

And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world,
And word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gypsy said :—

“ And so at last we find my tribe,
And so I set thee in the midst,
And to one and all of them describe
What thou saidst and what thou didst,
Our long and terrible journey thro',
And all thou art ready to say and do
In the trials that remain :
I trace them the vein and the other vein
That meet on thy brow and part again,
Making our rapid mystic mark ;
And I bid my people prove and probe
Each eye's profound and glorious globe
Till they detect the kindred spark
In those depths so drear and dark,
Like the spots that snap, and burst, and flee,
Circling over the midnight sea.
And on that young round cheek of thine
I make them recognise the tinge,
As when of the costly scarlet wine
They drip so much as will impinge
And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
Over a silver plate whose sheen
Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
For, so I prove thee, to one and all,
Fit, when my people ope their breast,
To see the sign, and hear the call,
And take the vow, and stand the test
Which adds one more child to the rest—
When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
And the world is left outside.
For there is probation to decree,
And many and long must the trials be
Thou shalt victoriously endure,
If that brow is true and those eyes are sure ;
Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb,—
Let once the vindicating ray

Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
And steel and fire have done their part
And the prize falls on its finder's heart ;
So, trial after trial past,
Wilt thou fall at the very last
Breathless, half in trance
With the thrill of the great deliverance,
Into our arms for evermore ;
And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
About thee, what we knew before,
How love is the only good in the world.
Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
Or brain devise, or hand approve !
Stand up, look below,
It is our life at thy feet we throw
To step with into light and joy ;
Not a power of life but we'll employ
To satisfy thy nature's want ;
Art thou the tree that props the plant,
Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree—
Canst thou help us, must we help thee ?
If any two creatures grew into one,
They would do more than the world has done ;
Tho' each apart were never so weak,
Yet vainly thro' the world should ye seek
For the knowledge and the might
Which in such union grew their right :
So, to approach, at least, that end,
And blend,—as much as may be, blend
Thee with us or us with thee,
As climbing-plant or propping-tree,
Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
Up and about, with blossoms and leaves ?
Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland crown,
Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
Die on thy boughs and disappear
While not a leaf of thine is sere ?
Or is the other fate in store,
And art thou fitted to adore,
To give thy wondrous self away,
And take a stronger nature's sway ?
I foresee and I could foretell
Thy future portion, sure and well—
But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,
And let them say what thou shalt do !
Only, be sure thy daily life,
In its peace, or in its strife,
Never shall be unobserved ;
We pursue thy whole career,

And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—
 Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
 We are beside thee, in all thy ways,
 With our blame, with our praise,
 Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
 Glad, sorry—but indifferent, no !
 Whether it is thy lot to go,
 For the good of us all, where the haters meet
 In the crowded city's horrible street ;
 Or thou step alone thro' the morass
 Where never sound yet was
 Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
 For the air is still, and the water still,
 When the blue breast of the dipping coot
 Dives under, and all again is mute.
 So at the last shall come old age,
 Decrepit as befits that stage ;
 How else wouldst thou retire apart
 With the hoarded memories of thy heart
 And gather all to the very least
 Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
 Let fall through eagerness to find
 The crowning dainties yet behind ?
 Ponder on the entire past
 Laid together thus at last,
 When the twilight helps to fuse
 The first fresh, with the faded hues,
 And the outline of the whole,
 As round eve's shades their framework roll,
 Grandly fronts for once thy soul :
 And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
 Of yet another morning breaks,
 And like the hand which ends a dream,
 Death, with the might of his sunbeam
 Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
 Then—”

Ay, then, indeed, something would happen !
 But what ? For here her voice changed like a bird's ;
 There grew more of the music and less of the words ;
 Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
 To paper and put you down every syllable,
 With those clever clerkly fingers,
 All that I've forgotten as well as what lingers
 In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
 To give you even this poor version
 Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
 —More fault of those who had the hammering
 Of prosody into me and syntax,
 And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks !

But to return from this excursion,—
Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap—
And the charm vanished!
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring made I,
Down from the casement, round to the portal,
Another minute and I had entered,
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess—I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding,
—I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve his wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what its friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers.
I preceded her; the crone
Followed silent and alone;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
We descended, I preceding;
Crossed the court with nobody heeding;
All the world was at the chase,
The court-yard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor Devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad for her service

To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,
 But unable to pay proper duty where owing it
 Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it :
 For though the moment I began setting
 His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
 (Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
 She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
 By a single rapid finger's lifting,
 And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
 And a little shake of the head, refused me,—
 I say, although she never used me,
 Yet when she was mounted, the gypsy behind her,
 And I ventured to remind her,
 I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
 Than usual, for my feelings exceeded me,
 —Something to the effect that I was in readiness
 Whenever God should please she needed me,—
 Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
 With a look that placed a crown on me,
 And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom—
 And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
 Dropped me—ah, had it been a purse
 Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
 Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
 So understood,—that a true heart so may gain
 Such a reward,—I should have gone home again,
 Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself !
 It was a little plait of hair
 Such as friends in a convent make
 To wear, each for the other's sake,—
 This, see, which at my breast I wear,
 Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudging),
 And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
 And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this is idle,
 These are feelings it is not good to foster,—
 I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
 And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost her !

16

When the liquor's out, why clink the cannakin ?
 I did think to describe you the panic in
 The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,
 And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
 How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib
 Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,
 When she heard, what she called, the flight of the feloness—
 But it seems such child's play
 What they said and did with the lady away !

And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
 Always made me—and no doubt makes you—sick.
 Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
 As that sweet form disappeared thro' the postern,
 She that keep it in constant good humour,
 It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do more.
 But the world thought otherwise and went on,
 And my head's one that its spite was spent on:
 Thirty years are fled since that morning,
 And with them all my head's adorning.
 Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
 As you expect, of suppressed spite,
 The natural end of every adder
 Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:
 But she and her son agreed, I take it,
 That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
 For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,
 So they made no search and small inquiry—
 And when fresh gypsies have paid us a visit, I've
 Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
 But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,
 And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
 Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it
 And the old one was in the young one's stead,
 And took, in her place, the household's head,
 And a blessed time the household had of it!
 And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
 How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
 I could favour you with sundry touches
 Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
 Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
 (To get on faster) until at last her
 Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
 Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse
 Till in short she grew from scalp to udder
 Just the object to make you shudder!

17

You're my friend—
 What a thing friendship is, world without end!
 How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up,
 As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
 And poured out all lovelily, sparkling, and sunlit,
 Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
 Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—
 Friendship's as good as that monarch of fluids
 To supple a dry brain, fill you its ins-and-outs,—
 Gives your Life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand
 doubts

Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees
 Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease !
 I have seen my little Lady once more,
 Jacynth, the Gypsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
 For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before ;
 I always wanted to make a clean breast of it,
 And now it is made—why, my heart's-blood, that went
 trickle,

Trickle, but anon, in such muddy dribblets,
 Is pumped up brisk now, thro' the main ventricle,
 And genially floats me about the giblets !
 I'll tell you what I intend to do :
 I must see this fellow his sad life thro'
 —He is our Duke after all,
 And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall ;
 My father was born here and I inherit
 His fame, a chain he bound his son with,—
 Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
 But there's no mine to blow up and get done with,
 So I must stay till the end of the chapter :
 For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,
 Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
 One day or other, his head in a morion,
 And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up
 Slain by some onslaught fierce of hiccup.
 And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,
 And its leathern sheath lies o'ergrown with a blue crust,
 Then, I shall scrape together my earnings ;
 For, you see, in the Churchyard Jacynth reposes,
 And our children all went the way of the roses—
 It's a long lane that knows no turnings—
 One needs but little tackle to travel in,
 So, just one stout cloak shall I indue,
 And for a staff, what beats the javelin
 With which his boars my father pinned you ?
 And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,
 Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinfull,
 I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly ?
 Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
 What's a man's age ? He must hurry more, that's all ;
 Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold ;
 When we mind labour, then only, we're too old—
 What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul ?
 And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,
 (Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)
 I shall get safely out of the turmoil
 And arrive one day at the land of the gypsies
 And find my lady, or hear the last news of her
 From some old thief and son of Lucifer,

His forehead chapletted green with wreathy hop,
 Sunburned all over like an Æthiop :
 And when my Cotnar begins to operate
 And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,
 And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
 I shall drop in with—as if by accident—
 “ You never knew then, how it all ended,
 “ What fortunes good or bad attended
 “ The little lady your Queen befriended ? ”
 —And when that’s told me, what’s remaining ?
 This world’s too hard for my explaining—
 The same wise judge of matters equine
 Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
 To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
 And for strong Cotnar drank French weak wine,
 He also must be such a lady’s scorner !
 Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau,
 Now up, now down, the world’s one see-saw !
 —So, I shall find out some snug corner
 Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
 Turn myself round and bid the world good night ;
 And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet’s blowing
 Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
 To a world where’s to be no further throwing
 Pearls before swine that can’t value them. Amen !

XXXII

EARTH’S IMMORTALITIES

FAME

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
 Our poet’s wants the freshness of its prime ;
 Spite of the sexton’s browsing horse, the sods
 Have struggled thro’ its binding osier-rods ;
 Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
 Wanting the brick-work promised by and by ;
 How the minute grey lichens, plate o’er plate,
 Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date !

LOVE

So, the year’s done with !

