scheme of life, what is man's end,
And what God's will—no two faiths e'er agreed
As his with mine: next, each of us allows
Faith should be acted on as best we may:
Accordingly, I venture to submit
A plan, in lack of better, for pursuing
The path which God's will seems to authorize:
Well—he discerns much good in it, avows
This motive worthy, that hope plausible,
A danger here, to be avoided—there,
An oversight to be repaired: at last
Our two minds go together—all the good
Approved by him, I gladly recognize;
All he counts bad, I thankfully discard;
And nought forbids my looking up at last
For some stray comfort in his cautious brow—
When, lo! I learn that, spite of all, there lurks
Some innate and inexplicable germ
Of failure in my schemes; so that at last
It all amounts to this—the sovereign proof
That we devote ourselves to God, is seen
In living just as though there were no God:
A life which, prompted by the sad and blind
Lusts of the world, Festus abhors the most—
But which these tenets sanctify at once;
Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,
Consider it how they may.

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

Paracelsus. Reject those glorious visions of God's love
And man's design; laugh loud that God should send
Vast longings to direct us; say how soon
Power satiates these, or lust, or gold; I know
The world's cry well, and how to answer it!
But this ambiguous warfare . . .

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

Ill understood—begot rash trust in you,
And shared in your undoing.

Paracelsus. Choose your side :
Hold or renounce : but meanwhile blame me not
Because I dare to act on your own views,
Nor shrink when they point onward, nor espy
A peril where they most ensure success.

Festus. Prove that to me—but that! Prove you abide
Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast
God's labour laid on you ; prove, all you covet
A mortal may expect ; and, most of all,
Prove the strange course you now affect, will lead
To its attainment—and I bid you speed,
Nay, count the minutes till you venture forth !
You smile ; but I had gathered from slow thought—
Much musing on the fortunes of my friend—
Matter I deemed could not be urged in vain :
But it all leaves me at my need : in shreds
And fragments I must venture what remains.

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

Festus. Stay, Michal : Aureole, I speak guardedly
And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your error,
This is no ill-considered choice of yours—
No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.
Not from your own confiding words alone
Am I aware your passionate heart long since
Gave birth to, nourished, and at length matures
This scheme. I will not speak of Einsiedeln,
Where I was born your elder by some years
Only to watch you fully from the first :
In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed
Even then—'twas mine to have you in my view
As you had your own soul and those intents
Which filled it when, to crown your dearest wish,
With a tumultuous heart, you left with me
Our childhood's home to join the favoured few
Whom, here at Würzburg, Tritheim deigns to teach
A portion of his lore : and not the best
Of those so favoured, whom you now despise,
Came earnest as you came ; resolved, like you,
To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve
By patient toil a wide renown like his.
And this new ardour which supplants the old,
I watched, too ; 'twas significant and strange,
In one matched to his soul's content at length
With rivals in the search for Wisdom's prize,
To see the sudden pause, the total change ;
From contest, the transition to repose—

From pressing onward as his fellows pressed,
 To a blank idleness ; yet most unlike
 The dull stagnation of a soul, content,
 Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.
 That careless bearing, free from all pretence
 Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek—
 Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving
 What it professed to praise—though not so well
 Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce as brief,
 Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly curbed—
 That ostentatious show of past defeat,
 That ready acquiescence in contempt,
 I deemed no other than the letting go
 His shivered sword, of one about to spring
 Upon this foe's throat ; but it was not thus :
 Not that way looked your brooding purpose then.
 For after-signs disclosed, what you confirmed,
 That you prepared to task to the uttermost
 Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim,
 Which—while it bore the name your rivals gave
 Their own most puny efforts—was so vast
 In scope that it included their best flights,
 Combined them, and desired to gain one prize
 In place of many,—the secret of the world,
 Of man, and man's true purpose, path, and fate :
 —That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream
 This purpose, with the sages of the Past,
 Have struck upon a way to this, if all
 You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,
 You, if a man may, dare aspire to know :
 And that this aim shall differ from a host
 Of aims alike in character and kind,
 Mostly in this,—to seek its own reward
 In itself only, not an alien end
 To blend therewith ; no hope, nor fear, nor joy,
 Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure
 Devotion to sustain you or betray :
 Thus you aspire.

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

Festus. Such the aim, then,
 God sets before you ; and 'tis doubtless need
 That he appoint no less the way of praise

Than the desire to praise ; for, though I hold
 With you, the setting forth such praise to be
 The natural end and service of a man,
 And think such praise is best attained when man
 Attains the general welfare of his kind—
 Yet, this, the end, is not the instrument.
 Presume not to serve God apart from such
 Appointed channel as He wills shall gather
 Imperfect tributes—for that sole obedience
 Valued, perchance. He seeks not that his altars
 Blaze—careless how, so that they do but blaze.
 Suppose this, then ; that God selected you
 To know (heed well your answers, for my faith
 Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)
 I cannot think you dare annex to such
 Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,
 An intense hope, nor let your gifts create
 Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
 Conducive to success—make destiny
 Dispense with man's endeavour. Now dare you search
 Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
 Whether you have not rather wild desire
 For this distinction, than security
 Of its existence ; whether you discern
 The path to the fulfilment of your purpose
 Clear as that purpose—and again, that purpose
 Clear as your yearning to be singled out
 For its pursuer. Dare you answer this ?

