

" (A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)  
 " ' Buy wine of us, you English Brig ?  
 " ' Or fruit, tobacco and cigars ?  
 " ' A Pilot for you to Triest ?  
 " ' Without one, look you ne'er so big,  
 " ' They'll never let you up the bay !  
 " ' We natives should know best.'  
 " I turned, and ' just those fellows' way,'  
 " Our captain said, ' The 'long-shore thieves  
 " ' Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

## 3

" In truth, the boy leaned laughing back ;  
 " And one, half-hidden by his side  
 " Under the furred sail, soon I spied,  
 " With great grass hat, and kerchief black,  
 " Who looked up, with his kingly throat,  
 " Said somewhat, while the other shook  
 " His hair back from his eyes to look  
 " Their longest at us ; then the boat,  
 " I know not how, turned sharply round,  
 " Laying her whole side on the sea  
 " As a leaping fish does ; from the lee  
 " Into the weather, cut somehow  
 " Her sparkling path beneath our bow ;  
 " And so went off, as with a bound,  
 " Into the rose and golden half  
 " Of the sky, to overtake the sun,  
 " And reach the shore, like the sea-calf  
 " Its singing cave ; yet I caught one  
 " Glance ere away the boat quite passed,  
 " And neither time nor toil could mar  
 " Those features : so I saw the last  
 " Of Waring !"—You ? Oh, never star  
 Was lost here, but it rose afar !  
 Look East, where whole new thousands are !  
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?

## XII

## RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

## 1

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives  
 First when he visits, last, too, when he leaves  
 The world ; and, vainly favoured, it repays  
 The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze

By no change of its large calm front of snow.  
 And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,  
 He cannot have perceived, that changes ever  
 At his approach ; and, in the lost endeavour  
 To live his life, has parted, one by one,  
 With all a flower's true graces, for the grace  
 Of being but a foolish mimic sun ;  
 With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.  
 Men nobly call by many a name the Mount,  
 As over many a land of theirs its large  
 Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe  
 Is reared, and still with old names, fresh ones vie,  
 Each to its proper praise and own account :  
 Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively.

2

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look  
 Across the waters to this twilight nook,  
 —The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook !

3

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed ?  
 Go ! Saying ever as thou dost proceed,  
 That I, French Rudel, choose for my device  
 A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice  
 Before its idol. See ! These inexpert  
 And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt  
 The woven picture ; 'tis a woman's skill  
 Indeed ; but nothing baffled me, so, ill  
 Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed  
 On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees  
 On my flower's breast as on a platform broad :  
 But, as the flower's concern is not for these  
 But solely for the sun, so men applaud  
 In vain this Rudel, he not looking here  
 But to the East—the East ! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear !

XIII

CRISTINA

1

SHE should never have looked at me,  
 If she meant I should not love her !  
 There are plenty . . . men, you call such,  
 I suppose . . . she may discover

All her soul to, if she pleases,  
 And yet leave much as she found them :  
 But I'm not so, and she knew it  
 When she fixed me, glancing round them.

## 2

What ? To fix me thus meant nothing ?  
 But I can't tell . . . there's my weakness . . .  
 What her look said !—no vile cant, sure,  
 About " need to strew the bleakness  
 " Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,  
 " That the Sea feels "—no " strange yearning  
 " That such souls have, most to lavish  
 " Where there's chance of least returning."

## 3

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows !  
 But not quite so sunk that moments,  
 Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,  
 When the spirit's true endowments  
 Stand out plainly from its false ones,  
 And apprise it if pursuing  
 Or the right way or the wrong way,  
 To its triumph or undoing.

## 4

There are flashes struck from midnights,  
 There are fire-flames noondays kindle,  
 Whereby piled-up honours perish,  
 Whereby sworn ambitions dwindle,  
 While just this or that poor impulse,  
 Which for once had play unstifled,  
 Seems the sole work of a life-time  
 That away the rest have trifled.

## 5

Doubt you if, in some such moment,  
 As she fixed me, she felt clearly,  
 Ages past the soul existed,  
 Here an age 'tis resting merely,  
 And hence, fleets again for ages :  
 While the true end, sole and single,  
 It stops here for is, this love-way,  
 With some other soul to mingle ?

6

Else it loses what it lived for,  
 And eternally must lose it ;  
 Better ends may be in prospect,  
 Deeper blisses, if you choose it,  
 But this life's end and this love-bliss  
 Have been lost here. Doubt you whether  
 This she felt, as, looking at me,  
 Mine and her souls rushed together ?

7

Oh, observe ! Of course, next moment,  
 The world's honours, in derision,  
 Trampled out the light for ever :  
 Never fear but there's provision  
 Of the Devil's to quench knowledge  
 Lest we walk the earth in rapture !  
 —Making those who catch God's secret  
 Just so much more prize their capture.

8

Such am I : the secret's mine now !  
 She has lost me—I have gained her !  
 Her soul's mine : and, thus, grown perfect,  
 I shall pass my life's remainder,  
 Life will just hold out the proving  
 Both our powers, alone and blended—  
 And then, come the next life quickly !  
 This world's use will have been ended.

XIV

JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION

THERE'S Heaven above, and night by night,  
 I look right through its gorgeous roof  
 No sun and moons though e'er so bright  
 Avail to stop me ; splendour-proof  
 I keep the broods of stars aloof :  
 For I intend to get to God,  
 For 'tis to God I speed so fast,  
 For in God's breast, my own abode,  
 Those shoals of dazzling glory past,  
 I lay my spirit down at last.  
 I lie where I have always lain,  
 God smiles as he has always smiled ;

Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,  
 Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled  
 The Heavens, God thought on me his child ;  
 Ordained a life for me, arrayed  
 Its circumstances, every one  
 To the minutest ; ay, God said  
 This head this hand should rest upon  
 Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.  
 And having thus created me,  
 Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,  
 Guiltless for ever, like a tree  
 That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know  
 The law by which it prospers so :  
 But sure that thought and word and deed  
 All go to swell his love for me,  
 Me, made because that love had need  
 Of something irrevocably  
 Pledged solely its content to be.  
 Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,—  
 No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop !  
 I have God's warrant, could I blend  
 All hideous sins, as in a cup,  
 To drink the mingled venoms up,  
 Secure my nature will convert  
 The draught to blossoming gladness fast,  
 While sweet dews turn to the gourd's hurt,  
 And bloat, and while they bloat it, blast,  
 As from the first its lot was cast.  
 For as I lie, smiled on, full fed  
 By unexhausted power to bless,  
 I gaze below on Hell's fierce bed,  
 And those its waves of flame oppress,  
 Swarming in ghastly wretchedness ;  
 Whose life on earth aspired to be  
 One altar-smoke, so pure !—to win  
 If not love like God's love to me,  
 At least to keep his anger in,  
 And all their striving turned to sin !  
 Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white  
 With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,  
 The martyr, the wan acolyte,  
 The incense-swinging child,—undone  
 Before God fashioned star or sun !  
 God, whom I praise ; how could I praise,  
 If such as I might understand,  
 Make out, and reckon on, his ways,  
 And bargain for his love, and stand,  
 Paying a price, at his right hand ?

xv

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

THE rain set early in to-night,  
 The sullen wind was soon awake,  
 It tore the elm-tops down for spite,  
 And did its worst to vex the lake,  
 I listened with heart fit to break ;  
 When glided in Porphyria : straight  
 She shut the cold out and the storm,  
 And kneeled and made the cheerless grate  
 Blaze up, and all the cottage warm ;  
 Which done, she rose, and from her form  
 Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,  
 And laid her soiled gloves by, untied  
 Her hat and let the damp hair fall,  
 And, last, she sate down by my side  
 And called me. When no voice replied,  
 She put my arm about her waist,  
 And made her smooth white shoulder bare,  
 And all her yellow hair displaced,  
 And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,  
 And spread o'er all her yellow hair,  
 Murmuring how she loved me ; she  
 Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,  
 To set its struggling passion free  
 From pride, and vainer ties dissever,  
 And give herself to me for ever :  
 But passion sometimes would prevail,  
 Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain  
 A sudden thought of one so pale  
 For love of her, and all in vain ;  
 So, she was come through wind and rain.  
 Be sure I looked up at her eyes  
 Proud, very proud ; at last I knew  
 Porphyria worshipped me ; surprise  
 Made my heart swell, and still it grew  
 While I debated what to do.  
 That moment she was mine, mine, fair,  
 Perfectly pure and good : I found  
 A thing to do, and all her hair  
 In one long yellow string I wound  
 Three times her little throat around,  
 And strangled her. No pain felt she ;  
 I am quite sure she felt no pain.