(*Love me for ever !*)

All March begun with,

April’s endeavour ;

May-wreaths that bound me
 June needs must sever !
 Now snows fall round me,
 Quenching June's fever—
 (*Love me for ever !*)

XXXIII

SONG

1

NAY but you, who do not love her,
 Is she not pure gold, my mistress ?
 Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her ?
 Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
 And this last fairest tress of all,
 So fair, see, ere I let it fall !

2

Because, you spend your lives in praising ;
 To praise, you search the wide world over ;
 So, why not witness, calmly gazing,
 If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her ?
 Above this tress, and this I touch
 But cannot praise, I love so much !

XXXIV

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

MORNING, evening, noon, and night,
 "Praise God," sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
 By which the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well ;
 O'er his work the boy's curls fell :

But ever, at each period,
 He stopped and sang, "Praise God."

Then back again his curls he threw,
 And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well done ;
" I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

" As well as if thy voice to-day
" Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

" This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
" Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, " Would God that I
" Might praise Him, that great way, and die ! "

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in Heaven, " Nor day nor night
" Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth ;

Entered in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well :

And morning, evening, noon, and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew :
The man put off the stripling's hue :

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay :

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will ; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, " A praise is in mine ear ;
" There is no doubt in it, no fear :

" So sing old worlds, and so
" New worlds that from my footstool go.

“Clearer loves sound other ways :
 “I miss my little human praise.”

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
 The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day : he flew to Rome,
 And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
 The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
 Stood the new Pope, Theocrite :

And all his past career
 Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
 Till on his life the sickness weighed ;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
 An angel in a dream brought cheer :

And rising from the sickness drear
 He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
 And on his sight the angel burned.

“I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,
 “And set thee here ; I did not well.

“Vainly I left my angel's-sphere,
 “Vain was thy dream of many a year.

“Thy voice's praise seemed weak ; it dropped—
 “Creation's chorus stopped !

“Go back and praise again
 “The early way—while I remain.

“With that weak voice of our disdain,
 “Take up Creation's pausing strain.

“Back to the cell and poor employ :
 “Become the craftsman and the boy !”

Theocrite grew old at home ;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's Dome.

One vanished as the other died :
They sought God side by side.

XXXV

MEETING AT NIGHT

1

THE grey sea and the long black land ;
And the yellow half-moon large and low ;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

2

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each !

XXXVI

PARTING AT MORNING

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim—
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

XXXVII

SAUL

SAID Abner, "At last thou art come !"
"Ere I tell, ere thou speak,—
"Kiss my cheek, wish me well !" Then I wished it,
And did kiss his cheek :

And he, " Since the King, oh my friend,
 " For thy countenance sent,
 Nor drunken nor eaten have we ;
 Nor, until from his tent
 Thou return with the joyful assurance
 The king liveth yet,
 Shall our lip with the honey be brightened,
 —The water, be wet.

" For out of the black mid-tent's silence,
 A space of three days,
 No sound hath escaped to thy servants,
 Of prayer nor of praise,
 To betoken that Saul and the Spirit
 Have ended their strife,
 And that faint in his triumph the monarch
 Sinks back upon life.

" Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved !
 God's child, with his dew
 On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies
 Still living and blue
 As thou brak'st them to twine round thy harp-strings,
 As if no wild heat
 Were raging to torture the desert !"
 Then I, as was meet,
 Knelt down to the God of my fathers,
 And rose on my feet,
 And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder.
 The tent was unlooped ;
 I pulled up the spear that obstructed,
 And under I stooped ;
 Hands and knees o'er the slippery grass-patch—
 All withered and gone—
 That leads to the second enclosure,
 I groped my way on,
 Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open ;
 Then once more I prayed,
 And opened the foldskirts and entered,
 And was not afraid ;
 And spoke, " Here is David, thy servant !"
 And no voice replied ;
 And first I saw nought but the blackness ;
 But soon I descried
 A something more black than the blackness
 —The vast, the upright
 Main-prop which sustains the pavilion,—
 And slow into sight

Grew a figure, gigantic, against it,
 And blackest of all ;—
 Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,
 Showed Saul.
 He stood as erect as that tent-prop ;
 Both arms stretched out wide
 On the great cross-support in the centre
 That goes to each side :
 So he bent not a muscle, but hung there
 As, caught in his pangs
 And waiting his change, the king-serpent
 All heavily hangs,
 Far away from his kind, in the pine,
 Till deliverance come
 With the Spring-time,—so agonized Saul,
 Drear and stark, blind and dumb.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies
 We twine round its chords
 Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide
 —Those sunbeams like swords !
 And I first played the tune all our sheep know,
 As, one after one,
 So docile they come to the pen-door
 Till folding be done ;
 —They are white and untorn by the bushes,
 For lo, they have fed
 Where the long grasses stifle the water
 Within the stream's bed :
 How one after one seeks its lodging,
 As star follows star
 Into eve and the blue far above us,
 —So blue and so far !—
 Then the tune for which quails on the cornland
 Will leave each his mate
 To follow the player ; then, what makes
 The crickets elate
 Till for boldness they fight one another :
 And then, what has weight
 To set the quick jerboa a-musing
 Outside his sand house
 —There are none such as he for a wonder—
 Half bird and half mouse !
 —God made all the creatures and gave them
 Our love and our fear,
 To show, we and they are his children,
 One family here.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers,
 Their wine-song, when hand
 Grasps hand, eye lights eye in good friendship,
 And great hearts expand,
 And grow one in the sense of this world's life ;
 And then, the low song
 When the dead man is praised on his journey—
 “ Bear, bear him along
 “ With his few faults shut up like dead flowrets ;
 “ Are balm-seeds not here
 “ To console us ? The land is left none such
 “ As he on the bier—
 “ Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother ! ”
 And then, the glad chaunt
 Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens,
 Next, she whom we vaunt
 As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling :
 And then, the great march
 When man runs to man to assist him,
 And buttress an arch
 Nought can break . . . who shall harm them, our friends ?
 Then, the chorus intoned
 As the Levites go up to the altar
 In glory enthroned—
 But I stopped here—for here, in the darkness,
 Saul groaned.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence !
 And listened apart ;
 And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered,—
 And sparkles ’gan dart
 From the jewels that woke in his turban
 —At once with a start
 All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies
 Courageous at heart ;
 So the head—but the body still moved not,
 Still hung there erect.
 And I bent once again to my playing,
 Pursued it unchecked,
 As I sang, “ Oh, our manhood’s prime vigour !
 —No spirit feels waste,
 No muscle is stopped in its playing,
 No sinew unbraced ;—
 And the wild joys of living ! The leaping
 From rock up to rock—
 The rending their boughs from the palm-trees,—
 The cool silver shock
 Of a plunge in the pool’s living water—
 The haunt of the bear,

And the sultriness showing the lion
 Is couched in his lair :
 And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed over
 With gold dust divine,
 And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher,
 The full draught of wine,
 And the sleep in the dried river channel
 Where tall rushes tell
 The water was wont to go warbling
 So softly and well,—
 How good is man's life here, mere living !
 How fit to employ
 The heart and the soul and the senses
 For ever in joy !
 Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father
 Whose sword thou didst guard
 When he trusted thee forth to the wolf hunt
 For glorious reward ?
 Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother
 Held up, as men sung
 The song of the nearly-departed,
 And heard her faint tongue
 Joining in while it could to the witness
 " Let one more attest,
 " I have lived, seen God's hand thro' that life-time,
 " And all was for best . . ."
 Then they sung thro' their tears, in strong triumph,
 Not much,—but the rest !
 And thy brothers—the help and the contest,
 The working whence grew
 Such result, as from seething grape-bundles
 The spirit so true :
 And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood
 With wonder and hope,
 Present promise, and wealth in the future,—
 The eye's eagle scope,—
 Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch,
 A people is thine !
 Oh all gifts the world offers singly,
 On one head combine,
 On one head the joy and the pride,
 Even rage like the throe
 That opes the rock, helps its glad labour,
 And let's the gold go—
 And ambition that sees a sun lead it—
 Oh, all of these—all
 Combine to unite in one creature
 —Saul !

XXXVIII

TIME'S REVENGES

I'VE a Friend, over the sea ;
 I like him, but he loves me ;
 It all grew out of the books I write ;
 They find such favour in his sight
 That he slaughters you with savage looks
 Because you don't admire my books :
 He does himself though,—and if some vein
 Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,
 To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
 Round should I just turn quietly,
 Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand
 Till I found him, come from his foreign land
 To be my nurse in this poor place,
 And make me broth, and wash my face,
 And light my fire, and, all the while,
 Bear with his old good-humoured smile
 That I told him " Better have kept away
 " Than come and kill me, night and day,
 " With worse than fever's throbs and shoots,
 " At the creaking of his clumsy boots."
 I am as sure that this he would do,
 As that Saint Paul's is striking Two :
 And I think I had rather . . . woe is me !
 —Yes, rather see him than not see,
 If lifting a hand would seat him there
 Before me in the empty chair
 To-night, when my head aches indeed,
 And I can neither think, nor read,
 And these blue fingers will not hold
 The pen ; this garret's freezing cold !