Paracelsus. (After a pause.) No, I have nought to fear !

Who will may know
 The secret'st workings of my soul. What though
 It be so ?—if indeed the strong desire
 Eclipse the aim in me ?—if splendour break
 Upon the outset of my path alone,
 And duskest shade succeed ? What fairer seal
 Shall I require to my authentic mission
 Than this fierce energy—this instinct striving
 Because its nature is to strive ?—enticed
 By the security of no broad course,
 With no success forever in its eyes !
 How know I else such glorious fate my own,
 But in the restless irresistible force
 That works within me ? Is it for human will
 To institute such impulses ?—still less,
 To disregard their promptings ? What should I
 Do, kept among you all ; your loves, your cares,
 Your life—all to be mine ? Be sure that God
 Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart !
 Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once

Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
 What full-grown power informs her from the first,
 Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
 The silent boundless regions of the sky!
 Be sure they sleep not whom God needs! Nor fear
 Their holding light his charge, when every hour
 That finds that charge delayed, is a new death.
 This for the faith in which I trust; and hence
 I can abjure so well the idle arts
 These pedants strive to learn and teach; Black Arts,
 Great Works, the Secret and Sublime, forsooth—
 Let others prize: too intimate a tie
 Connects me with our God! A sullen fiend
 To do my bidding, fallen and hateful sprites
 To help me—what are these, at best, beside
 God helping, God directing everywhere,
 So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,
 And every object shall be charged to strike,
 Teach, gratify, her master God appoints?
 And I am young, my Festus, happy and free!
 I can devote myself; I have a life
 To give; I, singled out for this, the One!
 Think, think; the wide east, where old Wisdom sprung;
 The bright south, where she dwelt; the hopeful north,
 All are passed o'er—it lights on me! 'Tis time
 New hopes should animate the world, new light
 Should dawn from new revealings to a race
 Weighed down so long, forgotten so long; so shall
 The heaven reserved for us, at last receive
 Creatures whom no unwonted splendours blind,
 But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze
 Whose beams not seldom blest their pilgrimage,
 Not seldom glorified their life below.

Festus. My words have their old fate and make faint stand
 Against your glowing periods. Call this, truth—
 Why not pursue it in a fast retreat,
 Some one of Learning's many palaces,
 After approved example; seeking there
 Calm converse with the great dead, soul to soul,
 Who laid up treasure with the like intent?
 —So lift yourself into their airy place,
 And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,
 Unravelling the knots their baffled skill
 Pronounced inextricable, true!—but left
 Far less confused? A fresh eye, a fresh hand,
 Might do much at their vigour's waning-point;
 Succeeding with new-breathed and earnest force,
 As at old games a runner snatched the torch
 From runner still: this way success might be.

But you have coupled with your enterprise,
 An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
 Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.
 What books are in the desert? writes the sea
 The secret of her yearning in vast caves
 Where yours will fall the first of human feet?
 Has Wisdom sate there and recorded aught
 You press to read? Why turn aside from her
 To visit, where her vesture never glanced,
 Now—solitudes consigned to barrenness
 By God's decree, which who shall dare impugn?
 Now—ruins where she paused but would not stay.
 Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,
 She called an endless curse on, so it came—
 Or, worst of all, now—men you visit, men,
 Ignoblest troops that never heard her voice,
 Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome
 Or Athens,—these shall Aureole's teachers be!
 Rejecting past example, practice, precept,
 Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand alone:
 Thick like a glory round the Stagyrite
 Your rivals throng, the sages: here stand you!
 Whate'er you may protest, knowledge is not
 Paramount in your love; or for her sake
 You would collect all help from every source—
 Rival or helper, friend, foe, all would merge
 In the broad class of those who showed her haunts,
 And those who showed them not.

Paracelsus. What shall I say?
 Festus, from childhood I have been possessed
 By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or fierce,
 As from without some master, so it seemed,
 Repressed or urged its current: this but ill
 Expresses what I would convey—but rather
 I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
 Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature,
 So became manifest. I knew not then
 What whispered in the evening, and spoke out
 At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,
 Were laid away in some great trance—the ages
 Coming and going all the while—till dawned
 His true time's advent, and could then record
 The words they spoke who kept watch by his bed,—
 Then I might tell more of the breath so light
 Upon my eyelids, and the fingers warm
 Among my hair. Youth is confused; yet never
 So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,
 I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns
 A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.