As a shut bud that holds a bee  
 I warily oped her lids ; again  
 Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.  
 And I untightened next the tress  
 About her neck ; her cheek once more  
 Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss ;  
 I propped her head up as before,  
 Only, this time *my* shoulder bore  
 Her head, which droops upon it still :  
 The smiling rosy little head,  
 So glad it has its utmost will,  
 That all it scorned at once is fled,  
 And I, its love, am gained instead !  
 Porphyria's love : she guessed not how  
 Her darling one wish would be heard.  
 And thus we sit together now,  
 And all night long we have not stirred,  
 And yet God has not said a word !

## xvi

## THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR

1842

1

As I ride, as I ride,  
 With a full heart for my guide,  
 So its tide rocks my side,  
 As I ride, as I ride,  
 That, as I were double-eyed,  
 He, in whom our Tribes confide,  
 Is descried, ways untried  
 As I ride, as I ride.

2

As I ride, as I ride  
 To our Chief and his Allied,  
 Who dares chide my heart's pride  
 As I ride, as I ride ?  
 Or are witnesses denied—  
 Through the desert waste and wide  
 Do I glide unespied  
 As I ride, as I ride ?

## 3

As I ride, as I ride,  
 When an inner voice has cried,  
 The sands slide, nor abide  
 (As I ride, as I ride)  
 O'er each visioned Homicide  
 That came vaunting (has he lied?)  
 To reside—where he died,  
 As I ride, as I ride.

## 4

As I ride, as I ride,  
 Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,  
 Yet his hide, streaked and pied,  
 As I ride, as I ride,  
 Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,  
 —Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—  
 How has vied stride with stride  
 As I ride, as I ride!

## 5

As I ride, as I ride,  
 Could I loose what Fate has tied,  
 Ere I pried, she should hide  
 As I ride, as I ride,  
 All that's meant me: satisfied  
 When the Prophet and the Bride  
 Stop veins I'd have subside  
 As I ride, as I ride!

## XVII

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN;

## A CHILD'S STORY

(WRITTEN FOR, AND INSCRIBED TO, W. M. THE YOUNGER)

## 1

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,  
 By famous Hanover city;  
 The River Weser, deep and wide,  
 Washes its wall on the southern side;  
 A pleasanter spot you never spied;



But, when begins my ditty,  
 Almost five hundred years ago,  
 To see townsfolk suffer so  
 From vermin, was a pity.

## 2

Rats !  
 They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,  
 And bit the babies in the cradles,  
 And ate the cheeses out of the vats,  
 And licked the soup from the cook's own ladles,  
 Split open the kegs of salted sprats,  
 Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,  
 And even spoiled the women's chats,  
 By drowning their speaking  
 With shrieking and squeaking  
 In fifty different sharps and flats.

## 3

At last the people in a body  
 To the Town Hall came flocking :  
 " 'Tis clear," cried they, " our Mayor's a noddy ;  
 " And as for our Corporation—shocking  
 " To think we buy gowns lined with ermine  
 " For dolts that can't or won't determine  
 " What's best to rid us of our vermin !  
 " You hope, because you're old and obese,  
 " To find in the furry civic robe ease ?  
 " Rouse up, Sirs ! Give your brains a racking  
 " To find the remedy we're lacking,  
 " Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing ! "  
 At this the Mayor and Corporation  
 Quaked with a mighty consternation.

## 4

An hour they sate in council,  
 At length the Mayor broke silence :  
 " For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell ;  
 " I wish I were a mile hence !  
 " It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—  
 " I'm sure my poor head aches again  
 " I've scratched it so, and all in vain.  
 " Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap ! "  
 Just as he said this, what should hap  
 At the chamber door but a gentle tap ?  
 " Bless us," cried the Mayor, " what's that ? "  
 (With the Corporation as he sat,  
 Looking little though wondrous fat ;

Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister  
 Than a too-long-opened oyster,  
 Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous  
 For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)  
 " Only a scraping of shoes on the mat ?  
 " Anything like the sound of a rat  
 " Makes my heart go pit-a-pat !

## 5

" Come in ! "—the Mayor cried, looking bigger :  
 And in did come the strangest figure !  
 His queer long coat from heel to head  
 Was half of yellow and half of red ;  
 And he himself was tall and thin,  
 With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,  
 And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,  
 No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,  
 But lips where smiles went out and in—  
 There was no guessing his kith and kin !  
 And nobody could enough admire  
 The tall man and his quaint attire :  
 Quoth one : " It's as my great-grandsire,  
 " Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,  
 " Had walked this way from his painted tombstone ! "

## 6

He advanced to the council-table :  
 And, " Please your honours," said he, " I'm able,  
 " By means of a secret charm, to draw  
 " All creatures living beneath the sun,  
 " That creep, or swim, or fly, or run,  
 " After me so as you never saw !  
 " And I chiefly use my charm  
 " On creatures that do people harm,  
 " The mole, the toad, and newt, and viper ;  
 " And people call me the Pied Piper."  
 (And here they noticed round his neck  
 A scarf of red and yellow stripe,  
 To match with his coat of the self same cheque ;  
 And at the scarf's end hung a pipe ;  
 And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying  
 As if impatient to be playing  
 Upon this pipe, as low it dangled  
 Over his vesture so old-fangled.)  
 " Yet," said he, " poor piper as I am,  
 " In Tartary I freed the Cham,  
 " Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats ;  
 " I eased in Asia the Nizam

" Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats :  
 " And, as for what your brain bewilders,  
 " If I can rid your town of rats  
 " Will you give me a thousand guilders ?"  
 " One ? fifty thousand !"—was the exclamation  
 Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

## 7

Into the street the Piper stept,  
 Smiling first a little smile,  
 As if he knew what magic slept  
 In his quiet pipe the while ;  
 Then, like a musical adept,  
 To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,  
 And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled  
 Like a candle flame where salt is sprinkled ;  
 And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,  
 You heard as if an army muttered ;  
 And the muttering grew to a grumbling ;  
 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling ;  
 And out of the houses the rats came tumbling :  
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,  
 Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,  
 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,  
 Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,  
 Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,  
 Families by tens and dozens,  
 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—  
 Followed the Piper for their lives.  
 From street to street he piped advancing,  
 And step for step they followed dancing,  
 Until they came to the river Weser  
 Wherein all plunged and perished  
 —Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,  
 Swam across and lived to carry  
 (As he the manuscript he cherished)  
 To Rat-land home his commentary,  
 Which was, " At the first shrill notes of the pipe,  
 " I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,  
 " And putting apples, wondrous ripe,  
 " Into a cider-press's gripe :  
 " And a moving away of pickle-tub boards,  
 " And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,  
 " And the drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,  
 " And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks ;  
 " And it seemed as if a voice  
 " (Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery  
 " Is breathed) called out, Oh rats, rejoice !  
 " The world is grown to one vast drysaltery !

" So munch on, crunch on, take your nunccheon,  
 " Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !  
 " And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,  
 " All ready staved, like a great sun shone  
 " Glorious scarce an inch before me,  
 " Just as methought it said, Come, bore me !  
 " —I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

## 8

You should have heard the Hamelin people  
 Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple ;  
 " Go," cried the Mayor, " and get long poles !  
 " Poke out the nests and block up the holes !  
 " Consult with carpenters and builders,  
 " And leave in our town not even a trace  
 " Of the rats ! "—when suddenly up the face  
 Of the Piper perked in the market-place,  
 With a, " First, if you please, my thousand guilders ! "

## 9

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked blue ;  
 So did the Corporation too.  
 For council dinners made rare havock  
 With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock ;  
 And half the money would replenish  
 Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.  
 To pay this sum to a wandering fellow  
 With a gipsy coat of red and yellow !  
 " Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,  
 " Our business was done at the river's brink  
 " We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,  
 " And what's dead can't come to life, I think.  
 " So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink  
 " From the duty of giving you something for drink,  
 " And a matter of money to put in your poke ;  
 " But, as for the guilders, what we spoke  
 " Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.  
 " Beside, our losses have made us thrifty ;  
 " A thousand guilders ! Come, take fifty ! "

## 10

The Piper's face fell, and he cried,  
 " No trifling ! I can't wait, beside !  
 " I've promised to visit by dinner time  
 " Bagdat, and accept the prime  
 " Of the Head Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,  
 " For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,

" Of a nest of scorpions no survivor—  
 " With him I proved no bargain-driver,  
 " With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!  
 " And folks who put me in a passion  
 " May find me pipe to another fashion."