And I've a Lady—There he wakes,
 The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
 Within me, at her name, to pray
 Fate send some creature in the way
 Of my love for her, to be down-torn
 Upthrust and onward borne
 So I might prove myself that sea
 Of passion which I needs must be !
 Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint,
 And my style infirm, and its figures faint,
 All the critics say, and more blame yet,
 And not one angry would you get !

But, please you, wonder I would put
 My cheek beneath that Lady's foot
 Rather than trample under mine
 The laurels of the Florentine,
 And you shall see how the Devil spends
 A fire God gave for other ends !
 I tell you, I stride up and down
 This garret, crowned with love's best crown,
 And feasted with love's perfect feast,
 To think I kill for her, at least,
 Body and soul and peace and fame,
 Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,
 —So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
 Filled full, eaten out and in
 With the face of her, the eyes of her,
 The lips and little chin, the stir
 Of shadow round her mouth ; and she
 —I'll tell you,—calmly would decree
 That I should roast at a slow fire,
 If that would compass her desire
 And make her one whom they invite
 To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be Heaven ; there must be Hell ;
 Meantime, there is our Earth here—well !

XXXIX

THE GLOVE

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur*)

“ HEIGHO,” yawned one day King Francis,
 “ Distance all value enhances !
 “ When a man's busy, why, leisure
 “ Strikes him as wonderful pleasure,—
 “ 'Faith, and at leisure once is he ?
 “ Straightway he wants to be busy.
 “ Here we've got peace ; and aghast I'm
 “ Caught thinking war the true pastime !
 “ Is there a reason in metre ?
 “ Give us your speech, master Peter !”
 I who, if mortal dare say so,
 Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,
 “ Sire,” I replied, “ joys prove cloudlets :
 “ Men are the merest Ixions ”—
 Here the King whistled aloud, “ Let's

“ . . . Heigho . . . go look at our lions ! ”
 Such are the sorrowful chances
 If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
 Our company, Francis was leading,
 Increased by new followers tenfold
 Before he arrived at the penfold ;
 Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
 At sunset the western horizon.
 And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost
 With the dame he professed to adore most—
 Oh, what a face ! One by fits eyed
 Her, and the horrible pitside ;
 For the penfold surrounded a hollow
 Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,
 And shelved to the chamber secluded
 Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
 The king hailed his keeper, an Arab
 As glossy and black as a scarab,
 And bade him make sport and at once stir
 Up and out of his den the old monster.
 They opened a hole in the wirework
 Across it, and dropped there a firework,
 And fled ; one's heart's beating redoubled ;
 A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
 The blackness and silence so utter,
 By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter ;
 Then earth in a sudden contortion
 Gave out to our gaze her abortion !
 Such a brute ! Were I friend Clement Marot
 (Who's experience of nature's but narrow,
 And whose faculties move in no small mist
 When he versifies David the Psalmist)
 I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu !
 One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
 To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
 The tail in the air stiff and straining,
 The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
 As over the barrier which bounded
 His platform, and us who surrounded
 The barrier, they reached and they rested
 On the space that might stand him in best stead :
 For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
 The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
 And if, in this minute of wonder,
 No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,

Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
The lion at last was delivered ?

Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead !

And you saw by the flesh on his forehead,
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,

He was leagues in the desert already,

Driving the flocks up the mountain,

Or catlike couched hard by the fountain

To waylay the date-gathering negress :

So guarded be entrance or egress.

“ How he stands ! ” quoth the King : “ we may well swear,

“ No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere,

“ And so can afford the confession,

“ We exercise wholesome discretion

“ In keeping aloof from his threshold ;

“ Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,

“ Their first would too pleasantly purloin

“ The visitor's brisket or sirloin :

“ But who's he would prove so fool-hardy ?

“ Not the best man of Marignan, pardie ! ”

The sentence no sooner was uttered,

Than over the rails a glove fluttered,

Fell close to the lion, and rested :

The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested

With life so, De Lorge had been wooing

For months past ; he sate there pursuing

His suit, weighing out with nonchalance

Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tARRIER !

De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,

Walked straight to the glove,—while the lion

Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on

The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,

And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—

Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,

Leaped back where the lady was seated,

And full in the face of its owner

Flung the glove—

“ Your heart's queen, you dethrone her ?

“ So should I ”—cried the King—“ 'twas mere vanity,

“ Not love, set that task to humanity ! ”

Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing

From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I ; for I caught an expression

In her brow's undisturbed self-possession

Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—
 As if from no pleasing experiment
 She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
 So long as the process was needful—
 As if she had tried in a crucible,
 To what "speeches like gold" were reducible,
 And, finding the finest prove copper,
 Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;
 To know what she had *not* to trust to,
 Was worth all the ashes, and dust too.
 She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;
 Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,
 And asked, as a grace, what it all meant—
 If she wished not the rash deed's recalment?
 "For I"—so I spoke—"am a Poet:
 "Human nature,—behoves that I know it!"

She told me, "Too long had I heard
 "Of the deed proved alone by the word:
 "For my love,—what De Lorge would not dare!
 "With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare!
 "And the endless descriptions of death
 "He would brave when my lip formed a breath.
 "I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
 "Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,
 "For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
 "Must offer my love in return.
 "When I looked on your lion, it brought
 "All the dangers at once to my thought,
 "Encountered by all sorts of men,
 "Before he was lodged in his den,—
 "From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
 "Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
 "With no King and no Court to applaud,
 "By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,
 "Yet to capture the creature made shift,
 "That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
 "To the page who last leaped o'er the fence
 "Of the pit, on no greater pretence
 "Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
 "Lest his pay for a week should be stopped—
 "So, wiser I judged it to make
 "One trial what 'death for my sake'
 "Really meant, while the power was yet mine,
 "Than to wait until time should define
 "Such a phase not so simply as I,
 "Who took it to mean just 'to die.'
 "The blow a glove gives is but weak—
 "Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?"

“ But when the heart suffers a blow,
 “ Will the pain pass so soon, do you know ? ”

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
 And saw a youth eagerly keeping
 As close as he dared to the doorway :
 No doubt that a noble should more weigh
 His life than befits a plebeian ;
 And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
 (I judge by a certain calm fervor
 The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
 —He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn
 If you whispered “ Friend, what you'd get, first earn ! ”
 And when, shortly after, she carried
 Her shame from the Court, and they married,
 To that marriage some happiness, maugre
 The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
 Those in wonder and praise, these in envy ;
 And in short stood so plain a head taller
 That he wooed and won . . . How do you call her ?
 The beauty, that rose in the sequel
 To the King's love, who loved her a week well ;
 And 'twas noticed he never would honour
 De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
 With the easy commission of stretching
 His legs in the service, and fetching
 His wife, from her chamber, those straying
 Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
 While the King took the closet to chat in,—
 But of course this adventure came pat in ;
 And never the King told the story,
 How bringing a glove brought such glory,
 But the wife smiled—“ His nerves are grown firmer—
 “ Mine he brings now and utters no murmur ! ”

Venienti occurrite morbo !
 With which moral I drop my theorbo.

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY

XL

CHRISTMAS-EVE

1

Out of the little chapel I burst
Into the fresh night air again.
I had waited a good five minutes first
In the doorway, to escape the rain
That drove in gusts down the common's centre,
And then, when I opened the chapel door,
I found an arrow of wind from the north
Reached past me and for the lot of
Of the lower door that was open,
More obstinate the more they tumbled,
Till, giving way at last with a sound
Of the crazy hinge, it sprang or tumbled
One sheep came to the north side
And left me terrified, standing solitary
In the shepherd's little and gloomy cage,
Four feet long by two feet wide,
Furnished all from the west side—
I looked at it in kind of bewilderment
No remark; the rain kept driving
They eyed me as if I were a wild beast
The congregation all arriving
Some of them by the narrow road,
A long way past midnight
Skirting the common then drawing
Not a few suddenly emerging
From the common's self the young-guns—
—They have by the gravel pits perhaps,
Where the road stops short with its assigned barrier
Of lamps, as if of such disorder—
But the most singular in the more orderly
From a certain school of boys
Where the town's had once swept carriages,
Which now the little chapel rallies

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY

1850

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY

XL

CHRISTMAS-EVE

1

Out of the little chapel I burst
Into the fresh night air again.
I had waited a good five minutes first
In the doorway, to escape the rain
That drove in gusts down the common's centre,
At the edge of which the chapel stands,
Before I plucked up heart to enter:
Heaven knows how many sorts of hands
Reached past me, groping for the latch
Of the inner door that hung on catch,
More obstinate the more they fumbled,
Till, giving way at last with a scold
Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled
One sheep more to the rest in fold,
And left me irresolute, standing sentry
In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry,
Four feet long by two feet wide,
Partitioned off from the vast inside—
I blocked up half of it at least.
No remedy; the rain kept driving:
They eyed me much as some wild beast,
The congregation, still arriving,
Some of them by the mainroad, white
A long way past me into the night,
Skirting the common, then diverging;
Not a few suddenly emerging
From the common's self thro' the paling-gaps,—
—They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,
Where the road stops short with its safeguard border
Of lamps, as tired of such disorder;—
But the most turned in yet more abruptly
From a certain squalid knot of alleys,
Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly,
Which now the little chapel rallies

And leads into day again,—its priestliness
 Lending itself to hide their beastliness
 So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),
 And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on
 Those neophytes too much in lack of it,
 That, where you cross the common as I did,
 And meet the party thus presided,
 "Mount Zion," with Love-lane at the back of it,
 They front you as little disconcerted,
 As, bound for the hills, her fate averted
 And her wicked people made to mind him,
 Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

2

Well, from the road, the lanes or the common,
 In came the flock: the fat weary woman,
 Panting and bewildered, down-clapping
 Her umbrella with a mighty report,
 Grounded it by me, wry and flapping,
 A wreck of whalebones; then, with a snort,
 Like a startled horse, at the interloper
 Who humbly knew himself improper,
 But could not shrink up small enough,
 Round to the door, and in,—the gruff
 Hinge's invariable scold
 Making your very blood run cold.
 Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered
 On broken clogs, the many-tattered
 Little old-faced, peaking sister-turned-mother
 Of the sickly babe she tried to smother
 Somehow up, with its spotted face,
 From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place;
 She too must stop, wring the poor suds dry
 Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby
 Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping
 Already from my own clothes' dropping,
 Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on;
 Then stooping down to take off her pattens,
 She bore them defiantly, in each hand one,
 Planted together before her breast
 And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.
 Close on her heels, the dingy satins
 Of a female something, past me flitted,
 With lips as much too white, as a streak
 Lay far too red on each hollow cheek;
 And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied
 All that was left of a woman once,
 Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.

