

Even so, 'would have Him misconceive, suppose
 This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,
 And always, above all else, envies Him ;
 Wherefore he mainly dances on dark nights,
 Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,
 And never speaks his mind save housed as now :
 Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,
 O'erheard this speech, and asked " What chucklest at ? "
 'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
 Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,
 Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
 Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste :
 While myself lit a fire, and made a song
 And sung it, " *What I hate, be consecrate*
 " *To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate*
 " *For Thee ; what see for envy in poor me ? "*
 Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,
 Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime,
 That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch
 And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
 Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

[What, what ? A curtain o'er the world at once !
 Crickets stop hissing ; not a bird—or, yes,
 There scuds His raven that has told Him all !
 It was fool's play, this prattling ! Ha ! The wind
 Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,
 And fast invading fires begin ! White blaze—
 A tree's head snaps—and there, there, there, there, there,
 His thunder follows ! Fool to gibe at Him !
 Lo ! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos !
 'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,
 Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month
 One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape !]

CII

CONFESSIONS

1

WHAT is he buzzing in my ears ?

" Now that I come to die,

" Do I view the world as a vale of tears ? "

Ah, reverend sir, not I !

2

What I viewed there once, what I view again
 Where the physic bottles stand
 On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,
 With a wall to my bedside hand.

3

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
 From a house you could descry
 O'er the garden-wall: is the curtain blue
 Or green to a healthy eye?

4

To mine, it serves for the old June weather
 Blue above lane and wall;
 And that farthest bottle labelled "Ether"
 Is the house o'ertopping all.

5

At a terrace, somewhere near the stopper,
 There watched for me, one June,
 A girl: I know, sir, it's improper,
 My poor mind's out of tune.

6

Only, there was a way . . . you crept
 Close by the side, to dodge
 Eyes in the house, two eyes except:
 They styled their house "The Lodge."

7

What right had a lounge up their lane?
 But, by creeping very close,
 With the good wall's help,—their eyes might strain
 And stretch themselves to Oes.

8

Yet never catch her and me together,
 As she left the attic, there,
 By the rim of the bottle labelled "Ether,"
 And stole from stair to stair,

9

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,
 We loved, sir—used to meet :
 How sad and bad and mad it was—
 But then, how it was sweet !

CIII

MAY AND DEATH

1

I wish that when you died last May,
 Charles, there had died along with you
 Three parts of spring's delightful things ;
 Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

2

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps !
 There must be many a pair of friends
 Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
 Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

3

So, for their sake, be May still May !
 Let their new time, as mine of old,
 Do all it did for me : I bid
 Sweet sights and sounds throng manifold.

4

Only, one little sight, one plant,
 Woods have in May, that starts up green
 Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
 Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves between,—

5

That, they might spare ; a certain wood
 Might miss the plant ; their loss were small :
 But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,
 Its drop comes from my heart, that's all.

CIV

PROSPICE

FEAR death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
 The mist in my face,
 When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
 I am nearing the place,
 The power of the night, the press of the storm,
 The post of the foe;
 Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
 Yet the strong man must go:
 For the journey is done and the summit attained,
 And the barriers fall,
 Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
 The reward of it all.
 I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
 The best and the last!
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
 And bade me creep past.
 No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
 The heroes of old,
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
 Of pain, darkness and cold.
 For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minute's at end,
 And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
 Then a light, then thy breast,
 O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
 And with God be the rest!

CV

YOUTH AND ART

1

It once might have been, once only:
 We lodged in a street together,
 You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,
 I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

2

Your trade was with sticks and clay,
 You thumbed, thrust, patted and polished,
 Then laughed "They will see some day
 "Smith made, and Gibson demolished."

3

My business was song, song, song;
 I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered,
 "Kate Brown's on the boards ere long,
 "And Grisi's existence embittered!"

4

I earned no more by a warble
 Than you by a sketch in plaster;
 You wanted a piece of marble,
 I needed a music-master.

5

We studied hard in our styles,
 Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,
 For air looked out on the tiles,
 For fun watched each other's windows.

6

You lounged, like a boy of the South,
 Cap and blouse—nay, a bit of beard too;
 Or you got it, rubbing your mouth
 With fingers the clay adhered to.