## 11

" How ? " cried the Mayor, " d'ye think I'll brook  
 " Being worse created than a Cook ?  
 " Insulted by a lazy ribald  
 " With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?  
 " You threaten us, fellow ? Do your worst,  
 " Blow your pipe there till you burst ! "

## 12

Once more he stept into the street ;  
 And to his lips again  
 Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane ;  
 And ere he blew three notes (such sweet  
 Soft notes as yet musician's cunning  
 Never gave the enraptured air)  
 There was a rustling, that seemed like a bustling  
 Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,  
 Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,  
 Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering,  
 And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,  
 Out came the children running.  
 All the little boys and girls,  
 With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,  
 And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,  
 Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after  
 The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

## 13

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood  
 As if they were changed into blocks of wood,  
 Unable to move a step, or cry  
 To the children merrily skipping by—  
 And could only follow with the eye  
 That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.  
 But how the Mayor was on the rack,  
 And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,  
 As the Piper turned from the High Street  
 To where the Weser rolled its waters  
 Right in the way of their sons and daughters !  
 However he turned from South to West,  
 And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,  
 And after him the children pressed ;  
 Great was the joy in every breast.

“ He never can cross that mighty top !  
“ He’s forced to let the piping drop,  
“ And we shall see our children stop ! ”  
When, lo, as they reached the mountain’s side,  
A wondrous portal opened wide,  
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed ;  
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,  
And when all were in to the very last,  
The door in the mountain side shut fast.  
Did I say, all ? No ! One was lame,  
And could not dance the whole of the way ;  
And in after years, if you would blame  
His sadness, he was used to say,—  
“ It’s dull in our town since my playmates left !  
“ I can’t forget that I’m bereft  
“ Of all the pleasant sights they see,  
“ Which the Piper also promised me ;  
“ For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,  
“ Joining the town and just at hand,  
“ Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew,  
“ And flowers put forth a fairer hue,  
“ And everything was strange and new ;  
“ The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,  
“ And their dogs outran our fallow deer,  
“ And honey-bees had lost their stings,  
“ And horses were born with eagles’ wings ;  
“ And just as I became assured  
“ My lame foot would be speedily cured,  
“ The music stopped and I stood still,  
“ And found myself outside the Hill,  
“ Left alone against my will,  
“ To go now limping as before,  
“ And never hear of that country more ! ”

## 14

Alas, alas for Hamelin !

There came into many a burgher’s pate  
A text which says, that Heaven’s Gate  
Opes to the Rich at as easy rate  
As the needle’s eye takes a camel in !  
The Mayor sent East, West, North, and South  
To offer the Piper by word of mouth,  
Wherever it was men’s lot to find him,  
Silver and gold to his heart’s content,  
If he’d only return the way he went,  
And bring the children behind him.  
But when they saw ’twas a lost endeavour,  
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,  
They made a decree that lawyers never

Should think their records dated duly  
 If, after the day of the month and year,  
 These words did not as well appear,  
 " And so long after what happened here  
 " On the Twenty-second of Júly,  
 " Thirteen hundred and Seventy-six : "  
 And the better in memory to fix  
 The place of the Children's last retreat,  
 They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—  
 Where any one playing on pipe or tabor  
 Was sure for the future to lose his labour.  
 Nor suffered they Hostelry or Tavern  
 To shock with mirth a street so solemn ;  
 But opposite the place of the cavern  
 They wrote the story on a column,  
 And on the Great Church Window painted  
 The same, to make the world acquainted  
 How their children were stolen away ;  
 And there it stands to this very day.  
 And I must not omit to say  
 That in Transylvania there's a tribe  
 Of alien people that ascribe  
 The outlandish ways and dress  
 On which their neighbours lay such stress,  
 To their fathers and mothers having risen  
 Out of some subterraneous prison  
 Into which they were trepanned  
 Long time ago in a mighty band  
 Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,  
 But how or why, they don't understand.

## 15

So, Willy, let you and me be wipers  
 Of scores out with all men—especially pipers :  
 And, whether they pipe us free, from rats or from mice,  
 If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise.

## XVIII

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM  
GHENT TO AIX"

[16—]

## 1

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;  
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three ;  
" Good speed ! " cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew ;  
" Speed ! " echoed the wall to us galloping through ;  
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,  
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

## 2

Not a word to each other ; we kept the great pace  
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place ;  
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,  
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,  
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,  
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

## 3

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while we drew near  
Lokern, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;  
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;  
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be ;  
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,  
So Joris broke silence with, " Yet there is time ! "

## 4

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black every one,  
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,  
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,  
With resolute shoulders, each butting away  
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray.

## 5

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back  
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;  
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance  
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !



And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon  
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

## 6

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, " Stay spur !  
" Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,  
" We'll remember at Aix "—for one heard the quick  
wheeze

Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering  
knees,

And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,  
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

## 7

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,  
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;  
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,  
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff ;  
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,  
And " Gallop," gasped Joris, " for Aix is in sight ! "

## 8

" How they'll greet us ! "—and all in a moment his roan  
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;  
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight  
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,  
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,  
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

## 9

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,  
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,  
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer ;  
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or  
good,  
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

## 10

And all I remember is, friends flocking round  
As I sate with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground,  
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,  
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,  
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)  
Was no more than his due who brought good news from  
Ghent.

XIX

PICTOR IGNOTUS

[FLORENCE, 15—]

I COULD have painted pictures like that youth's  
 Ye praise so. How my soul springs up! No bar  
 Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes!—  
 Never did fate forbid me, star by star,  
 To outburst on your night with all my gift  
 Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk  
 From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift  
 And wide to Heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk  
 To the centre, of an instant; or around  
 Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan  
 The license and the limit, space and bound,  
 Allowed to Truth made visible in Man.  
 And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,  
 Over the canvass could my hand have flung,  
 Each face obedient to its passion's law,  
 Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue;  
 Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,  
 A tip-toe for the blessing of embrace,  
 Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood  
 Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place,  
 Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,  
 And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—  
 O Human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?  
 What did ye give me that I have not saved?  
 Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)  
 Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,  
 As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,  
 To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South or North,  
 Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,  
 Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,  
 Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,  
 Through old streets named afresh from its event,  
 Till it reached home, where learned Age should greet  
 My face, and Youth, the star not yet distinct  
 Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—  
 Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked  
 With love about, and praise, till life should end,  
 And then not go to Heaven, but linger here,  
 Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—  
 The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear!

But a voice changed it! Glimpses of such sights  
Have scared me, like the revels thro' a door  
Of some strange House of Idols at its rites;

This world seemed not the world it was before!  
Mixed with my loving trusting ones there trooped  
. . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun  
To press on me and judge me? Tho' I stooped  
Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,  
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . . enough!

These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,  
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,  
And where they live our pictures needs must live,  
And see their faces, listen to their prate,

Partakers of their daily pettiness,  
Discussed of,—“This I love, or this I hate,

“This likes me more, and this affects me less!”  
Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles

My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint  
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles

With the same series, Virgin, Babe, and Saint,  
With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard,

At least no merchant traffics in my heart;  
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward

Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart;  
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine

While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke,  
They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,

'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.  
So die, my pictures; surely, gently die!

Oh, youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth?  
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?

Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?

## XX

## THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

THAT second time they hunted me  
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,  
And Austria, hounding far and wide  
Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,  
Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—  
I made six days a hiding-place  
Of that dry green old aqueduct  
Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked

The fire-flies from the roof above,  
Bright creeping thro' the moss they love.  
—How long it seems since Charles was lost !  
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed  
The country in my very sight ;  
And when that peril ceased at night,  
The sky broke out in red dismay  
With signal-fires ; well, there I lay  
Close covered o'er in my recess,  
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,  
Thinking on Metternich our friend,  
And Charles's miserable end,  
And much beside, two days ; the third,  
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard  
The peasants from the village go  
To work among the maize ; you know,  
With us, in Lombardy, they bring  
Provisions packed on mules, a string  
With little bells that cheer their task,  
And casks, and boughs on every cask  
To keep the sun's heat from the wine ;  
These I let pass in jingling line,  
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,  
The peasants from the village, too ;  
For at the very rear would troop  
Their wives and sisters in a group  
To help, I knew ; when these had passed,  
I threw my glove to strike the last,  
Taking the chance : she did not start,  
Much less cry out, but stooped apart  
One instant, rapidly glanced round,  
And saw me beckon from the ground :  
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt ;  
She picked my glove up while she stripped  
A branch off, then rejoined the rest  
With that ; my glove lay in her breast :  
Then I drew breath : they disappeared :  
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone  
Exactly where my glove was thrown.  
Meanwhile came many thoughts ; on me  
Rested the hopes of Italy ;  
I had devised a certain tale  
Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail  
Persuade a peasant of its truth ;  
I meant to call a freak of youth  
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,  
And no temptation to betray.