Then a tall yellow man, like the Penitent Thief,
 With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,
 And eyelids screwed together tight,
 Led himself in by some inner light.

And, except from him, from each that entered,
 I had the same interrogation—

“What, you, the alien, you have ventured
 “To take with us, elect, your station?”

“A carer for none of it, a Gallio?”—
 Thus, plain as print, I read the glance

At a common prey, in each countenance,
 As of huntsman giving his hounds the tallyho:

And, when the door's cry drowned their wonder,
 The draught, it always sent in shutting,

Made the flame of the single tallow candle
 In the cracked square lanthorn I stood under,

Shoot its blue lip at me, rebutting,
 As it were, the luckless cause of scandal:

I verily thought the zealous light
 (In the chapel's secret, too!) for spite,

Would shudder itself clean off the wick,
 With the airs of a St. John's Candlestick.

There was no standing it much longer.

“Good folks,” said I, as resolve grew stronger,

“This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor,

“When the weather sends you a chance visitor?

“You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you,

“And none of the old Seven Churches vie with you!

“But still, despite the pretty perfection

“To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness,

“And, taking God's word under wise protection,

“Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,

“Bidding one reach it over hot ploughshares,—

“Still, as I say, though you've found salvation,

“If I should choose to cry—as now—‘Shares!’—

“See if the best of you bars me my ration!

“Because I prefer for my expounder

“Of the laws of the feast, the feast's own Founder:

“Mine's the same right with your poorest and

sickliest,

“Supposing I don the marriage-vestment;

“So, shut your mouth, and open your testament,

“And carve me my portion at your quickliest!”

Accordingly, as a shoemaker's lad

With wizened face in want of soap,

And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,

After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,

To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,

And so avoid disturbing the preacher,

And leads into day again,—its priestliness
 Lending itself to hide their beastliness
 So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),
 And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on
 Those neophytes too much in lack of it,
 That, where you cross the common as I did,
 And meet the party thus presided,
 "Mount Zion," with Love-lane at the back of it,
 They front you as little disconcerted,
 As, bound for the hills, her fate averted
 And her wicked people made to mind him,
 Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

2

Well, from the road, the lanes or the common,
 In came the flock: the fat weary woman,
 Panting and bewildered, down-clapping
 Her umbrella with a mighty report,
 Grounded it by me, wry and flapping,
 A wreck of whalebones; then, with a snort,
 Like a startled horse, at the interloper
 Who humbly knew himself improper,
 But could not shrink up small enough,
 Round to the door, and in,—the gruff
 Hinge's invariable scold
 Making your very blood run cold.
 Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered
 On broken clogs, the many-tattered
 Little old-faced, peaking sister-turned-mother
 Of the sickly babe she tried to smother
 Somehow up, with its spotted face,
 From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place;
 She too must stop, wring the poor suds dry
 Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby
 Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping
 Already from my own clothes' dropping,
 Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on;
 Then stooping down to take off her pattens,
 She bore them defiantly, in each hand one,
 Planted together before her breast
 And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.
 Close on her heels, the dingy satins
 Of a female something, past me flitted,
 With lips as much too white, as a streak
 Lay far too red on each hollow cheek;
 And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied
 All that was left of a woman once,
 Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.

Then a tall yellow man, like the Penitent Thief,
With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,
And eyelids screwed together tight,
Led himself in by some inner light.
And, except from him, from each that entered,
I had the same interrogation—
“What, you, the alien, you have ventured
“To take with us, elect, your station?
“A carer for none of it, a Gallio?”—
Thus, plain as print, I read the glance
At a common prey, in each countenance,
As of huntsman giving his hounds the tallyho:
And, when the door’s cry drowned their wonder,
The draught, it always sent in shutting,
Made the flame of the single tallow candle
In the cracked square lanthorn I stood under,
Shoot its blue lip at me, rebutting,
As it were, the luckless cause of scandal:
I verily thought the zealous light
(In the chapel’s secret, too!) for spite,
Would shudder itself clean off the wick,
With the airs of a St. John’s Candlestick.
There was no standing it much longer.
“Good folks,” said I, as resolve grew stronger,
“This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor,
“When the weather sends you a chance visitor?
“You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you,
“And none of the old Seven Churches vie with you!
“But still, despite the pretty perfection
“To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness,
“And, taking God’s word under wise protection,
“Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,
“Bidding one reach it over hot ploughshares,—
“Still, as I say, though you’ve found salvation,
“If I should choose to cry—as now—‘Shares!’—
“See if the best of you bars me my ration!
“Because I prefer for my expounder
“Of the laws of the feast, the feast’s own Founder:
“Mine’s the same right with your poorest and
 sickliest,
“Supposing I don the marriage-vestment;
“So, shut your mouth, and open your testament,
“And carve me my portion at your quickliest!”
Accordingly, as a shoemaker’s lad
With wizened face in want of soap,
And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,
After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,
To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,
And so avoid disturbing the preacher,

Passed in, I sent my elbow spikewise
 At the shutting door, and entered likewise,—
 Received the hinge's accustomed greeting,
 Crossed the threshold's magic pentacle,
 And found myself in full conventicle,
 —To wit, in Zion Chapel Meeting,
 On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,
 Which, calling its flock to their special clover,
 Found them assembled and one sheep over,
 Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

3

I very soon had enough of it.
 The hot smell and the human noises,
 And my neighbour's coat, the greasy cuff of it,
 Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,
 Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure
 Of the preaching-man's immense stupidity,
 As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,
 To meet his audience's avidity.
 You needed not the wit of the Sybil
 To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling—
 No sooner had our friend an inkling
 Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,
 (Whenever it was the thought first struck him
 How Death, at unawares, might duck him
 Deeper than the grave, and quench
 The gin-shop's light in Hell's grim drench)
 Than he handled it so, in fine irreverence,
 As to hug the Book of books to pieces:
 And, a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance,
 Not improved by the private dog's-ears and creases,
 Having clothed his own soul with, he'd fain see equipt
 yours,—
 So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.
 And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt:
 Nay, had but a single face of my neighbours
 Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labours
 Were help which the world could be saved without,
 'Tis odds but I had borne in quiet
 A qualm or two at my spiritual diet;
 Or, who can tell? had even mustered
 Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon:
 But the flock sate on, divinely flustered,
 Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon
 With such content in every snuffle,
 As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.

My old fat woman purred with pleasure,
 And thumb round thumb went twirling faster
 While she, to his periods keeping measure,
 Maternally devoured the pastor.
 The man with the handkerchief, untied it,
 Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
 Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
 And rocked himself as the woman was doing.
 The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,
 Kept down his cough. 'Twas too provoking!
 My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff of it,
 And saying, like Eve when she plucked the apple,
 "I wanted a taste, and now there's enough of it,"
 I flung out of the little chapel.

4

There was a lull in the rain, a lull
 In the wind too; the moon was risen,
 And would have shone out pure and full,
 But for the ramparted cloud-prison,
 Block on block built up in the west,
 For what purpose the wind knows best,
 Who changes his mind continually.
 And the empty other half of the sky
 Seemed in its silence as if it knew
 What, any moment, might look through
 A chance-gap in that fortress massy:—
 Through its fissures you got hints
 Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,
 Now, a dull lion-colour, now, brassy
 Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,
 Like furnace-smoke just ere the flames bellow,
 All a-simmer with intense strain
 To let her through,—then blank again,
 At the hope of her appearance failing.
 Just by the chapel, a break in the railing
 Shows a narrow path directly across;
 'Tis ever dry walking there, on the moss—
 Besides, you go gently all the way uphill:
 I stooped under and soon felt better:
 My head grew light, my limbs more supple,
 As I walked on, glad to have slipt the fetter;
 My mind was full of the scene I had left,
 That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,
 —How this outside was pure and different!
 The sermon, now—what a mingled weft
 Of good and ill! were either less,
 Its fellow had coloured the whole distinctly;

But alas for the excellent earnestness,
 And the truths, quite true if stated succinctly,
 But as surely false, in their quaint presentment,
 However to pastor and flock's contentment!
 Say rather, such truths looked false to your eyes,
 With his provings and parallels twisted and twined,
 Till how could you know them, grown double their size,
 In the natural fog of the good man's mind?
 Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps,
 Haloed about with the common's damp.
 Truth remains true, the fault's in the prover;
 The zeal was good, and the aspiration;
 And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,
 Pharaoh received no demonstration
 By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,
 Of the doctrine of the Trinity,—
 Although, as our preacher thus embellished it,
 Apparently his hearers relished it
 With so unfeigned a gust—who knows if
 They did not prefer our friend to Joseph?
 But so it is everywhere, one way with all of them!
 These people have really felt, no doubt,
 A something, the motion they style the Call of them;
 And this is their method of bringing about,
 By a mechanism of words and tones,
 (So many texts in so many groans)
 A sort of reviving or reproducing,
 More or less perfectly, (who can tell?—)
 Of the mood itself, that strengthens by using;
 And how it happens, I understand well.
 A tune was born in my head last week,
 Out of the thump-thump and shriek-shriek
 Of the train, as I came by it, up from Manchester;
 And when, next week, I take it back again,
 My head will sing to the engine's clack again,
 While it only makes my neighbour's haunches stir,
 —Finding no dormant musical sprout
 In him, as in me, to be jolted out.
 'Tis the taught already that profit by teaching;
 He gets no more from the railway's preaching,
 Than, from this preacher who does the rail's office, I,
 Whom therefore the flock casts a jealous eye on.
 Still, why paint over their door "Mount Zion,"
 To which all flesh shall come, saith the prophecy?

5

But wherefore be harsh on a single case?
 After how many modes, this Christmas-Eve,
 Does the selfsame weary thing take place?

The same endeavour to make you believe,
And much with the same effect, no more:
Each method abundantly convincing,
As I say, to those convinced before,
But scarce to be swallowed without wincing,
By the not-as-yet-convinced. For me,
I have my own church equally.
And in *this* church my faith sprang first!
(I said, as I reached the rising ground,
And the wind began again, with a burst
Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound
From the heart beneath, as if, God speeding me,
I entered His church-door, Nature leading me)
—In youth I looked to these very skies,
And probing their immensities,
I found God there, His visible power;
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
Of that power, an equal evidence
That His love, there too, was the nobler dower.
For the loving worm within its clod,
Were diviner than a loveless god
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.
You know what I mean: God's all, man's nought:
But also, God, whose pleasure brought
Man into being, stands away
As it were, an handbreadth off, to give
Room for the newly-made to live,
And look at Him from a place of apart,
And use His gifts of brain and heart,
Given, indeed, but to keep for ever.
Who speaks of man, then, must not sever
Man's very elements from man,
Saying, "But all is God's"—whose plan
Was to create man and then leave him
Able, His own word saith, to grieve Him,
But able to glorify Him too,
As a mere machine could never do,
That prayed or praised, all unaware
Of its fitness for aught but praise and prayer,
Made perfect as a thing of course.
Man, therefore, stands on his own stock
Of love and power as a pin-point rock,
And, looking to God who ordained divorce
Of the rock from His boundless continent,
Sees in His power made evident,
Only excess by a million fold
O'er the power God gave man in the mould.
For, see: Man's hand, first formed to carry
A few pounds' weight, when taught to marry

Its strength with an engine's, lifts a mountain,
 —Advancing in power by one degree;
 And why count steps through eternity?
 But Love is the ever springing fountain:
 Man may enlarge or narrow his bed
 For the water's play, but the water head—
 How can he multiply or reduce it?
 As easy create it, as cause it to cease:
 He may profit by it, or abuse it;
 But 'tis not a thing to bear increase
 As power will: be love less or more
 In the heart of man, he keeps it shut
 Or opes it wide as he pleases, but
 Love's sun remains what it was before.
 So, gazing up, in my youth, at love
 As seen through power, ever above
 All modes which make it manifest,
 My soul brought all to a single test—
 That He, the Eternal First and Last,
 Who, in His power, had so surpassed
 All man conceives of what is might,—
 Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,
 —Would prove as infinitely good;
 Would never, my soul understood,
 With power to work all love desires,
 Bestow e'en less than man requires:
 That He who endlessly was teaching,
 Above my spirit's utmost reaching,
 What love can do in the leaf or stone,
 (So that to master this alone,
 This done in the stone or leaf for me,
 I must go on learning endlessly)
 Would never need that I, in turn,
 Should point him out a defect unheeded,
 And show that God had yet to learn
 What the meanest human creature needed,—
 —Not life, to wit, for a few short years,
 Tracking His way through doubts and fears,
 While the stupid earth on which I stay
 Suffers no change, but passive adds
 Its myriad years to myriads,
 Though I, He gave it to, decay,
 Seeing death come and choose about me,
 And my dearest ones depart without me.
 No! love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,
 Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,
 The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,
 Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it!
 And I shall behold Thee, face to face,

O God, and in Thy light retrace
 How in all I loved here, still wast Thou!
 Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now,
 I shall find as able to satiate
 The love, Thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
 Thou art able to quicken and sublimate,
 Was this sky of Thine, that I now walk under,
 And glory in Thee as thus I gaze,
 —Thus, thus! oh, let men keep their ways
 Of seeking Thee in a narrow shrine—
 Be this my way! And this *is* mine!

6

For lo, what think you? suddenly
 The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky
 Received at once the full fruition
 Of the moon's consummate apparition.
 The black cloud-barricade was riven,
 Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
 Deep in the west; while, bare and breathless,
 North and south and east lay ready
 For a glorious Thing, that, dauntless, deathless,
 Sprang across them, and stood steady.
 'Twas a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
 From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
 As the mother-moon's self, full in face.
 It rose, distinctly at the base
 With its seven proper colours chorded,
 Which still, in the rising, were compressed,
 Until at last they cöalesced,
 And supreme the spectral creature lorded
 In a triumph of whitest white,—
 Above which intervened the night.
 But above night too, like the next,
 The second of a wondrous sequence,
 Reaching in rare and rarer frequency,
 Till the heaven of heavens be circumflect,
 Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
 Fainter, flushier, and flightier,—
 Rapture dying along its verge!
 Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
 WHOSE, from the straining topmost dark,
 On to the keystone of that arc?

7

This sight was shown me, there and then,—
 Me, one out of a world of men,
 Singled forth, as the chance might hap
 To another, if in a thunderclap

Where I heard noise, and you saw flame,
 Some one man knew God called his name.
 For me, I think I said, "Appear!
 " Good were it to be ever here.
 " If Thou wilt, let me build to Thee
 " Service-tabernacles three,
 " Where, for ever in Thy presence,
 " In extatic acquiescence,
 " Far alike from thriftless learning
 " And ignorance's undiscerning,
 " I may worship and remain!"
 Thus, at the show above me, gazing
 With upturned eyes, I felt my brain
 Glutted with the glory, blazing
 Throughout its whole mass, over and under,
 Until at length it burst asunder,
 And out of it bodily there streamed
 The too-much glory, as it seemed,
 Passing from out me to the ground,
 Then palely serpentining round
 Into the dark with mazy error.

8

All at once I looked up with terror.
 He was there.
 He Himself with His human air,
 On the narrow pathway, just before:
 I saw the back of Him, no more—
 He had left the chapel, then, as I.
 I forgot all about the sky.
 No face: only the sight
 Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
 With a hem that I could recognise.
 I felt terror, no surprise:
 My mind filled with the cataract,
 At one bound, of the mighty fact.
 I remembered, He did say
 Doubtless, that, to this world's end,
 Where two or three should meet and pray,
 He would be in the midst, their friend:
 Certainly He was there with them.
 And my pulses leaped for joy
 Of the golden thought without alloy,
 That I saw His very vesture's hem.
 Then rushed the blood back, cold and clear
 With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear,
 And I hastened, cried out while I pressed
 To the salvation of the Vest,

"But not so, Lord! It cannot be
 "That Thou, indeed, art leaving me—
 "Me, that have despised Thy friends.
 "Did my heart make no amends?
 "Thou art the Love of God—above
 "His Power, didst hear me place His Love,
 "And that was leaving the world for Thee!
 "Therefore Thou must not turn from me
 "As if I had chosen the other part.
 "Folly and pride o'ercame my heart.
 "Our best is bad, nor bears Thy test;
 "Still it should be our very best.
 "I thought it best that Thou, the Spirit,
 "Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,
 "And in beauty, as even we require it—
 "Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth,
 "I left but now, as scarcely fitted
 "For Thee: I knew not what I pitied:
 "But, all I felt there, right or wrong,
 "What is it to Thee, who curest sinning?
 "Am I not weak as Thou art strong?
 "I have looked to Thee from the beginning,
 "Straight up to Thee through all the world
 "Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled
 "To nothingness on either side:
 "And since the time Thou wast descried,
 "Spite of the weak heart, so have I
 "Lived ever, and so fain would die,
 "Living and dying, Thee before!
 "But if Thou leavest me—"

9

Less or more,

I suppose that I spoke thus.
 When,—have mercy, Lord, on us!
 The whole face turned upon me full.
 And I spread myself beneath it,
 As when the bleacher spreads, to seethe it
 In the cleansing sun, his wool,—
 Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness
 Some defiled, discoloured web—
 So lay I, saturate with brightness.
 And when the flood appeared to ebb,
 Lo, I was walking, light and swift,
 With my senses settling fast and steady,
 But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
 Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying
 On, just before me, still to be followed,
 As it carried me after with its motion:

What shall I say?—as a path were hollowed
 And a man went weltering through the ocean,
 Sucked along in the flying wake
 Of the luminous water-snake.
 Darkness and cold were cloven, as through
 I passed, upborne yet walking too.
 And I turned to myself at intervals,—
 “So He said, and so it befalls.
 “God who registers the cup
 “Of mere cold water, for His sake
 “To a disciple rendered up,
 “Disdains not His own thirst to slake
 “At the poorest love was ever offered:
 “And because it was my heart I proffered,
 “With true love trembling at the brim,
 “He suffers me to follow Him
 “For ever, my own way,—dispensed
 “From seeking to be influenced
 “By all the less immediate ways
 “That earth, in worships manifold,
 “Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,
 “The garment’s hem, which, lo, I hold!”