7

And I—soon managed to find
 Weak points in the flower-fence facing,
 Was forced to put up a blind
 And be safe in my corset-lacing.

8

No harm! It was not my fault
 If you never turned your eye's tail up
 As I shook upon E *in alt*,
 Or ran the chromatic scale up:

9

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
 And the boys and girls gave guesses,
 And stalls in our street looked rare
 With bulrush and watercresses.

10

Why did not you pinch a flower
 In a pellet of clay and fling it?
 Why did not I put a power
 Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

11

I did look, sharp as a lynx,
 (And yet the memory rankles)
 When models arrived, some minx
 Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

12

But I think I gave you as good!
 "That foreign fellow,—who can know
 "How she pays, in a playful mood,
 "For his tuning her that piano?"

13

Could you say so, and never say,
 "Suppose we join hands and fortunes,
 "And I fetch her from over the way,
 "Her, piano, and long tunes and short tunes?"

14

No, no: you would not be rash,
 Nor I rasher and something over:
 You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,
 And Grisi yet lives in clover.

15

But you meet the Prince at the Board,
 I'm queen myself at *bals-paré*,
 I've married a rich old lord,
 And you're dubbed knight and an R.A.

16

Each life unfulfilled, you see ;
 It hangs still, patchy and scrappy :
 We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
 Starved, feasted, despaired,—been happy.

17

And nobody calls you a dunce,
 And people suppose me clever :
 This could but have happened once,
 And we missed it, lost it for ever.

CVI

A FACE

IF one could have that little head of hers
 Painted upon a background of pale gold,
 Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers !
 No shade encroaching on the matchless mould
 Of those two lips, which should be opening soft
 In the pure profile ; not as when she laughs,
 For that spoils all : but rather as if aloft
 Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's
 Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss
 And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.
 Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,
 How it should waver on the pale gold ground
 Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts !
 I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts
 Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
 Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb :
 But these are only massed there, I should think,
 Waiting to see some wonder momentarily
 Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky
 (That's the pale ground you'd see this sweet face by),
 All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
 Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

CVII

A LIKENESS

SOME people hang portraits up
 In a room where they dine or sup:
 And the wife clinks tea-things under,
 And her cousin, he stirs his cup,
 Asks "Who was the lady, I wonder?"
 "'T is a daub John bought at a sale,"
 Quoth the wife,—looks black as thunder:
 "What a shade beneath her nose!
 "Snuff-taking, I suppose,—"
 Adds the cousin, while John's corns ail.

Or else, there's no wife in the case,
 But the portrait's queen of the place,
 Alone mid the other spoils
 Of youth,—masks, gloves and foils,
 And pipe-sticks, rose, cherry-tree, jasmine,
 And the long whip, the tandem-lasher,
 And the cast from a fist ("not, alas! mine,
 "But my master's, the Tipton Slasher"),
 And the cards where pistol-balls mark ace,
 And a satin shoe used for cigar-case,
 And the chamois-horns ("shot in the Chablais")
 And prints—Rarey drumming on Cruiser,
 And Sayers, our champion, the bruiser,
 And the little edition of Rabelais:
 Where a friend, with both hands in his pockets,
 May saunter up close to examine it,
 And remark a good deal of Jane Lamb in it,
 "But the eyes are half out of their sockets;
 "That hair's not so bad, where the gloss is,
 "But they've made the girl's nose a proboscis:
 "Jane Lamb, that we danced with at Vichy!
 "What, is not she Jane? Then, who is she?"

All that I own is a print,
 An etching, a mezzotint;
 'T is a study, a fancy, a fiction,
 Yet a fact (take my conviction)
 Because it has more than a hint
 Of a certain face, I never
 Saw elsewhere touch or trace of
 In women I've seen the face of:
 Just an etching, and, so far, clever.