But when I saw that woman's face,  
 Its calm simplicity of grace,  
 Our Italy's own attitude  
 In which she walked thus far, and stood,  
 Planting each naked foot so firm,  
 To crush the snake and spare the worm—  
 At first sight of her eyes, I said,  
 " I am that man upon whose head  
 " They fix the price, because I hate  
 " The Austrians over us : the State  
 " Will give you gold—oh, gold so much,  
 " If you betray me to their clutch !  
 " And be your death, for aught I know,  
 " If once they find you saved their foe.  
 " Now, you must bring me food and drink,  
 " And also paper, pen, and ink,  
 " And carry safe what I shall write  
 " To Padua, which you'll reach at night  
 " Before the Duomo shuts ; go in,  
 " And wait till Tenebræ begin ;  
 " Walk to the third Confessional,  
 " Between the pillar and the wall,  
 " And kneeling whisper *whence comes peace ?*  
 " Say it a second time ; then cease ;  
 " And if the voice inside returns,  
 " *From Christ and Freedom ; what concerns*  
 " *The cause of Peace ?*—for answer, slip  
 " My letter where you placed your lip ;  
 " Then come back happy we have done  
 " Our mother service—I, the son,  
 " As you the daughter of our land ! "

Three mornings more, she took her stand  
 In the same place, with the same eyes :  
 I was no surer of sun-rise  
 Than of her coming : we conferred  
 Of her own prospects, and I heard  
 She had a lover—stout and tall,  
 She said—then let her eyelids fall,  
 " He could do much "—as if some doubt  
 Entered her heart,—then, passing out,  
 " She could not speak for others—who  
 " Had other thoughts ; herself she knew : "  
 And so she brought me drink and food.  
 After four days, the scouts pursued  
 Another path : at last arrived  
 The help my Paduan friends contrived  
 To furnish me : she brought the news :  
 For the first time I could not choose

But kiss her hand and lay my own  
Upon her head—"This faith was shown  
"To Italy, our mother;—she  
"Uses my hand and blesses thee!"  
She followed down to the sea-shore;  
I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought  
Concerning—much less wished for—aught  
Beside the good of Italy  
For which I live and mean to die!  
I never was in love; and since  
Charles proved false, nothing could convince  
My inmost heart I had a friend;  
However, if I pleased to spend  
Real wishes on myself—say, Three—  
I know at least what one should be;  
I would grasp Metternich until  
I felt his red wet throat distil  
In blood thro' these two hands: and next,  
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—  
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,  
Should die slow of a broken heart  
Under his new employers: last  
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast  
Do I grow old and out of strength.—  
If I resolved to seek at length  
My father's house again, how scared  
They all would look, and unprepared!  
My brothers live in Austria's pay  
—Disowned me long ago, men say:  
And all my early mates who used  
To praise me so—perhaps induced  
More than one early step of mine—  
Are turning wise; while some opine  
"Freedom grows License," some suspect  
"Haste breeds Delay," and recollect  
They always said, such premature  
Beginnings never could endure!  
So, with a sullen "All's for best,"  
The land seems settling to its rest.  
I think, then, I should wish to stand  
This evening in that dear, lost land,  
Over the sea the thousand miles,  
And know if yet that woman smiles  
With the calm smile; some little farm  
She lives in there, no doubt; what harm  
If I sate on the door-side bench,  
And, while her spindle made a trench

Fantastically in the dust,  
 Inquired of all her fortunes—just  
 Her children's ages and their names,  
 And what may be the husband's aims  
 For each of them—I'd talk this out,  
 And sit there, for an hour about,  
 Then kiss her hand once more, and lay  
 Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how  
 It steals the time ! To business now !

## XXI

## THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

[PIANO DI SORRENTO]

FORTÙ, Fortù, my beloved one,  
 Sit here by my side,  
 On my knees put up both little feet !  
 I was sure, if I tried,  
 I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco :  
 Now, open your eyes—  
 Let me keep you amused till he vanish  
 In black from the skies,  
 With telling my memories over  
 As you tell your beads ;  
 All the memories plucked at Sorrento  
 —The flowers, or the weeds.

Time for rain ! for your long hot dry Autumn  
 Had net-worked with brown  
 The white skin of each grape on the bunches,  
 Marked like a quail's crown,  
 Those creatures you make such account of,  
 Whose heads,—specked with white  
 Over brown like a great spider's back,  
 As I told you last night,—  
 Your mother bites off for her supper ;  
 Red-ripe as could be.  
 Pomegranates were chapping and splitting  
 In halves on the tree :  
 And betwixt the loose walls of great flintstone,  
 Or in the thick dust  
 On the path, or straight out of the rock side,  
 Wherever could thrust

Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower  
Its yellow face up,  
For the prize were great butterflies fighting,  
Some five for one cup.  
So I guessed, ere I got up this morning,  
What change was in store,  
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets  
Which woke me before  
I could open my shutter, made fast  
With a bough and a stone,  
And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs  
Sole lattice that's known !  
Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles,  
While, busy beneath,  
Your priest and his brother tugged at them,  
The rain in their teeth :  
And out upon all the flat house-roofs  
Where split figs lay drying,  
The girls took the frails under cover :  
Nor use seemed in trying  
To get out the boats and go fishing,  
For, under the cliff,  
Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock.  
No seeing our skiff  
Arrive about noon from Amalfi,  
—Our fisher arrive,  
And pitch down his basket before us,  
All trembling alive  
With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit,  
—You touch the strange lumps,  
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner  
Of horns and of humps,  
Which only the fisher looks grave at,  
While round him like imps  
Cling screaming the children as naked  
And brown as his shrimps ;  
Himself too as bare to the middle—  
—You see round his neck  
The string and its brass coin suspended,  
That saves him from wreck.  
But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,  
So back to a man  
Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards  
Grape-harvest began :  
In the vat, half-way up in our house-side,  
Like blood the juice spins,  
While your brother all bare-legged is dancing  
Till breathless he grins  
Dead-beaten, in effort on effort



To keep the grapes under,  
 Since still when he seems all but master,  
 In pours the fresh plunder  
 From girls who keep coming and going  
 With basket on shoulder,  
 And eyes shut against the rain's driving,  
 Your girls that are older,—  
 For under the hedges of aloe,  
 And where, on its bed  
 Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple  
 Lies pulpy and red,  
 All the young ones are kneeling and filling  
 Their laps with the snails  
 Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—  
 Your best of regales,  
 As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,  
 When, supping in state,  
 We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen,  
 Three over one plate)  
 With lasagne so tempting to swallow  
 In slippery ropes,  
 And gourds fried in great purple slices,  
 That colour of popes.  
 Meantime, see the grape-bunch they've brought you,—  
 The rain-water slips  
 O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe  
 Which the wasp to your lips  
 Still follows with fretful persistence—  
 Nay, taste, while awake,  
 This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball,  
 That peels, flake by flake,  
 Like an onion's, each smoother and whiter ;  
 Next, sip this weak wine  
 From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,  
 A leaf of the vine,—  
 And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh  
 That leaves thro' its juice  
 The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth  
 . . . Scirocco is loose !  
 Hark ! the quick, whistling pelt of the olives  
 Which, thick in one's track,  
 Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,  
 Tho' not yet half black !  
 How the old twisted olive trunks shudder !  
 The medlars let fall  
 Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees  
 Snap off, figs and all,—  
 For here comes the whole of the tempest !  
 No refuge, but creep

Back again to my side and my shoulder,  
And listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next week,  
When all the vine-boughs  
Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture  
The mules and the cows ?  
Last eve, I rode over the mountains ;  
Your brother, my guide,  
Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles  
That offered, each side,  
Their fruit-balls, black, glossy, and luscious,—  
Or strip from the sorbs  
A treasure, so rosy and wondrous,  
Of hairy gold orbs !  
But my mule picked his sure, sober path out,  
Just stopping to neigh  
When he recognised down in the valley  
His mates on their way  
With the faggots, and barrels of water ;  
And soon we emerged  
From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow ;  
And still as we urged  
Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,  
As up still we trudged  
Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,  
And place was e'en grudged  
'Mid the rock-chasms, and piles of loose stones  
(Like the loose broken teeth  
Of some monster, which climbed there to die  
From the ocean beneath)  
Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-weed  
That clung to the path,  
And dark rosemary, ever a-dying,  
That, 'spite the wind's wrath,  
So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,—  
And lentisks as staunch  
To the stone where they root and bear berries,—  
And . . . what shows a branch  
Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets  
Of pale seagreen leaves—  
Over all trod my mule with the caution  
Of gleaners o'er sheaves,  
Still, foot after foot like a lady—  
So, round after round,  
He climbed to the top of Calvano,  
And God's own profound  
Was above me, and round me the mountains,  
And under, the sea,

