

But you, sweet, you who know me, who so long
Have told my heart-beats over, held my life
In those white hands of yours,—it is not well!

Constance. Tush! I have said it, did I not say it all?
The life, for her—the heart-beats, for her sake!

Norbert. Enough! my cheek grows red, I think. Your
test!

There's not the meanest woman in the world,
Not she I least could love in all the world,
Whom, did she love me, did love prove itself,
I dared insult as you insult me now.

Constance, I could say, if it must be said,

“Take back the soul you offer—I keep mine”

But—“Take the soul still quivering on your hand,
The soul so offered, which I cannot use,

And, please you, give it to some friend of mine,

For—what's the trifle he requites me with?”

I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,

That two may mock her heart if it succumb?

No! fearing God and standing 'neath his heaven,

I would not dare insult a woman so,

Were she the meanest woman in the world,

And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

Constance. Norbert!

Norbert. I love once as I live but once.

What case is this to think or talk about?

I love you. Would it mend the case at all

Should such a step as this kill love in me?

Your part were done: account to God for it.

But mine—could murdered love get up again,

And kneel to whom you pleased to designate

And make you mirth? It is too horrible.

You did not know this, Constance? now you know

That body and soul have each one life, but one:

And here's my love, here, living, at your feet.

Constance. See the Queen! Norbert—this one more
last word—

If thus you have taken jest for earnest—thus

Loved me in earnest . . .

Norbert. Ah, no jest holds here!

Where is the laughter in which jests break up?

And what this horror that grows palpable?

Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony?

Have I done ill? Have I not spoken the truth?

How could I other? Was it not your test,

To try me, and what my love for Constance meant?

Madam, your royal soul itself approves,

The first, that I should choose thus! so one takes

A beggar—asks him what would buy his child,

And then approves the expected laugh of scorn
 Returned as something noble from the rags.
 Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha, what's this?
 You two glare each at each like panthers now.
 Constance—the world fades; only you stand there!
 You did not in to-night's wild whirl of things
 Sell me—your soul of souls for any price?
 No—no—'tis easy to believe in you.
 Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop
 Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still—
 Though I should curse, I love you. I am love
 And cannot change! love's self is at your feet.

[QUEEN goes out.]

Constance. Feel my heart; let it die against your own.

Norbert. Against my own! explain not; let this be.

This is life's height.

Constance. Yours! Yours! Yours!

Norbert. You and I—

Why care by what meanders we are here
 In the centre of the labyrinth? men have died
 Trying to find this place out, which we have found.

Constance. Found, found!

Norbert. Sweet, never fear what she can do—

We are past harm now.

Constance. On the breast of God.

I thought of men—as if you were a man.
 Tempting him with a crown!

Norbert. This must end here—

It is too perfect!

Constance. There's the music stopped.

What measured heavy tread? it is one blaze
 About me and within me.

Norbert. Oh, some death

Will run its sudden finger round this spark,
 And sever us from the rest—

Constance. And so do well.

Now the doors open—

Norbert. 'Tis the guard comes.

Constance. Kiss!

LXXVI

SAUL

1

SAID Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
 Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
 And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
 Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent
 Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,
 Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
 For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
 Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer or 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.

2

Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child, with his dew
 On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
 Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat
 Were now raging to torture the desert!"

3

Then I, as was meet,
 Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
 And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;
 I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;
 Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
 That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on
 Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed,
 And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid,

But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice
replied.

At the 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 against it, gigantic and blackest of all;—
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,—
showed Saul.

4

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:

He relaxed 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.

5

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine round
its chords

Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those
sunbeams like swords!

And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after
one,

So docile they come to the pen-door, till folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have
fed

Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's
bed;

And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

6

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each
leave his mate

To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets
elate,

Till for boldness they fight one another: and then, what
has weight

To set the quick jerboa a-musing 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 give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

7

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

8

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,—

9

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigour! no
spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew unbraced.

Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to
rock—

The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree,—the cool
silver shock

Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—the hunt of the
bear,

And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.

And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed over with gold
dust divine,

And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher; the full
draught of wine,

And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes
tell

That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and
well.

How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ

All the heart and the soul and the senses, for ever in joy!

Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword
thou didst guard

When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious
reward?

Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as
men sung

The low song of the nearly-departed, and heard her faint
tongue

Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more
attest,

I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was
for best . . .'

Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not
much,—but the rest.

And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working
whence grew

Such result as from seething grape-bundles, the spirit
strained true!

And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder
and hope,

Present promise, and wealth of the future beyond the eye's
scope,—

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;

And all gifts which the world offers singly, on one head
combine!

On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage,
like the throe

That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour, and lets the
gold go:

High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning
it,—all

Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul!"

10

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, heart, hand, harp and
voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I
say,
The Lord's army in rapture of service, strains through its
array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried I,
and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who
hung propt
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by
his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right
to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held,
(he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad
bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves grasp
of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his
feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black but alive yet, your
mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages
untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow
and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail,
there they are!
Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the
nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on
its crest
For their food in the ardours of summer! One long shudder
thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was
stilled,
At the King's self left standing before me, released and
aware.
What was gone, what remained? all to traverse 'twixt
hope and despair—
Death was past, life not come—so he waited. Awhile his
right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith
to remand

To their place what new object should enter: 'twas Saul
as before.

I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt
any more

Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from
the shore

At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and
entwine

Base with base to knit strength more intense: so, arm
folded in arm

O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

11

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next should
I urge

To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song filled
to the verge

His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty! Beyond,
on what fields,

Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten
the eye

And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup
they put by?

He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not—he lets me
praise life,

Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

12

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pastures, when round me
the sheep

Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in
sleep,

And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the world that might
lie

'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill
and the sky:

And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be passed
with my flocks,

Let me people at least with my fancies, the plains and the
rocks,

Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the
show

Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall
know!

Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage
 that gains,
 And the prudence that keeps what men strive for." And
 now these old trains
 Of vague thought came again ; I grew surer ; so once more
 the string
 Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

13

" Yea, my king,"

I began—" thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that
 spring
 From the mere mortal life held in common by man and
 by brute :
 In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it
 bears fruit.
 Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem
 trembled first
 Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler ; then safely
 outburst
 The fan-branches all round ; and thou mindest when these
 too, in turn
 Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect ; yet
 more was to learn,
 Ev'n the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our
 dates shall we slight,
 When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow ? or care for
 the plight
 Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them ?
 Not so ! stem and branch
 Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-
 wine shall staunch
 Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such
 wine.
 Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for : the spirit be
 thine !
 By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still
 shalt enjoy
 More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life of a
 boy.
 Crush that life, and behold its wine running ! each deed
 thou hast done
 Dies, revives, goes to work in the world ; until e'en as the
 sun
 Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him,
 though tempests efface,
 Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must every
 where trace

The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of
 thy will,
 Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall
 thrill
 Thy whole people the countless, with ardour, till they too
 give forth
 A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the south and
 the north
 With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in
 the past.
 But the license of age has its limit ; thou diest at last.
 As the lion when age dims his eye-ball, the rose at her
 height,
 So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever take
 flight.
 No ! again a long draught of my soul-wine ! look forth
 o'er the years—
 Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual ; begin with
 the seer's !
 Is Saul dead ? in the depth of the vale make his tomb—
 bid arise
 A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till built
 to the skies.
 Let it mark where the great First King slumbers—whose
 fame would ye know ?
 Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall
 go
 In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul, so
 he did,
 With the sages directing the work, by the populace
 chid,—
 For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there ! Which
 fault to amend,
 In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they
 shall spend
 (See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and
 record
 With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's
 great word
 Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's
 a-wave
 With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet
 winds rave :
 So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their
 part
 In thy being ! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that
 thou art."

14

And behold while I sang . . . But O Thou who didst grant
 me that day,
 And before it not seldom hast granted, thy help to essay
 Carry on and complete an adventure,—my Shield and my
 Sword
 In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was
 my word,—
 Still be with me, who then at the summit of human
 endeavour
 And scaling the highest man's thought could, gazed hope-
 less as ever
 On the new stretch of Heaven above me—till Mighty to
 save,
 Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's
 throne from man's grave!
 Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my
 heart,
 Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels that night
 I took part,
 As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my
 sheep,
 And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish like sleep!
 For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron up-
 heaves
 The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and
 Kidron retrieves
 Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

15

I say then,—my song
 While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more
 strong,
 Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed
 His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand
 replumed
 His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the
 swathes
 Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance
 bathes,
 He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as
 of yore,
 And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set
 before.
 He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
 The broad brow from the daily communion; and still,
 though much spent

Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God
 did choose,
 To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite
 lose.
 So sank he along by the tent-prop, till, stayed by the pile
 Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there
 awhile,
 And so sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop,
 to raise
 His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched
 on the praise
 I foresaw from all men in all times, to the man patient
 there,
 And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I
 was 'ware
 That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast
 knees
 Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak-
 roots which please
 To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
 If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not,
 but slow
 Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
 Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: thro'
 my hair
 The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head,
 with kind power—
 All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
 Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinised
 mine—
 And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was
 the sign?
 I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a
 bliss,
 I would add to that life of the past, both the future and
 this.
 I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
 As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart
 to dispense!"

16

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

17

"I have gone the whole round of Creation: I saw and I
 spoke!
 I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my
 brain

And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned
him again

His creation's approval or censure : I spoke as I saw.
I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's
law !

Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty
tasked

To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dew-drop
was asked.

Have I knowledge ? confounded it shrivels at wisdom laid
bare.

Have I forethought ? how purblind, how blank, to the
Infinite care !

Do I task any faculty highest, to image success ?
I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen
God

In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the
clod.

And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it
too)

The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to God's All-
Complete,

As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet !
Yet with all this abounding experience, this Deity known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my
own.

There's one faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
E'en the Giver in one gift. Behold ! I could love if I
durst !

But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'er-take
God's own speed in the one way of love : I abstain, for
love's sake !

—What, my soul ? see thus far and no farther ? when door
great and small,

Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the
hundredth appal ?

In the least things, have faith, yet distrust in the greatest
of all ?

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it ? here, the
parts shift ?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the end, what
Began ?—

Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this
man,

And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet alone
can ?

Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much
less power,

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous
dower

Of the life he was gifted and filled with ? to make such a
soul,

Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the
whole ?

And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more,
the best ?

Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the
height

This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's
minute of night ?

Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake,
Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him
awake

From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself
set

Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony
yet

To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows ? or
endure !

The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to
make sure.

By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggle
in this.

18

“ I believe it ! 'tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who
receive :

In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.

All's one gift : thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to
my prayer

As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread

Sabaoth :

I will ?—the mere atoms despise me ! and why am I loth
To look that, even that in the face too ? why is it I dare

Think but lightly of such impuissance ? what stops my
despair ?

This :—'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what
man Would do !

See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall
through,

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to
enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing
which,
I know that my service is perfect.—Oh, speak through me
now!

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wilt Thou—so
wilt Thou!

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost
crown—

And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with
death!

As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall
stand the most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh,
that I seek

In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee: a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever! a Hand like
this hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the
Christ stand!"

19

I know not too well how I found my way home in the
night.

There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to
right,

Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive—the
aware—

I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly
there,

As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—

Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed
with her crews;

And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and
shot

Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted
not.

For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported—
suppressed

All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy
behest,

Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to
rest.

Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—

Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth ;
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills ;
In the shuddering forests' new awe ; in the sudden wind-thrills ;

In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still

Tho' averted, in wonder and dread ; and the birds stiff and chill

That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with awe !

E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new law.

The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers ;

The same worked in the heart of the cedar, and moved the vine-bowers.

And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,

With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—E'en so ! it is so.

LXXVII

" DE GUSTIBUS—"

1

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
(If loves remain)

In an English lane,

By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.

Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—

A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,

Making love, say,—

The happier they !

Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,

And let them pass, as they will too soon,

With the beanflowers' boon,

And the blackbird's tune,

And May, and June !

2

What I love best in all the world,

Is, a castle, precipice-encurled,

In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.

Or look for me, old fellow of mine,

(If I get my head from out the mouth
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
 And come again to the land of lands)—
 In a sea-side house to the farther south,
 Where the baked cicalas die of drouth,
 And one sharp tree ('tis a cypress) stands,
 By the many hundred years red-rusted,
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
 My sentinel to guard the sands
 To the water's edge. For, what expands
 Without the house, but the great opaque
 Blue breadth of sea, and not a break?
 While, in the house, for ever crumbles
 Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
 From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
 A girl bare-footed brings and tumbles
 Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
 And says there's news to-day—the king
 Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
 Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling.
 —She hopes they have not caught the felons.

Italy, my Italy!

Queen Mary's saying serves for me—

(When fortune's malice
 Lost her, Calais.)

Open my heart and you will see

Graved inside of it, “Italy.”

Such lovers old are I and she;

So it always was, so it still shall be!

LXXVIII

WOMEN AND ROSES

1

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.
 And which of its roses three
 Is the dearest rose to me?

2

Round and round, like a dance of snow
 In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
 Floating the women faded for ages,
 Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
 Then follow the women fresh and gay,
 Living and loving and loved to-day.

Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
 Beauties unborn. And all, to one cadence,
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

3

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
 Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached :
 Bees pass it unimpeached.

4

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
 You, great shapes of the antique time !
 How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
 Break my heart at your feet to please you ?
 Oh ! to possess, and be possessed !
 Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast !
 But once of love, the poesy, the passion,
 Drink once and die !—In vain, the same fashion,
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

5

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed ;
 Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
 Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

6

Deep as drops from a statue's plinth
 The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
 So will I bury me while burning,
 Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
 Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips !
 Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
 Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure !
 Girdle me once ! But no—in their old measure
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

7

Dear rose without a thorn,
 Thy bud's the babe unborn :
 First streak of a new morn.

8

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear !
 What's far conquers what is near.
 Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
 Sprung from the dust where our own flesh moulders.

What shall arrive with the cycle's change?
 A novel grace and a beauty strange.
 I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,
 Shaped her to his mind!—Alas! in like manner
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

LXXIX

PROTUS

AMONG these latter busts we count by scores,
 Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
 Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loosed-thonged vest,
 Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast
 One loves a baby face, with violets there,
 Violets instead of laurel in the hair,
 As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. "Protus ends a period
 Of empery beginning with a god:
 Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant;
 Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant.
 And if he quickened breath there, 'twould like fire
 Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.
 A fame that he was missing, spread afar—
 The world, from its four corners, rose in war,
 Till he was borne out on a balcony
 To pacify the world when it should see.
 The captains ranged before him, one, his hand
 Made baby points at, gained the chief command.
 And day by day more beautiful he grew
 In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,
 While young Greek sculptors gazing on the child
 Were, so, with old Greek sculpture, reconciled.
 Already sages laboured to condense
 In easy tomes a life's experience:
 And artists took grave counsel to impart
 In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art—
 To make his graces prompt as blossoming
 Of plentifully-watered palms in spring:
 Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne,
 For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,
 And mortals love the letters of his name."

—Stop! have you turned two pages? Still the same.
 New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say
 How that same year, on such a month and day,

“ John the Pannonian, groundedly believed
 A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprevied
 The Empire from its fate the year before,—
 Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore
 The same for six years, (during which the Huns
 Kept off their fingers from us) till his sons
 Put something in his liquor ”—and so forth.
 Then a new reign. Stay—“ Take at its just worth ”
 (Subjoins an annotator) “ what I give
 As hearsay. Some think John let Protus live
 And slip away. 'Tis said, he reached man's age
 At some blind northern court; made first a page
 Then, tutor to the children—last, of use
 About the hunting-stables. I deduce
 He wrote the little tract ‘ On worming dogs,’
 Whereof the name in sundry catalogues
 Is extant yet. A Protus of the race
 Is rumoured to have died a monk in Thrace,—
 And if the same, he reached senility.”

Here's John the Smith's rough-hammered head. Great
 eye,
 Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can
 To give you the crown-grasper. What a man!

LXXX

HOLY-CROSS DAY

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL
 CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME

What the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church,
 was rather to this effect:

1

FEE, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
 Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week.
 Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
 Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
 Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime
 Gives us the summons—'tis sermon-time.

2

Boh, here's Barnabas! Job, that's you?
 Up stumps Solomon—bustling too?

Shame, man ! greedy beyond your years
 To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears ?
 Fair play's a jewel ! leave friends in the lurch ?
 Stand on a line ere you start for the church.

3

Higgledy piggledy, packed we lie,
 Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,
 Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
 Worms in a carcass, fleas in a sleeve.
 Hist ! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
 And buzz for the bishop—here he comes.

4

Bow, wow, wow—a bone for the dog !
 I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
 What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
 To help and handle my lord's hour-glass !
 Didst ever behold so lithe a chine ?
 His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

5

Aaron's asleep—shove hip to haunch,
 Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch !
 Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,
 And the gown with the angel and thingumbob.
 What's he at, quotha ? reading his text !
 Now you've his curtsey—and what comes next ?

6

See to our converts—you doomed black dozen—
 No stealing away—nor cog nor cozen !
 You five that were thieves, deserve it fairly ;
 You seven that were beggars, will live less sparely
 You took your turn and dipped in the hat,
 Got fortune—and fortune gets you ; mind that !

7

Give your first groan—compunction's at work ;
 And soft ! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.
 Lo, Micah,—the self-same beard on chin
 He was four times already converted in !
 Here's a knife, clip quick—it's a sign of grace—
 Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

8

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at ?
 I know a point where his text falls pat.
 I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
 Went to my heart and made me vow
 I meddle no more with the worst of trades—
 Let somebody else pay his serenades.

9

Groan all together now, whee—hee—hee !
 It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me !
 It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
 Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist ;
 Jew-brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
 To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

10

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,
 Yelled, pricked us out to this church like hounds.
 It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
 Which gutted my purse, would throttle my creed.
 And it overflows, when, to even the odd,
 Men I helped to their sins, help me to their God.

11

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,
 And the rest sit silent and count the clock,
 Since forced to muse the appointed time
 On these precious facts and truths sublime,—
 Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
 In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

12

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
 Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
 And spoke, " This world has been harsh and strange,
 Something is wrong, there needeth a change.
 But what, or where ? at the last, or first ?
 In one point only we sinned, at worst.

13

" The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
 And again in his border see Israel set.
 When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
 The stranger-seed shall be joined to them :
 To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
 So the prophet saith and his sons believe.

14

“ Ay, the children of the chosen race
 Shall carry and bring them to their place :
 In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
 Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
 When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
 The oppressor triumph for evermore ?

15

“ God spoke, and gave us the word to keep :
 Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
 'Mid a faithless world,—at watch and ward,
 Till the Christ at the end relieve our guard.
 By his servant Moses the watch was set :
 Though near upon cock-crow—we keep it yet.

16

“ Thou ! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
 By the starlight naming a dubious Name !
 And if we were too heavy with sleep—too rash
 With fear—O thou, if that martyr-gash
 Fell on thee coming to take thine own,
 And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne—

17

“ Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
 But, the judgment over, join sides with us !
 Thine too is the cause ! and not more thine
 Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,
 Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,
 Who maintain thee in word, and defy thee in deed !

18

“ We withstood Christ then ? be mindful how
 At least we withstand Barabbas now !
 Was our outrage sore ? but the worst we spared,
 To have called these—Christians,—had we dared !
 Let defiance to them, pay mistrust of thee,
 And Rome make amends for Calvary !

19

“ By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
 By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
 By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
 By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
 By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
 And the summons to Christian fellowship,

“ We boast our proofs, that at least the Jew
 Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew.
 Thy face took never so deep a shade
 But we fought them in it, God our aid !
 A trophy to bear, as we march, a band
 South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land ! ”

LXXXI

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL :

A PICTURE AT FANO

1

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
 That child, when thou hast done with him, for me !
 Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
 Shall find performed thy special ministry
 And time come for departure, thou, suspending
 Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
 — Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

2

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
 From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
 And suddenly my head be covered o'er
 With those wings, white above the child who prays
 Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
 Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding
 Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door !

3

I would not look up thither past thy head
 Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
 For I should have thy gracious face instead,
 Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend me low
 Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
 And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
 Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread ?

4

If this was ever granted, I would rest
 My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
 Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
 Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,

Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and supprest.

5

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired !
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O, world, as God has made it ! all is beauty :
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared ?

6

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend)—that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

7

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
—My angel with me too : and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame, (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)

8

And since he did not work so earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong,—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend ?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end ?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

LXXXII

CLEON

“As certain also of your own poets have said.”—

CLEON the poet, (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps “Greece”)—
To Protos in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unlades
Gift after gift; they block my court at last
And pile themselves along its portico
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee:
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed
Of black and white slaves, (like the chequer-work
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves)
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands
Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!
For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,
Thy recognition of the use of life;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
To help on life in straight ways, broad enough
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake—
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,
Thou first of men mightst look out to the east.
The vulgar saw thy tower; thou sawest the sun.
For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak

Thy great words, and describe thy royal face—
Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most
Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.
It is as thou hast heard : in one short life
I, Cleon, have affected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.
That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
Is mine,—and also mine the little chant,
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their nets.
The image of the sun-god on the phare
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine ;
The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.
I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before ;
And I have written three books on the soul,
Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.
For music,—why, I have combined the moods,
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine ;
Thus much the people know and recognise,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.
We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,
Look not so great (beside their simple way)
To a judge who only sees one way at once,
One mind-point, and no other at a time,—
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way,—not ours, nor meant for ours,
And ours is greater, had we still to know.
Yet, what we call this life of men on earth,
This sequence of the soul's achievements here,
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
But each part having reference to all,—
How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
Endure effacement by another part ?
Was the thing done ?—Then what's to do again ?
See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,
But laid them on a level in his work,

Making at last a picture ; there it lies.
 So, first the perfect separate forms were made,
 The portions of mankind—and after, so,
 Occurred the combination of the same.
 Or where had been a progress, or otherwise ?
 Mankind, made up of all the single men,—
 In such a synthesis the labour ends.
 Now, mark me—those divine men of old time
 Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point
 The outside verge that rounds our faculty ;
 And where they reached, who can do more than reach ?
 It takes but little water just to touch
 At some one point the inside of a sphere,
 And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest
 In due succession : but the finer air
 Which not so palpably nor obviously,
 Though no less universally, can touch
 The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,
 Fills it more fully than the water did ;
 Holds thrice the weight of water in itself
 Resolved into a subtler element.
 And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
 Up to the visible height—and after, void ;
 Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
 And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
 To vindicate his purpose in its life—
 Why stay we on the earth unless to grow ?
 Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
 That he or other God, descended here
 And, once for all, showed simultaneously
 What, in its nature, never can be shown
 Piecemeal or in succession ;—showed, I say,
 The worth both absolute and relative
 Of all his children from the birth of time,
 His instruments for all appointed work.
 I now go on to image,—might we hear
 The judgment which should give the due to each,
 Show where the labour lay and where the ease,
 And prove Zeus' self, the latent, everywhere !
 This is a dream. But no dream, let us hope,
 That years and days, the summers and the springs
 Follow each other with unwaning powers—
 The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer far
 Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock ;
 The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe ;
 The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet ;
 The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers ;
 That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave,
 Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,

Refines upon the women of my youth.
 What, and the soul alone deteriorates ?
 I have not chanted verse like Homer's, no—
 Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved
 And painted men like Phidias and his friend :
 I am not great as they are, point by point :
 But I have entered into sympathy
 With these four, running these into one soul,
 Who, separate, ignored each others' arts.
 Say, is it nothing that I know them all ?
 The wild flower was the larger—I have dashed
 Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
 Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
 And show a better flower if not so large.
 I stand, myself. Refer this to the gods
 Whose gift alone it is ! which, shall I dare
 (All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
 That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
 Discourse of lightly or depreciate ?
 It might have fallen to another's hand—what then ?
 I pass too surely—let at least truth stay !

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
 This being with me as I declare, O king,
 My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,
 So done by me, accepted so by men—
 Thou askest if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
 I must not be accounted to attain
 The very crown and proper end of life.
 Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
 I face death with success in my right hand :
 Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
 The fortunate of men. " For " (writest thou)
 " Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought :
 Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
 The pictures men shall study ; while my life,
 Complete and whole now in its power and joy,
 Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
 Is lost indeed ; since,—what survives myself ?
 The brazen statute that o'erlooks my grave,
 Set on the promontory which I named.
 And that—some supple courtier of my heir
 Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,
 To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.
 I go, then : triumph thou, who dost not go ! "

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
 Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
 Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,

That admiration grows as knowledge grows ?
 That imperfection means perfection hid,
 Reserved in part, to grace the after-time ?
 If, in the morning of philosophy,
 Ere ought had been recorded, ought perceived,
 Thou, with the light now in thee, could'st have looked
 On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
 Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage—
 Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced
 The perfectness of others yet unseen.
 Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee
 " Wilt thou go on a step, improve on this,
 Do more for visible creatures than is done ? "

Thou wouldst have answered, " Ay, by making each
 Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.
 All's perfect else : the shell sucks fast the rock,
 The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
 And slides ; the birds take flight, forth range the beasts,
 Till life's mechanics can no further go—
 And all this joy in natural life, is put,
 Like fire from off Thy finger into each,
 So exquisitely perfect is the same.
 But 'tis pure fire—and they mere matter are ;
 It has them, not they it : and so I choose,
 For man, Thy last premeditated work
 (If I might add a glory to this scheme)
 That a third thing should stand apart from both,
 A quality arise within the soul,
 Which, intro-active, made to supervise
 And feel the force it has, may view itself,
 And so be happy." Man might live at first
 The animal life : but is there nothing more ?
 In due time, let him critically learn
 How he lives ; and, the more he gets to know
 Of his own life's adaptabilities,
 The more joy-giving will his life become.
 The man who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said :
 " Let progress end at once,—man make no step
 Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
 Using his senses, not the sense of sense."
 In man there's failure, only since he left
 The lower and unconscious forms of life.
 We called it an advance, the rendering plain
 A spirit might grow conscious of that life,
 And, by new lore so added to the old,
 Take each step higher over the brute's head.
 This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,

Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
 Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
 Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to ;
 A tower that crowns a country. But alas !
 The soul now climbs it just to perish there,
 For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—
 We know this, which we had not else perceived)
 That there's a world of capability
 For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,
 Inviting us ; and still the soul craves all,
 And still the flesh replies, " Take no jot more
 Than ere you climbed the tower to look abroad !
 Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has brought
 Deduction to it." We struggle—fain to enlarge
 Our bounded physical reciprocity,
 Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
 Repair the waste of age and sickness. No,
 It skills not : life's inadequate to joy,
 As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.
 They praise a fountain in my garden here
 Wherein a Naiad sends the water-spurt
 Thin from her tube ; she smiles to see it rise.
 What if I told her, it is just a thread
 From that great river which the hills shut up,
 And mock her with my leave to take the same ?
 The artificer has given her one small tube
 Past power to widen or exchange—what boots
 To know she might spout oceans if she could ?
 She cannot lift beyond her first straight thread.
 And so a man can use but a man's joy
 While he sees God's. Is it, for Zeus to boast
 " See, man, how happy I live, and despair—
 That I may be still happier—for thy use !"
 If this were so, we could not thank our Lord,
 As hearts beat on to doing : 'tis not so—
 Malice it is not. Is it carelessness ?
 Still, no. If care—where is the sign, I ask—
 And get no answer : and agree in sum,
 O king, with thy profound discouragement,
 Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
 Most progress is most failure ! thou sayest well.

The last point now :—thou dost except a case—
 Holding joy not impossible to one
 With artist-gifts—to such a man as I—
 Who leave behind me living works indeed ;
 For, such a poem, such a painting lives.
 What ? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
 Confound the accurate view of what joy is

(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)
 With feeling joy? confound the knowing how
 And showing how to live (my faculty)
 With actually living?—Otherwise
 Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
 Because in my great epos I display
 How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—
 Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
 Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young?
 Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
 The many years of pain that taught me art!
 Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
 How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:
 But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.
 Yon rower with the moulded muscles there
 Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
 I can write love-odes—thy fair slave's an ode.
 I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
 For being beloved: she turns to that young man
 The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
 I know the joy of kingship: well—thou art king!

“But,” sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,
 To find thee tripping on a mere word) “what
 Thou writest, paintest, stays: that does not die:
 Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
 And Æschylus, because we read his plays!”
 Why, if they live still, let them come and take
 Thy slave in my despite—drink from thy cup—
 Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive?
 Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,—
 In this, that every day my sense of joy
 Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
 In power and insight) more enlarged, more keen;
 While every day my hairs fall more and more,
 My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—
 The horror quickening still from year to year,
 The consummation coming past escape
 When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—
 When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
 Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
 Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,
 I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,
 The man who loved his life so over much,
 Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
 I dare at times imagine to my need
 Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
 Unlimited in capability
 For joy, as this is in desire for joy,

To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us.
 That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait
 On purpose to make sweet the life at large—
 Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death
 We burst there as the worm into the fly,
 Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But, no!
 Zeus has not yet revealed it; and, alas!
 He must have done so—were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought die,
 Glad for what was. Farewell. And for the rest,
 I cannot tell thy messenger aright
 Where to deliver what he bears of thine
 To one called Paulus—we have heard his fame
 Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
 I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
 Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
 As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
 Hath access to a secret shut from us?
 Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
 In stooping to inquire of such an one,
 As if his answer could impose at all.
 He writeth, doth he? Well, and he may write.
 Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
 Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ;
 And (as I gathered from a bystander)
 Their doctrines could be held by no sane man.

LXXXIII

THE TWINS

“Give” and “It-shall-be-given-unto-you.”

1

GRAND rough old Martin Luther
 Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,
 The better the uncouth:
 Do roses stick like burrs?

2

A beggar asked an alms
 One day at an abbey-door,
 Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,
 The Abbot replied, “We’re poor!”

3

“ Poor, who had plenty once,
 “ When gifts fell thick as rain :
 “ But they give us nought, for the nonce,
 “ And how should we give again ? ”

4

Then the beggar, “ See your sins !

“ Of old, unless I err,

“ Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,

“ Date and Dabitur.”

5

“ While Date was in good case

“ Dabitur flourished too :

“ For Dabitur’s lenten face,

“ No wonder if Date rue.”

6

“ Would ye retrieve the one ?

“ Try and make plump the other !

“ When Date’s penance is done,

“ Dabitur helps his brother.”

7

“ Only, beware relapse ! ”

The Abbot hung his head.

This beggar might be, perhaps,

An angel, Luther said.

LXXXIV

POPULARITY

1

STAND still, true poet that you are,
 I know you ; let me try and draw you.
 Some night you’ll fail us. When afar
 You rise, remember one man saw you,
 Knew you, and named a star.

2

My star, God’s glow-worm ! Why extend
 That loving hand of His which leads you,
 Yet locks you safe from end to end
 Of this dark world, unless He needs you—
 Just saves your light to spend ?

3

His clenched Hand shall uncloset at last
 I know, and let out all the beauty.
 My poet holds the future fast,
 Accepts the coming ages' duty,
 Their present for this past.

4

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
 Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
 "Others give best at first, but Thou
 For ever set'st our table praising,—
 Keep'st the good wine till now."

5

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

6

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

7

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

8

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

9

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

10

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

11

Mere conchs ! not fit for warp or woof !
 Till art comes,—comes to pound and squeeze
 And clarify,—refines to proof
 The liquor filtered by degrees,
 While the world stands aloof.

12

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

13

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

LXXXV

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE

1

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

THE Lord, we look to once for all,
 Is the Lord we should look at, all at once :
 He knows not to vary, saith St. Paul,
 Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.
 See him no other than as he is ;
 Give both the Infinites their due—
 Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
 As infinite a justice too.

[Organ : *plagal-cadence.*

As infinite a justice too.

2

ONE SINGETH

JOHN, Master of the Temple of God,
 Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,
 What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,
 He sold it to Sultan Saladin—
 Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,
 Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,
 And clipt of his wings in Paris square,
 They bring him now to be burned alive.

*[And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern, ye shall
 say to confirm him who singeth—*

We bring John now to be burned alive.

3

In the midst is a goodly gallows built ;
 'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck ;
 But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,
 Make a trench all round with the city muck,
 Inside they pile log upon log, good store ;
 Faggots not few, blocks great and small,
 Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—
 For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

CHORUS

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

4

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith ;
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow ;
 Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith ;
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow ;
 Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
 Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,
 Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
 Sing " Laudes " and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS

Laus Deo—who bids clap-to the torch.

5

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,
 Is burning alive in Paris square !
 How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged ?
 Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there ?
 Or heave his chest, while a band goes round ?
 Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced ?
 Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound ?
 —Thinks John—I will call upon Jesus Christ.
 [Here one crosseth himself.]

6

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,
 Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk ;
 To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.
 (*Salvâ reverentiâ.*)
 Now it was, “Saviour, bountiful lamb,
 I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast me.
 See thy servant, the plight wherein I am !
 Art thou a Saviour ? Save thou me !”

CHORUS

’Tis John the mocker cries, Save thou me !

7

Who maketh God’s menace an idle word ?
 —Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,
 Than a damsel’s threat to her wanton bird ? —
 For she too prattles of ugly names.
 —Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what he knows ?
 That God is good and the rest is breath ;
 Why else is the same styled, Sharon’s rose ?
 Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith !

8

Alack, there be roses and roses, John !
 Some, honied of taste like your leman’s tongue.
 Some, bitter—for why ? (roast gaily on !)
 Their tree struck root in devil’s dung !

When Paul once reasoned of righteousness
 And of temperance and of judgment to come,
 Good Felix trembled, he could no less—
 John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb.

CHORUS

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb ?

9

Ha, ha, John plucks now at his rose
 To rid himself of a sorrow at heart !
 Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays unclose ;
 Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart ;
 And with blood for dew, the bosom boils ;
 And a gust of sulphur is all its smell ;
 And lo, he is horribly in the toils
 Of a coal-black giant flower of Hell !

CHORUS

What maketh Heaven, that maketh Hell.

10

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,
 On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life—
 To the Person, he bought and sold again—
 For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—
 Feature by feature It took its place !
 And his voice like a mad dog's choking bark
 At the steady whole of the Judge's Face—
 Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

God help all poor souls lost in the dark !

LXXXVI

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

1

I WONDER do you feel to-day
 As I have felt, since, hand in hand,
 We sat down on the grass, to stray
 In spirit better through the land,
 This morn of Rome and May ?

2

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
 Has tantalised me many times,
 (Like turns of thread the spiders throw
 Mocking across our path) for rhymes
 To catch at and let go.

3

Help me to hold it : first it left
 The yellowing fennel, run to seed
 There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
 Some old tomb's ruin : yonder weed
 Took up the floating weft,

4

Where one small orange cup amassed
 Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
 Among the honey-meal,—and last
 Everywhere on the grassy slope
 I traced it. Hold it fast !

5

The champaign with its endless fleece
 Of feathery grasses everywhere !
 Silence and passion, joy and peace,
 An everlasting wash of air—
 Rome's ghost since her decease.

6

Such life there, through such lengths of hours,
 Such miracles performed in play,
 Such primal naked forms of flowers,
 Such letting Nature have her way
 While Heaven looks from its towers.

7

How say you ? Let us, O my dove,
 Let us be unashamed of soul,
 As earth lies bare to heaven above.
 How is it under our control
 To love or not to love ?

8

I would that you were all to me,
 You that are just so much, no more—
 Nor yours, nor mine,—nor slave nor free !
 Where does the fault lie ? what the core
 Of the wound, since wound must be ?

9

I would I could adopt your will,
 See with your eyes, and set my heart
 Beating by yours, and drink my fill
 At your soul's springs,—your part, my part
 In life, for good and ill.

10

No. I yearn upward—touch you close,
 Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
 Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
 And love it more than tongue can speak—
 Then the good minute goes.

11

Already how am I so far
 Out of that minute? Must I go
 Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
 Onward, whenever light winds blow,
 Fixed by no friendly star?

12

Just when I seemed about to learn!
 Where is the thread now? Off again!
 The old trick! Only I discern—
 Infinite passion and the pain
 Of finite hearts that yearn.

LXXXVII

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
 Singing together.
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,
 Each in its tether
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
 Cared-for till cock-crow.
 Look out if yonder's not the day again
 Rimming the rock-row!
 That's the appropriate country—there, man's thought,
 Rarer, intenser,
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
 Chafes in the censer!

Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop ;
 Seek we sepulture
 On a tall mountain, citted to the top,
 Crowded with culture !
 All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels ;
 Clouds overcome it ;
 No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's
 Circling its summit !
 Thither our path lies—wind we up the heights—
 Wait ye the warning ?
 Our low life was the level's and the night's ;
 He's for the morning !
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect the head,
 'Ware the beholders !
 This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,
 Borne on our shoulders.
 Sleep, crop and herd ! sleep, darkling thorpe and
 croft,
 Safe from the weather !
 He, whom we convey to his grave aloft,
 Singing together,
 He was a man born with thy face and throat,
 Lyric Apollo !
 Long he lived nameless : how should spring take note
 Winter would follow ?
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone !
 Cramped and diminished,
 Moaned he, " New measures, other feet anon !
 My dance is finished ? "
 No, that's the world's way ! (keep the mountain-side,
 Make for the city.)
 He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
 Over men's pity ;
 Left play for work, and grappled with the world
 Bent on escaping :
 " What's in the scroll," quoth he, " thou keepest furled ?
 Shew me their shaping,
 Theirs, who most studied man, the bard and sage,—
 Give ! "—So he gowned him,
 Straight got by heart that book to its last page :
 Learned, we found him !
 Yea, but we found him bald too—eyes like lead,
 Accents uncertain :
 " Time to taste life," another would have said,
 " Up with the curtain ! "
 This man said rather, " Actual life comes next ?
 Patience a moment !
 Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
 Still, there's the comment.

Let me know all. Prate not of most or least,
 Painful or easy :
 Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
 Ay, nor feel queasy !"
 Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
 When he had learned it,
 When he had gathered all books had to give ;
 Sooner, he spurned it !
 Image the whole, then execute the parts—
 Fancy the fabric
 Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
 Ere mortar dab brick !
 (Here's the town-gate reached : there's the market-place
 Gaping before us.)
 Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
 (Hearten our chorus)
 Still before living he'd learn how to live—
 No end to learning.
 Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
 Use for our earning.
 Others mistrust and say—" But time escapes,—
 Live now or never !"
 He said, " What's Time ? leave Now for dogs and apes !
 Man has For ever."
 Back to his book then : deeper drooped his head ;
Calculus racked him :
 Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead ;
Tussis attacked him.
 " Now, Master, take a little rest !"—not he !
 (Caution redoubled !
 Step two a-breast, the way winds narrowly.)
 Not a whit troubled,
 Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
 Fierce as a dragon
 He, (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
 Sucked at the flagon.
 Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
 Heedless of far gain,
 Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,
 Bad is our bargain !
 Was it not great ? did not he throw on God,
 (He loves the burthen)—
 God's task to make the heavenly period
 Perfect the earthen ?
 Did not he magnify the mind, shew clear
 Just what it all meant ?
 He would not discount life, as fools do here,
 Paid by instalment !

He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
 Found, or earth's failure :
 " Wilt thou trust death or not ? " he answered " Yes.
 Hence with life's pale lure ! "

That low man seeks a little thing to do,
 Sees it and does it :
 This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
 Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,
 His hundred's soon hit :
 This high man, aiming at a million,
 Misses an unit.

That, has the world here—should he need the next,
 Let the world mind him !
 This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
 Seeking shall find Him.

So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife,
 Ground he at grammar ;
 Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife.
 While he could stammer

He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be !—
 Properly based *Oun*—
 Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
 Dead from the waist down.

Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.
 Hail to your purlieus
 All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
 Swallows and curlews !
 Here's the top-beak ! the multitude below
 Live, for they can there.

This man decided not to Live but Know—
 Bury this man there ?
 Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
 Lightnings are loosened,
 Stars come and go ! let joy break with the storm—
 Peace let the dew send !
 Lofty designs must close in like effects :
 Loftily lying,
 Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,
 Living and dying.

LXXXVIII

ONE WAY OF LOVE

1

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

2

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

3

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

LXXXIX

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

1

JUNE was not over,
 Though past the full,
 And the best of her roses
 Had yet to blow,
 When a man I know
 (But shall not discover,
 Since ears are dull,
 And time discloses)
 Turned him and said with a man's true air,
 Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere,—
 "If I tire of your June, will she greatly care?"

2

Well, dear, in-doors with you !
 True, serene deadness
 Tries a man's temper.
 What's in the blossom
 June wears on her bosom ?
 Can it clear scores with you ?
 Sweetness and redness,
Eadem semper !
 Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly !
 If June mends her bowers now, your hand left unsightly
 By plucking their roses,—my June will do rightly.

3

And after, for pastime,
 If June be refulgent
 With flowers in completeness,
 All petals, no prickles,
 Delicious as trickles
 Of wine poured at mass-time,—
 And choose One indulgent
 To redness and sweetness :
 Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
 She use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
 To stop the fresh spinning,—why, June will consider.

XC

“ TRANSCENDENTALISM: A POEM
 IN TWELVE BOOKS ”

Stop playing, poet ! may a brother speak ?
 'Tis you speak, that's your error. Song's our art :
 Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts
 Instead of draping them in sights and sounds.
 —True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure
 up !
 But why such long proclusion and display,
 Such turning and adjustment of the harp,
 And taking it upon your breast at length,
 Only to speak dry words across its strings ?
 Stark-naked thought is in request enough—
 Speak prose and holloa it till Europe hears !
 The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,
 Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp—
 Exchange our harp for that,—who hinders you ?

But here's your fault; grown men want thought, you think;
 Thought's what they mean by verse, and seek in verse:
 Boys seek for images and melody,
 Men must have reason—so you aim at men.
 Quite otherwise! Objects throng our youth, 'tis true,
 We see and hear and do not wonder much.
 If you could tell us what they mean, indeed!
 As Swedish Bœhme never cared for plants
 Until it happed, a-walking in the fields,
 He noticed all at once that plants could speak,
 Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him.
 That day the daisy had an eye indeed—
 Colloquised with the cowslip on such themes!
 We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose.
 But by the time youth slips a stage or two
 While reading prose in that tough book he wrote,
 (Collating, and emendating the same
 And settling on the sense most to our mind)
 We shut the clasps and find life's summer past.
 Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our loss—
 Another Bœhme with a tougher book
 And subtler meanings of what roses say,—
 Or some stout Mage like him of Halberstadt,
 John, who made things Bœhme wrote thoughts about?
 He with a “ look you ! ” vents a brace of rhymes,
 And in there breaks the sudden rose herself,
 Over us, under, round us every side,
 Nay, in and out the tables and the chairs
 And musty volumes, Bœhme's book and all,—
 Buries us with a glory, young once more,
 Pouring heaven into this shut house of life.

So come, the harp back to your heart again!
 You are a poem, though your poem's naught.
 The best of all you did before, believe,
 Was your own boy's-face o'er the finer chords
 Bent, following the cherub at the top
 That points to God with his paired half-moon wings.

MISCONCEPTIONS

1

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,
 Making it blossom with pleasure,
 Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
 Fit for her nest and her treasure.
 Oh, what a hope beyond measure
 Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—
 So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

2

THIS is a heart the Queen leant on,
 Thrilled in a minute erratic,
 Ere the true bosom she bent on,
 Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
 Oh, what a fancy, ecstatic
 Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on—
 Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

xcii

ONE WORD MORE

TO E. B. B.

1

THERE they are, my fifty men and women
 Naming me the fifty poems finished!
 Take them, Love, the book and me together,
 Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

2

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
 Made and wrote them in a certain volume
 Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
 Else he only used to draw Madonnas:
 These, the world might view—but one, the volume.
 Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you.
 Did she live and love it all her life-time?
 Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,

Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
 Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
 Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—
 Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,
 Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's?

3

You and I would rather read that volume,
 (Take to his beating bosom by it)
 Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
 Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas—
 Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
 Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
 Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—
 Seen by us and all the world in circle.

4

You and I will never read that volume.
 Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
 Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
 Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
 Cried, and the world with it, "Ours—the treasure!"
 Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

5

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
 Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."
 While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
 (Peradventure with a pen corroded
 Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
 When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
 Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
 Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
 Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
 Let the wretch go festering thro' Florence)—
 Dante, who loved well because he hated,
 Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
 Dante standing, studying his angel,—
 In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
 Says he—"Certain people of importance"
 (Such he gave his daily, dreadful line to)
 Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet.
 Says the poet—"Then I stopped my painting."

6

You and I would rather see that angel,
 Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
 Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno.

7

You and I will never see that picture.
 While he mused on love and Beatrice,
 While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
 In they broke, those "people of importance:"
 We and Bice bear the loss forever.

8

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?

9

This: no artist lives and loves that longs not
 Once, and only once, and for one only,
 (Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language
 Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—
 Using nature that's an art to others,
 Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.
 Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
 None but would forego his proper dowry,—
 Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—
 Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
 Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
 Once, and only once, and for one only,
 So to be the man and leave the artist,
 Save the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

10

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!
 He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
 Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
 Even he, the minute makes immortal,
 Proves, perchance, his mortal in the minute,
 Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
 While he smites, how can he but remember,
 So he smote before, in such a peril,
 When they stood and mocked—"Shall smiting help us?"
 When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy!"
 When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,
 Throwing him for thanks—"But drought was pleasant."
 Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;
 Thus the doing savours of disrelish;
 Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;
 O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,
 Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture.
 For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
 Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
 Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—

“How should'st thou, of all men, smite, and save us?”
 Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—
 “Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better.”

11

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!
 Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,
 Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.
 Never dares the man put off the prophet.

12

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
 (Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,
 Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)
 He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
 Keeping a reserve of scanty water
 Meant to save his own life in the desert;
 Ready in the desert to deliver
 (Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
 Hoard and life together for his mistress.

13

I shall never, in the years remaining,
 Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
 Make you music that should all-express me;
 So it seems: I stand on my attainment.
 This of verse alone, one life allows me;
 Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
 Other heights in other lives, God willing—
 All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!

14

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
 Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
 Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
 Lines I write the first time and the last time.
 He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush.
 Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
 Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
 Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
 Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
 He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver,
 Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
 He who writes, may write for once, as I do.

15

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
 Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
 Enter each and all, and use their service,
 Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.
 Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
 Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:
 I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's,
 Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
 Let me speak this once in my true person,
 Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
 Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence—
 Pray you, look on these my men and women,
 Take and keep my fifty poems finished;
 Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!
 Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

16

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!
 Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
 Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured,
 Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
 Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
 Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
 Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
 Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
 Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
 Now, a piece of her old self, improverished,
 Hard to greet, she traverses the houseroofs,
 Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
 Goes dispiritedly,—glad to finish.

17

What, there's nothing in the moon note-worthy?
 Nay—for if that moon could love a mortal,
 Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy)
 All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos)
 She would turn a new side to her mortal,
 Side unseen or herdsman, huntsman, steersman—
 Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
 Blind to Galileo on his turret,
 Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even!
 Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—
 When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
 Opens out anew for worse or better?
 Proves she like some portent of an ice-berg
 Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
 Hungry with huge teeth of splintered chrystals?

Proves she as the paved-work of a sapphire
 Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain ?
 Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
 Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
 Stand upon the paved-work of a sapphire.
 Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
 Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved-work,
 When they ate and drank and saw God also !

18

What were seen ? None knows, none ever shall know.
 Only this is sure—the sight were other,
 Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
 Dying now impoverished here in London.
 God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
 Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
 One to show a woman when he loves her.

19

This I say of me, but think of you, Love !
 This to you—yourself my moon of poets !
 Ah, but that's the world's side—there's the wonder—
 Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you.
 There, in turn I stand with them and praise you,
 Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
 But the best is when I glide from out them,
 Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
 Come out on the other side, the novel
 Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
 Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

20

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
 Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
 Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,
 Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom !

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

XIII

JAMES LEE

I.—AT THE WINDOW

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

And the world has changed!
The sun's a stranger!
And the bird estranged!
The wind has dropped,
And the sky's deranged!
Summer has stopped.

1864

2

Look in my eyes!
Wilt thou change too?
Should I fear surprise?
Shall I find aught new
In the old and dear,
In the good and true,
With the changing year?

3

Thou art a man,
But I am thy love!
For the lake, its swan;
For the dell, its dove;
And for thee—(oh, haste!)
Be, to hand above,
Me, to hold embraced!

II.—BY THE FRESIDIO

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

XCIH

JAMES LEE

I.—AT THE WINDOW

1

AH, Love, but a day
 And the world has changed !
 The sun's away,
 And the bird estranged ;
 The wind has dropped,
 And the sky's deranged :
 Summer has stopped.

2

Look in my eyes !
 Wilt thou change too ?
 Should I fear surprise ?
 Shall I find aught new
 In the old and dear,
 In the good and true.
 With the changing year ?

3

Thou art a man,
 But I am thy love !
 For the lake, its swan ;
 For the dell, its dove ;
 And for thee—(oh, haste !)
 Me, to bend above,
 Me, to hold embraced !

II.—BY THE FIRESIDE

1

Is all our fire of shipwreck wood,
 Oak and pine?
 Oh, for the ills half-understood,
 The dim dead woe
 Long ago
 Befallen this bitter coast of France!
 Well, poor sailors took their chance;
 I take mine.

2

A ruddy shaft our fire must shoot
 O'er the sea:
 Do sailors eye the casement—mute,
 Drenched and stark,
 From their bark—
 And envy, gnash their teeth for hate
 O' the warm safe house and happy freight
 —Thee and me?

3

God help you, sailors, at your need!
 Spare the curse!
 For some ships, safe in port indeed,
 Rot and rust,
 Run to dust,
 All through worms i' the wood, which crept,
 Gnawed our hearts out while we slept:
 That is worse.

4

Who lived here before us two?
 Old-world pairs!
 Did a woman ever—would I knew!—
 Watch the man
 With whom began
 Love's voyage full-sail,—(now, gnash your teeth!)
 When planks start, open hell beneath
 Unawares?

III.—IN THE DOORWAY

1

THE swallow has set her six young on the rail,
 And looks sea-ward:
 The water's in stripes like a snake, olive-pale
 To the leeward,—
 On the weather-side, black, spotted white with the
 wind.

“Good fortune departs, and disaster's behind,”—
 Hark, the wind with its wants and its infinite wail!

2

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the saltness, has furled
 Her five fingers,
 Each leaf like a hand opened wide to the world
 Where there lingers
 No glint of the gold, Summer sent for her sake:
 How the vines writhe in rows, each impaled on its
 stake!
 My heart shrivels up and my spirit shrinks curled.

3

Yet here are we two; we have love, house enough,
 With the field there,
 This house of four rooms, that field red and rough,
 Though it yield there,
 For the rabbit that robs, scarce a blade or a bent;
 If a magpie alight now, it seems an event;
 And they both will be gone at November's rebuff.

4

But why must cold spread? but wherefore bring
 change
 To the spirit,
 God meant should mate His with an infinite range
 And inherit
 His power to put life in the darkness and cold?
 Oh, live and love worthily, bear and be bold!
 Whom Summer made friends of, let Winter estrange!