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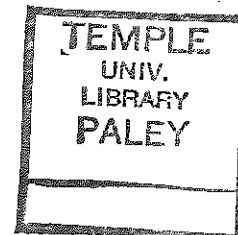
Robert Browning:
The Poems

VOLUME ONE

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To Pat and Sara

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Men and Women

1855

Love Among the Ruins

I

Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles,
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop –
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
10 Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

II

Now, – the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
20 Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

III

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
30 Stock or stone –
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;

And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

IV

Now, – the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper over-rooted, by the gourd
40 Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks –
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

V

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
50 Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
Melt away –
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
60 Till I come.

VI

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts, – and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not; she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace

70 Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

VII

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force –
Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
80 Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best.

A Lovers' Quarrel

I

Oh, what a dawn of day!
How the March sun feels like May!
All is blue again
After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.
Only, my Love's away!
I'd as lief that the blue were grey.

II

Runnels, which rillets swell,
Must be dancing down the dell,
10 With a foaming head
On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell;
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

III

Dearest, three months ago!
 When we lived blocked-up with snow, —
 When the wind would edge
 In and in his wedge,
 In, as far as the point could go —
 20 Not to our ingle, though,
 Where we loved each the other so!

IV

Laughs with so little cause!
 We devised games out of straws.
 We would try and trace
 One another's face
 In the ash, as an artist draws;
 Free on each other's flaws,
 How we chattered like two church daws!

V

What's in the 'Times'? — a scold
 30 At the Emperor deep and cold;
 He has taken a bride
 To his gruesome side,
 That's as fair as himself is bold:
 There they sit ermine-stoled,
 And she powders her hair with gold.

VI

Fancy the Pampas' sheen!
 Miles and miles of gold and green
 Where the sunflowers blow
 In a solid glow,
 40 And — to break now and then the screen —
 Black neck and eyeballs keen,
 Up a wild horse leaps between!

VII

Try, will our table turn?
 Lay your hands there light, and yearn
 Till the yearning slips
 Through the finger-tips

In a fire which a few discern,
 And a very few feel burn,
 And the rest, they may live and learn!

VIII

50 Then we would up and pace,
 For a change, about the place,
 Each with arm o'er neck:
 'Tis our quarter-deck,
 We are seamen in woeful case.
 Help in the ocean-space!
 Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

IX

See, how she looks now, dressed
 In a sledging-cap and vest!
 'Tis a huge fur cloak —
 60 Like a reindeer's yoke
 Falls the lappet along the breast:
 Sleeves for her arms to rest,
 Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

X

Teach me to flirt a fan
 As the Spanish ladies can,
 Or I tint your lip
 With a burnt stick's tip
 And you turn into such a man!
 Just the two spots that span
 70 Half the bill of the young male swan.

XI

Dearest, three months ago
 When the mesmerizer Snow
 With his hand's first sweep
 Put the earth to sleep:
 'Twas a time when the heart could show
 All — how was earth to know,
 'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro?

XII

Dearest, three months ago
 When we loved each other so,
 80 Lived and loved the same
 Till an evening came
 When a shaft from the devil's bow
 Pierced to our ingle-glow,
 And the friends were friend and foe!

XIII

Not from the heart beneath –
 'Twas a bubble born of breath,
 Neither sneer nor vaunt,
 Nor reproach nor taunt.
 See a word, how it severeth!
 90 Oh, power of life and death
 In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

XIV

Woman, and will you cast
 For a word, quite off at last
 Me, your own, your You, –
 Since, as truth is true,
 I was You all the happy past –
 Me do you leave aghast
 With the memories We amassed?

XV

Love, if you knew the light
 100 That your soul casts in my sight,
 How I look to you
 For the pure and true
 And the beauteous and the right, –
 Bear with a moment's spite
 When a mere mote threatens the white!

XVI

What of a hasty word?
 Is the fleshly heart not stirred
 By a worm's pin-prick
 Where its roots are quick?

110 See the eye, by a fly's foot blurred –
 Ear, when a straw is heard
 Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

XVII

Foul be the world or fair
 More or less, how can I care?
 'Tis the world the same
 For my praise or blame,
 And endurance is easy there.
 Wrong in the one thing rare –
 Oh, it is hard to bear!

XVIII

120 Here's the spring back or close,
 When the almond-blossom blows:
 We shall have the word
 In a minor third
 There is none but the cuckoo knows:
 Heaps of the guelder-rose!
 I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX

Could but November come,
 Were the noisy birds struck dumb
 At the warning slash
 130 Of his driver's-lash –
 I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
 Facing the castle glum
 And the giant's fee-faw-fum!

XX

Then, were the world well stripped
 Of the gear wherein equipped
 We can stand apart,
 Heart dispense with heart
 In the sun, with the flowers unnipped, –
 Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
 140 We were both in a bare-walled crypt!

XXI

Each in the crypt would cry
 'But one freezes here! and why?
 When a heart, as chill,
 At my own would thrill
 Back to life, and its fires out-fly?
 Heart, shall we live or die?
 The rest, . . . settle by-and-by!'

XXII

So, she'd efface the score,
 And forgive me as before.
 150 It is twelve o'clock:
 I shall hear her knock
 In the worst of a storm's uproar,
 I shall pull her through the door,
 I shall have her for evermore!

Evelyn Hope

I

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead!
 Sit and watch by her side an hour.
 That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
 She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
 Beginning to die too, in the glass;
 Little has yet been changed, I think:
 The shutters are shut, no light may pass
 Save two long rays through the hinge's chink.

II

10 Sixteen years old when she died!
 Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;
 It was not her time to love; beside,
 Her life had many a hope and aim,
 Duties enough and little cares,
 And now was quiet, now astir,
 Till God's hand beckoned unawares, -
 And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
 What, your soul was pure and true,
 The good stars met in your horoscope,
 20 Made you of spirit, fire and dew -
 And, just because I was thrice as old
 And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
 Each was naught to each, must I be told?
 We were fellow mortals, naught beside?

IV

No, indeed! for God above
 Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
 And creates the love to reward the love:
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
 Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
 30 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:
 Much is to learn, much to forget
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

V

But the time will come, - at last it will,
 When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
 In the lower earth, in the years long still,
 That body and soul so pure and gay?
 Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
 And your mouth of your own geranium's red -
 And what you would do with me, in fine,
 40 In the new life come in the old one's stead.

VI

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
 Given up myself so many times,
 Gained me the gains of various men,
 Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
 Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
 Either I missed or itself missed me:
 And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
 What is the issue? let us see!

VII

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while.

50 My heart seemed full as it could hold?

There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,

And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.

So, hush, — I will give you this leaf to keep:

See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!

There, that is our secret: go to sleep!

You will wake, and remember, and understand.

Up at a Villa — Down in the City

(As Distinguished by an Italian Person of Quality)

I

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,

The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;

Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!

There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;

While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

III

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull

Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,

Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!

10 — I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned wool.

IV

But the city, oh the city — the square with the houses! Why?

They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take
the eye!

Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;

You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries
by;

Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets
high;

And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

V

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,
'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the
heights:

You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam
and wheeze,

20 And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive-trees.

VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at once;

In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.

'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers
well,

The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell

Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and sell.

VII

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and
splash!

In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-bows
flash

On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and
pash

Round the lady atop in her conch — fifty gazers do not abash,

30 Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a
sort of sash.

VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you linger,

Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted forefinger.

Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and mingle,
Or thrud the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.

Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,

And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on
the hill.

Enough of the seasons, — I spare you the months of the fever and
chill.

IX

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells
begin:

No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in:

40 You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.
By-and-by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood,
draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture – the new play, piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were
shot.

Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law of
the Duke's!

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome and Cicero,
'And moreover,' (the sonnet goes rhyming,) 'the skirts of Saint
Paul has reached,

50 Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous than
ever he preached.'

Noon strikes, – here sweeps the procession! our Lady borne
smiling and smart

With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck in
her heart!

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest pleasure in life.

x

But bless you, it's dear – it's dear! fowls, wine, at double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays passing
the gate

It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still – ah, the pity, the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls and
sandals,

60 And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow
candles;

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with
handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention
of scandals:

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

A Woman's Last Word

I

Let's contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep:
All be as before, Love,
– Only sleep!

II

What so wild as words are?
I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough!

III

10 See the creature stalking
While we speak!
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek!

IV

What so false as truth is,
False to thee?
Where the serpent's tooth is
Shun the tree –

v

20 Where the apple reddens
Never pry –
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I.

VI

Be a god and hold me
With a charm!
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm!

VII

Teach me, only teach, Love!
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought –

VIII

30 Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

IX

That shall be tomorrow
Not tonight:
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight:

X

40 – Must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me!)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

Fra Lippo Lippi

I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?
The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do, – harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
10 And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company!
Aha, you know your betters! Then, you'll take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?

Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off – he's a certain . . . how d'ye call?
Master – a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,
20 How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net?
He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbours me
30 (And many more beside, lads! more beside!)
And all's come square again. I'd like his face –
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern, – for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand ('Look you, now,' as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
40 What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye –
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night –
50 Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs of song, –
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?