And within me, my heart to bear witness  
 What was and shall be !  
 Oh heaven, and the terrible crystal !  
 No rampart excludes  
 Your eye from the life to be lived  
 In the blue solitudes !  
 Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement !  
 Still moving with you—  
 For, ever some new head and breast of them  
 Thrusts into view  
 To observe the intruder—you see it  
 If quickly you turn  
 And, before they escape you, surprise them—  
 They grudge you should learn  
 How the soft plains they look on, lean over,  
 And love (they pretend)  
 —Cower beneath them ; the flat sea-pine crouches,  
 The wild fruit-trees bend,  
 E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut—  
 All is silent and grave—  
 'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty—  
 How fair, but a slave !  
 So, I turned to the sea,—and there slumbered  
 As greenly as ever  
 Those isles of the siren, your Galli ;  
 No ages can sever  
 The Three, nor enable their sister  
 To join them,—half way  
 On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—  
 No farther to-day ;  
 Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave,  
 Watches breast-high and steady  
 From under the rock, her bold sister  
 Swum half-way already.  
 Fortù, shall we sail there together  
 And see from the sides  
 Quite new rocks show their faces—new haunts  
 Where the siren abides ?  
 Shall we sail round and round them, close over  
 The rocks, tho' unseen,  
 That ruffle the gray glassy water  
 To glorious green ?  
 Then scramble from splinter to splinter,  
 Reach land and explore,  
 On the largest, the strange square black turret  
 With never a door,  
 Just a loop to admit the quick lizards ;  
 Then, stand there and hear  
 The birds' quiet singing, that tells us

What life is, so clear !  
The secret they sang to Ulysses,  
When, ages ago,  
He heard and he knew this life's secret,  
I hear and I know !

Ah, see ! The sun breaks o'er Calvano—  
He strikes the great gloom  
And flutters it o'er the mount's summit  
In airy gold fume !  
All is over ! Look out, see the gypsy,  
Our tinker and smith,  
Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,  
And down-squatted forthwith  
To his hammering, under the wall there ;  
One eye keeps aloof  
The urchins that itch to be putting  
His jews'-harps to proof,  
While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,  
Is watching how sleek  
Shines the hog, come to share in the windfalls  
—An abbot's own cheek !  
All is over ! Wake up and come out now,  
And down let us go,  
And see the fine things got in order  
At Church for the show  
Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening ;  
To-morrow's the Feast  
Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means  
Of Virgins the least—  
As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse  
Which (all nature, no art)  
The Dominican brother, these three weeks,  
Was getting by heart.  
Not a post nor a pillar but's dized  
With red and blue papers ;  
All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar  
A-blaze with long tapers ;  
But the great masterpiece is the scaffold  
Rigged glorious to hold  
All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers,  
And trumpeters bold,  
Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,  
Who, when the priest's hoarse,  
Will strike us up something that's brisk  
For the feast's second course.  
And then will the flaxen-wigged Image  
Be carried in pomp  
Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession

The priests mean to stomp.  
 And all round the glad church lie old bottles  
 With gunpowder stopped,  
 Which will be, when the Image re-enters,  
 Religiously popped.  
 And at night from the crest of Calvano  
 Great bonfires will hang,  
 On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,  
 And more poppers bang !  
 At all events, come—to the garden,  
 As far as the wall,  
 See me tap with a hoe on the plaster  
 Till out there shall fall  
 A scorpion with wide angry nippers !  
 . . . “ Such trifles ”—you say ?  
 Fortù, in my England at home,  
 Men meet gravely to-day  
 And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws  
 Is righteous and wise  
 —If 'tis proper, Scirocco should vanish  
 In black from the skies !

## XXII

## THE LOST LEADER

## 1

Just for a handful of silver he left us,  
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—  
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,  
 Lost all the others she lets us devote ;  
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,  
 So much was their's who so little allowed :  
 How all our copper had gone for his service !  
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud !  
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured  
 him,  
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,  
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,  
 Made him our pattern to live and to die !  
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their  
 graves !  
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,  
 He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

## 2

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence ;  
 Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre ;  
 Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,  
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire :  
 Blot out his name, then,—record one lost soul more,  
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,  
 One more triumph for devils, and sorrow for angels,  
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !  
 Life's night begins : let him never come back to us !  
 There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,  
 Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,  
 Never glad confident morning again !  
 Best fight on well, for we taught him,—strike gallantly,  
 Aim at our heart ere we pierce through his own ;  
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,  
 Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the throne !

## XXIII

## THE LOST MISTRESS

## 1

ALL's over, then—does truth sound bitter  
 As one at first believes ?  
 Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night twitter  
 About your cottage eaves !

## 2

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

## 3

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

## 4

For each glance of that eye so bright and black,  
 Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—  
 Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,  
 Though it stays in my soul for ever !—

## 5

—Yet I will but say what mere friends say,  
 Or only a thought stronger ;  
 I will hold your hand but as long as all may,  
 Or so very little longer !

## XXIV

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

## 1

OH, to be in England  
 Now that April's there,  
 And whoever wakes in England  
 Sees, some morning, unaware,  
 That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf  
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
 In England—now !

## 2

And after April, when May follows,  
 And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows—  
 Hark ! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge  
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
 Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent-spray's edge—  
 That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over,  
 Lest you should think he never could recapture  
 The first fine careless rapture !  
 And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
 All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
 The buttercups, the little children's dower,  
 —Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !—

## 3

Here's to Nelson's memory !  
 'Tis the second time that I, at sea,  
 Right off Cape Trafalgar here,  
 Have drunk it deep in British beer :  
 Nelson for ever—any time  
 Am I his to command in prose or rhyme !  
 Give me of Nelson only a touch,  
 And I guard it, be it little or much ;  
 Here's one the Captain gives, and so  
 Down at the word, by George, shall it go !

He says that at Greenwich they show the beholder  
 Nelson's coat, "still with tar on the shoulder,  
 "For he used to lean with one shoulder digging,  
 "Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zigging,  
 "Up against the mizen rigging!"

## XXV

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west died  
 away ;  
 Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay ;  
 Bluish mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay ;  
 In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar  
 grand and gray ;  
 "Here and here did England help me,—how can I help  
 England?"—say,  
 Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and  
 pray,  
 While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

## XXVI

## NATIONALITY IN DRINKS

## 1

My heart sunk with our Claret-flask,  
 Just now, beneath the heavy sedges  
 That serve this pond's black face for mask ;  
 And still at yonder broken edges  
 Of the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,  
 After my heart I look and listen.

## 2

Our laughing little flask, compell'd  
 Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady ;  
 As when, both arms beside her held,  
 Feet straightened out, some gay French lady  
 Is caught up from Life's light and motion,  
 And dropped into Death's silent ocean !



Up jumped Tokay on our table,  
 Like a pygmy castle-warder,  
 Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,  
 Arms and accoutrements all in order ;  
 And fierce he looked north, then, wheeling south,  
 Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,  
 Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,  
 Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,  
 Jingled his huge brass spurs together,  
 Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,  
 And then with an impudence nought could abash,  
 Shrugged his hump-shoulder,  
 To tell the beholder,  
 For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the bolder,  
 And so with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,  
 And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,  
 Went the little man from Ausbruch, strutting !

## XXVII

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT  
 ST. PRAXED'S CHURCH

[ROME, 15—]

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity !  
 Draw round my bed : is Anselm keeping back ?  
 Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not ! Well—  
 She, men would have to be your mother once,  
 Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was !  
 What's done is done, and she is dead beside,  
 Dead long ago, and I am bishop since,  
 And as she died so must we die ourselves,  
 And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.  
 Life, how and what is it ? As here I lie  
 In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,  
 Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask  
 " Do I live, am I dead ? " Peace, peace seems all.  
 St. Praxed's ever was the church for peace ;  
 And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought  
 With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know :  
 —Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care ;  
 Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South  
 He graced his carrion with, God curse the same !  
 Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence  
 One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,

And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,  
 And up into the aery dome where live  
 The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk :  
 And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,  
 And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,  
 With those nine columns round me, two and two,  
 The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands :  
 Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe  
 As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse  
 —Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,  
 Put me where I may look at him ! True peach,  
 Rosy and flawless : how I earned the prize !  
 Draw close : that conflagration of my church  
 —What then ? So much was saved if aught were missed !  
 My sons, ye would not be my death ? Go dig  
 The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,  
 Drop water gently till the surface sinks,  
 And if ye find . . . Ah, God I know not, I ! . . .  
 Bedded in store of rotten figleaves soft,  
 And corded up in a tight olive-frail,  
 Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,  
 Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,  
 Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .  
 Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,  
 That brave Frascati villa with its bath,  
 So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,  
 Like God the Father's globe on both his hands  
 Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,  
 For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst !  
 Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years :  
 Man goeth to the grave, and where is he ?  
 Did I say basalt for my slab, sons ? Black—  
 'Twas ever antique-black I meant ! How else  
 Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath ?  
 The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,  
 Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance  
 Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,  
 The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,  
 St. Praxed in a glory, and one Pan  
 Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,  
 And Moses with the tables . . . but I know  
 Ye mark me not ! What do they whisper thee,  
 Child of my bowels, Anselm ? Ah, ye hope  
 To revel down my villas while I gasp  
 Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine  
 Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at !  
 Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then !  
 'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve  
 My bath must needs be left behind, alas !