And having this within me and about me
 While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes, and woods
 Confined me—what oppressive joy was mine
 When life grew plain, and I first viewed the thronged,
 The ever-moving concourse of mankind !
 Believe that ere I joined them—ere I knew
 The purpose of the pageant, or the place
 Consigned to me within its ranks—while yet
 Wonder was freshest and delight most pure—
 'Twas then that least supportable appeared
 A station with the brightest of the crowd,
 A portion with the proudest of them all !
 And from the tumult in my breast, this only
 Could I collect—that I must thenceforth die,
 Or elevate myself far, far above
 The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long
 At once to trample on—yet save mankind—
 To make some unexampled sacrifice
 In their behalf—to wring some wondrous good
 From heaven or earth for them—to perish, winning
 Eternal weal in the act : as who should dare
 Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,
 That, all its gathered flame discharged on him,
 No storm might threaten summer's azure sleep :
 Yet never to be mixed with men so much
 As to have part even in my own work—share
 In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,
 I would withdraw from their officious praise,
 Would gently put aside their profuse thanks :
 Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
 Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe
 Of desert-people from their dragon-foe ;
 When all the swarthy race press round to kiss
 His feet, and choose him for their king, and yield
 Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-hills, for
 His realm ; and he points, smiling, to his scarf,
 Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet,
 Gay set with twinkling stones—and to the east,
 Where these must be displayed !

Festus. Good : let us hear
 No more about your nature, " which first shrank
 " From all that marked you out apart from men ! "

Paracelsus. I touch on that : these words but analyse
 That first mad impulse—'twas as brief as fond ;
 For as I gazed again upon the show,
 I soon distinguished here and there a shape
 Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and full eye.
 Well pleased was I their state should thus at once
 Interpret my own thoughts :—" Behold the clue

"To all," I rashly said, "and what I pine
 "To do, these have accomplished: we are peers!
 "They know, and therefore rule: I, too, will know!"
 You were beside me, Festus, as you say;
 You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom Fame
 Is lavish to attest the lords of mind;
 Not pausing to make sure the prize in view
 Would satiate my cravings when obtained—
 But since they strove I strove. Then came a slow
 And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
 Yet not the meanest plodder Tritheim schools
 But faced me, all-sufficient, all-content,
 Or staggered only at his own strong wits;
 While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
 Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slur over
 That struggle; suffice it, that I loathed myself
 As weak compared with them, yet felt somehow
 A mighty power was brooding, taking shape
 Within me: and this lasted till one night—
 When, as I sate revolving it and more,
 A still voice from without said—"See'st thou not,
 "Desponding child, whence came defeat and loss?
 "Even from thy strength. Consider: hast thou gazed
 "Presumptuously on Wisdom's countenance,
 "No veil between; and can thy hands which falter
 "Unguided by thy brain the mighty sight
 "Continues to absorb, pursue their task
 "On earth like these around thee—what their sense
 "Which radiance ne'er distracted, clear descries?
 "If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose their life,
 "Unfed by splendour. Let each task present
 "Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts
 "In profitless waiting for the gods' descent,
 "But have some idol of thine own to dress
 "With their array. Know, not for knowing's sake,
 "But to become a star to men for ever.
 "Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,
 "The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds.
 "Look one step onward, and secure that step."
 And I smiled as one never smiles but once;
 Then first discovering my own aim's extent,
 Which sought to comprehend the works of God,
 And God himself, and all God's intercourse
 With the human mind; I understood, no less,
 My fellow's studies, whose true worth I saw,
 But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.
 And softer came the voice—"There is a way—
 "'Tis hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued
 "With frailty—hopeless, if indulgence first

" Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength :
 " Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man's,
 " Apart from all reward ? " And last it breathed—
 " Be happy, my good soldier ; I am by thee,
 " Be sure, even to the end ! "—I answered not,
 Knowing Him. As He spoke, I was endued
 With comprehension and a steadfast will ;
 And when He ceased, my brow was sealed His own.
 If there took place no special change in me,
 How comes it all things wore a different hue
 Thenceforward ?—pregnant with vast consequence—
 Teeming with grand results—loaded with fate ;
 So that when quailing at the mighty range
 Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste
 To contemplate undazzled some one truth,
 Its bearings and effects alone—at once
 What was a speck expands into a star,
 Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
 Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul !
 I see my way as birds their trackless way—
 I shall arrive ! what time, what circuit first,
 I ask not : but unless God send his hail
 Or blinding fire-balls, sleet, or stifling snow,
 In some time—his good time—I shall arrive :
 He guides me and the bird. In his good time !

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

Festus. Just thus you help me ever. This would hold
 Were it the trackless air, and not a path
 Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet
 Of many a mighty spirit gone that way.
 You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,
 But they were famous in their day—the proofs
 Remain. At least accept the light they lend.

Paracelsus. Their light ! the sum of all is briefly this :
 They laboured, and grew famous ; and the fruits
 Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth,
 Given over to a blind and endless strife
 With evils, which of all your Gods abates ?
 No ; I reject and spurn them utterly,
 And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside
 Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye,
 While in the distance heaven is blue above
 Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns ?

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

Michal. Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint