

May lead within a world which (by
your leave)
Is Rome or London, not Fool's-paradise.

Embellish Rome, idealize away,
Make paradise of London if you can,
You 're welcome, nay, you 're wise.

A simile!

We mortals cross the ocean of this
world

Each in his average cabin of a life;
The best 's not big, the worst yields
elbow-room.

Now for our six months' voyage—how
prepare?

You come on shipboard with a lands-
man's list

Of things he calls convenient: so they
are!

An India screen is pretty furniture,
A piano-forte is a fine resource,

All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,
The new edition fifty volumes long;

And little Greek books, with the funny
type

They get up well at Leipsic, fill the
next:

Go on! slabbed marble, what a bath it
makes!

And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us
add!

'T were pleasant could Correggio's
fleeting glow

Hang full in face of one where'er one
roams,

Since he more than the others brings
with him

Italy's self,—the marvellous Moden-
ese!

Yet was not on your list before, per-
haps.

—Alas friend, here 's the agent . . .
is 't the name?

The captain, or whoever 's master
here—

You see him screw his face up; what 's
his cry

Ere you set foot on shipboard? "Six
feet square!"

If you won't understand what six feet
mean,

Compute and purchase stores accord-
ingly—

And if, in pique because he overhauls
Your Jerome, piano and bath, you
come on board

Bare—why, you cut a figure at the first
While sympathetic landsmen see you
off;

Not afterward, when long ere half seas
over,

You peep up from your utterly naked
boards

Into some snug and well-appointed
berth,

Like mine for instance (try the cooler
jug—

Put back the other, but don't jog the
ice!)

And mortified you mutter "Well and
good;

"He sits enjoying his sea-furniture;

"'T is stout and proper, and there 's
store of it:

"Though I 've the better notion, all
agree,

"Of fitting rooms up. Hang the car-
penter,

"Neat ship-shape fixings and contriv-
ances—

"I would have brought my Jerome,
frame and all!"

And meantime you bring nothing:
never mind—

You 've proved your artist-nature:
what you don't

You might bring, so despise me, as I
say.

Now come, let 's backward to the
starting-place.

See my way: we 're two college friends,
suppose.

Prepare together for our voyage, then;
Each note and check the other in his
work,—

Here 's mine, a bishop's outfit; criti-
cize!

What 's wrong? why won't you be a
bishop too?

Why first, you don't believe, you
don't and can't,

(Not stately, that is, and fixedly
And absolutely and exclusively)

In any revelation called divine.

No dogmas nail your faith; and what
remains

But say so, like the honest man you
are?

First, therefore, overhaul theology!

Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to
think,

Must find believing every whit as hard :
And if I do not frankly say as much,
The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now wait, my friend : well, I do not
believe—

If you'll accept no faith that is not
fixed,

Absolute and exclusive, as you say.
You're wrong—I mean to prove it in
due time.

Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie
I could not, cannot solve, nor ever
shall,

So give up hope accordingly to solve—
(To you, and over the wine). Our
dogmas then

With both of us, though in unlike
degree,

Missing full credence—overboard with
them !

I mean to meet you on your own
premise :

Good, there go mine in company with
yours !

And now what are we ? unbelievers
both,
Calm and complete, determinately
fixed

To-day, to-morrow and for ever, pray ?
You 'll guarantee me that ? Not so,
I think !

In no wise ! all we 've gained is, that
belief,

As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,
Confounds us like its predecessor.
Where 's

The gain ? how can we guard our un-
belief,

Make it bear fruit to us ?—the prob-
lem here.

Just when we are safest, there 's a sun-
set touch,

A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's
death,

A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that 's enough for fifty hopes and
fears

As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantas-
tic ring,

Round the ancient idol, on his base
again,—

The grand Perhaps ! We look on help-
lessly.

There the old misgivings, crooked
questions are—

This good God,—what he could do, if
he would,

Would, if he could—then must have
done long since :

If so, when, where and how ? some
way must be,—

Once feel about, and soon or late you
hit

Some sense, in which it might be, after
all.

Why not, " The Way, the Truth, the
Life ? "

—That way

Over the mountain, which who stands
upon

Is apt to doubt if it be indeed a road ;
While if he view it from the waste it-
self,

Up goes the line there, plain from base
to brow,

Not vague, mistakeable ! what 's a
break or two

Seen from the unbroken desert either
side ?

And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)
What if the breaks themselves should
prove at last

The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is
faith ?

And so we stumble at truth's very test !
All we have gained then by our unbel-
ief

Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt :
We called the chess-board white,—we
call it black.

" Well," you rejoin, " the end 's no
worse, at least ;

" We 've reason for both colours on
the board :

" Why not confess then, where I drop
the faith

" And you the doubt, that I 'm as right
as you ? "

Because, friend, in the next place,
this being so,

And both things even,—faith and un-
belief

Left to a man's choice,—we 'll proceed
a step

Returning to our image, which I like.

A man's choice, yes—but a cabin-passenger's—
 The man made for the special life of the world—
 Do you forget him? I remember though!
 Consult our ship's conditions and you find
 One and but one choice suitable to all;
 The choice, that you unluckily prefer,
 Turning things topsy-turvy—they or it
 Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief
 [course,
 Bears upon life, determines its whole
 Begins at its beginning. See the world
 Such as it is,—you made it not, nor I;
 I mean to take it as it is,—and you
 Not so you 'll take it,—though you get
 nought else.
 I know the special kind of life I like,
 What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,
 Brings out the best of me and bears
 me fruit
 In power, peace, pleasantness and
 length of days.
 I find that positive belief does this
 For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.
 —For you, it does, however?—that,
 we 'll try!
 'T is clear, I cannot lead my life, at
 least,
 Induce the world to let me peaceably,
 Without declaring at the outset,
 " Friends,
 " I absolutely and peremptorily
 " Believe! "—I say, faith is my waking
 life:
 One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,
 We know, but waking 's the main point
 with us,
 And my provision 's for life's waking
 part.
 Accordingly, I use heart, head and
 hand
 All day, I build, scheme, study, and
 make friends;
 And when night overtakes me, down I
 lie,
 Sleep, dream a little, and get done with
 it,
 The sooner the better, to begin afresh.
 What 's midnight doubt before the
 dayspring's faith?
 You, the philosopher that disbelieve,
 That recognise the night, give dreams
 their weight—

To be consistent you should keep your
 bed,
 Abstain from healthy acts that prove
 you man,
 For fear you drowse perhaps at un-
 wares! [dream,
 And certainly at night you 'll sleep and
 Live through the day and bustle as you
 please.
 And so you live to sleep as I to wake,
 To unbelieve as I to still believe?
 Well, and the common sense of the
 world calls you
 Bed-ridden,—and its good things come
 to me.
 Its estimation, which is half the fight,
 That's the first-cabin comfort I secure:
 The next . . . but you perceive with
 half an eye!
 Come, come, it 's best believing, if we
 may;
 You can't but own that!

Next, concede again,
 If once we choose belief, on all accounts
 We can't be too decisive in our faith,
 Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,
 To suit the world which gives us the
 good things.
 In every man's career are certain points
 Whereon he dares not be indifferent;
 The world detects him clearly, if he
 dare,
 As baffled at the game, and losing life.
 He may care little or he may care much
 For riches, honour, pleasure, work, re-
 pose,
 Since various theories of life and life's
 Success are extant which might easily
 Comport with either estimate of these;
 And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,
 Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool
 Because his fellow would choose other-
 wise:
 We let him choose upon his own ac-
 count
 So long as he 's consistent with his
 choice.
 But certain points, left wholly to him-
 self,
 When once a man has arbitrated on,
 We say he must succeed there or go
 hang.
 Thus, he should wed the woman he
 loves most
 Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or
 need—

For he can't wed twice. Then, he
 must avouch,
 Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
 The form of faith his conscience holds
 the best,
 Whate'er the process of conviction
 was :
 For nothing can compensate his mis-
 take
 On such a point, the man himself being
 judge :
 He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his
 soul.

Well now, there 's one great form of
 Christian faith
 I happened to be born in—which to
 teach
 Was given me as I grew up, on all
 hands,
 As best and readiest means of living by ;
 The same on examination being proved
 The most pronounced moreover, fixed,
 precise
 And absolute form of faith in the whole
 world—
 Accordingly, most potent of all forms
 For working on the world. Observe,
 my friend !
 Such as you know me, I am free to say,
 In these hard latter days which hamper
 one,
 Myself—by no immoderate exercise
 Of intellect and learning, and the tact
 To let external forces work for me,
 —Bid the street's stones be bread and
 they are bread ;
 Bid Peter's creed, or rather, Hilde-
 brand's,
 Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world
 And make my life an ease and joy and
 pride ;
 It does so,—which for me 's a great
 point gained,
 Who have a soul and body that exact
 A comfortable care in many ways.
 There 's power in me and will to dom-
 inate
 Which I must exercise, they hurt me
 else :
 In many ways I need mankind's re-
 spect,
 Obedience, and the love that 's born of
 fear :
 While at the same time, there 's a taste
 I have,
 A toy of soul, a titillating thing.

Refuses to digest these dainties crude.
 The naked life is gross till clothed upon :
 I must take what men offer, with a
 grace
 As though I would not, could I help it,
 take !
 An uniform I wear though over-rich—
 Something imposed on me, no choice of
 mine ;
 No fancy-dress worn for pure fancy's
 sake
 And despicable therefore ! now men
 kneel
 And kiss my hand—of course the
 Church's hand.
 Thus I am made, thus life is best for
 me,
 And thus that it should be I have pro-
 cured ;
 And thus it could not be another way,
 I venture to imagine.

You 'll reply,
 So far my choice, no doubt, is a suc-
 cess ;
 But were I made of better elements,
 With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like
 you,
 I hardly would account the thing suc-
 cess
 Though it did all for me I say.

But, friend,
 We speak of what is ; not of what
 might be,
 And how 't were better if 't were other-
 wise.
 I am the man you see here plain enough :
 Grant I'm a beast, why, beasts must
 lead beasts' lives !
 Suppose I own at once to tail and
 claws ;
 The tailless man exceeds me : but be-
 ing tailed
 I'll lash out lion fashion, and leave apes
 To dock their stump and dress their
 haunches up.
 My business is not to remake myself,
 But make the absolute best of what
 God made.
 Or—our first simile—though you
 proved me doomed
 To a viler berth still, to the steerage-
 hole,
 The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should
 strive
 To make what use of each were pos-
 sible ;

And as this cabin gets upholstery,
That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast

I fail of all your manhood's lofty castes
Enumerated so complacently,
On the mere ground that you forsooth can find

In this particular life I choose to lead
No fit provision for them. Can you not?

Say you, my fault is I address myself
To grosser estimators than should judge?

And that 's no way of holding up the soul,

Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows

One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools'—

Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that?

I pine among my million imbeciles
(You think) aware some dozen men of sense

Eye me and know me, whether I believe

In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,
And am a fool, or disbelieve in her

And am a knave,—approve in neither case,

Withhold their voices though I look their way:

Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end

(The thing they gave at Florence,—what 's its name?)

While the mad houseful's plaudits near out-bang

His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,

He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths

Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here—

That even your prime men who appraise their kind

Are men still, catch a wheel within a wheel,

See more in a truth than the truth's simple self,

Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street

Sixty the minute; what 's to note in that?

You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack;

Him you must watch—he 's sure to fall, yet stands!

Our interest 's on the dangerous edge of things.

The honest thief, the tender murderer,
The superstitious atheist, demirep

That loves and saves her soul in new French books—

We watch while these in equilibrium keep

The giddy line midway: one step aside,
They're classed and done with. I,

then, keep the line
Before your sages,—just the men to shrink

From the gross weights, coarse scales and labels broad

You offer their refinement. Fool or knave?

Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
When there 's a thousand diamond weights between?

So I enlist them. Your picked twelve, you 'll find,

Profess themselves indignant, scandalized

At thus being held unable to explain

How a superior man who disbelieves
May not believe as well: that 's

Schelling's way!

It 's through my coming in the tail of time,

Nicking the minute with a happy tact.
Had I been born three hundred years ago

They 'd say, "What 's strange? Blougram of course believes;"

And, seventy years since, "disbelieves of course."

But now, "He may believe; and yet, and yet

"How can he?" All eyes turn with interest.

Whereas, step off the line on either side—
You, for example, clever to a fault,

The rough and ready man who write apace,

Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less—

You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares?

Lord So-and-so—his coat bedropped with wax,

All Peter's chains about his waist, his
back
Brave with the needlework of Noodle-
dom—
Believes! Again, who wonders and
who cares?
But I, the man of sense and learning
too,
The able to think yet act, the this, the
that,
I, to believe at this late time of day!
Enough; you see, I need not fear con-
tempt.
—Except it's yours! Admire me as
these may,
You don't. But whom at least do you
admire? [ideal,
Present your own perfection, your
Your pattern man for a minute—oh,
make haste!
Is it Napoleon you would have us grow?
Concede the means; allow his head
and hand,
(A large concession, clever as you are)
Good! In our common primal ele-
ment
Of unbelief (we can't believe, you
know—
We're still at that admission, recol-
lect)
Where do you find—apart from, tower-
ing o'er
The secondary temporary aims
Which satisfy the gross taste you de-
pise—
Where do you find his star?—his
crazy trust
God knows through what or in what?
It's alive
And shines and leads him, and that's
all we want.
Have we aught in our sober night shall
point
Such ends as his were, and direct the
means
Of working out our purpose straight as
his,
Nor bring a moment's trouble on suc-
cess
With after-care to justify the same?
—Be a Napoleon and yet disbelieve—
Why, the man's mad, friend, take his
light away!
What's the vague good of the world, for
which you dare
With comfort to yourself blow millions
up?

We neither of us see it! we do see
The blown-up millions—spatter of
their brains
And writhing of their bowels and so
forth,
In that bewildering entanglement
Of horrible eventualities
Past calculation to the end of time!
Can I mistake for some clear word of
God
(Which were my ample warrant for it
all)
His puff of hazy instinct, idle talk,
"The State, that's I," quack-nonsense
about crowns,
And (when one beats the man to his
last hold)
A vague idea of setting things to rights,
Policing people efficaciously,
More to their profit, most of all to his
own;
The whole to end that dimmest of
ends
By an Austrian marriage, cant to us
the Church,
And resurrection of the old *régime*?
Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,
Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and
such?
No: for, concede me but the merest
chance
Doubt may be wrong—there's judg-
ment, life to come!
With just that chance, I dare not.
Doubt proves right?
This present life is all?—you offer me
Its dozen noisy years, without a chance
That wedding an arch-duchess, wear-
ing lace,
And getting called by divers new-
coined names,
Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me
dine,
Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like!
Therefore I will not.

Take another case?
Fit up the cabin yet another way.
What say you to the poets? shall we
write
Hamlet, Othello—make the world our
own,
Without a risk to run of either sort?
I can't!—to put the strongest reason
first.
"But try," you urge, "the trying shall
suffice;

"The aim, if reached or not, makes
 great the life :
 "Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest
 to fate !"
 Spare my self-knowledge—there's no
 fooling me !
 If I prefer remaining my poor self,
 I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.
 If I 'm a Shakespeare, let the well
 alone ;
 Why should I try to be what now I
 am ?
 If I 'm no Shakespeare, as too prob-
 able,—
 His power and consciousness and self-
 delight
 And all we want in common, shall I
 find—
 Trying for ever ? while on points of
 taste
 Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and
 I
 Are dowered alike—I'll ask you, I or
 he,
 Which in our two lives realizes most ?
 Much, he imagined—somewhat, I
 possess.
 He had the imagination ; stick to that !
 Let him say, "In the face of my soul's
 works
 "Your world is worthless and I touch it
 not
 "Lest I should wrong them"—I'll
 withdraw my plea.
 But does he say so ? look upon his
 life !
 Himself, who only can, gives judgment
 there.
 He leaves his towers and gorgeous
 palaces
 To build the trimmest house in Strat-
 ford town ;
 Saves money, spends it, owns the worth
 of things, [lute ;
 Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's
 Enjoys a show, respects the puppets,
 too,
 And none more, had he seen its entry
 once,
 Than "Pandulph, of fair Milan car-
 dinal."
 Why then should I who play that per-
 sonage,
 The very Pandulph Shakespeare's
 fancy made,
 Be told that had the poet chanced to
 start
 From where I stand now (some degree
 like mine
 Being just the goal he ran his race to
 reach)
 He would have run the whole race back,
 forsooth,
 And left being Pandulph, to begin
 write plays ?
 Ah, the earth's best can be but the
 earth's best !
 Did Shakespeare live, he could but sit
 at home
 And get himself in dreams the Vatican,
 Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Ro-
 man walls,
 And English books, none equal to his
 own,
 Which I read, bound in gold, (he never
 did).
 —Terni's fall, Naples' bay and Goth-
 ard's top—
 Eh, friend ? I could not fancy one of
 these ;
 But, as I pour this claret, there they
 are :
 I 've gained them—crossed St. Goth-
 ard last July
 With ten mules to the carriage and a
 bed [that ?
 Slung inside ; is my hap the worse for
 We want the same things, Shake-
 speare and myself,
 And what I want, I have : he, gifted
 more,
 Could fancy he too had it when he
 liked,
 But not so thoroughly that, if fate
 allowed,
 He would not have it also in my sense.
 We play one game ; I send the ball
 aloft
 No less adroitly that of fifty strokes
 Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and
 high
 Which sends them back to me : I
 wish and get.
 He struck balls higher and with better
 skill,
 But at a poor fence level with his head,
 And hit—his Stratford house, a coat of
 arms,
 Successful dealings in his grain and
 wool,—
 While I receive heaven's incense in my
 nose
 And style myself the cousin of Queen
 Bess.

Ask him, if this life 's all, who wins the game ?

Believe—and our whole argument breaks up.
 Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat ;
 Only, we can't command it ; fire and life
 Are all, dead matter 's nothing, we agree :
 And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,
 The fact 's the same,—belief's fire, once in us,
 Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself :
 We penetrate our life with such a glow
 As fire lends wood and iron—this turns steel,
 That burns to ash—all 's one, fire proves its power
 For good or ill, since men call flare success.
 But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn.
 Light one in me, I'll find it food enough !
 Why, to be Luther—that's a life to lead,
 Incomparably better than my own.
 He comes, reclaims God's earth for God,
 he says,
 Sets up God's rule again by simple means,
 Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.
 He flared out in the flaring of mankind ;
 Such Luther's luck was : how shall such be mine ?
 If he succeeded, nothing 's left to do :
 And if he did not altogether—well,
 Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be
 I might be also. But to what result ?
 He looks upon no future : Luther did.
 What can I gain on the denying side ?
 Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts,
 Read the text right, emancipate the world—
 The emancipated world enjoys itself
 With scarce a thank-you : Blougram told it first
 It could not owe a farthing,—not to him
 More than Saint Paul ? 't would press its pay, you think ?
 Then add there 's still that plaguy hundredth chance

Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run—

For what gain ? not for Luther's, who secured

A real heaven in his heart throughout his life,

Supposing death a little altered things.

“ Ay, but since really you lack faith,” you cry,

“ You run the same risk really on all sides,

“ In cool indifference as bold unbelief.

“ As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.

“ It 's not worth having, such imperfect faith,

“ No more available to do faith's work

“ Than unbelief like mine. Whole faith, or none ! ”

Softly, my friend ! I must dispute that point.

Once own the use of faith, I 'll find you faith.

We 're back on Christian ground. You call for faith :

I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.

The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I [say,

If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does ?

By life and man's free will, God gave for that !

To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice :

That 's our one act, the previous work's his own.

You criticize the soil ? it reared this tree—

This broad life and whatever fruit it bears !

What matter though I doubt at every pore,

Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,

Doubts in the trivial work of every day.
 Doubts at the very bases of my soul

In the grand moments when she probes herself—

If finally I have a life to show,
 The thing I did, brought out in evidence

Against the thing done to me under ground

By hell and all its brood, for aught I know ?

I say, whence sprang this? shows it
 faith or doubt?
 All's doubt in me; where's break of
 faith in this?
 It is the idea, the feeling and the love,
 God means mankind should strive for
 and show forth
 Whatever be the process to that end,—
 And not historic knowledge, logic
 sound,
 And metaphysical acumen, sure!
 "What think ye of Christ," friend?
 when all's done and said,
 Like you this Christianity or not?
 It may be false, but will you wish it
 true?
 Has it your vote to be so if it can?
 Trust you an instinct silenced long ago
 That will break silence and enjoin you
 love
 What mortified philosophy is hoarse,
 And all in vain, with bidding you de-
 spise?
 If you desire faith—then you've faith
 enough:
 What else seeks God—nay, what else
 seek ourselves?
 You form a motion of me, we'll sup-
 pose,
 On hearsay; it's a favourable one:
 "But still," (you add) "there was no
 such good man,
 "Because of contradiction in the facts.
 "One proves, for instance, he was born
 in Rome,
 "This Blougram; yet throughout the
 tales of him
 "I see he figures as an Englishman."
 Well, the two things are reconcilable.
 But would I rather you discovered
 that,
 Subjoining—"Still, what matter
 though they be?
 "Blougram concerns me nought, born
 here or there."
 Pure faith indeed—you know not
 what you ask!
 Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
 Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too
 much
 The sense of conscious creatures to be
 borne.
 It were the seeing him, no flesh shall
 dare.
 Some think, Creation's meant to show
 him forth:

I say it's meant to hide him all it can,
 And that's what all the blessed evil's
 for.
 Its use in Time is to environ us,
 Our breath, our drop of dew, with
 shield enough
 Against that sight till we can bear its
 stress.
 Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain
 And lidless eye and disemprisoned
 heart
 Less certainly would wither up at once
 Than mind, confronted with the truth
 of him.
 But time and earth case-harden us to
 live;
 The feeblest sense is trusted most; the
 child
 Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the
 place,
 Plays on and grows to be a man like us.
 With me, faith means perpetual unbel-
 lief
 Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Mi-
 chael's foot
 Who stands calm just because he feels
 it writhe.
 Or, if that's too ambitious,—here's
 my box—
 I need the excitation of a pinch
 Threatening the torpor of the inside-
 nose
 Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never
 comes.
 "Leave it in peace" advise the simple
 folk:
 Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,
 Say I—let doubt occasion still more
 faith!
 You'll say, once all believed, man,
 woman, child,
 In that dear middle-age these noodles
 praise.
 How you'd exult if I could put you
 back
 Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,
 Geology, ethnology, what not,
 (Greek endings, each the little passing-
 bell
 That signifies some faith's about to
 die)
 And set you square with Genesis
 again,—
 When such a traveller told you his last
 news,
 He saw the ark a-top of Ararat

But did not climb there since 't was
getting dusk
And robber-bands infest the moun-
tain's foot !
How should you feel, I ask, in such an
age,
How act ? As other people felt and
did ;
With soul more blank than this de-
canter's knob,
Believe—and yet lie, kill, rob, forni-
cate
Full in belief's face, like the beast you'd
be !

No, when the fight begins within
himself,
A man 's worth something. God
stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both
tug—
He 's left, himself, in the middle : the
soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle
through his life !
Never leave growing till the life to
come !
Here, we 've got callous to the Virgin's
winks
That used to puzzle people whole-
somely :
Men have outgrown the shame of being
fools,
What are the laws of nature, not to
bend
If the Church bid them ?—brother
Newman asks.
Up with the Immaculate Conception,
then—
On to the rack with faith !—is my ad-
vice.
Will not that hurry us upon our knees,
Knocking our breasts, " It can't be—
yet it shall !
" Who am I, the worm, to argue with
my Pope ?
" Low things confound the high
things ! " and so forth.
That 's better than acquitting God with
grace
As some folks do. He 's tried—no case
is proved,
Philosophy is lenient—he may go !
You 'll say, the old system 's not so
obsolete
But men believe still : ay, but who and
where ?

King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes ;
But even of these, what ragamuffin-
saint
Believes God watches him continually,
As he believes in fire that it will burn,
Or rain that it will drench him ? Break
fire's law,
Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just a singe or soaking ? " No,"
he smiles ;
" Those laws are laws that can enforce
themselves."

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is
great,
My faith 's still greater, then my faith 's
enough.
I have read much, thought much, ex-
perienced much,
Yet would die rather than avow my
fear
The Naples' liquefaction may be false,
When set to happen by the palace-
clock
According to the clouds or dinner-time.
I hear you recommend, I might at
least
Eliminate, declassifying my faith
Since I adopt it ; keeping what I must
And leaving what I can—such points
as this.
I won't—that is, I can't throw one
away.
Supposing there 's no truth in what I
hold
About the need of trial to man's faith,
Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end.
Clearing off one excrescence to see two.
There 's ever a next in size, now grown
as big.
That meets the knife : I cut and cut
again !
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes
last
But Fichte's clever cut at God himself?
Experimentalize on sacred things !
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor
brain
To stop betimes : they all get drunk
alike.
The first step, I am master not to take.
You 'd find the cutting-process to
your taste
As much as leaving growths of lie un-
pruned,

Nor see more danger in it,—you retort.
 Your taste 's worth minè; but my
 taste proves more wise
 When we consider that the steadfast
 hold
 On the extreme end of the chain of
 faith
 Gives all the advantage, makes the dif-
 ference
 With the rough purblind mass we seek
 to rule:
 We are their lords, or they are free of us,
 Just as we tighten or relax our hold.
 So, other matters equal, we 'll revert
 To the first problem—which, if solved
 my way
 And thrown into the balance, turns the
 scale—
 How we may lead a comfortable life,
 How suit our luggage to the cabin's
 size.

Of course you are remarking all this
 time
 How narrowly and grossly I view life,
 Respect the creature-comforts, care to
 rule
 The masses, and regard complacently
 "The cabin," in our old phrase. Well,
 I do,
 I act for, talk for, live for this world
 now,
 As this world prizes action, life and
 talk:
 No prejudice to what next world may
 prove,
 Whose new laws and requirements, my
 best pledge
 To observe then, is that I observe
 these now,
 Shall do hereafter what I do mean-
 while.
 Let us concede (gratuitously though)
 Next life relieves the soul of body,
 yields
 Pure spiritual enjoyment: well, my
 friend,
 Why lose this life in the meantime,
 since its use
 May be to make the next life more in-
 tense?

Do you know, I have often had a
 dream
 (Work it up in your next month's arti-
 cle)
 Of man's poor spirit in its progress, still

Losing true life for ever and a day
 Through ever trying to be and ever
 being—
 In the evolution of successive spheres—
Before its actual sphere and place of
 life,
 Halfway into the next, which having
 reached,
 It shoots with corresponding foolery
 Halfway into the next still, on and off!
 As when a traveller, bound from North
 to South,
 Scouts fur in Russia; what 's its use in
 France?
 In France spurns flannel; where 's its
 need in Spain?
 In Spain drops cloth, too cumbrous for
 Algiers!
 Linen goes next, and last the skin it-
 self,
 A superfluity at Timbuctoo.
 When, through his journey, was the
 fool at ease?
 I 'm at ease now, friend; worldly in
 this world,
 I take and like its way of life; I think
 My brothers, who administer the means,
 Live better for my comfort—that 's
 good too;
 And God, if he pronounce upon such
 life,
 Approves my service, which is better
 still.
 If he keep silence,—why, for you or me
 Or that brute-beast pulled-up in to-
 day's "Times,"
 What odds is 't, save to ourselves, what
 life we lead?

You meet me at this issue: you de-
 clare,—
 All special-pleading done with, truth is
 truth,
 And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
 You do n't fear but it 's better, if we
 doubt,
 To say so, act up to our truth perceived
 However feebly. Do then,—act away!
 'T is there I 'm on the watch for you.
 How one acts
 Is, both of us agree, our chief concern:
 And how you 'll act is what I fain would
 see
 If, like the candid person you appear,
 You dare to make the most of your
 life's scheme
 As I of mine, live up to its full law

Since there 's no higher law that coun-
 terchecks.
 Put natural religion to the test
 You 've just demolished the revealed
 with—quick,
 Down to the root of all that checks your
 will,
 All prohibition to lie, kill and thief
 Or even to be an atheistic priest !
 Supposing a pricking to incontinence—
 Philosophers deduce you chastity
 Or shame, from just the fact that at the
 first
 Whoso embraced a woman in the field,
 Threw club down and forewent his
 brains beside,
 So, stood a ready victim in the reach
 Of any brother-savage, club in hand ;
 Hence saw the use of going out of sight
 In wood or cave to prosecute his loves :
 I read this in a French book t' other
 day.
 Does law so analysed coerce you much ?
 Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where mat-
 ters end,
 But you who reach where the first
 thread begins,
 You 'll soon cut that !—which means
 you can, but won't
 Through certain instincts, blind, un-
 reasoned-out,
 You dare not set aside, you can't tell
 why,
 But there they are, and so you let them
 rule.
 Then, friend, you seem as much a slave
 as I,
 A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite,
 Without the good the slave expects to
 get,
 In case he has a master after all !
 You own your instincts ? why, what
 else do I,
 Who want, am made for, and must have
 a God
 Ere I can be aught, do aught ?—no
 mere name
 Want, but the true thing with what
 proves its truth,
 To wit, a relation from that thing to
 me,
 Touching from head to foot—which
 touch I feel,
 And with it take the rest, this life of
 ours !
 I live my life here ; yours you dare not
 live.

—Not as I state it, who (you please
 subjoin)
 Disfigure such a life and call it names,
 While, to your mind, remains another
 way
 For simple men : knowledge and power
 have rights,
 But ignorance and weakness have
 rights too.
 There needs no crucial effort to find
 truth
 If here or there or anywhere about :
 We ought to turn each side, try hard
 and see,
 And if we can't, be glad we 've earned
 at least
 The right, by one laborious proof the
 more,
 To graze in peace earth 's pleasant
 pasturage.
 Men are not angels, neither are they
 brutes :
 Something we may see, all we cannot
 see.
 What need of lying ? I say, I see all,
 And swear to each detail the most
 minute
 In what I think a Pan's face—you,
 mere cloud :
 I swear I hear him speak and see him
 wink,
 For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,
 Mankind may doubt there 's any
 cloud at all.
 You take the simple life—ready to see,
 Willing to see (for no cloud's worth a
 face)
 And leaving quiet what no strength can
 move,
 And which, who bids you move ? who
 has the right ?
 I bid you ; but you are God's sheep,
 not mine :
 " *Pastor est tui Dominus.*" You find
 In this the pleasant pasture of our life
 Much you may eat without the least
 offence,
 Much you don't eat because your maw
 objects,
 Much you would eat but that your
 fellow-flock
 Open great eyes at you and even butt.
 And thereupon you like your mates so
 well
 You cannot please yourself, offending
 them ;

Though when they seem exorbitantly
sheep,
You weigh your pleasure with their
butts and bleats
And strike the balance. Sometimes
certain fears
Restrain you, real checks since you
find them so ;
Sometimes you please yourself and
nothing checks :
And thus you graze through life with
not one lie,
And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name ?
If so, you beat—which means you are
not I—
Who needs must make earth mine and
feed my fill
Not simply unbutted at, unbickered
with,
But motioned to the velvet of the sword
By those obsequious wethers' very
selves.
Look at me, sir ; my age is double
yours :
At yours, I knew beforehand, so en-
joyed,
What now I should be—as, permit the
word,
I pretty well imagine your whole range
And stretch of tether twenty years to
come.
We have both minds and bodies much
alike :
In truth's name, do n't you want my
bishopric,
My daily bread, my influence and my
state ?
You 're young, I 'm old, you must be
old one day ;
Will you find then, as I do hour by
hour,
Women their lovers kneel to, who cut
curls
From your fat lap-dog's ear to grace a
brooch—
Dukes, who petition just to kiss your
ring—
With much beside you know or may
conceive ?
Suppose we die to-night : well, here
am I,
Such were my gains, life bore this fruit
to me,
While writing all the same my articles

On music, poetry, the fictile vase
Found at Albano, chess, Anacreon's
Greek.
But you—the highest honour in your
life,
The thing you 'll crown yourself with,
all your days,
Is—dining here and drinking this last
glass
I pour you out in sign of amity
Before we part for ever. Of your
power
And social influence, worldly worth in
short,
Judge what 's my estimation by the
fact,
I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech.
Hint secrecy on one of all these words !
You 're shrewd and know that should
you publish one
The world would brand the lie—my
enemies first,
Who 'd sneer—" the bishop 's an arch-
hypocrite
" And knave perhaps, but not so frank
a fool."
Whereas I should not dare for both my
ears
Breathe one such syllable, smile one
such smile,
Before the chaplain who reflects my-
self—
My shade 's so much more potent than
your flesh.
What 's your reward, self-abnegating
friend ?
Stood you confessed of those excep-
tional
And privileged great natures that dwarf
mine—
A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,
A poet just about to print his ode,
A statesman with a scheme to stop this
war,
An artist whose religion is his art—
I should have nothing to object : such
men
Carry the fire, all things grow warm to
them,
Their druggot 's worth my purple, they
beat me.
But you,—you're just as little those as
I—
You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,
Write stately for Blackwood's Maga-
zine,

Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul
 Unseized by the Germans yet—which view you 'll print—
 Meantime the best you have to show being still
 That lively lightsome article we took
 Almost for the true Dickens,—what 's its name?
 "The Slum and Cellar, or Whitechapel life
 "Limned after dark!" it made me laugh, I know,
 And pleased a month, and brought you in ten pounds.
 —Success I recognise and compliment,
 And therefore give you, if you choose, three words
 (The card and pencil-scratch is quite enough)
 Which whether here, in Dublin or New York,
 Will get you, prompt as at my eye-brow's wink,
 Such terms as never you aspired to get
 In all our own reviews and some not ours.
 Go write your lively sketches! be the first
 "Blougram, or The Eccentric Confidence"—
 Or better simply say, "The Outward-bound."
 Why, men as soon would throw it in my teeth
 As copy and quote the infamy chalked broad
 About me on the church-door opposite.
 You will not wait for that experience though,
 I fancy, howsoever you decide,
 To discontinue—not detesting, not
 Defaming, but at least—despising me!

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour
 Sylvester Blougram, styled *in partibus Episcopis, nec non*—(the deuce knows what
 It 's changed to by our novel hierarchy)
 With Gigadibs the literary man,
 Who played with spoons, explored his plate's design,
 And ranged the olive-stones about its edge,

While the great bishop rolled him out his mind.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke.

The other portion, as he shaped it thus
 For argumentary purposes,
 He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.
 Some arbitrary accidental thoughts
 That crossed his mind, amusing because new,

He chose to represent as fixtures there,
 Invariable convictions (such they seemed

Beside his interlocutor's loose cards
 Flung daily down, and not the same way twice)

While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue

Is never bold to utter in their truth
 Because styled hell-deep ('t is an old mistake

To place hell at the bottom of the earth)
 He ignored these,—not having in readiness

Their nomenclature and philosophy:
 He said true things, but called them by wrong names.

"On the whole," he thought, "I justify myself

"On every point where cavillers like this

"Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of fence,

"I close, he 's worsted, that 's enough for him.

"He 's on the ground: if the ground should break away

"I take my stand on, there 's a firmer yet

"Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.

"His ground was over mine and broke the first:

"So, let him sit with me this many a year!"

He did not sit five minutes. Just a week

Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.
 Something had struck him in the "Outward-bound"

Another way than Blougram's purpose was:

And having bought, not cabin-furniture

But settler's-implements (enough for three)

And started for Australia—there, I
hope,
By this time he has tested his first
plough,
And studied his last chapter of St.
John.

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 lips "Greece")—
To Protus 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 muni-
ficence!
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 archi-
tect,
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 effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.
That epos on thy hundred plates of
gold
Ismine,—and also mine the little chant,
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul
their net.
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 recog-
nise,
Throughout our seventeen islands.
Marvel not.

We of these latter days, with greater
 mind
 Than our forerunners, since more com-
 posite,
 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 skill to
 know :
 For, what we call this life of men on
 earth,
 This sequence of the soul's achieve-
 ments here,
 Being, as I find much reason to con-
 ceive,
 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 oppos-
 ite,
 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.
 For where had been a progress, other-
 wise ?
 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 proper-
 ties.
 And thus our soul, misknown, cries out
 to Zeus
 To vindicate his purpose in our 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 simultane-
 ously
 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 every-
 where !
 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,
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 pre-
text

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 " (writ-
est 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 statue to o'erlook 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 aught had been recorded, nay per-
ceived,

Thou, with the light now in thee,
couldst have looked

On all earth's tenantry, from worm to
bird,

Ere man, her last, appeared upon the
stage—

Thou wouldst have seen them perfect,
and deduced

The perfectness of others yet unseen.
Conceding which,—had Zeus then ques-
tioned thee

" Shall I 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 't is 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 the scheme)
- " That a third thing should stand apart from both,
- " A quality arise within his 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.
- Thus 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
- Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's 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 ('t is 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 thou climbedst 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-bow
- 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 thin 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 : 't is 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
By 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 overmuch,

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 prized 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 Christ 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 circum-
cised,
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 doctrine could be held by no sane
man.

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

I

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun per-
ceives
First, when he visits, last, too, when he
leaves
The world; and, vainly favoured, it
repays
The day-long glory of his steadfast
gaze
By no change of its large calm front of
snow.

And underneath the Mount, a Flower
I know,
He cannot have perceived, that changes
ever
At his approach; and, in the lost en-
deavour
To live his life, has parted, one by one,
With all a flower's true graces, for the
grace
Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
With ray-like florets round a disk-like
face.
Men nobly call by many a name the
Mount
As over many a land of theirs its large
Calm front of snow like a triumphal
targe
Is reared, and still with old names,
fresh names vie,
Each to its proper praise and own
account:
Men call the Flower, the Sunflower,
sportively.

II

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

III

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

ONE WORD MORE¹

TO E. B. B.

London, September, 1855.

I

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.

II

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?

III

You and I would rather read that volume,

(Taken 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 slept with lilies in the Louvre—
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

IV

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 cried too, "Ours,
the treasure!"

Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

V

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."

While he mused and traced it and re-traced 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 rangle,

Let the wretch go festering through 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."

VI

You and I would rather see that angel,
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,

Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno.

VII

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 for ever.

VIII

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

This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not

¹ Originally appended to the collection of Poems called "Men and Women," the greater portion of which has now been, more correctly, distributed under the other titles of this edition.

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,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

IX

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, but 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 shouldst 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. "

X

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.

XI

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.

XII

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!

XIII

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,
Fifty serenade a slumbrous princess,
He who writes, may write for once as I
do.

XIV

Love, you saw me gather men and
women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their ser-
vice,
Speak from every mouth,—the speech,
a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbeliev-
ing :
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 per-
son,
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.

XV

Not but that you know me ! Lo, the
moon's self !
Here in London, yonder late in Flor-
ence,
Still we find her face, the thrice-trans-
figured.
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, impover-
ished,

Hard to greet, she traverses the house-
roofs,
Hurries with unhandsome thrift of
silver,
Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

XVI

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 ('t is the old sweet my-
thos)
She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of 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
crystals ?
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 sap-
phire,
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 !

XVII

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 Lon-
don.
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!

XVIII

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 un-
dreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with
silence.

XIX

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!

R. B.

IN A BALCONY

BAGNI DI LUCCA, 1853

CONSTANCE and NORBERT.

Nor. Now!

Con. Not now!

Nor. Give me them again,
those hands—Put them upon my forehead, how it
throbs!Press them before my eyes, the fire
comes through!You cruellest, you dearest in the world,
Let me! The Queen must grant what-
e'er I ask—How can I gain you and not ask the
Queen?There she stays waiting for me, here
stand you;Some time or other this was to be
asked;Now is the one time—what I ask, I
gain:

Let me ask now, love!

Con. Do, and ruin us!

Nor. Let it be now, love! All my
soul breaks forth.How I do love you! Give my love its
way!A man can have but one life and one
death,One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil
my fate—Grant me my heaven now! Let me
know you mine,Prove you mine, write my name upon
your brow,Hold you and have you, and then die
awayIf God please, with completion in my
soul!Con. I am not yours then? How
content this man!I am not his—who change into himself,
Have passed into his heart and beat its
beats,Who give my hands to him, my eyes,
my hair,Give all that was of me away to him—
So well, that now, my spirit turned his
own,Takes part with him against the woman
here,Bids him not stumble at so mere a
straw

As caring that the world be cognisant

How he loves her and how she wor-
ships him.You have this woman, not as yet that
world.Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me
By saving what I cease to care about,The courtly name and pride of circum-
stance—

- The name you 'll pick up and be cumbered with
 Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more ;
 Just that the world may slip from under you—
 Just that the world may cry " So much for him—
 " The man predestined to the heap of crowns :
 " There goes his chance of winning one, at least ! "
Nor. The world !
Con. You love it ! Love me quite as well,
 And see if I shall pray for this in vain !
 Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks ?
Nor. You pray for—what, in vain ?
Con. Oh my heart's heart,
 How I do love you, Norbert ! That is right :
 But listen, or I take my hands away !
 You say, " let it be now : " you would go now
 And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,
 You love me—so you do, thank God !
Nor. Thank God !
Con. Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your love,
 And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her
 My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,
 Listening to me. You are the minister, The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.
 To-night completes your wonderful year's-work
 (This palace-feast is held to celebrate)
 Made memorable by her life's success,
 The junction of two crowns, on her sole head,
 Her house had only dreamed of anciently : [truth,
 That this mere dream is grown a stable
 To-night's feast makes authentic.
 Whose the praise ?
 Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved
 What turned the many heads and broke the hearts ?
 You are the fate, your minute's in the heaven.
 Next comes the Queen's turn. " Name your own reward ! "
- With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come,
 Put out an arm and touch and take the sun
 And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,
 Possess yourself supremely of her life,—
 You choose the single thing she will not grant ;
 Nay, very declaration of which choice
 Will turn the scale and neutralize your work :
 At best she will forgive you, if she can.
 You think I 'll let you choose—her cousin's hand ?
Nor. Wait. First, do you retain your old belief
 The Queen is generous,—nay, is just ?
Con. There, there !
 So men make women love them, while they know
 No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,
 You that are just and generous beside,
 Make it your own case ! For example now,
 I 'll say—I let you kiss me, hold my hands—
 Why ? do you know why ? I'll instruct you, then— [court,
 The kiss, because you have a name at
 This hand and this, that you may shut in each
 A jewel, if you please to pick up such.
 That 's horrible ? Apply it to the Queen—
 Suppose I am the Queen to whom you speak.
 " I was a nameless man ; you needed me :
 " Why did I proffer you my aid ? there stood
 " A certain pretty cousin at your side.
 " Why did I make such common cause with you ?
 " Access to her had not been easy else.
 " You give my labours here abundant praise ?
 " Faith ! labour, which she overlooked, grew play.
 " How shall your gratitude discharge itself ?
 " Give me her hand ! "
Nor. And still I urge the same.
 Is the Queen just ? just—generous or no !
Con. Yes, just. You love a rose ; no harm in that :

But was it for the rose's sake or mine
 You put it in your bosom? mine, you
 said—
 Then, mine you still must say or else
 be false.
 You told the Queen you served her for
 herself;
 If so, to serve her was to serve your-
 self,
 She thinks, for all your unbelieving
 face!
 I know her. In the hall, six steps from
 us,
 One sees the twenty pictures; there's
 a life
 Better than life, and yet no life at all.
 Conceive her born in such a magic
 dome,
 Pictures all round her! why, she sees
 the world,
 Can recognise its given things and
 facts,
 The fight of giants or the feast of gods,
 Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,
 Chaces and battles, the whole earth's
 display,
 Landscape and sea-piece, down to
 flowers and fruit—
 And who shall question that she knows
 them all,
 In better semblance than the things
 outside?
 Yet bring into the silent gallery
 Some live thing to contrast in breath
 and blood,
 Some lion, with the painted lion there—
 You think she'll understand com-
 posedly?
 —Say, "that's his fellow in the hunt-
 ing-piece
 "Yonder, I've turned to praise a hun-
 dred times?"
 Not so. Her knowledge of our actual
 earth,
 Its hopes and fears, concerns and sym-
 pathies,
 Must be too far, too mediate, too un-
 real.
 The real exists for us outside, not her:
 How should it, with that life in these
 four walls,
 That father and that mother, first to
 last
 No father and no mother—friends, a
 heap,
 Lovers, no lack—a husband in due
 time,

And every one of them alike a lie!
 Things painted by a Rubens out of
 nought
 Into what kindness, friendship, love
 should be;
 All better, all more grandiose than life,
 Only no life; mere cloth and surface-
 paint,
 You feel, while you admire, How
 should she feel?
 Yet now that she has stood thus fifty
 years
 The sole spectator in that gallery,
 You think to bring this warm real
 struggling love
 In to her of a sudden, and suppose
 She'll keep her state untroubled?
 Here's the truth—
 She'll apprehend truth's value at a
 glance,
 Prefer it to the pictured loyalty?
 You only have to say "so men are made,
 "For this they act; the thing has
 many names,
 "But this the right one: and now,
 Queen, be just!"
 Your life slips back; you lose her at
 the word:
 You do not even for amends gain me.
 He will not understand! oh, Norbert,
 Norbert,
 Do you not understand?
Nor. The Queen's the Queen,
 I am myself—no picture, but alive
 In every nerve and every muscle, here
 At the palace-window o'er the people's
 street,
 As she in the gallery where the pictures
 glow:
 The good of life is precious to us both.
 She cannot love; what do I want with
 rule?
 When first I saw your face a year ago
 I knew my life's good, my soul heard
 one voice—
 "The woman yonder, there's no use of
 life
 "But just to obtain her! heap earth's
 woes in one
 "And bear them—make a pile of all
 earth's joys
 "And spurn them, as they help or help
 not this;
 "Only, obtain her!"—how was it to
 be?
 I found you were the cousin of the
 Queen:

I must then serve the Queen to get to you.
 No other way. Suppose there had been one,
 And I, by saying prayers to some white star
 With promise of my body and my soul,
 Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no?
 Instead, there was the Queen to serve!
 I served,
 Helped, did what other servants failed to do.
 Neither she sought nor I declared my end.
 Her good is hers, my recompense be mine, [pense.
 I therefore name you as that recompense.
 She dreamed that such a thing could never be?
 Let her wake now. She thinks there was more cause
 In love of power, high fame, pure loyalty?
 Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives
 Chasing such shades. Then, I've a fancy too;
 I worked because I want you with my soul:
 I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now!
Con. Had I not loved you from the very first,
 Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus
 So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,
 You might become impatient. What's conceived
 Of us without here, by the folks within?
 Where are you now? immersed in cares of state—
 Where am I now?—intent on festal robes—
 We two, embracing under death's spread hand!
 What was this thought for, what that scruple of yours
 Which broke the council up?—to bring about
 One minute's meeting in the corridor!
 And then the sudden sleights, strange secrecies,
 Complots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,
 Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look,

“ Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?”
 A year of this compression's ecstasy
 All goes for nothing! you would give this up
 For the old way, the open way, the world's,
 His way who beats, and his who sells his wife!
 What tempts you?—their notorious happiness,
 That you are ashamed of ours? The best you'll gain
 Will be—the Queen grants all that you require,
 Concedes the cousin, rids herself of you
 And me at once, and gives us ample leave
 To live like our five hundred happy friends. [hand
 The world will show us with officious
 Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,
 Where we so oft have stolen across its traps!
 Get the world's warrant, ring the falcons' feet,
 And make it duty to be bold and swift,
 Which long ago was nature. Have it so!
 We never hawked by rights till flung from fist?
 Oh, the man's thought! no woman's such a fool.
Nor. Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which is more—
 One made to love you, let the world take note!
 Have I done worthy work? be love's the praise,
 Though hampered by restrictions, barred against
 By set forms, blinded by forced secrecies!
 Set free my love, and see what love can do
 Shown in my life—what work will spring from that!
 The world is used to have its business done
 On other grounds, find great effects produced
 For power's sake, fame's sake, motives in men's mouth.
 So, good: but let my low ground shame their high!
 Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true!

And love's the truth of mine. Time
 prove the rest !
 I choose to wear you stamped all over
 me,
 Your name upon my forehead and my
 breast,
 You, from the sword's blade to the
 ribbon's edge,
 That men may see, all over, you in me—
 That pale loves may die out of their
 pretence
 In face of mine, shames thrown on love
 fall off.
 Permit this, Constance ! Love has
 been so long
 Subdued in me, eating me through and
 through,
 That now 't is all of me and must have
 way.
 Think of my work, that chaos of in-
 trigues,
 Those hopes and fears, surprises and
 delays,
 That long endeavour, earnest, patient,
 slow,
 Trembling at last to its assured result—
 Then think of this revulsion ! I re-
 sume
 Life after death, (it is no less than life,
 After such long unlovely labouring
 days)
 And liberate to beauty life's great need
 Of the beautiful, which, while it
 prompted work,
 Suppressed itself erewhile. This eve 's
 the time,
 This eve intense with yon first tremb-
 ling star
 We seem to pant and reach ; scarce
 aught between
 The earth that rises and the heaven
 that bends ;
 All nature self-abandoned, every tree
 Flung as it will, pursuing its own
 thoughts
 And fixed so, every flower and every
 weed,
 No pride, no shame, no victory, no
 defeat ;
 All under God, each measured by itself.
 These statues round us stand abrupt,
 distinct,
 The strong in strength, the weak in
 weakness fixed,
 The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre,
 The Nymph to her fawn, the Silence to
 her rose :

See God's approval on his universe !
 Let us do so—aspire to live as these
 In harmony with truth, ourselves being
 true !
 Take the first way, and let the second
 come !
 My first is to possess myself of you ;
 The music sets the march-step—for-
 ward, then !
 And there 's the Queen, I go to claim
 you of,
 The world to witness, wonder and ap-
 plaud.
 Our flower of life breaks open. No
 delay !
Con. And so shall we be ruined, both
 of us.
 Norbert, I know her to the skin and
 bone : [it,
 You do not know her, were not born to
 To feel what she can see or cannot see.
 Love, she is generous,—ay, despite
 your smile,
 Generous as you are : for, in that thin
 frame
 Pain-twisted, punctured through and
 through with cares,
 There lived a lavish soul until it
 starved
 Debarred all healthy food. Look to
 the soul—
 Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin
 (The true man's way) on justice and
 your rights,
 Exactions and acquittance of the past !
 Begin so—see what justice she will
 deal !
 We women hate a debt as men a gift.
 Suppose her some poor keeper of a
 school
 Whose business is to sit thro' summer
 months
 And dole out children leave to go and
 play,
 Herself superior to such lightness—she
 In the arm-chair's state and pædagogic
 pomp,
 To the life, the laughter, sun and youth
 outside :
 We wonder such a face looks black on
 us ?
 I do not bid you wake her tenderness.
 (That were vain truly—none is left to
 wake)
 But, let her think her justice is engaged
 To take the shape of tenderness, and
 mark

- If she 'll not coldly pay its warmest need !
- Does she love me, I ask you ? not a whit :
- Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged
- To help a kinswoman, she took me up—
Did more on that bare ground than other loves
- Would do on greater argument. For me,
- I have no equivalent of such cold kind
To pay her with, but love alone to give
If I give anything. I give her love :
I feel I ought to help her, and I will.
So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice
- That women hate a debt as men a gift.
If I were you, I could obtain this grace—
Could lay the whole I did to love's account,
- Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—
Declaring my success was recompense ;
It would be so, in fact : what were it else ?
- And then, once loose her generosity,—
Oh, how I see it ! then, were I but you
To turn it, let it seem to move itself,
And make it offer what I really take,
Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,
- Her value as the next thing to the Queen's—
- Since none loves Queens directly, none dares that, [echo
- And a thing's shadow or a name's mere Suffices those who miss the name and thing !
- You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,
To keep in proof how near her breath you came.
- Say, I 'm so near I seem a piece of her—
Ask for me that way—(oh, you understand)
- You 'd find the same gift yielded with a grace,
- Which, if you make the least show to extort . . .
- You 'll see ! and when you have ruined both of us,
Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude !
- Nor. Then, if I turn it that way, you consent ?
- 'T is not my way ; I have more hope in truth :
- Still, if you won't have truth—why, this indeed,
- Were scarcely false, as I 'd express the sense.
- Will you remain here ?
- Con. O best heart of mine,
How I have loved you ! then, you take my way ?
- Are mine as you have been her minister,
- Work out my thought, give it effect for me,
- Paint plain my poor conceit and make it serve ? [thing—
- I owe that withered woman every-Life, fortune, you, remember ! Take my part—
- Help me to pay her ! Stand upon your rights ?
- You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on you ?
- Your rights are mine—you have no rights but mine.
- Nor. Remain here. How you know me !
- Con. Ah, but still—
[*He breaks from her : she remains.*
Dance-music from within.
- Enter the QUEEN.
- Queen. Constance ? She is here as he said. Speak quick !
- Is it so ? Is it true or false ? One word ?
- Con. True.
- Queen. Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee !
- Con. Madam ?
- Queen. I love you, Constance, from my soul.
- Now say once more, with any words you will,
- 'T is true, all true, as true as that I speak.
- Con. Why should you doubt it ?
- Queen. Ah, why doubt ? why doubt ?
- Dear, make me see it ! Do you see it so ?
- None see themselves ; another sees them best.
- You say " why doubt it ? "—you see him and me.
- It is because the Mother has such grace
That if we had but faith—wherein we fail—
- Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us ;
- Howbeit we let our whims prescribe despair,

Our very fancies thwart and cramp our will,

And so, accepting life, abjure ourselves.
Constance, I had abjured the hope of love

And being loved, as truly as yon palm
The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.

Con. Heaven!

Queen. But it was so, Constance, it was so!

Men say—or do men say it? fancies say—

“Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.

“Too late—no love for you, too late for love—

“Leave love to girls. Be queen: let Constance love!”

One takes the hint—half meets it like a child,

Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.
“Oh love, true, never think of love again!

“I am a queen: I rule, not love, indeed.”

So it goes on; so a face grows like this,
Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,

Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank God!

Con. I cannot understand—

Queen. The happier you!

Constance, I know not how it is with men:

For women (I am a woman now like you)

There is no good of life but love—but love!

What else looks good, is some shade flung from love;

Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,

Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,

Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!

O Constance, how I love you!

Con. I love you.

Queen. I do believe that all is come through you.

I took you to my heart to keep it warm
When the last chance of love seemed dead in me;

I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered heart.

Oh, I am very old now, am I not?

Not so! it is true and it shall be true!

Con. Tell it me: let me judge if true or false.

Queen. Ah, but I fear you! you will look at me

And say, “she’s old, she’s grown unlovely quite

“Who ne’er was beauteous: men want beauty still.” [sure!

Well, so I feared—the curse! so I felt

Con. Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say?

Queen. Constance, he came,—the coming was not strange—

Do not I stand and see men come and go?

I turned a half-look from my pedestal
Where I grow marble—“one young man the more!

“He will love some one; that is nought to me:

“What would he with my marble stateliness?”

Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;

The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,

And I still older, with less flesh to change—

We two those dear extremes that long to touch.

It seemed still harder when he first began

Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs
The old way for the old end—interest.

Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts

Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,

Professing they’ve no care but for your cause,

Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,

And you the marble statue all the time
They praise and point at as preferred

to life,
Yet leave for the first breathing

woman’s cheek,
First dancer’s, gipsy’s or street baladine’s!

Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men’s speech

Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,
Their gait subdued lest step should

startle me,
Their eyes declined, such queendom to

respect,

Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,

While not a man of them broke rank and spoke,

Or wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,
Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand!

There have been moments, if the sentinel

Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,

Had flung it brutally and clasped my I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

Con. Who could have comprehended?

Queen. Ay, who—who?

Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.

Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps

It comes too late—would you but tell the truth.

Con. I wait to tell it.

Queen. Well, you see, he came, Outfaced the others, did a work this year

Exceeds in value all was ever done,
You know—it is not I who say it—all Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)

I grew aware not only of what he did,
But why so wondrously. Oh, never work

Like his was done for work's ignoble sake—

It must have finer aims to lure it on!
I felt, I saw, he loved—loved somebody?

And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,

I did believe this while 't was you he loved.

Con. Me, madam?

Queen. It did seem to me, your face Met him where'er he looked: and whom but you

Was such a man to love? It seemed to me,

You saw he loved you, and approved the love,

And so you both were in intelligence.

You could not loiter in the garden, step Into this balcony, but I straight was stung

And forced to understand. It seemed so true,

So right, so beautiful, so like you both,
That all this work should have been done by him

Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,
But that at last—suppose, some night like this—

Borne on to claim his due reward of me,
He might say, "Give her hand and pay me so."

And I (O Constance, you shall love me now!)

I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,

—"And he shall have it. I will make her blest.

"My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,

"My happiest woman's self that might have been!

"These two shall have their joy and leave me here."

Yes—yes!

Con. Thanks! [lips]

Queen. And the word was on my When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear

A mere calm statement of his just desire
For payment of his labour. When—O heaven,

How can I tell you? cloud was on my eyes

And thunder in my ears at that first word

Which told 't was love of me, of me, did all—

He loved me—from the first step to the last,

Loved me!

Con. You did not hear . . .

you thought he spoke

Of love? what if you should mistake?

Queen. No, no—

No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake!

He had not dared to hint the love he felt—

You were my reflex—(how I understood!)

He said you were the ribbon I had worn,
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,

And love, love was the end of every phrase.

Love is begun; this much is come to pass:

The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours!

I will learn, I will place my life on you,
But teach me how to keep what I have
won!

Am I so old? This hair was early grey;
But joy ere now has brought hair
brown again.

And joy will bring the cheek's red back,
I feel.

I could sing once too; that was in my
youth.

Still, when men paint me, they declare
me . . . yes,

Beautiful—for the last French painter
did!

I know they flatter somewhat: you are
frank—

I trust you. How I loved you from the
first!

Some queens would hardly seek a
cousin out

And set her by their side to take the eye:
I must have felt that good would come
from you.

I am not generous—like him—like you!
But he is not your lover after all:

It was not you he looked at. Saw you
him?

You have not been mistaking words or
looks?

He said you were the reflex of myself.
And yet he is not such a paragon

To you, to younger women who may
choose

Among a thousand Norberts. Speak
the truth!

You know you never named his name
to me—

You know, I cannot give him up—ah
God,

Not up now, even to you!

Con. Then calm yourself.

Queen. See, I am old—look here,
you happy girl,

I will not play the fool, deceive myself;
'T is all gone: put your cheek beside
my cheek— [hold!

Ah, what a contrast does the moon be-
but then I set my life upon one chance,
The last chance and the best—am I not
left,

My soul, myself? All women love
great men

If young or old; it is in all the tales:
Young beauties love old poets who can
love—

Why should not he, the poems in my
soul,

The love, the passionate faith, the
sacrifice,
The constancy? I throw them at his
feet.

Who cares to see the fountain's very
shape,

And whether it be a Triton's or a
Nymph's

That pours the foam, makes rainbows
all around?

You could not praise indeed the empty
conch;

But I'll pour floods of love and hide
myself.

How I will love him! Cannot men
love love?

Who was a queen and loved a poet once
Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women
can do that!

Well, but men too; at least, they tell
you so.

They love so many women in their
youth,

And even in age they all love whom
they please;

And yet the best of them confide to
friends

That 't is not beauty makes the lasting
love—

They spend a day with such and tire
the next:

They like soul,—well then, they like
phantasy,

Novelty even. Let us confess the
truth,

Horrible though it be, that prejudice,
Prescription . . . curses! they will
love a queen.

They will, they do: and will not, does
not—he?

Con. How can he? You are wedded:
't is a name

We know, but still a bond. Your
rank remains,

His rank remains. How can he, nobly
souled

As you believe and I incline to think,
Aspire to be your favourite, shame and
all?

Queen. Hear her! There, there
now—could she love like me?

What did I say of smooth-cheeked
youth and grace?

See all it does or could do! so youth
loves!

Oh, tell him, Constance you could
never do

What I will—you, it was not born in ! I
Will drive these difficulties far and fast
As yonder mists curdling before the
moon.

I 'll use my light too, gloriously re-
trieve

My youth from its enforced calamity,
Dissolved that hateful marriage, and
be his,

His own in the eyes alike of God and
man.

Con. You will do—dare do . . .
pause on what you say !

Queen. Hear her ! I thank you,
sweet, for that surprise.

You have the fair face : for the soul, see
mine !

I have the strong soul : let me teach
you, here.

I think I have borne enough and long
enough,

And patiently enough, the world re-
marks,

To have my own way now, unblamed
by all.

It does so happen (I rejoice for it)
This most unhopèd-for issue cuts the
knot.

There 's not a better way of settling
claims

Than this ; God sends the accident ex-
press :

And were it for my subjects' good, no
more,

'T were best thus ordered. I am
thankful now,

Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
And bless God simply, or should almost
fear

To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.
Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate !

How strong I am ! Could Norbert see
me now !

Con. Let me consider. It is all too
strange.

Queen. You, Constance, learn of me ;
do you, like me !

You are young, beautiful : my own,
best girl,

You will have many lovers, and love
one—

Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to
suit yours,

And taller than he is, for yourself are
tall.

Love him, like me ! Give all away to
him ;

Think never of yourself ; throw by
your pride,

Hope, fear,—your own good as you
saw it once.

And love him simply for his very self.
Remember, I (and what am I to you ?)

Would give up all for one, leave throne,
lose life,

Do all but just unlove him ! He loves
me.

Con. He shall.

Queen. You, step inside my in-
most heart !

Give me your own heart : let us have
one heart !

I 'll come to you for counsel ; " this he
says,

" This he does ; what should this
amount to, pray ?

" Beseech you, change it into current
coin !

" Is that worth kisses ? Shall I please
him there ? "

And then we 'll speak in turn of you—
what else ?

Your love, according to your beauty's
worth.

For you shall have some noble love, all
gold :

Whom choose you ? we will get him at
your choice.

—Constance, I leave you. Just a
minute since,

I felt as I must die or be alone
Breathing my soul into an ear like
yours :

Now, I would face the world with my
new life,

With my new crown. I 'll walk around
the rooms,

And then come back and tel you how
it feels.

How soon a smile of God can change
the world !

How we are made for happiness—how
Grows play, adversity a winning fight !

True, I have lost so many years : what
then ?

Many remain : God has been very good.
You, stay here ! 'Tis as different from
dreams.

From the mind's cold calm estimate of
bliss,

As these stone statues from the flesh
and blood.

The comfort thou hast caused man-
kind. God's moon !

[*She goes out, leaving* CONSTANCE.
Dance-music from within.

NORBERT enters.

Nor. Well? we have but one minute
and one word!

Con. I am yours, Norbert!

Nor. Yes, mine.

Con. Not till now!

You were mine. Now I give myself to
you.

Nor. Constance?

Con. Your own! I know the
thriffter way

Of giving—haply, 't is the wiser way.
Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole
Coin after coin out (each, as that were
all,

With a new largess still at each despair)
And force you keep in sight the deed,
preserve

Exhaustless till the end my part and
yours,

My giving and your taking; both our
joys

Dying together. Is it the wiser way?
I choose the simpler; I give all at once.
Know what you have to trust to, trade
upon!

Use it, abuse it,—anything but think
Hereafter, "Had I known she loved
me so,

"And what my means, I might have
thriven with it."

This is your means. I give you all my-
self.

Nor. I take you and thank God.

Con. Look on through years!

We cannot kiss, a second day like this;
Else were this earth, no earth.

Nor. With this day's heat
We shall go on through years of cold.

Con. So, best!
—I try to see those years—I think I see.

You walk quick and new warmth
comes; you look back

And lay all to the first glow—not sit
down

For ever brooding on a day like this
While seeing the embers whiten and
love die.

Yes, love lives best in its effect; and
mine,

Full in its own life, yearns to live in
yours.

Nor. Just so. I take and know
you all at once.

Your soul is disengaged so easily,
Your face is there, I know you; give
me time,

Let me be proud and think you shall
know me.

My soul is slower: in a life I roll
The minute out whereto you condense
yours—

The whole slow circle round you I must
move,

To be just you. I look to a long life
To decompose this minute, prove its
worth.

'T is the sparks' long succession one by
one

Shall show you, in the end, what fire
was crammed

In that mere stone you struck: how
could you know,

If it lay ever unproved in your sight,
As now my heart lies? your own
warmth would hide

Its coldness, were it cold.

Con. But how prove, how?

Nor. Prove in my life, you ask?

Con. Quick, Norbert—how?

Nor. That's easy told. I count life
just a stuff

To try the soul's strength on, educe the
man.

Who keeps one end in view makes all
things serve.

As with the body—he who hurls a lance
Or heaps up stone on stone, shows
strength alike, [prove,

So I will seize and use all means to
And show this soul of mine, you crown
as yours,

And justify us both.

Con. Could you write books,
Paint pictures! One sits down in
poverty

And writes or paints, with pity for the
rich.

Nor. And loves one's painting and
one's writing, then,

And not one's mistress! All is best,
believe,

And we best as no other than we are.
We live, and they experiment on life—
Those poets, painters, all who stand
aloof

To overlook the farther. Let us be
The thing they look at! I might take
your face

And write of it and paint it—to what
end?

For whom? what pale dictatress in the
air
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like
form
With earth's real blood and breath, the
beauteous life
She makes despised for ever? You
are mine,
Made for me, not for others in the
world,
Nor yet for that which I should call my
art,
The cold calm power to see how fair you
look. [write
I come to you; I leave you not, to
Or paint. You are, I am: let Rubens
there
Paint us!
Con. So, best!
Nor. I understand your soul.
You live, and rightly sympathize with
life,
With action, power, success. This
way is straight;
And time were short beside, to let me
change
The craft my childhood learnt: my
craft shall serve.
Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
Manure their barren lives, and force the
fruit
First for themselves, and afterward for
me
In the due tithes; the task of some one
man,
Through ways of work appointed by
themselves.
I am not bid create—they see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant
that—
But bind in one and carry out their
wills.
So I began: to-night sees how I end.
What if it see, too, my first outbreak
here
Amid the warmth, surprise and sym-
pathy,
And instincts of the heart that teach
the head?
What if the people have discerned at
length
The dawn of the next nature, the new
man
Whose will they venture in the place of
theirs,
And who, they trust, shall find them
out new ways

B.P.

To heights as new which yet he only
sees?
I felt it when you kissed me. See this
Queen,
This people—in our phrase, this mass
of men—
See how the mass lies passive to my
hand
And how my hand is plastic, and you
by
To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end
Shall crown this issue as this crowns
the first!
My will be on this people! then, the
strain,
The grappling of the potter with his
clay,
The long uncertain struggle,—the suc-
cess
And consummation of the spirit-work,
Some vase shaped to the curl of the
god's lip,
While rounded fair for lower men to see
The Graces in a dance all recognise
With turbulent applause and laughs of
heart!
So triumph ever shall renew itself;
Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,
Ever begin . . .
Con. I ever helping?
Nor. Thus!
[As he embraces her, the QUEEN enters.
Con. Hist, madam! So I have per-
formed my part.
You see your gratitude's true decency,
Norbert? A little slow in seeing it!
Begin, to end the sooner! What's a
kiss?
Nor. Constance?
Con. Why, must I teach it you
again?
You want a witness to your dulness,
sir?
What was I saying these ten minutes
long?
Then I repeat—when some young
handsome man
Like you has acted out a part like yours,
Is pleased to fall in love with one be-
yond,
So very far beyond him, as he says—
So hopelessly in love, that but to speak
Would prove him mad,—he thinks
judiciously,
And makes some insignificant good
soul,
Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant,

Q Q

And very stalking-horse to cover him
In following after what he dares not
face—

When his end 's gained—(sir, do you
understand ?)

When she, he dares not face, has loved
him first,

—May I not say so, madam ?—tops his
hope,

And overpasses so his wildest dream,
With glad consent of all, and most of
her

The confidant who brought the same
about—

Why, in the moment when such joy ex-
plodes,

I do hold that the merest gentleman
Will not start rudely from the stalking-
horse,

Dismiss it with a " There, enough of
you ! "

Forget it, show his back unmannerly ;
But like a liberal heart will rather turn

And say, " A tingling time of hope was
ours ;

" Betwixt the fears and falterings, we
two lived

" A chanceful time in waiting for the
prize :

" The confidant, the Constance, served
not ill.

" And though I shall forget her in due
time,

" Her use being answered now, as rea-
son bids,

" Nay as herself bids from her heart of
hearts,—

" Still, she has rights, the first thanks
go to her,

" The first good praise goes to the pros-
perous tool,

" And the first—which is the last—re-
warding kiss."

Nor. Constance, it is a dream—ah,
see, you smile !

Con. So, now his part being properly
performed,

Madam, I turn to you and finish mine
As duly ; I do justice in my turn.

Yes, madam, he has loved you—long
and well ;

He could not hope to tell you so—
't was I

Who served to prove your soul access-
ible,

I led his thoughts on, drew them to
their place

When else they had wandered out into
despair,

And kept love constant toward its
natural aim.

Enough, my part is played ; you stoop
half-way

And I meet us royally and spare our
fears :

'T is like yourself. He thanks you, so
do I.

Take him—with my full heart ! my
work is praised

By what comes of it. Be you happy,
both !

Yourself—the only one on earth who
can— [heart

Do all for him, much more than a mere
Which though warm is not useful in its
warmth

As the silk vesture of a queen ! fold
that

Around him gently, tenderly. For
him—

For him,—he knows his own part !
Nor. Have you done ?

I take the jest at last. Should I speak
now ?

Was yours the wager, Constance, fool-
ish child,

Or did you but accept it ? Well—at
least

You lose by it.
Con. Nay, madam, 't is your turn !

Restrain him still from speech a little
more,

And make him happier and more confi-
dent !

Pity him, madam, he is timid yet !
Mark, Norbert ! 'Do not shrink now !

Here I yield
My whole right in you to the Queen
observe !

With her go put in practice the great
schemes

You teem with, follow the career else
closed—

Be all you cannot be except by her !
Behold her !—Madam, say for pity's
sake

Anything—frankly say you love him !
Else

He 'll not believe it : there 's more ear-
nest in

His fear than you conceive : I know
the man !

Nor. I know the woman somewhat
and confess

I thought she had jested better : she
begins
To overcharge her part. I gravely
wait
Your pleasure, madam : where is my
reward ?
Queen. Norbert, this wild girl (whom
I recognise
Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-
fit,
Eccentric speech and variable mirth,
Not very wise perhaps and somewhat
bold,
Yet suitable, the whole night's work
being strange) — [speak
—May still be right : I may do well to
And make authentic what appears a
dream
To even myself. For, what she says, is
true :
Yes, Norbert—what you spoke just
now of love,
Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,
But justified a warmth felt long before.
Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall
say :
Strange ! but I do grow stronger, now
't is said.
Your courage helps mine : you did
well to speak
To-night, the night that crowns your
twelvemonths' toil :
But still I had not waited to discern
Your heart so long, believe me ! From
the first
The source of so much zeal was almost
plain,
In absence even of your own words
just now
Which opened out the truth. 'T is
very strange, [love
But takes a happy ending—in your
Which mine meets : be it so ! as you
choose me,
So I choose you.
Nor. And worthily you choose,
I will not be unworthy your esteem,
No, madam. I do love you ; I will
meet
Your nature, now I know it. This was
well.
I see,—you dare and you are justified :
But none had ventured such experi-
ment,
Less versed than you in nobleness of
heart,
Less confident of finding such in me.

I joy that thus you test me ere you
grant
The dearest, richest, beauteousect and
best
Of women to my arms : 't is like your-
self.
So—back again into my part's set
words—
Devotion to the uttermost is yours,
But no, you cannot, madam, even you,
Create in me the love our Constance
does.
Or—something truer to the tragic
phrase—
Not you magnolia-bell superb with
scent
Invites a certain insect—that 's my-
self—
But the small eye-flower nearer to the
ground.
I take this lady.
Con. Stay—not hers, the trap—
Stay, Norbert—that mistake were
worse of all !
He is too cunning, madam ! It was I,
I, Norbert, who . . .
Nor. You, was it, Constance ?
Then,
But for the grace of this divinest hour
Which gives me you, I might not par-
don here ! [brain :
I am the Queen's ; she only knows my
She may experiment therefore on my
heart
And I instruct her too by the result.
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 !
Con. Tush ! I have said it, did I
not say it all ?
The life, for her—the heart-beats, for
her sake !
Nor. 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, [itself,
Whom, did she love me, did love prove
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 play-
ful friend,
" 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 suc-
cumb ?
- 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 !
Con. Norbert !
- Nor.* 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, [nate
And kneel to whom you please to desig-
And make you mirth ? It is too hor-
rible.
- 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.
- Con.* See the Queen ! Norbert—this
one more last word—
If thus you have taken jest for earnest
—thus
Loved me in earnest . . .
Nor. Ah, no jest holds here !
Where is the laughter in which jests
break up,
And what this horror that grows pal-
pable ?
Madam—why grasp you thus the bal-
cony ?
Have I done ill ? Have I not spoken
the truth ? [test
How could I other ? Was it not your
To try me, and what my love for Con-
stance 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 [rags.
Returned as something noble from the
Speak, Constance, I 'm the beggar !
Ha, what 's this ?
You two glare each at each like pan-
thers now.
Constance, the world fad s ; only you
stand there !
You did not, in to-night's wild whirl of
things, [price ?
Sell me—your soul of souls, for any
No—no—'t is 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 !
- [*The QUEEN goes out.*
Con. Feel my heart ; let it die
against your own !
Nor. Against my own. Explain
not ; let this be !
This is life's height.
Con. Yours, yours, yours !
Nor. 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, which we have
found.
Con. Found, found !
Nor. Sweet, never fear what
she can do !
We are past harm now.
Con. On the breast of God
I thought of men—as if you were a man.
Tempting him with a crown !
Nor. This must end here—
It is too perfect.
Con. There 's the music stopped.
What measured heavy tread ? It is
one blaze
About me and within me.
Nor. Oh, some death
Will run its sudden finger round this
spark
And sever us from the rest !
Con. And so do well
Now the doors open.
Nor. 'T is the guard comes.
Con. Kiss

BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM

The following poem was not reprinted in any collected edition of Robert Browning's works. It was written in April, 1854, and published in *The Keepsake*, 1856.

I
 "WOULD a man 'scape the rod?"
 Rabbi Ben Karshook saith,
 "See that he turn to God
 The day before his death."
 "Ay, could a man inquire
 When it shall come!" I say.
 The Rabbi's eye shoots fire—
 "Then let him turn to-day!"

II
 Quoth a young Sadducee:
 "Reader of many rolls,

It is so certain we
 Have, as they tell us, souls?"

"Son, there is no reply!"
 The Rabbi bit his beard:
 "Certain, a soul have I—
 We may have none," he sneered.

Thus Karshook, the Hiram's-Hammer,
 The Right-hand Temple-column,
 Taught babes in grace their grammar,
 And struck the simple, solemn.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LONDON, 1864

JAMES LEE'S WIFE.

I
 JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE
 WINDOW

I
 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.

II
 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?

III
 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

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

II
 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?

III
 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.

IV

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

I

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 !

II

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the salt-
ness, 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.

III

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 Novem-
ber's rebuff.

IV

But why must cold spread ? but
wherefore bring change
To the spirit,
God meant should mate his with an in-
finite 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 !

IV

ALONG THE BEACH

I

I WILL be quiet and talk with you,
And reason why you are wrong.
You wanted my love—is that much
true ?
And so I did love, so I do :
What has come of it all along ?

II

I took you—how could I otherwise ?
For a world to me, and more ;
For all, love greatens and glorifies
Till God 's a-glow, to the loving eyes,
In what was mere earth before.

III

Yes, earth—yes, mere ignoble earth !
Now do I mis-state, mistake ?
Do I wrong your weakness and call it
worth ?
Expect all harvest, dread no dearth.
Seal my sense up for your sake ?

IV

Oh, love, love, no, love ! not so, in-
deed !
You were just weak earth, I knew :
With much in you waste, with many a
weed,
And plenty of passions run to seed,
But a little good grain too.

V

And such as you were, I took you for
mine :
Did not you find me yours,
To watch the olive and wait the
And wonder when rivers of oil and wine
Would flow, as the Book assures ?

VI

Well, and if none of these good things
came,

What did the failure prove ?

The man was my whole world, all the
same,

With his flowers to praise or his weeds
to blame,

And, either or both, to love.

VII

Yet this turns now to a fault—there !
there !

That I do love, watch too long,

And wait too well, and weary and wear;
And 't is all an old story, and my des-
pair

Fit subject for some new song :

VIII

"How the light, light love, he has wings
to fly

" At suspicion of a bond :

" My wisdom has bidden your pleasure
good-bye,

" Which will turn up next in a laughing
eye,

" And why should you look beyond ? "

V

ON THE CLIFF

I

I LEANED on the turf,

I looked at a rock

Left dry by the surf ;

For the turf, to call it grass were to
mock :

Dead to the roots, so deep was done

The work of the summer sun.

II

And the rock lay flat

As an anvil's face :

No iron like that !

Baked dry ; of a weed, of a shell, no
trace :

Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,

Death's altar by the lone shore.

III

On the turf, sprang gay

With his films of blue,

No cricket, I'll say,

But a warhorse, barded and chanfroned
too,

The gift of a quixote-mage to his
knight,

Real fairy, with wings all right.

IV

On the rock, they scorch

Like a drop of fire

From a brandished torch,

Fall two red fans of a butterfly :

No turf, no rock, in their ugly stead,

See, wonderful blue and red !

V

Is it not so

With the minds of men ?

The level and low,

The burnt and bare, in themselves ;
but then

With such a blue and red grace, not
theirs,

Love settling unawares !

VI

READING A BOOK, UNDER THE CLIFF

I

" STILL ailing, Wind ? Wilt be ap-
peased or no ?

" Which needs the other's office
thou or I ?

" Dost want to be disburthened of a
woe,

" And can, in truth, my voice untie

" Its links, and let it go ?

II

" Art thou a dumb, wronged thing that
would be righted,

" Entrusting thus thy cause to me ?
Forbear !

" No tongue can mend such pleadings ;
faith, requited

" With falsehood,—love, at last
aware

" Of scorn,—hopes, early blighted,—

III

" We have them ; but I know not any
tone

" So fit as thine to falter forth a sor-
row :

" Dost think men would go mad with-
out a moan,

" If they knew any way to borrow

" A pathos like thy own ?

IV

" Which sigh wouldst mock, of all the
sighs? The one
" So long escaping from lips starved
and blue,
" That lasts while on her pallet-bed the
nun
" Stretches her length; her foot
comes through
" The straw she shivers on;

V

" You had not thought she was so tall:
and spent,
" Her shrunk lids open, her lean fin-
gers shut
" Close, close, their sharp and livid
nails indent
" The clammy palm; then all is
mute:
" That way, the spirit went.

VI

" Or wouldst thou rather that I under-
stand
" Thy will to help me?—like the dog
I found
" Once, pacing sad this solitary strand,
" Who would not take my food, poor
hound,
" But whined and licked my hand."

VII

All this, and more, comes from some
young man's pride
Of power to see,—in failure and mis-
take,
Relinquishment, disgrace, on every
side,—
Merely examples for his sake,
Helps to his path untried:

VIII

Instances he must—simply recognise?
Oh, more than so!—must, with a
learner's zeal,
Make doubly prominent, twice empha-
size,
By added touches that reveal
The god in babe's disguise.

IX

Oh, he knows what defeat means, and
the rest!
Himself the undefeated that shall be:

Failure, disgrace, he flings them you to
test,—
His triumph, in eternity
Too plainly manifest!

X

Whence, judge if he learn forthwith
what the wind
Means in its moaning—by the happy
prompt
Instinctive way of youth, I mean; for
kind
Calm years, exacting their account
Of pain, mature the mind:

XI

And some midsummer morning, at the
lull
Just about daybreak, as he looks
across
A sparkling foreign country, wonderful
To the sea's edge for gloom and gloss,
Next minute must annul,—

XII

Then, when the wind begins among the
vines,
So low, so low, what shall it say but
this?
" Here is the change beginning, here the
lines
" Circumscribe beauty, set to bliss
" The limit time assigns."

XIII

Nothing can be as it has been before:
Better, so call it, only not the same.
To draw one beauty into our hearts'
core,
And keep it changeless! such our
claim;
So answered,—Never more!

XIV

Simple? Why this is the old woe of
the world;
Tune, to whose rise and fall we live
and die.
Rise with it, then! Rejoice that man
is hurled
From change to change unceasingly.
His soul's wings never furled!

XV

That's a new question; still replies the
fact,
Nothing endures: the wind moans,
saying so;

We moan in acquiescence: there 's
 life's pact,
 Perhaps probation—do I know?
 God does: endure his act!

XVI

Only, for man, how bitter not to grave
 On his soul's hands' palms one fair
 good wise thing
 Just as he grasped it! For himself,
 death's wave;
 While time first washes—ah, the
 sting!—
 O'er all he'd sink to save.

VII

AMONG THE ROCKS

I

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown
 old earth,
 This autumn morning! How he
 sets his bones
 To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out
 knees and feet
 For the ripple to run over in its mirth;
 Listening the while, where on the
 heap of stones
 The white breast of the sea-lark twit-
 ters sweet.

II

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient,
 true;
 Such is life 's trial, as old earth smiles
 and knows.
 If you loved only what were worth
 your love,
 Love were clear gain, and wholly well
 for you:
 Make the low nature better by your
 throes!
 Give earth yourself, go up for gain
 above!

VIII

BESIDE THE DRAWING-BOARD

I

"As like as a Hand to another Hand!"
 Whoever said that foolish thing,
 Could not have studied to understand
 The counsels of God in fashioning,
 Out of the infinite love of his heart,
 This Hand, whose beauty I praise,
 apart
 From the world of wonder left to praise.

If I tried to learn the other ways
 Of love, in its skill, or love, in its power,
 "As like as a Hand to another
 Hand:"

Who said that, never took his stand,
 Found and followed, like me, an hour,
 The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
 To fear, almost,—of the limit-line!
 As I looked at this, and learned and
 drew,

Drew and learned, and looked again,
 While fast the happy minutes flew,
 Its beauty mounted into my brain,
 And a fancy seized me; I was fain
 To efface my work, begin anew,
 Kiss what before I only drew;
 Ay, laying the red chalk 'twixt my lips,
 With soul to help if the mere lips
 failed,

I kissed all right where the drawing
 ailed,
 Kissed fast the grace that somehow
 slips
 Still from one's soulless finger-tips.

II

'T is a clay cast, the perfect thing,
 From Hand live once, dead long ago:
 Princess-like it wears the ring
 To fancy's eye, by which we know
 That here at length a master found
 His match, a proud lone soul its
 mate,

As soaring genius sank to ground
 And pencil could not emulate
 The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
 To fear almost!—of the limit-line.
 Long ago the god, like me
 The worm, learned, each in our degree:
 Looked and loved, learned and drew,
 Drew and learned and loved again,
 While fast the happy minutes flew,
 Till beauty mounted into his brain
 And on the finger which outvied
 His art he placed the ring that 's
 there,

Still by fancy's eye descried,
 In token of a marriage rare:
 For him on earth, his art's despair,
 For him in heaven, his soul's fit bride.

III

Little girl with the poor coarse hand
 I turned from to a cold clay cast—
 I have my lesson, understand
 The worth of flesh and blood at last!
 Nothing but beauty in a Hand?

Because he could not change the hue,
Mend the lines and make them true
To this which met his soul's demand,—
Would Da Vinci turn from you?
I hear him laugh my woes to scorn—
"The fool forsooth is all forlorn
"Because the beauty, she thinks best,
"Lived long ago or was never born,—
"Because no beauty bears the test
"In this rough peasant Hand! Confessed
"Art is null and study void!"
"So sayest thou? So said not I,
"Who threw the faulty pencil by,
"And years instead of hours employed,
"Learning the veritable use
"Of flesh and bone and nerve beneath
"Lines and hue of the outer sheath,
"If haply I might reproduce
"One motive of the mechanism,
"Flesh and bone and nerve that make
"The poorest coarsest human hand
"An object worthy to be scanned
"A whole life long for their sole sake.
"Shall earth and the cramped moment-space
"Yield the heavenly crowning grace?
"Now the parts and then the whole!
"Who art thou, with stunted soul
"And stunted body, thus to cry
"I love,—shall that be life's strait
dole?
"I must live beloved or die!"
"This peasant hand that spins the
wool
"And bakes the bread, why lives it on,
"Poor and coarse with beauty gone,—
"What use survives the beauty?
Fool!"

Go, little girl with the poor coarse hand
I have my lesson, shall understand.

IX

ON DECK

I

THERE is nothing to remember in me,
Nothing I ever said with a grace,
Nothing I did that you care to see,
Nothing I was that deserves a place
In your mind, now I leave you, set you
free.

II

Conceded! In turn, concede to me,
Such things have been as a mutual
flame.

Your soul 's locked fast but, love for
a key,
You might let it loose, till I grew the
same
In your eyes, as in mine you stand:
strange plea!

III

For then, then, what would it matter
to me
That I was the harsh, ill-favoured
one?
We both should be like as pea and pea;
It was ever so since the world begun:
So, let me proceed with my reverie.

IV

How strange it were if you had all me,
As I have all you in my heart and
brain,
You, whose least word brought gloom
or glee,
Who never lifted the hand in vain
Will hold mine yet, from over the sea!

V

Strange, if a face, when you thought of
me,
Rose like your own face present now,
With eyes as dear in their due degree,
Much such a mouth, and as bright a
brow,
Till you saw yourself, while you cried
"Tis She!"

VI

Well, you may, you must, set down to
me
Love that was life, life that was love;
A tenure of breath at your lips' decree,
A passion to stand as your thoughts
approve,
A rapture to fall where your foot might
be.

VII

But did one touch of such love for me
Come in a word or a look of yours,
Whose words and looks will, circling,
flee
Round me and round while life en-
dures,—
Could I fancy "As I feel, thus feels He;"

VIII

Why, fade you might to a thing like me,
And your hair grow these coarse
hanks of hair,

Your skin, this bark of a gnarled tree,—
 You might turn yourself!—should I
 know or care,
 When I should be dead of joy, James
 Lee?

GOLD HAIR :
 A STORY OF PORNIC

I

Oh, the beautiful girl, too white,
 Who lived at Pornic down by the sea,
 Just where the sea and the Loire unite!
 And a boasted name in Brittany
 She bore, which I will not write.

II

Too white, for the flower of life is red ;
 Her flesh was the soft seraphic screen
 Of a soul that is meant (her parents
 said)
 To just see earth, and hardly be seen,
 And blossom in heaven instead.

III

Yet earth saw one thing, one how fair!
 One grace that grew to its full on
 earth :
 Smiles might be sparse on her cheek so
 spare,
 And her waist want half a girdle's
 girth,
 But she had her great gold hair.

IV

Hair, such a wonder of flax and floss,
 Freshness and fragrance—floods of
 it, too!
 Gold, did I say? Nay, gold 's mere
 dross :
 Here, Life smiled, "Think what I
 meant to do!"
 And Love sighed, "Fancy, my loss!"

V

So, when she died, it was scarce more
 strange
 Than that, when some delicate even-
 ing dies,
 And you follow its spent sun's pallid
 range,
 There 's a shoot of colour startles the
 skies
 With sudden, violent change,—

VI

That, while the breath was nearly to
 seek,

As they put the little cross to her lips,
 She changed; a spot came out on her
 cheek,
 A spark from her eye in mid-eclipse,
 And she broke forth, "I must speak!"

VII

"Not my hair!" made the girl her
 moan—
 "All the rest is gone or to go ;
 "But the last, last grace, my all, my
 own,
 "Let it stay in the grave, that the
 ghosts may know!
 "Leave my poor gold hair alone!"

VIII

The passion thus vented, dead lay she ;
 Her parents sobbed their worst on
 that,
 All friends joined in, nor observed de-
 gree :
 For indeed the hair was to wonder at,
 As it spread—not flowing free,

IX

But curled around her brow, like a
 crown,
 And coiled beside her cheeks, like a
 cap,
 And calmed about her neck—ay, down
 To her breast, pressed flat, without a
 gap
 I' the gold, it reached her gown.

X

All kissed that face, like a silver wedge
 Mid the yellow wealth, nor disturbed
 its hair :
 E'en the priest allowed death's privi-
 lege,
 As he planted the crucifix with care
 On her breast, 'twixt edge and edge.

XI

And thus was she buried, inviolate
 Of body and soul, in the very space
 By the altar; keeping saintly state
 In Pornic church, for her pride of
 race,
 Pure life and piteous fate.

XII

And in after-time would your fresh tear
 fall,
 Though your mouth might twitch
 with a dubious smile,

As they told you of gold both robe and
pall,
How she prayed them leave it alone
awhile,
So it never was touched at all.

XIII

Years flew; this legend grew at last
The life of the lady; all she had done,
All been, in the memories fading fast
Of lover and friend, was summed in
one
Sentence survivors passed:

XIV

To wit, she was meant for heaven, not
earth;
Had turned an angel before the time:
Yet, since she was mortal, in such
dearth
Of frailty, all you could count a crime
Was—she knew her gold hair's worth.

XV

At little pleasant Pornic church,
It chanced, the pavement wanted
repair,
Was taken to pieces: left in the lurch,
A certain sacred space lay bare,
And the boys began research.

XVI

'T was the space where our sires would
lay a saint,
A benefactor,—a bishop, suppose,
A baron with armour-adornments
quaint,
Dame with chased ring and jewelled
rose,
Things sanctity saves from taint;

XVII

So we come to find them in after-days
When the corpse is presumed to have
done with gauds
Of use to the living, in many ways:
For the boys get pelf, and the town
applauds,
And the church deserves the praise.

XVIII

They grubbed with a will: and at
length—*O cor*
Humanum, pectora cæca, and the
rest!—
They found—no gaud they were prying
for,

No ring, no rose, but—who would
have guessed?—
A double Louis-d'or!

XIX

Here was a case for the priest: he
heard,
Marked, inwardly digested, laid
Finger on nose, smiled, "A little bird
"Chirps in my ear:" then, "Bring
a spade,
"Dig deeper!"—he gave the word.

XX

And lo, when they came to the coffin-
lid,
Or rotten planks which composed it
once,
Why, there lay the girl's skull wedged
amid
A mint of money, it served for the
nonce
To hold in its hair-heaps hid!

XXI

Hid there? Why? Could the girl
be wont
(She the stainless soul) to treasure up
Money, earth's trash and heaven's
affront?
Had a spider found out the com-
munion-cup,
Was a toad in the christening-font?

XXII

Truth is truth: too true it was.
Gold! She hoarded and hugged it
first,
Longed for it, leaned o'er it, loved it—
alas—
Till the humour grew to a head and
burst,
And she cried, at the final pass,—

XXIII

"Talk not of God, my heart is stone!
"Nor lover nor friend—be gold for
both!
"Gold I lack; and, my all, my own
"It shall hide in my hair. I scarce
die loth
"If they let my hair alone!"

XXIV

Louis-d'ors, some six times five,
And duly double, every piece.
Now, do you see? With the priest to
shrive,

With parents preventing her soul's
release
By kisses that kept alive,—

XXV

With heaven's gold gates about to ope,
With friends' praise, gold-like, linger-
ing still,
An instinct had bidden the girl's hand
grope
For gold, the true sort—"Gold in
heaven, if you will ;
' But I keep earth's too, I hope."

XXVI

Enough ! The priest took the grave's
grim yield :
The parents, they eyed that price of
sin
As if *thirty pieces* lay revealed
On the place to bury strangers in,
The hideous Potter's Field.

XXVII

But the priest bethought him : "' Milk
that 's spilt '
"—You know the adage ! Watch
and pray !
" Saints tumble to earth with so slight
a tilt !
" It would build a new altar ; that,
we may ! "
And the altar therewith was built.

XXVIII

Why I deliver this horrible verse ?
As the text of a sermon, which now I
preach :
Evil or good may be better or worse
In the human heart, but the mixture
of each
Is a marvel and a curse.

XXIX

The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith may be false,
I find ;
For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight :

XXX

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
See reasons and reasons ; this, to be-
gin :
' T is the faith that launched point-
blank her dart

At the head of a lie—taught Original
Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

THE WORST OF IT

I

WOULD it were I had been false, not
you !
I that am nothing, not you that are
all :
I, never the worse for a touch or two
On my speckled hide ; not you, the
pride
Of the day, my swan, that a first fleck's
fall
On her wonder of white must un-
swan, undo !

II

I had dipped in life's struggle, and out
again,
Bore specks of it here, there, easy to
see,
When I found my swan and the cure
was plain ;
The dull turned bright as I caught
your white
On my bosom : you saved me—saved
in vain
If you ruined yourself, and all
through me !

III

Yes, all through the speckled beast
that I am,
Who taught you to stoop ; you gave
me yourself,
And bound your soul by the vows that
damn :
Since on better thought you break,
as you ought,
Vows—words, no angel set down, some
elf
Mistook,—for an oath, an epigram !

IV

Yes, might I judge you, here were my
heart,
And a hundred its like, to treat as
you pleased !
I choose to be yours, for my proper part,
Yours, leave or take, or mar me or
make ;
If I acquiesce, why should you be
teased
With the conscience-prick and the
memory-smart ?

v

But what will God say? Oh, my sweet,
Think, and be sorry you did this thing!
Though earth were unworthy to feel your feet,
There 's a heaven above may deserve your love:
Should you forfeit heaven for a snapt gold ring
And a promise broke, were it just or meet?

vi

And I to have tempted you! I, who tried
Your soul, no doubt, till it sank!
Unwise,
I loved, and was lowly, loved and aspired,
Loved, grieving or glad, till I made you mad,
And you meant to have hated and despised—
Whereas, you deceived me nor inquired!

vii

She, ruined? How? No heaven for her?
Crowns to give, and none for the brow
That looked like marble and smelt like myrrh?
Shall the robe be worn, and the palm-branch borne,
And she go graceless, she graced now
Beyond all saints, as themselves aver?

viii

Hardly! That must be understood!
The earth is your place of penance, then;
And what will it prove? I desire your good,
But, plot as I may, I can find no way
How a blow should fall, such as falls on men,
Nor prove too much for your womanhood.

ix

It will come, I suspect, at the end of life,
When you walk alone, and review the past;

And I, who so long shall have done with strife,
And journeyed my stage and earned my wage
And retired as was right,—I am called at last
When the devil stabs you, to lend the knife.

x

He stabs for the minute of trivial wrong,
Nor the other hours are able to save,
The happy, that lasted my whole life long:
For a promise broke, not for first words spoke,
The true, the only, that turn my grave
To a blaze of joy and a crash of song.

xi

Witness beforehand! Off I trip
On a safe path gay through the flowers you flung:
My very name made great by your lip,
And my heart a-glow with the good I know
Of a perfect year when we both were young,
And I tasted the angels' fellowship.

xii

And witness, moreover . . . Ah, but wait!
I spy the loop whence an arrow shoots!
It may be for yourself, when you meditate,
That you grieve—for slain ruth, murdered truth:
"Though falsehood escape in the end, what boots?
"How truth would have triumphed!"
—you sigh too late.

xiii

Ay, who would have triumphed like you, I say!
Well, it is lost now; well, you must bear,
Abide and grow fit for a better day:
You should hardly grudge, could I be your judge!
But hush! For you, can be no despair:
There 's amends: 'tis a secret: hope and pray!

xiv

For I was true at least—oh, true
enough!

And, dear, truth is not as good as it
seems!

Commend me to conscience! Idle
stuff!

Much help is in mine, as I mope and
pine,

And skulk through day, and scowl in
my dreams

At my swan's obtaining the crow's
rebuff.

xv

Men tell me of truth now—"False!"
I cry:

Of beauty—"A mask, friend! Look
beneath!"

We take our own method, the devil and
I,

With pleasant and fair and wise and
rare:

And the best we wish to what lives, is—
death;

Which even in wishing, perhaps we
lie!

xvi

Far better commit a fault and have
done—

As you, dear!—for ever; and
choose the pure,

And look where the healing waters run,
And strive and strain to be good
again,

And a place in the other world ensure,
All glass and gold, with God for its
sun.

xvii

Misery! What shall I say or do?

I cannot advise, or, at least, per-
suade:

Most like, you are glad you deceived
me—rue

No whit of the wrong: you endured
too long,

Have done no evil and want no aid,
Will live the old life out and chance
the new.

xviii

And your sentence is written all the
same,

And I can do nothing,—pray, per-
haps:

But somehow the world pursues its
game,

If I pray, if I curse,—for better or
worse:

And my faith is torn to a thousand
scraps,

And my heart feels ice while my words
breathe flame.

xix

Dear, I look from my hiding-place.

Are you still so fair? Have you
still the eyes?

Be happy! Add but the other grace,
Be good! Why want what the
angels vaunt?

I knew you once: but in Paradise,

If we meet, I will pass nor turn my
face.

DÏS ALITER VISUM;

OR,

LE BYRON DE NOS JOURS

I

STOP, let me have the truth of that!

Is that all true? I say, the day

Ten years ago when both of us

Met on a morning, friends—as thus

We met this evening, friends or
what?—

II

Did you—because I took your arm

And sillily smiled, "A mass of brass

"That sea looks, blazing underneath!"

While up the cliff-road edged with

heath,

We took the turns nor came to

harm—

III

Did you consider "Now makes twice

"That I have seen her, walked and

talked

"With this poor pretty thoughtful

thing,

"Whose worth I weigh: she tries to

sing;

"Draws, hopes in time the eye grows

nice;

IV

"Reads verse and thinks she under-

stands;

"Loves all, at any rate, that's great,

" Good, beautiful ; but much as we
 " Down at the bath-house love the
 sea,
 " Who breathe its salt and bruise its
 sands :

v

" While . . . do but follow the fishing-
 gull
 " That flaps and floats from wave to
 cave !
 " There 's the sea-lover, fair my friend !
 " What then ? Be patient, mark
 and mend !
 " Had you the making of your scull ? "

vi

And did you, when we faced the church
 With spire and sad slate roof, aloof
 From human fellowship so far,
 Where a few graveyard crosses are,
 And garlands for the swallows' perch,—

vii

Did you determine, as we stepped
 O'er the lone stone fence, " Let me
 get
 " Her for myself, and what 's the earth
 " With all its art, verse, music, wort!—
 " Compared with love, found, gained,
 and kept ?

viii

" Schumann 's our music-maker now ;
 " Has his march-movement youth
 and mouth ?
 " Ingres 's the modern man that paints ;
 " Which will lean on me, of his saints ?
 " Heine for songs ; for kisses, how ? "

ix

And did you, when we entered, reached
 The votive frigate, soft aloft
 Riding on air this hundred years,
 Safe-smiling at old hopes and fears,—
 Did you draw profit while she preached ?

x

Resolving, " Fools we wise men grow !
 " Yes, I could easily blurt out curt
 " Some question that might find reply
 " As prompt in her stopped lips,
 dropped eye,
 " And rush of red to cheek and brow :

xi

" Thus were a match made, sure and
 fast,

" 'Mid the blue weed-flowers round
 the mound

" Where, issuing, we shall stand and
 stay

" For one more look at baths and
 bay,

" Sands, sea-gulls, and the old church
 last—

xii

" A match 'twixt me, bent, wigged and
 lamed,

" Famous, however, for verse and
 worse,

" Sure of the Fortieth spare Arm-chair
 " When gout and glory seat me
 there,

" So, one whose love-freaks pass un-
 blamed,—

xiii

" And this young beauty, round and
 sound

" As a mountain-apple, youth and
 truth

" With loves and doves, at all events
 " With money in the Three per Cents ;

" Whose choice of me would seem pro-
 found :—

xiv

" She might take me as I take her.
 " Perfect the hour would pass, alas !

" Climb high, love high, what matter ?
 Still,

" Feet, feelings, must descend the hill :
 " An hour's perfection can't recur.

xv

" Then follows Paris and full time
 " For both to reason : ' Thus with
 us ! '

" She 'll sigh, " Thus girls give body
 and soul

" ' At first word, think they gain the
 goal,

" ' When 't is the starting-place they
 climb !

xvi

" ' My friend makes verse and gets re-
 nown ;

" ' Have they all fifty years, his
 peers ?

" ' He knows the world, firm, quiet and
 gay ;

" ' Boys will become as much one
 day :

"They're fools; he cheats, with
beard less brown.

XVII

"For boys say, *Love me or I die!*
He did not say, *The truth is, youth*
"I want, *who am old and know too
much;*
"I'd catch youth: *lend me sight and
touch!*
"Drop heart's blood where life's wheels
grate dry!"

XVIII

"While I should make rejoinder"—
(then
It was, no doubt, you ceased that
least
Light pressure of my arm in yours)
"I can conceive of cheaper cures
"For a yawning-fit o'er books and
men.

XIX

"What? All I am, was, and might
be,
"All, books taught, art brought,
life's whole strife,
"Painful results since precious, just
"Were fitly exchanged, in wise dis-
gust,
"For two cheeks freshened by youth
and sea?"

XX

"All for a nose-gay!—what came first;
"With fields on flower, untried each
side;
"I rally, need my books and men,
"And find a nose-gay: drop it,
then,
"No match yet made for best or
worst!"

XXI

That ended me. You judged the
porch
We left by, Norman; took our look
At sea and sky; wondered so few
Find out the place for air and view;
Remarked the sun began to scorch;

XXII

Descended, soon regained the baths,
And then, good bye! Years ten
since then:
Ten years! We meet: you tell me,
now,

By a window-seat for that cliff-brow,
On carpet-stripes for those sand-paths.

XXIII

Now I may speak: you fool, for all
Your lore! WHO made things plain
in vain?
What was the sea for? What, the
grey
Sad church, that solitary day,
Crosses and graves and swallows' call?

XXIV

Was there nought better than to en-
joy?
No feat which, done, would make
time break,
And let us pent-up creatures through
Into eternity, our due?
No forcing earth teach heaven's em-
ploy?

XXV

No wise beginning, here and now,
What cannot grow complete (earth's
feat)
And heaven must finish, there and
then?
No tasting earth's true food for men,
Its sweet in sad, its sad in sweet?

XXVI

No grasping at love, gaining a share
O' the sole spark from God's life at
strife
With death, so, sure of range above
The limits here? For us and love,
Failure; but, when God fails, despair.

XXVII

This you call wisdom? Thus you add
Good unto good again, in vain?
You loved, with body worn and weak;
I loved, with faculties to seek:
Were both loves worthless since ill-
clad?

XXVIII

Let the mere star-fish in his vault
Crawl in a wash of weed, indeed,
Rose-jacynth to the finger-tips:
He, whole in body and soul, outstrips
Man, found with either in default.

XXIX

But what 's whole, can increase no
more,

Is dwarfed and dies, since here 's its
sphere.
The devil laughed at you in his sleeve !
You knew not ? That I well be-
lieve ;
Or you had saved two souls : nay, four.

XXX

For Stephanie sprained last night her
wrist,
Ankle or something. " Pooh," cry
you ?
At any rate she danced, all say,
Vilely ; her vogue has had its day.
Here comes my husband from his whist.

TOO LATE

I

HERE was I with my arm and heart
And brain, all yours for a word, a
want
Put into a look—just a look, your
part,—
While mine, to repay it . . . vainest
vaunt,
Were the woman, that 's dead, alive to
hear,
Had her lover, that 's lost, love's
proof to show !
But I cannot show it ; you cannot
speak
From the churchyard neither, miles
removed,
Though I feel by a pulse within my
cheek,
Which stabs and stops, that the
woman I loved
Needs help in her grave and finds none
near,
Wants warmth from the heart which
sends it—so !

II

'Did I speak once angrily, all the drear
days
You lived, you woman I loved so
well,
Who married the other ? Blame or
praise,
Where was the use then ? Time
would tell,
And the end declare what man for you,
What woman for me was the choice
of God.
But, Edith dead ! no doubting more !
I used to sit and look at my life

As it rippled and ran till, right before,
A great stone stopped it : oh, the
strife
Of waves at the stone some devil threw
In my life's midcurrent, thwarting
God !

III

But either I thought, " They may churn
and chide
" Awhile, my waves which came for
their joy
" And found this horrible stone full-
tide :
" Yet I see just a thread escape,
deploy
" Through the evening-country, silent
and safe,
" And it suffers no more till it finds
the sea."
Or else I would think, " Perhaps some
night
" When new things happen, a meteor-
ball
" May slip through the sky in a line of
light,
" And earth breathe hard, and land-
marks fall,
" And my waves no longer champ nor
chafe,
" Since a stone will have rolled from
its place : let be ! "

IV

But, dead ! All 's done with : wait
who may,
Watch and wear and wonder who
will.
Oh, my whole life that ends to-day !
Oh, my soul's sentence, sounding
still,
" The woman is dead, that was none of
his ;
" And the man, that was none of
hers, may go ! "
There 's only the past left : worry that !
Wreak, like a bull, on the empty
coat,
Rage, its late wearer is laughing at !
Tear the collar to rags, having missed
his throat ;
Strike stupidly on—" This, this and
this,
" Where I would that a bosom re-
ceived the blow ! "

v

I ought to have done more : once my
speech,
And once your answer, and there,
the end,
And Edith was henceforth out of reach !
Why, men do more to deserve a
friend,
Be rid of a foe, get rich, grow wise,
Nor, folding their arms, stare fate in
the face.
Why, better even have burst like a
thief
And borne you away to a rock for
us two,
In a moment's horror, bright, bloody
and brief,
Then changed to myself again—" I
slew
" Myself in that moment ; a ruffian
lies
" Somewhere : your slave, see, born
in his place ! "

vi

What did the other do ? You be
judge !
Look at us, Edith ! Here are we
both !
Give him his six whole years : I grudge
None of the life with you, nay, I
loathe
Myself that I grudged his start in ad-
vance
Of me who could overtake and pass.
But, as if he loved you ! No, not he,
Nor any one else in the world, 't is
plain :
Who ever heard that another, free
As I, young, prosperous, sound and
sane,
Poured life out, proffered it—" Half a
glance
" Of those eyes of yours and I drop
the g ass ! "

vii

Handsome, were you ? 'Tis more than
they held,
More than they said ; I was 'ware
and watched :
I was the 'scapegrace, this rat belled
The cat, this fool got his whiskers
scratched :
The others ? No head that was
turned, no heart
Broken, my lady, assure yourself !

Each soon made his mind up ; so and
so
Married a dancer, such and such
Stole his friend's wife, stagnated slow,
Or mandered, unable to do as much,
And muttered of peace where he had no
part :
While, hid in the closet, laid on the
shelf,—

viii

On the whole, you were let alone, I
think !
So, you looked to the other, who ac-
quiesced ;
My rival, the proud man,—prize your
pink
Of poets ! A poet he was ! I've
guessed :
He rhymed you his rubbish nobody
read,
Loved you and doved you—did not I
laugh !
There was a prize ! But we both were
tried
Oh, heart of mine, marked broad
with her mark,
Tekel, found wanting, set aside,
Scorned ! See, I bleed these tears in
the dark
Till comfort come and the last be bled :
He ? He is tagging your epitaph.

ix

If it would only come over again !
—Time to be patient with me, and
probe
This heart till you punctured the
proper vein,
Just to learn what blood is : twitch
the robe
From that blank lay-figure your fancy
draped,
Prick the leathern heart till the—
verses spirt !
And late it was easy ; late, you walked
Where a friend might meet you ;
Edith's name
Arose to one's lip if one laughed or
talked ;
If I heard good news, you heard the
same ;
When I woke, I knew that your breath
escaped ;
I could bide my time, keep alive,
alert.

X

And alive I shall keep and long, you
will see!

I knew a man, was kicked like a dog
From gutter to cesspool; what cared
he

So long as he picked from the filth his
prog?

He saw youth, beauty and genius die,
And jollily lived to his hundredth
year.

But I will live otherwise: none of such
life!

At once I begin as I mean to end.

Go on with the world, get gold in its
strife,

Give your spouse the slip and betray
your friend!

There are two who decline, a woman
and I,

And enjoy our death in the darkness
here.

XI

I liked that way you had with your
curls

Wound to a ball in a net behind:

Your cheek was chaste as a quaker-
girl's,

And your mouth—there was never,
to my mind,

Such a funny mouth, for it would not
shut;

And the dented chin too—what a
chin!

There were certain ways when you
spoke, some words

That you know you never could pro-
nounce:

You were thin, however; like a bird's

Your hand seemed—some would say,
the pounce

Of a scaly-footed hawk—all but!

The world was right when it called
you thin.

XII

But I turn my back on the world: I
take

Your hand, and kneel, and lay to my
lips.

Bid me live, Edith! Let me slake
Thirst at your presence! Fear no
slips!

'T is your slave shall pay, while his soul
endures,

Full due, love's whole debt, *sum-
mum jus*.

My queen shall have high observance,
planned

Courtship made perfect, no least line
Crossed without warrant. There you
stand,

Warm too, and white too: would this
wine

Had washed all over that body of yours,
Ere I drank it, and you down with t,
thus!

ABT VOGLER

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORIZING
UPON THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF
HIS INVENTION)

I

WOULD that the structure brave, the
manifold music I build,

Bidding my organ obey, calling its
keys to their work,

Claiming each slave of the sound, at a
touch, as when Solomon willed

Armies of angels that soar, legions of
demons that lurk,

Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end
and of aim,

Adverse, each from the other heaven-
high, hell-deep removed,—

Should rush into sight at once as he
named the ineffable Name,

And pile him a palace straight, to
pleasure the princess he loved!

II

Would it might tarry like his, the beau-
tiful building of mine,

This which my keys in a crowd
pressed and importuned to raise!

Ah, one and all, how they helped,
would dispart now and now com-
bine,

Zealous to hasten the work, heighten
their master his praise!

And one would bury his brow with a
blind plunge down to hell,

Burrow awhile and build, broad on
the roots of things,

Then up again swim into sight, having
based me my palace well,

Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on
the nether springs.

III

And another would mount and march,
like the excellent minion he was,

Ay, another and yet another, one
 crowd but with many a crest,
 Raising my rampired walls of gold as
 transparent as glass,
 Eager to do and die, yield each his
 place to the rest :
 For higher still and higher (as a runner
 tips with fire,
 When a great illumination surprises a
 festal night—
 Outlining round and round Rome's
 dome from space to spire)
 Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and
 the pride of my soul was in sight.

IV

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it
 was certain, to match man's birth,
 Nature in turn conceived, obeying
 an impulse as I ;
 And the emulous heaven yearned down,
 made effort to reach the earth,
 As the earth had done her best, in my
 passion, to scale the sky :
 Novel splendours burst forth, grew
 familiar and dwelt with mine,
 Not a point nor peak but found and
 fixed its wandering star ;
 Meteor-moons, balls of blaze : and
 they did not pale nor pine,
 For earth had attained to heaven,
 there was no more near nor far.

V

Nay more ; for there wanted not who
 walked in the glare and glow,
 Presences plain in the place ; or,
 fresh from the Protoplast,
 Furnished for ages to come, when a
 kindlier wind should blow,
 Lured now to begin and live, in a
 house to their liking at last ;
 Or else the wonderful Dead who have
 passed through the body and gone,
 But were back once more to breathe
 in an old world worth their new :
 What never had been, was now ; what
 was, as it shall be anon ;
 And what is,—shall I say, matched
 both ? for I was made perfect too.

VI

All through my keys that gave their
 sounds to a wish of my soul,
 All through my soul that praised as
 its wish flowed visibly forth,

All through music and me ! For think,
 had I painted the whole,
 Why, there it had stood, to see, nor
 the process so wonder-worth :
 Had I written the same, made verse—
 still, effect proceeds from cause,
 Ye know why the forms are fair, ye
 hear how the tale is told ;
 It is all triumphant art, but art in obe-
 dience to laws,
 Painter and poet are proud in the
 artist-list enrolled :—

VII

But here is the finger of God, a flash of
 the will that can,
 Existent behind all laws, that made
 them and, lo, they are !
 And I know not if, save in this, such
 gift be allowed to man,
 That out of three sounds he frame,
 not a fourth sound, but a star.
 Consider it well : each tone of our scale
 in itself is nought ;
 It is everywhere in the world—loud,
 soft, and all is said :
 Give it to me to use ! I mix it with
 two in my thought
 And, there ! Ye have heard and
 seen : consider and bow the head !

VIII

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of
 music I reared ;
 Gone ! and the good tears start, the
 praises that come too slow ;
 For one is assured at first, one scarce
 can say that he feared,
 That he even gave it a thought, the
 gone thing was to go.
 Never to be again ! But many more
 of the kind
 As good, nay, better perchance : is
 this your comfort to me ?
 To me, who must be saved because I
 cling with my mind
 To the same, same self, same love,
 same God : ay, what was, shall be.

IX

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee,
 the ineffable Name ?
 Builder and maker, thou, of houses
 not made with hands !
 What, have fear of change from thee
 who art ever the same ?
 Doubt that Thy power can fill the
 heart that Thy power expands ?

There shall never be one lost good !
 What was, shall live as before ;
 The evil is null, is nought, is silence
 implying sound ;
 What was good, shall be good, with, for
 evil, so much good more ;
 On the earth the broken arcs ; in the
 heaven, a perfect round.

X

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed
 of good, shall exist ;
 Not its semblance, but itself ; no
 beauty, nor good, nor power
 Whose voice has gone forth, but each
 survives for the melodist
 When eternity affirms the concep-
 tion of an hour.
 The high that proved too high, the
 heroic for earth too hard,
 The passion that left the ground to
 lose itself in the sky,
 Are music sent up to God by the lover
 and the bard ;
 Enough that he heard it once : we
 shall hear it by-and-by.

XI

And what is our failure here but a tri-
 umph's evidence
 For the fulness of the days ? Have
 we withered or agonized ?
 Why else was the pause prolonged but
 that singing might issue thence ?
 Why rushed the discords in, but that
 harmony should be prized ?
 Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is
 slow to clear,
 Each sufferer says his say, his scheme
 of the weal and woe :
 But God has a few of us whom he whis-
 pers in the ear ;
 The rest may reason and welcome :
 't is we musicians know.

XII

Well, it is earth with me ; silence re-
 sumes her reign :
 I will be patient and proud, and
 soberly acquiesce.
 Give me the keys. I feel for the com-
 mon chord again,
 Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the
 minor,—yes,
 And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand
 on alien ground,

Surveying awhile the heights I rolled
 from into the deep ;
 Which, hark, I have dared and done,
 for my resting-place is found,
 The C Major of this life : so, now I
 will try to sleep.

RABBI BEN EZRA

I

Grow old along with me !
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was
 made :
 Our times are in His hand
 Who saith " A whole I planned,
 " Youth shows but half ; trust God :
 see all, nor be afraid ! "

II

Not that, amassing flowers,
 Youth sighed " Which rose make ours,
 " Which lily leave and then as best re-
 call ? "
 Not that, admiring stars,
 It yearned " Nor Jove, nor Mars ;
 " Mine be some figured flame which
 blends, transcends them all ! "

III

Not for such hopes and fears
 Annulling youth's brief years,
 Do I remonstrate : folly wide the mark !
 Rather I prize the doubt
 Low kinds exist without,
 Finished and finite clods, untroubled
 by a spark.

IV

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
 Were man but formed to feed
 On joy, to solely seek and find and
 feast :
 Such feasting ended, then
 As sure an end to men ;
 Irks care the crop-full bird ? Frets
 doubt the maw-crammed beast ?

V

Rejoice we are allied
 To That which doth provide
 And not partake, effect and not receive !
 A spark disturbs our clod ;
 Nearer we hold of God
 Who gives, than of His tribes that take,
 I must believe.

VI

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand
but go!

Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare,
never grudge the throe!

VII

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to
fail:

What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would
not sink i' the scale.

VIII

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh hath soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs
want play?

To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on
its lone way?

IX

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every
turn:

Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How
good to live and learn?"

X

Not once beat "Praise be Thine!
"I see the whole design,
"I, who saw power, see now Love per-
fect too:

"Perfect I call Thy plan:
"Thanks that I was a man!
"Maker, remake, complete,—I trust
what Thou shalt do!"

XI

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for
rest:

Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold

Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as
we did best!

XII

Let us not always say
"Spite of this flesh to-day
"I strove, made head, gained ground
upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry "All good things
"Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more,
now, than flesh helps soul!"

XIII

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its
term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a God
though in the germ.

XIV

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and
new:
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour
to indue.

XV

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is
gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall
know, being old.

XVI

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the
grey:
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
"Take it and try its worth: here dies
another day."

XVII

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at
last,

" This rage was right i' the main,
 " That acquiescence vain :
 " The Future I may face now I have
 proved the Past."

XVIII

For more is not reserved
 To man, with soul just nerved
 To act to-morrow what he learns to-
 day :
 Here, work enough to watch
 The Master work, and catch
 Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the
 tool's true play.

XIX

As it was better, youth
 Should strive, through acts uncouth,
 Toward making, than repose on aught
 found made ;
 So, better, age, exempt
 From strife, should know, than tempt
 Further. Thou waitedst age ; wait
 death nor be afraid !

XX

Enough now, if the Right
 And Good and Infinite
 Be named here, as thou callest thy
 hand thine own,
 With knowledge absolute,
 Subject to no dispute
 From fools that crowded youth, nor let
 thee feel alone.

XXI

Be there, for once and all,
 Severed great minds from small,
 Announced to each his station in the
 Past !
 Was I, the world arraigned,
 Were they, my soul disdained,
 Right ? Let age speak the truth and
 give us peace at last !

XXII

Now, who shall arbitrate ?
 Ten men love what I hate,
 Shun what I follow, slight what I re-
 ceive ;
 Ten, who in ears and eyes
 Match me : we all surmise,
 They, this thing, and I, that : whom
 shall my soul believe ?

XXIII

Not on the vulgar mass
 Called " work," must sentence pass,

Things done, that took the eye and had
 the price ;
 O'er which, from level stand,
 The low world laid its hand,
 Found straightway to its mind, could
 value in a trice :

XXIV

But all, the world's coarse thumb
 And finger failed to plumb,
 So passed in making up the main ac-
 count ;
 All instincts immature,
 All purposes unsure,
 That weighed not as his work, yet
 swelled the man's amount :

XXV

Thoughts hardly to be packed
 Into a narrow act,
 Fancies that broke through language
 and escaped ;
 All I could never be,
 All, men ignored in me,
 This, I was worth to God, whose wheel
 the pitcher shaped.

XXVI

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
 That metaphor ! and feel
 Why time spins fast, why passive lies
 our clay,—
 Thou, to whom fools propound,
 When the wine makes its round,
 " Since life fleets, all is change ; the
 Past gone, seize to-day !"

XXVII

Fool ! All that is, at all,
 Lasts ever, past recall ;
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God
 stand sure :
 What entered into thee,
 That was, is, and shall be :
 Time's wheel runs back or stops : Pot-
 ter and clay endure.

XXVIII

He fixed thee mid this dance
 Of plastic circumstance,
 This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst
 fain arrest :
 Machinery just meant
 To give thy soul its bent,
 Try thee and turn thee forth, suffi-
 ciently impressed.

XXIX

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and
press ?

What though, about thy rim,
Scull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the
sterner stress ?

xxx

Look not thou down but up !
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and
trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow !
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what
needst thou with earth's wheel ?

xxxI

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moulded men ;
And since, not even while the whirl was
worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to
slake Thy thirst :

xxxII

So, take and use Thy work !
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings
past the aim !
My times be in Thy hand !
Perfect the cup as planned !
Let age approve of youth, and death
complete the same !

A DEATH IN THE DESERT

[SUPPOSED of Pamphylax the Antio-
chene :

It is a parchment, of my rolls the fifth,
Hath three skins glued together, is all
Greek,

And goeth from *Epsilon* down to *Mu* :
Lies second in the surnamed Chosen
Chest,

Stained and conserved with juice of
terebinth,

Covered with cloth of hair, and lettered
Xi,

From Xanthus, my wife's uncle, now at
peace :

Mu and *Epsilon* stand for my own
name,

I may not write it, but I make a cross
To show I wait His coming, with the
rest,
And leave off here : beginneth Pam-
phylax.]

I said, " If one should wet his lips with
wine,
" And slip the broadest plantain-leaf
we find,
" Or else the lappet of a linen robe,
" Into the water-vessel, lay it right,
" And cool his forehead just above the
eyes,
" The while a brother, kneeling either
side,
" Should chafe each hand and try to
make it warm,—
" He is not so far gone but he might
speak."

This did not happen in the outer cave,
Nor in the secret chamber of the rock,
Where, sixty days since the decree was
out,

We had him, bedded on a camel-skin,
And waited for his dying all the while ;
But in the midmost grotto : since
noon's light

Reached there a little, and we would
not lose

The last of what might happen on his
face.

I at the head, and Xanthus at the feet,
With Valens and the Boy, had lifted
him,

And brought him from the chamber in
the depths,

And laid him in the light where we
might see :

For certain smiles began about his
mouth,

And his lids moved, presageful of the
end.

Beyond, and half way up the mouth o'
the cave,

The Bactrian convert, having his de-
sire,

Kept watch, and made pretence to
graze a goat

That gave us milk, on rags of various
herb,

Plantain and quitch, the rocks' shade
keeps alive :

So that if any thief or soldier passed,

(Because the persecution was aware)
Yielding the goat up promptly with his
life,

Such man might pass on, joyful at a
prize,

Nor care to pry into the cool o' the
cave.

Outside was all noon and the burning
blue.

"Here is wine," answered Xanthus,—
dropped a drop;

I stooped and placed the lap of cloth
aright,

Then chafed his right hand, and the
Boy his left:

But Valens had bethought him, and
produced

And broke a ball of nard, and made
perfume.

Only, he did—not so much wake, as—
turn

And smile a little, as a sleeper does
If any dear one call him, touch his face—
And smiles and loves, but will not be
disturbed.

Then Xanthus said a prayer, but still
he slept:

It is the Xanthus that escaped to Rome,
Was burned, and could not write the
chronicle.

Then the Boy sprang up from his knees,
and ran,

Stung by the splendour of a sudden
thought,

And fetched the seventh plate of
graven lead

Out of the secret chamber, found a
place,

Pressing with finger on the deeper dints,
And spoke, as 'twere his mouth pro-
claiming first,

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Whereat he opened his eyes wide at
once,

And sat up of himself, and looked at us;
And thenceforth nobody pronounced a
word:

Only, outside, the Bactrian cried his
cry

Like the lone desert-bird that wears the
ruff,

As signal we were safe, from time to
time,

First he said, "If a friend declared to
me,

"This my son Valens, this my other
son,

"Were James and Peter,—nay, de-
clared as well

"This lad was very John,—I could be-
lieve!

"—Could, for a moment, doubtlessly
believe:

"So is myself withdrawn into my
depths,

"The soul retreated from the perished
brain

"Whence it was wont to feel and use
the world

"Through these dull members, done
with long ago.

"Yet I myself remain; I feel myself:
"And there is nothing lost. Let be,
awhile!"

[This is the doctrine he was wont to
teach,

How divers persons witness in each
man,

Three souls which make up one soul:
first, to wit,

A soul of each and all the bodily parts,
Seated therein, which works, and is
what Does,

And has the use of earth, and ends the
man

Downward: but, tending upward for
advice,

Grows into, and again is grown into
By the next soul, which, seated in the
brain,

Useth the first with its collected use,
And feeleth, thinketh, willeth,—is what
Knows:

Which, duly tending upward in its
turn,

Grows into, and again is grown into
By the last soul, that uses both the
first,

Subsisting whether they assist or no,
And, constituting man's self, is what
Is—

And leans upon the former, makes it
play,

As that played off the first: and, tend-
ing up,

Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the
man

Upward in that dread point of inter-
course,

- Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him.
 What Does, what Knows, what Is ;
 three souls, one man.
 I give the glossa of Theotypas.]
- And then, " A stick, once fire from end
 to end ;
 " Now, ashes save the tip that holds a
 spark !
 " Yet, blow the spark, it runs back,
 spreads itself
 " A little where the fire was : thus I
 urge
 " The soul that served me, till it task
 once more
 " What ashes of my brain have kept
 their shape,
 " And these make effort on the last o'
 the flesh,
 " Trying to taste again the truth of
 things— "
 (He smiled)—" their very superficial
 truth ;
 " As that ye are my sons, that it is long
 " Since James and Peter had release
 by death,
 " And I am only he, your brother John,
 " Who saw and heard, and could re-
 member all.
 ' Remember all ! It is not much to
 say.
 " What if the truth broke on me from
 above
 " As once and oft-times ? Such might
 hap again :
 " Doubtlessly He might stand in pre-
 sence here,
 " With head wool-white, eyes, flame,
 and feet like brass,
 " The sword and the seven stars, as I
 have seen—
 " I who now shudder only and surmise
 " ' How did your brother bear that
 sight and live ? '
 " If I live yet, it is for good, more love
 " Through me to men : be nought but
 ashes here
 " That keep awhile my semblance, who
 was John,—
 " Still, when they scatter, there is left
 on earth
 " No one alive who knew (consider
 this !)
 " —Saw with his eyes and handled with
 his hands
 " That which was from the first, the
 Word of Life.
- " How will it be when none more saith—
 ' I saw ? '
 " Such ever was love's way : to rise, it
 stoops.
 " Since I, whom Christ's mouth taught,
 was bidden teach,
 " I went, for many years, about the
 world,
 " Saying ' It was so ; so I heard and
 saw,'
 " Speaking as the case asked : and men
 believed.
 " Afterward came the message to my-
 self
 " In Patmos isle ; I was not bidden
 teach,
 " But simply listen, take a book and
 write,
 " Nor set down other than the given
 word,
 " With nothing left to my arbitrament
 " To choose or change : I wrote, and
 men believed.
 " Then, for my time grew brief, no
 message more,
 " No call to write again, I found a way,
 " And, reasoning from my knowledge,
 merely taught
 " Men should, for love's sake, in love's
 strength, believe
 " Or I would pen a letter to a friend
 " And urge the same as friend, nor less
 nor more :
 " Friends said I reasoned rightly, and
 believed.
 " But at the last, why, I seemed left
 alive
 " Like a sea-jelly weak on Patmos
 strand,
 " To tell dry sea-beach gazers how I
 fared
 " When there was mid-sea, and the
 mighty things ;
 " Left to repeat, ' I saw, I heard, I
 knew,'
 " And go all over the old ground again,
 " With Antichrist already in the world,
 " And many Antichrists, who answered
 prompt
 " ' Am I not Jasper as thyself art John ?
 " ' Nay, young, whereas through age
 thou mayest forget :
 " ' Wherefore, explain, or how shall we
 believe ? '
 " I never thought to call down fire on
 such.

- " Or, as in wonderful and early days,
 " Pick up the scorpion, tread the serpent dumb ;
 " But patient stated much of the Lord's life
 " Forgotten or misdelivered, and, let it work :
 " Since much that at the first, in deed and word,
 " Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,
 " Had grown (or else my soul was grown to match,
 " Fed through such years, familiar with such light,
 " Guarded and guided still to see and speak)
 " Of new significance and fresh result ;
 " What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars,
 " And named them in the Gospel I have writ.
 " For men said, ' It is getting long ago : '
 " ' Where is the promise of His coming ? '—asked
 " These young ones in their strength, as loth to wait,
 " Of me who, when their sires were born, was old.
 " I, for I loved them, answered, joyfully,
 " Since I was there, and helpful in my age ;
 " And, in the main, I think such men believed.
 " Finally, thus endeavouring, I fell sick,
 " Ye brought me here, and I supposed the end,
 " And went to sleep with one thought that, at least,
 " Though the whole earth should lie in wickedness,
 " We had the truth, might leave the rest to God.
 " Yet now I wake in such decrepitude
 " As I had slidden down and fallen afar,
 " Past even the presence of my former self,
 " Grasping the while for stay at facts which snap,
 " Till I am found away from my own world,
 " Feeling for foot-hold through a blank profound,
 " Along with unborn people in strange lands,
 " Who say—I hear said or conceive they say—
 " ' Was John at all, and did he say he saw ? '
 " ' Assure us, ere we ask what he might see ! '
 " And how shall I assure them ? Can they share
 " —They, who have flesh, a veil of youth and strength
 " About each spirit, that needs must bide its time,
 " Living and learning still as years assist
 " Which wear the thickness thin, and let man see—
 " With me who hardly am withheld at all,
 " But shudderingly, scarce a shred between,
 " Lie bare to the universal prick of light ?
 " Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
 " We whom God loves ? When pain ends, gain ends too.
 " To me, that story—ay, that Life and Death [is ;
 " Of which I wrote ' it was '—to me, it
 " —Is, here and now : I apprehend nought else.
 " Is not God now i' the world His power first made ?
 " Is not His love at issue still with sin,
 " Visibly when a wrong is done on earth ?
 " Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else around ?
 " Yea, and the Resurrection and Uprise
 " To the right hand of the throne—what is it beside,
 " When such truth, breaking bounds, o'erfloods my soul,
 " And, as I saw the sin and death, even so
 " See I the need yet transiency of both,
 " The good and glory consummated thence ?
 " I saw the Power ; I see the Love, once weak,
 " Resume the Power : and in this word ' I see,'
 " Lo, there is recognised the Spirit of both
 " That moving o'er the spirit of man, unblinds

- " His eye and bids him look. These
are, I see ;
- " But ye, the children, His beloved
ones too,
- " Ye need,—as I should use an optic
glass
- " I wondered at erewhile, somewhere i'
the world,
- " It had been given a crafty smith to
make ;
- " A tube, he turned on objects brought
too close,
- " Lying confusedly in subordinate
- " For the unassisted eye to master
once :
- " Look through his tube, at distance
now they lay,
- " Become succinct, distinct, so small, so
clear !
- " Just thus, ye needs must apprehend
what truth
- " I see, reduced to plain historic fact,
" Diminished into clearness, proved a
point
- " And far away : ye would withdraw
your sense
- " From out eternity, strain it upon
time,
- " Then stand before that fact, that Life
and Death,
- " Stay there at gaze, till it dispart, di-
spread,
- " As though a star should open out, all
sides,
- " And grow the world on you, as it is
my world.
- " For life, with all it yields of joy and
woe,
- " And hope and fear,—believe the aged
friend,—
- " Is just our chance o' the prize of
learning love,
- " How love might be, hath been indeed,
and is ;
- " And that we hold thenceforth to the
uttermost
- " Such prize despite the envy of the
world,
- " And, having gained truth, keep
truth : that is all.
- " But see the double way wherein we
are led,
- " How the soul learns diversely from
the flesh !
- " With flesh, that hath so little time to
stav.
- " And yields mere basement for the
soul's emprise,
- " Expect prompt teaching. Helpful
was the light,
- " And warmth was cherishing and food
was choice
- " To every man's flesh, thousand years
ago,
- " As now to yours and mine ; the body
sprang
- " At once to the height, and stayed :
but the soul,—no !
- " Since sages who, this noontide, medi-
tate
- " In Rome or Athens, may descry some
point
- " Of the eternal power, hid yestereve ;
- " And as thereby the power's whole
mass extends,
- " So much extends the æther floating
o'er,
- " The love that tops the might, the
Christ in God.
- " Then, as new lessons shall be learned
in these
- " Till earth's work stop and useless
time run out,
- " So duly, daily, needs provision be
- " For keeping the soul's prowess pos-
sible, [cay,
- " Building new barriers as the old de-
" Saving us from evasion of life's proof,
- " Putting the question ever, ' Does
God love,
- " And will ye hold that truth against
the world !'
- " Ye know there needs no second proof
with good
- " Gained for our flesh from any ear-hly
source :
- " We might go freezing, ages,—give us
fire,
- " Thereafter we judge fire at its full
worth,
- " And guard it safe through every
chance, ye know !
- " That fable of Prometheus and his
theft,
- " How mortals gained Jove's fiery
flower, grows old
- " (I have been used to hear the pagans
own)
- " And out of mind ; but fire, howe'er its
birth,
- " Here is it, precious to the sophist now
- " Who laughs the myth of Æschylus to
scorn,

- " As precious to those satyrs of his play,
 " Who touched it in gay wonder at the thing.
 " While were it so with the soul,—this gift of truth
 " Once grasped, were this our soul's gain safe, and sure
 " To prosper as the body's gain is wont,—
 " Why, man's probation would conclude, his earth
 " Crumble; for he both reasons and decides,
 " Weighs first, then chooses: will he give up fire
 " For gold or purple once he knows its worth?
 " Could he give Christ up were His worth as plain?
 " Therefore, I say, to test man, the proofs shift, [fact,
 " Nor may he grasp that fact like other
 " And straightway in his life acknowledge it,
 " As, say, the indubitable bliss of fire.
 " Sigh ye, ' It had been easier once than now? '
 " To give you answer I am left alive;
 " Look at me who was present from the first!
 " Ye know what things I saw; then came a test,
 " My first, befitting me who so had seen:
 " ' Forsake the Christ thou sawest transfigured, Him
 " ' Who trod the sea and brought the dead to life?
 " ' What should wring this from thee! '
 " —ye laugh and ask.
 " What wrung it? Even a torchlight and a noise,
 " The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,
 " And fear of what the Jews might do!
 " Just that,
 " And it is written, ' I forsook and fled: '
 " There was my trial, and it ended thus.
 " Ay, but my soul had gained its truth, could grow:
 " Another year or two,—what little child,
 " What tender woman that had seen no least
 " Of all my sights, but barely heard them told,
 " Who did not clasp the cross with a light laugh,
 " Or wrap the burning robe round, thanking God?
 " Well, was truth safe for ever, then? Not so.
 " Already had begun the silent work
 " Whereby truth, deadened of its absolute blaze,
 " Might need love's eye to pierce the o'erstretched doubt;
 " Teachers were busy, whispering ' All is true
 " ' As the aged ones report; but youth can reach
 " ' Where age gropes dimly, weak with stir and strain,
 " ' And the full doctrine slumbers till to-day.'
 " Thus, what the Roman's lowered spear was found,
 " A bar to me who touched and handled truth,
 " Now proved the glozing of some new shrewd tongue,
 " This Ebion, this Cerinthus or their mates,
 " Till imminent was the outcry ' Save our Christ! '
 " Whereon I stated much of the Lord's life
 " Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work.
 " Such work done, as it will be, what comes next?
 " What do I hear say, or conceive men say,
 " ' Was John at all, and did he say he saw?
 " ' Assure us, ere we ask what he might see! '
 " Is this indeed a burthen for late days,
 " And may I help to bear it with you all,
 " Using my weakness which becomes your strength?
 " For if a babe were born inside this grot,
 " Grew to a boy here, heard us praise the sun,
 " Yet had but yon sole glimmer in light's place,—
 " One loving him and wishful he should learn,
 " Would much rejoice himself was blinded first
 " Month by month here, so made to understand

- " How eyes, born darkling, apprehend
amiss ;
- " I think I could explain to such a child
" There was more glow outside than
gleams he caught,
- " Ay, nor need urge ' I saw it, so be-
lieve !'
- " It is a heavy burthen you shall bear
" In latter days, new lands, or old
grown strange,
- " Left without me, which must be very
soon.
- " What is the doubt, my brothers ?
Quick with it !
- " I see you stand conversing, each new
face,
- " Either in fields, of yellow summer
eves,
- " On islets yet unnamed amid the sea ;
" Or pace for shelter 'neath a portico
" Out of the crowd in some enormous
town
- " Where now the larks sing in a soli-
tude ;
- " Or muse upon blank heaps of stone
and sand
- " Idly conjectured to be Ephesus :
" And no one asks his fellow any more
" ' Where is the promise of His com-
ing ?' but
- " ' Was He revealed in any of His lives,
" ' As Power, as Love, as Influencing
Soul ?'
- " Quick, for time presses, tell the whole
mind out,
- " And let us ask and answer and be
saved !
- " My book speaks on, because it can-
not pass ;
- " One listens quietly, nor scoffs but
pleads
- " Here is a tale of things done ages
since ;
- " What truth was ever told the second
day ?
- " Wonders, that would prove doc-
trine, go for nought.
- " Remains the doctrine, love ; well,
we must love,
- " And what we love most, power and
love in one,
- " Let us acknowledge on the record
here,
- " Accepting these in Christ : must
Christ then be ?
- " Has He been ? Did not we our-
selves make Him ?
- " Our mind receives but what it holds,
no more.
- " First of the love, then ; we acknow-
ledge Christ—
- " A proof we comprehend His love, a
proof
- " We had such love already in our-
selves,
- " Knew first what else we should not
recognise.
- " 'T is mere projection from man's in-
most mind,
- " And, what he loves, thus falls re-
flected back,
- " Becomes accounted somewhat out
of him ;
- " He throws it up in air, it drops down
earth's,
- " With shape, name, story added,
man's old way.
- " How prove you Christ came other-
wise at least ?
- " Next try the power : He made and
rules the world :
- " Certes there is a world once made,
now ruled,
- " Unless things have been ever as we
see.
- " Our sires declared a charioteer's
yoked steeds
- " Brought the sun up the east and
down the west,
- " Which only of itself now rises, sets,
" As if a hand impelled it and a will,—
" Thus they long thought, they who
had will and hands :
- " But the new question's whisper is
distinct,
- " Wherefore must all force needs be
like ourselves ?
- " We have the hands, the will ; what
made and drives
- " The sun is force, is law, is named,
not known,
- " While will and love we do know ;
marks of these,
- " Eye-witnesses attest, so books de-
clare—
- " As that, to punish or reward our
race,
- " The sun at undue times arose or set
" Or else stood still : what do not men
affirm ?
- " But earth requires as urgently re-
ward

- " Or punishment to-day as years ago,
 " And none expects the sun will interpose ;
 " Therefore it was mere passion and mistake,
 " Or erring zeal for right, which changed the truth.
 " Go back, far, farther, to the birth of things ;
 " Ever the will, the intelligence, the love,
 " Man's !—which he gives, supposing he but finds,
 " As late he gave head, body, hands and feet,
 " To help these in what forms he called his gods.
 " First, Jove's brow, Juno's eyes were swept away,
 " But Jove's wrath, Juno's pride continued long ;
 " As last, will, power, and love discarded these,
 " So law in turn discards power, love, and will.
 " What proveth God is otherwise at least ?
 " All else, projection from the mind of man !
 " Nay, do not give me wine, for I am strong,
 " But place my gospel where I put my hands.
 " I say that man was made to grow, not stop ;
 " That help, he needed once, and needs no more,
 " Having grown up but an inch by, is withdrawn :
 " For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.
 " This imports solely, man should mount on each
 " New height in view ; the help whereby he mounts,
 " The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,
 " Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.
 " Man apprehends Him newly at each stage
 " Whereat earth's ladder drops, its service done ;
 " And nothing shall prove twice what once was proved.
- " You stick a garden-plot with ordered twigs
 " To show inside lie germs of herbs unborn,
 " And check the careless step would spoil their birth ;
 " But when herbs wave, the guardian twigs may go,
 " Since should ye doubt of virtues question kinds,
 " It is no longer for old twigs ye look,
 " Which proved once underneath lay store of seed,
 " But to the herb's self, by what light ye boast,
 " For what fruit's signs are. This book's fruit is plain,
 " Nor miracles need prove it any more.
 " Doth the fruit show ? Then miracles bade 'ware
 " At first of root and stem, saved both till now
 " From trampling ox, rough boar and wanton goat.
 " What ? Was man made a wheel-work to wind up,
 " And be discharged, and straight wound up anew ?
 " No !—grown, his growth lasts ; taught, he ne'er forgets :
 " May learn a thousand things, not twice the same.
 " This might be pagan teaching : now hear mine.
 " I say, that as the babe, you feed awhile,
 " Becomes a boy and fit to feed himself,
 " So, minds at first must be spoon-fed with truth :
 " When they can eat, babe's nurture is withdrawn.
 " I fed the babe whether it would or no :
 " I bid the boy or feed himself or starve.
 " I cried once, ' That ye may believe in Christ,
 " Behold this blind man shall receive his sight !'
 " I cry now, ' Urgest thou, for I am shrewd
 " And smile at stories how John's word could cure—
 " Repeat that miracle and take my faith ?'
 " I say, that miracle was duly wrought

"When, save for it, no faith was possible.
 "Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o' the world,
 "Whether the change came from our minds which see
 "Of the shows o' the world so much as and no more
 "Than God wills for His purpose,— (what do I
 "See now, suppose you, there where you see rock
 "Round us ?)—I know not ; such was the effect,
 "So faith grew, making void more miracles
 "Because too much : they would compel, not help.
 "I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ [thee
 "Accepted by thy reason, solves for
 "All questions in the earth and out of it,
 "And has so far advanced thee to be wise.
 "Wouldst thou unprove this to reprove the proved ?
 "In life's mere minute, with power to use that proof,
 "Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung ?
 "Thou hast it ; use it and forthwith, or die !
 "For I say, this is death and the sole death,
 "When a man's loss comes to him from his gain,
 "Darkness from light, from knowledge ignorance,
 "And lack of love from love made manifest ;
 "A lamp's death when, replete with oil, it chokes ;
 "A stomach's when, surcharged with food, it starves.
 "With ignorance was surety of a cure.
 "When man, appalled at nature, questioned first
 "'What if there lurk a might behind this might ?'
 "He needed satisfaction God could give,
 "And did give, as ye have the written word :
 "But when he finds might still re-
 double might,

"Yet asks, ' Since all is might, what use of will ? '
 "'—Will, the one source of might,—he being man
 "With a man's will and a man's might, to teach
 "In little how the two combine in large,—
 "That man has turned round on himself and stands,
 "Which in the course of nature is, to die.
 "And when man questioned, ' What if there be love
 "' Behind the will and might, as real as they ? '—
 "He needed satisfaction God could give,
 "And did give, as ye have the written word :
 "But when, beholding that love everywhere,
 "He reasons, ' Since such love is everywhere,
 "' And since ourselves can love and would be loved,
 "' We ourselves make the love, and Christ was not, '—
 "How shall ye help this man who knows himself,
 "That he must love and would be loved again,
 "Yet, owning his own love that proveth Christ,
 "Rejecteth Christ through very need of Him ?
 "The lamp o'erswims with oil, the stomach flags
 "Loaded with nurture, and that man's soul dies.
 "If he rejoin, ' But this was all the while
 "' A trick ; the fault was, first of all, in thee,
 "' Thy story of the places, names and dates,
 "' Where, when and how the ultimate truth had rise,
 "'—Thy prior truth, at last discovered none,
 "' Whence now the second suffers detriment.
 "' What good of giving knowledge if, because
 "' Of the manner of the gift, its profit fail ?

- " And why refuse what modicum of help
 " Had stopped the after-doubt, impossible
 " 'I' the face of truth—truth absolute, uniform?
 " Why must I hit of this and miss of that,
 " Distinguish just as I be weak or strong,
 " And not ask of thee and have answer prompt,
 " Was this once, was it not once?—then and now
 " And evermore, plain truth from man to man.
 " Is John's procedure just the heathen bard's?
 " Put question of his famous play again
 " How for the ephemerals' sake, Jove's fire was filched,
 " And carried in a cane and brought to earth:
 " *The fact is in the fable, cry the wise,*
 " *Mortals obtained the boon, so much is fact,*
 " *Though fire be spirit and produced on earth,*
 " As with the Titan's, so now with thy tale:
 " Why breed in us perplexity, mistake,
 " Nor tell the whole truth in the proper words?
 " I answer, Have ye yet to argue out
 " The very primal thesis, plainest law,
 " —Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,
 " A master to obey, a course to take,
 " Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?
 " Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
 " From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
 " From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.
 " How could man have progression otherwise?
 " Before the point was mooted 'What is God?'
 " No savage man inquired 'What am myself?'
 " Much less replied, 'First, last, and best of things.'
- " Man takes that title now if he believes
 " Might can exist with neither will nor love,
 " In God's case—what he names now Nature's Law—
 " While in himself he recognises love
 " No less than might and will: and rightly takes.
 " Since if man prove the sole existent thing
 " Where these combine, whatever their degree,
 " However weak the might or will or love,
 " So they be found there, put in evidence,—
 " He is as surely higher in the scale
 " Than any might with neither love nor will,
 " As life, apparent in the poorest midge,
 " (When the faint dust-speck flits, ye guess its wing)
 " Is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self:
 " I give such to the midge for resting-place!
 " Thus, man proves best and highest—God, in fine,
 " And thus the victory leads but to defeat,
 " The gain to loss, best rise to the worst [fall,
 " His life becomes impossible, which is death.
 " But if, appealing thence, he cower, avouch
 " He is mere man, and in humility
 " Neither may know God nor mistake himself;
 " I point to the immediate consequence
 " And say, by such confession straight he falls
 " Into man's place, a thing nor God nor beast,
 " Made to know that he can know and not more:
 " Lower than God who knows all and can all,
 " Higher than beasts which know and can so far
 " As each beast's limit, perfect to an end,
 " Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more;
 " While man knows partly but conceives beside,
 " Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,

- " And in this striving, this converting
air
" Into a solid he may grasp and use,
" Finds progress, man's distinctive
mark alone,
" Not God's, and not the beasts' : God
is, they are,
" Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
" Such progress could no more attend
his soul
" Were all it struggles after found at
first
" And guesses changed to knowledge
absolute,
" Than motion wait his body, were all
else
" Than it the solid earth on every side,
" Where now through space he moves
from rest to rest.
" Man, therefore, thus conditioned,
must expect
" He could not, what he knows now,
know at first ; [day,
" What he considers that he knows to-
" Come but to-morrow, he will find mis-
known ;
" Getting increase of knowledge, since
he learns
" Because he lives, which is to be a man,
" Set to instruct himself by his past
self :
" First, like the brute, obliged by facts
to learn,
" Next, as man may, obliged by his own
mind,
" Bent, habit, nature, knowledge
turned to law.
* God's gift was that man should con-
ceive of truth
" And yearn to gain it, catching at mis-
take,
" As midway help till he reach fact in-
deed.
" The statuary ere he mould a shape
" Boasts a like gift, the shape's idea,
and next
" The aspiration to produce the same ;
" So, taking clay, he calls his shape
thereout,
" Cries ever ' Now I have the thing I
see :'
" Yet all the while goes changing what
was wrought,
" From falsehood like the truth, to
truth itself.
" How were it had he cried ' I see no
face,
- " ' No breast, no feet i' the ineffectual
clay ?'
" Rather commend him that he clapped
his hands,
" And laughed ' It is my shape and
lives again !'
" Enjoyed the falsehood, touched it on
to truth,
" Until yourselves applaud the flesh in
deed
" In what is still flesh-imitating clay.
" Right in you, right in him, such way
be man's !
" God only makes the live shape at a
jet.
" Will ye renounce this pact of crea-
tureship ? [more,
" The pattern on the Mount subsists no
" Seemed awhile, then returned to
nothingness ;
" But copies, Moses strove to make
thereby,
" Serve still and are replaced as time re-
quires :
" By these, make newest vessels, reach
the type !
" If ye demur, this judgment on your
head,
" Never to reach the ultimate, angels'
law,
" Indulging every instinct of the soul
" There where law, life, joy, impulse are
one thing !
" Such is the burthen of the latest time.
" I have survived to hear it with my
ears,
" Answer it with my lips : does this
suffice ?
" For if there be a further woe than
such,
" Wherein my brothers struggling
need a hand,
" So long as any pulse is left in mine,
" May I be absent even longer yet,
" Plucking the blind ones back from
the abyss,
" Though I should tarry a new hundred
years !"
- But he was dead : 'twas about noon,
the day
Somewhat declining : we five buried
him
That eve, and then, dividing, went five
ways,
And I, disguised, returned to Ephesus.

By this, the cave's mouth must be filled with sand.

Valens is lost, I know not of his trace ;
The Bactrian was but a wild childish man,

And could not write nor speak, but only loved :

So, lest the memory of this go quite,
Seeing that I to-morrow fight the beasts,

I tell the same to Phœbas, whom believe !

For many look again to find that face,
Beloved John's to whom I ministered,
Somewhere in life about the world ;
they err :

Either mistaking what was darkly spoke

At ending of his book, as he relates,
Or misconceiving somewhat of this speech

Scattered from mouth to mouth, as I suppose.

Believe ye will not see him any more
About the world with his divine regard !
For all was as I say, and now the man
Lies as he lay once, breast to breast
with God.

Cerintus read and mused ; one added this :

" If Christ, as thou affirmest, be of men
" Mere man, the first and best but
" nothing more,—

" Account Him, for reward of what He was,

" Now and for ever, wretchedest of all.

" For see ; Himself conceived of life as love,

" Conceived of love as what must enter in,

" Fill up, make one with His each soul
He loved :

" Thus much for man's joy, all men's
joy for Him.

" Well, He is gone, thou sayest, to fit
reward.

" But by this time are many souls set
free,

" And very many still retained alive :

" Nay, should His coming be delayed
awhile,

" Say, ten years longer (twelve years,
some compute)

" See if, for every finger of thy hands,

" There be not found, that day the
world shall end,

" Hundreds of souls, each holding by
Christ's word

" That He will grow incorporate with
all,

" With me as Pamphylax, with him as
John,

" Groom for each bride ! Can a mere
man do this ?

" Yet Christ saith, this He lived and
died to do

" Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
" Or lost ! "

But 'twas Cerintus that is lost.

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS ;

OR,

NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND

[WILL sprawl, now that the heat of
day is best,

Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
With elbows wide, fists clenched to
prop his chin ;

And, while he kicks both feet in the cool
slush,

And feels about his spine small eft-
things course,

Run in and out each arm, and make
him laugh ;

And while above his head a pompion-
plant,

Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair
and beard,

And now a flower drops with a bee in-
side,

And now a fruit to snap at, catch and
crunch,—

He looks out o'er yon sea which sun-
beams cross

And recross till they weave a spider-
web,

Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks
at times)

And talks to his own self, howe'er he
please,

Touching that other, whom his dam
called God.

Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,
Could He but know ! and time to vex
is now,

When talk is safer than in winter-time.
 Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep
 In confidence he drudges at their task,
 And it is good to cheat the pair, and
 gibe,
 Letting the rank tongue blossom into
 speech.]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!

'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o'
 the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to
 match,
 But not the stars; the stars came
 otherwise;
 Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such
 as that:
 Also this isle, what lives and grows
 thereon,
 And snaky sea which rounds and ends
 the same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:
 He hated that He cannot change His
 cold,
 Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy
 fish

That longed to 'scape the rock-stream
 where she lived,
 And thaw herself within the lukewarm
 brine

O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far
 amid,

A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls
 of wave;

Only she ever sickened, found repulse
 At the other kind of water, not her life,
 (Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o'
 the sun)

Flournced back from bliss she was not
 born to breathe,

And in her old bounds buried her des-
 pair,

Hating and loving warmth alike: so
 He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun,
 this isle,

Trees and the fowls here, beast and
 creeping thing.

Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a
 leech;

Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
 That floats and feeds; a certain badger
 brown

He hath watched hunt with that slant
 white-wedge eye

By moonlight; and the pie with the
 long tongue

That pricks deep into oakwarts for a
 worm,

And says a plain word when she finds
 her prize,

But will not eat the ants; the ants
 themselves

That build a wall of seeds and settled
 stalks

About their hole—He made all these
 and more,

Made all we see, and us, in spite: how
 else?

He could not, Himself, make a second
 self

To be His mate; as well have made
 Himself.

He would not make what He dislikes
 or slights,

An eyecore to Him, or not worth His
 pains:

But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,
 Make what Himself would fain, in a
 manner, be—

Weaker in most points, stronger in a
 few,

Worthy, and yet mere playthings all
 the while,

Things He admires and mocks too,—
 that is it.

Because, so brave, so better though
 they be,

It nothings skills if He begin to plague.
 Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into

mash,
 Add honeycomb and pods, I have per-
 ceived,

Which bite like finches when they bill
 and kiss,—

Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink
 up all,

Quick, quick, till maggots scamper
 through my brain;

And throw me on my back i' the seeded
 thyme,

And wanton, wishing I were born a
 bird.

Put case, unable to be what I wish,
 I yet could make a live bird out of clay:

Would not I take clay, pinch my Cali-
 ban

Able to fly?—for, there, see, he hath
 wings,

And great comb like the hoopoe's to
 admire,

- And there, a sting to do his foes offence,
There, and I will that he begin to live,
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the
horns
Of grigs high up that make the merry
din,
Saucy through their veined wings, and
mind me not.
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle
clay,
And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should
laugh;
And if he, spying me, should fall to
weep,
Beseech me to be good, repair his
wrong,
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow
again,—
Well, as the chance were, this might
take or else
Not take my fancy: I might hear his
cry,
And give the manikin three legs for one,
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an
egg,
And lessoned he was mine and merely
clay.
Were this no pleasure, lying in the
thyme,
Drinking the mash, with brain become
alive,
Making and marring clay at will? So
He.
- 'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor
wrong in Him,
Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and
Lord.
'Am strong myself compared to yonder
crabs
That march now from the mountain to
the sea;
'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-
first,
Loving not, hating not, just choosing
so.
'Say, the first straggler that boasts
purple spots,
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted
off;
'Say, This bruised fellow shall receive
a worm,
And two worms he whose nippers end
in red;
As it likes me each time, I do: so He.
- Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the
main,
Piacable if His mind and ways were
guessed,
But rougher than His handiwork, be
sure!
Oh, He hath made things worthier than
Hims-elf,
And envieth that, so helped, such things
do more
Than He who made them! What con-
soles but this?
That they, unless through Him, do
nought at all,
And must submit: what other use in
things?
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
That, blown through, gives exact the
scream o' the jay
When from her wing you twitch the
feathers blue:
Sound this, and little birds that hate
the jay
Flock within stone's throw, glad their
foe is hurt:
Put case such pipe could prattle and
boast forsooth
"I catch the birds, I am the crafty
thing,
"I make the cry my maker cannot
make
"With his great round mouth; he
must blow through mine!"
Woud not I smash it with my foot?
So He.
But wherefore rough, why cold and ill
at ease?
Aha, that is a question! Ask, for
that,
What knows,—the something over
Setebos
That made Him, or He, may be, found
and fought,
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing,
perchance.
There may be something quiet o'er His
head,
Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor
grief,
Since both derive from weakness in
some way.
I joy because the quails come: would
not joy
Could I bring quails here when I have
a mind:
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.

'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch,
 But never spends much thought nor care that way.
 It may look up, work up,—the worse for those
 It works on! 'Careth but for Setebos
 The many-handed as a cuttle-fish,
 Who, making Himself feared through what He does,
 Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot soar
 To what is quiet and hath happy life;
 Next looks down here, and out of very spite
 Makes this a bauble-world to ape you real,
 These good things to match those as hips do grapes.
 'T is solace making baubles, ay, and sport.
 Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books
 Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:
 Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves, arrow-shaped,
 Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words;
 Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;
 [robe
 Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's
 The eyed skin of a supple oncelot;
 And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling mole,
 A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,
 Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,
 And saith she is Miranda and my wife:
 'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane
 He bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge;
 Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared,
 Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,
 And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge
 In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban;
 A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.
 'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
 Taketh his mirth with make-believes:
 so He.

His dam held that the Quiet made all things
 Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not so.
 Who made them weak, meant weakness He might vex.
 Had He meant other, while His hand was in,
 Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,
 Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow,
 Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and joint,
 Like an orc's armour? Ay,—so spoil His sport!
 He is the One now: only He doth all.
 'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits Him.
 Ay, himself loves what does him good; but why?
 'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded beast
 Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,
 But, had he eyes, would want no help, but hate
 Or love, just as it liked him: He hath eyes.
 Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
 Use all His hands, and exercise much craft,
 By no means for the love of what is worked.
 'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the world
 When all goes right, in this safe summer-time,
 And he wants little, hungers, aches not much,
 Than trying what to do with wit and strength.
 'Falls to make something: 'piled yen pile of turfs,
 And squared and stuck there squares of soft white chalk,
 And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon on each,
 And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,
 And crowned the whole with a sloth's skull a-top,
 Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one to kill.
 No use at all i' the work, for work's sole sake;

- 'Shall some day knock it down again :
so He.
- 'Saith He is terrible : watch His feats
in proof !
One hurricane will spoil six good
months' hope.
He hath a spite against me, that I
know,
Just as He favours Prosper, who knows
why ?
So it is, all the same, as well I find.
'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced
them firm
With stone and stake to stop she-tor-
toises
Crawling to lay their eggs here : well,
one wave,
Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,
Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its
large tongue,
And licked the whole labour flat : so
much for spite.
- 'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it
lies)
Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the
shade :
Often they scatter sparkles : there is
force !
'Dug up a newt He may have envied
once
And turned to stone, shut up inside a
stone.
Please Him and hinder this ?—What
Prosper does ?
Aha, if He would tell me how ! Not
He !
There is the sport : discover how or
die ! [i-le
All need not die, for of the things o' the
Some flee afar, some dive, some run up
trees :
Those at His mercy,—why, they please
Him most
When . . . when . . . well, never try the
same way twice !
Repeat what act has pleased, He may
grow wroth.
You must not know His ways, and play
Him off,
Sure of the issue. 'Doth the like him-
self :
'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears
But steals the nut from underneath my
thumb,
And when I threat, bites stoutly in de-
fence :
- 'Spareth an urchin, that, contrariwise,
Curls up into a ball, pretending death
For fright at my approach : the two
ways please.
But what would move my choler more
than this,
That either creature counted on its life
To-morrow and next day and all days
to come,
Saying forsooth in the inmost of its
heart,
" Because he did so yesterday with me,
" And otherwise with such another
brute,
" So must he do henceforth and al-
ways."—Ay ?
'Would teach the reasoning couple
what " must " means !
'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord ?
So He.
- 'Conceiveth all things will continue
thus,
And we shall have to live in fear of Him
So long as He lives, keeps His strength :
no change,
If He have done His best, make no new
world
To please Him more, so leave off watch-
ing this,—
If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
Some strange day,—or, suppose, grow
into it
As grubs grow butterflies : else, here
are we,
And there is He, and nowhere help at
all.
- 'Believeth with the life, the pain shall
stop.
His dam held different, that after death
He both plagued enemies and feasted
friends :
Idly ! He doth His worst in this our
life,
Giving just respite lest we die through
pain,
Saving last pain for worst,—with
which, an end.
Meanwhile, the best way to escape His
ire
Is, not to seem too happy. 'Sees, him-
self,
Yonder two flies, with purple films and
pink,
Bask on the pompion-bell above : kills
both.

'Sees two black painful beetles roll their
ball
On head and tail as if to save their
lives :
Moves them the stick away they strive
to clear.

Even so, 'would have Him miscon-
ceive, 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 conse-
crate*

" *To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no
mate*

" *For Thee ; what see for envy in poor
me ? "*

Hoping the while, since evils some-
times 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
Decrept 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 hath 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 !]

CONFESSIONS

I

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 !

II

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.

III

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 ?

IV

To mine, it serves for the old June
weather

Blue above lane and wall ;
And that farthest bottle labelled
" Ether "

Is the house o'er-topping all.

V

At a terrace, somewhat near the stop-
per,

There watched for me, one June,
A girl : I know, sir, it 's improper,
My poor mind 's out of tune.

VI

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."

VII

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

VIII

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,

IX

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 !

MAY AND DEATH

I

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.

II

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.

III

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 mani-
 fold.

IV

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 be-
 tween,—

V

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.

DEAF AND DUMB

A GROUP BY WOOLNER

ONLY the prism's obstruction shows
 aright
 The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its
 light
 Into the jewelled bow from blankest
 white ;
 So may a glory from defect arise :
 Only by Deafness may the vexed Love
 wreak
 Its insuppressive sense on brow and
 cheek,
 Only by Dumbness adequately speak
 As favoured mouth could never,
 through the eyes.

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 guer-
 don 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!

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 be-
yond:
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!

YOUTH AND ART

I

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.

II

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

III

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

IV

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.

V

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 win-
dows.

VI

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.

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

XI

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

XII

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?"

XIII

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

XIV

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.

xv

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.

xvi

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

xvii

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.

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.

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 thun-
der :
" 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, jas-
mine,
And the long whip, the tandem-lasher,
And the cast from a fist (" not, alas !
mine,
" But my master's, the Tip'o'oi
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;
'Tis 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 stretch-
ing,
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 Volpa-
to'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—
" 'Tis only a duplicate.
"A thing of no value! Take it, I sup-
plicate!"

MR. SLUDGE, "THE MEDIUM"

Now, don't sir! Don't expose me!
Just this once!
This was the first and only time, I 'll
swear,—
Look at me,—see, I kneel,—the only
time,

I swear, I ever cheated,—yes, by the
soul
Of Her who hears—(your sainted
mother, sir!)
All, except this last accident, was
truth—
This little kind of slip!—and even this,
It was your own wine, sir, the good
champagne,
(I took it for Catawba, you 're so kind)
Which put the folly in my head!

"Get up?"
You still inflict on me that terrible
face?
You show no mercy?—Not for Her
dear sake,
The sainted spirit's, whose soft breath
even now
Blows on my cheek—(don't you feel
something, sir?)
You 'll tell?

Go tell, then! Who the devil cares
What such a rowdy chooses to . . .

Aie—aie—aie!
Please, sir! your thumbs are through
my windpipe, sir!
Ch—ch!

Well, sir, I hope you've done it now!
Oh Lord! I little thought, sir, yester-
day,
When your departed mother spoke
those words
Of peace through me, and moved you,
sir, so much,
You gave me—(very kind it was of
you)
These shirt-studs—(better take them
back again,
Please, sir)—yes, little did I think so
soon
A trifle of trick, all through a glass too
much
Of his own champagne, would change
my best of friends
Into an angry gentleman!

Though, 't was wrong.
I do n't contest the point; your anger's
just:
Whatever put such folly in my head,
I know 't was wicked of me. There 's
a thick
Dusk undeveloped spirit (I 've ob-
served)

Owes me a grudge—a negro's, I should say,

Or else an Irish emigrant's ; yourself Explained the case so well last Sunday, sir,

When we had summoned Franklin to clear up

A point about those shares in the telegraph :

Ay, and he swore . . . or might it be Tom Paine ? . . .

Thumping the table close by where I crouched,

He 'd do me soon a mischief : that 's come true !

Why, now your face clears ! I was sure it would !

Then, this one time . . . don't take your hand away,

Through yours I surely kiss your mother's hand . . .

You 'll promise to forgive me ?—or, at least,

Tell nobody of this ? Consider, sir !

What harm can mercy do ? Would but the shade

Of the venerable dead—one just vouchsafe

A rap or tip ! What bit of paper 's here ?

Suppose we take a pencil, let her write, Make the least sign, she urges on her child

Forgiveness ? There now ! Eh ? Oh ! 'T was your foot,

And not a natural creak, sir ?

Answer, then !

Once, twice, thrice . . . see, I 'm waiting to say " thrice ! "

All to no use ? No sort of hope for me ? It 's all to post to Greeley's newspaper ?

What ? If I told you all about the tricks ?

Upon my soul !—the whole truth, and nought else,

And how there 's been some falsehood—for your part,

Will you engage to pay my passage out, And hold your tongue until I 'm safe on board ?

England 's the place, not Boston—no offence !

I see what makes you hesitate : don't fear !

I mean to change my trade and cheat no more,

Yes, this time really it's upon my soul ! Be my salvation !—under Heaven, of course,

I 'll tell some queer things. Sixty V's must do.

A trifle, though, to start with ! We 'll refer

The question to this table ?

How you 're changed !

Then split the difference ; thirty more, we 'll say.

Ay, but you leave my presents ! Else I 'll swear

'T was all through those : you wanted yours again,

So, picked a quarrel with me, to get them back !

Tread on a worm, it turns, sir ! If I turn,

Your fault ! 'T is you 'll have forced me ! Who 's obliged

To give up life yet try no self-defence ? At all events, I 'll run the risk. Eh ?

Done !

May I sit, sir ? This dear old table, now !

Please, sir, a parting egg-nogg and cigar !

I 've been so happy with you ! Nice stuffed chairs,

And sympathetic sideboards ; what an end

To all the instructive evenings ! (It 's alight.)

Well, nothing lasts, as Bacon came and said.

Here goes,—but keep your temper, or I 'll scream !

Fol-lol-the-rido-liddle-iddle-ol !

You see, sir, it 's your own fault more than mine ;

It 's all your fault, you curious gentlefolk !

You 're prigs,—excuse me,—like to look so spry,

So clever, while you cling by half a claw

To the perch whereon you puff yourselves at roost,

Such piece of self-conceit as serves for perch

Because you chose it, so it must be safe.

Oh, otherwise you 're sharp enough!
 You spy
 Who slips, who slides, who holds by
 help of wing,
 Wanting real foothold,—who can't
 keep upright
 On the other perch, your neighbour
 chose! not you:
 There 's no outwitting you respecting
 him!
 For instance, men love money—that,
 you know—
 And what men do to gain it: well, sup-
 pose
 A poor lad, say a help's son in your
 house,
 Listening at keyholes, hears the com-
 pany
 Talk grand of dollars, V-notes, and so
 forth,
 How hard they are to get, how good to
 hold,
 How much they buy,—if, suddenly, in
 pops he—
 "I've got a V-note!"—what do you
 say to him?
 What 's your first word which follows
 your last kick?
 "Where did you steal it, rascal?"
 That 's because
 He finds you, fain would fool you, off
 your perch,
 Not on the special piece of nonsense,
 sir, [try
 Elected your parade-ground: let him
 Lies to the end of the list,—“He picked
 it up
 “His cousin died and left it him by will,
 “The President flung it to him, riding
 by,
 “An actress trucked it for a curl of his
 hair,
 “He dreamed of luck and found his
 shoe enriched,
 “He dug up clay, and out of clay made
 gold”—
 How would you treat such possibilities?
 Would not you, prompt, investigate
 the case
 With cow-hide? “Lies, lies, lies,”
 you 'd shout: and why?
 Which of the stories might not prove
 mere truth?
 This last, perhaps, that clay was turned
 to coin!
 Let 's see, now, give him me to speak
 for him!

How many of your rare philosophers'
 In plaguy books I 've had to dip into,
 Believed gold could be made thus, saw
 it made
 And made it? Oh, with such philoso-
 phers
 You 're on your best behaviour! While
 the lad—
 With him, in a trice, you settle likeli-
 hoods,
 Nor doubt a moment how he got his
 prize:
 In his case, you hear, judge and exe-
 cute,
 All in a breath: so would most men of
 sense.
 But let the same lad hear you talk as
 grand
 At the same keyhole, you and com-
 pany,
 Of signs and wonders, the invisible
 world;
 How wisdom scouts our vulgar unbelief
 More than our vulgarest incredulity;
 How good men have desired to see a
 ghost,
 What Johnson used to say, what Wes-
 ley did,
 Mother Goose thought, and fiddle-
 diddle-dee:—
 If he then break in with, “Sir, I saw a
 ghost!”
 Ah, the ways change! He finds you
 perched and prim;
 It 's a conceit of yours that ghosts may
 be:
 There 's no talk now of cow-hide. “Tell
 it out!
 “Don't fear us! Take your time and
 recollect!
 “Sit down first: try a glass of wine,
 my boy!
 “And, David, (is not that your Chris-
 tian name?)
 “Of all things, should this happen
 twice—it may—
 “Be sure, while fresh in mind, you let
 us know!”
 Does the boy blunder, blurt out this,
 blab that,
 Break down in the other, as beginners
 will?
 All 's candour, all 's considerateness—
 “No haste!
 “Pause and collect yourself We
 understand!

"That 's the bad memory, or the natural shock,

"Or the unexplained *phenomena*!"