One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,  
 There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—  
 And have I not St. Praxed's ear to pray  
 Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,  
 And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?  
 —That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,  
 Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,  
 No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—  
 Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need!  
 And then how I shall lie through centuries,  
 And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,  
 And see God made and eaten all day long,  
 And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste  
 Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!  
 For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,  
 Dying in state and by such slow degrees,  
 I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,  
 And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,  
 And let the bedclothes for a mortcloth drop  
 Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:  
 And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts  
 Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,  
 About the life before I lived this life,  
 And this life too, Popes, Cardinals and Priests,  
 St. Praxed at his sermon on the mount,  
 Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,  
 And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,  
 And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,  
 —Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?  
 No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!  
 Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.  
 All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope  
 My villas: will ye ever eat my heart?  
 Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,  
 They glitter like your mother's for my soul,  
 Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,  
 Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase  
 With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,  
 And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx  
 That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,  
 To comfort me on my entablature  
 Whereon I am to lie till I must ask  
 "Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!  
 For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude  
 To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—  
 Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat  
 As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—  
 And no more *lapis* to delight the world!  
 Well, go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,

But in a row : and, going, turn your backs  
 —Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,  
 And leave me in my church, the church for peace,  
 That I may watch at leisure if he leers—  
 Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,  
 As still he envied me, so fair she was !

XXVIII

GARDEN-FANCIES

I.—THE FLOWER'S NAME

1

HERE'S the garden she walked across,  
 Arm in my arm, such a short while since :  
 Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss  
 Hinders the hinges and makes them wince !  
 She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,  
 As back with that murmur the wicket swung ;  
 For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,  
 To feed and forget it the leaves among.

2

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

3

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

## 4

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

## 5

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,  
 Stay as you are and be loved for ever !  
 Bud, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not,  
 Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never !  
 For while thus it pouts, her fingers wrestle,  
 Twinkling the audacious leaves between,  
 Till round they turn and down they nestle—  
 Is not the dear mark still to be seen ?

## 6

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

## II.—SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

## 1

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

## 2

Into the garden I brought it to read,  
 And under the arbuté and laurustine  
 Read it, so help me grace in my need,  
 From title-page to closing line.

Chapter on chapter did I count,  
 As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge ;  
 Added up the mortal amount ;  
 And then proceeded to my revenge.

3

Yonder's a plum-tree, with a crevice  
 An owl would build in, were he but sage ;  
 For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis  
 In a castle of the middle age,  
 Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;  
 When he'd be private, there might he spend  
 Hours alone in his lady's chamber :  
 Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

4

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,  
 —I knew at the bottom rain drippings stagnate ;  
 Next a handful of blossoms I plucked  
 To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate ;  
 Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,  
 Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis ;  
 Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf  
 Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

5

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss  
 And gum that locked our friend in limbo,  
 A spider had spun his web across,  
 And sate in the midst with arms a-kimbo :  
 So, I took pity, for learning's sake,  
 And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis,*  
*Cantate!* quoth I, as I got a rake,  
 And up I fished his delectable treatise.

6

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

## 7

How did he like it when the live creatures  
 Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,  
 And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,  
 Came in, each one, for his right of trover ;  
 When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face  
 Made of her eggs the stately deposit,  
 And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface  
 As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet.

## 8

All that life, and fun, and romping,  
 All that frisking, and twisting, and coupling,  
 While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping,  
 And clasps were cracking, and covers suppling !  
 As if you had carried sour John Knox  
 To the play-house at Paris, Vienna, or Munich,  
 Fastened him into a front-row box,  
 And danced off the Ballet with trousers and tunic.

## 9

Come, old Martyr ! What, torment enough is it ?  
 Back to my room shall you take your sweet self !  
 Good-bye, mother-beetle ; husband-*eft*, *sufficit* !  
 See the snug niche I have made on my shelf :  
 A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,  
 Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be gay,  
 And with E. on each side, and F. right over you,  
 Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day !

## XXIX

## THE LABORATORY

## ANCIEN RÉGIME

## 1

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,  
 May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,  
 As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy—  
 Which is the poison to poison her, prithee ?

## 2

He is with her ; and they know that I know  
 Where they are, what they do : they believe my tears  
 flow

While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear  
Empty church, to pray God in, for them!—I am here.

## 3

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,  
Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste!  
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,  
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

## 4

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?  
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!  
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,  
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

## 5

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,  
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!  
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,  
A signet, a fan-mount, a fillagree-basket!

## 6

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give  
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!  
But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head,  
And her breast, and her arms, and her hands, should  
drop dead!

## 7

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim!  
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?  
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,  
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

## 8

What a drop! She's not little, no minion like me—  
That's why she ensnared him: this never will free  
The soul from those strong, great eyes,—say, “no!”  
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

## 9

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought  
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought  
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall,  
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!



## 10

Not that I bid you spare her the pain !  
 Let death be felt and the proof remain :  
 Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—  
 He is sure to remember her dying face !

## 11

Is it done ? Take my mask off ! Nay, be not morose,  
 It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close :  
 The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee—  
 If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me ?

## 12

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,  
 You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will !  
 But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings  
 Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's !

## xxx

## THE CONFSSIONAL

[SPAIN]

## 1

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,  
 Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope  
 Are lies, and lies—there ! thro' my door  
 And ceiling, there ! and walls and floor,  
 There, lies, they lie, shall still be hurled,  
 Till spite of them I reach the world !

## 2

You think Priests just and holy men !  
 Before they put me in this den,  
 I was a human creature too,  
 With flesh and blood like one of you,  
 A girl that laughed in beauty's pride  
 Like lilies in your world outside.

## 3

I had a lover—shame avaunt !  
 This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,  
 Was kissed all over till it burned,  
 By lips the truest, love e'er turned

His heart's own tint: one night they kissed  
My soul out in a burning mist.

## 4

So, next day when the accustomed train  
Of things grew round my sense again,  
"That is a sin," I said—and slow  
With downcast eyes to church I go,  
And pass to the confession-chair,  
And tell the old mild father there.

## 5

But when I falter Beltran's name,  
"Ha?" quoth the father; "much I blame  
"The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?  
"Despair not,—strenuously retrieve!  
"Nay, I will turn this love of thine  
"To lawful love, almost divine.

## 6

"For he is young, and led astray,  
"This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,  
"To change the laws of church and state;  
"So, thine shall be an angel's fate,  
"Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll  
"Its cloud away and save his soul.

## 7

"For, when he lies upon thy breast,  
"Thou mayst demand and be possessed  
"Of all his plans, and next day steal  
"To me, and all those plans reveal,  
"That I and every priest, to purge  
"His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

## 8

That father's beard was long and white,  
With love and truth his brow seemed bright;  
I went back, all on fire with joy,  
And, that same evening, bade the boy,  
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,  
Something to prove his love of me.

## 9

He told me what he would not tell  
For hope of heaven or fear of Hell;

And I lay listening in such pride,  
 And, soon as he had left my side,  
 Tripped to the church by morning-light  
 To save his soul in his despite.

## 10

I told the father all his schemes,  
 Who were his comrades, what their dreams ;  
 " And now make haste," I said, " to pray  
 " The one spot from his soul away ;  
 " To-night he comes, but not the same  
 " Will look ! " At night he never came.

## 11

Nor next night : on the after-morn,  
 I went forth with a strength new-born :  
 The church was empty ; something drew  
 My steps into the street ; I knew  
 It led me to the market-place—  
 Where, lo,—on high—the father's face !

## 12

That horrible black scaffold drest—  
 The stapled block . . . God sink the rest !  
 That head strapped back, that blinding vest,  
 Those knotted hands and naked breast—  
 Till near one busy hangman pressed—  
 And—on the neck these arms caressed. . . .

## 13

No part in aught they hope or fear !  
 No Heaven with them, no Hell,—and here,  
 No Earth, not so much space as pens  
 My body in their worst of dens  
 But shall bear God and Man my cry—  
 Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie !

## XXXI

## THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

## 1

YOU'RE my friend :  
 I was the man the Duke spoke to ;  
 I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too ;  
 So, here's the tale from beginning to end,  
 My friend !