I keep my prints, an imbroglio,
 Fifty in one portfolio.
 When somebody tries my claret,
 We turn round chairs to the fire,
 Chirp over days in a garret,
 Chuckle o'er increase of salary,
 Taste the good fruits of our leisure,
 Talk about pencil and lyre,
 And the National Portrait Gallery:
 Then I exhibit my treasure.
 After we've turned over twenty,
 And the debt of wonder my crony owes
 Is paid to my Marc Antonios,
 He stops me—" *Festina lentè!*
 "What's that sweet thing there, the etching?"
 How my waistcoat-strings want stretching,
 How my cheeks grow red as tomatos,
 How my heart leaps! - But hearts, after leaps, ache.

"By the by, you must take, for a keepsake,
 " That other, you praised, of Volpato's."
 The fool! would he try a flight further and say—
 He never saw, never before to-day,
 What was able to take his breath away,
 A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
 With the dream of, meet death with,—why, I'll not
 engage
 But that, half in a rapture and half in a rage,
 I should toss him the thing's self—" 'T is only a
 duplicate,
 "A thing of no value! Take it, I supplicate!"

CVIII

APPARENT FAILURE

"We shall soon lose a celebrated building."

Paris Newspaper.

1

No, for I'll save it! Seven years since,
 I passed through Paris, stopped a day
 To see the baptism of your Prince;
 Saw, made my bow, and went my way:
 Walking the heat and headache off,

I took the Seine-side, you surmise,
Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,
Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,
So sauntered till—what met my eyes?

2

Only the Doric little Morgue!
The dead-house where you show your drowned:
Petrarch's Vaucluse makes proud the Sorgue,
Your Morgue has made the Seine renowned.
One pays one's debt in such a case;
I plucked up heart and entered,—stalked,
Keeping a tolerable face
Compared with some whose cheeks were chalked:
Let them! No Briton's to be baulked!

3

First came the silent gazers; next,
A screen of glass, we're thankful for;
Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,
The three men who did most abhor
Their life in Paris yesterday,
So killed themselves: and now, enthroned
Each on his copper couch, they lay
Fronting me, waiting to be owned.
I thought, and think, their sin's atoned.

4

Poor men, God made, and all for that!
The reverence struck me; o'er each head
Religiously was hung its hat,
Each coat dripped by the owner's bed,
Sacred from touch: each had his berth,
His bounds, his proper place of rest,
Who last night tenanted on earth
Some arch, where twelve such slept abreast,—
Unless the plain asphalte seemed best.

5

How did it happen, my poor boy?
You wanted to be Buonaparte
And have the Tuileries for toy,
And could not, so it broke your heart?

You, old one by his side, I judge,
 Were, red as blood, a socialist,
 A leveller! Does the Empire grudge
 You've gained what no Republic missed?
 Be quiet, and unclench your fist!

6

And this—why, he was red in vain,
 Or black,—poor fellow that is blue!
 What fancy was it turned your brain?
 Oh, women were the prize for you!
 Money gets women, cards and dice
 Get money, and ill-luck gets just
 The copper couch and one clear nice
 Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,
 The right thing to extinguish lust!

7

It's wiser being good than bad;
 It's safer being meek than fierce:
 It's fitter being sane than mad.
 My own hope is, a sun will pierce
 The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
 That, after Last, returns the First,
 Though a wide compass round be fetched;
 That what began best, can't end worst,
 Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

CIX

EPILOGUE

FIRST SPEAKER

1

ON the first of the Feast of Feasts,
 The Dedication Day,
 When the Levites joined the Priests
 At the Altar in robed array,
 Gave signal to sound and say,—

2

When the thousands, rear and van,
 Swarming with one accord
 Became as a single man
 (Look, gesture, thought and word)
 In praising and thanking the Lord,—

3

When the singers lift up their voice,
 And the trumpets made endeavour,
 Sounding, "In God rejoice!"
 Saying, "In Him rejoice
 "Whose mercy endureth for ever!"—

4

Then the Temple filled with a cloud,
 Even the House of the Lord;
 Porch bent and pillar bowed:
 For the presence of the Lord,
 In the glory of His cloud,
 Had filled the House of the Lord.