Flower o' the thyme – and so on. Round they went.
 Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
 Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight, – three slim shapes,
 60 And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
 That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
 Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
 All the bed-furniture – a dozen knots,
 There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
 Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
 And after them. I came up with the fun
 Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met, –
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
 70 And so as I was stealing back again
 To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
 Ere I rise up tomorrow and go work
 On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
 With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
 You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
 Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head –
 Mine's shaved – a monk, you say – the sting's in that!
 If Master Cosimo announced himself,
 Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!
 80 Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
 I was a baby when my mother died
 And father died and left me in the street.
 I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
 On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
 Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
 My stomach being empty as your hat,
 The wind doubled me up and down I went.
 Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
 (Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
 90 And so along the wall, over the bridge,
 By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
 While I stood munching my first bread that month:
 'So, boy, you're minded,' quoth the good fat father
 Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time, –
 'To quit this very miserable world?
 Will you renounce' . . . 'the mouthful of bread?' thought I;
 By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
 I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,

Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,
 100 Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
 Have given their hearts to – all at eight years old.
 Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
 'Twas not for nothing – the good bellyful,
 The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
 And day-long blessed idleness beside!
 'Let's see what the urchin's fit for' – that came next.
 Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
 Such a to-do! They tried me with their books:
 Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!
 110 *Flower o' the clove,*
All the Latin I construe is, 'amo' I love!
 But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
 Eight years together, as my fortune was,
 Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
 The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
 And who will curse or kick him for his pains, –
 Which gentleman processional and fine,
 Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
 Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
 120 The droppings of the wax to sell again,
 Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped, –
 How say I? – nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
 His bone from the heap of offal in the street, –
 Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
 He learns the look of things, and none the less
 For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
 I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
 Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
 I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
 130 Scrawled them within the antiphony's marge,
 Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
 Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's,
 And made a string of pictures of the world
 Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
 On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.
 'Nay,' quoth the Prior, 'turn him out, d'ye say?
 In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
 What if at last we get our man of parts,
 We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
 140 And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine

And put the front on it that ought to be!
 And hereupon he bade me daub away.
 Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
 Never was such prompt disemburdening.
 First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
 I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,
 From good old gossips waiting to confess
 Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends, –
 To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
 150 Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
 With the little children round him in a row
 Of admiration, half for his beard and half
 For that white anger of his victim's son
 Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
 Signing himself with the other because of Christ
 (Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
 After the passion of a thousand years)
 Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
 (Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
 160 On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
 Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
 (The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.
 I painted all, then cried 'Tis ask and have;
 Choose, for more's ready!' – laid the ladder flat,
 And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
 The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
 Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
 Being simple bodies, – 'That's the very man!
 Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
 170 That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
 To care about his asthma: it's the life!
 But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funk'd;
 Their betters took their turn to see and say:
 The Prior and the learned pulled a face
 And stopped all that in no time. 'How? what's here?
 Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
 Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
 As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game!
 Your business is not to catch men with show,
 180 With homage to the perishable clay,
 But lift them over it, ignore it all,
 Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.

Your business is to paint the souls of men –
 Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no, it's not . . .
 It's vapour done up like a new-born babe –
 (In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
 It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul!
 Give us no more of body than shows soul!
 Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,
 190 That sets us praising, – why not stop with him?
 Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
 With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?
 Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
 Rub all out, try at it a second time.
 Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
 She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say, –
 Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
 Have it all out! Now, is this sense, I ask?
 A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
 200 So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
 And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
 When what you put for yellow's simply black,
 And any sort of meaning looks intense
 When all beside itself means and looks naught.
 Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
 Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
 Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
 Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
 The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint – is it so pretty
 210 You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
 Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
 Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
 Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
 And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
 Or say there's beauty with no soul at all –
 (I never saw it – put the case the same –)
 If you get simple beauty and naught else,
 You get about the best thing God invents:
 That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
 220 Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
 'Rub all out!' Well, well, there's my life, in short,
 And so the thing has gone on ever since.
 I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds:
 You should not take a fellow eight years old

And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
 I'm my own master, paint now as I please –
 Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
 Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front –
 Those great rings serve more purposes than just
 230 To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
 And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
 Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
 The heads shake still – 'It's art's decline, my son!
 You're not of the true painters, great and old;
 Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;
 Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:
 Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!'

Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!

240 I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
 Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
 They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
 Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
 To please them – sometimes do and sometimes don't;
 For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
 A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints –
 A laugh, a cry, the business of the world –
 (*Flower o' the peach,*
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)

250 And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
 The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
 And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
 And play the fooleries you catch me at,
 In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
 After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
 Although the miller does not preach to him
 The only good of grass is to make chaff.
 What would men have? Do they like grass or no –
 May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing
 260 Settled for ever one way. As it is,
 You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:
 You don't like what you only like too much,
 You do like what, if given you at your word,
 You find abundantly detestable.
 For me, I think I speak as I was taught;
 I always see the garden and God there

A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned,
 The value and significance of flesh,
 I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

270 You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.
 But see, now – why, I see as certainly
 As that the morning-star's about to shine,
 What will hap some day. We've a youngster here
 Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
 Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
 His name is Guidi – he'll not mind the monks –
 They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk –
 He picks my practice up – he'll paint apace,
 I hope so – though I never live so long,

280 I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!
 You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
 However, you're my man, you've seen the world
 – The beauty and the wonder and the power,
 The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
 Changes, surprises, – and God made it all!
 – For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
 For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
 The mountain round it and the sky above,
 Much more the figures of man, woman, child,

290 These are the frame to? What's it all about?
 To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
 Wondered at? oh, this last of course! – you say.
 But why not do as well as say, – paint these
 Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
 God's works – paint anyone, and count it crime
 To let a truth slip. Don't object, 'His works
 Are here already; nature is complete:
 Suppose you reproduce her' – (which you can't)
 'There's no advantage! you must beat her, then.'

300 For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
 First when we see them painted, things we have passed
 Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
 And so they are better, painted – better to us,
 Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
 God uses us to help each other so,
 Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
 Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,

And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
 If I drew higher things with the same truth!
 310 That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
 Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
 It makes me mad to see what men shall do
 And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
 Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
 To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
 'Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer!'

Strikes in the Prior: 'when your meaning's plain
 It does not say to folk – remember matins,
 Or, mind you fast next Friday!' Why, for this
 320 What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
 Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,
 A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
 I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
 At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
 'How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?'
 I ask a brother: 'Hugely,' he returns –
 'Already not one phiz of your three slaves
 Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
 But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
 330 The pious people have so eased their own
 With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
 We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
 Expect another job this time next year,
 For pity and religion grow i' the crowd –
 Your painting serves its purpose!' Hang the fools!

– That is – you'll not mistake an idle word
 Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, Got wot,
 Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
 The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
 340 Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!
 It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
 Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
 And hearken how I plot to make amends.
 I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
 . . . There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see
 Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the nuns!
 They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint

God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
 Ringed by a bowery flowery angel-brood,
 350 Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
 As puff on puff of grated orris-root
 When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.
 And then i' the front, of course a saint or two –
 Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
 Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
 The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
 And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
 The man of Uz (and Us without the z,
 Painters who need his patience). Well, all these
 360 Secured at their devotion, up shall come
 Out of a corner when you least expect,
 As one by a dark stair into a great light,
 Music and talking, who but Lippo! I! –
 Mazed, motionless and moonstruck – I'm the man!
 Back I shrink – what is this I see and hear?
 I, caught up with my monk's-things by mistake,
 My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
 I, in this presence, this pure company!
 Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
 370 Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
 Forward, puts out a soft palm – 'Not so fast!'
 – Addresses the celestial presence, 'nay –
 He made you and devised you, after all,
 Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there draw –
 His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?
 We come to brother Lippo for all that,
Iste perfecit opus!' So, all smile –
 I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
 Under the cover of a hundred wings
 380 Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay
 And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
 Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
 The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
 To some safe bench behind, not letting go
 The palm of her, the little lily thing
 That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
 Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
 And so all's saved for me, and for the church

A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
 390 Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights, no lights!
 The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,
 Don't fear me! There's the grey beginning. Zooks!

A Toccata of Galuppi's

I
 Oh Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!
 I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and blind;
 But although I take your meaning, 'tis with such a heavy mind!

II
 Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good it
 brings.
 What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants were
 the kings,
 Where Saint Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with
 rings?

III
 Ay, because the sea's the street there; and 'tis arched by . . . what
 you call
 . . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept the
 carnival:
 I was never out of England – it's as if I saw it all.

IV
 10 Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm in
 May?
 Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to midday,
 When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you say?

V
 Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red, –
 On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its bed,
 O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might base his
 head?

VI
 Well, and it was graceful of them – they'd break talk off and afford
 – She, to bite her mask's black velvet – he, to finger on his sword,
 While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

VII
 What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished, sigh
 on sigh,
 20 Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions –
 'Must we die?'
 Those commiserating sevenths – 'Life might last! we can but
 try!'

VIII
 'Were you happy?' – 'Yes.' – 'And are you still as happy?' –
 'Yes. And you?'
 – 'Then, more kisses!' – 'Did I stop them, when a million
 seemed so few?'
 Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be answered to!

IX
 So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare say!
 'Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!
 I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!'

X
 Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,
 Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well
 undone,
 30 Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the
 sun.

XI
 But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,
 While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
 In you come with your cold music till I creep through every
 nerve.

XII

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was
 burned:
 'Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice
 earned.
 The soul, doubtless, is immortal – where a soul can be discerned.

XIII

'Yours for instance: you know physics, something of geology,
 Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree;
 Butterflies may dread extinction, – you'll not die, it cannot be!

XIV

40 'As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
 Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the
 crop:
 What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

XV

'Dust and ashes!' So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
 Dear dead women, with such hair, too – what's become of all the
 gold
 Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown
 old.

By the Fire-Side

I

How well I know what I mean to do
 When the long dark autumn-evenings come,
 And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
 With the music of all thy voices, dumb
 In life's November too!

II

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
 O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
 While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows
 And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
 10 Not verse now, only prose!

III

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
 'There he is at it, deep in Greek:
 Now then, or never, out we slip
 To cut from the hazels by the creek
 A mainmast for our ship!'

IV

I shall be at it indeed, my friends:
 Greek puts already on either side
 Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
 To a vista opening far and wide,
 20 And I pass out where it ends.

V

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees:
 But the inside-archway widens fast,
 And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
 And we slope to Italy at last
 And youth, by green degrees.

VI

I follow wherever I am led,
 Knowing so well the leader's hand:
 Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
 Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
 30 Laid to their hearts instead!

VII

Look at the ruined chapel again
 Half-way up in the Alpine gorge!
 Is that a tower, I point you plain,
 Or is it a mill, or an iron-forge
 Breaks solitude in vain?

VIII

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
 The woods are round us, heaped and dim;
 From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
 The thread of water single and slim,
 40 Through the ravage some torrent brings!

IX

Does it feed the little lake below?
 That speck of white just on its marge
 Is Pella; see, in the evening-glow,
 How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
 When Alp meets heaven in snow!

X

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
 And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
 By boulder-stones where lichens mock
 The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
 50 Their teeth to the polished block.

XI

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
 And thorny balls, each three in one,
 The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!
 For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
 These early November hours,

XII

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
 Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
 O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
 And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
 60 Elf-needled mat of moss,

XIII

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
 Last evening – nay, in today's first dew
 Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
 Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew
 Of toadstools peep indulged.

XIV

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
 That takes the turn to a range beyond,
 Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
 Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
 70 Danced over by the midge.

XV

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
 Blackish-grey and mostly wet;
 Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dike.
 See here again, how the lichens fret
 And the roots of the ivy strike!

XVI

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
 On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
 To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
 Gathered within that precinct small
 80 By the dozen ways one roams –

XVII

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
 Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
 Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
 Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
 Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

XVIII

It has some pretension too, this front,
 With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
 Set over the porch, Art's early wont:
 'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
 90 But has borne the weather's brunt –

XIX

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
 For a pent-house properly projects
 Where three carved beams make a certain show,
 Dating – good thought of our architect's –
 'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX

And all day long a bird sings there,
 And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;
 The place is silent and aware;
 It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
 100 But that is its own affair.

XXI

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
 Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
 Whom else could I dare look backward for,
 With whom beside should I dare pursue
 The path grey heads abhor?

XXII

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
 Youth, flowery all the way, there stops –
 Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
 Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
 110 One inch from life's safe hem!

XXIII

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
 No longer watch you as you sit
 Reading by fire-light, that great brow
 And the spirit-small hand propping it,
 Mutely, my heart knows how –

XXIV

When, if I think but deep enough,
 You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
 And you, too, find without rebuff
 Response your soul seeks many a time
 120 Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

XXV

My own, confirm me! If I tread
 This path back, is it not in pride
 To think how little I dreamed it led
 To an age so blest that, by its side,
 Youth seems the waste instead?

XXVI

My own, see where the years conduct!
 At first, 'twas something our two souls
 Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
 In each now: on, the new stream rolls,
 130 Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII

Think, when our one soul understands
 The great Word which makes all things new,
 When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
 How will the change strike me and you
 In the house not made with hands?

XXVIII

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
 Your heart anticipate my heart,
 You must be just before, in fine,
 See and make me see, for your part,
 140 New depths of the divine!

XXIX

But who could have expected this
 When we two drew together first
 Just for the obvious human bliss,
 To satisfy life's daily thirst
 With a thing men seldom miss?

XXX

Come back with me to the first of all,
 Let us lean and love it over again,
 Let us now forget and now recall,
 Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
 150 And gather what we let fall!

XXXI

What did I say? – that a small bird sings
 All day long, save when a brown pair
 Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
 Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day glare
 You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII

But at afternoon or almost eve
 'Tis better; then the silence grows
 To that degree, you half believe
 It must get rid of what it knows,
 160 Its bosom does so heave.

XXXIII

Hither we walked then, side by side,
 Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
 And still I questioned or replied,
 While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
 Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
 And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
 And care about the fresco's loss,
 And wish for our souls a like retreat,
 170 And wonder at the moss.

XXXV

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
 Look through the window's grated square:
 Nothing to see! For fear of plunder,
 The cross is down and the altar bare,
 As if thieves don't fear thunder.

XXXVI

We stoop and look in through the grate,
 See the little porch and rustic door,
 Read duly the dead builder's date;
 Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
 180 Take the path again – but wait!

XXXVII

Oh moment, one and infinite!
 The water slips o'er stock and stone;
 The West is tender, hardly bright:
 How grey at once is the evening grown –
 One star, its chrysolite!

XXXVIII

We two stood there with never a third,
 But each by each, as each knew well:
 The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
 The lights and the shades made up a spell
 190 Till the trouble grew and stirred.

XXXIX

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
 And the little less, and what worlds away!
 How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
 Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
 And life be a proof of this!

XL

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
 So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her:
 I could fix her face with a guard between,
 And find her soul as when friends confer,
 200 Friends – lovers that might have been.

XLI

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
 Wanting to sleep now over its best.
 Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
 But bring to the last leaf no such test!
 'Hold the last fast!' runs the rhyme.

XLII

For a chance to make your little much,
 To gain a lover and lose a friend,
 Venture the tree and a myriad such,
 When nothing you mar but the year can mend:
 210 But a last leaf – fear to touch!

XLIII

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
 Eddying down till it find your face
 At some slight wind – best chance of all!
 Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
 You trembled to forestall!

XLIV

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
 That hair so dark and dear, how worth
 That a man should strive and agonize,
 And taste a veriest hell on earth
 220 For the hope of such a prize!

XLV

You might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

XLVI

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word.
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
230 One near one is too far.

XLVII

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast;
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life: we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII

The forests had done it; there they stood;
We caught for a moment the powers at play:
They had mingled us so, for once and good,
Their work was done – we might go or stay,
240 They relapsed to their ancient mood.

XLIX

How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself – to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does!

L

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan;
250 Each living his own, to boot.

LI

I am named and known by that moment's feat;
There took my station and degree;
So grew my own small life complete,
As nature obtained her best of me –
One born to love you, sweet!

LII

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
260 Yonder, my heart knows how!

LIII

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too;
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When autumn comes: which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

Any Wife to Any Husband

I

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou –
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say –
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will,
Would death that leads me from thee brook delay.

II

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
The beating of my heart to reach its place.
10 When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone?
When cry for the old comfort and find none?
Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

III

Oh, I should fade – 'tis willed so! Might I save,
 Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
 Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
 It is not to be granted. But the soul
 Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole;
 Vainly the flesh fades; soul makes all things new.

IV

It would not be because my eye grew dim
 20 Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks to Him
 Who never is dishonoured in the spark
 He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
 Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
 While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

V

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and clean
 Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne
 Alike, this body given to show it by!
 Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,
 What plaudits from the next world after this,
 30 Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky!

VI

And is it not the bitterer to think
 That, disengage our hands and thou wilt sink
 Although thy love was love in very deed?
 I know that nature! Pass a festive day,
 Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
 Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

VII

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell;
 If old things remain old things all is well,
 For thou art grateful as becomes man best:
 40 And hadst thou only heard me play one tune;
 Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
 With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

VIII

I seem to see! We meet and part; 'tis brief;
 The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
 The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank;
 That is a portrait of me on the wall –
 Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call:
 And for all this, one little hour to thank!

IX

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,
 50 Because our inmost beings met and mixed,
 Because thou once hast loved me – wilt thou dare
 Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
 'Therefore she is immortally my bride;
 Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

X

'So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,
 I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,
 Look from my path when, mimicking the same,
 The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone?
 – Where was it till the sunset? where anon
 60 It will be at the sunrise! What's to blame?'

XI

Is it so helpful to thee? Canst thou take
 The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,
 Put gently by such efforts at a beam?
 Is the remainder of the way so long,
 Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong?
 Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream!

XII

– Ah, but the fresher faces! 'Is it true,'
 Thou'lt ask, 'some eyes are beautiful and new?'
 Some hair, – how can one choose but grasp such wealth?
 70 And if a man would press his lips to lips
 Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips
 The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth?

XIII

'It cannot change the love still kept for Her,
More than if such a picture I prefer
 Passing a day with, to a room's bare side:
The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
Yet, while the Titian's Venus lies at rest,
 A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?'

XIV

80 So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
 Its warrant to the very thefts from me –
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud.
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
 Thy man's-truth I was bold to bid God see!

XV

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou canst
Away to the new faces – disentranced,
 (Say it and think it) obdurate no more:
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint,
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
90 Image and superscription once they bore!

XVI

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend, –
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
 Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shalt be,
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
 Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee!

XVII

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
 Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
100 Why need the other women know so much,
And talk together, 'Such the look and such
 The smile he used to love with, then as now!'

XVIII

Might I die last and show thee! Should I find
Such hardship in the few years left behind,
 If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
 The better that they are so blank, I know!

XIX

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
110 Within my mind each look, get more and more
 By heart each word, too much to learn at first;
And join thee all the fitter for the pause
'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were cause
 For lingering, though thou called'st, if I durst!

XX

And yet thou art the nobler of us two:
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
 Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?
I'll say then, here's a trial and a task –
Is it to bear? – if easy, I'll not ask:
120 Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

XXI

Pride? – when those eyes forestall the life behind
The death I have to go through! – when I find,
 Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past
 And I wake saved. – And yet it will not be!