## 2

Ours is a great wild country :  
 If you climb to our castle's top,  
 I don't see where your eye can stop ;  
 For when you've passed the corn-field country,  
 Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,  
 And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,  
 And cattle-tract to open-chase,  
 And open-chase to the very base  
 Of the mountain, where, at a funeral pace,  
 Round about, solemn and slow,  
 One by one, row after row,  
 Up and up the pine-trees go,  
 So, like black priests up, and so  
 Down the other side again  
 To another greater, wilder country,  
 That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,  
 Branched thro' and thro' with many a vein  
 Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt ;  
 Look right, look left, look straight before,—  
 Beneath they mine, above they smelt,  
 Copper-ore and iron-ore,  
 And forge and furnace mould and melt,  
 And so on, more and ever more,  
 Till, at the last, for a bounding belt,  
 Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea shore,  
 —And the whole is our Duke's country !

## 3

I was born the day this present Duke was—  
 (And O, says the song, ere I was old !)  
 In the castle where the other Duke was—  
 (When I was hopeful and young, not old !)  
 I in the Kennel, he in the Bower :  
 We are of like age to an hour.  
 My father was Huntsman in that day ;  
 Who has not heard my father say  
 That, when a boar was brought to bay,  
 Three times, four times out of five,  
 With his huntspear he'd contrive  
 To get the killing-place transfix'd,  
 And pin him true, both eyes betwixt ?  
 And that's why the old Duke had rather  
 Have lost a salt-pit than my father,  
 And loved to have him ever in call ;  
 That's why my father stood in the hall

When the old Duke brought his infant out  
 To show the people, and while they passed  
 The wondrous bantling round about,  
 Was first to start at the outside blast  
 As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,  
 Just a month after the babe was born.  
 "And" quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since  
 "The Duke has got an Heir, our Prince  
 "Needs the Duke's self at his side:"  
 The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,  
 But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,  
 Castles a-fire, men on their march,  
 The toppling tower, the crashing arch;  
 And up he looked, and awhile he eyed  
 The row of crests and shields and banners,  
 Of all achievements after all manners,  
 And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.  
 The more was his comfort when he died  
 At next year's end, in a velvet suit,  
 With a gilt glove on his hand, and his foot  
 In a silken shoe for a leather boot,  
 Petticoated like a herald,  
 In a chamber next to an ante-room,  
 Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,  
 What he called stink, and they, perfume:  
 —They should have set him on red Berold,  
 Mad with pride, like fire to manage!  
 They should have got his cheek fresh tannage  
 Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine!  
 Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin!  
 —Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game!  
 Oh for a noble falcon-lanner  
 To flap each broad wing like a banner,  
 And turn in the wind, and dance like flame!)  
 Had they broached a cask of white beer from Berlin!  
 —Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine—  
 Put to his lips when they saw him pine,  
 A cup of our own Moldavia fine,  
 Cotnar, for instance, green as May sorrel,  
 And ropy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

## 4

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess  
 Was left with the infant in her clutches,  
 She being the daughter of God knows who:  
 And now was the time to revisit her tribe,  
 So, abroad and afar they went, the two,  
 And let our people rail and gibe

At the empty Hall and extinguished fire,  
 As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,  
 Till after long years we had our desire,  
 And back came the Duke and his mother again.

## 5

And he came back the pertest little ape  
 That ever affronted human shape ;  
 Full of his travel, struck at himself—  
 You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways  
 —Not he ! For in Paris they told the elf  
 That our rough North land was the Land of Lays,  
 The one good thing left in evil days ;  
 Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,  
 And only in wild nooks like ours  
 Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,  
 And see true castles, with proper towers,  
 Young-hearted women, old-minded men,  
 And manners now as manners were then.  
 So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,  
 This Duke would fain know he was, without being it ;  
 'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,  
 Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,  
 He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,  
 The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-  
 out :

And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,  
 On a lathy horse, all legs and length,  
 With blood for bone, all speed, no strength ;  
 —They should have sent him on red Berold,  
 With the red eye slow consuming in fire,  
 And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire !

## 6

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard :  
 And out of a convent, at the word,  
 Came the Lady, in time of spring.  
 —Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling !  
 That day, I know, with a dozen oaths  
 I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes  
 Fit for the chase of urox or buffle  
 In winter-time when you need to muffle ;  
 But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,  
 And so we saw the Lady arrive :  
 My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger !  
 She was the smallest lady alive,  
 Made, in a piece of Nature's madness,  
 Too small, almost, for the life and gladness

That over-filled her, as some hive  
 Out of the bears' reach on the high trees  
 Is crowded with its safe merry bees :  
 In truth, she was not hard to please !  
 Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,  
 Straight at the castle, that's best indeed  
 To look at from outside the walls :  
 As for us, styled the " serfs and thralls,"  
 She as much thanked me as if she had said it,  
 (With her eyes, do you understand ?)  
 Because I patted her horse while I led it ;  
 And Max, who rode on her other hand,  
 Said, no bird flew past but she enquired  
 What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired—  
 If that was an eagle she saw hover,—  
 If the green and gray bird on the field was the plover.  
 When suddenly appeared the Duke,  
 And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed  
 On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,  
 And as if his backbone were not jointed,  
 The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,  
 And welcomed her with his grandest smile ;  
 And, mind you, his mother all the while  
 Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward ;  
 And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies  
 Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;  
 And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,  
 The Lady's face stopped its play,  
 As if her first hair had grown grey—  
 For such things must begin some one day !

## 7

In a day or two she was well again ;  
 As who should say, " You labour in vain !  
 " This is all a jest against God, who meant  
 " I should ever be, as I am, content  
 " And glad in his sight ; therefore, glad I will be ! "

So, smiling as at first went she.

## 8

She was active, stirring, all fire—  
 Could not rest, could not tire—  
 To a stone she had given life !  
 (I myself loved once, in my day,)

—For a Shepherd's, Miner's, Huntsman's wife,  
 (I had a wife, I know what I say,)

Never in all the world such an one !  
 And here was plenty to be done,

And she that could do it, great or small,  
 She was to do nothing at all.  
 There was already this man in his post,  
 This in his station, and that in his office,  
 And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,  
 To meet his eye, with the other trophies,  
 Now outside the Hall, now in it,  
 To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,  
 At the proper place in the proper minute,  
 And die away the life between.  
 And it was amusing enough, each infraction  
 Of rule (but for after-sadness that came)  
 To hear the consummate self-satisfaction  
 With which the young Duke and the old Dame  
 Would let her advise, and criticise,  
 And, being a fool, instruct the wise,  
 And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame:  
 They bore it all in complacent guise,  
 As tho' an artificer, after contriving  
 A wheel-work image as if it were living,  
 Should find with delight it could motion to strike him!  
 So found the Duke, and his mother like him,—  
 The Lady hardly got a rebuff—  
 That had not been contemptuous enough,  
 With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,  
 And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

## 9

So, the little Lady grew silent and thin,  
 Paling and ever paling,  
 As the way is with a hid chagrin;  
 And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,  
 And said in his heart, "'Tis done to spite me,  
 "But I shall find in my power to right me!"  
 Don't swear, friend—the Old One, many a year,  
 Is in Hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall hear.

## 10

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,  
 When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning,  
 A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice  
 That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,  
 Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,  
 And another and another, and faster and faster,  
 Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled:  
 Then it so chanced that the Duke our master



Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,  
 And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,  
 He should do the Middle Age no treason  
 In resolving on a hunting-party.  
 Always provided, old books showed the way of it!  
 What meant old poets by their strictures?  
 And when old poets had said their say of it,  
 How taught old painters in their pictures?  
 We must revert to the proper channels,  
 Workings in tapestry, paintings on pannels,  
 And gather up Woodcraft's authentic traditions:  
 Here was food for our various ambitions,  
 As on each case, exactly stated,  
 —To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,  
 Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting your stirrup—  
 We of the household took thought and debated.  
 Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin  
 His sire was wont to do forest-work in;  
 Blessedder he who nobly sunk "ohs"  
 And "ahs" while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-hose;  
 What signified hats if they had no rims on,  
 Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,  
 And able to serve at sea for a shallop,  
 Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?  
 So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,  
 What with our Venerers, Prickers, and Verderers,  
 Might hope for real hunters at length, and not murderers,  
 And oh, the Duke's tailor—he had a hot time on't!