SECOND SPEAKER

Gone now! All gone across the dark so far,
 Sharpening fast, shuddering ever, shutting still,
 Dwindling into the distance, dies that star
 Which came, stood, opened once! We gazed our fill
 With upturned faces on as real a Face
 That, stooping from grave music and mild fire,
 Took in our homage, made a visible place
 Through many a depth of glory, gyre on gyre,
 For the dim human tribute. Was this true?
 Could man indeed avail, mere praise of his,
 To help by rapture God's own rapture too,
 Thrill with a heart's red tinge that pure pale bliss?
 Why did it end? Who failed to beat the breast,
 And shriek, and throw the arms protesting wide,
 When a first shadow showed the star addressed
 Itself to motion, and on either side
 The rims contracted as the rays retired;
 The music, like a fountain's sickening pulse,
 Subsided on itself; awhile transpired
 Some vestige of a Face no pangs convulse,

No prayers retard; then even this was gone,
 Lost in the night at last. We, lone and left
 Silent through centuries, ever and anon
 Venture to probe again the vault bereft
 Of all now save the lesser lights, a mist
 Of multitudinous points, yet suns, men say—
 And this leaps ruby, this lurks amethyst,
 But where may hide what came and loved our clay?
 How shall the sage detect in yon expanse
 The star which chose to stoop and stay for us?
 Unroll the records! Hailed ye such advance
 Indeed, and did your hope vanish thus?
 Watchers of twilight, is the worst averred?
 We shall not look up, know ourselves are seen,
 Speak, and be sure that we again are heard,
 Acting or suffering, have the disk's serene
 Reflect our life, absorb an earthly flame,
 Nor doubt that, were mankind inert and numb,
 Its core had never crimsoned all the same,
 Nor, missing ours, its music fallen dumb?
 Oh, dread succession to a dizzy post,
 Sad sway of sceptre whose mere touch appals,
 Ghastly dethronement, cursed by those the most
 On whose repugnant brow the crown next falls!

THIRD SPEAKER

1

Witless alike of will and way divine,
 How heaven's high with earth's low should intertwine!
 Friends, I have seen through your eyes: now use mine!

2

Take the least man of all mankind, as I;
 Look at his head and heart, find how and why
 He differs from his fellows utterly:

3

Then, like me, watch when nature by degrees
 Grows alive round him, as in Arctic seas
 (They said of old) the instinctive water flees

4

Toward some elected point of central rock,
 As though, for its sake only, roamed the flock
 Of waves about the waste: awhile they mock

5

With radiance caught for the occasion,—hues
Of blackest hell now, now such reds and blues
As only heaven could fitly interfuse,—

6

The mimic monarch of the whirlpool, king
O' the current for a minute: then they wring
Up by the roots and oversweep the thing,

7

And hasten off, to play again elsewhere
The same part, choose another peak as bare,
They find and flatter, feast and finish there.

8

When you see what I tell you,—nature dance
About each man of us, retire, advance,
As though the pageant's end were to enhance

9

His worth, and—once the life, his product, gained—
Roll away elsewhere, keep the strife sustained,
And show thus real, a thing the North but feigned—

10

When you acknowledge that one world could do
All the diverse work, old yet ever new,
Divide us, each from other, me from you,—

11

Why, where's the need of Temple, when the walls
O' the world are that? What use of swells and falls
From Levites' choir, Priests' cries, and trumpet-calls?

12

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows.

CX

EURYDICE TO ORPHEUS

A PICTURE BY LEIGHTON

BUT give them me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow !
Let them once more absorb me ! One look now
Will lap me round for ever, not to pass
Out of its light, though darkness lie beyond :
Hold me but safe again within the bond
Of one immortal look ! All woe that was,
Forgotten, and all terror that may be,
Defied,—no past is mine, no future : look at me !

THE END.

And—
 said she
 EURYPIDICE TO ORPHEUS

A PICTURE BY LEIGHTON

But give them me, the proud, the proud,
 Let them once more absorb me! One look now
 Will lap me round for ever, not to pass
 Out of its light, though darkness lie beyond;
 Hold me but safe again within the bond
 Of one immortal look! All woe that was,
 Forgotten, and all terror that may be,
 Deh'd,—no past is mine, no future; look at me!
 As though the past had never been,

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All things done
 All the world
 Divide

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 Of the world
 From the world

The world
 Of the world
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