10

And so we crossed the world and stopped.
 For where am I, in city or plain,
 Since I am 'ware of the world again?
 And what is this that rises propped
 With pillars of prodigious girth?
 Is it really on the earth,
 This miraculous Dome of God?
 Has the angel's measuring-rod
 Which numbered cubits, gem from gem,
 'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,
 Meted it out,—and what he meted,
 Have the sons of men completed?
 —Binding, ever as he bade,
 Columns in this colonnade
 With arms wide open to embrace
 The entry of the human race
 To the breast of . . . what is it, yon building,
 Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,
 With marble for brick, and stones of price
 For garniture of the edifice?
 Now I see: it is no dream:
 It stands there and it does not seem;
 For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,
 And thus I have read of it in books,

Often in England, leagues away,
And wondered how those fountains play,
Growing up eternally
Each to a musical water-tree,
Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,
Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,
To the granite lavers underneath.
Liar and dreamer in your teeth!
I, the sinner that speak to you,
Was in Rome this night, and stood, and knew
Both this and more! For see, for see,
The dark is rent, mine eye is free
To pierce the crust of the outer wall,
And I view inside, and all there, all,
As the swarming hollow of a hive,
The whole Basilica alive!
Men in the chancel, body, and nave.
Men on the pillars' architrave,
Men on the statues, men on the tombs
With popes and kings in their porphyry wombs,
All famishing in expectation
Of the main-altar's consummation.
For see, for see, the rapturous moment
Approaches, and earth's best endowment
Blends with heaven's: the taper-fires
Pant up, the winding brazen spires
Heave loftier yet the baldachin;
The incense-gaspings, long kept in,
Suspire in clouds; the organ blatant
Holds his breath and grovels latent,
As if God's hushing finger grazed him,
(Like Behemoth when He praised him)
At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,
Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling
On the sudden pavement strewed
With faces of the multitude.
Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows heaven, with its new day
Of endless life, when He who trod,
Very man and very God,
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
Dying the death whose signs remain
Up yonder on the accursed tree,—
Shall come again, no more to be
Of captivity the thrall,
But the one God, all in all,
King of kings, and Lord of lords,
As His servant John received the words,
“ I died, and live for evermore ! ”

11

Yet I was left outside the door.
 Why sate I there on the threshold-stone,
 Left till He returns, alone
 Save for the garment's extreme fold
 Abandoned still to bless my hold?—
 My reason, to my doubt, replied,
 As if a book were opened wide,
 And at a certain page I traced
 Every record undefaced,
 Added by successive years,—
 The harvestings of truth's stray ears
 Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf
 Bound together for belief.
 Yes, I said—that He will go
 And sit with these in turn, I know.
 Their faith's heart beats, though her head swims
 Too giddily to guide her limbs,
 Disabled by their palsy-stroke
 From propping me. Though Rome's gross yoke
 Drops off, no more to be endured,
 Her teaching is not so obscured
 By errors and perversities,
 That no truth shines athwart the lies:
 And He, whose eye detects a spark
 Even where, to man's, the whole seems dark,
 May well see flame where each beholder
 Acknowledges the embers smoulder.
 But I, a mere man, fear to quit
 The clue God gave me as most fit
 To guide my footsteps through life's maze,
 Because Himself discerns all ways
 Open to reach Him: I, a man
 He gave to mark where faith began
 To swerve aside, till from its summit
 Judgment drops her damning plummet,
 Pronouncing such a fatal space
 Departed from the founder's base:
 He will not bid me enter too,
 But rather sit, as now I do,
 Awaiting His return outside.
 —'Twas thus my reason straight replied,
 And joyously I turned, and pressed
 The garment's skirt upon my breast,
 Until, afresh its light suffusing me,
 My heart cried,—what has been abusing me
 That I should wait here lonely and coldly,
 Instead of rising, entering boldly,

Baring truth's face, and letting drift
 Her veils of lies as they choose to shift?
 Do these men praise Him? I will raise
 My voice up to their point of praise!
 I see the error; but above
 The scope of error, see the love.—
 Oh, love of those first Christian days!
 —Fanned so soon into a blaze,
 From the spark preserved by the trampled sect,
 That the antique sovereign Intellect
 Which then sate ruling in the world,
 Like a change in dreams, was hurled
 From the throne he reigned upon:
 —You looked up, and he was gone!
 Gone, his glory of the pen!
 —Love, with Greece and Rome in ken,
 Bade her scribes abhor the trick
 Of poetry and rhetoric,
 And exult, with hearts set free,
 In blessed imbecility
 Scrawled, perchance, on some torn sheet,
 Leaving Livy incomplete.
 Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter!
 —Love, while able to acquaint her
 With the thousand statues yet
 Fresh from chisel, pictures wet
 From brush, she saw on every side,
 Chose rather with an infant's pride
 To frame those portents which impart
 Such unction to true Christian Art.
 Gone, Music too! The air was stirred
 By happy wings: Terpander's bird
 (That, when the cold came, fled away)
 Would tarry not the wintry day,—
 As more-enduring sculpture must,
 —Till a filthy saint rebuked the gust
 With which he chanced to get a sight
 Of some dear naked Aphrodite
 He glanced a thought above the toes of,
 By breaking zealously her nose off.
 Love, surely, from that music's lingering,
 Might have filched her organ-fingering,
 Nor chose rather to set prayings
 To hog-grunts, praises to horse-neighings.
 Love was the startling thing, the new;
 Love was the all-sufficient too;
 And seeing that, you see the rest.
 As a babe can find its mother's breast
 As well in darkness as in light,

Love shut our eyes, and all seemed right.
 True, the world's eyes are open now:
 —Less need for me to disallow
 Some few that keep Love's zone unbuckled,
 Peevish as ever to be suckled,
 Lulled by the same old baby-prattle
 With intermixture of the rattle,
 When she would have them creep, stand steady
 Upon their feet, or walk already,
 Not to speak of trying to climb.
 I will be wise another time,
 And not desire a wall between us,
 When next I see a church-roof cover
 So many species of one genus,
 All with foreheads bearing *Lover*
 Written above the earnest eyes of them;
 All with breasts that beat for beauty,
 Whether sublimed, to the surprise of them,
 In noble daring, steadfast duty,
 The heroic in passion, or in action,—
 Or, lowered for the senses' satisfaction,
 To the mere outside of human creatures,
 Mere perfect form and faultless features.
 What! with all Rome here, whence to levy
 Such contributions to their appetite,
 With women and men in a gorgeous bevy,
 They take, as it were, a padlock, and clap it tight
 On their southern eyes, restrained from feeding
 On the glories of their ancient reading,
 On the beauties of their modern singing,
 On the wonders of the builder's bringing,
 On the majesties of Art around them,—
 And, all these loves, late struggling incessant,
 When faith has at last united and bound them,
 They offer up to God for a present!
 Why, I will, on the whole, be rather proud of it,—
 And, only taking the act in reference
 To the other recipients who might have allowed of it
 I will rejoice that God had the preference!

12

So I summed up my new resolves:
 Too much love there can never be.
 And where the intellect devolves
 Its function on love exclusively,
 I, as one who possesses both,
 Will accept the provision, nothing loth,
 —Will feast my love, then depart elsewhere,
 That my intellect may find its share.

And ponder, O soul, the while thou departest,
 And see thou applaud the great heart of the artist,
 Who, examining the capabilities
 Of the block of marble he has to fashion
 Into a type of thought or passion,—
 Not always, using obvious facilities,
 Shapes it, as any artist can,
 Into a perfect symmetrical man,
 Complete from head to foot of the life-size,
 Such as old Adam stood in his wife's eyes,—
 But, now and then, bravely aspires to consummate
 A Colossus by no means so easy to come at,
 And uses the whole of his block for the bust,
 Leaving the minds of the public to finish it,
 Since cut it ruefully short he must:
 On the face alone he expends his devotion;
 He rather would mar than resolve to diminish it,
 —Saying, "Applaud me for this grand notion
 "Of what a face may be! As for completing it
 "In breast and body and limbs, do *that*, you!"
 All hail! I fancy how, happily meeting it,
 A trunk and legs would perfect the statue,
 Could man carve so as to answer volition.
 And how much nobler than petty cavils,
 A hope to find, in my spirit-travels,
 Some artist of another ambition,
 Who having a block to carve, no bigger,
 Has spent his power on the opposite quest,
 And believed to begin at the feet was best—
 For so may I see, ere I die, the whole figure!

13

No sooner said than out in the night!
 And still as we swept through storm and night,
 My heart beat lighter and more light:
 And lo, as before, I was walking swift,
 With my senses settling fast and steadying,
 But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
 Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying
 On just before me, still to be followed,
 As it carried me after with its motion,
 —What shall I say?—as a path were hollowed,
 And a man went weltering through the ocean
 Sucked along in the flying wake
 Of the luminous water-snake.

14

Alone! I am left alone once more—
 (Save for the garment's extreme fold

Abandoned still to bless my hold)
 Alone, beside the entrance-door
 Of a sort of temple,—perhaps a college,
 —Like nothing I ever saw before
 At home in England, to my knowledge.
 The tall, old, quaint, irregular town!
 It may be . . . though *which*, I can't affirm . . . any
 Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany;
 And this flight of stairs where I sit down,
 Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, or Frankfort,
 Or Göttingen, that I have to thank for't?
 It may be Göttingen,—most likely.
 Through the open door I catch obliquely
 Glimpses of a lecture-hall;
 And not a bad assembly neither—
 Ranged decent and symmetrical
 On benches, waiting what's to see there;
 Which, holding still by the vesture's hem,
 I also resolve to see with them,
 Cautious this time how I suffer to slip
 The chance of joining in fellowship
 With any that call themselves His friends,
 As these folks do, I have a notion.
 But hist—a buzzing and emotion!
 All settle themselves, the while ascends
 By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,
 Step by step, deliberate
 Because of the cranium's over-freight,
 Three parts sublime to one grotesque,
 If I have proved an accurate guesser,
 The hawk-nosed, high-cheek-boned Professor.
 I felt at once as if there ran
 A shoot of love from my heart to the man—
 That sallow, virgin-minded, studious
 Martyr to mild enthusiasm,
 As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious
 That woke my sympathetic spasm,
 (Beside some spitting that made me sorry)
 And stood, surveying his auditory
 With a wan pure look, well nigh celestial,—
 —Those blue eyes had survived so much!
 While, under the foot they could not smutch,
 Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.
 Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,
 Till the auditory's clearing of throats
 Was done with, died into silence;
 And, when each glance was upward sent,
 Each bearded mouth composed intent,
 And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence,—

He pushed back higher his spectacles,—
 Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells,
 And giving his head of hair—a hake
 Of undressed tow, for colour and quantity—
 One rapid and impatient shake,
 (As our young England adjusts a jaunty tie
 When about to impart, on mature digestion,
 Some thrilling view of the surplice-question)
 —The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse,
 Broke into his Christmas-Eve's discourse.

15

And he began it by observing
 How reason dictated that men
 Should rectify the natural swerving,
 By a reversion, now and then,
 To the well-heads of knowledge, few
 And far away, whence rolling grew
 The life-stream wide whereat we drink,
 Commingled, as we needs must think,
 With waters alien to the source:
 To do which, aimed this Eve's discourse.
 Since, where could be a fitter time
 For tracing backward to its prime,
 This Christianity, this lake,
 This reservoir, whereat we slake,
 From one or other bank, our thirst?
 So he proposed inquiring first
 Into the various sources whence
 This Myth of Christ is derivable;
 Demanding from the evidence,
 (Since plainly no such life was liveable)
 How these phenomena should class?
 Whether 'twere best opine Christ was,
 Or never was at all, or whether
 He was and was not, both together—
 It matters little for the name,
 So the Idea be left the same:
 Only, for practical purpose' sake,
 'Twas obviously as well to take
 The popular story,—understanding
 How the ineptitude of the time,
 And the penman's prejudice, expanding
 Fact into fable fit for the clime,
 Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated it
 Into this myth, this Individuum,—
 Which, when reason had strained and abated it
 Of foreign matter, gave, for residuum,

A Man!—a right true man, however,
 Whose work was worthy a man's endeavour!
 Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient
 To his disciples, for rather believing
 He was just omnipotent and omniscient,
 As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving
 His word, their tradition,—which, though it meant
 Something entirely different
 From all that those who only heard it,
 In their simplicity thought and averred it,
 Had yet a meaning quite as respectable:
 For, among other doctrines delectable,
 Was he not surely the first to insist on,
 The natural sovereignty of our race?—
 Here the lecturer came to a pausing-place.
 And while his cough, like a drouthy piston,
 Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to him,
 I seized the occasion of bidding adieu to him,
 The vesture still within my hand.

16

I could interpret its command.
 This time He would not bid me enter
 The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.
 Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic
 When Papist struggles with Dissenter,
 Impregnating its pristine clarity,
 —One, by his daily fare's vulgarity,
 Its gust of broken meat and garlic;
 —One, by his soul's too-much presuming,
 To turn the frankincense's fuming
 And vapours of the candle starlike
 Into the cloud her wings she buoys on:
 And each, that sets the pure air seething,
 Poisoning it for healthy breathing—
 But the Critic leaves no air to poison;
 Pumps out by a ruthless ingenuity
 Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity.
 Thus much of Christ, does he reject?
 And what retain? His intellect?
 What is it I must reverence duly?
 Poor intellect for worship, truly,
 Which tells me simply what was told
 (If mere morality, bereft
 Of the God in Christ, be all that's left)
 Elsewhere by voices manifold;
 With this advantage, that the stater
 Made nowise the important stumble
 Of adding, he, the sage and humble,

Was also one with the Creator.
You urge Christ's followers' simplicity:
But how does shifting blame, evade it?
Have wisdom's words no more felicity?
The stumbling-block, His speech—who laid it?
How comes it that for one found able,
To sift the truth of it from fable,
Millions believe it to the letter?
Christ's goodness, then—does that fare better?
Strange goodness, which upon the score
Of being goodness, the mere due
Of man to fellow-man, much more
To God,—should take another view
Of its possessor's privilege,
And bid him rule his race! You pledge
Your fealty to such rule? What, all—
From Heavenly John and Attic Paul,
And that brave weather-battered Peter
Whose stout faith only stood completer
For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,
As the more his hands hauled nets, they hardened,—
All, down to you, the man of men,
Professing here at Göttingen,
Compose Christ's flock! So, you and I
Are sheep of a good man! and why?
The goodness,—how did he acquire it?
Was it self-gained, did God inspire it?
Choose which; then tell me, on what ground
Should its possessor dare propound
His claim to rise o'er us an inch?
Were goodness all some man's invention,
Who arbitrarily made mention
What we should follow, and where flinch,—
What qualities might take the style
Of right and wrong,—and had such guessing
Met with as general acquiescing
As graced the Alphabet erewhile,
When A got leave an Ox to be,
No Camel (quoth the Jews) like G,—
For thus inventing thing and title
Worship were that man's fit requital.
But if the common conscience must
Be ultimately judge, adjust
Its apt name to each quality
Already known,—I would decree
Worship for such mere demonstration
And simple work of nomenclature,
Only the day I praised, not Nature,
But Harvey, for the circulation.

I would praise such a Christ, with pride
 And joy, that he, as none beside,
 Had taught us how to keep the mind
 God gave him, as God gave his kind,
 Freer than they from fleshly taint!
 I would call such a Christ our Saint,
 As I declare our Poet, him
 Whose insight makes all others dim:
 A thousand poets pried at life,
 And only one amid the strife
 Rose to be Shakespeare! Each shall take
 His crown, I'd say, for the world's sake—
 Though some objected—"Had we seen
 "The heart and head of each, what screen
 "Was broken there to give them light,
 "While in ourselves it shuts the sight,
 "We should no more admire, perchance,
 "That these found truth out at a glance,
 "Than marvel how the bat discerns
 "Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns,
 "Led by a finer tact, a gift
 "He boasts, which other birds must shift
 "Without, and grope as best they can."
 No, freely I would praise the man,—
 Nor one whit more, if he contended
 That gift of his, from God, descended.
 Ah, friend, what gift of man's does not?
 No nearer something, by a jot,
 Rise an infinity of nothings
 Than one: take Euclid for your teacher:
 Distinguish kinds: do crownings, clothings
 Make that creator which was creature?
 Multiply gifts upon his head,
 And what, when all's done, shall be said
 But . . . the more gifted he, I ween!
 That one's made Christ, another, Pilate,
 And this might be all that has been,—
 So what is there to frown or smile at?
 What is left for us, save, in growth,
 Of soul, to rise up, far past both,
 From the gift looking to the Giver,
 And from the cistern to the River,
 And from the finite to Infinity,
 And from man's dust to God's divinity?

Take all in a word: the Truth in God's breast
 Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:

Though He is so bright and we so dim,
 We are made in His image to witness Him;
 And were no eye in us to tell,
 Instructed by no inner sense,
 The light of Heaven from the dark of Hell,
 That light would want its evidence,—
 Though Justice, Good and Truth were still
 Divine, if by some demon's will,
 Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed
 Law through the worlds, and Right misnamed.
 No mere exposition of morality
 Made or in part or in totality,
 Should win you to give it worship, therefore:
 And, if no better proof you will care for,
 —Whom do you count the best man upon earth?
 Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
 Of what Right is, than arrives at birth
 In the best man's acts that we bow before:
 This last *knows* better—true; but my fact is,
 'Tis one thing to know, and another to practise;
 And thence I conclude that the real God-function
 Is to furnish a motive and injunction
 For practising what we know already.
 And such an injunction and such a motive
 As the God in Christ, do you waive, and “heady
 High minded,” hang your tablet-votive
 Outside the fane on a finger-post?
 Morality to the uttermost,
 Supreme in Christ as we all confess,
 Why need *we* prove would avail no jot
 To make Him God, if God He were not?
 What is the point where Himself lays stress?
 Does the precept run “Believe in Good,
 “In Justice, Truth, now understood
 “For the first time?”—or, “Believe in ME,
 “Who lived and died, yet essentially
 “Am Lord of Life?” Whoever can take
 The same to his heart and for mere love's sake
 Conceive of the love,—that man obtains
 A new truth; no conviction gains
 Of an old one only, made intense
 By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

Can it be that He stays inside?
 Is the vesture left me to commune with?
 Could my soul find aught to sing in tune with
 Even at this lecture, if she tried?

Oh, let me at lowest sympathise
 With the lurking drop of blood that lies
 In the dessicated brain's white roots
 Without a throb for Christ's attributes,
 As the lecturer makes his special boast!
 If love's dead there, it has left a ghost.
 Admire we, how from heart to brain
 (Though to say so strike the doctors dumb)
 One instinct rises and falls again,
 Restoring the equilibrium.
 And how when the Critic had done his best,
 And the Pearl of Price, at reason's test,
 Lay dust and ashes levigable
 On the Professor's lecture-table;
 When we looked for the inference and monition
 That our faith, reduced to such a condition,
 Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-hole,—
 He bids us, when we least expect it,
 Take back our faith,—if it be not just whole,
 Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it,
 Which fact pays the damage done rewardingly,
 So, prize we our dust and ashes accordingly!
 "Go home and venerate the Myth
 "I thus have experimented with—
 "This Man, continue to adore him
 "Rather than all who went before him,
 "And all who ever followed after!"—
 Surely for this I may praise you, my brother!
 Will you take the praise in tears or laughter?
 That's one point gained: can I compass another?
 Unlearned love was safe from spurning—
 Can't we respect your loveless learning?
 Let us at least give Learning honour!
 What laurels had we showered upon her,
 Girding her loins up to perturb
 Our theory of the Middle Verb;
 Or Turklike brandishing a scimeter
 O'er anapæsts in comic-trimeter;
 Or curing the halt and maimed "Iketides,"
 While we lounged on at our indebted ease:
 Instead of which, a tricky demon
 Sets her at Titus or Philemon!
 When Ignorance wags his ears of leather
 And hates God's word, 'tis altogether;
 Nor leaves he his congenial thistles
 To go and browse on Paul's Epistles.
 —And you, the audience, who might ravage
 The world wide, enviably savage
 Nor heed the cry of the retriever,

More than Herr Heine (before his fever),—
 I do not tell a lie so arrant
 As say my passion's wings are furled up,
 And, without the plainest Heavenly warrant,
 I were ready and glad to give this world up—
 But still, when you rub the brow meticulous,
 And ponder the profit of turning holy
 If not for God's, for your own sake solely,
 —God forbid I should find you ridiculous!
 Deduce from this lecture all that eases you,
 Nay, call yourselves, if the calling pleases you,
 "Christians,"—abhor the deist's pravity,—
 Go on, you shall no more move my gravity,
 Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse
 I find it in my heart to embarrass them
 By hinting that their stick's a mock horse,
 And they really carry what they say carries them.

19

So sate I talking with my mind.
 I did not long to leave the door
 And find a new church, as before,
 But rather was quiet and inclined
 To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting
 From further tracking and trying and testing.
 This tolerance is a genial mood!
 (Said I, and a little pause ensued).
 One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and shelf,
 And sees, each side, the good effects of it,
 A value for religion's self,
 A carelessness about the sects of it.
 Let me enjoy my own conviction,
 Not watch my neighbour's faith with fretfulness,
 Still spying there some dereliction
 Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness!
 Better a mild indifferentism,
 To teach that all our faiths (though duller
 His shines through a dull spirit's prism)
 Originally had one colour—
 Sending me on a pilgrimage
 Through ancient and through modern times
 To many peoples, various climes,
 Where I may see saint, savage, sage
 Fuse their respective creeds in one
 Before the general Father's throne!

20

. . . 'Twas the horrible storm began afresh!
 The black night caught me in his mesh

Whirled me up, and flung me prone.
 I was left on the college-step alone.
 I looked, and far there, ever fleeting
 Far, far away, the receding gesture,
 And looming of the lessening vesture,
 Swept forward from my stupid hand,
 While I watched my foolish heart expand
 In the lazy glow of benevolence,
 O'er the various modes of man's belief.
 I sprang up with fear's vehemence.
 —Needs must there be one way, our chief
 Best way of worship: let me strive
 To find it, and when found, contrive
 My fellows also take their share.
 This constitutes my earthly care:
 God's is above it and distinct!
 For I, a man, with men am linked,
 And not a brute with brutes; no gain
 That I experience, must remain
 Unshared: but should my best endeavour
 To share it, fail—subsisteth ever
 God's care above, and I exult
 That God, by God's own ways occult,
 May—doth, I will believe—bring back
 All wanderers to a single track!
 Meantime, I can but testify
 God's care for me—no more, can I—
 It is but for myself I *know*.
 The world rolls witnessing around me
 Only to leave me as it found me;
 Men cry there, but my ear is slow.
 Their races flourish or decay
 —What boots it, while yon lucid way
 Loaded with stars, divides the vault?
 How soon my soul repairs its fault
 When, sharpening senses' hebetude,
 She turns on my own life! So viewed,
 No mere moat's-breadth but teems immense
 With witnessings of providence:
 And woe to me if when I look
 Upon that record, the sole book
 Unsealed to me, I take no heed
 Of any warning that I read!
 Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve,
 God's own hand did the rainbow weave,
 Whereby the truth from heaven slid
 Into my soul?—I cannot bid
 The world admit He stooped to heal
 My soul, as if in a thunder-peal

Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,
 I only knew He named my name.
 And what is the world to me, for sorrow
 Or joy in its censures, when to-morrow
 It drops the remark, with just-turned head
 Then, on again—That man is dead?
 Yes,—but for me—my name called,—drawn
 As a conscript's lot from the lap's black yawn,
 He has dipt into on a battle-dawn:
 Bid out of life by a nod, a glance,—
 Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's chance,—
 With a rapid finger circled round,
 Fixed to the first poor inch of ground,
 To fight from, where his foot was found;
 Whose ear but a minute since lay free
 To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry—
 Summoned, a solitary man,
 To end his life where his life began,
 From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful van!
 Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and held
 By the hem of the vesture . . .

21

And I caught
 At the flying robe, and unrepelled
 Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught
 With warmth and wonder and delight,
 God's mercy being infinite.
 And scarce had the words escaped my tongue,
 When, at a passionate bound, I sprung
 Out of the wandering world of rain,
 Into the little chapel again.

22

How else was I found there, bolt upright
 On my bench, as if I had never left it?
 —Never flung out on the common at night
 Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft it,
 Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,
 Or the laboratory of the Professor!
 For the Vision, *that* was true, I wist,
 True as that heaven and earth exist.
 There sate my friend, the yellow and tall,
 With his neck and its wen in the selfsame place;
 Yet my nearest neighbour's cheek showed gall,
 She had slid away a contemptuous space:
 And the old fat woman, late so placable,
 Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistakeable,

Of her milk of kindness turning rancid:
 In short a spectator might have fancied
 That I had nodded betrayed by a slumber,
 Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,
 Through the heads of the sermon, nine in number,
 To wake up now at the tenth and lastly.
 But again, could such a disgrace have happened?
 Each friend at my elbow had surely nudged it;
 And, as for the sermon, where did my nap end?
 Unless I heard it, could I have judged it?
 Could I report as I do at the close,
 First, the preacher speaks through his nose:
 Second, his gesture is too emphatic;
 Thirdly, to waive what's pedagogic,
 The subject-matter itself lacks logic:
 Fourthly the English is ungrammatical.
 Great news! the preacher is found no Pascal,
 Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call
 Of making square to a finite eye
 The circle of infinity,
 And find so all-but-just-succeeding!
 Great news! the sermon proves no reading
 Where bee-like in the flowers I may bury me,
 Like Taylor's, the immortal Jeremy!
 And now that I know the very worst of him,
 What was it I thought to obtain at first of him?
 Ha! Is God mocked, as He asks?
 Shall I take on me to change His tasks,
 And dare, despatched to a river-head
 For a simple draught of the element,
 Neglect the thing for which He sent,
 And return with another thing instead?—
 Saying . . . "Because the water found
 " Welling up from underground,
 " Is mingled with the taints of earth,
 " While Thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth,
 " And couldest, at a word, convulse
 " The world with the leap of its river-pulse,—
 " Therefore I turned from the oozings muddy,
 " And bring thee a chalice I found, instead:
 " See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy!
 " One would suppose that the marble bled.
 " What matters the water? A hope I have nursed,
 " That the waterless cup will quench my thirst."
 —Better have knelt at the poorest stream
 That trickles in pain from the straitest rift!
 For the less or the more is all God's gift,
 Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.
 And here, is there water or not, to drink?