## 11

Now you must know, that when the first dizziness  
 Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jackboots subsided,  
 The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part provided,  
 "Had not the Duchess some share in the business?"  
 For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses,  
 Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:  
 And, after much laying of heads together,  
 Somebody's cap got a notable feather  
 By the announcement with proper unction  
 That he had discovered the lady's function;  
 Since ancient authors held this tenet,  
 "When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,  
 "Let the dame of the Castle prick forth on her jennet,  
 "And with water to wash the hands of her liege  
 "In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,  
 "Let her preside at the disemboweling."  
 Now, my friend, if you had so little religion  
 As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,  
 And thrust her broad wings like a banner

Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon ;  
 And if day by day, and week by week,  
 You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,  
 And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,  
 Would it cause you any great surprise  
 If when you decided to give her an airing  
 You found she needed a little preparing ?  
 —I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,  
 If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon ?  
 Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,  
 Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,  
 In what a pleasure she was to participate,—  
 And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,  
 Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,  
 As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,  
 And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,  
 But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,  
 Of the weight by day and the watch by night,  
 And much wrong now that used to be right,  
 So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—  
 Was conduct ever more affronting ?  
 With all the ceremony settled—  
 With the towel ready, and the sewer  
 Polishing up his oldest ewer,  
 And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,  
 Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-ball'd,—  
 No wonder if the Duke was nettled !  
 And when she persisted nevertheless,—  
 Well, I suppose here's the time to confess  
 That there ran half round our Lady's chamber  
 A balcony none of the hardest to clamber ;  
 And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,  
 Stayed in call outside, what need of relating ?  
 And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent  
 Adorer of Jacynth, of course, was your servant ;  
 And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,  
 How could I keep at any vast distance ?  
 And so, as I say, on the Lady's persistence,  
 The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,  
 Stood for awhile in a sultry smother,  
 And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,  
 Turned her over to his yellow mother  
 To learn what was decorous and lawful ;  
 And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,  
 As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct—  
 Oh, but the Lady heard the whole truth at once !  
 What meant she ?—Who was she ?—Her duty and station,  
 The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,  
 Its decent regard and its fitting relation—

In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free  
 And turn them out to carouse in a belfry,  
 And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,  
 And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on !  
 Well, somehow or other it ended at last  
 And, licking her whiskers, out she passed ;  
 And after her,—making (he hoped) a face  
 Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,  
 Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace  
 Of ancient hero or modern paladin,—  
 From door to staircase—oh, such a solemn  
 Unbending of the vertebral column !

## 12

However, at sunrise our company mustered,  
 And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,  
 And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,  
 With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel ;  
 For the court-yard's four walls were filled with fog  
 You might cut as an axe chops a log.  
 Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness ;  
 And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,  
 Since before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,  
 And a sinking at the lower abdomen  
 Begins the day with indifferent omen :  
 And lo, as he looked around uneasily,  
 The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder  
 This way and that from the valley under ;  
 And, looking thro' the court-yard arch,  
 Down in the valley, what should meet him  
 But a troop of Gypsies on their march,  
 No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

## 13

Now, in your land, Gypsies reach you, only  
 After reaching all lands beside ;  
 North they go, south they go, trooping or lonely,  
 And still, as they travel far and wide,  
 Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,  
 That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there :  
 But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,  
 And nowhere else, I take it, are found  
 With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned ;  
 Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on  
 The very fruit they are meant to feed on :  
 For the earth—not a use to which they don't turn it,  
 The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,  
 Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,  
 They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—

Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle  
 With side-bars never a brute can baffle ;  
 Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards ;  
 Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve inwards,  
 Horseshoes they'll hammer which turn on a swivel  
 And won't allow the hoof to shrivel ;  
 Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle,  
 That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle :  
 But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters ;  
 Commend me to Gypsy glass-makers and potters !  
 Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,  
 Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,  
 As if in pure water you dropped and let die  
 A bruised black-blooded mulberry ;  
 And that other sort, their crowning pride,  
 With long white threads distinct inside,  
 Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle  
 Loose such a length and never tangle,  
 Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,  
 And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters :  
 Such are the works they put their hand to,  
 And the uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.  
 And these made the troop which our Duke saw sally  
 Towards his castle from out of the valley,  
 Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,  
 Come out with the morning to greet our riders ;  
 And up they wound till they reached the ditch,  
 Whereat all stopped save one, a witch,  
 That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,  
 By her gait, directly, and her stoop,  
 I, whom Jacynth was used to importune  
 To let that same witch tell us our fortune.  
 The oldest Gypsy then above ground ;  
 And, so sure as the autumn season came round,  
 She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,  
 And every time, as she swore, for the last time.  
 And presently she was seen to sidle  
 Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,  
 So that the horse of a sudden reared up  
 As under its nose the old witch peered up  
 With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes  
 Of no use now but to gather brine,  
 And began a kind of level whine  
 Such as they used to sing to their viols  
 When their ditties they go grinding  
 Up and down with nobody minding :  
 And, then as of old, at the end of the humming  
 Her usual presents were forthcoming  
 —A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,

(Just as a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)  
 Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-end,—  
 And so she awaited her annual stipend.  
 But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe  
 A word in reply; and in vain she felt  
 With twitching fingers at her belt  
 For the purse of sleekpine-martin pelt,  
 Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe,—  
 Till, either to quicken his apprehension,  
 Or possibly with an after-intention,  
 She was come, she said, to pay her duty  
 To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.  
 No sooner had she named his Lady,  
 Than a shine lit up the face so shady,  
 And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—  
 For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning;  
 If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow,  
 She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow;  
 And who so fit a teacher of trouble  
 As this sordid crone bent well nigh double?  
 So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,  
 (If such it was, for they grow so hirsute  
 That their own fleece serves for natural fur suit)  
 He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his gesture,  
 The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate  
 With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.  
 I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned  
 From out of the throng, and while I drew near  
 He told the crone, as I since have reckoned  
 By the way he bent and spoke into her ear  
 With circumspection and mystery,  
 The main of the Lady's history,  
 Her frowardness and ingratitude;  
 And for all the crone's submissive attitude  
 I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,  
 And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,  
 As tho' she engaged with hearty good will  
 Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,  
 And promised the lady a thorough frightening.  
 And so, just giving her a glimpse  
 Of a purse, with the air of a man whoimps  
 The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,  
 He bade me take the gypsy mother  
 And set her telling some story or other  
 Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,  
 To while away a weary hour  
 For the Lady left alone in her bower,  
 Whose mind and body craved exertion  
 And yet shrank from all better diversion.

## 14

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curvetter,  
 Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo  
 Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,  
 And back I turned and bade the crone follow.  
 And what makes me confident what's to be told you  
 Had all along been of this crone's devising,  
 Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,  
 There was a novelty quick as surprising:  
 For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,  
 And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,  
 As if age had foregone its usurpature,  
 And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,  
 And the face looked quite of another nature,  
 And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,  
 Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement,  
 For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,  
 Gold coins were glittering on the edges,  
 Like the band-roll strung with tomans  
 Which proves the veil a Persian woman's:  
 And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly  
 Come out as after the rain he paces,  
 Two unmistakeable eye-points duly  
 Lived and aware looked out of their places.  
 So we went and found Jacynth at the entry  
 Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry;  
 I told the command and produced my companion,  
 And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,  
 For since last night, by the same token,  
 Not a single word had the Lady spoken:  
 So they went in both to the presence together,  
 While I in the balcony watched the weather.

## 15

And now, what took place at the very first of all,  
 I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:  
 Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall  
 On that little head of hers and burn it,  
 If she knew how she came to drop so soundly  
 Asleep of a sudden and there continue  
 The whole time sleeping as profoundly  
 As one of the boars my father would pin you  
 'Twixt the eyes where the life holds garrison,  
 —Jacynth forgive me the comparison!  
 But where I begin my own narration  
 Is a little after I took my station  
 To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,  
 And, having in those days a falcon eye,

To follow the hunt thro' the open country,  
 From where the bushes thinlier crested  
 The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree :—  
 When, in a moment, my ear was arrested  
 By—was it singing, or was it saying,  
 Or a strange musical instrument playing  
 In the chamber ?—and to be certain  
 I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,  
 And there lay Jacynth asleep,  
 Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,  
 In a rosy sleep along the floor  
 With her head against the door ;  
 While in the midst, on the seat of state,  
 Like a queen the Gypsy woman sate,  
 With head and face downbent  
 On the Lady's head and face intent,  
 For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,  
 The lady sate between her knees  
 And o'er them the Lady's clasped hands met,  
 And on those hands her chin was set,  
 And her upturned face met the face of the crone  
 Wherein the eyes had grown and grown  
 As if she could double and quadruple  
 At pleasure the play of either pupil  
 —Very like by her hands slow fanning,  
 As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers  
 They moved to measure like bell clappers  
 —I said, is it blessing, is it banning,  
 Do they applaud you or burlesque you ?  
 Those hands and fingers with no flesh on ?  
 When, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,  
 At once I was stopped by the Lady's expression :  
 For it was life her eyes were drinking  
 From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,  
 Life's pure fire received without shrinking,  
 Into the heart and breast whose heaving  
 Told you no single drop they were leaving—  
 Life, that filling her, past redundant  
 Into her very hair, back swerving  
 Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,  
 As her head thrown back showed the white throat curving,  
 And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,  
 Moving to the mystic measure,  
 Bounding as the bosom bounded.  
 I stopped short, more and more confounded,  
 As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,  
 As she listened and she listened,—  
 When all at once a hand detained me,  
 And the selfsame contagion gained me,