Egad,

The boy takes heart of grace; finds, never fear,

The readiest way to ope your own heart wide,

Show—what I call your peacock-perch, pet post

To strut, and spread the tail, and squawk upon!

"Just as you thought, much as you might expect!

"There be more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,"

And so on. Shall not David take the hint,

Grow bolder, stroke you down at quickened rate?

If he ruffle a feather, it 's "Gently, patiently!

"Manifestations are so weak at first!

"Doubting, moreover, kills them, cuts all short,

"Cures with a vengeance!"

There, sir, that 's your style!

You and your boy—such pains bestowed on him,

Or any headpiece of the average worth,

To teach, say, Greek, would perfect him apace,

Make him a Person ("Porson?" thank you, sir!)

Much more, proficient in the art of lies.

You never leave the lesson! Fire alight,

Catch you permitting it to die! You 've friends;

There 's no withholding knowledge,—least from those

Apt to look elsewhere for their souls' supply:

Why should not you parade your lawful prize?

Who finds a picture, digs a medal up, Hits on a first edition,—he henceforth

Gives it his name, grows notable: how much more,

Who ferrets out a "medium?" "David 's yours,

"You highly-favoured man? Then, pity souls

"Less privileged! Allow us share your luck!"

So, David holds the circle, rules the roost,

Narrates the vision, peeps in the glass ball,

Sets to the spirit-writing, hears the raps, As the case may be.

Now mark! To be precise—

Though I say, "lies" all these, at this first stage,

'Tis just for science' sake: I call such grubs

By the name of what they 'll turn to, dragonflies.

Strictly, it 's what good people style untruth;

But yet, so far, not quite the full-grown thing:

It 's fancying, fable-making, nonsense-work—

What never meant to be so very bad—

The knack of story-telling, brightening up

Each dull old bit of fact that drops its shine.

One does see somewhat when one shuts one's eyes,

If only spots and streaks; tables do tip

In the oddest way of themselves: and pens, good Lord,

Who knows if you drive them or they drive you?

'Tis but a foot in the water and out again;

Not that duck-under which decides your dive.

Note this, for it 's important: listen why.

I 'll prove, you push on David till he dives

And ends the shivering. Here 's your circle, now:

Two-thirds of them, with heads like you their host,

Turn up their eyes, and cry, as you expect,

"Lord, who 'd have thought it!"

But there's always one Looks wise, compassionately smiles, submits

"Of your veracity no kind of doubt,

"But—do you feel so certain of that boy's?"

"Really, I wonder! I confess myself

"More chary of my faith!" That's galling, sir!

What, he the investigator, he the sage,
 When all 's done? Then, you just
 have shut your eyes,
 Opened your mouth, and gulped down
 David whole,
 You! Terrible were such catastrophe!
 So, evidence is redoubled, doubled
 again,
 And doubled besides; once more, "He
 heard, we heard,
 "You and they heard, your mother
 and your wife,
 "Your children and the stranger in
 your gates:
 "Did they or did they not?" So
 much for him,
 The black sheep, guest without the
 wedding-garb,
 And doubting Thomas! Now 's your
 turn to crow:
 "He 's kind to think you such a fool:
 Sludge cheats?
 "Leave you alone to take precau-
 tions!"

Straight

The rest join chorus. Thomas stands
 abashed,
 Sips silent some such beverage as this,
 Considers if it be harder, shutting eyes
 And gulping David in good fellowship,
 Than going elsewhere, getting, in ex-
 change,
 With no egg-nogg to lubricate the food,
 Some just as tough a morsel. Over the
 way,
 Holds Captain Sparks his court: is it
 better there?
 Have not you hunting-stories, scalping-
 scenes,
 And Mexican War exploits to swallow
 plump
 If you 'd be free of the stove-side,
 rocking-chair,
 And trio of affable daughters?

Doubt succumbs!

Victory! All your circle 's yours
 again!
 Out of the clubbing of submissive wits,
 David's performance rounds, each
 chink gets patched,
 Every protrusion of a point 's filed fine,
 All 's fit to set a-rolling round the
 world,
 And then return to David finally,
 Lies seven-feet thick about his first half-
 inch.

Here 's a choice birth of the super-
 natural,
 Poor David 's pledged to! You 've
 employed no tool
 That laws exclaim at, save the devil's
 own,
 Yet screwed him into henceforth gull-
 ing you
 To the top of your bent,—all out of one
 half-lie!

You hold, if there 's one half or a hun-
 dredth part
 Of a lie, that 's his fault,—his be the
 penalty!
 I dare say! You 'd prove firmer in his
 place?
 You 'd find the courage,—that first
 flurry over,
 That mild bit of romancing-work at
 end,—
 To interpose with "It gets serious, this;
 "Must stop here. Sir, I saw no ghost
 at all.

"Inform your friends I made . . well,
 fools of them,
 "And found you ready made. I 've
 lived in clover
 "These three weeks: take it out in
 kicks of me!"

I doubt it. Ask your conscience! Let
 me know,
 Twelve months hence, with how few
 embellishments
 You 've told almighty Boston of this
 passage
 Of arms between us, your first taste of
 the foil
 From Sludge who could not fence, sir!
 Sludge, your boy!
 I lied, sir,—there! I got up from my
 gorge
 On offal in the gutter, and preferred
 Your canvass-backs: I took their car-
 ver's size,

Measured his modicum of intelligence,
 Ticked him on the cockles of his heart
 With a raven feather, and next week
 found myself
 Sweet and clean, dining daintily,
 dizened smart,
 Set on a stool buttressed by ladies'
 knees,
 Every soft smiler calling me her pet,
 Encouraging my story to uncoil
 And creep out from its hole, inch after
 inch,

- " How last night, I no sooner snug in bed,
 " Tucked up, just as they left me,—
 than came raps!
 " While a light whisked " . . . " Shaped
 somewhat like a star?"
 " Well, like some sort of stars, ma'am."
 "—" So we thought!
 " And any voice? Not yet? Try
 hard, next time,
 " If you can't hear a voice; we think
 you may:
 " At least, the Pennsylvanian ' me-
 diums ' did."
 Oh, next time comes the voice! " Just
 as we hoped!"
 Are not the hoppers proud now, pleased,
 profuse
 Of the natural acknowledgment?
 Of course!
 So, off we push, illy-oh-yo, trim the
 boat,
 On we sweep with a cataract ahead,
 We 're midway to the Horse-shoe:
 stop, who can,
 The dance of bubbles gay about our
 prow!
 Experiences become worth waiting for,
 Spirits now speak up, tell their inmost
 mind,
 And compliment the " medium "
 properly, [coat,
 Concern themselves about his Sunday
 See rings on his hand with pleasure.
 Ask yourself
 How you 'd receive a course of treats
 like these!
 Why, take the quietest hack and stall
 him up,
 Cram him with corn a month, then out
 with him
 Among his mates on a bright April
 morn,
 With the turf to tread; see if you find
 or no
 A caper in him, if he bucks or bolts!
 Much more a youth whose fancies
 sprout as rank
 As toadstool-clump from melon-bed.
 'Tis soon,
 " Sirrah, you spirit, come, go, fetch and
 carry,
 " Read, write, rap, rub-a-dub, and
 hang yourself!"
 I 'm spared all further trouble; all 's
 arranged;
- Your circle does my business; I may
 rave
 Like an epileptic dervish in the books,
 Foam, fling myself flat rend my clothes
 to shreds;
 No matter: lovers, friends and country-
 men
 Will lay down spiritual laws, read
 wrong things right
 By the rule of reverse. If Francis
 Verulam
 Styles himself Bacon, spells the name
 beside
 With a y and a k, says he drew breath
 in York,
 Gave up the ghost in Wales when Crom-
 well reigned,
 (As, sir, we somewhat fear he was apt
 to say,
 Before I found the useful book that
 knows)
 Why, what harm 's done? The circle
 smiles apace,
 " It was not Bacon, after all, do you
 see!
 " We understand; the trick 's but
 natural:
 " Such spirits' individuality
 " Is hard to put in evidence: they in-
 cline
 " To gibe and jeer, these undeveloped
 sorts.
 " You see, their world 's much like a
 jail broke loose,
 " While this of ours remains shut,
 bolted, barred,
 " With a single window to it. Sludge,
 our friend,
 " Serves as this window, whether thin
 or thick,
 " Or stained or stainless; he 's the
 medium-pane
 " Through which, to see us and be seen,
 they peep:
 " They crowd each other, hustle for a
 chance,
 " Tread on their neighbour's kibes,
 play tricks enough!
 " Does Bacon, tired of waiting, swerve
 aside?
 " Up in his place jumps Barnum—' I'm
 your man,
 " ' I 'll answer you for Bacon!' Try
 once more!"
 Or else it 's—" What 's a ' medium? '
 He 's a means,

" Good, bad, indifferent, still the only means
 " Spirits can speak by ; he may misconceive,
 " Stutter and stammer,—he 's their Sludge and drudge,
 " Take him or leave him ; they must hold their peace,
 " Or else, put up with having knowledge strained
 " To half-expression through his ignorance.
 " Suppose, the spirit Beethoven wants to shed
 " New music he 's brimful of ; why, he turns
 " The handle of this organ, grinds with Sludge,
 " And what he poured in at the mouth o' the mill
 " As a Thirty-third Sonata, (fancy now !)
 " Comes from the hopper as bran-new Sludge, nought else,
 " The Shakers' Hymn in G, with a natural F,
 " Or the ' Stars and Stripes ' set to consecutive fourths."

Sir, where 's the scrape you did not help me through,
 You that are wise ? And for the fools, the folk
 Who came to see,—the guests, (observe that word !)
 Pray do you find guests criticize your wine,
 Your furniture, your grammar, or your nose ?
 Then, why your " medium ? " What 's the difference ?
 Prove your madeira red-ink and gamboge,—
 Your Sludge, a cheat—then, somebody 's a goose
 For vaunting both as genuine.
 "Guests ! " Don't fear !
 They 'll make a wry face, nor too much of that,
 And leave you in your glory.

" No, sometimes
 " They doubt and say as much ! " Ay, doubt they do !
 And what 's the consequence ? " Of course they doubt "—
 (You triumph) " that explains the hitch at once !

" Doubt posed our ' medium,' puddled his pure mind ;
 " He gave them back their rubbish : pitch chaff in,
 " Could flour come out o' the honest mill ? " So, prompt
 Applaud the faithful : cases flock in point,
 " How, when a mocker willed a ' medium ' once
 " Should name a spirit James whose name was George,
 " " James ' cried the ' medium,'— 't was the test of truth ! "
 In short, a hit proves much, a miss proves more.
 Does this convince ? The better : does it fail ?
 Time for the double-shotted broadside, then—
 The grand means, last resource. Look black and big !
 " You style us idiots, therefore—why stop short ?
 " Accomplices in rascality : this we hear
 " In our own house, from our invited guest
 " Found brave enough to outrage a poor boy
 " Exposed by our good faith ! Have you been heard ?
 " Now, then, hear us ; one man 's not quite worth twelve.
 " You see a cheat ? Here 's some twelve see an ass :
 " Excuse me if I calculate : good day ! "
 Out slinks the sceptic, all the laughs explode,
 Sludge waves his hat in triumph !

Or—he don't.
 There 's something in real truth (explain who can !)
 One casts a wistful eye at, like the horse
 Who mopes beneath stuffed hay-racks and won't munch
 Because he spies a corn-bag : hang that truth,
 It spoils all dainties proffered in its place !
 I 've felt at times when, cockered, cossetted
 And coddled by the aforesaid company,
 Bidden enjoy their bullying,—never fear,

But o'er their shoulders spit at the flying man,—
 I've felt a child; only, a fractious child
 That, dandled soft by nurse, aunt, grandmother,
 Who keep him from the kennel, sun and wind,
 Good fun and wholesome mud,—enjoined be sweet,
 And comely and superior,—eyes askance
 The ragged sons of the gutter at their game,
 Fain would be down with them i' the thick of the filth,
 Making dirt-pies, laughing free, speaking plain,
 And calling granny the grey old cat she is.
 I've felt a spite, I say, at you, at them,
 Huggings and humbug—gnashed my teeth to mark
 A decent dog pass! It's too bad, I say.
 Ruining a soul so!

But what's "so," what's fixed,
 Where may one stop? Nowhere!
 The cheating 's nursed
 Out of the lying, softly and surely spun
 To just your length, sir! I'd stop soon enough:
 But you're for progress. "All old, nothing new?"
 "Only the usual talking through the mouth,
 "Or writing by the hand? I own, I thought
 "This would develop, grow demonstrable,
 "Make doubt absurd, give figures we might see,
 "Flowers we might touch. There's no one doubts you, Sludge!
 "You dream the dreams, you see the spiritual sights,
 "The speeches come in your head, beyond dispute.
 "Still, for the sceptics' sake, to stop all mouths,
 "We want some outward manifestation!—well,
 "The Pennsylvanians gained such; why not Sludge?
 "He may improve with time!"

Ay, that he may!
 He sees his lot: there's no avoiding fate.
 'Tis a trifle at first. "Eh, David? Did you hear?"
 "You jogged the table, your foot caused the squeak,
 "This time you're . . . joking, are you not, my boy?"
 "N-n-no!"—and I'm done for, bought and sold henceforth.
 The old good easy jog-trot way, the . . . eh?
 The . . . not so very false, as falsehood goes,
 The spinning out and drawing fine, you know,—
 Really mere novel-writing of a sort, Acting, or improvising, make-believe, Surely not downright cheaterly,—any how,
 'T is done with and my lot cast; Cheat's my name:
 The fatal dash of brandy in your tea
 Has settled what you'll have the sou-chong's smack:
 The caddy gives way to the dram-bottle.
 Then, it's so cruel easy! Oh, those tricks
 That can't be tricks, those feats by sleight of hand,
 Clearly no common conjurer's!—no, indeed!
 A conjurer? Choose me any craft in the world
 A man puts hand to; and with six months' pains,
 I'll play you twenty tricks miraculous
 To people untaught the trade: have you seen glass blown,
 Pipes pierced? Why, just this biscuit that I chip,
 Did you ever watch a baker toss one flat
 To the oven? Try and do it! Take my word,
 Practise but half as much, while limbs are lithe,
 To turn, shove, tilt a table, crack your joints,
 Manage your feet, dispose your hands aright,
 Work wires that twitch the curtains, play the glove

At end of your slipper,—then put out
the lights
And . . . there, there, all you want
you 'll get, I hope !
I found it slip, easy as an old shoe.
Now, lights on table again ! I've done
my part,
You take my place while I give thanks
and rest.
" Well, Judge Humgruffin, what 's
your verdict, sir ?
" You, hardest head in the United
States,—
" Did you detect a cheat here ? Wait !
Let 's see !
" Just an experiment first, for cand-
our's sake !
" I 'll try and cheat you, Judge ! The
table tilts :
" Is it I that move it ? Write ! I 'll
press your hand :
" Cry when I push, or guide your pen-
cil, Judge !"
Sludge still triumphant ! " That a
rap, indeed ?
" That, the real writing ? Very like a
whale !
" Then, if, sir, you—a most distin-
guished man,
" And, were the Judge not here, I 'd
say, . . . no matter !
" Well, sir, if you fail, you can't take us
in,—
" There 's little fear that Sludge will !"
Won't he, ma'am ?
But what if our distinguished host,
like Sludge,
Bade God bear witness that he played
no trick,
While you believed that what produced
the raps
Was just a certain child who died, you
know,
And whose last breath you thought
your lips had felt ?
Eh ? That 's a capital point, ma'am :
Sludge begins
At your entreaty with your dearest
dead,
The little voice set lispng once again,
The tiny hand made feel for yours once
more,
The poor lost image brought back,
plain as dreams,
Which image, if a word had chanced
recall,

The customary cloud would cross your
eyes,
Your heart return the old tick, pay its
pang !
A right mood for investigation, this !
Ome 's at one 's ease with Saul and
Jonathan,
Pompey and Cæsar : but one's own
lost child . . .
I wonder, when you heard the first cold
drop
From the spadeful at the grave-side,
felt you free
To investigate who twitched your
funeral scarf
Or brushed your flounces ? Then, it
came of course,
You should be stunned and stupid ;
then, (how else ?)
Your breath stopped with your blood,
your brain struck work. [fects,
But now, such causes fail of such ef-
All 's changed,—the little voice begins
afresh,
Yet you, calm, consequent, can test
and try
And touch the truth. " Tests ? Didn't
the creature tell
" Its nurse 's name, and say it lived six
years,
" And rode a rocking-horse ? Enough
of tests !
" Sludge never could learn that !"

He could not, eh ?
You compliment him. " Could not ?"
Speak for yourself !
I 'd like to know the man I ever saw
Once,—never mind where, how, why,
when,—once saw,
Of whom I do not keep some matter in
mind
He 'd swear I " could not " know, saga-
cious soul !
What ? Do you live in this world's
blow of blacks,
Palaver, gossipry, a single hour
Nor find one smut has settled on your
nose,
Of a smut's worth, no more, no less ?—
one fact
Out of the drift of facts, whereby you
learn
What some one was, somewhere, some-
when, somewhy ?
You don't tell folk—" See what has
stuck to me !

- " Judge Humgruffin, our most distinguished man,
 " Your uncle was a tailor, and your wife
 " Thought to have married Miggs, missed him, hit you!"—
 Do you, sir, though you see him twice a-week?
 " No," you reply, " what use retailing it?
 " Why should I?" But, you see, one day you *should*,
 Because one day there 's much use,—when this fact
 Brings you the Judge upon both gouty knees
 Before the supernatural; proves that Sludge
 Knows, as you say, a thing he " could not" know:
 Will not Sludge thenceforth keep an outstretched face,
 The way the wind drives?
 " Could not!" Look you now, I 'll tell you a story! There 's a whiskered chap,
 A foreigner, that teaches music here
 And gets his bread,—knowing no better way:
 He says, the fellow who informed of him
 And made him fly his country and fall West,
 Was a hunchback cobbler, sat, stitched soles and sang,
 In some outlandish place, the city Rome,
 In a cellar by their Broadway, all day long;
 Never asked questions, stopped to listen or look, world
 Nor lifted nose from lapstone; let the Roll round his three-legged stool, and news run in
 The ears he hardly seemed to keep pricked up.
 Well, that man went on Sundays, touched his pay,
 And took his praise from Government, you see;
 For something like two dollars every week,
 He 'd engage tell you some one little thing
 Of some one man, which led to many more,
- (Because one truth leads right to the world's end.)
 And make you that man's master—when he dined
 And on what dish, where walked to keep his health
 And to what street. His trade was, throwing thus
 His sense out, like an ant eater's long tongue,
 Soft, innocent, warm, moist, impassible,
 And when 't was crusted o'er with creatures—slick,
 Their juice enriched his palate. " Could not Sludge!"
 I 'll go yet a step further, and maintain,
 Once the imposture plunged its proper depth
 In the rotten of your natures, all of you,—
 (If one 's not mad nor drunk, and hardly then)
 It 's impossible to cheat—that 's, be found out!
 Go tell your brotherhood this first slip of mine,
 All to-day's tale, how you detected Sludge,
 Behaved unpleasantly, till he was fain confess,
 And so has come to grief! You 'll find, I think,
 Why Sludge still snaps his fingers in your face.
 There now, you 've told them! What's their prompt reply?
 " Sir, did that youth confess he had cheated me,
 " I 'd disbelieve him. He may cheat at times;
 " That 's in the 'medium'-nature, thus they 're made,
 " Vain and vindictive, cowards, prone to scratch.
 " And so all cats are; still, a cat 's the beast
 " You coax the strange electric sparks from out,
 " By rubbing back its fur; not so a dog,
 " Nor lion, nor lamb: 't is the cat's nature, sir!
 " Why not the dog's? Ask God, who made them beasts!

"D' ye think the sound, the nicely-balanced man
 "(Like me"—aside)—"like you yourself,"—(aloud)
 "—He 's stuff to make a 'medium?'
 Bless your soul,
 "'Tis these hysteric, hybrid half-and-halves,
 "Equivocal, worthless vermin yield the fire!
 "We must take such as we find them, 'ware their tricks,
 "Wanting their service. Sir, Sludge took in you—
 "How, I can't say, not being there to watch:
 "He was tried, was tempted by your easiness,—
 "He did not take in me!"

Thank you for Sludge!
 I'm to be grateful to such patrons, eh,
 When what you hear 's my best word?
 'Tis a challenge;
 "Snap at all strangers, half-tamed prairie-dog,
 "So you cower duly at your keeper's nod!
 "Cat, show what claws were made for, muffling them
 "Only to me! Cheat others if you can,
 "Me, if you dare!" And, my wise sir, I dared—
 Did cheat you first, made you cheat others next,
 And had the help of your vaunted manliness
 To bully the incredulous. You used me?
 Have not I used you, taken full revenge,
 Persuaded folk they knew not their own name,
 And straight they 'd own the error!
 Who was the fool
 When, to an awe-struck wide-eyed open-mouthed
 Circle of sages, Sludge would introduce Milton composing baby-rhymes, and Locke
 Reasoning in gibberish, Homer writing Greek
 In noughts and crosses, Asaph setting psalms
 To crotchet and quaver? I've made a spirit squeak

In sham voice for a minute, then out-broke
 Bold in my own, defying the imbeciles—
 Have copied some ghost's pothooks, half a page,
 Then ended with my own scrawl undisguised,
 "All right! The ghost was merely using Sludge,
 "Suiting itself from his imperfect stock!"
 Don't talk of gratitude to me! For what?
 For being treated as a showman's ape,
 Encouraged to be wicked and make sport,
 Fret or sulk, grin or whimper, any mood
 So long as the ape be in it and no man—
 Because a nut pays every mood alike.
 Curse your superior, superintending sort,
 Who, since you hate smoke, send up boys that climb
 To cure your chimney, bid a "medium" lie
 To sweep you truth down! Curse your women too,
 Your insolent wives and daughters, that fire up
 Or faint away if a male hand squeeze theirs,
 Yet, to encourage Sludge, may play with Sludge [thing
 As only a "medium," only the kind of
 They must humour, fondle . . . oh, to misconceive
 Were too preposterous! But I 've paid them out!
 They 've had their wish—called for the naked truth,
 And in she tripped, sat down and bade them stare:
 They had to blush a little and forgive!
 "The fact is, children talk so; in next world
 "All our conventions are reversed,—perhaps
 "Made light of: something like old prints, my dear!
 "The Judge has one, he brought from Italy,
 "A metropolis in the background,—o'er a bridge,
 "A team of trotting roadsters,—cheerful groups

- " Of wayside travellers, peasants at
 their work,
 " And, full in front, quite uncon-
 cerned, why not?
 " Three nymphs conversing with a
 cavalier,
 " And never a rag among them:
 ' fine,' folk cry—
 " And heavenly manners seem not
 much unlike!
 " Let Sludge go on; we 'll fancy it 's
 in print!"
 If such as came for wool, sir, went
 home shorn,
 Where is the wrong I did them?
 'Twas their choice;
 They tried the adventure, ran the risk,
 tossed up
 And lost, as some one 's sure to do in
 games;
 They fancied I was made to lose,—
 smoked glass
 Useful to spy the sun through, spare
 their eyes:
 And had I proved a red-hot iron plate
 They thought to pierce, and, for their
 pains, grew blind,
 Whose were the fault but theirs?
 While, as things go,
 Their loss amounts to gain, the more 's
 the shame!
 They've had their peep into the spirit-
 world,
 And all this world may know it!
 They 've fed fat
 Their self-conceit which else had
 starved: what chance
 Save this, of cackling o'er a golden egg
 And compassing distinction from the
 flock,
 Friends of a feather? Well, they paid
 for it,
 And not prodigiously; the price o' the
 play,
 Not counting certain pleasant inter-
 ludes,
 Was scarce a vulgar play's worth.
 When you buy
 The actor's talent, do you dare propose
 For his soul beside? Whereas, my
 soul you buy!
 Sludge acts Macbeth, obliged to be
 Macbeth,
 Or you 'll not hear his first word! Just
 go through
 That slight formality, swear himself 's
 the Thane,
 And thenceforth he may strut and
 fret his hour,
 Spout, spawl, or spin his target, no one
 cares!
 Why hadn't I leave to play tricks,
 Sludge as Sludge?
 Enough of it all! I 've wiped out
 scores with you—
 Vented your fustian, let myself be
 streaked [mine,
 Like tom-fool with your ochre and car-
 Worn patchwork your respectable
 fingers sewed
 To metamorphose somebody,—yes,
 I 've earned
 My wages, swallowed down my bread
 of shame,
 And shake the crumbs off—where but
 in your face?
 As for religion—why, I served it, sir!
 I'll stick to that! With my *phenomena*
 I laid the atheist sprawling on his back,
 Propped up Saint Paul, or, at least,
 Swedenborg!
 In fact, it 's just the proper way to
 baulk
 These troublesome fellows—liars, one
 and all,
 Are not these sceptics? Well, to
 baffle them,
 No use in being squeamish: lie your-
 self!
 Erect your buttress just as wide o' the
 line,
 Your side, as they 've built up the wall
 on theirs;
 Where both meet, midway in a point,
 is truth,
 High overhead: so, take your room,
 pile bricks,
 Lie! Oh, there 's titillation in all
 shame!
 What snow may lose in white, it gains
 in rose!
 Miss Stokes turns—Rahab,—nor a bad
 exchange!
 Glory be on her, for the good she
 wrought,
 Breeding relief anew 'neath ribs of
 death,
 Brow-beating now the unabashed be-
 fore,
 Ridding us of their whole life's gathered
 straws
 By a live coal from the altar! Why, of
 old,

Great men spent years and years in
writing books
To prove we 've souls, and hardly
proved it then :
Miss Stokes with her live coal, for you
and me !
Surely, to this good issue, all was fair—
Not only fondling Sludge, but, even
suppose
He let escape some spice of knavery,—
well,
In wisely being blind to it ! Don't you
praise
Nelson for setting spy-glass to blind eye
And saying . . what was it—that he
could not see
The signal he was bothered ? Ay, in-
deed !

I'll go beyond : there 's a real love of
a lie,
Liars find ready-made for lies they
make,
As hand for glove, or tongue for sugar-
plum.
At best, 't is never pure and full belief ;
Those furthest in the quagmire—don't
suppose
They strayed there with no warning,
got no chance
Of a filth-speck in their face, which
they clenched teeth,
Bent brow against ! Be sure they had
their doubts,
And fears, and fairest challenges to try
The floor o' the seeming solid sand !
But no !
Their faith was pledged, acquaintance
too apprised,
All but the last step ventured, kerchiefs
waved,
And Sludge called " pet : " 't was easier
marching on
To the promised land ; join those who,
Thursday next
Meant to meet Shakespeare ; better
follow Sludge—
Prudent, oh sure !—on the alert how
else ?
But making for the mid-bog, all the
same !
To hear your outcries, one would think
I caught
Miss Stokes by the scuff o' the neck,
and pitched her flat,
Foolish-face-foremost ! Hear these
simpletons,

That 's all I beg, before my work 's be-
gun,
Before I 've touched them with my
finger-tip !
Thus they await me (do but listen,
now !
It 's reasoning, this is,—I can't imitate
The baby voice, though) " In so many
tales
" Must be some truth, truth though a
pin-point big,
" Yet, some : a single man 's deceived,
perhaps—
" Hardly, a thousand : to suppose one
cheat
" Can gull all these, were more miracu-
lous far
" Than aught we should confess a
miracle "—
And so on. Then the Judge sums up—
(it 's rare)—
Bids you respect the authorities that
leap
To the judgment-seat at once,—why
don't you note
The limpid nature, the unblemished
life,
The spotless honour, indisputable sense
Of the first upstart with his story ?
What—
Outrage a boy on whom you ne'er till
now
Set eyes, because he finds raps trouble
him ?

Fools, these are : ay, and how of their
opposites
Who never did, at bottom of their
hearts,
Believe for a moment ?—Men emas-
culate,
Blank of belief, who played, as eunuchs
use,
With superstition safely,—cold of
blood,
Who saw what made for them in the
mystery,
Took their occasion, and supported
Sludge
—As proselytes ? No, thank you, far
too shrewd !
—But promisers of fair play, encour-
agers
Of the claimant ; who in candour needs
must hoist
Sludge up on Mars' Hill, get speech out
of Sludge

To carry off, criticize, and cant about !
 Did n't Athens treat Saint Paul so ?—
 at any rate,
 It 's " a new thing," philosophy fumble at.
 Then there 's the other picker out of pearl
 From dung heaps,—ay, your literary man,
 Who draws on his kid gloves to deal with Sludge
 Daintily and discreetly,—shakes a dust
 Of the doctrine, flavours thence, he well knows how,
 The narrative or the novel,—half-believes,
 All for the book's sake, and the public's stare,
 And the cash that 's God's sole solid in this world !
 Look at him ! Try to be too bold, too gross
 For the master ! Not you ! He 's the man for muck ;
 Shovel it forth, full-splash, he 'll smooth your brown
 Into artistic richness, never fear !
 Find him the crude stuff ; when you recognise
 Your lie again, you 'll doff your hat to it,
 Dressed out for company ! " For company,"
 I say, since there 's the relish of success :
 Let all pay due respect, call the lie truth,
 Save the soft silent smirking gentleman
 Who ushered in the stranger : you must sigh
 " How melancholy, he, the only one
 " Fails to perceive the bearing of the truth
 " Himself gave birth to !"—There 's the triumph's smack !
 That man would choose to see the whole world roll
 I' the slime o' the slough, so he might touch the tip
 Of his brush with what I call the best of browns—
 Tint ghost-tales, spirit-stories, past the power
 Of the outworn umber and bistre !

Yet I think

There 's a more hateful form of foolery—
 The social sage's, Solomon of saloons

And philosophic diner-out, the fribble
 Who wants a doctrine for a chopping-block
 To try the edge of his faculty upon,
 Prove how much common sense he 'll hack and hew
 In the critical minute 'twixt the soup and fish !
 These were my patrons : these, and the like of them
 Who, rising in my soul now, sicken it,—
 These I have injured ! Gratitude to these ?
 The gratitude, forsooth, of a prostitute
 To the greenhorn and the bully—friends of hers,
 From the wag that wants the queer jokes for his club,
 To the snuff-box decorator, honest man,
 Who just was at his wits' end where to find
 So genial a Pasiphae ! All and each
 Pay, compliment, protect from the police,
 And how she hates them for their pains, like me !
 So much for my remorse at thanklessness
 Toward a deserving public !

But, for God ?

Ay, that 's a question ! Well, sir, since you press—
 (How you do teaze the whole thing out of me !
 I don't mean you, you know, when I say " them :"
 Hate you, indeed ! But that Miss Stokes, that Judge !
 Enough, enough—with sugar : thank you, sir !)
 Now for it, then ! Will you believe me, though ? [unsay
 You 've heard what I confess ; I don't
 A single word : I cheated when I could,
 Rapped with my toe-joints, set sham hands at work,
 Wrote down names weak in sympathetic ink,
 Rubbed odic lights with ends of phosphor-match,
 And all the rest ; believe that : believe this,
 By the same token, though it seem to set
 The crooked straight again, unsay the said,

Stick up what I've thrown down; I
 can't help that:
 It's truth! I somehow vomit truth
 to-day.
 This trade of mine—I don't know,
 can't be sure
 But there was something in it, tricks
 and all!
 Really, I want to light up my own
 mind.
 They were tricks,—true, but what I
 mean to add
 Is also true. First,—don't it strike
 you, sir?
 Go back to the beginning,—the first
 fact
 We're taught is, there's a world beside
 this world,
 With spirits, not mankind, for tenantry;
 That much within that world once so-
 journed here,
 That all upon this world will visit
 there,
 And therefore that we, bodily here be-
 low,
 Must have exactly such an interest
 In learning what may be the ways o'
 the world
 Above us, as the disembodied folk
 Have (by all analogic likelihood)
 In watching how things go in the old
 world
 With us, their sons, successors, and
 what not.
 Oh, yes, with added powers probably,
 Fit for the novel state,—old loves
 grown pure,
 Old interests understood aright,—they
 watch! [help,
 Eyes to see, ears to hear, and hands to
 Proportionate to advancement: they're
 ahead,
 That's all—do what we do, but nobler
 done—
 Use plate, whereas we eat our meals
 off delf,
 (To use a figure.)

Concede that, and I ask
 Next what may be the mode of inter-
 course
 Between us men here, and those once-
 men there?
 First comes the Bible's speech; then,
 history
 With the supernatural element,—you
 know—

All that we sucked in with our mothers'
 milk,
 Grew up with, got inside of us at last,
 Till it's found bone of bone and flesh
 of flesh.
 See now, we start with the miraculous,
 And know it used to be, at all events:
 What's the first step we take, and
 can't but take,
 In arguing from the known to the ob-
 scure?
 Why this: "What was before, may
 be to-day.
 "Since Samuel's ghost appeared to
 Saul,—of course
 "My brother's spirit may appear to
 me."
 Go tell your teacher that! What's his
 reply?
 What brings a shade of doubt for the
 first time [faith?
 O'er his brow late so luminous with
 "Such things have been," says he,
 "and there's no doubt
 "Such things may be: but I advise
 mistrust
 "Of eyes, ears, stomach, and, more
 than all, your brain,
 "Unless it be of your great-grand-
 mother,
 "Whenever they propose a ghost to
 you!"
 The end is, there's a composition
 struck;
 'T is settled, we've some way of inter-
 course
 Just as in Saul's time; only, different:
 How, when and where, precisely,—find
 it out!
 I want to know, then, what's so natural
 As that a person born into this world
 And seized on by such teaching, should
 begin
 With firm expectancy and a frank look-
 out
 For his own allotment, his especial
 share
 In the secret,—his particular ghost, in
 fine?
 I mean, a person born to look that way,
 Since natures differ: take the painter-
 sort,
 One man lives fifty years in ignorance
 Whether grass be green or red,—"No
 kind of eye
 "For colour," say you; while another
 picks

And puts away even pebbles, when a
child,
Because of bluish spots and pinky
veins—
" Give him forthwith a paint-box ! "
Just the same
Was I born . . . " medium," you
won't let me say,—
Well, seer of the supernatural
Everywhen, everyhow and every-
where,—
Will that do ?

I and all such boys of course
Started with the same stock of Bible-
truth ;
Only,—what in the rest you style their
sense,
Instinct, blind reasoning but impera-
tive,
This, betimes, taught them the old
world had one law
And ours another : " New world, new
laws," cried they :
" None but old laws, seen everywhere
at work,"
Cried I, and by their help explained my
life
The Jews' way, still a working way to
me.
Ghosts made the noises, fairies waved
the lights,
Or Santaclaus slid down on New Year's
Eve
And stuffed with cakes the stocking at
my bed,
Changed the worn shoes, rubbed clean
the fingered slate
Of the sum that came to grief the day
before.

This could not last long : soon enough
I found
Who had worked wonders thus, and to
what end :
But did I find all easy, like my mates ?
Henceforth no supernatural any more ?
Not a whit : what projects the billiard-
balls ?
" A cue," you answer : " Yes, a cue,"
said I ;
" But what hand, off the cushion,
moved the cue ?
" What unseen agency, outside the
world,
" Prompted its puppets to do this and
that,

" Put cakes and shoes and slates into
their mind,
" These mothers and aunts, nay even
schoolmasters ? "
Thus high I sprang, and there have
settled since.
Just so I reason, in sober earnest still,
About the greater godsend, what you
call
The serious gains and losses of my life.
What do I know or care about your
world
Which either is or seems to be ? This
snap [self ;
Of my fingers, sir ! My care is for my-
Myself am whole and sole reality
Inside a raree-show and a market-mob
Gathered about it : that 's the use of
things.
'Tis easy saying they serve vast pur-
poses,
Advantage their grand selves : be it
true or false,
Each thing may have two uses. What's
a star ?
A world, or a world's sun : doesn't it
serve
As taper also, time-piece, weather-
glass,
And almanac ? Are stars not set for
signs
When we should shear our sheep, sow
corn, prune trees ?
The Bible says so.

Well, I add one use
To all the acknowledged uses, and
declare
If I spy Charles's Wain at twelve to-
night,
It warns me, " Go, nor lose another
day,
" And have your hair cut, Sludge ! "
You laugh : and why ?
Were such a sign too hard for God to
give ?
No : but Sludge seems too little for
such grace :
Thank you, sir ! So you think, so does
not Sludge !
When you and good men gape at Pro-
vidence,
Go into history and bid us mark
Not merely powder-plots preventive,
crowns
Kept on kings' heads by miracle
enough,

But private mercies—oh, you 've told me, sir,
Of such interpositions! How yourself
Once, missing on a memorable day
Your handkerchief—just setting out,
you know,—
You must return to fetch it, lost the train,
And saved your precious self from what befell
The thirty-three whom Providence forgot.
You tell, and ask me what I think of this?
Well, sir, I think then, since you needs must know,
What matter had you and Boston city to boot
Sailed skyward, like burnt onion-peelings? Much
To you, no doubt: for me—undoubtedly
The cutting of my hair concerns me more,
Because, however sad the truth may seem,
Sludge is of all-importance to himself.
You set apart that day in every year
For special thanksgiving, were a heaven else: [cape,
Well, I who cannot boast the like es-
Suppose I said "I don't thank Providence
"For my part, owing it no gratitude?"
"Nay, but you owe as much"—you 'd tutor me,
"You, every man alive, for blessings gained
"In every hour of the day, could you but know!
"I saw my crowning mercy: all have such,
"Could they but see!" Well, sir, why don't they see?
"Because they won't look,—or perhaps, they can't."
Then, sir, suppose I can, and will, and do
Look, microscopically as is right,
Into each hour with its infinitude
Of influences at work to profit Sludge?
For that 's the case: I 've sharpened up my sight
To spy a providence in the fire's going out,
The kettle's boiling, the dime's sticking fast

Despite the hole i' the pocket. Call such facts
Fancies, too petty a work for Providence,
And those same thanks which you exact from me,
Prove too prodigious payment: thanks for what,
If nothing guards and guides us little men?
No, no, sir! You must put away your pride,
Resolve to let Sludge into partnership!
I live by signs and omens: looked at the roof
Where the pigeons settle—"If the further bird,
"The white, takes wing first, I 'll confess when thrashed;
"Not, if the blue does"—so I said to myself
Last week, lest you should take me by surprise:
Off flapped the white,—and I 'm confessing, sir!
Perhaps 'tis Providence's whim and way
With only me, in the world: how can you tell?
"Because unlikely!" Was it likelier, now,
That this our one out of all worlds beside,
The what - d'you-call - 'em millions, should be just
Precisely chosen to make Adam for,
And the rest o' the tale? Yet the tale 's true, you know:
Such undeserving clod was graced so once;
Why not graced likewise undeserving Sludge?
Are we merit-mongers, flaunt we filthy rags?
All you can bring against my privilege
Is, that another way was taken with you,—
Which I don't question. It 's pure grace, my luck.
I 'm broken to the way of nods and winks,
And need no formal summoning.
You 've a help;
Holloa his name or whistle, clap your hands,
Stamp with your foot or pull the bell:
all 's one,

He understands you want him, here he comes.
 Just so, I come at the knocking: you, sir, wait
 The tongue of the bell, nor stir before you catch
 Reason's clear tingle, nature's clapper brisk,
 Or that traditional peal was wont to cheer
 Your mother's face turned heavenward: short of these
 There 's no authentic intimation, eh? Well, when you hear, you 'll answer them, start up
 And stride into the presence, top of toe, And there find Sludge beforehand, Sludge that sprung [wall!
 At noise o' the knuckle on the partition— I think myself the more religious man. Religion 's all or nothing; it 's no mere smile
 Of contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir— No quality of the finelier-tempered clay Like its whiteness or its lightness; rather, stuff
 Of the very stuff, life of life, self of self. I tell you, men won't notice; when they do,
 They 'll understand. I notice nothing else,
 I 'm ears, eyes, mouth of me, one gaze and gape,
 Nothing eludes me, everything's a hint, Handle and help. It 's all absurd, and yet
 There 's something in it all, I know: how much?
 No answer! What does that prove? Man 's still man,
 Still meant for a poor blundering piece of work
 When all 's done; but, if somewhat 's done, like this,
 Or not done, is the case the same? Suppose
 I blunder in my guess at the true sense Of the knuckle-summons, nine times out of ten,—
 What if the tenth guess happen to be right?
 If the tenth shovel-load of powdered quartz
 Yield me the nugget? I gather, crush, sift all,
 Pass o'er the failure, pounce on the success,

To give you a notion, now—(let who wins, laugh!)
 When first I see a man, what do I first? Why, count the letters which make up his name,
 And as their number chances, even or odd,
 Arrive at my conclusion, trim my course:
 Hiram H. Horsefall is your honoured name,
 And have n't I found, a patron, sir, in you?
 "Shall I cheat this stranger?" I take apple-pips,
 Stick one in either *canthus* of my eye, And if the left drops first—(your left, sir, stuck)
 I 'm warned, I let the trick alone this time.
 You, sir, who smile, superior to such trash,
 You judge of character by other rules: Don't your rules sometimes fail you?
 Pray, what rule
 Have you judged Sludge by hitherto?
 Oh, be sure.
 You, everybody blunders, just as I, In simpler things than these by far!
 For see:
 I knew two farmers,—one, a wiseacre Who studied seasons, rummaged almanacs,
 Quoted the dew-point, registered the frost,
 And then declared, for outcome of his pains,
 Next summer must be dampish: 't was a drought.
 His neighbour prophesied such drought would fall,
 Saved hay and corn, made cent. per cent. thereby,
 And proved a sage indeed: how came his lore?
 Because one brindled heiter, late in March,
 Stiffened her tail of evenings, and somehow
 He got into his head that drought was meant!
 I don't expect all men can do as much: Such kissing goes by favour. You must take
 A certain turn of mind for this,—a twist

I' the flesh, as well. Be lazily alive,
 Open-mouthed, like my friend the
 anteater,
 Letting all nature's loosely-guarded
 notes
 Settle and, slick, be swallowed! Think
 yourself
 The one i' the world, the one for whom
 the world
 Was made, expect it tickling at your
 mouth!
 Then will the swarm of busy buzzing
 flies,
 Clouds of coincidence, break egg-shell,
 thrive,
 Breed, multiply, and bring you food
 enough.
 I can't pretend to mind your smiling,
 sir!
 Oh, what you mean is this! Such in-
 timate way,
 Close converse, frank exchange of
 offices,
 Strict sympathy of the immeasurably
 great
 With the infinitely small, betokened
 here
 By a course of signs and omens, raps
 and sparks,—
 How does it suit the dread traditional
 text
 Of the "Great and Terrible Name?"
 Shall the Heaven of Heavens
 Stoop to such child's-play?

Please, sir, go with me
 A moment, and I'll try to answer you.
 The "*Magnum et terribile*" (is that
 right?)
 Well, folk began with this in the early
 day;
 And all the acts they recognised in
 proof
 Were thunders, lightnings, earth-
 quakes, whirlwinds, dealt
 Indisputably on men whose death they
 caused.
 There, and there only, folk saw Provi-
 dence
 At work,—and seeing it, 'twas right
 enough
 All leads should tremble, hands wring
 hands amain,
 And knees knock hard together at the
 breath
 Of the Name's first letter; why, the
 Jews, I'm told,

Won't write it down, no, to this very
 hour,
 Nor speak aloud: you know best if 't
 be so.
 Each ague-fit of fear at end, they crept
 (Because somehow people once born
 must live)
 Out of the sound, sight, swing and
 sway of the Name,
 Into a corner, the dark rest of the world,
 And safe space where as yet no fear had
 reached;
 'T was there they looked about them,
 breathed again,
 And felt indeed at home, as we might
 say.
 The current of common things, the daily
 life,
 This had their due contempt; no
 Name pursued
 Man from the mountain-top where
 fires abide,
 To his particular mouse-hole at its foot
 Where he ate, drank, digested, lived in
 short:
 Such was man's vulgar business, far too
 small
 To be worth thunder: "small," folk
 kept on, "small,"
 With much complacency in those great
 days!
 A mote of sand, you know, a blade of
 grass—
 What was so despicable as mere grass,
 Except perhaps the life of the worm or
 fly
 Which fed there? These were "small"
 and men were great.
 Well, sir, the old way 's altered some-
 what since,
 And the world wears another aspect
 now:
 Somebody turns our spyglass round, or
 else
 Puts a new lens in it: grass, worm, fly
 grow big:
 We find great things are made of little
 things,
 And little things go lessening till at last
 Comes God behind them. Talk of
 mountains now?
 We talk of mould that heaps the moun-
 tain, mites
 That throng the mould, and God that
 makes the mites.
 The Name comes close behind a stom-
 ach-cyst,

- The simplest of creations, just a sac
That 's mouth, heart, legs and belly at
once, yet lives
And feels, and could do neither, we con-
clude
If simplified still further one degree :
The small becomes the dreadful and
immense !
Lightning, forsooth ? No word more
upon that !
A tin-foil bottle, a strip of greasy silk,
With a bit of wire and knob of brass,
and there 's
Your dollar's-worth of lightning ! But
the cyst—
The life of the least of the little things ?
No, no !
Preachers and teachers try another
tack,
Come near the truth this time : they
put aside
Thunder and lightning : " That 's
mistake," they cry,
" Thunderbolts fall for neither fright
nor sport,
" But do appreciable good, like tides,
" Changes of the wind, and other
natural facts—
" " Good ' meaning good to man, his
body or soul.
" Mediate, immediate, all things minis-
ter
" To man,—that 's settled : be our
future text
" " We are His children ! " So, they
now harangue
About the intention, the contrivance,
all
That keeps up an incessant play of
love,—
See the Bridgewater book.
Amen to it !
Well, sir, I put this question : I 'm a
child ?
I lose no time, but take you at your
word :
How shall I act a child's part properly ?
Your sainted mother, sir,—used you to
live
With such a thought as this a-worrying
you ?
" She has it in her power to throttle me,
" Or stab or poison : she may turn me
out,
" Or lock me in,—nor stop at this, to-
day,
- " But cut me off to-morrow from the
estate
" I look for"—(long may you enjoy it,
sir !)
" In brief, she may unchild the child I
am."
You never had such crotchets ? Nor
have I !
Who, frank confessing childship from
the first,
Cannot both fear and take my ease at
once,
So, don't fear,—know what might be,
well enough,
But know too, child-like, that it will
not be,
At least in my case, mine, the son and
heir
Of the kingdom, as yourself proclaim
my style.
But do you fancy I stop short at this ?
Wonder if suit and service, sons and
heirs
Needs must expect, I dare pretend to
find ?
If, looking for signs proper to such an
one,
I straight perceive them irresistible ?
Concede that homage is a son's plain
right,
And, never mind the nods and raps and
winks,
'T is the pure obvious supernatural
Steps forward, does its duty : why, of
course !
I have presentiments ; my dreams
come true :
I fancy a friend stands whistling all in
white
Blithe as a boblink, and he 's dead I
learn.
I take dislike to a dog my favourite
long,
And sell him ; he goes mad next week
and snaps.
I guess that stranger will turn up to-
day
I have not seen these three years ;
there 's his knock.
I wager " sixty peaches on that tree !"—
That I pick up a dollar in my walk,
That your wife's brother's cousin's
name was George—
And win on all points. Oh, you wince
at this ?
You 'd fain distinguish between gift
and gift,

Washington's oracle and Sludge's itch
O' the elbow when at whist he ought to
trump ?

With Sludge it 's too absurd ? *Fine,*
draw the line
Somewhere, but, sir, your somewhere is
not mine !

Bless us, I 'm turning poet ! It 's time
to end.

How you have drawn me out, sir ! All
I ask

Is—am I heir or not heir ? If I 'm he,
Then, sir, remember, that same person-
age

(To judge by what we read in the news-
paper)

Requires, beside one nobleman in gold
To carry up and down his coronet,
Another servant, probably a duke,
To hold egg-nogg in readiness : why
want

Attendance, sir, when helps in his
father's house

Abound, I 'd like to know ?

Enough of talk !

My fault is that I tell too plain a truth.
Why, which of those who say they dis-
believe,

Your clever people, but has dreamed
his dream,

Caught his coincidence, stumbled on
his fact

He can't explain, (he 'll tell you smil-
ingly)

Which he 's too much of a philosopher
To count as supernatural, indeed,

So calls a puzzle and problem, proud of
it :

Bidding you still be on your guard, you
know,

Because one fact don't make a system
stand,

Nor prove this an occasional escape
Of spirit beneath the matter : that 's
the way !

Just so wild Indians picked up, piece by
piece,

The fact in California, the *fine* gold
That underlay the gravel—hoarded
these,

But never made a system stand, nor
dug !

So wise men hold out in each hollowed
palm

A handful of experience, sparkling fact

They can't explain ; and since their
rest of life

Is all explainable, what proof in this ?
Whereas I take the fact, the grain of
gold,

And fling away the dirty rest of life,
And add this grain to the grain each
fool has found

Of the million other such philosophers,—
Till I see gold, all gold and only gold,

Truth questionless though unexplain-
able,

And the miraculous proved the com-
monplace !

The other fools believed in mud, no
doubt—

Failed to know gold they saw : was
that so strange ?

Are all men born to play Bach's fiddle-
fugues,

" Time " with the foil in carte, jump
their own height,

Cut the mutton with the broadsword,
skate a five,

Make the red hazard with the cue, clip
nails

While swimming, in five minutes row a
mile,

Pull themselves three feet up with the
left arm,

Do sums of fifty figures in their head,
And so on, by the scores of instances ?

The Sludge with luck, who sees the
spiritual facts,

His fellows strive and fail to see, may
rank

With these, and share the advantage.

Ay, but share

The drawback ! Think it over by
yourself ;

I have not heart, sir, and the fire 's
gone grey.

Defect somewhere compensates for suc-
cess,

Every one knows that. Oh, we 're
equals, sir !

The big-legged fellow has a little arm
And a less brain, though big legs win
the race :

Do you suppose I 'scape the common
lot ?

Say, I was born with flesh so sensitive,
Soul so alert, that, practice helping
both,

I guess what 's going on outside the
veil,

Just as a prisoned crane feels pairing-time
 In the islands where his kind are, so
 must fall
 To capering by himself some shiny
 night,
 As if your back-yard were a plot of
 spice—
 Thus am I 'ware of the spirit-world :
 while you,
 Blind as a beetle that way,—for
 amends,
 Why, you can double fist and floor me,
 sir !
 Ride that hot hardmouthed horrid
 horse of yours,
 Laugh while it lightens, play with the
 great dog,
 Speak your mind though it vex some
 friend to hear,
 Never brag, never bluster, never
 blush,—
 In short, you 've pluck, when I 'm a
 coward—there !
 I know it, I can't help it,—folly or no,
 I 'm paralysed, my hand 's no more a
 hand,
 Nor my head, a head, in danger : you
 can smile
 And change the pipe in your cheek.
 Your gift 's not mine.
 Would you swap for mine ? No ! but
 you 'd add my gift
 To yours : I dare say ! I too sigh at
 times,
 Wish I were stouter, could tell truth nor
 flinch,
 Kept cool when threatened, did not
 mind so much
 Being dressed gaily, making strangers
 stare,
 Eating nice things ; when I 'd amuse
 myself,
 I shut my eyes and fancy in my brain,
 I 'm—now the President, now, Jenny
 Lind,
 Now, Emerson, now, the Benicia Boy—
 With all the civilized world a-wonder-
 ing
 And worshipping. I know it 's folly
 and worse ;
 I feel such tricks sap, honeycomb the
 soul :
 But I can't cure myself,—despond,
 despair,
 And then, hey, presto, there 's a turn of
 the wheel,

Under comes uppermost, fate makes
 full amends ;
 Sludge knows and sees and hears a
 hundred things
 You all are blind to,—I 've my taste of
 truth,
 Likewise my touch of falsehood,—vice
 no doubt,
 But you 've your vices also : I 'm con-
 tent.
 What, sir ? You won't shake hands ?
 " Because I cheat !
 " You've found me out in cheating ! "
 That 's enough
 To make an apostle swear ! Why,
 when I cheat,
*Mean to cheat, do cheat, and am caught
 in the act,*
Are you, or rather, am I sure of the fact ?
 (There 's verse again, but I 'm inspired
 somehow.)
 Well then I 'm not sure ! I may be, per-
 haps,
 Free as a babe from cheating : how it
 began,
 My gift,—no matter ; what 'tis got to
 be
 In the end now, that 's the question :
 answer that !
 Had I seen, perhaps, what hand was
 holding mine,
 Leading me whither, I had died of
 fright,
 So, I was made believe I led myself.
 If I should lay a six-inch plank from
 roof
 To roof, you would not cross the street,
 one step,
 Even at your mother's summons : but,
 being shrewd,
 If I paste paper on each side of the
 plank
 And swear 'tis solid pavement, why,
 you 'll cross
 Humming a tune the while, in ignor-
 ance
 Beacon Street stretches a hundred feet
 below :
 I walked thus, took the paper-cheat for
 stone.
 Some impulse made me set a thing on
 the move
 Which, started once, ran really by it-
 self ;
 Beer flows thus, suck the siphon ; toss
 the kite,

It takes the wind and floats of its own force.

Don't let truth's lump rot stagnant for the lack

Of a timely helpful lie to leaven it!

Put a chalk-egg beneath the clucking hen,

She 'll lay a real one, laudably deceived,
Daily for weeks to come. I've told my lie,

And seen truth follow, marvels none of mine,

All was not cheating, sir, I'm positive!
I don't know if I move your hand sometimes

When the spontaneous writing spreads so far,

If my knee lifts the table all that height,
Why the inkstand don't fall off the desk a-tilt, [waltz

Why the accordion plays a prettier
Than I can pick out on the pianoforte,
Why I speak so much more than I intend,

Describe so many things I never saw.
I tell you, sir, in one sense, I believe
Nothing at all,—that everybody can,
Will, and does cheat: but in another sense

I'm ready to believe my very self—
That every cheat's inspired, and every lie

Quick with a germ of truth.

You ask perhaps

Why I should condescend to trick at all
If I know a way without it? This is why!

There 's a strange secret sweet self-sacrifice

In any desecration of one 's soul
To a worthy end,—isn't it Herodotus
(I wish I could read Latin!) who describes

The single gift of the land's virginity,
Demanded in those old Egyptian rites.
(I've but a hazy notion—help me, sir!)
For one purpose in the world, one day
in a life,

One hour in a day—thereafter, purity,
And a veil thrown o'er the past for evermore!

Well now, they understood a many things

Down by Nile city, or wherever it was!
I've always vowed, after the minute's lie,

And the good end's gain,—truth should be mine henceforth.

This goes to the root of the matter, sir,
—this plain

Plump fact: accept it and unlock with it

The wards of many a puzzle!

Or, finally,

Why should I set so fine a gloss on things?

What need I care? I cheat in self-defence,

And there 's my answer to a world of cheats!

Cheat? To be sure, sir! What's the world worth else?

Who takes it as he finds, and thanks his stars?

Don't it want trimming, turning, finishing up

And polishing over? Your so-styled great men,

Do they accept one truth as truth is found,

Or try their skill at tinkering? What's your world?

Here are you born, who are, I'll say at once,

One of the luckiest whether in head and heart,

Body and soul, or all that helps the same.

Well, now, look back: what faculty of yours

Came to its full, had ample justice done

By growing when rain fell, biding its time,

Solidifying growth when earth was dead,

Spiring up, broadening wide, in seasons due?

Never! You shot up and frost nipped you off,

Settled to sleep when sunshine bade you sprout;

One faculty thwarted its fellow: at the end,

All you boast is, "I had proved a topping tree

In other climes"—yet this was the right clime

Had you foreknown the seasons. Young, you've force

Wasted like well-streams: old,—oh, then indeed,
Behold a labyrinth of hydraulic pipes

Through which you 'd play off wondrous waterwork ;
 Only, no water left to feed their play !
 Young,—you 've a hope, an aim, a love ; it 's tossed
 And crossed and lost : you struggle on, some spark
 Shut in your heart against the puffs around,
 Through cold and pain ; these in due time subside,
 Now then for age's triumph, the hoarded light
 You mean to loose on the altered face of things,—
 Up with it on the tripod ! It 's extinct.
 Spend your life's remnant asking, which was best,
 Light smothered up that never peeped forth once,
 Or the cold cresset with full leave to shine ?
 Well, accept this too,—seek the fruit of it
 Not in enjoyment, proved a dream on earth,
 But knowledge, useful for a second chance,
 Another life,—you 've lost this world—
 —you 've gained
 Its knowledge for the next.—What knowledge, sir,
 Except that you know nothing ? Nay, you doubt
 Whether 'twere better have made you man or brute,
 If aught be true, if good and evil clash.
 No foul, no fair, no inside, no outside,
 There 's your world !

Give it me ! I slap it brisk
 With harlequin's pasteboard sceptre : what 's it now ?
 Changed like a rock-fat, rough with rusty weed,
 At first wash-over of the returning wave !
 All the dry dead impracticable stuff
 Starts into life and light again ; this world
 Pervaded by the influx from the next,
 I cheat, and what's the happy consequence ?
 You find full justice straightway dealt
 you out,

Each want supplied, each ignorance set at ease,
 Each folly fooled. No life-long labour now
 As the price of worse than nothing ! No mere film
 Holding you chained in iron, as it seems,
 Against the outstretch of your very arms
 And legs in the sunshine moralists forbid !
 What would you have ? Just speak and, there, you see !
 You 're supplemented, made a whole at last,
 Bacon advises, Shakespeare writes you songs,
 And Mary Queen of Scots embraces you.
 Thus it goes on, not quite like life perhaps,
 But so near, that the very difference piques,
 Shows that e'en better than this best will be—
 This passing entertainment in a hut
 Whose bare walls take your taste since, one stage more,
 And you arrive at the palace : all half real,
 And you, to suit it, less than real beside,
 In a dream, lethargic kind of death in life,
 That helps the interchange of natures, flesh
 Transfused by souls, and such souls !
 Oh, 'tis choice !
 And if at whiles the bubble, blown too thin,
 Seem nigh on bursting,—if you nearly see
 The real world through the false,—what *do* you see ?
 Is the old so ruined ? You find you 're in a flock
 Of the youthful, earnest, passionate—genius, beauty,
 Rank and wealth also, if you care for these,
 And all depose their natural rights, hail you,
 (That 's me, sir) as their mate and yoke-fellow,
 Participate in Sludgehood—nay, grow mine,

I veritably possess them—banish
doubt,
And reticence and modesty alike!
Why, here 's the Golden Age, old Paradise
Or new Eutopia! Here is life indeed,
And the world well won now, yours for
the first time!
And all this might be, may be, and with
good help
Of a little lying shall be: so, Sludge
lies!
Why, he 's at worst your poet who
sings how Greeks
That never were, in Troy which never
was,
Did this or the other impossible great
thing!
He 's Lowell—it 's a world, you smile
and say,
Of his own invention—wondrous Long-
fellow,
Surprising Hawthorne! Sludge does
more than they,
And acts the books they write: the
more his praise!
But why do I mount to poets? Take
plain prose—
Dealers in common sense, set these at
work,
What can they do without their helpful
lies?
Each states the law and fact and face
of the thing
Just as he 'd have them, finds what he
thinks fit,
Is blind to what missuits him, just re-
cords
What makes his case out, quite ignores
the rest.
It 's a History of the World, the Lizard
Age,
The Early Indians, the Old Country
War,
Jerome Napoleon, whatsoever you
please,
All as the author wants it. Such a
scribe
You pay and praise for putting life in
stones,
Fire into fog, making the past your
world.
There 's plenty of "How did you con-
trive to grasp
"The thread which led you through
this labyrinth?

"How build such solid fabric out of air?
"How on so slight foundation found
this tale,
"Biography, narrative?" or, in other
words,
"How many lies did it require to make
"The portly truth you here present us
with?"
"Oh," quoth the penman, purring at
your praise,
"T is fancy all; no particle of fact:
"I was poor and threadbare when I
wrote that book
"'"Bliss in the Golden City.' I, at
Thebes?
"We writers paint out of our heads,
you see!"
"—Ah, the more wonderful the gift in
you,
"The more creativeness and godlike
craft!"
But I, do I present you with my piece,
It 's "What, Sludge? When my
sainted mother spoke
"The verses Lady Jane Grey last com-
posed
"About the rosy bower in the seventh
heaven
"Where she and Queen Elizabeth keep
house,—
"You made the raps? 'T was your
invention that?
"Cur, slave and devil!"—eight fingers
and two thumbs
Stuck in my throat!

Well, if the marks seem gone,
'T is because stiffish cock-tail, taken in
time,
Is better for a bruise than arnica.
There, sir! I bear no malice: 't isn't
in me.
I know I acted wrongly: still, I 've
tried
What I could say in my excuse,—to
show
The devil 's not all devil . . . I don't
pretend,
An angel, much less such a gentleman
As you, sir! And I 've lost you, lost
myself,
Lost all, l-l-l- . . .

No—are you in earnest, sir?
O, yours, sir, is an angel's part! I
know
What prejudice must be, what the
common course

Men take to soothe their ruffled self-conceit :
 Only you rise superior to it all !
 No, sir, it don't hurt much ; it 's speaking long
 That makes me choke a little : the marks will go !
 What ? Twenty V-notes more, and outfit too,
 And not a word to Greeley ? One— one kiss
 Of the hand that saves me ! You 'll not let me speak
 I well know, and I 've lost the right, too true !
 But I must say, sir, if She hears (she does)
 Your sainted . . . Well, sir,—be it so !
 That 's, I think,
 My bed-room candle. Good night !
 Bl-l-less you, sir !

R-r-r, you brute-beast and blackguard !
 Cowardly scamp !
 I only wish I dared burn down the house
 And spoil your sniggering ! Oh, what, you 're the man ?
 You 're satisfied at last ? You 've found out Sludge ?
 We 'll see that presently : my turn, sir, next !
 I too can tell my story : brute,—do you hear ?—
 You throttled your sainted mother, that old hag,
 In just such a fit of passion : no, it was . . .
 To get this house of hers, and many a note
 Like these . . . I 'll pocket them, however . . . five,
 Ten, fifteen . . . ay, you gave her throat the twist,
 Or else you poisoned her ! Confound the cuss !
 Where was my head ? I ought to have prophesied
 He 'll die in a year and join her : that 's the way.
 I don't know where my head is : what had I done ?
 How did it all go ? I said he poisoned her,
 And hoped he 'd have grace given him to repent,

Whereon he picked this quarrel, bullied me
 And called me cheat : I thrashed him, —who could help ?
 He howled for mercy, prayed me on his knees
 To cut and run and save him from disgrace :
 I do so, and once off, he slanders me.
 An end of him ! Begin elsewhere anew !
 Boston 's a hole, the herring-pond is wide,
 V-notes are something, liberty still more.
 Beside, is he the only fool in the world ?

APPARENT FAILURE

"We shall soon lose a celebrated building."
Paris Newspaper.

I

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 ?

II

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 !

III

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.

IV

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 asphalté seemed best.

V

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 !

VI

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 !

VII

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.

EPILOGUE

FIRST SPEAKER, *as David.*

I

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,—

II

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,—

III

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 !"—

IV

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, *as Renan.*

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 pro-
testing 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 con-
vulse,
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 ame-
thyst,
But where may hide what came and
loved our clay ?
How shall the sage detect in yon ex-
panse
The star which chose to stoop and
stay for us ?
Unroll the records ! Hailed ye such
advance [thus ?
Indeed, and did your hope evanish
Watchers of twilight, is the worst
averted ?
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.

I

Witless alike of will and way divine,

How heaven's high and earth's low
should intertwine !
Friends, I have seen through your
eyes : now use mine !

II

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 :

III

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

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

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

x

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

xi

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?

xii

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

THE RING AND THE BOOK

I

THE RING AND THE BOOK

Do you see this Ring?
'T is Rome-work, made to match
(By Castellani's imitative craft)
Etrurian circlets found, some happy
morn,
After a dropping April; found alive
Spark-like 'mid unearthed slope-side
figtree-roots
That roof old tombs at Chiusi: soft,
you see,
Yet crisp as jewel-cutting. There 's
one trick,
(Craftsmen instruct me) one approved
device
And but one, fits such slivers of pure
gold
As this was,—such mere oozings from
the mine,
Virgin as oval tawny pendent tear
At beehive-edge when ripened combs
o'erflow,—
To bear the file's tooth and the ham-
mer's tap:
Since hammer needs must widen out
the round,
And file emboss it fine with lily-flowers,
Ere the stuff grow a ring-thing right to
wear.
That trick is, the artificer melts up wax
With honey, so to speak; he mingles
gold
With gold's alloy, and, duly tempering
both,
Effects a manageable mass, then works.
But his work ended, once the thing a
ring,
Oh, there 's repristination! Just a
spirt

O' the proper fiery acid o'er its face,
And forth the alloy unfastened flies in
fume;
While, self-sufficient now, the shape
remains,
The roudure brave, the liliated loveliness,
Gold as it was, is, shall be evermore:
Prime nature with an added artistry—
No carat lost, and you have gained a
ring.
What of it? 'T is a figure, a symbol,
say;
A thing's sign: now for the thing signi-
fied.

Do you see this square old yellow Book,
I toss
I' the air, and catch again, and twirl
about
By the crumpled vellum covers,—pure
crude fact
Secreted from man's life when hearts
beat hard,
And brains, high-blooded, ticked two
centuries since?
Examine it yourselves! I found this
book,
Gave a *lira* for it, eightpence English
just,
(Mark the predestination!) when a
Hand,
Always above my shoulder, pushed me
once,
One day still fierce 'mid many a day
struck calm,
Across a Square in Florence, crammed
with booths,
Buzzing and blaze, noontide and mar-
ket-time;
Toward Baccio's marble,—ay, the
basement-ledge

O' the pedestal where sits and menaces
 John of the Black Bands with the up-
 right spear,
 'Twixt palace and church,—Riccardi
 where they lived,
 His race, and San Lorenzo where they
 lie.
 This book,—precisely on that palace-
 step
 Which, meant for lounging knaves o'
 the Medici,
 Now serves re-vendors to display their
 ware,—
 'Mongst odds and ends of ravage, pic-
 ture-frames
 White through the worn gilt, mirror-
 sconces chipped,
 Bronze angel-heads once knobs at-
 tached to chests,
 (Handled when ancient dames chose
 forth brocade)
 Modern chalk drawings, studies from
 the nude,
 Samples of stone, jet, breccia, porphyry
 Polished and rough, sundry amazing
 busts
 In baked earth, (broken, Providence be
 praised !)
 A wreck of tapestry, proudly-purposed
 web
 When reds and blues were indeed red
 and blue,
 Now offered as a mat to save bare feet
 (Since carpets constitute a cruel cost)
 Treading the chill scagliola bedward :
 then
 A pile of brown-etched prints, two
crazie each,
 Stopped by a conch a-top from flutter-
 ing forth
 —Sowing the Square with works of one
 and the same
 Master, the imaginative Sienese
 Great in the scenic backgrounds—
 (name and fame
 None of you know, nor does he fare the
 worse :)
 From these . . . Oh, with a Lionard go-
 ing cheap
 If it should prove, as promised, that
 Joconde
 Whereof a copy contents the Louvre !
 —these
 I picked this book from. Five com-
 peers in flank
 Stood left and right of it as tempting
 more—

A dog's eared Spicilegium, the fond tale
 O' the Frail One of the Flower, by
 young Dumas,
 Vulgarized Horace for the use of schools
 The Life, Death, Miracles of Saint
 Somebody,
 Saint Somebody Else, his Miracles,
 Death and Life,—
 With this, one glance at the lettered
 back of which,
 And " Stall ! " cried I : a *lira* made it
 mine.
 Here it is, this I toss and take again ;
 Small-quarto size, part print part
 manuscript :
 A book in shape but, really, pure crude
 fact
 Secreted from man's life when hearts
 beat hard,
 And brains, high-blooded, ticked two
 centuries since.
 Give it me back ! The thing 's restor-
 ative
 I' the touch and sight.
 That memorable day,
 (June was the month, Lorenzo named
 the Square)
 I leaned a little and overlooked my
 prize
 By the low railing round the fountain-
 source
 Close to the statue, where a step
 descends :
 While clinked the cans of copper, as
 stooped and rose
 Thick-ankled girls who brimmed them,
 and made place
 For marketmen glad to pitch basket
 down,
 Dip a broad melon-leaf that holds the
 wet,
 And whisk their faded fresh. And on
 I read [ous
 Presently, though my path grew peril-
 ous
 Between the outspread straw-work,
 piles of plait
 Soon to be flapping, each o'er two black
 eyes
 And swathe of Tuscan hair, on festas
 fine :
 Through fire-irons, tribes of tongs,
 shovels in sheaves,
 Skeleton bedsteads, wardrobe-drawers
 agape,
 Rows of tall slim brass lamps with
 dangling gear,—

And worse, cast clothes a-sweetening in
the sun :
None of them took my eye from off my
prize.
Still read I on, from written title-page
To written index, on, through street
and street,
At the Strozzi, at the Pillar, at the
Bridge ;
Till, by the time I stood at home again
In Casa Guidi by Felice Church,
Under the doorway where the black
begins [cold,
With the first stone-slab of the staircase
I had mastered the contents, knew the
whole truth
Gathered together, bound up in this
book,
Print three-fifths, written supplement
the rest.
" *Romana Homicidiorum* "—nay,
Better translate—" A Roman murder-
case :
" Position of the entire criminal cause
" Of Guido Franceschini, nobleman,
" With certain Four the cutthroats in
his pay,
" Tried, all five, and found guilty and
put to death
" By heading or hanging as befitted
ranks,
" At Rome on February Twenty-Two,
" Since our salvation Sixteen Ninety-
Eight :
" Wherein it is disputed if, and when,
" Husbands may kill adulterous wives,
yet 'scape
" The customary forfeit."
Word for word,
So ran the title-page : murder, or else
Legitimate punishment of the other
crime,
Accounted murder by mistake,—just
that
And no more, in a Latin cramp enough
When the law had her eloquence to
launch,
But interfilleted with Italian streaks
When testimony stooped to mother-
tongue,—
That, was this old square yellow book
about.
Now, as the ingot, ere the ring was
forged,
Lay gold, (beseech you, hold that
figure fast.)

So, in this book lay absolutely truth,
Fanciless fact, the documents indeed,
Primary lawyer-pleadings for, against,
The aforesaid Five ; real summed-up
circumstance
Added in proof of these on either
side,
Put forth and printed, as the practice
was,
At Rome, in the Apostolic Chamber's
type,
And so submitted to the eye o' the
Court
Presided over by His Reverence
Rome's Governor and Criminal Judge,
—the trial
Itself, to all intents, being then as now
Here in the book and nowise out of it ;
Seeing, there properly was no judg-
ment-bar,
No bringing of accuser and accused,
And whoso judged both parties, face to
face
Before some court, as we conceive of
courts. [last :
There was a Hall of Justice ; that came
For justice had a chamber by the hall
Where she took evidence first, summed
up the same,
Then sent accuser and accused alike,
In person of the advocate of each,
To weigh that evidence' worth, ar-
range, array
The battle. 'T was the so-styled Fise
began,
Pleaded (and since he only spoke in
print
The printed voice of him lives now as
then)
The public Prosecutor—" Murder 's
proved ;
" With five . . what we call qualities
of bad,
" Worse, worst, and yet worse still, and
still worse yet ;
" Crest over crest crowning the cocka-
trice,
" That beggar hell's regalia to enrich
" Count Guido Franceschini : punish
him !"
Thus was the paper put before the
court
In the next stage, (no noisy work at all.)
To study at ease. In due time like
reply
Came from the so-styled Patron of the
Poor,

Official mouthpiece of the five accused
 Too poor to see a better,—Guido's
 luck
 Or else his fellows', which, I hardly
 know,—
 An outbreak as of wonder at the world,
 A fury-fit of outraged innocence,
 A passion of betrayed simplicity:
 "Punish Count Guido? For what
 crime, what hint
 "O' the colour of a crime, inform us
 first!
 "Reward him rather! Recognise, we
 say,
 "In the deed done, a righteous judg-
 ment dealt!
 "All conscience and all courage,—
 there 's our Count
 "Charactered in a word; and, what 's
 more strange,
 "He had companionship in privilege,
 "Found four courageous conscientious
 friends:
 "Absolve, applaud all five, as props of
 law,
 "Sustainers of society!—perchance
 "A trifle over-hasty with the hand
 "To hold her tottering ark, had tum-
 bled else;
 "But that 's a splendid fault whereat
 we wink,
 "Wishing your cold correctness spar-
 kled so!"
 Thus paper second followed paper first,
 Thus did the two join issue—nay, the
 four,
 Each pleader having an adjunct.
 "True, he killed
 "—So to speak—in a certain sort—his
 wife,
 "But laudably, since thus it happed!"
 quoth one:
 Whereat, more witness and the case
 postponed.
 "Thus it happed not, since thus he did
 the deed,
 "And proved himself thereby porten-
 tousest
 "Of cutthroats and a prodigy of crime,
 "As the woman that he slaughtered
 was a saint,
 "Martyr and miracle!" quoth the
 other to match:
 Again, more witness, and the case post-
 poned.
 "A miracle, ay—of lust and impud-
 ence;
 "Hear my new reasons!" interposed
 the first:
 "—Coupled with more of mine!"
 pursued his peer.
 "Beside, the precedents, the authori-
 ties!"
 From both at once a cry with an echo,
 that!
 That was a firebrand at each fox's tail
 Unleashed in a cornfield: soon spread
 flare enough,
 As hurtled thither and there heaped
 themselves
 From earth's four corners, all authority
 And precedent for putting wives to
 death,
 Or letting wives live, sinful as they
 seem.
 How legislated, now, in this respect,
 Solon and his Athenians? Quote the
 code
 Of Romulus and Rome! Justinian
 speak!
 Nor modern Baldo, Bartolo be dumb!
 The Roman voice was potent, plentiful;
Cornelia de Sicariis hurried to help
Pompeia de Parricidiis: *Julia de*
 Something-or-other jostled *Lex* this-
 and-that;
 King Solomon confirmed Apostle Paul:
 That nice decision of Dolabella, eh?
 That pregnant instance of Theodoric,
 oh!
 Down to that choice example Ælian
 gives
 (An instance I find much insisted on)
 Of the elephant who, brute-beast
 though he were,
 Yet understood and punished on the
 spot
 His master's naughty spouse and faith-
 less friend;
 A true tale which has edified each child,
 Much more shall flourish favoured by
 our court!
 Pages of proof this way, and that way
 proof,
 And always—once again the case post-
 poned.
 Thus wrangled, brangled, jangled they
 a month,
 —Only on paper, pleadings all in print,
 Nor ever was, except i' the brains of
 men,
 More noise by word of mouth than you
 hear now—

<p>Till the court cut all short with: " Judged, your cause. " Receive our sentence! Praise God! We pronounce " Count Guido devilish and damnable: " His wife Pompilia in thought, word and deed, " Was perfect pure, he murdered her for that: " As for the Four who helped the One, all Five— " Why, let employer and hirelings share alike " In guilt and guilt's reward, the death their due!"</p> <p>So was the trial at end, do you suppose? " Guilty you find him, death you doom him to? " Ay, were not Guido, more than needs, a priest, " Priest and to spare!"—this was a shot reserved; I learn this from epistles which begin Here where the print ends,—see the pen and ink Of the advocate, the ready at a pinch!— " My client boasts the clerky privilege, " Has taken minor orders many enough, " Shows still sufficient chrism upon his pate " To neutralize a blood-stain: <i>pres-</i> <i>byter,</i> " <i>Primæ tonsuræ, subdiaconus,</i> " <i>Sacerdos,</i> so he slips from underneath " Your power, the temporal, slides in- side the robe " Of mother Church: to her we make appeal " By the Pope, the Church's head!"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A parlous plea, Put in with noticeable effect, it seems; " Since straight,"—resumes the zealous orator, Making a friend acquainted with the facts,— " Once the word 'clericality' let fall, " Procedure stopped and freer breath was drawn " By all considerate and responsible Rome." Quality took the decent part, of course; Held by the husband, who was noble too:</p>	<p>Or, for the matter of that, a churl would side With too-refined susceptibility, And honour which, tender in the ex- treme, Stung to the quick, must roughly right itself At all risks, not sit still and whine for law As a Jew would, if you squeezed him to the wall, Brisk-trotting through the Ghetto. Nay, it seems, Even the Emperor's Envoy had his say To say on the subject; might not see, unmoved, Civility menaced throughout Christen- dom By too harsh measure dealt her cham- pion here. Lastly, what made all safe, the Pope was kind, [life, From his youth up, reluctant to take If mercy might be just and yet show grace; Much more unlikely then, in extreme age, To take a life the general sense bade spare. 'T was plain that Guido would go scatheless yet.</p> <p>But human promise, oh, how short of shine! How topple down the piles of hope we rear! How history proves . . . nay, read Herodotus! Suddenly starting from a nap, as it were, A dog-sleep with one shut, one open orb, Cried the Pope's great self,—Innocent by name And nature too, and eighty-six years old, Antonio Pignatelli of Naples, Pope Who had trod many lands, known many deeds, Probed many hearts, beginning with his own, And now was far in readiness for God,— 'Twas he who first bade leave those souls in peace, Those Jansenists, re-nicknamed Molin- ists.</p>
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('Gainst whom the cry went, like a
 frowsy tune,
 Tickling men's ears—the sect for a
 quarter of an hour
 I' the teeth of the world which, clown-
 like, loves to chew
 Be it but a straw twixt work and
 whistling-while,
 Taste some vituperation, bite away,
 Whether at marjoram-sprig or garlic-
 clove,
 Aught it may sport with, spoil, and
 then spit forth)
 "Leave them alone," bade he, "those
 Molinists!
 "Who may have other light than we
 perceive,
 "Or why is it the whole world hates
 them thus?"
 Also he peeled off that last scandal-rag
 Of Nepotism; and so observed the
 poor
 That men would merrily say, "Halt,
 deaf and blind,
 "Who feed on fat things, leave the
 master's self
 "To gather up the fragments of his
 feast,
 "These be the nephews of Pope Inno-
 cent!—
 "His own meal costs but five carlines a
 day,
 "Poor-priest's allowance, for he claims
 no more."
 —He cried of a sudden, this great good
 old Pope,
 When they appealed in last resort to
 him,
 "I have mastered the whole matter:
 I nothing doubt.
 "Though Guido stood forth priest
 from head to heel,
 "Instead of, as alleged, a piece of
 one,—
 "And further, were he, from the ton-
 sured scalp
 "To the sandaled sole of him, my son
 and Christ's,
 "Instead of touching us by finger-tip
 "As you assert, and pressing up so
 close
 "Only to set a blood-smutch on our
 robe,—
 "I and Christ would renounce all right
 in him.
 "Am I not Pope, and presently to die,
 *And busied how to render my account,

"And shall I wait a day ere I decide
 "On doing or not doing justice here?
 "Cut off his head to-morrow by this
 time,
 "Hang up his four mates, two on either
 hand,
 "And end one business more!"

So said, so done—

Rather so writ, for the old Pope bade
 this,
 I find, with his particular chirograph,
 His own no such infirm hand, Friday
 night;
 And next day, February Twenty-Two,
 Since our salvation Sixteen Ninety-
 Eight,
 —Not at the proper head-and-hanging-
 place
 On bridge-foot close by Castle Angelo,
 Where custom somewhat staled the
 spectacle,
 ('Twas not so well i' the way of Rome,
 beside,
 The noble Rome, the Rome of Guido's
 rank)
 But at the city's newer gayer end,—
 The cavalcading promenading place
 Beside the gate and opposite the church
 Under the Pincian gardens green with
 Spring,
 'Neath the obelisk 'twixt the fountains
 in the Square,
 Did Guido and his fellows find their
 fate,
 All Rome for witness, and—my writer
 adds—
 Remonstrant in its universal grief,
 Since Guido had the suffrage of all
 Rome.
 This is the bookful; thus far take the
 truth,
 The untempered gold, the fact untam-
 pered with,
 The mere ring-metal ere the ring be
 made!
 And what has hitherto come of it?
 Who preserves.
 The memory of this Guido, and his
 wife
 Pompilia, more than Ademollo's name,
 The etcher of those prints, two *crazie*
 each,
 Saved by a stone from snowing broad
 the Square
 With scenic backgrounds? Was this
 truth of force?

Able to take its own part as truth should,
 Sufficient, self-sustaining? Why, if so—
 Yonder 's a fire, into it goes my book,
 As who shall say me nay, and what the loss?
 You know the tale already: I may ask,
 Rather than think to tell you, more thereof,—
 Ask you not merely who were he and she,
 Husband and wife, what manner of mankind,
 But how you hold concerning this and that
 Other yet-unnamed actor in the piece.
 The young frank handsome courtly Canon, now,
 The priest, declared the lover of the wife,
 He who, no question, did elope with her,
 For certain bring the tragedy about,
 Giuseppe Caponsacchi;—his strange course
 I' the matter, was it right or wrong or both?
 Then the old couple, slaughtered with the wife
 By the husband as accomplices in crime,
 Those Comparini, Pietro and his spouse,—
 What say you to the right or wrong of that,
 When, at a known name whispered through the door
 Of a lone villa on a Christmas night,
 It opened that the joyous hearts inside
 Might welcome as it were an angel-guest
 Come in Christ's name to knock and enter, sup
 And satisfy the loving ones he saved;
 And so did welcome devils and their death?
 I have been silent on that circumstance
 Although the couple passed for close of kin
 To wife and husband, were by some accounts
 Pompilia's very parents: you know best.
 Also that infant the great joy was for,
 That Gaetano, the wife's two-weeks' babe,

The husband's first-born child, his son and heir,
 Whose birth and being turned his night to day—
 Why must the father kill the mother thus
 Because she bore his son and saved himself?
 Well, British Public, ye who like me not,
 (God love you!) and will have your proper laugh
 At the dark question, laugh it! I laugh first.
 Truth must prevail, the proverb vows; and truth
 —Here is it all i' the book at last, as first
 There it was all i' the heads and hearts of Rome
 Gentle and simple, never to fall nor fade
 Nor be forgotten. Yet, a little while,
 The passage of a century or so,
 Decads thrice five, and here 's time paid his tax,
 Oblivion gone home with her harvest-ing,
 And all left smooth again as scythe could shave.
 Far from beginning with you London folk,
 I took my book to Rome first, tried truth's power
 On likely people. "Have you met such names?"
 "Is a tradition extant of such facts?"
 "Your law-courts stand, your records frown a-row:
 "What if I rove and rummage?"—
 "—Why, you'll waste
 "Your pains and end as wise as you began!"
 Everyone snickered: "names and facts thus old
 "Are newer much than Europe news we find
 "Down in to-day's *Diario*. Records, quotha?"
 "Why, the French burned them, what else do the French?
 "The rap-and-rending nation! And it tells
 "Against the Church, no doubt,—another gird
 "At the Temporality, your Trial, of course?"

<p> "—Quite otherwise this time," submitted I; "Clean for the Church and dead against the world, "The flesh and the devil, does it tell for once." "—The rarer and the happier! All the same, "Content you with your treasure of a book, "And waive what 's wanting! Take a friend's advice! "It's not the custom of the country. Mend "Your ways indeed and we may stretch a point: "Go get you manned by Manning and new-manned "By Newman and, mayhap, wise-manned to boot "By Wiseman, and we'll see or else we won't! "Thanks meantime for the story, long and strong, "A pretty piece of narrative enough, "Which scarce ought so to drop out, one would think, "From the more curious annals of our kind. "Do you tell the story, now, in off-hand style, "Straight from the book? Or simply here and there, "(The while you vault it through the loose and large) "Hang to a hint? Or is there book at all, "And don't you deal in poetry, make-believe, "And the white lies it sounds like?" </p>	<p> Thridded and so thrown fast the facts else free, As right through ring and ring runs the djereed And binds the loose, one bar without a break. I fused my live soul and that inert stuff, Before attempting smithcraft, on the night After the day when,—truth thus grasped and gained,— The book was shut and done with and laid by On the cream-coloured massive agate, broad 'Neath the twin cherubs in the tarnished frame O' the mirror, tall thence to the ceiling-top. And from the reading, and that slab I leant My elbow on, the while I read and read, I turned, to free myself and find the world, And stepped out on the narrow terrace, built Over the street and opposite the church, And paced its lozenge-brickwork sprinkled cool; Because Felice-church-side stretched, a-glow Through each square window fringed for festival, Whence came the clear voice of the cloistered ones Chanting a chant made for midsummer nights— I know not what particular praise of God, It always came and went with June. Beneath I' the street, quick shown by openings of the sky When flame fell silently from cloud to cloud, Richer than that gold snow Jove rained on Rhodes, The townsmen walked by twos and threes, and talked, Drinking the blackness in default of air— A busy human sense beneath my feet: While in and out the terrace-plants, and round One branch of tall datura, waxed and waned </p>
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Yes and no!

From the book, yes; thence bit by bit I dug
 The lingot truth, that memorable day,
 Assayed and knew my piecemeal gain was gold,—
 Yes; but from something else surpassing that,
 Something of mine which, mixed up with the mass,
 Made it bear hammer and be firm to file.
 Fancy with fact is just one fact the more;
 To wit, that fancy has informed, transpierced,

The lamp-fly lured there, wanting the
white flower.
Over the roof o' the lighted church I
looked
A bowshot to the street's end, north
away
Out of the Roman gate to the Roman
road
By the river, till I felt the Apennine.
And there would lie Arezzo, the man's
town,
The woman's trap and cage and tor-
ture-place,
Also the stage where the priest played
his part,
A spectacle for angels,—ay, indeed,
There lay Arezzo! Farther then I
fared,
Feeling my way on through the hot
and dense, [inn
Romeward, until I found the wayside
By Castelnuovo's few mean hut-like
homes
Huddled together on the hill-foot
bleak,
Bare, broken only by that tree or two
Against the sudden bloody splendour
poured
Cursewise in his departure by the day
On the low house-roof of that squalid
inn
Where they three, for the first time and
the last,
Husband and wife and priest, met face
to face.
Whence I went on again, the end was
near,
Step by step, missing none and mark-
ing all,
Till Rome itself, the ghastly goal, I
reached.
Why, all the while,—how could it
otherwise?—
The life in me abolished the death of
things,
Deep calling unto deep: as then and
there
Acted itself over again once more
The tragic piece. I saw with my own
eyes
In Florence as I trod the terrace,
breathed
The beauty and the fearfulness of night,
How it had run, this round from
Rome to Rome—
Because, you are to know, they lived at
Rome,

Pompilia's parents, as they thought
themselves,
Two poor ignoble hearts who did their
best
Part God's way, part the other way
than God's,
To somehow make a shift and scramble
through
The world's mud, careless if it splashed
and spoiled,
Provided they might so hold high, keep
clean
Their child's soul, one soul white
enough for three,
And lift it to whatever star should
stoop,
What possible sphere of purer life than
theirs
Should come in aid of whiteness hard
to save.
I saw the star stoop, that they strained
to touch,
And did touch and depose their trea-
sure on,
As Guido Franceschini took away
Pompilia to be his for evermore,
While they sang " Now let us depart in
peace,
" Having beheld thy glory, Guido's
wife ! "
I saw the star supposed, but fog o' the
fen,
Gilded star-fashion by a glint from
hell ;
Having been heaved up, haled on its
gross way,
By hands unguessed before, invisible
help
From a dark brotherhood, and speci-
ally
Two obscure goblin creatures, fox-
faced this,
Cat-clawed the other, called his next of
kin
By Guido the main monster,—cloaked
and caped,
Making as they were priests, to mock
God more,—
Abate Paul, Canon Girolamo.
These who had rolled the starlike pest
to Rome
And stationed it to suck up and absorb
The sweetness of Pompilia, rolled again
That bloated bubble, with her soul in-
side,
Back to Arezzo and a palace there—
Or say, a fissure in the honest earth

Whence long ago had curled the vapour first,
 Blown big by nether fires to appal day:
 It touched home, broke, and blasted
 far and wide.
 I saw the cheated couple find the cheat
 And guess what foul rite they were captured for,—
 Too fain to follow over hill and dale
 That child of theirs caught up thus in
 the cloud
 And carried by the Prince o' the Power
 of the Air
 Whither he would, to wilderness or sea.
 I saw them, in the potency of fear,
 Break somehow through the satyr-
 family
 (For a grey mother with a monkey-
 mien,
 Mopping and mowing, was apparent
 too,
 As, confident of capture, all took hands
 And danced about the captives in a
 ring)
 —Saw them break through, breathe
 safe, at Rome again,
 Saved by the selfish instinct, losing so
 Their loved one left with haters. These
 I saw,
 In recrudescency of baffled hate,
 Prepare to wring the uttermost revenge
 From body and soul thus left them: all
 was sure,
 Fire laid and cauldron set, the obscene
 ring traced,
 The victim stripped and prostrate:
 what of God?
 The cleaving of a cloud, a cry, a crash,
 Quenched lay their cauldron, covered
 i' the dust the crew,
 As, in a glory of armour like Saint
 George,
 Out again sprang the young good
 beauteous priest
 Bearing away the lady in his arms,
 Saved for a splendid minute and no
 more.
 For, whom i' the path did that priest
 come upon,
 He and the poor lost lady borne so
 brave,
 —Checking the song of praise in me,
 had else
 Swelled to the full for God's will done
 on earth—
 Whom but a dusk misfeatured mes-
 senger,

No other than the angel of this life,
 Whose care is lest men see too much at
 once.
 He made the sign, such God-glimpse
 must suffice,
 Nor prejudice the Prince o' the Power
 of the Air,
 Whose ministration piles us overhead
 What we call, first, earth's roof and,
 last, heaven's floor,
 Now grate o' the trap, then outlet of
 the cage:
 So took the lady, left the priest alone,
 And once more canopied the world
 with black.
 But through the blackness I saw Rome
 again,
 And where a solitary villa stood
 In a lone garden-quarter: it was eve,
 The second of the year, and oh so cold!
 Ever and anon there flittered through
 the air
 A snow-flake, and a scanty couch of
 snow
 Crusted the grass-walk and the garden-
 mould.
 All was grave, silent, sinister,—when,
 ha?
 Glimmeringly did a pack of were-
 wolves pad
 The snow, those flames were Guido's
 eyes in front,
 And all five found and footed it, the
 track,
 To where a threshold-streak of warmth
 and light
 Betrayed the villa-door with life inside,
 While an inch outside were those blood-
 bright eyes,
 And black lips wrinkling o'er the flash
 of teeth,
 And tongues that lolled—Oh God that
 madest man!
 They parleyed in their language. Then
 one whined—
 That was the policy and master-
 stroke—
 Deep in his throat whispered what
 seemed a name—
 "Open to Caponsacchi!" Guido cried:
 "Gabriel!" cried Lucifer at Eden-gate.
 Wide as a heart, opened the door at
 once,
 Showing the joyous couple, and their
 child
 The two-weeks' mother, to the wolves
 the wolves

To them. Close eyes! And when
 the corpses lay
 Stark-stretched, and those the wolves,
 their wolf-work done,
 Were safe-embosomed by the night
 again,
 I knew a necessary change in things ;
 As when the worst watch of the night
 gives way,
 And there comes duly, to take cognis-
 ance,
 The scrutinizing eye-point of some
 star—
 And who despairs of a new daybreak
 now ?
 Lo, the first ray protruded on those
 five !
 It reached them, and each felon writhed
 transfixed.
 Awhile they palpitated on the spear
 Motionless over Tophet : stand or fall ?
 " I say, the spear should fall—should
 stand, I say ! "
 Cried the world come to judgment,
 granting grace
 Or dealing doom according to world's
 wont,
 Those world's-bystanders grouped on
 Rome's cross-road
 At prick and summons of the primal
 curse
 Which bids man love as well as make a
 lie.
 There prattled they, discoursed the
 right and wrong,
 Turned wrong to right, proved wolves
 sheep and sheep wolves,
 So that you scarce distinguished fell
 from fleece ;
 Till out spoke a great guardian of the
 fold,
 Stood up, put forth his hand that held
 the crook,
 And motioned that the arrested point
 decline :
 Horribly off, the wriggling dead-weight
 reeled,
 Rushed to the bottom and lay ruined
 there.
 Though still at the pit's mouth, despite
 the smoke
 O' the burning, tarriers turned again
 to talk
 And trim the balance, and detect at
 least
 A touch of wolf in what showed whitest
 sheep,

A cross of sheep redeeming the whole
 wolf,—
 Vex truth a little longer :—less and
 less,
 Because years came and went, and
 more and more
 Brought new lies with them to be loved
 in turn.
 Till all at once the memory of the
 thing,—
 The fact that, wolves or sheep, such
 creatures were,—
 Which hitherto, however men sup-
 posed,
 Had somehow plain and pillar-like pre-
 vailed
 I' the midst of them, indisputably fact,
 Granite, time's tooth should grate
 against, not graze,—
 Why, this proved sandstone, friable,
 fast to fly [wind.
 And give its grain away at wish o' the
 Ever and ever more diminutive,
 Base gone, shaft lost, only entablature,
 Dwindled into no bigger than a book,
 Lay of the column ; and that little,
 left
 By the roadside 'mid the ordure, shards
 and weeds.
 Until I haply, wandering that way,
 Kicked it up, turned it over, and recog-
 nised,
 For all the crumblement, this abacus,
 This square old yellow book,—could
 calculate
 By this the lost proportions of the style.
 This was it from, my fancy with these
 facts,
 I used to tell the tale, turned gay to
 grave,
 But lacked a listener seldom ; such
 alloy,
 Such substance of me interfused the
 gold
 Which, wrought into a shapely ring
 therewith,
 Hammered and filed, fingered and
 favoured, last
 Lay ready for the renovating wash
 O' the water. " How much of the tale
 was true ? "
 I disappeared ; the book grew all in all ;
 The lawyers' pleadings swelled back to
 their size,—
 Doubled in two, the crease upon them
 yet.

For more commodity of carriage, see!—
 And these are letters, veritable sheets
 That brought post-haste the news to
 Florence, writ
 At Rome the day Count Guido died,
 we find,
 To stay the craving of a client there,
 Who bound the same and so produced
 my book.
 Lovers of dead truth, did ye fare the
 worse?
 Lovers of live truth, found ye false my
 tale?

Well, now; there's nothing in nor out
 o' the world
 Good except truth: yet this, the some-
 thing else,
 What's this then, which proves good
 yet seems untrue?
 This that I mixed with truth, motions
 of mine
 That quickened, made the inertness
 malleable
 O' the gold was not mine,—what's
 your name for this?
 Are means to the end, themselves in
 part the end?
 Is fiction which makes fact alive, fact
 too?
 The somehow may be thishow.

I find first

Writ down for very A. B. C. of fact,
 "In the beginning God made heaven
 and earth;"
 From which, no matter with what lisp,
 I spell
 And speak you out a consequence—
 that man, [thing,—
 Man,—as befits the made, the inferior
 Purposed, since made, to grow, not
 make in turn,
 Yet forced to try and make, else fail to
 grow,—
 Formed to rise, reach at, if not grasp
 and gain
 The good beyond him,—which attempt
 is growth,—
 Repeats God's process in man's due
 degree,
 Attaining man's proportionate result,—
 Creates, no, but resuscitates, perhaps.
 Inalienable, the arch-prerogative
 Which turns thought, act—conceives,
 expresses too!
 No less, man, bounded, yearning to be
 free,

May so project his surplusage of soul
 In search of body, so add self to self
 By owning what lay ownerless before,—
 So find, so fill full, so appropriate
 forms—
 That, although nothing which had
 never life
 Shall get life from him, be, not having
 been,
 Yet, something dead may get to live
 again,
 Something with too much life or not
 enough,
 Which, either way imperfect, ended
 once:
 An end whereat man's impulse inter-
 venes,
 Makes new beginning, starts the dead
 alive,
 Completes the incomplete and saves
 the thing.
 Man's breath were vain to light a virgin
 wick,—
 Half-burned-out, all but quite-quenched
 wicks o' the lamp
 Stationed for temple-service on this
 earth,
 These indeed let him breathe on and
 relume!
 For such man's feat is, in the due degree,
 —Mimic creation, galvanism for life,
 But still a glory portioned in the scale.
 Why did the mage say,—feeling as we
 are wont
 For truth, and stopping midway short
 of truth,
 And resting on a lie,—“I raise a
 ghost?”
 “Because,” he taught adepts, “man
 makes not man.
 “Yet by a special gift, an art of arts,
 “More insight and more out-sight and
 much more
 “Will to use both of these than boast
 my mates,
 “I can detach from me, commission
 forth
 “Half of my soul; which in its pil-
 grimage
 “O'er old unwandered waste ways of
 the world,
 “May chance upon some fragment of a
 whole,
 “Rag of flesh, scrap of bone in dim
 disuse,
 “Smoking flax that fed fire once:
 prompt therein

" I enter, spark-like, put old powers to
 play,
 " Push lines out to the limit, lead forth
 last
 " (By a moonrise through a ruin of a
 crypt)
 " What shall be mistily seen, murmur-
 ingly heard,
 " Mistakenly felt: then write my
 name with Faust's!"
 Oh, Faust, why Faust? Was not
 Elisha once?— [face,
 Who bade them lay his staff on a corpse—
 There was no voice, no hearing: he
 went in
 Therefore, and shut the door upon
 them twain,
 And prayed unto the Lord: and he
 went up
 And lay upon the corpse, dead on the
 couch,
 And put his mouth upon its mouth, his
 eyes
 Upon its eyes, his hands upon its hands,
 And stretched him on the flesh; the
 flesh waxed warm:
 And he returned, walked to and fro the
 house,
 And went up, stretched him on the flesh
 again,
 And the eyes opened. 'Tis a credible
 feat
 With the right man and way.
 Enough of me!
 The Book! I turn its medicinable
 leaves
 In London now till, as in Florence erst,
 A spirit laughs and leaps through every
 limb,
 And lights my eye, and lifts me by the
 hair,
 Letting me have my will again with
 these
 —How title I the dead alive once more?
 Count Guido Franceschini the Aretine,
 Descended of an ancient house, though
 poor,
 A beak-nosed bushy-bearded black-
 haired lord,
 Lean, pallid, low of stature yet robust,
 Fifty years old,—having four years ago
 Married Pompilia Comparini, young,
 Good, beautiful, at Rome, where she
 was born,
 And brought her to Arezzo, where they
 lived

Unhappy lives, whatever curse the
 cause,—
 This husband, taking four accom-
 plices,
 Followed this wife to Rome, where she
 was fled
 From their Arezzo to find peace again,
 In convoy, eight months earlier, of a
 priest,
 Aretine also, of still nobler birth,
 Giuseppe Caponsacchi,—and caught
 her there
 Quiet in a villa on a Christmas night,
 With only Pietro and Violante by,
 Both her putative parents; killed the
 three,
 Aged, they, seventy each, and she,
 seventeen, [babe
 And, two weeks since, the mother of his
 First-born and heir to what the style
 was worth
 O' the Guido who determined, dared
 and did
 This deed just as he purposed point by
 point.
 Then, bent upon escape, but hotly
 pressed,
 And captured with his co-mates that
 same night,
 He, brought to trial, stood on this de-
 fence—
 Injury to his honour caused the act;
 That since his wife was false, (as mani-
 fest
 By flight from home in such compan-
 ionship.)
 Death, punishment deserved of the
 false wife
 And faithless parents who abetted her
 I' the flight aforesaid, wronged nor God
 nor man.
 " Nor false she, nor yet faithless they,"
 replied
 The accuser; " cloaked and masked
 this murder glooms;
 " True was Pompilia, loyal too the
 pair;
 " Out of the man's own heart this mon-
 ster curled,
 " This crime coiled with connivance at
 crime,
 " His victim's breast, he tells you,
 hatched and reared;
 " Uncoil we and stretch stark the worm
 of hell!"
 A month the trial swayed this way and
 that

Ere judgment settled down on Guido's
guilt ;
Then was the Pope, that good Twelfth
Innocent,
Appealed to : who well weighed what
went before,
Affirmed the guilt and gave the guilty
doom.

Let this old woe step on the stage again!
Act itself o'er anew for men to judge,
Not by the very sense and sight in-
deed—

(Which take at best imperfect cognis-
ance,

Since, how heart moves brain, and how
both move hand,

What mortal ever in entirety saw ?)

—No dose of purer truth than man
digests,

But truth with falsehood, milk that
feeds him now,

Nor strong meat he may get to bear
some day—

To-wit, by voices we call evidence,

Uproar in the echo, live fact deadened
down,

Talked over, bruited abroad, whispered
away,

Yet helping us to all we seem to hear :
For how else know we save by worth of
word ?

Here are the voices presently shall
sound

In due succession. First, the world's
outcry

Around the rush and ripple of any fact
Fallen stonewise, plumb on the smooth
face of things ;

The world's guess, as it crowds the
bank o' the pool,

At what were figure and substance, by
their splash :

Then, by vibrations in the general
mind,

At depth of deed already out of reach.

This threefold murder of the day be-
fore,—

Say, Half-Rome's feel after the van-
ished truth ;

Honest enough, as the way is : all the
same,

Harbouring in the centre of its sense
A hidden germ of failure, shy but sure,

Should neutralize that honesty and
leave

That feel for truth at fault, as the way
is too.

Some prepossession such as starts
amiss, [blade,

By but a hair's-breadth at the shoulder-
The arm o' the feeler, dip he ne'er so

brave ;

And so leads waveringly, lets fall wide
O' the mark his finger meant to find,

and fix
Truth at the bottom, that deceptive
speck.

With this Half-Rome,—the source of
swerving, call

Over-belief in Guido's right and wrong
Rather than in Pompilia's wrong and

right :

Who shall say how, who shall say why ?
'T is there—

The instinctive theorizing whence a
fact

Looks to the eye as the eye likes the
look.

Gossip in a public place, a sample-
speech.

Some worthy, with his previous hint to
find

A husband's side the safer, and no whit
Aware he is not Æacus the while,—

How such an one supposes and states
fact

To whosoever of a multitude
Will listen, and perhaps prolong there-
by

The not-unpleasant flutter at the
breast,

Born of a certain spectacle shut in
By the church Lorenzo opposite. So,

they lounge
Midway the mouth o' the street, on Cor-
so side,

'Twixt palace Fiano and palace Rus-
poli,

Linger and listen ; keeping clear o' the
crowd,

Yet wishful one could lend that crowd
one's eyes,

(So universal is its plague of squint)
And make hearts beat our time that
flutter false :

—All for the truth's sake, mere truth,
nothing else !

How Half-Rome found for Guido
much excuse.

Next, from Rome's other half, the
opposite feel

For truth with a like swerve, like un-
 success,—
 Or if success, by no more skill but
 luck :
 This time, through rather siding with
 the wife,
 However the fancy-fit inclined that
 way,
 Than with the husband. One wears
 drab, one, pink ;
 Who wears pink, ask him " Which
 shall win the race,
 " Of coupled runners like as egg and
 egg ? "
 " —Why, if I must choose, he with the
 pink scarf."
 Doubtless for some such reason choice
 fell here.
 A piece of public talk to correspond
 At the next stage of the story ; just a
 day
 Let pass and new day bring the proper
 change.
 Another sample-speech i' the market-
 place
 O' the Barberini by the Capucins ;
 Where the old Triton, at his fountain-
 sport,
 Bernini's creature plated to the paps,
 Puffs up steel sleet which breaks to
 diamond dust,
 A spray of sparkles snorted from his
 conch,
 High over the caritellas, out o' the way
 O' the motley merchandizing multi-
 tude.
 Our murder has been done three days
 ago,
 The frost is over and gone, the south
 wind laughs,
 And, to the very tiles of each red roof
 A-smoke i' the sunshine, Rome lies gold
 and glad :
 So, listen how, to the other half of
 Rome,
 Pompilia seemed a saint and martyr
 both !
 Then, yet another day let come and go,
 With pause prelusivé still of novelty,
 Hear a fresh speaker !—neither this nor
 that
 Half-Rome aforesaid ; something bred
 of both :
 One and one breed the inevitable three.
 Such is the personage harangues you
 next ;

The elaborated product, *tertium quid* :
 Rome's first commotion in subsidence
 gives
 The curd o' the cream, flower o' the
 wheat, as it were,
 And finer sense o' the city. Is this
 plain ?
 You get a reasoned statement of the
 case,
 Eventual verdict of the curious few
 Who care to sift a business to the bran
 Nor coarsely bolt it like the simpler sort.
 Here, after ignorance, instruction
 speaks ;
 Here, clarity of candour, history's soul,
 The critical mind, in short : no gossip-
 gues.
 What the superior social section thinks,
 In person of some man of quality
 Who,—breathing musk from lace-
 work and brocade,
 His solitaire amid the flow of frill,
 Powdered peruke on nose, and bag at
 back,
 And cane dependent from the ruffled
 wrist,—
 Harangues in silvery and selectest
 phrase
 'Neath waxlight in a glorified saloon
 Where mirrors multiply the girandole :
 Courting the approbation of no mob,
 But Eminence This and All-Illustrious
 That
 Who take snuff softly, range in well-
 bred ring,
 Card-table-quitters for observance'
 sake,
 Around the argument, the rational
 word—
 Still, spite its weight and worth, a
 sample-speech.
 How quality dissertated on the case.
 So much for Rome and rumour ; smoke
 comes first :
 Once the smoke risen untroubled, we
 descrie
 Clearlier what tongues of flame may
 spire and spit
 To eye and ear, each with appropriate
 tinge
 According to its food, pure or impure.
 The actors, no mere rumours of the act,
 Intervene. First you hear Count
 Guido's voice,
 In a small chamber that adjoins the
 court,

Where Governor and Judges, summoned thence,
 Tommati, Venturini and the rest,
 Find the accused ripe for declaring truth.
 Soft-cushioned sits he ; yet shifts seat,
 shirks touch,
 As, with a twitchy brow and wincing lip
 And cheek that changes to all kinds of white,
 He proffers his defence, in tones subdued
 Near to mock-mildness now, so mournful seems
 The obtuser sense truth fails to satisfy ;
 Now, moved, from pathos at the wrong endured,
 To passion ; for the natural man is roused
 At fools who first do wrong, then pour the blame
 Of their wrong-doing, Satan-like, on Job.
 Also his tongue at times is hard to curb ;
 Incisive, nigh satiric bites the phrase,
 Rough-raw, yet somehow claiming privilege
 —It is so hard for shrewdness to admit
 Folly means no harm when she calls black white !
 —Eruption momentary at the most,
 Modified forthwith by a fall o' the fire,
 Sage acquiescence ; for the world 's the world,
 And, what it errs in, Judges rectify :
 He feels he has a fist, then folds his arms
 Crosswise and makes his mind up to be meek.
 And never once does he detach his eye
 From those ranged there to slay him or to save,
 But does his best man's-service for himself,
 Despite,—what twitches brow and makes lip wince,—
 His limbs' late taste of what was called the Cord,
 Or Vigil-torture more facetiously.
 Even so ; they were wont to tease the truth
 Out of loath witness (toying, trifling time)
 By torture : 'twas a trick, a vice of the age,
 Here, there and everywhere, what would you have ?

Religion used to tell Humanity
 She gave him warrant or denied him course.
 And since the course was much to his own mind,
 Of pinching flesh and pulling bone from bone
 To unhusk truth a-hiding in its hulls,
 Nor whisper of a warning stopped the way,
 He, in their joint behalf, the burly slave,
 Bestirred him, mauled and maimed all recusants,
 While, prim in place, Religion overlooked ;
 And so had done till doomsday, never a sign
 Nor sound of interference from her mouth,
 But that at last the burly slave wiped brow,
 Let eye give notice as if soul were there,
 Muttered " 'Tis a vile trick, foolish more than vile,
 " Should have been counted sin ; I make it so :
 " At any rate no more of it for me—
 " Nay, for I break the torture-engine thus ! "
 Then did Religion start up, stare amain,
 Look round for help and see none, smile and say
 " What, broken is the rack ? Well done of thee !
 " Did I forget to abrogate its use ?
 " Be the mistake in common with us both !
 " —One more fault our blind age shall answer for,
 " Down in my book denounced though it must be
 " Somewhere. Henceforth find truth by milder means ! "
 Ah but, Religion, did we wait for thee
 To ope the book, that serves to sit upon,
 And pick such place out, we should wait indeed !
 That is all history : and what is not now,
 Was then, defendants found it to their cost.
 How Guido, after being tortured, spoke.
 Also hear Caponsacchi who comes next.
 Man and priest—could you comprehend the coil !—

In days when that was rife which now
is rare.
How, mingling each its multifarious
wires,
Now heaven, now earth, now heaven
and earth at once,
Had plucked at and perplexed their
puppet here,
Played off the young frank personable
priest;
Sworn fast and tonsured plain heaven's
celibate,
And yet earth's clear-accepted servitor,
A courtly spiritual Cupid, squire of
dames
By law of love and mandate of the
mode.
The Church's own, or why parade her
seal,
Wherefore that chrism and consecrative
work?
Yet verily the world's, or why go
badged
A prince of sonneteers and lutanists,
Show colour of each vanity in vogue
Borne with decorum due on blameless
breast?
All that is changed now, as he tells the
court
How he had played the part excepted
at;
Tells it, moreover, now the second
time:
Since, for his cause of scandal, his own
share
I' the flight from home and husband of
the wife,
He has been censured, punished in a
sort
By relegation,—exile, we should say,
To a short distance for a little time,—
Whence he is summoned on a sudden
now,
Informed that she, he thought to save,
is lost,
And, in a breath, bidden re-tell his tale,
Since the first telling somehow missed
effect,
And then advise in the matter. There
stands he,
While the same grim black-panelled
chamber blinks
As though rubbed shiny with the sins
of Rome
Told the same oak for ages—wave-
washed wall
Whereto has set a sea of wickedness.

There, where you yesterday heard
Guido speak,
Speaks Caponsacchi; and there face
him too
Tommati, Venturini and the rest
Who, eight months earlier, scarce re-
pressed the smile,
Forewent the wink; waived recogni-
tion so
Of peccadillos incident to youth,
Especially youth high-born; for youth
means love,
Vows can't change nature, priests are
only men,
And love needs stratagem and subter-
fuge:
Which age, that once was youth, should
recognise,
May blame, but needs not press too
hard against.
Here sit the old Judges then, but with
no grace
Of reverend carriage, magisterial port.
For why? The accused of eight
months since,—the same
Who cut the conscious figure of a fool,
Changed countenance, dropped bash-
ful gaze to ground,
While hesitating for an answer then,—
Now is grown judge himself, terrifies
now
This, now the other culprit called a
judge,
Whose turn it is to stammer and look
strange,
As he speaks rapidly, angrily, speech
that smites:
And they keep silence, bear blow after
blow,
Because the seeming-solitary man,
Speaking for God, may have an audi-
ence too,
Invisible, no discreet judge provokes.
How the priest Caponsacchi said his
say.
Then a soul sighs its lowest and its last
After the loud ones,—so much breath
remains
Unused by the four-days'-dying; for
she lived
Thus long, miraculously long, 't was
thought,
Just that Pompilia might defend her-
self.
How, while the hireling and the alien
stoop,

Comfort, yet question,—since the time
 is brief,
 And folk, allowably inquisitive,
 Encircle the low pallet where she lies
 In the good house that helps the poor
 to die,—
 Pompilia tells the story of her life.
 For friend and lover,—leech and man
 of law
 Do service; busy helpful ministrants
 As varied in their calling as their mind,
 Temper and age: and yet from all of
 these,
 About the white bed under the arched
 roof,
 Is somehow, as it were, evolved a one,—
 Small separate sympathies combined
 and large,
 Nothings that were, grown something
 very much:
 As if the bystanders gave each his
 straw,
 All he had, though a trifle in itself,
 Which, plaited all together, made a
 Cross
 Fit to die looking on and praying with,
 Just as well as if ivory or gold.
 So, to the common kindness she
 speaks,
 There being scarce more privacy at the
 last
 For mind than body: but she is used
 to bear,
 And only unused to the brotherly look.
 How she endeavoured to explain her
 life.

Then, since a Trial ensued, a touch o'
 the same
 To sober us, flustered with frothy talk,
 And teach our common sense its help-
 lessness.
 For why deal simply with divining-rod,
 Scrape where we fancy secret sources
 flow,
 And ignore law, the recognised ma-
 chine,
 Elaborate display of pipe and wheel
 Framed to unchoak, pump up and
 pour apace
 Truth in a flowery foam shall wash the
 world?
 The patent truth-extracting process,—
 ha?
 Let us make all that mystery turn one
 wheel,
 Give you a single grind of law at least!

One orator, of two on either side,
 Shall teach us the puissance of the
 tongue
 —That is, o' the pen which simulated
 tongue
 On paper and saved all except the
 sound
 Which never was. Law's speech be-
 side law's thought?
 That were too stunning, too immense
 an odds:
 That point of vantage, law let nobly
 pass.
 One lawyer shall admit us to behold
 The manner of the making out a case,
 First fashion of a speech; the chick in
 egg,
 And masterpiece law's bosom incubates.
 How Don Giacinto of the Arcangeli,
 Called Procurator of the Poor at Rome,
 Now advocate for Guido and his
 mates,—
 The jolly learned man of middle age,
 Cheek and jowl all in laps with fat and
 law,
 Mirthful as mighty, yet, as great hearts
 use,
 Despite the name and fame that tempt
 our flesh,
 Constant to that devotion of the
 hearth, [ties!—
 Still captive in those dear domestic
 How he,—having a cause to triumph
 with,
 All kind of interests to keep intact,
 More than one efficacious personage
 To tranquillize, conciliate and secure,
 And above all, public anxiety
 To quiet, show its Guido in good
 hands,—
 Also, as if such burdens were too light,
 A certain family-feast to claim his care,
 The birthday-banquet for the only son—
 Paternity at smiling strife with law—
 How he brings both to buckle in one
 bond;
 And, thick at throat, with waterish
 under-eye,
 Turns to his task and settles in his seat
 And puts his utmost means to practice
 now:
 Wheezes out law and whiffles Latin
 forth,
 And, just as though roast lamb would
 never be,
 Makes logic levigate the big crime
 small:

Rubs palm on palm, rakes foot with itchy foot,
 Conceives and inchoates the argument,
 Sprinkling each flower appropriate to the time,
 —Ovidian quip or Ciceronian crank,
 A-bubble in the larynx while he laughs,
 As he had fritters deep down frying there.
 How he turns, twists, and tries the oily thing
 Shall be—first speech for Guido 'gainst the Fisc.
 Then with a skip as it were from heel to head,
 Leaving yourselves fill up the middle bulk
 O' the Trial, reconstruct its shape august,
 From such exordium clap we to the close ;
 Give you, if we dare wing to such a height,
 The absolute glory in some full-grown speech
 On the other side, some finished butterfly,
 Some breathing diamond-flake with leaf-gold fans,
 That takes the air, no trace of worm it was,
 Or cabbage-bed it had production from.
 Giovambattista o' the Bottini, Fisc,
 Pompilia's patron by the chance of the hour,
 To-morrow her persecutor,—composite, he,
 As becomes who must meet such various calls—
 Odds of age joined in him with ends of youth.
 A man of ready smile and facile tear,
 Improvised hopes, despairs at nod and beck,
 And language—ah, the gift of eloquence !
 Language that goes as easy as a glove
 O'er good and evil, smoothens both to one.
 Rashness helps caution with him, fires the straw,
 In free enthusiastic careless fit,
 On the first proper pinnacle of rock
 Which happens, as reward for all that zeal,
 To lure some bark to founder and bring gain :

While calm sits Caution, rapt with heavenward eye,
 A true confessor's gaze amid the glare,
 Beaconing to the breaker, death and hell.
 " Well done, thou good and faithful ! " she approves :
 " Hadst thou let slip a faggot to the beach,
 " The crew had surely spied thy precipice
 " And saved their boat ; the simple and the slow,
 " Who should have prompt forestalled the wrecker's fee :
 " Let the next crew be wise and hail in time ! "

Just so compounded is the outside man,
 Blue juvenile pure eye and pippin cheek,
 And brow all prematurely soiled and scamed [hair.
 With sudden age, bright devastated
 Ah, but you miss the very tones o' the voice,
 The scannell pipe that screams in heights of head,
 As, in his modest studio, all alone,
 The tall wight stands a-tiptoe, strives and strains,
 Both eyes shut, like the cockerel that would crow,
 Tries to his own self amorously o'er
 What never will be uttered else than so—
 To the four walls, for Forum and Mars' Hill,
 Speaks out the poesy which, penned, turns prose.
 Clavecinist debarred his instrument,
 He yet thrums—shirking neither turn nor trill,
 With desperate finger on dumb table-edge—
 The sovereign rondo, shall conclude his *Suite*,
 Charm an imaginary audience there,
 From old Corelli to young Haendel, both
 I' the flesh at Rome, ere he perforce go print
 The cold black score, mere music for the mind—
 The last speech against Guido and his gang,
 With special end to prove Pompilia pure.

How the Fisc vindicates Pompilia's
 fame.
 Then comes the all but end, the ultim-
 ate
 Judgment save yours. Pope Innocent
 the Twelfth,
 Simple, sagacious, mild yet resolute,
 With prudence, probity and—what be-
 side
 From the other world he feels impress
 at times,
 Having attained to fourscore years and
 six,—
 How, when the court found Guido and
 the rest
 Guilty, but law supplied a subterfuge
 And passed the final sentence to the
 Pope,
 He, bringing his intelligence to bear
 This last time on what ball behoves
 him drop
 In the urn, or white or black, do's drop
 a black,
 Send five souls more to just precede his
 own,
 Stand him in stead and witness, if need
 were,
 How he is wont to do God's work on
 earth.
 The manner of his sitting out the dim
 Droop of a sombre February day
 In the plain closet where he does such
 work,
 With, from all Peter's treasury, one
 stool,
 One table and one lathen crucifix.
 There sits the Pope, his thoughts for
 company ;
 Grave but not sad,—nay, something
 like a cheer
 Leaves the lips free to be benevolent,
 Which, all day long, did duty firm and
 fast.
 A cherishing there is of foot and knee,
 A chafing loose-skinned large-veined
 hand with hand,—
 What steward but knows when stew-
 ardship earns its wage,
 May levy praise, anticipate the lord ?
 He reads, notes, lays the papers down
 at last,
 Muses, then takes a turn about the
 room ;
 Unclassps a huge tome in an antique
 guise,
 Primitive print and tongue half obso-
 lete,
 That stands him in diurnal stead ; opens
 page,
 Finds place where falls the passage to
 be conned
 According to an order long in use :
 And, as he comes upon the evening's
 chance,
 Starts somewhat, solemnizes straight
 his smile,
 Then reads aloud that portion first to
 last,
 And at the end lets flow his own
 thoughts forth
 Likewise aloud, for respite and relief,
 Till by the dreary relics of the west
 Wan through the half-moon window,
 all his light,
 He bows the head while the lips move
 in prayer,
 Writes some three brief lines, signs and
 seals the same,
 Tinkles a hand-bell, bids the obse-
 quious Sir
 Who puts foot presently o' the closet-
 sill
 He watched outside of, bear as super-
 scribed
 That mandate to the Governor forth-
 with :
 Then heaves abroad his cares in one
 good sigh,
 Traverses corridor with no arm's help,
 And so to sup as a clear conscience
 should.
 The manner of the judgment of the
 Pope.
 Then must speak Guido yet a second
 time,
 Satan's old saw being apt here—skin
 for skin,
 All a man hath that will he give for
 life.
 While life was graspable and gainable,
 free
 To bird-like buzz her wings round
 Guido's brow,
 Not much truth stiffened out the web
 of words
 He wove to catch her : when away she
 flew
 And death came, death's breath ri-
 velled up the lies,
 Left bare the metal thread, the fibre
 fine
 Of truth, i' the spinning : the true
 words come last.

How Guido, to another purpose quite,
Speaks and despairs, the last night of
his life,

In that New Prison by Castle Angelo
At the bridge-foot: the same man,
another voice.

On a stone bench in a close fetid cell,
Where the hot vapour of an agony,
Struck into drops on the cold wall,
runs down

Horrible worms made out of sweat and
tears—

There crouch, well-nigh to the knees in
dungeon-straw,

Lit by the sole lamp suffered for their
sake,

Two awe-struck figures, this a Car-
dinal,

That an Abate, both of old styled
friends

Of the part-man part-monster in the
midst,

So changed is Franceschini's gentle
blood.

The tiger-cat screams now, that whined
before,

That pried and tried and trod so gin-
gerly,

Till in its silkiness the trap-teeth join;
Then you know how the bristling fury
foams.

They listen, this wrapped in his folds
of red,

While his feet fumble for the filth be-
low;

The other, as beseems a stouter heart,
Working his best with beads and cross
to ban

The enemy that comes in like a flood
Spite of the standard set up, verily

And in no trope at all, against him
there:

For at the prison-gate, just a few steps
Outside, already, in the doubtful dawn,

Thither, from this side and from that,
slow sweep

And settle down in silence solidly,
Crow-wise, the frightful Brotherhood
of Death.

Black-hatted and black-hooded huddle
they,

Black rosaries a-dangling from each
waist;

So take they their grim station at the
door,

Torches alight and cross-bones-banner
spread,

And that gigantic Christ with open
arms,

Grounded. Nor lacks there aught but
that the group

Break forth, intone the lamentable
psalm,

"Out of the deeps, Lord, have I cried
to thee!"—

When inside, from the true profound,
a sign

Shall bear intelligence that the foe is
foiled,

Count Guido Franceschini has con-
fessed, [God.

And is absolved and reconciled with
Then they, intoning, may, begin their

march,
Make by the longest way for the People's
Square,

Carry the criminal to his crime's award:
A mob to cleave, a scaffolding to reach,

Two gallows and Mannaia crowning all.
How Guido made defence a second

time.

Finally, even as thus by step and step
I led you from the level of to-day

Up to the summit of so long ago,
Here, whence I point you the wide

prospect round—
Let me, by like steps, slope you back to

smooth,
Land you on mother-earth, no whit the

worse,
To feed o' the fat o' the furrow: free

to dwell,
Taste our time's better things pro-
fusely spread

For all who love the level, corn and
wine,

Much cattle and the many-folded fleece,
Shall not my friends go feast again on

sward,
Though cognisant of country in the

clouds
Higher than wistful eagle's horny eye

Ever unclosed for, 'mid ancestral crags,
When morning broke and Spring was

back once more,
And he died, heaven, save by his heart,

unreached?
Yet heaven my fancy lifts to, ladder-
like,—

As Jack reached, holpen of his bean-
stalk-rungs!

A novel country: I might make it
mine

By choosing which one aspect of the
 year
 Suited mood best, and putting solely
 that
 On panel somewhere in the House of
 Fame,
 Landscaping what I saved, not what I
 saw :
 —Might fix you, whether frost in
 goblin-time
 Started the moon with his abrupt
 bright laugh,
 Or, August's hair afloat in filmy fire,
 She fell, arms wide, face foremost on
 the world,
 Swooned there and so singed out the
 strength of things.
 Thus were abolished Spring and Au-
 tumn both,
 The land dwarfed to one likeness of the
 land,
 Life cramped corpse-fashion. Rather
 learn and love
 Each facet-flash of the revolving year!—
 Red, green and blue that whirl into a
 white,
 The variance now, the eventual unity,
 Which make the miracle. See it for
 yourselves, [alive!
 This man's act, changeable because
 Action now shrouds, now shows the
 informing thought ;
 Man, like a glass ball with a spark a-
 top,
 Out of the magic fire that lurks inside,
 Shows one tint at a time to take the eye :
 Which, let a finger touch the silent
 sleep,
 Shifted a hair's-breadth shoots you
 dark for bright,
 Suffuses bright with dark, and baffles so
 Your sentence absolute for shine or
 shade.
 Once set such orbs,—white styled,
 black stigmatized,—
 A-rolling, see them once on the other
 side
 Your good men and your bad men
 every one,
 From Guido Franceschini to Guy Faux,
 Oft would you rub your eyes and
 change your names.
 Such, British Public, ye *who like me*
 no'.
 (God love you!)—whom I yet have
 laboured for,
 Perchance more careful whoso runs
 may read
 Than erst when all, it seemed, could
 read who ran,—
 Perchance more careless whoso reads
 may praise
 Than late when he who praised and
 read and wrote
 Was apt to find himself the self-same
 me,—
 Such labour had such issue, so I wrought
 This arc, by furtherance of such alloy,
 And so, by one spirt, take away its
 trace
 Till, justifiably golden, rounds my ring.
 A ring without a posy, and that ring
 mine ?
 O lyric Love, half-angel and half-bird
 And all a wonder and a wild desire,—
 Boldest of hearts that ever braved the
 sun,
 Took sanctuary within the holier blue,
 And sang a kindred soul out to his
 face,—
 Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart—
 When the first summons from the
 darkling earth
 Reached thee amid thy chambers,
 blanched their blue,
 And bared them of the glory—to drop
 down,
 To toil for man, to suffer or to die,—
 This is the same voice : can thy soul
 know change ?
 Hail then, and hearken from the realms
 of help !
 Never may I commence my song, my
 due
 To God who best taught song by gift of
 thee,
 Except with bent head and beseeching
 hand—
 That still, despite the distance and the
 dark,
 What was, again may be ; some inter-
 change
 Of grace, some splendour once thy very
 thought,
 Some benediction anciently thy smile :
 —Never conclude, but raising hand
 and head
 Thither where eyes, that cannot reach,
 yet yearn
 For all hope, all sustainment, all re-
 ward,

Their utmost up and on,—so blessing
back
In those thy realms of help, that heaven
thy home,
Some whiteness which, I judge, thy
face makes proud,
Some wanness where, I think, thy foot
may fall!

II

HALF-ROME

WHAT, you, Sir, come too? (Just the
man I'd meet.)
Be ruled by me and have a care o' the
crowd:
This way, while fresh folk go and get
their gaze:
I'll tell you like a book and save your
shins.
Fie, what a roaring day we've had!
Whose fault?
Lorenzo in Lucina,—here's a church
To hold a crowd at need, accommodate
All comers from the Corso! If this
crush
Make not its priests ashamed of what
they show
For temple-room, don't prick them to
draw purse
And down with bricks and mortar, eke
us out
The beggarly transept with its bit of
apse
Into a decent space for Christian ease,
Why, to-day's lucky pearl is cast to
swine.
Listen and estimate the luck they've
had!
(The right man, and I hold him.)
Sir, do you see,
They laid both bodies in the church,
this morn
The first thing, on the chancel two steps
up,
Behind the little marble balustrade;
Disposed them, Pietro the old mur-
dered fool
To the right of the altar, and his
wretched wife
On the other side. In trying to count
stabs,
People supposed Violante showed the
most,
Till somebody explained us that mis-
take;
His wounds had been dealt out indiffer-
ent where,

But she took all her stabbings in the
face,
Since punished thus solely for honour's
sake,
Honoris causa, that's the proper term.
A delicacy there is, our gallants hold,
When you avenge your honour and
only then,
That you disfigure the subject, fray the
face,
Not just take life and end, in clownish
guise.
It was Violante gave the first offence,
Got therefore the conspicuous punish-
ment:
While Pietro, who helped merely, his
mere death
Answered the purpose, so his face went
free.
We fancied even, free as you please,
that face
Showed itself still intolerably wronged;
Was wrinkled over with resentment
yet,
Nor calm at all, as murdered faces use,
Once the worst ended: an indignant
air
O' the head there was—'tis said the
body turned
Round and away, rolled from Violante's
side
Where they had laid it loving-husband-
like.
If so, if corpses can be sensitive,
Why did not he roll right down altar-
step,
Roll on through nave, roll fairly out of
church,
Deprive Lorenzo of the spectacle,
Pay back thus the succession of
affronts
Whereto this church had served as
theatre?
For see: at that same altar where he
lies,
To that same inch of step, was brought
the babe
For blessing after baptism, and there
styled
Pompilia, and a string of names beside,
By his bad wife, some seventeen years
ago,
Who purchased her simply to palm on
him,
Flatter his dotage and defraud the
heirs.
Wait awhile! Also to this very step

Did this Violante, twelve years after-
 ward,
 Bring, the mock-mother, that child-
 cheat full-grown,
 Pompilia, in pursuance of her plot,
 And there brave God and man a second
 time
 By linking a new victim to the lie.
 There, having made a match unknown
 to him,
 She, still unknown to Pietro, tied the
 knot
 Which nothing cuts except this kind of
 knife ;
 Yes, made her daughter, as the girl
 was held,
 Marry a man, and honest man beside,
 And man of birth to boot,—clandestinely
 Because of this, because of that, be-
 cause
 O' the devil's will to work his worst for
 once,—
 Confident she could top her part at
 need
 And, when her husband must be told
 in turn,
 Ply the wife's trade, play off the sex's
 trick
 And, alternating worry with quiet
 qualms, [fool
 Bravado with submissiveness, quick
 Her Pietro into patience : so it proved.
 Ay, 'tis four years since man and wife
 they grew,
 This Guido Franceschini and this same
 Pompilia, foolishly thought, falsely
 declared
 A Comparini and the couple's child :
 Just at this altar where, beneath the
 piece
 Of Master Guido Reni, Christ on cross,
 Second to nought observable in Rome,
 That couple lie now, murdered yester-
 eve.
 Even the blind can see a providence
 here.

 From dawn till now that it is growing
 dusk,
 A multitude has flocked and filled the
 church,
 Coming and going, coming back again,
 Till to count crazed one. Rome was at
 the show.
 People climbed up the columns, fought
 for spikes
 O' the chapel-rail to perch themselves
 upon,
 Jumped over and so broke the wooden
 work
 Painted like porphyry to deceive the
 eye ;
 Serve the priests right ! The organ-
 loft was crammed,
 Women were fainting, no few fights
 ensued,
 In short, it was a show repaid your
 pains :
 For, though their room was scant
 undoubtedly,
 Yet they did manage matters, to be
 just,
 A little at this Lorenzo. Body o' me !
 I saw a body exposed once . . . never
 mind !
 Enough that here the bodies had their
 due.
 No stinginess in wax, a row all round,
 And one big taper at each head and
 foot.

 So, people pushed their way, and took
 their turn,
 Saw, threw their eyes up, crossed them-
 selves, gave place
 To pressure from behind, since all the
 world
 Knew the old pair, could talk the
 tragedy
 Over from first to last : Pompilia too,
 Those who had known her—what 't
 was worth to them !
 Guido's acquaintance was in less re-
 quest ;
 The Count had lounged somewhat too
 long in Rome,
 Made himself cheap ; with him were
 hand and glove
 Barbers and blear-eyed, as the ancient
 sings.
 Also he is alive and like to be :
 Had he considerably died,—aha !
 I jostled Luca Cini on his staff,
 Mute in the midst, the whole man one
 amaze,
 Staring amain and crossing brow and
 breast.
 "How now ?" asked I, "'Tis seventy
 years," quoth he,
 "Since I first saw, holding my father's
 hand,
 "Bodies set forth : a many have I
 seen,

" Yet all was poor to this I live and see.
 " Here the world's wickedness seals up
 the sum :
 " What with Molinos' doctrine and this
 deed,
 " Antichrist's surely come and dooms-
 day near.
 " May I depart in peace, I have seen
 my see."
 " Depart then," I advised, " nor block
 the road
 " For youngsters still behindhand with
 such sights !"
 " Why no," rejoins the venerable sire,
 " I know it 's horrid, hideous past be-
 lief,
 " Burdensome far beyond what eye
 can bear ;
 " But they do promise, when Pompilia
 dies
 " I' the course o' the day,—and she
 can't outlive night,—
 " They'll bring her body also to expose
 " Beside the parents, one, two, three a-
 breast ;
 " That were indeed a sight which, might
 I see,
 " I trust I should not last to see the
 like !"
 Whereat I bade the senior spare his
 shanks,
 Since doctors give her till to-night to
 live
 And tell us how the butchery happened.
 " Ah,
 " But you can't know !" sighs he, " I'll
 not despair :
 " Beside I'm useful at explaining
 things—
 " As, how the dagger laid there at the
 feet,
 " Caused the peculiar cuts ; I mind its
 make,
 " Triangular i' the blade, a Genoese,
 " Armed with those little hook-teeth
 on the edge
 " To open in the flesh nor shut again :
 " I like to teach a novice : I shall
 stay !"
 And stay he did, and stay be sure he
 will.
 A personage came by the private door
 At noon to have his look : I name no
 names :
 Well then, His Eminence the Cardinal,
 Whose servitor in honourable sort

Guido was once, the same who made
 the match,
 (Will you have the truth ?) whereof we
 see effect.
 No sooner whisper ran he was arrived
 Than up pops Curate Carlo, a brisk lad,
 Who never lets a good occasion slip,
 And volunteers improving the event.
 We looked he'd give the history's self
 some help,
 Treat us to how the wife's confession
 went
 (This morning she confessed her crime,
 we know)
 And, may be, throw in something of
 the Priest—
 If he's not ordered back, punished
 anew,
 The gallant, Caponsacchi, Lucifer
 I' the garden where Pompilia, Eve-like,
 lured
 Her Adam Guido to his fault and fall.
 Think you we got a sprig of speech
 akin
 To this from Carlo, with the Cardinal
 there ?
 Too wary, he was, too widely awake, I
 trow,
 He did the murder in a dozen words ;
 Then said that all such outrages crop
 forth [tares
 I' the course of nature, when Molinos'
 Are sown for wheat, flourish and choke
 the Church :
 So slid on to the abominable sect
 And the philosophic sin—we've heard
 all that,
 And the Cardinal too, (who book-made
 on the same)
 But, for the murder, left it where he
 found.
 Oh but he's quick, the Curate, minds
 his game !
 And, after all, we have the main o' the
 fact :
 Case could not well be simpler,—
 mapped, as it were,
 We follow the murder's maze from
 source to sea,
 By the red line, past mistake : one sees
 indeed
 Not only how all was and must have
 been,
 But cannot other than be to the end
 of time.
 Turn out here by the Ruspoli ! Do
 you hold

Guido was so prodigiously to blame?
A certain cousin of yours has told you
so?

Exactly! Here's a friend shall set
you right,

Let him but have the handsel of your
ear.

These wretched Comparini were once
gay

And galiard, of the modest middle
class:

Born in this quarter seventy years ago,
And married young, they lived the
accustomed life,

Citizens as they were of good repute:
And, childless, naturally took their ease
With only their two selves to care about
And use the wealth for: wealthy is the
word,

Since Pietro was possessed of house and
land—

And specially one house, when good
days were,

In Via Vittoria, the aspectable street
Where he lived mainly; but another
house

Of less pretension did he buy betimes,
The villa, meant for jaunts and jollity,
I' the Pauline district, to be private
there—

Just what puts murder in an enemy's
head.

Moreover,—and here's the worm i' the
core, the germ

Q' the rottenness and ruin which
arrived,—

He owned some usufruct, had moneys'
use

Lifelong, but to determine with his
life

In heirs' default: so, Pietro craved an
heir,

(The story always old and always new)
Shut his fool's-eyes fast on the visible
good

And wealth for certain, opened them
owl-wide

On fortune's sole piece of forgetfulness,
The child that should have been and
would not be.

Hence, seventeen years ago, conceive
his glee

When first Violante, 'twixt a smile and
a blush,

With touch of agitation proper too,

Announced that, spite of her unprom-
ising age,

The miracle would in time be manifest,
An heir's birth was to happen: and it
did.

Somehow or other,—how, all in good
time! [hear,—

By a trick, a sleight of hand you are to
A child was born, Pompilia, for his joy,
Plaything at once and prop, a fairy-
gift,

A saints' grace or, say, grant of the
good God,—

A fiddle-pin's end! What imbeciles
are we!

Look now: if some one could have
prophesied,

"For love of you, for liking to your
wife,

"I undertake to crush a snake I spy
"Settling itself i' the soft of both your
breasts.

"Give me yon babe to strangle pain-
lessly!

"She'll soar to the safe: you'll have
your crying out,

"Then sleep, then wake, then sleep,
then end your days

"In peace and plenty, mixed with
mild regret,

"Thirty years hence when Christmas
takes old folk"—

How had old Pietro sprung up, crossed
himself,

And kicked the conjurer! Whereas
you and I,

Being wise with after-wit, had clapped
our hands;

Nay, added, in the old fool's interest,
"Strangle the black-eyed babe, so far
so good,

"But on condition you relieve the man
"O' the wife and throttle him Violante
too—

"She is the mischief!"

We had hit the mark.
She, whose trick brought the babe into
the world,

She it was, when the babe was grown a
girl,

Judged a new trick should reinforce the
old,

Send vigour to the lie now somewhat
spent

By twelve years' service; lest Eve's
rule decline

Over this Adam of hers, whose cabbage-plot
 Throve dubiously since turned fools'-paradise,
 Spite of a nightingale on every stump.
 Pietro's estate was dwindling day by day,
 While he, rapt far above such mundane care,
 Crawled all-fours with his baby pick-a-back,
 Sat at serene cats'-cradle with his child,
 Or took the measured tallness, top to toe,
 Of what was grown a great girl twelve years old :
 Till sudden at the door a tap discreet,
 A visitor's premonitory cough,
 And poverty had reached him in her rounds.

This came when he was past the working-time,
 Had learned to dandle and forgot to dig,
 And who must but Violante cast about,
 Contrive and task that head of hers again ?
 She who had caught one fish, could make that catch
 A bigger still, in angler's policy :
 So, with an angler's mercy for the bait,
 Her minnow was set wriggling on its barb
 And tossed to the mid-stream ; that is, this grown girl
 With the great eyes and bounty of black hair
 And first crisp youth that tempts a jaded taste,
 Was whisked i' the way of a certain man, who snapped.

Count Guido Franceschini the Aretine
 Was head of an old noble house enough,
 Not over-rich, you can't have everything,
 But such a man as riches rub against,
 Readily stick to,—one with a right to them
 Born in the blood : 'twas in his very brow
 Always to knit itself against the world,
 So be beforehand when that stinted due
 Service and suit : the world ducks and defers.

As such folks do, he had come up to Rome
 To better his fortune, and, since many years,
 Was friend and follower of a cardinal ;
 Waiting the rather thus on providence,
 That a shrewd younger poorer brother yet,
 The Abate Paolo, a regular priest,
 Had long since tried his powers and found he swam
 With the deftest on the Galilean pool :
 But then he was a web-foot, free o' the wave,
 And no ambiguous dabchick hatched to strut,
 Humbled by any fond attempt to swim
 When fiercer fowl usurped his dunghill-top—
 A whole priest, Paolo, no mere piece of one
 Like Guido tacked thus to the Church's tail !
 Guido moreover, as the head o' the house,
 Claiming the main prize, not the lesser luck,
 The centre lily, no mere chickweed fringe.

He waited and learned waiting, thirty years ;
 Got promise, missed performance—what would you have ?
 No petty post rewards a nobleman
 For spending youth in splendid lackey-work,
 And there's concurrence for each rarer prize ;
 When that falls, rougher hand and readier foot
 Push aside Guido spite of his black looks.
 The end was, Guido, when the warning showed,
 The first white hair i' the glass, gave up the game,
 Determined on returning to his town,
 Making the best of bad incurable,
 Patching the old palace up and lingering there
 The customary life out with his kin,
 Where honour helps to spice the scanty bread.

Just as he trimmed his lap and girt his loins
 To go his journey and be wise at home,

In the right mood of disappointed
worth,
Who but Violante sudden spied her
prey
(Where was I with that angler-simile ?)
And threw her bait, Pompilia, where he
sulked—
A gleam i' the gloom !

What if he gained thus much,
Wrung out this sweet drop from the
bitter Past,
Bore off this rose-bud from the prickly
brake
To justify such torn clothes and
scratched hands,
And, after all, brought something back
from Rome ?
Would not a wife serve at Arezzo well
To light the dark house, lend a look of
youth
To the mother's face grown meagre, left
alone
And famished with the emptiness of
hope,
Old Donna Beatrice ? Wife you want
Would you play family-representative,
Carry you elder-brotherly, high and
right
O'er what may prove the natural petu-
lance
Of the third brother, younger, greedier
still,
Giolamo, also a fledgeling priest,
Beginning life in turn with callow beak
Agape for luck, no luck had stopped
and stilled.
Such were the pinks and greys about
the bait
Persuaded Guido gulp down hook and
all.

What constituted him so choice a
catch,
You question ? Past his prime and
poor beside ?
Ask that of any she who knows the
trade.
Why first, here was a nobleman with
friends,
A palace one might run to and be safe
When presently the threatened fate
should fall,
A big-browed master to block door-
way up,
Parley with people bent on pushing by
And praying the mild Pietro quick clear
scores :

Is birth a privilege and power or no ?
Also,—but judge of the result desired,
By the price paid and manner of the
sale.

The Count was made woo, win and
wed at once :

Asked, and was haled for answer, lest
the heat

Should cool, to San Lorenzo, one blind
eye,

And had Pompilia put into his arms
O' the sly there, by a hasty candle-
blink,

With sanction of some priest-con-
federate

Properly paid to make short work and
sure.

So did old Pietro's daughter change her
style

For Guido Franceschini's lady-wife
Ere Guido knew it well ; and why this
haste

And scramble and indecent secrecy ?

" Lest Pietro, all the while in ignorance,
" Should get to learn, gainsay and
break the match :

" His peevishness had promptly put
aside

" Such honour and refused the pro-
ferred boon,

" Pleased to become authoritative once.
" She remedied the wilful man's mis-
take—"

Did our discreet Violante. Rather say,
Thus did she, lest the object of her
game,

Guido the gulled one, give him but a
chance,

A moment's respite, time for thinking
twice,

Might count the cost before he sold
himself,

And try the clink of coin they paid him
with.

But passed, the bargain struck, the
business done,

Once the clandestine marriage over
thus,

All parties made performe the best o'
the fact ;

Pietro could play vast indignation off,
Be ignorant and astounded, dupe alike
At need, of wife, daughter and son-in-
law,

While Guido found himself in flagrant
fault,

Must e'en do suit and service, soothe,
 subdue
 A father not unreasonably chafed,
 Bring him to terms by paying son's
 devoir.
 Pleasant initiation !

The end, this :

Guido's broad back was saddled to bear
 all—

Pietro, Violante, and Pompilai too,—
 Three lots cast confidently in one lap,
 Three dead-weights with one arm to
 lift the three

Out of their limbo up to life again :
 The Roman household was to strike
 fresh root

In a new soil, graced with a novel name,
 Gilt with an alien glory, Aretine
 Henceforth and never Roman any
 more, [ran :

By treaty and engagement : thus it
 Pompilia's dowry for Pompilia's self
 As a thing of course—she paid her own
 expense ;

No loss nor gain there : but the couple,
 you see,

They, for their part, turned over first of
 all

Their fortune in its rags and rottenness
 To Guido, fusion and confusion, he
 And his with them and theirs,—what-
 ever rag

With a coin residuary fell on floor
 When Brother Paolo's energetic shake
 Should do the relics justice : since
 'twas thought,

Once vulnerable Pietro out of reach,
 That, left at Rome as representative,
 The Abate, backed by a potent patron
 here,

And otherwise with purple flushing him,
 Might play a good game with the
 creditor,

Make up a moiety which, great or small,
 Should go to the common stock—if
 anything,

Guido's, so far repayment of the cost
 About to be,—and if, as looked more
 like,

Nothing,—why, all the nobler cost
 were his

Who guaranteed, for better or for
 worse,

To Pietro and Violante, house and home,
 Kith and kin, with the pick of com-
 pany

And life o' the fat o' the land while life
 should last.

How say you to the bargain at first
 blush ?

Why did a middle-aged not-silly man
 Show himself thus besotted all at once?
 Quoth Solomon, one black eye does it
 all.

They went to Arezzo,—Pietro and his
 spouse,

With just the dusk o' the day of life to
 spend,

Eager to use the twilight, taste a treat,
 Enjoy for once with neither stay nor
 stint

The luxury of lord-and-lady-ship,
 And realise the stuff and nonsense long
 A-simmer in their noddles ; vent the
 fume [ceit

Born there and bred, the citizen's con-
 How fares nobility while crossing earth,
 What rampart or invisible body-guard
 Keeps off the taint of common life
 from such.

They had not fed for nothing on the
 tales

Of grandees who give banquets worthy
 Jove,

Spending gold as if Plutus paid a whim,
 Served with obeisances as when . . .
 what God ?

I'm at the end of my tether ; 'tis
 enough

You understand what they came
 primed to see :

While Guido who should minister the
 sight,

Stay all this qualmish greediness of soul
 With apples and with flagons—for his
 part,

Was set on life diverse as pole from
 pole :

Lust of the flesh, lust of the eye,—what
 else

Was he just now awake from, sick and
 sage,

After the very debauch they would be-
 gin ?—

Suppose such stuff and nonsense really
 were.

That bubble, they were bent on blow-
 ing big.

He had blown already till he burst his
 cheeks,

And hence found soapsuds bitter to the
 tongue.

- He hoped now to walk softly all his days
 In soberness of spirit, if haply so,
 Pinching and paring he might furnish
 forth
 A frugal board, bare sustenance, no
 more,
 Till times, that could not well grow
 worse, should mend.
- Thus minded then, two parties mean to
 meet
 And make each other happy. The
 first week,
 And fancy strikes fact and explodes in
 full.
- "This," shrieked the Comparini, "this
 the Count,
 "The palace, the signorial privilege,
 "The pomp and pageantry were
 promised us?
 "For this have we exchanged our
 liberty,
 "Our competence, our darling of a
 child?
 "To house as spectres in a sepulchre
 "Under this black stone heap, the
 street's disgrace,
 "Grimmest as that is of the gruesome
 town,
 "And here pick garbage on a pewter
 plate
 "Or cough at verjuice dripped from
 earthenware?
 "Oh Via Vittoria, oh the other place
 "I' the Pauline, did we give you up
 for this?
 "Where's the foregone housekeeping
 good and gay,
 "The neighbourliness, the companion-
 ship,
 "The treat and feast when holidays
 came round,
 "The daily feast that seemed no treat
 at all,
 "Called common by the uncommon
 fools we were!
 "Even the sun that used to shine at
 Rome,
 "Where is it? Robbed and starved
 and frozen too,
 "We will have justice, justice if there
 be!"
 Did not they shout, did not the town
 resound!
 Guido's old lady-mother Beatrice,
 Who since her husband, Count Tom-
 maso's death,
- Had held sole sway i' the house,—the
 doited crone
 Slow to acknowledge, curtsey and
 abdicate,—
 Was recognised of true novel type,
 Dragon and devil. His brother Giro-
 lamo
 Came next in order; priest was he?
 The worse!
 No way of winning him to leave his
 mumps
 And help the laugh against old ances-
 try
 And formal habits long since out of
 date,
 Letting his youth be patterned on the
 mode
 Approved of where Violante laid down
 law.
 Or did he brighten up by way of change?
 Dispose himself for affability?
 The malapert, too complaisant by half
 To the alarmed young novice of a
 bride!
 Let him go buzz, betake himself else-
 where
 Nor singe his fly-wings in the candle-
 flame!
- Four months' probation of this purga-
 tory,
 Dog-snap and cat-claw, curse and
 counterblast,
 The devil's self had been sick of his own
 din;
 And Pietro, after trumpeting huge
 wrongs
 At church and market-place, pillar and
 post,
 Square's corner, street's end, now the
 palace-step
 And now the wine-house bench—while,
 on her side,
 Violante up and down was voluble
 In whatsoever pair of ears would perk
 From goody, gossip, cater-cousin and
 sib,
 Curious to peep at the inside of things
 And catch in the act pretentious
 poverty
 At its wits' end to keep appearance up,
 Make both ends meet,—nothing the
 vulgar loves
 Like what this couple pitched them
 right and left,—
 Then, their worst done that way, they
 struck tent, marched:

—Renounced their share o' the bargain,
flung what dues
Guido was bound to pay, in Guido's face,
Left their hearts'-darling, treasure of
the twain
And so forth, the poor inexperienced
bride,
To her own devices, bade Arezzo rot
And the life signorial, and sought Rome
once more.

I see the comment ready on your lip,
"The better fortune, Guido's—free at
least
"By this defection of the foolish pair,
"He could begin make profit in some
sort
"Of the young bride and the new
quietness,
"Lead his own life now, henceforth
breathe unplagued."
Could he? You know the sex like
Guido's self.
Learn the Violante-nature!

Once in Rome,
By way of helping Guido lead such life,
Her first act to inaugurate return
Was, she got pricked in conscience:
Jubilee
Gave her the hint. Our Pope, as kind
as just,
Attained his eighty years, announced a
boon
Should make us bless the fact, held
Jubilee—
Short shrift, prompt pardon for the
light offence,
And no rough dealing with the regular
crime
So this occasion were not suffered slip—
Otherwise, sins commuted as before,
Without the least abatement in the
price.
Now, who had thought it? All this
while, it seems,
Our sage Violante had a sin of a sort
She must compound for now or not at
all:
Now be the ready riddance! She con-
fessed
Pompilia was a fable not a fact:
She never bore a child in her whole life.
Had this child been a changeling, that
were grace
In some degree, exchange is hardly
theft;

You take your stand on truth ere leap
your lie:
Here was all lie, no touch of truth at
all,
All the lie hers—not even Pietro guessed
He was as childless still as twelve years
since.
The babe had been a find i' the filth-
heap, Sir,
Catch from the kennel! There was
found at Rome,
Down in the deepest of our social dregs,
A woman who professed the wanton's
trade
Under the requisite thin coverture,
Communis meretrix and washer-wife:
The creature thus conditioned found
by chance
Motherhood like a jewel in the muck,
And straightway either trafficked with
her prize
Or listened to the tempter and let be,—
Made pact abolishing her place and
part
In womankind, beast-fellowship in-
deed—
She sold this babe eight months before
its birth
To our Violante, Pietro's honest spouse,
Well-famed and widely-instanced as
that crown
To the husband, virtue in a woman's
shape.
She it was, bought and paid for, passed
the thing
Off as the flesh and blood and child of
her
Despite the flagrant fifty years,—and
why?
Partly to please old Pietro, fill his cup
With wine at the late hour when lees
are left,
And send him from life's feast rejoic-
ingly,—
Partly to cheat the rightful heirs,
agape,
Each uncle's cousin's brother's son of
him,
For that same principal of the usufruct
It vexed him he must die and leave be-
hind.

Such was the sin had come to be con-
fessed.
Which of the tales, the first or last, was
true?
Did she so sin once, or, confessing now,

Sin for the first time? Either way
 you will.

One sees a reason for the cheat: one
 sees

A reason for a cheat in owning cheat
 Where no cheat had been. What of
 the revenge?

What prompted the contrition all at
 once, [slight?

Made the avowal easy, the shame
 Why, prove they but Pompilia not
 their child,

No child, no dowry; this, supposed
 their child,

Had claimed what this, shown alien to
 their blood,

Claimed nowise: Guido's claim was
 through his wife,

Null then and void with hers. The
 biter bit,

Do you see! For such repayment of
 the past,

One might conceive the penitential
 pair

Ready to bring their case before the
 courts,

Publish their infamy to all the world
 And, arm in arm, go chuckling thence
 content.

Is this your view? 'Twas Guido's
 anyhow

And colourable: he came forward
 then,

Protested in his very bride's behalf
 Against this lie and all it led to, least
 Of all the loss o' the dowry; no! From
 her

And him alike he would expunge the
 blot,

Erase the brand of such a bestial birth,
 Participate in no hideous heritage
 Gathered from the gutter to be gar-
 nered up

And glorified in a palace. Peter and
 Paul!

But that who likes may look upon the
 pair

Exposed in yonder church, and show
 his skill

By saying which is eye and which is
 mouth

Thro' those stabs thick and threefold,
 —but for that—

A strong word on the liars and their lie
 Might crave expression and obtain it,
 Sir!

—Though prematurely, since there's
 more to come,

More that will shake your confidence
 in things

Your cousin tells you,—may I be so
 bold?

This makes the first act of the farce,—
 anon

The stealing sombre element comes in
 Till all is black or blood-red in the piece.

Guido, thus made a laughing-stock
 abroad,

A proverb for the market-place at
 home,

Left alone with Pompilia now, this
 graft

So reputable on his ancient stock,
 This plague-seed set to fester his sound
 flesh,

What did the Count? Revenge him
 on his wife?

Unfasten at all risks to rid himself
 The noisome lazar-badge, fall foul of
 fate,

And, careless whether the poor rag was
 ware

O' the part it played, or helped unwittingly,
 Bid it go burn and leave his frayed
 flesh free?

Plainly, did Guido open both doors
 wide,

Spurn thence the cur-cast creature and
 clear scores

As man might, tempted in extreme like
 this?

No, birth and breeding, and compas-
 sion too

Saved her such scandal. She was
 young, he thought,

Not privy to the treason, punished most
 I' the proclamation of it; why make
 her

A party to the crime she suffered by?
 Then the black eyes were now her very
 own,

Not any more Violante's: let her live,
 Lose in a new air, under a new sun,
 The taint of the imputed parentage
 Truly or falsely, take no more the
 touch

Of Pietro and his partner anyhow!
 All might go well yet.

So she thought, herself,
 It seems, since what was her first act
 and deed

When news came how these kindly
 ones at Rome
 Had stripped her naked to amuse the
 world
 With spots here, spots there and spots
 everywhere ?
 —For I should tell you that they noised
 abroad
 Not merely the main scandal of her
 birth, [wide,
 But slanders written, printed, published
 Pamphlets which set forth all the
 pleasantry
 Of how the promised glory was a
 dream,
 The power a bubble and the wealth—
 why, dust.
 There was a picture, painted to the life,
 Of those rare doings, that superlative
 Initiation in magnificence
 Conferred on a poor Roman family
 By favour of Arezzo and her first
 And famousest, the Franceschini there.
 You had the Countship holding head
 aloft
 Bravely although bespattered, shifts
 and straits
 in keeping out o' the way o' the wheels
 o' the world,
 The comic of those home-contrivances
 When the old lady-mother's wit was
 taxed
 To find six clamorous mouths in food
 more real
 Than fruit plucked off the cobwebbed
 family-tree, [frame—
 Or acorns shed from its gilt mouldered
 Cold glories served up with three-pauls'
 worth' sauce.
 What, I ask,—when the drunkenness
 of hate
 Hiccuped return for hospitality,
 Befouled the table they had feasted on,
 Or say,—God knows I'll not prejudice
 the case,—
 Grievances thus distorted, magnified,
 Coloured by quarrel into calumny,—
 What side did our Pompilia first es-
 pouse ?
 Her first deliberate measure was, she
 wrote,
 Pricked by some loyal impulse, straight
 to Rome
 And her husband's brother the Abate
 there,
 Who, having managed to effect the
 match,
 Might take men's censure for its ill suc-
 cess.
 She made a clean breast also in her
 turn ;
 She qualified the couple handsomely !
 Since whose departure, hell, she said,
 was heaven,
 And the house, late distracted by their
 peals,
 Quiet as Carmel where the lilies live,
 Herself had oftentimes complained :
 but why ?
 All her complaints had been their
 prompting, tales
 Trumped up, devices to this very end.
 Their game had been to thwart her
 husband's love
 And cross his will, malign his words
 and ways,
 So reach this issue, furnish this pre-
 tence
 For impudent withdrawal from their
 bond,—
 Theft, indeed murder, since they meant
 no less
 Whose last injunction to her simple self
 Had been—what parents'-precept do
 you think ?
 That she should follow after with all
 speed,
 Fly from her husband's house clandestinely,
 [all
 Join them at Rome again, but first of
 Pick up a fresh companion in her flight,
 Putting so youth and beauty to fit use,
 Some gay, dare-devil, cloak-and-rapier
 spark
 Capable of adventure,—helped by
 whom
 She, some fine eve when lutes were in
 the air,
 Having put poison in the posset-cup,
 Laid hands on money, jewels and the
 like,
 And, to conceal the thing with more
 effect,
 By way of parting benediction too,
 Fired the house,—one would finish
 famously
 I' the tumult, slip out, scurry off and
 away
 And turn up merrily at home once
 more.
 Fact this, and not a dream o' the devil,
 Sir !
 And more than this, a fact none dare
 dispute,

Sin for the first time? Either way
you will.
One sees a reason for the cheat: one
sees
A reason for a cheat in owning cheat
Where no cheat had been. What of
the revenge?
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More that will shake
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Till all is black or blood
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Left alone with Pon-
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r, midway, twixt near
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ouge away time, live
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by
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t both and stay here
community, enroll
ith those good Con-
Those sinners saved, those Magda-
lens re-made,
"Accept their ministration, well be-
stow
"Her body and patiently possess her
soul,
"Until we see what better can be done.
"Last for the husband: if his tale
prove true,
"Well is he rid of two domestic
plagues—
"The wife that ailed, do whatsoever he
would,
"And friend of hers that undertook
the cure.
"See, what a double load we lift from
breast!
"Off he may go, return, resume old
Laugh at the priest here and Pom-
pilia there
"In limbo each and punished for their
pains,
"And grateful tell the inquiring neigh-
bourhood—
"In Rome, no wrong but has its
remedy."
The case was closed. Now, am I fair
or no
In what I utter? Do I state the facts,
Having forechosen a side? I prom-
ised you!
The Canon Caponsacchi, then, was sent
To change his garb, re-trim his tonsure,
tie
The clerky silk round, every plait cor-
rect,
Make the impressive entry on his place
Of relegation, thrill his Civita,
As Ovid, a like sufferer in the cause,
Planted a primrose-patch by Pontus:
where,
What with much culture of the sonnet-
stave
And converse with the aborigines,
Soft savagery of eyes unused to roll,
And hearts that all awry went pit-a-pat
And wanted setting right in charity,
What were a couple of years to whike
away?
Pompilia, as enjoined, betook herself
To the aforesaid Convertites, the sister-
hood
In Via Lungara, where the light ones
live,
Spin, pray, then sing like linnets o'er
the flax.

- " Pretence may this be and a cloak for
sin,
" And circumstances that concur i' the
close
" Hint as much, loudly—yet scarce
loud enough
" To drown the answer ' strange may
yet be true : '
" Innocence often looks like guiltiness.
" The accused declare that in thought,
word and deed,
" Innocent were they both from first to
last
" As male-babe haply laid by female-
babe
" At church on edge of the baptismal
font
" Together for a minute, perfect-pure.
" Difficult to believe, yet possible,
" As witness Joseph, the friend's
patron-saint.
" The night at the inn—there charity
nigh chokes
" Ere swallow what they both assever-
ate ;
" Though down the gullet faith may
feel it go,
" When mindful of what flight fatigued
the flesh
" Out of its faculty and fleshliness,
" Subdued it to the soul, as saints as-
sure :
" So long a flight necessitates a fall
" On the first bed, though in a lion's
den,
" And the first pillow, though the lion's
back :
" Difficult to believe, yet possible,
" Last come the letters' bundled beast-
liness—
" Authority repugns give glance to
twice,
" Turns head, and almost lets her whip-
lash fall ;
" Yet here a voice cries ' Respite ! '
from the clouds—
" The accused, both in a tale, protest,
disclaim,
" Abominate the horror : ' Not my
hand '
" Asserts the friend—' Nor mine '
chimes in the wife,
" ' Seeing I have no hand, nor write at
all.'
" Illiterate—for she goes on to ask,
" What if the friend did pen now verse
now prose,
- " Commend it to her notice now and
then ?
" 'Twas pearls to swine : she read no
more than wrote,
" And kept no more than read, for as
they fell
" She ever brushed the burr-like things
away,
" Or, better, burned them, quenched
the fire in smoke.
" As for this fardel, filth and foolish-
ness,
" She sees it now the first time : burn it
too !
" While for his part the friend vows
ignorance
" Alike of what bears his name and
bears hers :
" 'Tis forgery, a felon's masterpiece,
" And, as 'tis said the fox still finds the
stench,
" Home-manufacture and the hus-
band's work.
" Though he confesses, the ingenuous
friend,
" That certain missives, letters of a
sort,
" Flighty and feeble, which assigned
themselves
" To the wife, no less have fallen, far
too oft,
" In his path : wherefrom he under-
stood just this—
" That were they verily the lady's own,
" Why, she who penned them, since he
never saw [her,
" Save for one minute the mere face of
" Since never had there been the inter-
change
" Of word with word between them all
their life,
" Why, she must be the fondest of the
fraid,
" And fit, she for the ' *apage* ' he flung,
" Her letters for the flame they went
to feed.
" But, now he sees her face and hears
her speech,
" Much he repents him if, in fancy-freak
" For a moment the minutest measur-
able,
" He coupled her with the first flimsy
word
" O' the self-spun fabric some mean
spider-soul
" Furnished forth : stop his films and
stamp on him !

" Never was such a tangled knottiness,
 " But thus authority cuts the Gordian
 through,
 " And mark how her decision suits the
 need!
 " Here's troublesomeness, scandal on
 both sides,
 " Plenty of fault to find, no absolute
 crime:
 " Let each side own its fault and make
 amends!
 " What does a priest in cavalier's attire
 " Consorting publicly with vagrant
 wives
 " In quarters close as the confessional,
 " Though innocent of harm? 'Tis
 harm enough:
 " Let him pay it, and be relegate a good
 " Three years, to spend in some place
 not too far
 " Nor yet too near, midway, twixt near
 and far,
 " Rome and Arezzo,—Civita we choose,
 " Where he may lounge away time, live
 at large,
 " Find out the proper function of a
 priest,
 " Nowise an exile,—that were punish-
 ment,
 " But one our love thus keeps out of
 harm's way
 " Not more from the husband's anger
 than, mayhap
 " His own . . . say, indiscretion, way-
 wardness,
 " And wanderings when Easter eves
 grow warm.
 " For the wife,—well, our best step to
 take with her,
 " On her own showing, were to shift her
 root
 " From the old cold shade and unhappy
 soil
 " Into a generous ground that fronts
 the south: [late,
 " Where, since her callow soul, a-shiver
 " Craved simply warmth and called
 mere passers-by
 " To the rescue, she should have her
 fill of shine.
 " Do house and husband hinder and
 not help?
 " Why then, forget both and stay here
 at peace,
 " Come into our community, enroll
 " Herself along with those good Con-
 vertites,

" Those sinners saved, those Magda-
 lens re-made,
 " Accept their ministration, well be-
 stow
 " Her body and patiently possess her
 soul,
 " Until we see what better can be done.
 " Last for the husband: if his tale
 prove true,
 " Well is he rid of two domestic
 plagues—
 " The wife that ailed, do whatsoever he
 would,
 " And friend of hers that undertook
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 " Laugh at the priest here and Pom-
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 To change his garb, re-trim his tonsure,
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 The clerkly silk round, every plait cor-
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 And converse with the aborigines,
 Soft savagery of eyes unused to roll,
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 the flax.

" Anywhere, anyhow, out of my husband's house
 " Is heaven," cried she,—was therefore suited so.
 But for Count Guido Franceschini, he—
 The injured man thus righted—found no heaven
 I' the house when he returned there, I engage,
 Was welcomed by the city turned upside down
 In a chorus of inquiry. " What, back—you ?
 " And no wife ? Left her with the Penitents ?
 " Ah, being young and pretty, 'twere a shame
 " To have her whipped in public : leave the job
 " To the priests who understand ! Such priests as yours—
 " (Pontifex Maximus whipped Vestals once)
 " Our madcap Caponsacchi : think of him !
 " So, he fired up, showed fight and skill of fence ?
 " Ay, you drew also, but you did not fight !
 " The wiser, 'tis a word and a blow with him,
 " True Caponsacchi, of old Head-i'-the-Sack
 " That fought at Fiesole ere Florence was :
 " He had done enough, to firk you were too much.
 " And did the little lady menace you,
 " Make at your breast with your own harmless sword ?
 " The spitfire ! Well, thank God you're safe and sound,
 " Have kept the sixth commandment whether or no
 " The lady broke the seventh : I only wish
 " I were as saint-like, could contain me so.
 " I am a sinner, I fear I should have left [me !"
 " Sir Priest no nose-tip to turn up at
 " you, Sir, who listen but interpose no word,
 " Ask yourself, had you borne a baiting thus ?
 " Was it enough to make a wise man mad ?

Oh, but I'll have your verdict at the end !

Well, not enough, it seems : such mere hurt falls,
 Frets awhile, and aches long, then less and less,
 And so is done with. Such was not the scheme
 O' the pleasant Comparini : on Guido's wound
 Ever in due succession, drop by drop,
 Came slow distilment from the alembic here
 Set on to simmer by Canidian hate,
 Corrosives keeping the man's misery raw.
 First fire-drop,—when he thought to make the best
 O' the bad, to wring from out the sentence passed,
 Poor, pitiful, absurd although it were,
 Yet what might eke him out result enough
 And make it worth his while he had the right
 And not the wrong i' the matter judged at Rome.
 Inadequate her punishment, no less
 Pun'ished in some slight sort his wife had been ;
 Then, punished for adultery, what else ?
 On such admitted crime he thought to seize,
 And institute procedure in the courts
 Which cut corruption of this kind from man,
 Cast loose a wife proved loose and cast-away :
 He claimed in due form a divorce at least.
 This claim was met now by a counter-claim :
 Pompilia sought divorce from bed and board
 Of Guido, whose outrageous cruelty,
 Whose mother's malice and whose brother's hate
 Were just the white o' the charge, such dreadful depths
 Blackened its centre,—hints of worse than hate,
 Love from that brother, by that Guido's guile,
 That mother's prompting. Such reply was made,

So was the engine loaded, wound up,
sprung
On Guido, who received the bolt in
breast ;
But no less bore up, giddily perhaps.
He had the Abate Paolo still in Rome,
Brother and friend and fighter on his
side :
They rallied in a measure, met the foe
Manlike, joined battle in the public
courts,
As if to shame supine law from her
sloth :
And waiting her award, let beat the
while
Arezzo's banter, Rome's buffoonery,
On this ear and on that ear, deaf alike,
Safe from worse outrage. Let a scor-
pion nip,
And never mind till he contorts his
tail !
But there was sting i' the creature ;
thus it struck.
Guido had thought in his simplicity—
That lying declaration of remorse,
That story of the child which was no
child
And motherhood no motherhood at all,
—That even this sin might have its sort
of good
Inasmuch as no question could be
more,
Call it false, call the story true, no claim
Of further parentage pretended now :
The parents had abjured all right, at
least,
I' the woman still his wife : to plead
right now
Were to declare the abjuration false :
He was relieved from any fear hence-
forth
Their hands might touch, their breath
defile again
Pompilia with his name upon her yet.
Well, no : the next news was, Pom-
pilia's health
Demanded change after full three long
weeks
Spent in devotion with the Sisterhood,—
Rendering sojourn,—so the court
opined,—
Too irksome, since the convent's walls
were high
And windows narrow, nor was air
enough
Nor light enough, but all looked prison-
like.

The last thing which had come in the
court's head.
Propose a new expedient therefore,—
this !
She had demanded—had obtained in-
deed,
By intervention of whatever friends
Or perhaps lovers—(beauty in distress,
In one whose tale is the town-talk be-
side,
Never lacks friendship's arm about her
neck)—
Not freedom, scarce remitted penalty,
Solely the transfer to some private
place
Where better air, more light, new food
might be—
Incarcerated (call it, all the same)
At some sure friend's house she must
keep inside,
Be found in at requirement fast
enough.—
Domus pro carcere, in Roman style.
You keep the house i' the main, as most
men do [wise,
And all good women : but free other-
Should friends arrive, to lodge and
entertain.
And such a *domum*, such a dwelling-
place,
Having all Rome to choose from, where
chose she ?
What house obtained Pompilia's pre-
ference ?
Why, just the Comparini's—just, do
you mark,
Theirs who renounced all part and lot
in her
So long as Guido could be robbed there-
by,
And only fell back on relationship
And found their daughter safe and
sound again
So soon as that might stab him : yes,
the pair
Who, as I told you, first had baited
hook
With this poor gilded fly Pompilia-
thing,
Then caught the fish, pulled Guido to
the shore
And gutted him,—now found a further
use
For the bait, would trail the gauze wing
yet again
I' the way of what new swimmer passed
their stand.

They took Pompilia to their hiding-
place—
Not in the heart of Rome as formerly,
Under observance, subject to control—
But out o' the way,—or in the way,
who knows ?
That blind mute villa lurking by the
gate
At Via Paulina, not so hard to miss
By the honest eye, easy enough to find
In twilight by marauders: where per-
chance
Some muffled Caponsacchi might re-
pair,
Employ odd moments when he too tried
change,
Found that a friend's abode was pleas-
anter
Than relegation, penance and the rest.

Come, here's the last drop does its
worst to wound,
Here's Guido poisoned to the bone, you
say,
Your boasted still's full strain and
strength: not so!
Our master-squeeze from screw shall
bring to birth
The hoard i' the heart o' the toad, hell's
quintessence.
He learned the true convenience of the
change,
And why a convent wants the cheerful
hearts
And helpful hands which female straits
require, [gate,
When, in the blind mute villa by the
Pompilia—what? sang, danced, saw
company?
—Gave birth, Sir, to a child, his son
and heir,
Or Guido's heir and Caponsacchi's son.
I want your word now: what do you
say to this?
What would say little Arezzo and great
Rome,
And what did God say and the devil
say
One at each ear o' the man, the hus-
band, now
The father? Why, the overburdened
mind
Broke down, what was a brain became
a blaze.
In fury of the moment—(that first news
Fell on the Count among his vines, it
seems,

Doing his farm-work,)—why, he sum-
moned steward,
Called in the first four hard hands and
stout hearts
From field and furrow, poured forth his
appeal,
Not to Rome's law and gospel any
more,
But this clown with a mother or a wife,
That clodpole with a sister or a son:
And, whereas law and gospel held
their peace,
What wonder if the sticks and stones
cried out?

All five soon somehow found themselves
at Rome,
At the villa door: there was the warmth
and light—
The sense of life so just an inch inside—
Some angel must have whispered
"One more chance!"

He gave it: bade the others stand
aside:
Knocked at the door,—“Who is it
knocks?” cried one.
“I will make,” surely Guido's angel
said,
“One final essay, last experiment,
“Speak the word, name the name from
out all names
“Which, if,—as doubtless strong illu-
sions are,
“And strange disguisings whence even
truth seems false,
“And, for I am a man, I dare not do
“God's work until assured I see with
God,—
“If I should bring my lips to breathe
that name
“And they be innocent,—nay, by one
touch
“Of innocence redeemed from utter
guilt,—
“That name will bar the door and bid
fate pass.
“I will not say ‘It is a messenger,
“‘A neighbour, even a belated man,
“‘Much less your husband's friend,
your husband's self:’
“At such appeal the door is bound to
ope.
“But I will say”—here's rhetoric and
to spare!
Why, Sir, the stumbling-block is cursed
and kicked,

Block though it be; the name that
brought offence
Will bring offence: the burnt child
dreads the fire
Although that fire feed on a taper-wick
Which never left the altar nor singed
fly:
And had a harmless man tripped you
by chance,
How would you wait him, stand or
step aside,
When next you heard he rolled your
way? Enough.

"Giuseppe Caponsacchi!" Guido cried;
And open flew the door: enough again.
Vengeance, you know, burst, like a
mountain-wave
That holds a monster in it, over the
house,
And wiped its filthy four walls free
again
With a wash of hell-fire,—father,
mother, wife,
Killed them all, bathed his name clean
in their blood,
And, reeking so, was caught, his
friends and he,
Haled hither and imprisoned yester-
night
O' the day all this was.

Now the whole is known,
And how the old couple come to lie in
state
Though hacked to pieces,—never, the
expert say,
So thorough a study of stabbing—
while the wife
Viper-like, very difficult to slay,
Writhes still through every ring of her,
poor wretch,
At the Hospital hard by—survives,
we'll hope,
To somewhat purify her putrid soul
By full confession, make so much
amends
While time lasts; since at day's end
die she must.

For Caponsacchi,—why, they'll have
him here,
The hero of the adventure, who so fit
To tell it in the coming Carnival?
'Twill make the fortune of whate'er
saloon
Hears him recount, with helpful cheek,
and eye

Hotly indignant now, now dewy-
dimmed,
The incidents of flight, pursuit, sur-
prise,
Capture, with hints of kisses all be-
tween—
While Guido, the most unromantic
spouse,
No longer fit to laugh at since the blood
Gave the broad farce an all too brutal
air,
Why, he and those our luckless friends
of his
May tumble in the straw this bitter
day—
Laid by the heels i' the New Prison, I
hear,
To bide their trial, since trial, and for
the life,
Follows if but for form's sake: yes,
indeed!

But with a certain issue: no dispute,
"Try him," bids law: formalities
oblige:
But as to the issue,—look me in the
face!—
If the law thinks to find them guilty,
Sir, ^{[five,}
Master or men—touch one hair of the
Then I say in the name of all that's
left
Of honour in Rome, civility i' the world
Whereof Rome boasts herself the cen-
tral source,—
There's an end to all hope of justice
more.
Astræa's gone indeed, let hope go too!
Who is it dares impugn the natural
law?
Deny God's word "the faithless wife
shall die?"
What, are we blind? How can we fail
to see,
This crowd of miseries make the man a
mark,
Accumulate on one devoted head
For our example, yours and mine who
read
Its lesson thus—"Henceforward let
none dare
"Stand, like a natural in the public
way,
"Letting the very urchins twitch his
beard
"And tweak his nose, to earn a nick-
name so,

"Of the male-Grissel or the modern
 Job!"
 Had Guido, in the twinkling of an eye,
 Summed up the reckoning, promptly
 paid himself,
 That morning when he came up with
 the pair
 At the wayside inn,—exacted his just
 debt
 By aid of what first mattock, pitchfork,
 axe
 Came to hand in the helpful stable-
 yard,
 And with that axe, if providence so
 pleased,
 Cloven each head, by some Rolando-
 stroke,
 In one clean cut from crown to clavicle,
 —Slain the priest-gallant, the wife-
 paramour,
 Sticking, for all defence, in each skull's
 cleft
 The rhyme and reason of the stroke
 thus dealt,
 To wit, those letters and last evidence
 Of shame, each package in its proper
 place,—
 Bidding, who pitied, undistend the
 skulls,—
 I say, the world had praised the man.
 But no!
 That were too plain, too straight, too
 simply just!
 He hesitates, calls law forsooth to help.
 And law, distasteful to who calls in
 law
 When honour is beforehand and would
 serve,
 What wonder if law hesitate in turn,
 Plead her disuse to calls o' the kind,
 reply
 Smiling a little "'Tis yourself assess
 "The worth of what's lost, sum of
 damage done:
 "What you touched with so light a
 finger-tip,
 "You whose concern it was to grasp
 the thing,
 "Why must law gird herself and
 grapple with?
 "Law, alien to the actor whose warm
 blood
 "Asks heat from law whose veins run
 lukewarm milk,—
 "What you dealt lightly with, shall law
 make out
 "Heinous forsooth?"

Sir, what's the good of law
 In a case o' the kind? None, as she all
 but says.
 Calls in law when a neighbour breaks
 your fence,
 Cribs from your field, tampers with rent
 or lease,
 Touches the purse or pocket,—but
 woos your wife?
 No: take the old way trod when men
 were men!
 Guido preferred the new path,—for his
 pains,
 Stuck in a quagmire, floundered worse
 and worse
 Until he managed somehow scramble
 back
 Into the safe sure rutted road once
 more,
 Revenged his own wrong like a gentle-
 man.
 Once back 'mid the familiar prints, no
 doubt
 He made too rash amends for his first
 fault,
 Vaulted too loftily over what barred
 him late,
 And lit i' the mire again,—the common
 chance,
 The natural over-energy: the
 deed
 Maladroït yields three deaths instead
 of one.
 And one life left: for where's the
 Canon's corpse?
 All which is the worse for Guido, but,
 be frank—
 The better for you and me and all the
 world,
 Husbands of wives, especially ir
 Rome.
 The thing is put right, in the old place
 —ay,
 The rod hangs on its nail behind the
 door,
 Fresh from the brine: a matter I com-
 mend
 To the notice, during Carnival that's
 near,
 Of a certain what's-his-name and jack-
 anapes
 Somewhat too civil of eves with lute
 and song
 About a house here, where I keep a
 wife.
 (You, being his cousin, may go tell him
 so.)

III

THE OTHER HALF-ROME

ANOTHER day that finds her living yet,
 Little Pompilia, with the patient brow
 And lamentable smile on those poor
 lips,
 And, under the white hospital-array,
 A flower-like body, to frighten at a
 bruise
 You'd think, yet now, stabbed through
 and through again,
 Alive i' the ruins. 'T is a miracle.
 It seems that, when her husband struck
 her first,
 She prayed Madonna just that she
 might live
 So long as to confess and be absolved ;
 And whether it was that, all her sad life
 long,
 Never before successful in a prayer,
 This prayer rose with authority too
 dread,—
 Or whether, because earth was hell to
 her,
 By compensation, when the blackness
 broke
 She got one glimpse of quiet and the
 cool blue,
 To show her for a moment such things
 were,—
 Or else,—as the Augustinian Brother
 thinks,
 The friar who took confession from her
 lip,—
 When a probationary soul that moves
 From nobleness to nobleness, as she,
 Over the rough way of the world, suc-
 cumbs,
 Bloodies its last thorn with unflinching
 foot,
 The angels love to do their work be-
 times,
 Staunch some wounds here nor leave so
 much for God.
 Who knows? However it be, con-
 fessed, absolved,
 She lies, with overplus of life beside
 To speak and right herself from first to
 last,
 Right the friend also, lamb-pure, lion-
 brave,
 Care for the boy's concerns, to save the
 son
 From the sire, her two-weeks' infant
 orphaned thus,

And—with best smile of all reserved
 for him—
 Pardon that sire and husband from the
 heart.
 A miracle, so tell your Molinists !
 There she lies in the long white lazar-
 house.
 Rome has besieged, these two days,
 never doubt,
 Saint Anna's where she waits her death,
 to hear
 Though but the chink o' the bell, turn
 o' the hinge
 When the reluctant wicket opes at last,
 Lets in, on now this and now that pre-
 tence,
 Too many by half,—complain the men
 of art,—
 For a patient in such plight. The
 lawyers first
 Paid the due visit—justice must be
 done ;
 They took her witness, why the murder
 was ; [soul
 Then the priests followed properly,—a
 To shrive ; 't was Brother Celestine's
 own right,
 The same who noises thus her gifts
 abroad :
 But many more, who found they were
 old friends,
 Pushed in to have their stare and take
 their talk
 And go forth boasting of it and to boast.
 Old Monna Baldi chatters like a jay,
 Swears—but that, prematurely trundled
 out
 Just as she felt the benefit begin,
 The miracle was snapped up by some-
 body,—
 Her palsied limb 'gan prick and promise
 life
 At touch o' the bedclothes merely,—
 how much more
 Had she but brushed the body as she
 tried !
 Cavalier Carlo—well, there 's some ex-
 cuse
 For him—Maratta who paints Virgins
 so—
 He too must fee the porter and slip by
 With pencil cut and paper squared,
 and straight
 There was he figuring away at face—
 "A lovelier face is not in Rome,"
 cried he,

" Shaped like a peacock's egg, the pure
 as pearl,
 " That hatches you anon a snow-white
 chick."
 Then, oh that pair of eyes, that pend-
 ent hair,
 Black this, and black the other!
 Mighty fine—
 But nobody cared ask to paint the
 same,
 Nor grew a poet over hair and eyes
 Four little years ago when, ask and
 have,
 The woman who wakes all this rapture
 leaned
 Flower-like from out her window long
 enough,
 As much uncomplimented as uncropped
 By comers and goers in Via Vittoria:
 eh?
 'T is just a flower's fate: past parterre
 we trip,
 Till peradventure someone plucks our
 sleeve—
 " Yon blossom at the briar's end,
 that 's the rose
 " Two jealous people fought for yester-
 day
 " And killed each other: see, there 's
 undisturbed
 " A pretty pool at the root, of rival
 red!"
 Then cry we, " Ah, the perfect para-
 gon!"
 Then crave we, " Just one keepsake-
 leaf for us!"
 Truth lies between: there 's anyhow a
 child
 Of seventeen years, whether a flower or
 weed,
 Ruined: who did it shall account to
 Christ—
 Having no pity on the harmless life
 And gentle face and girlish form he
 found,
 And thus flings back: go practise if
 you please
 With men and women: leave a child
 alone
 For Christ's particular love's sake!—
 so I say.
 Somebody, at the bedside, said much
 more,
 Took on him to explain the secret cause
 O' the crime: quoth he, " Such crimes
 are very rife,
 " Explode nor make us wonder now-a-
 days,
 " Seeing that Antichrist disseminates
 " That doctrine of the Philosophic Sin:
 " Molinos' sect will soon make earth
 too hot!"
 " Nay," groaned the Augustinian,
 " what 's there new?
 " Crime will not fail to flare up from
 men's hearts
 " While hearts are men's and so born
 criminal;
 " Which one fact, always old yet ever
 new,
 " Accounts for so much crime that, for
 my part,
 " Molinos may go whistle to the wind
 " That waits outside a certain church,
 you know!"
 Though really it does seem as if she
 here,
 Pompilia, living so and dying thus,
 Has had undue experience how much
 crime
 A heart can hatch. Why was she
 made to learn
 —Not you, not I, not even Molinos'
 self—
 What Guido Franceschini's heart could
 hold?
 Thus saintshp is effected probably;
 No sparing saints the process!—which
 the more
 Tends to the reconciling us, no saints,
 To sinnership, immunity and all.
 For see now: Pietro and Violante's life
 Till seventeen years ago, all Rome
 might note
 And quote for happy—see the signs
 distinct
 Of happiness as we yon Triton's trump.
 What could they be but happy?—
 balanced so,
 Nor low i' the social scale nor yet too
 high,
 Nor poor nor richer than comports with
 ease,
 Nor bright and envied, nor obscure and
 scorned,
 Nor so young that their pleasures fell
 too thick,
 Nor old past catching pleasure when it
 fell,
 Nothing above, below the just degree,
 All at the mean where joy's components
 mix.

So again, in the couple's very souls
 You saw the adequate half with half to
 match,
 Each having and each lacking some-
 what, both
 Making a whole that had all and lacked
 nought ;
 The round and sound, in whose com-
 posure just
 The acquiescent and recipient side
 Was Pietro's, and the stirring striving
 one
 Violante's : both in union gave the due
 Quietude, enterprise, craving and con-
 tent,
 Which go to bodily health and peace of
 mind.
 But, as 't is said a body, rightly mixed,
 Each element in equipoise, would last
 Too long and live for ever,—accord-
 ingly
 Holds a germ—sand-grain weight too
 much i' the scale—
 Ordained to get predominance one day
 And so bring all to ruin and release,—
 Not otherwise a fatal germ lurked here :
 " With mortals much must go, but
 something stays ;
 " Nothing will stay of our so happy
 selves."
 Out of the very ripeness of Life's core
 A worm was bred—" Our life shall
 leave no fruit."
 Enough of bliss, they thought, could
 bliss bear seed,
 Yield its like, propagate a bliss in turn
 And keep the kind up ; not supplant
 themselves
 But put in evidence, record they were,
 Show them, when done with, i' the
 shape of a child.
 " 'T is in a child, man and wife grow
 complete,
 " One flesh : God says so : let him do
 his work !"
 Now, one reminder of this gnawing
 want,
 One special prick o' the maggot at the
 core
 Always befell when, as the day came
 round,
 A certain yearly sum,—our Pietro be-
 ing
 As the long name runs, an usufructu-
 ary,—
 Dropped in the common bag as interest

Of money, his till death, not afterward,
 Failing an heir : an heir would take
 and take,
 A child of theirs be wealthy in their
 place
 To nobody's hurt—the stranger else
 seized all.
 Prosperity rolled river-like and stopped,
 Making their mill go ; but when wheel
 wore out,
 The wave would find a space and sweep
 on free
 And, half-a-mile off, grind some neigh-
 bour's corn.
 Adam-like, Pietro sighed and said no
 more :
 Eve saw the apple was fair and good to
 taste,
 So, plucked it, having asked the snake
 advice.
 She told her husband God was merciful,
 And his and her prayer granted at the
 last :
 Let the old mill-stone moulder,—wheel
 unworn,
 Quartz from the quarry, shot into the
 stream
 Adroitly, should go bring grist as be-
 fore—
 Their house continued to them by an
 heir, [child.
 Their vacant heart replenished with a
 We have her own confession at full
 length
 Made in the first remorse : 't was Jubi-
 lee
 Pealed in the ear o' the conscience and
 it woke.
 She found she had offended God no
 doubt,
 So much was plain from what had hap-
 pened since,
 Misfortune on misfortune ; but she
 harmed
 No one i' the world, so far as she could
 see.
 The act had gladdened Pietro to the
 height,
 Her husband—God himself must glad-
 den so
 Or not at all—(thus much seems prob-
 able
 From the implicit faith, or rather say
 Stupid credulity of the foolish man
 Who swallowed such a tale nor strained
 a whit

" Shaped like a peacock's egg, the pure
as pearl,
" That hatches you anon a snow-white
chick."
Then, oh that pair of eyes, that pendent
hair,
Black this, and black the other!
Mighty fine—
But nobody cared ask to paint the
same,
Nor grew a poet over hair and eyes
Four little years ago when, ask and
have,
The woman who wakes all this rapture
leaned
Flower-like from out her window long
enough,
As much uncomplimented as uncropped
By comers and goers in Via Vittoria:
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'T is just a flower's fate: past parterre
we trip,
Till peradventure someone plucks our
sleeve—
" Yon blossom at the briar's end,
that 's the rose
" Two jealous people fought for yesterday
" And killed each other: see, there 's
undisturbed
" A pretty pool at the root, of rival
red!"
Then cry we, " Ah, the perfect para-
gon!"
Then crave we, " Just one keepsake-
leaf for us!"
Truth lies between: there 's anyhow a
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Of seventeen years, whether a flower or
weed,
Ruined: who did it shall account to
Christ—
Having no pity on the harmless life
And gentle face and girlish form he
found,
And thus flings back: go practise if
you please
With men and women: leave a child
alone
For Christ's particular love's sake!—
so I say.
Somebody, at the bedside, said much
more,
Took on him to explain the secret cause
O' the crime: quoth he, " Such crimes
are very rife,

" Explode no
days,
" Seeing that
" That doctriu
" Molinos' see
too hot!
" Nay," gro
" what 's
" Crime will r
men's hea
" While hearts
criminal;
" Which one f
new,
" Accounts for
my part,
" Molinos may
" That waits o
you know
Though really
here,
Pompilia, living
Has had undue
crime
A heart can h
made to lea
—Not you, not
self—
What Guido Fra
hold?
Thus saintship is
No sparing saint
the more
Tends to the rec
To sinnership, im
For see now: Pie
Till seventeen y
might note
And quote for
distinct
Of happiness as w
What could they
balanced so,
Nor low i' the soc
high,
Nor poor nor riche
ease,
Nor bright and env
scorned,
Nor so young that
too thick,
Nor old past catch
fell,
Nothing above, bel
All at the mean wh
mix.

he carried case before the
s;
e Violante, blushing to the
dic declaration of her fault,
ed her motherhood, and
ed the law
ose, frustrate of its effect
and redress the injury done.
was the disastrous conse-
ce,
ugh indisputably clear the
teen years are not so large a
e
i six witnesses survived in
e
the truth o' the tale)—yet,
nt wrong
Guido's; the first cheat had
ced on him;
i the pity that, deciding right,
to began the wrong would gain
good.
announced the story one long lie
o robbery and take revenge:
were no lie at all but truth,
both robbed the right heirs
shamed him
revenge to humanise the deed:
ad he done when first they
ned him thus?
t were too fantastic: losels
ing this world's-wonder of a lie,
l to blot him though it brand
nselves.
red Guido through the Abate's
th.
re the court, its customary
to the middle course the sage
t—
ed the child to be a changeling,
ood:
t the husband got no good
eby,
led the dowry, though not hers
ll,
et be his, if not by right then
e—
ment for the plain injustice
e.
a, that other contract, Pietro's
k.
Who could guess the plot
awed!
Nobody in the world, but
world.
Who knows—might
tion be
From any maid
Substitute for
Pretending to
self—
" Woman, contumacious
work
" And talking
me
" But what of
cheap!
" No honest
being
Tell it and
How were
all:

Renunciation of his own estate,
That must be cancelled—give him back
his goods,
He was no party to the cheat at least!
So ran the judgment:—whence a
prompt appeal
On both sides, seeing right is absolute.
Cried Pietro " Is Pompilia not my
child?
" Why give her my child's dowry? "
" Have I right
" To the dowry, why not to the rest
as well?"
Cried Guido, or cried Paolo in his name:
Till law said " Reinvestigate the case!"
And so the matter pends, unto this day.
Hence new disaster—that no outlet
seemed;
Whatever the fortune of the battle-
field,
No path whereby the fatal man might
march
Victorious, wreath on head and spoils
in hand,
And back turned full upon the baffled
foe,—
Nor cranny whence, desperate and dis-
graced,
Stripped to the skin, he might be fain
to crawl
Worm-like, and so away with his defeat
To other fortune and the novel prey.
No, he was pinned to the place there,
left alone
With his immense hate and, the soli-
tary
Subject to satisfy that hate, his wife.
" Cast her off? Turn her naked out of
doors?
" Easily said! But still the action
pends,
" Still dowry, principal and interest,
" Pietro's possessions, all I bargained
for,—
" Any good day, be but my friends
alert,
" May give them me if she continue
mine.
" Yet, keep her? Keep the puppet of
my foes—
" Her voice that lispeth me back their
curse—her eye
" They lend their leer of triumph to—
her lip
" I touch and taste their very fifth
upon?"

Replied the throne—" Ere God forgive
 the guilt,
 " Make man some restitution! Do
 your part!
 " The owners of your husband's heri-
 tage,
 " Barred thence by this pretended birth
 and heir,—
 " Tell them, the bar came so, is broken
 so,
 " Theirs be the due reversion as before!
 " Your husband who, no partner in the
 guilt,
 " Suffers the penalty, led blindfold thus
 " By love of what he thought his flesh
 and blood
 " To alienate his all in her behalf,—
 " Tell him too such contract is null and
 void! [law,
 " Last, he who personates your son-in-
 " Who with sealed eyes and stopped
 ears, tame and mute,
 " Took at your hand that bastard of a
 whore
 " You called your daughter and he
 calls his wife,—
 " Tell him, and bear the anger which is
 just!
 " Then, penance so performed, may par-
 don be!"

Who could gainsay this just and right
 award?

Nobody in the world: but, out o' the
 world,

Who knows?—might timid interven-
 tion be

From any makeshift of an angel-guide,
 Substitute for celestial guardianship,
 Pretending to take care of the girl's
 self:

" Woman, confessing crime is healthy
 work,

" And telling truth relieves a liar like
 you,

" But what of her my unconsidered
 charge?

" No thought of, while this good befalls
 yourself,

" What in the way of harm may find
 out her?"

No least thought, I assure you: truth
 being truth,

Tell it and shame the devil!

Said and done:

Home went *Violante* and disbosomed
 all:

And *Pietro* who, six months before,
 had borne

Word after word of such a piece of news
 Like so much cold steel inched through
 his breast-blade,

Now at its entry gave a leap for joy,
 As who—what did I say of one in a
 quag?—

Should catch a hand from heaven and
 spring thereby

Out of the mud, on ten toes stand once
 more.

" What? All that used to be, may be
 again?

" My money mine again, my house, my
 land,

" My chairs and tables, all mine ever-
 more?

" What, the girl's dowry never was the
 girl's,

" And, unpaid yet, is never now to pay?

" Then the girl's self, my pale *Pompilia*
 child

" That used to be my own with her
 great eyes—

" He who drove us forth, why should
 he keep her

" When proved as very a pauper as
 himself?

" Will she come back, with nothing
 changed at all,

" And laugh ' But how you dreamed
 uneasily!

" ' I saw the great drops stand here on
 your brow—

" ' Did I do wrong to wake you with a
 kiss?'

" No, indeed, darling! No, for wide
 awake

" I see another outburst of surprise:

" The lout-lord, bully-beggar, braggart-
 sneak,

" Who not content with cutting purse,
 crops ear—

" Assuredly it shall be salve to mine

" When this great news red-letters him,
 the rogue!

" Ay, let him taste the teeth o' the
 trap, this fox,

" Give us our lamb back, golden fleece
 and all,

" Let her creep in and warm our breasts
 again!

" What care for the past?—we three
 are our old selves,

" Who know now what the outside
 world is worth."

And so, he carried case before the courts ;
 And there Violante, blushing to the bone,
 Made public declaration of her fault,
 Renounced her motherhood, and prayed the law
 To interpose, frustrate of its effect
 Her folly, and redress the injury done.

Whereof was the disastrous consequence,
 That though indisputably clear the case
 (For thirteen years are not so large a lapse,
 And still six witnesses survived in Rome
 To prove the truth o' the tale)—yet, patent wrong
 Seemed Guido's ; the first cheat had chanced on him :
 Here was the pity that, deciding right,
 Those who began the wrong would gain the good.

Guido pronounced the story one long lie
 Lied to do robbery and take revenge :
 Or say it were no lie at all but truth,
 Then, it both robbed the right heirs and shamed him
 Without revenge to humanise the deed :
 What had he done when first they shamed him thus ?
 But that were too fantastic : losels they,
 And leasing this world's-wonder of a lie,
 They lied to blot him though it brand themselves.

So answered Guido through the Abate's mouth.
 Wherefore the court, its customary way,
 Inclined to the middle course the sage affect—
 They held the child to be a changeling,
 —good :
 But, lest the husband got no good thereby,
 They willed the dowry, though not hers at all,
 Should yet be his, if not by right then grace—
 Part-payment for the plain injustice done.
 But then, that other contract, Pietro's work,

Renunciation of his own estate,
 That must be cancelled—give him back his goods,
 He was no party to the cheat at least !
 So ran the judgment :—whence a prompt appeal

On both sides, seeing right is absolute.
 Cried Pietro " Is Pompilia not my child ?

" Why give her my child's dowry ?"—
 " Have I right

" To the dowry, why not to the rest as well ?"

Cried Guido, or cried Paolo in his name :
 Till law said " Reinvestigate the case !"
 And so the matter pends, unto this day.

Hence new disaster—that no outlet seemed ;

Whatever the fortune of the battle-field,

No path whereby the fatal man might march

Victorious, wreath on head and spoils in hand,

And back turned full upon the baffled foe,—

Nor cranny whence, desperate and disgraced,

Stripped to the skin, he might be fain to crawl

Worm-like, and so away with his defeat
 To other fortune and the novel prey.

No, he was pinned to the place there, left alone

With his immense hate and, the solitary

Subject to satisfy that hate, his wife.

" Cast her off ? Turn her naked out of doors ?

" Easily said ! But still the action pends,

" Still dowry, principal and interest,
 " Pietro's possessions, all I bargained for,—

" Any good day, be but my friends alert,

" May give them me if she continue mine.

" Yet, keep her ? Keep the puppet of my foes—

" Her voice that lips me back their curse—her eye

" They lend their leer of triumph to—her lip

" I touch and taste their very filth upon ?"

In short, he also took the middle course
Rome taught him—did at last excogitate

How he might keep the good and leave
the bad

Twined in revenge, yet extricable,—
nay

Make the very hate's eruption, very
rush

Of the unpent sluice of cruelty relieve
His heart first, then go fertilise his
field.

What if the girl-wife, tortured with due
care,

Should take, as though spontaneously,
the road

It were impolitic to thrust her on ?

If, goaded, she broke out in full revolt,
Followed her parents i' the face o' the
world,

Branded as runaway not castaway,
Self-sentenced and self-punished in the
act ?

So should the loathed form and de-
tested face

Launch themselves into hell and there
be lost

While he looked o'er the brink with
folded arms ;

So should the heaped-up shames go
shuddering back

O' the head o' the heapers, Pietro and
his wife,

And bury in the breakage three at once :
While Guido, left free, no one right re-
nounced,

Gain present, gain prospective, all the
gain,

None of the wife except her rights ab-
sorbed,

Should ask law what it was law paused
about—

If law were dubious still whose word to
take,

The husband's—dignified and derelict,
Or the wife's—the . . . what I tell you.
It should be.

Guido's first step was to take pen, in-
dite

A letter to the Abate,—not his own,
His wife's,—she should re-write, sign,
seal and send.

She liberally told the household-news,
Rejoiced her vile progenitors were fled,
Revealed their malice—how they even
laid

A last injunction on her, when they fled,
That she should forthwith find a para-
mour,

Complot with him to gather spoil
enough

Then burn the house down,—taking
previous care

To poison all its inmates overnight,—
And so companioned, so provisioned
too,

Follow to Rome and all join fortunes
gay.

This letter, traced in pencil-characters,
Guido as easily got retraced in ink

By his wife's pen, guided from end to
end,

As it had been just so much Hebrew,
Sir :

For why ? That wife could broider,
sing perhaps,

Pray certainly, but no more read than
write

This letter " which yet write she must,"
he said

" Being half courtesy and compliment,
" Half sisterliness : take the thing on
trust ! "

She had as readily re-traced the words
Of her own death-warrant,—in some
sort 't was so.

This letter the Abate in due course
Communicated to such curious souls

In Rome as needs must pry into the
cause

Of quarrel, why the Comparini fled
The Franceschini, whence the griev-
ance grew,

What the hubbub meant : " Nay,—see
the wife's own word,

" Authentic answer ! Tell detractors
too

" There 's a plan formed, a programme
figured here

" —Pray God no after-practice put to
proof,

" This letter cast no light upon, one
day ! "

So much for what should work in Rome,
—back now

To Arezzo, go on with the project there,
Forward the next step with as bold a
foot,

And plague Pompilia to the height, you
see !

Accordingly did Guido set himself
To worry up and down, across, around,

The woman, hemmed in by her household-bars,—
 Chased her about the coop of daily life,
 Having first stopped each outlet thence save one
 Which, like bird with a ferret in her haunt,
 She needs must seize as sole way of escape
 Though there was tied and twittering a decoy
 To seem as if it tempted,—just the plume
 O' the popinjay, and not a respite there
 From tooth and claw of something in the dark,—
 Giuseppe Caponsacchi.

Now begins

The tenebrific passage of the tale :
 How hold a light, display the cavern's gorge ?
 How, in this phase of the affair, show truth ?
 Here is the dying wife who smiles and says
 " So it was,—so it was not,—how it was,
 " I never knew nor ever care to know—"
 Till they all weep, physician, man of law,
 Even that poor old bit of battered brass
 Beaten out of all shape by the world's sins,
 Common utensil of the lazar-house—
 Confessor Celestino groans "'T is truth,
 " All truth and only truth: there 's something else,
 " Some presence in the room beside us all,
 " Something that every lie expires before :
 " No question she was pure from first to last."
 So far is well and helps us to believe :
 But beyond, she the helpless, simple-sweet
 Or silly-sooth, unskilled to break one blow
 At her good fame by putting finger forth,—
 How can she render service to the truth ?
 The bird says " So I fluttered where a springe

" Caught me : the springe did not contrive itself,
 " That I know : who contrived it, God forgive !"
 But we, who hear no voice and have dry eyes,
 Must ask,—we cannot else, absolving her,—
 How of the part played by that same decoy
 I' the catching, caging ? Was himself caught first ?
 We deal here with no innocent at least,
 No witless victim,—he's a man of the age
 And a priest beside,—persuade the mocking world
 Mere charity boiled over in this sort !
 He whose own safety too,—(the Pope 's apprised—
 Good-natured with the secular offence,
 The Pope looks grave on priesthood in a scrape)
 Our priest's own safety therefore, may-be life,
 Hangs on the issue ! You will find it hard.
 Guido is here to meet you with fixed foot,
 Stiff like a statue—" Leave what went before !
 " My wife fled i' the company of a priest,
 " Spent two days and two nights alone with him :
 " Leave what came after !" He is hard to throw.
 Moreover priests are merely flesh and blood ;
 When we get weakness, and no guilt beside,
 We have no such great ill-fortune : finding grey,
 We gladly call that white which might be black,
 Too used to the double-dye. So, if the priest
 Moved by Pompilia's youth and beauty, gave
 Way to the natural weakness. . . .
 Anyhow
 Here be facts, charactery ; what they spell
 Determine, and thence pick what sense you may !
 There was a certain young bold handsome priest
 Popular in the city, far and wide

Famed, for Arezzo's but a little place,
 As the best of good companions, gay
 and grave
 At the decent minute; settled in his
 stall,
 Or sideling, lute on lap, by lady's
 couch,
 Ever the courtly Canon: see in such
 A star shall climb apace and culminate,
 Have its due handbreadth of the heaven
 at Rome,
 Though meanwhile pausing on Arezzo's
 edge,
 As modest candle 'mid the mountain
 fog,
 To rub off redness and rusticity
 Ere it sweep chastened, gain the silver-
 sphere.
 Whether through Guido's absence or
 what else,
 This Caponsacchi, favourite of the
 town,
 Was yet no friend of his nor free o' the
 house,
 Though both moved in the regular
 magnates' march—
 Each must observe the other's tread
 and halt
 At church, saloon, theatre, house of
 play.
 Who could help noticing the husband's
 slouch,
 The black of his brow—or miss the
 news that buzzed
 Of how the little solitary wife
 Wept and looked out of window all day
 long?
 What need of minute search into such
 springs
 As start men, set o' the move?—
 machinery
 Old as earth, obvious as the noonday
 sun.
 Why, take men as they come,—an in-
 stance now,—
 Of all those who have simply gone to
 see
 Pompilia on her deathbed since four
 days,
 Half at the least are, call it how you
 please,
 In love with her—I don't except the
 priests
 Nor even the old confessor whose eyes
 run
 Over at what he styles his sister's
 voice

Who died so early and weaned him
 from the world.
 Well, had they viewed her ere the pale-
 ness pushed
 The last o' the red o' the rose away,
 while yet
 Some hand, adventurous 'twixt the
 wind and her,
 Might let the life run back and raise the
 flower
 Rich with reward up to the guardian's
 face,—
 Would they have kept that hand em-
 ployed the same
 At fumbling on with prayer-book
 pages? No!
 Men are men: why then need I say one
 word
 More than this, that our man the Canon
 here
 Saw, pitied, loved Pompilia?

This is why;

This startling why: that Caponsacchi's
 self—
 Whom foes and friends alike avouch,
 for good
 Or ill, a man of truth whate'er betide,
 Intrepid altogether, reckless too
 How his own fame and fortune, tossed
 to the winds,
 Suffer by any turn the adventure take,
 Nay, more—not thrusting, like a badge
 to hide,
 'Twixt shirt and skin a joy which
 shown is shame—
 But flirting flag-like i' the face o' the
 world [love
 This tell-tale kerchief, this conspicuous
 For the lady,—oh, called innocent love,
 I know!
 Only, such scarlet fiery innocence
 As most men would try muffle up in
 shade,—
 —'Tis strange then that this else
 abashless mouth
 Should yet maintain, for truth's sake
 which is God's,
 That it was not he made the first ad-
 vance,
 That, even ere word had passed be-
 tween the two,
 Pompilia penned him letters, passionate
 prayers,
 If not love, then so simulating love
 That he, no novice to the taste of
 thyme,

Turned from such over-luscious honey-clot
 At end o' the flower, and would not lend his lip
 Till . . . but the tale here frankly outsoars faith :
 There must be falsehood somewhere.
 For her part,
 Pompilia quietly constantly avers
 She never penned a letter in her life
 Nor to the Canon nor any other man,
 Being incompetent to write and read :
 Nor had she ever uttered word to him,
 nor he
 To her till that same evening when they met,
 She on her window-terrace, he beneath
 I' the public street, as was their fateful chance,
 And she adjured him in the name of God
 Find out and bring to pass where, when and how
 Escape with him to Rome might be contrived.
 Means found, plan laid and time fixed, she avers,
 And heart assured to heart in loyalty,
 All at an impulse ! All extemporised
 As in romance-books ! Is that credible ?
 Well, yes : as she avers this with calm mouth
 Dying, I do think "Credible !" you'd cry—
 Did not the priest's voice come to break the spell :
 They questioned him apart, as the custom is,
 When first the matter made a noise at Rome,
 And he, calm, constant then as she is now,
 For truth's sake did assert and reassert
 Those letters called him to her and he came,
 —Which damns the story credible otherwise.
 Why should this man,—mad to devote himself,
 Careless what comes of his own fame, the first,—
 Be studious thus to publish and declare
 Just what the lightest nature loves to hide,
 Nor screen a lady from the byword's laugh

"First spoke the lady, last the cavalier !"
 —I say,—why should the man tell truth just here
 When graceful lying meets such ready shrift ?
 Or is there a first moment for a priest
 As for a woman, when invaded shame
 Must have its first and last excuse to show ?
 Do both contrive love's entry in the mind
 Shall look, i' the manner of it, a surprise,
 That after, once the flag o' the fort hauled down,
 Effrontery may sink drawbridge, open gate,
 Welcome and entertain the conqueror ?
 Or what do you say to a touch of the devil's worst ?
 Can it be that the husband, he who wrote
 The letter to his brother I told you of,
 I' the name of her it meant to criminate,—
 What if he wrote those letters to the priest ?
 Further the priest says, when it first befell,
 This folly o' the letters, that he checked the flow,
 Put them back lightly each with its reply.
 Here again vexes new discrepancy :
 There never reached her eye a word from him ;
 He did write but she could not read—she could
 Burn what offended wifeness, womanhood, [her,
 So did burn : never bade him come to
 Yet when it proved he must come, let him come,
 And when he did come though uncalled, she spoke
 Prompt by an inspiration : thus it was.
 Will you go somewhat back to understand ?
 When first, pursuant to his plan, there sprung,
 Like an uncaged beast, Guido's cruelty
 On the weak shoulders of his wife, she cried
 To those whom law appoints resource for such,

The secular guardian,—that's the
 Governor,
 And the Archbishop,—that's the
 spiritual guide,
 And prayed them take the claws from
 out her flesh.
 Now, this is ever the ill consequence
 Of being noble, poor and difficult,
 Ungainly, yet too great to disregard,—
 That the born peers and friends heredi-
 tary
 Though disinclined to help from their
 own store
 The opprobrious wight, put penny in
 his poke
 From purse of theirs or leave the door
 ajar
 When he goes wistful by at dinner-
 time,—
 Yet, if his needs conduct him where
 they sit [That,
 Smugly in office, Judge This, Bishop
 Dispensers of the shine and shade o'
 the place—
 And if, the friend's door shut and purse
 undrawn,
 The potentate may find the office-hall
 Do as good service at no cost—give help
 By-the-bye, pay up traditional dues
 at once
 Just through a feather-weight too much
 i' the scale,
 A finger-tip forgot at the balance-
 tongue,—
 Why, only churls refuse, or Molinists.
 Thus when, in the first roughness of sur-
 prise
 At Guido's wolf-face whence the sheep-
 skin fell,
 The frightened couple, all bewildered,
 Rushed to the Governor,—who else
 rights wrong?
 Told him their tale of wrong and
 craved redress—
 Why, then the Governor woke up to
 the fact
 That Guido was a friend of old, poor
 Count!—
 So, promptly paid his tribute, promised
 the pair,
 Wholesome chastisement should soon
 cure their qualms
 Next time they came and prated and
 told lies:
 Which stopped all prating, sent them
 dumb to Rome.

Well, now it was Pompilia's turn to try:
 The troubles pressing on her, as I said,
 Three times she rushed, maddened by
 misery,
 To the other mighty man, sobbed out
 her prayer
 At footstool of the Archbishop—fast
 the friend
 Of her husband also! Oh, good friends
 of yore!
 So, the Archbishop, not to be outdone
 By the Governor, break custom more
 than he,
 Thrice bade the foolish woman stop her
 tongue,
 Unloosed her hands from harassing his
 gout,
 Coached her and carried her to the
 Count again,
 —His old friend should be master in
 his house,
 Rule his wife and correct her faults at
 need!
 Well, driven from post to pillar in this
 wise,
 She, as a last resource, betook herself
 To one, should be no family-friend at
 least,
 A simple friar o' the city; confessed to
 him,
 Then told how fierce temptation of re-
 lease
 By self-dealt death was busy with her
 soul,
 And urged that he put this in words,
 write plain
 For one who could not write, set down
 her prayer
 That Pietro and Violante, parent-like
 If somehow not her parents, should for
 love
 Come save her, pluck from out the flame
 the brand
 Themselves had thoughtlessly thrust in
 so deep
 To send gay-coloured sparkles up and
 cheer
 Their seat at the chimney-corner. The
 good friar
 Promised as much at the moment;
 but, alack,
 Night brings discretion: he was no
 one's friend,
 Yet presently found he could not turn
 about
 Nor take a step i' the case and fail to
 tread

On some one's toe who either was a friend,
 Or a friend's friend, or friend's friend
 thrice-removed,
 And woe to friar by whom offences
 come!
 So, the course being plain,—with a
 general sigh
 At matrimony the profound mistake,—
 He threw reluctantly the business up,
 Having his other penitents to mind.

If then, all outlets thus secured save
 one,
 At last she took to the open, stood and
 stared
 With her wan face to see where God
 might wait—
 And there found Caponsacchi wait as
 well
 For the precious something at perdition's
 edge,
 He only was predestinate to save,—
 And if they recognised in a critical flash
 From the zenith, each the other, her
 need of him,
 His need of . . . say, a woman to perish
 for,
 The regular way o' the world, yet break
 no vow,
 Do no harm save to himself,—if this
 were thus?
 How do you say? It were improbable;
 So is the legend of my patron-saint.

Anyhow, whether, as Guido states the
 case,
 Pompilia,—like a starving wretch i' the
 street
 Who stops and rifles the first passenger
 In the great right of an excessive
 wrong,—
 Did somehow call this stranger and he
 came,—
 Or whether the strange sudden inter-
 view
 Blazed as when star and star must needs
 go close
 Till each hurts each and there is loss in
 heaven—
 Whatever way in this strange world it
 was,—
 Pompilia and Caponsacchi met, in fine,
 She at her window, he i' the street be-
 neath,
 And understood each other at first
 look.

All was determined and performed at
 once.
 And on a certain April evening, late
 I' the month, this girl of sixteen, bride
 and wife
 Three years and over,—she who hither-
 to
 Had never taken twenty steps in Rome
 Beyond the church, pinned to her
 mother's gown,
 Nor, in Arezzo, knew her way through
 street
 Except what led to the Archbishop's
 door,—
 Such an one rose up in the dark, laid
 hand
 On what came first, clothes and a trin-
 ket or two,
 Belongings of her own in the old day,—
 Stole from the side o' the sleeping
 spouse—who knows? [slid
 Sleeping perhaps, silent for certain,—
 Ghost-like from great dark room to
 great dark room,
 In through the tapestries and out again
 And onward, unembarrassed as a fate,
 Descended staircase, gained last door
 of all,
 Sent it wide open at first push of palm,
 And there stood, first time, last and
 only time,
 At liberty, alone in the open street,—
 Unquestioned, unmolested found her-
 self
 At the city gate, by Caponsacchi's side,
 Hope there, joy there, life and all good
 again,
 The carriage there, the convoy there,
 light there
 Broadening into a full blaze at Rome
 And breaking small what long miles
 lay between;
 Up she sprang, in he followed, they
 were safe.

The husband quotes this for incredible,
 All of the story from first word to last:
 Sees the priest's hand throughout up-
 holding hers,
 Traces his foot to the alcove, that night,
 Whither and whence blindfold he knew
 the way,
 Proficient in all craft and stealthiness;
 And cites for proof a servant, eye that
 watched
 And ear that opened to purse secrets
 up,

A woman-spy,—suborned to give and take
 Letters and tokens, do the work of shame
 The more adroitly that herself, who helped
 Communion thus between a tainted pair,
 Had long since been a leper thick in spot,
 A common trull o' the town: she witnessed all,
 Helped many meetings, partings, took her wage
 And then told Guido the whole matter.
 Lies!
 The woman's life confutes her word,—her word
 Confutes itself: "Thus, thus and thus I lied."
 "And thus, no question, still you lie," we say.
 "Ay, but at last, e'en have it how you will,
 "Whatever the means, whatever the way, explodes
 "The consummation"—the accusers shriek:
 "Here is the wife avowedly found in flight,
 "And the companion of her flight, a priest;
 "She flies her husband, he the church his spouse:
 "What is this?"
 Wife and priest alike reply
 "This is the simple thing it claims to be,
 "A course we took for life and honour's sake,
 "Very strange, very justifiable."
 She says, "God put it in my head to fly,
 "As when the martin migrates: autumn claps
 "Her hands, cries 'Winter 's coming, will be here,
 "'Off with you ere the white teeth overtake!
 "'Flee!' So I fled: this friend was the warm day,
 "The south wind and whatever favours flight;
 "I took the favour, had the help, how else?
 "And so we did fly rapidly all night,

"All day, all night—a longer night—again,
 "And then another day, longest of days,
 "And all the while, whether we fled or stopped,
 "I scarce know how or why, one thought filled both,
 "'Fly and arrive!' So long as I found strength
 "I talked with my companion, told him much,
 "Knowing that he knew more, knew me, knew God
 "And God's disposal of me,—but the sense
 "O' the blessed flight absorbed me in the main,
 "And speech became mere talking through a sleep,
 "Till at the end of that last longest night
 "In a red daybreak, when we reached an inn
 "And my companion whispered 'Next stage—Rome!'
 "Sudden the weak flesh fell like piled-up cards,
 "All the frail fabric at a finger's touch,
 "And prostrate the poor soul too, and I said
 "'But though Count Guido were a furlong off,
 "'Just on me, I must stop and rest awhile!'
 "Then something like a white wave o' the sea
 "Broke o'er my brain and buried me in sleep
 "Blessedly, till it ebbed and left me loose,
 "And where was I found but on a strange bed
 "In a strange room like hell, roaring with noise,
 "Ruddy with flame, and filled with men, in front
 "Whom but the man you call my husband, ay—
 "Count Guido once more between heaven and me,
 "For there my heaven stood, my salvation, yes—
 "That Caponsacchi all my heaven of help,
 "Helpless himself, held prisoner in the hands

- " Of men who looked up in my husband's face
 " To take the fate thence he should signify,
 " Just as the way was at Arezzo : then,
 " Not for my sake but his who had helped me—
 " I sprang up, reached him with one bound, and seized
 " The sword o' the felon, trembling at his side,
 " Fit creature of a coward, unsheathed the thing
 " And would have pinned him through the poison-bag
 " To the wall and left him there to palpitate,
 " As you serve scorpions, but men interposed—
 " Disarmed me, gave his life to him again
 " That he might take mine and the other lives,
 " And he has done so. I submit myself ! "
 The priest says—oh, and in the main result
 The facts asseverate, he truly says,
 As to the very act and deed of him,
 However you mistrust the mind o' the man—
 The flight was just for flight's sake, no pretext
 For aught except to set Pompilia free :
 He says " I cite the husband's self's worst charge
 " In proof of my best word for both of us.
 " Be it conceded that so many times
 " We took our pleasure in his palace : then,
 " What need to fly at all ?—or flying no less,
 " What need to outrage the lips sick and white
 " Of a woman, and bring ruin down beside,
 " By halting when Rome lay one stage beyond ? "
 So does he vindicate Pompilia's fame,
 Confirm her story in all points but one—
 This ; that, so fleeing and so breathing forth
 Her last strength in the prayer to halt awhile,
 She makes confusion of the reddening white
- Which was the sunset when her strength gave way,
 And the next sunrise and its whitening red
 Which she revived in when her husband came :
 She mixes both times, morn and eve, in one,
 Having lived through a blank of night 'twixt each
 Though dead-asleep, unaware as a corpse,
 She on the bed above ; her friend below
 Watched in the doorway of the inn the while,
 Stood i' the red o' the morn, that she mistakes,
 In act to rouse and quicken the tardy crew
 And hurry out the horses, have the stage
 Over, the last league, reach Rome and be safe :
 When up came Guido.
 Guido's tale begins—
 How he and his whole household, drunk to death
 By some enchanted potion, popped drugs
 Plied by the wife, lay powerless in gross sleep
 And left the spoilers unimpeded way,
 Could not shake off their poison and pursue,
 Till noontide, then made shift to get on horse
 And did pursue : which means, he took his time,
 Pressed on no more than lingered after, step
 By step, just making sure o' the fugitives,
 Till at the nick of time, he saw his chance,
 Seized it, came up with and surprised the pair.
 How he must needs have gnawn lip and gnashed teeth,
 Taking successively at tower and town,
 Village and roadside, still the same report
 " Yes, such a pair arrived an hour ago,
 " Sat in the carriage just where your horse stands,
 " While we got horses ready,—turned deaf ear

A woman-spy,—suborned to give and take
Letters and tokens, do the work of shame
The more adroitly that herself, who helped
Communion thus between a tainted pair,
Had long since been a leper thick in spot,
A common trull o' the town : she witnessed all,
Helped many meetings, partings, took her wage
And then told Guido the whole matter.
Lies!
The woman's life confutes her word,—
her word
Confutes itself : " Thus, thus and thus
I lied."
" And thus, no question, still you lie,"
we say.

" Ay, but at last, e'en have it how you will,
" Whatever the means, whatever the way, explodes
" The consummation"—the accusers shriek :
" Here is the wife avowedly found in flight,
" And the companion of her flight, a priest ;
" She flies her husband, he the church his spouse :
" What is this ? "

Wife and priest alike reply
" This is the simple thing it claims to be,
" A course we took for life and honour's sake,
" Very strange, very justifiable."
She says, " God put it in my head to fly,
" As when the martin migrates : autumn claps
" Her hands, cries ' Winter 's coming, will be here,
" Off with you ere the white teeth overtake !
" Flee ! " So I fled : this friend was the warm day,
" The south wind and whatever favours flight ;
" I took the favour, had the help, how else ?
" And so we did fly rapidly all night,

" All a
" Anc
" Anc
" I s
" Fl
" I t
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" Ar
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" An
" Til
" In
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" Su
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" T
" F

With memory of the sorrow just at
end,—
She, happy in her parents' arms at
length
With the new blessing of the two weeks'
babe,—
How had that name's announcement
moved the wife ?
Or, as the other slanders circulate,
Were Caponsacchi no rare visitant
On nights and days whether safe be-
bour lured,
What bait had been ? the name to open
the door ?
The promise of a letter ? Strangled
guests
Have secret watchwords, private en-
trances :
The man's own self might have been
found inside
And all the scheme made frustrate by a
word.

No : but since Guido knew, some knew
so well,
The man had never since returned to
Rome
Nor seen the wife's face more than
villa's front,
So, could not be at hand to warn or
save,—
For that, he took this sure way to the
end.

" Come in," bade poor Violante cheer-
fully,
Drawing the door-bolt : that death
was the first,
Stabbed through and through. Pardon
close on her heels,
Set up a cry—" Let me confess my-
self !
" Grant but confession ! " Cold steel
was the grant.
Then came Pompilia's turn.

The noise o' the slaughter roused the
neighbourhood.
They had forgotten just the one thing
more
Which saves ? the circumstance, the
ticket towit
Which puts post-horses at a traveller's
use :
So, all on foot, desperate through the
dar
Reeled they like drunkards along open
road,

IV

TERTIUM QUID

TRUE, Excellency—as his Highness
says,
Though she 's not dead yet, she 's as
good as stretched
Symmetrical beside the other two ;
Though he 's not judged yet, he 's the
same as judged,
So do the facts abound and super-
abound :
And nothing hinders, now, we lift the
case
Out of the shade into the shine, allow
Qualified persons to pronounce at last,
Nay, edge in an authoritative word
Between this rabble's-brabble of dolts
and fools
Who make up reasonless unreasoning
Rome.
" Now for the Trial ! " they roar :
" the Trial to test
" The truth, weigh husband and weigh
wife alike
" 'T the scales of law, make one scale
kick the beam ! "
Law 's a machine from which, to please
the mob,
Truth the divinity must needs descend
And clear things at the play's fifth act
—aha !
Hammer into their noddles who was
who
And what was what. I tell the simple-
tons
" Could law be competent to such a
feat
" 'T were done already : what begins
next week
" Is end o' the Trial, last link of a chain
" Whereof the first was forged three
years ago
" When law addressed herself to set
wrong right,
" And proved so slow in taking the first
step
" That ever some new grievance,—tort,
retort,
" On one or the other side,—o'ertook
i' the game,
" Retarded sentence, till this deed of
death
" Is thrown in, as it were, last bale to
boat
" Crammed to the edge with cargo—or
passengers ?

With memory of the sorrow just at
 end,—
 She, happy in her parents' arms at
 length
 With the new blessing of the two weeks'
 babe,—
 How had that name's announcement
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 Or, as the other slanders circulate,
 Were Caponsacchi no rare visitant
 On nights and days whither safe har-
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 Have secret watchwords, private en-
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 The man's own self might have been
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 And all the scheme made frustrate by a
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 The man had never since returned to
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 For that, he took this sure way to the
 end.
 "Come in," bade poor Violante cheer-
 fully,
 Drawing the door-bolt: that death
 was the first,
 Stabbed through and through. Pietro,
 close on her heels,
 Set up a cry—"Let me confess my-
 self!
 "Grant but confession!" Cold steel
 was the grant.
 Then came Pompilia's turn.
 Then they escaped.
 The noise o' the slaughter roused the
 neighbourhood.
 They had forgotten just the one thing
 more
 Which saves i' the circumstance, the
 ticket towit
 Which puts post-horses at a traveller's
 use:
 So, all on foot, desperate through the
 dark
 Reeled they like drunkards along open
 road,
 Accomplished a prodigious twenty
 miles
 Homeward, and gained Baccano very
 near,
 Stumbled at last, deaf, dumb, blind
 through the feat,
 Into a grange and, one dead heap, slept
 there
 Till the pursuers hard upon their trace
 Reached them and took them, red from
 head to heel,
 And brought them to the prison where
 they lie.
 The couple were laid i' the church two
 days ago,
 And the wife lives yet by miracle.
 All is told.
 You hardly need ask what Count Guido
 says,
 Since something he must say. "I
 own the deed—"
 (He cannot choose,—but—) "I de-
 clare the same
 "Just and inevitable,—since no way
 else
 "Was left me, but by this of taking
 life,
 "To save my honour which is more
 than life.
 "I exercised a husband's rights." To
 which
 The answer is as prompt—"There was
 no fault
 "In any one o' the three to punish
 thus:
 "Neither i' the wife, who kept all faith
 to you,
 "Nor in the parents, whom yourself
 first duped,
 "Robbed and maltreated, then turned
 out of doors.
 "You wronged and they endured
 wrong; yours the fault.
 "Next, had endurance overpassed the
 mark
 "And turned resentment needing
 remedy,—
 "Nay, put the absurd impossible case,
 for once—
 "You were all blameless of the blame
 alleged
 "And they blameworthy where you fix
 all blame,
 "Still, why this violation of the law?
 "Yourself elected law should take its
 course,

" Avenge wrong, or show vengeance
not your right ;
" Why, only when the balance in law's
hand
" Trembles against you and inclines
the way
" O' the other party, do you make protest,
" Renounce arbitrament, flying out of
court,
" And crying ' Honour's hurt the sword
must cure ?'
" Aha, and so i' the middle of each suit
" Trying i' the courts,—and you had
three in play
" With an appeal to the Pope's self be-
side,—
" What, you may chop and change and
right your wrongs
" Leaving the law to lag as she thinks
fit ? "

That were too temptingly commodious,
Count !
One would have still a remedy in re-
serve
Should reach the safest oldest sinner,
you see !
One's honour forsooth ? Does that
take hurt alone
From the extreme outrage ? I who
have no wife,
Being yet sensitive in my degree
As Guido,—must discover hurt else-
where
Which, half compounded-for in days
gone by,
May profitably break out now afresh,
Need cure from my own expeditious
hands.
The lie that was, as it were, imputed me
When you objected to my contract's
clause,—
The theft as good as, one may say,
alleged, [Sir,
When you, co-heir in a will, excepted,
To my administration of effects,
—Aha, do you think law disposed of
these ?
My honour's touched and shall deal
death around !
Count, that were too commodious, I
repeat !
If any law be imperative on us all,
Of all are you the enemy : out with you
From the common light and air and
life of man !

IV

TERTIUM QUID

TRUE, Excellency—as his Highness
says,
Though she 's not dead yet, she 's as
good as stretched
Symmetrical beside the other two ;
Though he 's not judged yet, he 's the
same as judged,
So do the facts abound and super-
abound :
And nothing hinders, now, we lift the
case
Out of the shade into the shine, allow
Qualified persons to pronounce at last,
Nay, edge in an authoritative word
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and fools
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" Now for the Trial ! " they roar :
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wife alike
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the mob,
Truth the divinity must needs descend
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—aha !
Hammer into their noddles who was
who
And what was what. I tell the simple-
tons
" Could law be competent to such a
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i' the game,
" Retarded sentence, till this deed of
death
" Is thrown in, as it were, last bale to
boat
" Crammed to the edge with cargo—or
passengers ?

" " *Trecentos inseris : ohe, jam satis est !*
 " " *Huc appelle !*—passengers, the
 word must be."
 Long since, the boat was loaded to my
 eyes.
 To hear the rabble and brabble, you 'd
 call the case
 Fused and confused past human finding
 out.
 One calls the square round, t' other the
 round square—
 And pardonably in that first surprise
 O' the blood that fell and splashed the
 diagram :
 But now we 've used our eyes to the
 violent hue
 Can't we look through the crimson and
 trace lines ?
 It makes a man despair of history,
 Eusebius and the established fact—
 fig's end !
 Oh, give the fools their Trial, rattle
 away
 With the leash of lawyers, two on either
 side—
 One barks, one bites,—Masters Arc-
 angeli
 And Spreti,—that 's the husband's
 ultimate hope
 Against the Fisc and the other kind of
 Fisc,
 Bound to do barking for the wife : bow
 —wow ! [here
 Why, Excellency, we and his Highness
 Would settle the matter as sufficiently
 As ever will Advocate This and Fiscal
 That
 And Judge the Other, with even—a
 word and a wink—
 We well know who for ultimate arbiter.
 Let us beware o' the basset-table—lest
 We jog the elbow of Her Eminence,
 Jostle his cards,—he 'll rap you out
 a . . st !
 By the window-seat ! And here 's the
 Marquis too !
 Indulge me but a moment : if I fail
 —Favoured with such an audience,
 understand !—
 To set things right, why, class me with
 the mob
 As understander of the mind of man !
 The mob,—now, that 's just how the
 error comes !
 Bethink you that you have to deal
 with *plebs*,

The commonalty ; this is an episode
 In burgess-life,—why seek to aggran-
 dise,
 Idealise, denaturalise the class ?
 People talk just as if they had to do
 With a noble pair that . . Excellency,
 your ear !
 Stoop to me, Highness,—listen and
 look yourselves !
 This Pietro, this Violante, live their life
 At Rome in the easy way that 's far
 from worst
 Even for their betters,—themselves
 love themselves,
 Spend their own oil in feeding their
 own lamp
 That their own faces may grow bright
 thereby.
 They get to fifty and over : how 's the
 lamp ?
 Full to the depth o' the wick,—moneys
 so much ;
 And also with a remnant,—so much
 more
 Of moneys,—which there 's no con-
 suming now,
 But, when the wick shall moulder out
 some day,
 Failing fresh twist of tow to use up
 dregs,
 Will lie a prize for the passer-by,—to
 wit
 Anyone that can prove himself the
 heir,
 Seeing, the couple are wanting in a
 child :
 Meantime their wick swims in the safe
 broad bowl
 O' the middle rank,—not raised a bea-
 con's height
 For wind to ravage, nor swung till
 lamp graze ground
 As watchman's cresset, he pokes here
 and there,
 Going his rounds to probe the ruts i'
 the road
 Or fish the luck o' the puddle. Pietro's
 soul
 Was satisfied when crony smirked,
 " No wine
 " Like Pietro's, and he drinks it every
 day ! "
 His wife's heart swelled her bodice,
 joyed its fill
 When neighbours turned heads wist-
 fully at church,

Sighed at the load of lace that came to pray.
 Well, having got through fifty years of flare,
 They burn out so, indulge so their dear selves,
 That Pietro finds himself in debt at last,
 As he were any lordling of us all :
 And, for the dark begins to creep on day,
 Creditors grow uneasy, talk aside,
 Take counsel, then importune all at once.
 For if the good fat rosy careless man,
 Who has not laid a ducat by, decease—
 Let the lamp fall, no heir at hand to catch—
 Why, being childless, there 's a spilth i' the street
 O' the remnant, there 's a scramble for the dregs
 By the stranger : so, they grant him no long day
 But come in a body, clamour to be paid.
 What 's his resource ? He asks and straight obtains
 The customary largess, dole dealt out
 To, what we call our "poor dear shame-faced ones,"
 In secret once a month to spare the shame
 O' the slothful and the spendthrift,—pauper-saints
 The Pope puts meat i' the mouth of, ravens they,
 And Providence he—just what the mob admires !
 That is, instead of putting a prompt foot
 On selfish worthless human slugs whose slime
 Has failed to lubricate their path in life,
 Why, the Pope picks the first ripe fruit that falls
 And gracious puts it in the vermin's way.
 Pietro could never save a dollar ?
 Straight
 He must be subsidised at our expense :
 And for his wife—the harmless household sheep
 One ought not to see harassed in her age—
 Judge, by the way she bore adversity,

O' the patient nature you ask pity for !
 How long, now, would the roughest marketman,
 Handling the creatures huddled to the knife,
 Harass a mutton ere she made a mouth
 Or menaced biting ? Yet the poor sheep here,
 Violante, the old innocent burgess-wife,
 In her first difficulty showed great teeth
 Fit to crunch up and swallow a good round crime.
 She meditates the tenure of the Trust,
Fidei commissum is the lawyer-phrase,
 These funds that only want an heir to take—
 Goes o'er the gamut o' the creditor's cry
 By semitones from whine to snarl high up
 And growl down low, one scale in sundry keys,—
 Pauses with a little compunction for the face
 Of Pietro frustrate of its ancient cheer,—
 Never a bottle now for friend at need,—
 Comes to a stop on her own frittered lace
 And neighbourly condolences thereat,
 Then makes her mind up, sees the thing to do :
 And so, deliberately snaps house-book clasp,
 Posts off to vespers, missal beneath arm,
 Passes the proper San Lorenzo by,
 Dives down a little lane to the left, is lost
 In a labyrinth of dwellings best unnamed,
 Selects a certain blind one, black at base,
 Blinking at top,—the sign of we know what,—
 One candle in a casement set to wink
 Streetward, do service to no shrine inside,—
 Mounts thither by the filthy flight of stairs,
 Holding the cord by the wall, to the tip-top,
 Gropes for the door i' the dark, ajar of course,
 Raps, opens, enters in : up starts a thing
 Naked as needs be—"What, you rogue, 't is you ?

" Back,—how can I have taken a
 farthing yet ?
 " Mercy on me, poor sinner that I am !
 " Here's . . . why, I took you for Ma-
 donna's self
 " With all that sudden swirl of silk i'
 the place !
 " What may your pleasure be, my
 bonny dame ? "
 Your Excellency supplies aught left
 obscure ?
 One of those women that abound in
 Rome,
 Whose needs oblige them eke out one
 poor trade
 By another vile one : her ostensible
 work
 Was washing clothes, out in the open air
 At the cistern by Citorio ; but true
 trade—
 Whispering to idlers when they stopped
 and praised
 The antles she let liberally shine
 In kneeling at the slab by the fountain-
 side,
 That there was plenty more to criticise
 At home, that eve, i' the house where
 candle blinked
 Decorously above, and all was done
 I' the holy fear of God and cheap be-
 side.
 Violante, now, had seen this woman
 wash,
 Noticed and envied her propitious
 shape,
 Tracked her home to her house-top,
 noted too,
 And now was come to tempt her and
 propose
 A bargain far more shameful than the
 first
 Which trafficked her virginity away
 For a melon and three pauls at twelve
 years old.
 Five minutes' talk with this poor child
 of Eve,
 Struck was the bargain, business at an
 end—
 " Then, six months hence, that person
 whom you trust,
 " Comes, fetches whatsoever babe it be ;
 " I keep the price and secret, you the
 babe,
 " Paying beside for mass to make all
 straight :
 " Meantime, I pouch the earnest-
 money-piece,"

Down stairs again goes fumbling by the
 rope
 Violante, triumphing in a flourish of fire
 From her own brain, self-lit by such
 success,—
 Gains church in time for the "*Magni-
 ficat*"
 And gives forth " My reproof is taken
 away,
 " And blessed shall mankind proclaim
 me now,"
 So that the officiating priest turns
 round
 To see who proffers the obstreperous
 praise :
 Then home to Pietro, the enraptured—
 much
 But puzzled—more when told the won-
 drous news—
 How orisons and works of charity,
 (Beside that pair of pinners and a coif
 Birth-day surprise last Wednesday was
 five weeks)
 Had borne fruit in the Autumn of his
 life,—
 They, or the Orvieto in a double dose.
 Anyhow, she must keep house next six
 months,
 Lie on the settle, avoid the three-legged
 stool,
 And, chiefly, not be crossed in wish or
 whim,
 And the result was like to be an heir.
 Accordingly, when time was come
 about,
 He found himself the sire indeed of this
 Francesca Vittoria Pompilia and the
 rest
 O' the names whereby he sealed her his
 next day.
 A crime complete in its way is here, I
 hope ?
 Lies to God, lies to man, every way lies
 To nature and civility and the mode :
 Flat robbery of the proper heirs thus
 foiled
 O' the due succession,—and, what fol-
 lowed thence,
 Robbery of God, through the confes-
 sor's ear
 Debarred the most noteworthy inci-
 dent
 When all else done and undone twelve-
 month through
 Was put in evidence at Easter-time.
 All other peccadillos!—but this one

To the priest who comes next day to
dine with us ?

'T were inexpedient : decency forbade.

Is so far clear ? You know Violante
now,

Compute her capability of crime

By this authentic instance ? Black
hard cold

Crime like a stone you kick up with
your foot

I' the middle of a field ?

I thought as much.

But now, a question,—how long does it
lie,

The bad and barren bit of stuff you
kick,

Before encroached on and encompassed
round

With minute moss, weed, wild-flower
—made alive

By worm, and fly, and foot of the free
bird ?

Your Highness,—healthy minds let by-
gones be,

Leave old crimes to grow young and
virtuous-like

I' the sun and air ; so time treats ugly
deeds :

They take the natural blessing of all
change.

There was the joy o' the husband silly-
sooth,

The softening of the wife's old wicked
heart,

Virtues to right and left, profusely paid
If so they might compensate the saved
sin.

And then the sudden existence, dewy-
dear,

O' the rose above the dungheap, the
pure child

As good as new created, since with-
drawn

From the horror of the pre-appointed
lot

With the unknown father and the
mother known

Too well,—some fourteen years of
squalid youth,

And then libertinage, disease, the
grave—

Hell in life here, hereafter life in hell :
Look at that horror and this soft re-
pose !

Why, moralist, the sin has saved a
soul !

Then, even the palpable grievance to
the heirs—

'Faith this was no frank setting hand
to throat

And robbing a man, but . . . Excel-
lency, by your leave,

How did you get that marvel of a gem,
The sapphire with the Graces grand
and Greek ?

The story is, stooping to pick a stone
From the pathway through a vine-
yard—no-man's-land—

To pelt a sparrow with, you chanced
on this :

Why now, do those five clowns o' the
family

O' the vinedresser digest their porridge
worse

That not one keeps it in his goatskin
pouch

To do flints'-service with the tinder-
box ?

Don't cheat me, don't cheat you,
don't cheat a friend !

But are you so hard on who jostles just
A stranger with no natural sort of
claim

To the havings and the holdings (here's
the point)

Unless by misadventure, and defect
Of that which ought to be—nay,

which there 's none

Would dare so much as wish to profit
by—

Since who dares put in just so many
" May Pietro fail to have a child, please
God !

" So shall his house and goods belong
to me,

" The sooner that his heart will pine
betimes ? "

Well then, God don't please, nor his
heart shall pine !

Because he has a child at last, you see,
Or selfsame thing as though a child it
were,

He thinks, whose sole concern it is to
think :

If he accepts it why should you demur ?

Moreover, say that certain sin there
seem,

The proper process of unsinning sin
Is to begin well-doing somehow else.

Pietro,—remember, with no sin at all
I' the substitution,—why, this gift of
God

Flung in his lap from over Paradise
 Steadied him in a moment, set him
 straight
 On the good path he had been straying
 from.
 Henceforward no more wilfulness and
 waste,
 Cuppings, carousings,—these a sponge
 wiped out.
 All sort of self-denial was easy now
 For the child's sake, the chatelaine to
 be,
 Who must want much and might want
 who knows what ?
 And so, the debts were paid, habits re-
 formed,
 Expense curtailed, the dowry set to
 grow.
 As for the wife,—I said, hers the whole
 sin :
 So, hers the exemplary penance. 'T
 was a text
 Whereon folk preached and praised,
 the district through :
 " Oh, make us happy and you make us
 good !
 " It all comes of God giving her a
 child :
 " Such graces follow God's best earthly
 gift !"
 Here you put by my guard, pass to my
 heart
 By the home-thrust—" There 's a lie
 at base of all." [no,
 Why, thou exact Prince, is it a pearl or
 Yon globe upon the Principessa's neck?
 That great round glory of pellucid stuff,
 A fish secreted round a grain of grit !
 Do you call it worthless for the worth-
 less core ?
 (She don't, who well knows what she
 changed for it !)
 So, to our brace of burgesses again !
 You see so far i' the story, who was
 right,
 Who wrong, who neither, don't you ?
 What, you don't ?
 Eh ? Well, admit there 's somewhat
 dark i' the case,
 Let 's on—the rest shall clear, I pro-
 mise you.
 Leap over a dozen years: you find,
 these passed,
 An old good easy creditable sire,
 A careful housewife's beaming bustling
 face,

Both wrapped up in the love of their
 one child,
 The strange tall pale beautiful creature
 grown
 Lily-like out o' the cleft i' the sun-smit
 rock
 To bow its white miraculous birth of
 buds
 I' the way of wandering Joseph and his
 spouse,—
 So painters fancy: here it was a fact.
 And this their lily,—could they but
 transplant
 And set in vase to stand by Solomon's
 porch
 'Twixt lion and lion !—this Pompilia of
 theirs,
 Could they see worthily married, well
 bestowed
 In house and home ! And why despair
 of this
 With Rome to choose from, save the
 topmost rank ?
 Themselves would help the choice with
 heart and soul, [heap
 Throw their late savings in a common
 Should go with the dowry, to be fol-
 lowed in time
 By the heritage legitimately hers :
 And when such paragon was found and
 fixed,
 Why, they might chant their "*Nunc
 dimittas*" straight.
 Indeed the prize was simply full to a
 fault ;
 Exorbitant for the suitor they should
 seek,
 And social class to choose among, these
 cits.
 Yet there 's a latitude: exceptional
 white
 Amid the general brown o' the species,
 lurks
 A burgess nearly an aristocrat,
 Legitimately in reach: look out for
 him !
 What banker, merchant, has seen bet-
 ter days,
 What second-rate painter a-pushing up,
 Poet a-slipping down, shall bid the best
 For this young beauty with the thump-
 ing purse ?
 Alack, had it been but one of such as
 these
 So like the real thing they may pass for
 it,

All had gone well ! Unluckily fate must
 needs
 It proved to be the impossible thing
 itself ;
 The truth and not the sham : hence
 ruin to them all.

 For, Guido Franceschini was the head
 Of an old family in Arezzo, old
 To that degree they could afford be
 poor
 Better than most : the case is common
 too.
 Out of the vast door 'scutcheoned
 overhead,
 Creeps out a serving-man on Saturdays
 To cater for the week,—turns up anon
 I' the market, chaffering for the lamb's
 least leg,
 Or the quarter-fowl, less entrails, claws
 and comb :
 Then back again with prize,—a liver
 begged
 Into the bargain, gizzard overlooked,—
 He 's mincing these to give the beans a
 taste,
 When, at your knock, he leaves the
 simmering soup,
 Waits on the curious stranger-visitant,
 Napkin in half-wiped hand, to show
 the rooms,
 Point pictures out have hung their
 hundred years,
 " Priceless," he tells you,—puts in his
 place at once
 The man of money : yes, you 're
 banker-king
 Or merchant-kaiser, wallow in your
 wealth
 While patron, the house-master, can't
 afford
 To stop our ceiling-hole that rain so
 rots—
 But he 's the man of mark, and there 's
 his shield,
 And yonder 's the famed Rafael, first
 in kind,
 The painter painted for his grand-
 father—
 You have paid a paul to see : " Good
 morning, Sir ! "
 Such is the law of compensation. Here
 The poverty was getting too acute ;
 There gaped so many noble mouths to
 feed,
 Beans must suffice unflavoured of the
 fowl.

The mother,—hers would be a spun-
 out life
 I' the nature of things ; the sisters had
 done well
 And married men of reasonable rank :
 But that sort of illumination stops,
 Throws back no heat upon the parent-
 hearth.
 The family instinct felt out for its fire
 To the Church,—the Church tradition-
 ally helps
 A second son : and such was Paolo,
 Established here at Rome these thirty
 years,
 Who played the regular game,—priest
 and Abate,
 Made friends, owned house and land,
 became of use
 To a personage : his course lay clear
 enough.
 The youngest caught the sympathetic
 flame,
 And, though unfledged wings kept him
 still i' the cage,
 Yet he shot up to be a Canon, so
 Clung to the higher perch and crowed
 in hope.
 Even our Guido, eldest brother, went
 As far i' the way o' the Church as safety
 seemed,
 He being Head o' the House, ordained
 to wive,—
 So, could but dally with an Order or
 two
 And testify good-will i' the cause : he
 clipt
 His top-hair and thus far affected Christ,
 But main promotion must fall other-
 wise,
 Though still from the side o' the
 Church : and here was he
 At Rome, since first youth, worn thread-
 bare of soul
 By forty-six years' rubbing on hard
 life,
 Getting fast tired o' the game whose
 word is—" Wait ! "
 When one day,—he too having his
 Cardinal
 To serve in some ambiguous sort, as
 serve
 To draw the coach the plumes o' the
 horses' heads,—
 The Cardinal saw fit to dispense with
 him,
 Ride with one plume the less ; and off
 it dropped.

Guido thus left,—with a youth spent in
vain

And not a penny in purse to show for it,
Advised with Paolo, bent no doubt in
chafe

The black brows somewhat formidably
the while.

“Where is the good I came to get at
Rome?”

“Where the repayment of the servi-
tude

“To a purple popinjay, whose feet I
kiss,

“Knowing his father wiped the shoes of
mine?”

“Patience,” pats Paolo the recalci-
trant—

“You have not had, so far, the proper
luck,

“Nor do my gains suffice to keep us
both:

“A modest competency is mine, not
more.

“You are the Count however, yours
the style,

“Heirdom and state,—you can’t ex-
pect all good.

“Had I, now, held your hand of cards
. . . well, well—

“What’s yet unplayed, I’ll look at, by
your leave,

“Over your shoulder,—I who made
my game,

“Let’s see, if I can’t help to handle
yours.

“Fie on you, all the Honours in your
fist,

“Countship, Househeadship. — how
have you misdealt!

“Why, in the first place, they will
marry a man!

“*Notum tonsoribus!* To the Tonsor
then!

“Come, clear your looks, and choose
your freshest suit,

“And, after function’s done with, down
we go

“To the woman-dealer in perukes, a
wench

“I and some others settled in the shop
“At Place Colonna: she’s an oracle.
Hmm!

“‘Dear, ’tis my brother: brother, ’tis
my dear.

“‘Dear, give us counsel! Whom do
you suggest

“‘As properest party in the quarter
round,

“‘For the Count here?—he is minded
to take wife,

“‘And further tells me he intends to
slip

“‘Twenty zecchines under the bottom-
scalp

“‘Of his old wig when he sends it to
revive

“‘For the wedding: and I add a trifle
too.

“‘You know what personage I’m
potent with.’”

And so plumped out Pompilia’s name
the first.

She told them of the household and its
ways,

The easy husband and the shrewder
wife

In Via Vittoria,—how the tall young
girl,

With hair black as yon patch and eyes
as big

As yon pomander to make freckles fly,
Would have so much for certain, and so
much more

In likelihood,—why, it suited, slipt as
smooth

As the Pope’s pantoufle does on the
Pope’s foot.

“I’ll to the husband!” Guido ups and
cries.

“Ay, so you’d play your last court-
card, no doubt!”

Puts Paolo in with a groan—“Only,
you see,

“’Tis I, this time, that supervise your
lead.

“Priests play with women, maids,
wives, mothers,—why?

“These play with men and take them
off our hands.

“Did I come, counsel with some cut-
beard gruff

“Or rather this sleek young-old bar-
beress?

“Go, brother, stand you rapt in the
ante-room

“Of Her Efficacy my Cardinal
“For an hour,—he likes to have lord-
suits lounge,—

“While I betake myself to the grey
mare,

“The better horse,—how wise the
people’s word!—

“And wait on Madam Violante.”

Said and done.
 He was at Via Vittoria in three skips :
 Proposed at once to fill up the one want
 O' the burgess-family which, wealthy
 enough,
 And comfortable to heart's desire, yet
 crouched
 Outside a gate to heaven,—locked,
 bolted, barred,
 Whereof Count Guido had a key he
 kept
 Under his pillow, but Pompilia's hand
 Might slide behind his neck and pilfer
 thence.
 The key was fairy ; mention of it, made
 Violante feel the thing shoot one sharp
 ray
 That reached the heart o' the woman.
 " I assent :
 " Yours be Pompilia, hers and ours
 that key
 " To all the glories of the greater life !
 " There 's Pietro to convince : leave
 that to me !"
 Then was the matter broached to Pie-
 tro ; then
 Did Pietro make demand and get re-
 sponse
 That in the Countship was a truth, but
 in
 The counting up of the Count's cash, a
 lie :
 He thereupon stroked grave his chin,
 looked great,
 Declined the honour. Then the wife
 wiped one—
 Winked with the other eye turned
 Paolo-ward,
 Whispered Pompilia, stole to church
 at eve,
 Found Guido there and got the mar-
 riage done,
 And finally begged pardon at the feet
 Of her dear lord and master. Where-
 upon
 Quoth Pietro—" Let us make the best
 of things !"
 " I knew your love would licence us,"
 quoth she :
 Quoth Paolo once more, " Mothers,
 wives and maids,
 " These be the tools wherewith priests
 manage men."
 Now, here take breath and ask,—
 which bird o' the brace

Decoyed the other into clapnet ? Who
 Was fool, who knave ? Neither and
 both, perchance.
 There was a bargain mentally proposed
 On each side, straight and plain and
 fair enough ;
 Mind knew its own mind : but when
 mind must speak,
 The bargain have expression in plain
 terms,
 There was the blunder incident to
 words,
 And in the clumsy process, fair turned
 foul.
 The straight backbone-thought of the
 crooked speech
 Were just—" I Guido truck my name
 and rank
 " For so much money and youth and
 female charms."— [child
 " We Pietro and Violante give our
 " And wealth to you for a rise i' the
 world thereby."
 Such naked truth while chambered in
 the brain
 Shocks nowise : walk it forth by way
 of tongue,—
 Out on the cynical unseemliness !
 Hence was the need, on either side, of a
 lie
 To serve as decent wrappage : so,
 Guido gives
 Money for money,—and they, bride for
 groom,
 Having, he, not a doit, they, not a
 child
 Honestly theirs, but this poor waif and
 stray.
 According to the words, each cheated
 each ;
 But in the inexpressive barter of
 thoughts,
 Each did give and did take the thing
 designed,
 The rank on this side and the cash on
 that—
 Attained the object of the traffic, so.
 The way of the world, the daily bargain
 struck
 In the first market ! Why sells Jack
 his ware ?
 " For the sake of serving an old custo-
 mer."
 Why does Jill buy it ? " Simply not
 to break
 " A custom, pass the old stall the first
 time."

Guido thus left,—with a youth spent in vain
 And not a penny in purse to show for it,
 Advised with Paolo, bent no doubt in chafe
 The black brows somewhat formidably
 "Where is the good I came to get at Rome?
 "Where the repayment of the servitude
 "To a purple popinjay, whose feet I kiss,
 "Knowing his father wiped the shoes of mine?"

"Patience," pats Paolo the recalcitrant—
 "You have not had, so far, the proper luck,
 "Nor do my gains suffice to keep us both:
 "A modest competency is mine, not more.
 "You are the Count however, your style,
 "Heirdom and state,—you can't expect all good.
 "Had I, now, held your hand of card well, well—
 "What's yet unplayed, I'll look at, by your leave,
 "Over your shoulder,—I who mac my game,
 "Let's see, if I can't help to hand yours.
 "Fie on you, all the Honours in your fist,
 "Countship, Househeadship. — how have you misdealt!
 "Why, in the first place, they will marry a man!
 "Notum tonsoribus! To the Tonsoribus then!
 "Come, clear your looks, and choose your freshest suit,
 "And, after function's done with, do we go
 "To the woman-dealer in perukes and wench
 "I and some others settled in the street
 "At Place Colonna: she 's an ora
 "Hm!
 "Dear, 'tis my brother: brother, my dear.
 "Dear, give us counsel! Whom you suggest

He meant should tempt the woman,
 as they charge?
 Do you fright your hare that you may catch your hare?
 Consider too, the charge was made and met
 At the proper time and place where proofs were plain—
 Heard patiently and disposed of thoroughly
 By the highest powers, possessors of the most light,
 The Governor, for the law, and the Archbishop
 For the gospel: which acknowledged primacies,
 'T is impudently pleaded, he could warp
 Into a tacit partnership with crime—
 He being the while, believe their own account,
 Impotent, penniless and miserable!
 He further asks—Duke, note the knotty point!—
 How he,—concede him skill to play such part
 And drive his wife into a gallant's arms,
 Could bring the gallant to play his part too
 And stand with arms so opportunely wide?
 How bring this Caponsacchi,—with whom, friends
 And foes alike agree, throughout his life
 He never interchanged a civil word
 Nor lifted courteous cap to—how bend him,
 To such observancy of beck and call,
 —To undertake this strange and perilous feat
 For the good of Guido, using, as the lure,
 Pompilia whom, himself and she avow!
 He had not spoken with nor seen, indeed,
 Beyond sight in a public theatre,
 When she wrote letters (she that could not write!)
 The importunate shamelessly-protected love
 Which brought him, thought reluctant to her feet,
 And forced on him the plunge which howsoever
 She might swim up? the whirl, must bury him

the propriety, expediting might they come to
 granting the interview so adapted to assist whether he advance, in his benevolent mood, the interview befell at
 and only interview, single and single course to
 pose of him, head, heart
 it and braved the consequent
 natural end, the love of man whether love be virtue or
 you, altogether for pity's sake
 and helplessness!
 he assure himself of both?
 the house-inmate, visitor, of the described martyr-
 t to pronounce its remedy such extreme and desperate,
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 "The commonplace adventure, mere intrigue
 "In the prose form with the unpoetic tricks,
 "Cheatings and lies: they used the hackney chair
 "Satan jaunts forth with, shabby and serviceable,
 "No gilded gimcrack-novelty from below,
 "To bowl you along thither, swift and sure.
 "That same officious go-between, the wench
 "That gave and took the letters of the two,
 "Now offers self and service back to me:
 "Bears testimony to visits night by night
 "When all was safe, the husband far and away,—
 "To many a timely slipping out at large
 "By light o' the morning-star, ere he should wake.
 "And when the fugitives were found at last,
 "Why, with them were found also, to belie
 "What protest they might make of innocence,
 "All documents yet wanting, if need were,
 "To establish guilt in them, disgrace in me—
 "The chronicle o' the converse from its rise
 "To culmination in this outrage: read!
 "Letters from wife to priest, from priest to wife,—
 "Here they are, read and say where they chime in
 "With the other tale, superlative purity
 "O' the pair of saints! I stand or fall by these."

But then on the other side again,—how say
 The pair of saints? That not one word is theirs—
 No syllable o' the batch or writ or sent

He meant should tempt the woman,
 as they charge ?
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 catch your hare ?
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 The importunate shamelessly-protessed
 love
 Which brought him, thought reluctant,
 to her feet,
 And forced on him the plunge which,
 howsoe'er
 She might swim up i' the whirl, must
 bury him

Under abysmal black: a priest con-
 trive
 No mitigable amour to be hushed up,
 But open flight and noon-day infamy ?
 Try and concoct defence for such re-
 volt !
 Take the wife's tale as true, say she
 was wronged,—
 Pray, in what rubric of the breviary
 Do you find it registered the part of a
 priest
 That to right wrongs he skip from the
 church-door,
 Go journeying with a woman that 's a
 wife,
 And be pursued, o'ertaken and cap-
 tured . . . how ?
 In a lay-dress, playing the sentinel
 Where the wife sleeps (says he who best
 should know)
 And sleeping, sleepless, both have spent
 the night !
 Could no one else be found to serve at
 need—
 No woman—or if man, no safer sort
 Than this not well-reputed turbulence ?
 Then, look into his own account o' the
 case !
 He, being the stranger and astonished
 one,
 Yet received protestations of her love
 From lady neither known nor cared
 about :
 Love, so protested, bred in him disgust
 After the wonder,—or incredulity,
 Such impudence seeming impossible:
 But, soon assured such impudence
 might be,
 When he had seen with his own eyes at
 last
 Letters thrown down to him i' the very
 street
 From behind lattice where the lady
 lurked,
 And read their passionate summons to
 her side—
 Why then, a thousand thoughts
 swarmed up and in,—
 How he had seen her once, a moment's
 space,
 Observed she was so young and beau-
 tiful,
 Heard everywhere report she suffered
 much
 From a jealous husband thrice her age,
 —in short

There flashed the propriety, expediency
 Of treating, trying might they come to terms,
 —At all events, granting the interview
 Prayed for, and so adapted to assist
 Decision as to whether he advance,
 Stand or retire, in his benevolent mood.
 Therefore the interview befell at length ;
 And at this one and only interview,
 He saw the sole and single course to take—
 Bade her dispose of him, head, heart and hand,
 Did her behest and braved the consequence,
 Not for the natural end, the love of man
 For woman whether love be virtue or vice,
 But, please you, altogether for pity's sake—
 Pity of innocence and helplessness !
 And how did he assure himself of both ?
 Had he been the house-inmate, visitor,
 Eye-witness of the described martyrdom,
 So, competent to pronounce its remedy
 Ere rush on such extreme and desperate course,
 Involving such enormity of harm,
 Moreover, to the husband judged thus,
 doomed
 And damned without a word in his defence ?
 But no,—the truth was felt by instinct
 here !
 —Process which saves a world of trouble and time,
 And there 's his story : what do you say to it,
 Trying its truth by your own instinct too,
 Since that 's to be the expeditious mode ?
 " And now, do hear my version,"
 Guido cries :
 " I accept argument and inference both.
 " It would indeed have been miraculous
 " Had such a confidency sprung to birth
 " With no more fanning from acquaintanceship
 " Then here avowed by my wife and this priest.

" Only, it did not : you must substitute
 " The old stale unromantic way of fault,
 " The commonplace adventure, mere intrigue
 " In the prose form with the unpoetic tricks,
 " Cheatings and lies : they used the hackney chair
 " Satan jaunts forth with, shabby and serviceable,
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 " By light o' the morning-star, ere he should wake.
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 " Why, with them were found also, to belie
 " What protest they might make of innocence,
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 " The chronicle o' the converse from its rise
 " To culmination in this outrage : read !
 " Letters from wife to priest, from priest to wife,—
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 " With the other tale, superlative purity
 " O' the pair of saints ! I stand or fall by these."

But then on the other side again,—how say
 The pair of saints ? That not one word is theirs—
 No syllable o' the batch or writ or sent

Or yet received by either of the two.
 "Found," says the priest, "because he needed them,
 "Failing all other proofs, to prove our fault:
 "So, here they are, just as is natural.
 "Oh yes—we had our missives, each of us!
 "Not these, but to the full as vile, no doubt:
 "Hers as from me,—she could not read, so burnt,—
 "Mine as from her,—I burnt because I read.
 "Who forged and found them? *Cui profuerint!*"
 (I take the phrase out of your Highness' mouth)
 "He who would gain by her fault and my fall,
 "The trickster, schemer and pretender—he
 "Whose whole career was lie entailing lie
 "Sought to be sealed truth by the worst lie last!"

Guido rejoins—"Did the other end o' the tale
 "Match this beginning! 'Tis alleged I prove
 "A murderer at the end, a man of force
 "Prompt, indiscriminate, effectual: good!
 "Then what need all this trifling woman's-work,
 "Letters and embassies and weak intrigue,
 "When will and power were mine to end at once
 "Safely and surely? Murder had come first
 "Not last with such a man, assure yourselves!
 "The silent *acquetta*, stilling at command—
 "A drop a day i' the wine or soup, the dose,—
 "The shattering beam that breaks above the bed
 "And beats out brains, with nobody to blame
 "Except the wormy age which eats even oak,—
 "Nay, the staunch steel or trusty cord,
 —who cares

"I' the blind old palace, a pitfall at each step,
 "With none to see, much more to interpose
 "O' the two, three creeping house-dog-servant-things
 "Born mine and bred mine?—had I willed gross death,
 "I had found nearer paths to thrust him prey
 "Than this that goes meandering here and there
 "Through half the world and calls down in its course
 "Notice and noise,—hate, vengeance should it fail,
 "Derision and contempt though it succeed! [heir?
 "Moreover, what o' the future son and
 "The unborn babe about to be called mine,—
 "What end in heaping all this shame on him,
 "Were I indifferent to my own black share?
 "Would I have tried these crookednesses, say,
 "Willing and able to effect the straight?"

"Ay, would you!"—one may hear the priest retort,
 "Being as you are, i' the stock, a man of guile,
 "And ruffianism but an added graft.
 "You, a born coward, try a coward's arms,
 "Trick and chicane,—and only when these fail
 "Does violence follow, and like fox you bite [disgrace
 "Caught out in stealing. Also, the
 "You hardly shrunk at, wholly shrivelled her:
 "You plunged her thin white delicate hand i' the flame
 "Along with your coarse horny brutish fist,
 "Held them a second there, then drew out both
 "—Yours roughed a little, hers ruined through and through.
 "Your hurt would heal forthwith at ointment's touch—
 "Namely, succession to the inheritance
 "Which bolder crime had lost you: let things change,

" The birth o' the boy warrant the
bolder crime,
" Why, murder was determined, dared
and done.
" For me," the priest proceeds with his
reply,
" The look o' the thing, the chances of
mistake,
" All were against me,—that, I knew
the first :
" But, knowing also what my duty was,
" I did it : I must look to men more
skilled
" I' the reading hearts than ever was
the world."

Highness, decide ! Pronounce, Her
Excellency !

Or . . . even leave this argument in
doubt,

Account it a fit matter, taken up
With all its faces, manifold enough,
To put upon—what fronts us, the next
stage,

Next legal process !—Guido, in pursuit,
Coming up with the fugitives at the inn,
Caused both to be arrested then and
there

And sent to Rome for judgment on the
case—

Thither, with all his armoury of proofs
Betook himself, and there we 'll meet
him now,

Waiting the further issue.

Here some smile

" And never let him henceforth dare to
plead,—

" Of all pleas and excuses in the world
" For any deed hereafter to be done,—

" His irrepressible wrath at honour's
wound !

" Passion and madness irrepressible ?

" Why, Count and cavalier, the hus-
band comes

" And catches foe i' the very act of
shame :

" There 's man to man,—nature must
have her way,—

" We look he should have cleared
things on the spot.

" Yes, then, indeed—even tho' it prove
he erred—

" Though the ambiguous first appear-
ance, mount

" Of solid injury, melt soon to mist,

" Still,—had he slain the lover and the
wife—

" Or, since she was a woman and his
wife,

" Slain him, but stript her naked to the
skin

" Or at best left no more of an attire

" Than patch sufficient to pin paper to,

" Some one love-letter, infamy and all,

" As passport to the Paphos fit for such,

" Safe-conduct to her natural home the
stews,—

" Good ! One had recognised the
power o' the pulse.

" But when he stands, the stock-fish,—
sticks to law—

" Offers the hole in his heart, all fresh
and warm,

" For scrivener's pen to poke and play
about—

" Can stand, can stare, can tell his
beads perhaps,

" Oh, let us hear no syllable o' the rage !

" Such rage were a convenient after-
thought

" For one who would have shown his
teeth belike,

" Exhilited unbridled rage enough,

" Had but the priest been found, as was
to hope,

" In serge, not silk, with crucifix, not
sword :

" Whereas the grey innocuous grub, of
yore,

" Had hatched a hornet, tickle to the
touch,

" The priest was metamorphosed into
knight.

" And even the timid wife, whose cue
was—shriek,

" Bury her brow beneath his trampling
foot,—

" She too sprang at him like a pytho-
ness :

" So, gulp down rage, passion must be
postponed,

" Calm be the word ! Well, our word
is—we brand

" This part o' the business, howsoever
the rest

" Befall."

" Nay," interpose as prompt
his friends—

" This is the world's way ! So you
adjudge reward

" To the forbearance and legality

" Yourselves begin by inculcating—ay

" Exacting from us all with knife at
throat !

" This one wrong more you add to
 wrong's amount,—
 " You publish all, with the kind com-
 ment here,
 " " Its victim was too cowardly for re-
 venge." "
 Make it your own case,—you who stand
 apart!
 The husband wakes one morn from
 heavy sleep,
 With a taste of poppy in his mouth,—
 rubs eyes,
 Finds his wife flown, his strong box
 ransacked too,
 Follows as he best can, overtakes i' the
 end.
 You bid him use his privilege : well, it
 seems
 He 's scarce cool-blooded enough for
 the right move—
 Does not shoot when the game were
 sure, but stands [since
 Bewildered at the critical minute,—
 He has the first flash of the fact alone
 To judge from, act with, not the steady
 lights
 Of after-knowledge,—yours who stand
 at ease
 To try conclusions : he 's in smother
 and smoke,
 You outside, with explosion at an end :
 The sulphur may be lightning or a
 squib—
 He 'll know in a minute, but till then,
 he doubts.
 Back from what you know to what he
 knew not!
 Hear the priest's lofty " I am inno-
 cent,"
 The wife's as resolute " You are
 guilty!" Come!
 Are you not staggered?—pause, and
 you lose the move!
 Naught left you but a low appeal to
 law,
 " Coward " tied to your tail for com-
 pliment!
 Another consideration : have it your
 way!
 Admit the worst : his courage failed
 the Count,
 He 's cowardly like the best o' the bur-
 gesses
 He 's grown incorporate with,—a very
 cur,
 Kick him from out your circle by all
 means !

Why, trundled down this reputable
 stair,
 Still, the Church-door lies wide to take
 him in,
 And the Court-porch also : in he sneaks
 to each,—
 " Yes, I have lost my honour and my
 wife,
 " And, being moreover an ignoble
 hound,
 " I dare not jeopardise my life for
 them!"
 Religion and Law lean forward from
 their chairs,
 " Well done, thou good and faithful
 servant!" Ay,
 Not only applaud him that he scorned
 the world,
 But punish should he dare do other-
 wise.
 If the case be clear or turbid,—you
 must say!
 Thus, anyhow, it mounted to the stage
 In the law-courts,—let 's see clearly
 from this point!—
 Where the priest tells his story true or
 false,
 And the wife her story, and the hus-
 band his,
 All with result as happy as before.
 The courts would nor condemn nor yet
 acquit
 This, that or the other, in so distinct a
 sense
 As end the strife to either's absolute
 loss :
 Pronounced, in place of something
 definite,
 " Each of the parties, whether goat or
 sheep
 " I' the main, has wool to show and
 hair to hide.
 " Each has brought somehow trouble,
 is somehow cause
 " Of pains enough,—even though no
 worse were proved.
 " Here is a husband, cannot rule his
 wife
 " Without provoking her to scream and
 scratch
 " And scour the fields,—causelessly, it
 may be :
 " Here is that wife,—who makes her
 sex our plague,
 " Wedlock, our bugbear,—perhaps
 with cause enough :

- " And here is the truant priest o' the trio, worst
 " Or best—each quality being conceivable.
 " Let us impose a little mulct on each.
 " We punish youth in state of pupilage
 " Who talk at hours when youth is bound to sleep,
 " Whether the prattle turn upon Saint Rose
 " Or Donna Olimpia of the Vatican :
 " 'T is talk, talked wisely or unwisely talked,
 " I' the dormitory where to talk at all,
 " Transgresses, and is mulct : as here we mean.
 " For the wife,—let her betake herself, for rest,
 " After her run, to a House of Convertites—
 " Keep there, as good as real imprisonment :
 " Being sick and tired, she will recover so.
 " For the priest, spritely strayer out of bounds,
 " Who made Arezzo hot to hold him,—Rome
 " Profits by his withdrawal from the scene.
 " Let him be relegate to Civita,
 " Circumscribed by its bounds till matters mend :
 " There he at least lies out o' the way of harm
 " From foes—perhaps from the too friendly fair.
 " And finally for the husband, whose rash rule
 " Has but itself to blame for this ado,—
 " If he be vexed that, in our judgments dealt,
 " He fails obtain what he accounts his [right,
 " Let him go comforted with the thought, no less,
 " That, turn each sentence howsoever he may,
 " There 's satisfaction to extract therefrom.
 " For, does he wish his wife proved innocent ?
 " Well, she 's not guilty, he may safely urge,
 " Has missed the stripes dishonest wives endure—
 " This being a fatherly pat o' the cheek, no more.
- " Does he wish her guilty ? Were she otherwise
 " Would she be locked up, set to say her prayers,
 " Prevented intercourse with the outside world,
 " And that suspected priest in banishment,
 " Whose portion is a further help i' the case ?
 " Oh, ay, you all of you want the other thing,
 " The extreme of law, some verdict neat, complete—
 " Either, the whole o' the dowry i' your poke
 " With full release from the false wife, to boot,
 " And heading, hanging for the priest, beside—
 " Or, contrary, claim freedom for the wife,
 " Repayment of each penny paid her spouse,
 " Amends for the past, release for the future ! Such
 " Is wisdom to the children of this world ;
 " But we 've no mind, we children of the light,
 " To miss the advantage of the golden mean,
 " And push things to the steel point." Thus the courts.
- Is it settled so far ? Settled or disturbed,
 Console yourselves : 't is like . . an instance, now !
 You 've seen the puppets, of Place Navona, play,—
 Punch and his mate,—how threats pass, blows are dealt,
 And a crisis comes : the crowd or clap or hiss
 Accordingly as disposed for man or wife—
 When down the actors duck awhile perdue,
 Donning what novel rag-and-feather trim
 Best suits the next adventure, new effect :
 And,—by the time the mob is on the move,
 With something like a judgment *pro* and *con*,—

There 's a whistle, up again the actors
 pop
 In t' other tatter with fresh-tinselled
 staves,
 To re-engage in one last worst fight
 more
 Shall show, what you thought tragedy
 was farce.
 Note, that the climax and the crown of
 things
 Invariably is, the devil appears himself,
 Armed and accoutred, horns and hoofs
 and tail!
 Just so, nor otherwise it proved—
 you 'll see :
 Move to the murder, never mind the
 rest !

Guido, at such a general duck-down,
 I' the breathing-space,—of wife to con-
 vent here,
 Priest to his relegation, and himself
 To Arezzo,—had resigned his part per-
 force [best,
 To brother Abate, who bustled, did his
 Retrieved things somewhat, managed
 the three suits—
 Since, it should seem, there were three
 suits-at-law
 Behoved him look to, still, lest bad
 grow worse :
 First civil suit,—the one the parents
 brought,
 Impugning the legitimacy of his wife,
 Affirming thence the nullity of her
 rights :
 This was before the Rota,—Molinès,
 That 's judge there, made that notable
 decree
 Which partly leaned to Guido, as I
 said,—
 But Pietro had appealed against the
 same
 To the very court will judge what we
 judge now—
 Tommati and his fellows,—Suit the
 first.
 Next civil suit,—demand on the wife's
 part
 Of separation from the husband's bed
 On plea of cruelty and risk to life—
 Claims restitution of the dowry paid,
 Immunity from paying any more :
 This second, the Vicegerent has to
 judge.
 Third and last suit,—this time, a
 criminal one,—

Answer to, and protection from, both
 these,—
 Guido's complaint of guilt against his
 wife
 In the Tribunal of the Governor,
 Venturini, also judge of the present
 cause.
 Three suits of all importance plaguing
 him,
 Beside a little private enterprise
 Of Guido's,—essay at a shorter cut.
 For Paolo, knowing the right way at
 Rome,
 Had, even while superintending these
 three suits
 I' the regular way, each at its proper
 court, [Pope
 Ingeniously made interest with the
 To set such tedious regular forms aside,
 And, acting the supreme and ultimate
 judge,
 Declare for the husband and against
 the wife.
 Well, at such crisis and extreme of
 straits,
 The man at bay, buffeted in this wise,
 Happened the strangest accident of all.
 " Then," sigh friends, " the last feather
 broke his back,
 " Made him forget all possible remedies
 " Save one—he rushed to, as the sole
 relief
 " From horror and the abominable
 thing."
 " Or rather," laugh foes, " then did
 there befall
 " The luckiest of conceivable events,
 " Most pregnant with impunity for
 him,
 " Which henceforth turned the flank
 of all attack,
 " And bade him do his wickedest and
 worst."
 —The wife's withdrawal from the Con-
 vertites,
 Visit to the villa where her parents
 lived,
 And birth there of his babe. Diverg-
 ence here !
 I simply take the facts, ask what they
 show.
 First comes this thunderclap of a sur-
 prise :
 Then follow all the signs and silences
 Premonitory of earthquake. Paolo
 first

Vanished, was swept off somewhere,
 lost to Rome :
 (Wells dry up, while the sky is sunny
 and blue.)
 Then Guido girds himself for enter-
 prise,
 Hies to Vittiano, counsels with his
 steward,
 Comes to terms with four peasants
 young and bold,
 And starts for Rome the Holy, reaches
 her
 At very holiest, for 't is Christmas Eve,
 And makes straight for the Abate's
 dried-up font,
 The lodge where Paolo ceased to work
 the pipes.
 And then, rest taken, observation made
 And plan completed, all in a grim week,
 The five proceed in a body, reach the
 place,
 —Pietro's, by the Paolina, silent, lone,
 And stupefied by the propitious snow,—
 At one in the evening: knock: a
 voice " Who's there ? "
 " Friends with a letter from the priest
 your friend."
 At the door, straight smiles old Vio-
 lante's self.
 She falls,—her son-in-law stabs through
 and through,
 Reaches thro' her at Pietro—" With
 your son
 " This is the way to settle suits, good
 sire ! "
 He bellows " Mercy for heaven, not
 for earth !
 " Leave to confess and save my sinful
 soul,
 " Then do your pleasure on the body of
 me ! "
 —" Nay, father, soul with body must
 take its chance ! "
 He presently got his portion and lay
 still.
 And last, Pompilia rushes here and
 there
 Like a dove among lightnings in her
 brake,
 Falls also: Guido's, this last hus-
 band's-act.
 He lifts her by the long dishevelled
 hair,
 Holds her away at arms' length with
 one hand,
 While the other tries if life come from
 the mouth—

Looks out his whole heart's hate on
 the shut eyes,
 Draws a deep satisfied breath, " So—
 dead at last ! "
 Throws down the burthen on dead
 Pietro's knees,
 And ends all with " Let us away, my
 boys ! "
 And, as they left by one door, in at the
 other
 Tumbled the neighbours—for the
 shrieks had pierced
 To the mill and the grange, this cottage
 and that shed.
 Soon followed the Public Force ; pur-
 suit began
 Though Guido had the start and chose
 the road :
 So, that same night was he, with the
 other four,
 Overtaken near Baccano,—where they
 sank
 By the wayside, in some shelter meant
 for beasts,
 And now lay heaped together, nuzzling
 swine,
 Each wrapped in bloody cloak, each
 grasping still
 His unwiped weapon, sleeping all the
 same
 The sleep o' the just,—a journey of
 twenty miles
 Bringing just and unjust to a level, you
 see.
 The only one i' the world that suffered
 aught
 By the whole night's toil and trouble,
 flight and chase,
 Was just the officer who took them,
 Head
 O' the Public Force,—Patrizj, zealous
 soul,
 Who, having duty to sustain the flesh,
 Got heated, caught a fever and so died :
 A warning to the over-vigilant,
 —Virtue in a chafe should change her
 linen quick,
 Lest pleurisy get start of providence.
 (That's for the Cardinal, and told, I
 think !)
 Well, they bring back the company to
 Rome.
 Says Guido, " By your leave, I fain
 would ask
 " How you found out 't was I who did
 the deed ? "

- " What put you on my trace, a for-
eigner,
" Supposed in Arezzo,—and assuredly
safe
" Except for an oversight: who told
you, pray?"
" Why, naturally your wife!" Down
Guido drops
O' the horse he rode,—they have to
steady and stay,
At either side the brute that bore him,
bound,
So strange it seemed his wife should
live and speak!
She had prayed—at least so people
tell you now—
For but one thing to the Virgin for her-
self,
Not simply, as did Pietro 'mid the
stabs,—
Time to confess and get her own soul
saved—
But time to make the truth apparent,
truth
For God's sake, lest men should believe
a lie:
Which seems to have been about the
single prayer
She ever put up, that was granted her.
With this hope in her head, of telling
truth,—
Being familiarised with pain, beside,—
She bore the stabbing to a certain pitch
Without a useless cry, was flung for
dead
On Pietro's lap, and so attained her
point.
Her friends subjoin this—have I done
with them?—
And cite the miracle of continued life
(She was not dead when I arrived just
now)
As attestation to her probity.
- Does it strike your Excellency? Why,
your Highness,
The self-command and even the final
prayer,
Our candour must acknowledge ex-
plainable
As easily by the consciousness of guilt.
So, when they add that her confession
runs
She was of wifehood one white inno-
cence
In thought, word, act, from first of
her short life
- To last of it; praying, i' the face of
death,
That God forgive her other sins—not
this,
She is charged with and must die for,
that she failed
Any way to her husband: while there-
on
Comments the old Religious—" So
much good,
" Patience beneath enormity of ill,
" I hear to my confusion, woe is me,
" Sinner that I stand, shamed in the
walk and gait
" I have practised and grown old in, by
a child!"—
Guido's friends shrug the shoulder,
" Just this same
" Prodigious absolute calm in the last
hour
" Confirms us,—being the natural re-
sult
" Of a life which proves consistent to
the close.
" Having braved heaven and deceived
earth throughout,
" She braves still and deceives still,
gains thereby
" Two ends, she prizes beyond earth or
heaven:
" First sets her lover free, imperilled
sore
" By the new turn things take: he
answers yet
" For the part he played: they have
summoned him indeed:
" The past ripped up, he may be pun-
ished still:
" What better way of saving him than
this?
" Then,—thus she dies revenged to the
uttermost
" On Guido, drags him with her in the
dark,
" The lower still the better, do you
doubt?
" Thus, two days, does she love her
love to the end,
" And hate her hate—death, hell is
no such price
" To pay for these,—lovers and haters
hold."
But there's another parry for the
thrust.
" Confession," cry folks—" a confes-
sion, think!
" Confession of the moribund is true!"

Which of them, my wise friends?
 This public one,
 Or the private other we shall never
 know?
 The private may contain—your casu-
 ists teach,—
 The acknowledgment of, and the peni-
 tence for,
 That other public one, so people say.
 However it be—we trench on delicate
 ground,
 Her Eminence is peeping o'er the
 cards,—
 Can one find nothing in behalf of this
 Catastrophe? Deaf folks accuse the
 dumb!
 You criticise the drunken reel, fool's-
 speech,
 Maniacal gesture of the man,—we
 grant!
 But who poured poison in his cup, we
 ask?
 Recall the list of his excessive wrongs,
 First cheated in his wife, robbed by
 her kin,
 Rendered anon the laughing-stock o'
 the world
 By the story, true or false, of his wife's
 birth,—
 The last seal publicly apposed to shame
 By the open flight of wife and priest,—
 why, Sirs,
 Step out of Rome a furlong, would you
 know
 What anotherguess tribunal than ours
 here,
 Mere worldly Court without the help of
 grace,
 Thinks of just that one incident o' the
 flight?
 Guido preferred the same complaint
 before
 The court at Arezzo, bar of the Gran-
 duke,—
 In virtue of it being Tuscany
 Where the offence had rise and flight
 began,—
 Self-same complaint he made in the
 sequel here
 Where the offence grew to the full, the
 flight
 Ended: offence and flight, one fact
 judged twice
 By two distinct tribunals,—what re-
 sult?
 There was a sentence passed at the
 same time

By Arezzo and confirmed by the Gran-
 duke,
 Which nothing balks of swift and sure
 effect
 But absence of the guilty, (flight to
 Rome
 Frees them from Tuscan jurisdiction
 now)
 —Condemns the wife to the oppro-
 brious doom
 Of all whom law just lets escape from
 death.
 The Stinche, House of Punishment, for
 life,—
 That's what the wife deserves in Tus-
 cany:
 Here, she deserves—remitting with a
 smile
 To her father's house, main object of
 the flight!
 The thief presented with the thing he
 steals!

At this discrepancy of judgments—
 mad,
 The man took on himself the office,
 judged;
 And the only argument against the use
 O' the law he thus took into his own
 hands
 Is . . . what, I ask you?—that, re-
 venging wrong,
 He did not revenge sooner, kill at first
 Whom he killed last! That is the final
 charge.
 Sooner? What's soon or late i' the
 case?—ask we.
 A wound i' the flesh no doubt wants
 prompt redress;
 It smarts a little to-day, well in a week,
 Forgotten in a month; or never, or
 now, revenge!
 But a wound to the soul? That
 rankles worse and worse.
 Shall I comfort you, explaining—"Not
 this once
 "But now it may be some five hundred
 times [rogue:
 "I called you ruffian, pandar, liar and
 "The injury must be less by lapse of
 time?"
 The wrong is a wrong, one and immor-
 tal too,
 And that you bore it those five hundred
 times,
 Let it rankle unrevenged five hundred
 years,