*An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of
Karshish, the Arab Physician*

Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapour from his mouth, man's soul)

– To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
 Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
 Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
 10 Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,
 Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
 Back and rejoin its source before the term, –
 And aptest in contrivance (under God)
 To baffle it by deftly stopping such: –
 The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
 Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)
 Three samples of true snakestone – rarer still,
 One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
 (But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)
 20 And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho:
 Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
 Shall count a little labour unrepaid?
 I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
 On many a flinty furlong of this land.
 Also, the country-side is all on fire
 With rumours of a marching hitherward:
 Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
 A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear;
 30 Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:
 I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
 Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
 And once a town declared me for a spy;
 But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
 Since this poor covert where I pass the night,
 This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
 A man with plague-sores at the third degree
 Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here!
 'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
 40 To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
 And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
 A viscid choler is observable
 In tertians, I was nearly bold to say;
 And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
 Than our school wots of: there's a spider here
 Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
 Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back;

Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,
 The Syrian runagate I trust this to?
 50 His service payeth me a sublimate
 Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
 Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,
 There set in order my experiences,
 Gather what most deserves, and give thee all –
 Or I might add, Judea's gum-tragacanth
 Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
 Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
 In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
 Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy –
 60 Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar –
 But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
 Protesteth his devotion is my price –
 Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal?
 I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
 What set me off a-writing first of all.
 An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!
 For, be it this town's barrenness – or else
 The Man had something in the look of him –
 70 His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth.
 So, pardon if – (lest presently I lose
 In the great press of novelty at hand
 The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
 I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
 Almost in sight – for, wilt thou have the truth?
 The very man is gone from me but now,
 Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
 Thus then, and let thy better wit help all!

'Tis but a case of mania – subinduced
 80 By epilepsy, at the turning-point
 Of trance prolonged unduly some three days:
 When, by the exhibition of some drug
 Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art
 Unknown to me and which 'twere well to know,
 The evil thing out-breaking all at once
 Left the man whole and sound of body indeed, –
 But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,

Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
 The first conceit that entered might inscribe
 90 Whatever it was minded on the wall
 So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
 (First come, first served) that nothing subsequent
 Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls
 The just-returned and new-established soul
 Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
 That henceforth she will read or these or none.
 And first – the man's own-firm conviction rests
 That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
 – That he was dead and then restored to life
 100 By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:
 – 'Sayeth, the same bade 'Rise,' and he did rise.
 'Such cases are diurnal,' thou wilt cry.
 Not so this figment! – not, that such a fume,
 Instead of giving way to time and health,
 Should eat itself into the life of life,
 As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all!
 For see, how he takes up the after-life.
 The man – it is one Lazarus a Jew,
 Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
 110 The body's habit wholly laudable,
 As much, indeed, beyond the common health
 As he were made and put aside to show.
 Think, could we penetrate by any drug
 And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
 And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep!
 Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?
 This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
 Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
 Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
 120 To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
 Now sharply, now with sorrow, – told the case, –
 He listened not except I spoke to him,
 But folded his two hands and let them talk,
 Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool.
 And that's a sample how his years must go.
 Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
 Should find a treasure, – can he use the same
 With straitened habits and with tastes starved small,
 And take at once to his impoverished brain

130 The sudden element that changes things,
 That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand
 And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?
 Is he not such an one as moves to mirth –
 Warily parsimonious, when no need,
 Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times?
 All prudent counsel as to what befits
 The golden mean, is lost on such an one:
 The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
 So here – we call the treasure knowledge, say,
 140 Increased beyond the fleshly faculty –
 Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
 Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven:
 The man is witless of the size, the sum,
 The value in proportion of all things,
 Or whether it be little or be much.
 Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
 Assembled to besiege his city now,
 And of the passing of a mule with gourds –
 'Tis one! Then take it on the other side,
 150 Speak of some trifling fact, – he will gaze rapt
 With stupor at its very littleness,
 (Far as I see) as if in that indeed
 He caught prodigious import, whole results;
 And so will turn to us the bystanders
 In ever the same stupor (note this point)
 That we too see not with his opened eyes.
 Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
 Preposterously, at cross-purposes.
 Should his child sicken unto death, – why, look
 160 For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
 Or pretermission of the daily craft!
 While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
 At play or in the school or laid asleep,
 Will startle him to an agony of fear,
 Exasperation, just as like. Demand
 The reason why – 'tis but a word,' object –
 'A gesture' – he regards thee as our lord
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
 Looked at us (dost thou mind?) when, being young,
 170 We both would unadvisedly recite
 Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,

Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
 All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
 Thou and the child have each a veil alike
 Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both
 Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
 Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!
 He holds on firmly to some thread of life –
 (It is the life to lead perforce)
 180 Which runs across some vast distracting orb
 Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
 Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet –
 The spiritual life around the earthly life:
 The law of that is known to him as this,
 His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
 So is the man perplexed with impulses
 Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
 Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
 And not along, this black thread through the blaze –
 190 'It should be' balked by 'here it cannot be.'
 And oft the man's soul springs into his face
 As if he saw again and heard again
 His sage that bade him 'Rise' and he did rise.
 Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within
 Admonishes: then back he sinks at once
 To ashes, who was very fire before,
 In sedulous recurrence to his trade
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,
 200 Professedly the faultier that he knows
 God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
 Indeed the especial marking of the man
 Is prone submission to the heavenly will –
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
 For that same death which must restore his being
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul
 Divorced even now by premature full growth:
 He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
 210 So long as God please, and just how God please.
 He even seeketh not to please God more
 (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
 Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach

The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
 Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do:
 How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
 His own conviction? Ardent as he is –
 Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
 'Be it as God please' reassureth him.
 220 I probed the sore as thy disciple should:
 'How, beast,' said I, 'this stolid carelessness'
 Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
 To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
 Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?'
 He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
 The man is apathetic, you deduce?
 Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
 Able and weak, affects the very brutes
 And birds – how say I? flowers of the field –
 230 As a wise workman recognizes tools
 In a master's workshop, loving what they make.
 Thus is the man, as harmless as a lamb:
 Only impatient, let him do his best,
 At ignorance and carelessness and sin –
 An indignation which is promptly curbed:
 As when in certain travels I have feigned
 To be an ignoramus in our art
 According to some preconceived design,
 And happed to hear the land's practitioners
 240 Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
 Prattle fantastically on disease,
 Its cause and cure – and I must hold my peace!

 Thou wilt object – Why have I not ere this
 Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
 Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,
 Conferring with the frankness that befits?
 Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
 Perished in a tumult many years ago,
 Accused, – our learning's fate, – of wizardry,
 250 Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
 And creed prodigious as described to me.
 His death, which happened when the earthquake fell
 (Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
 To occult learning in our lord the sage

Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
 Was wrought by the mad people – that's their wont!
 On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
 To his tried virtue, for miraculous help –
 How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way!
 260 The other imputations must be lies:
 But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,
 In mere respect for any good man's fame.
 (And after all, our patient Lazarus
 Is stark mad; should we count on what he says?
 Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech
 'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)
 This man so cured regards the curer, then,
 As – God forgive me! who but God himself,
 Creator and sustainer of the world,
 270 That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!
 – 'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived,
 Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
 Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
 And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,
 And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
 In hearing of this very Lazarus
 Who saith – but why all this of what he saith?
 Why write of trivial matters, things of price
 Calling at every moment for remark?
 280 I noticed on the margin of a pool
 Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
 Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
 Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
 Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!
 Nor I myself discern in what is writ
 Good cause for the peculiar interest
 And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
 Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
 290 Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus:
 I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
 Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
 A moon made like a face with certain spots
 Multiform, manifold and menacing:
 Then a wind rose behind me. So we met

In this old sleepy town at unaware,
 The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
 Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
 To this ambiguous Syrian – he may lose,
 300 Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.
 Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
 For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine;
 Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
 So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too –
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice
 Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
 Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
 Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
 310 But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
 And thou must love me who have died for thee!'
 The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

Mesmerism

I
 All I believed is true!
 I am able yet
 All I want, to get
 By a method as strange as new:
 Dare I trust the same to you?

II
 If at night, when doors are shut,
 And the wood-worm picks,
 And the death-watch ticks,
 And the bar has a flag of smut,
 10 And a cat's in the water-butt –

III
 And the socket floats and flares,
 And the house-beams groan,
 And a foot unknown
 Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
 And the locks slip unawares –

IV

And the spider, to serve his ends,
 By a sudden thread,
 Arms and legs outspread,
 On the table's midst descends,
 20 Comes to find, God knows what friends! -

V

If since eve drew in, I say,
 I have sat and brought
 (So to speak) my thought
 To bear on the woman away,
 Till I felt my hair turn grey -

VI

Till I seemed to have and hold,
 In the vacancy
 'Twixt the wall and me,
 From the hair-plait's chestnut gold
 30 To the foot in its muslin fold -

VII

Have and hold, then and there,
 Her, from head to foot,
 Breathing and mute,
 Passive and yet aware,
 In the grasp of my steady stare -

VIII

Hold and have, there and then,
 All her body and soul
 That completes my whole,
 All that women add to men,
 40 In the clutch of my steady ken -

IX

Having and holding, till
 I imprint her fast
 On the void at last
 As the sun does whom he will
 By the calotypist's skill -

X

Then, - if my heart's strength serve,
 And through all and each
 Of the veils I reach
 To her soul and never swerve,
 50 Knitting an iron nerve -

XI

Command her soul to advance
 And inform the shape
 Which has made escape
 And before my countenance
 Answers me glance for glance -

XII

I, still with a gesture fit
 Of my hands that best
 Do my soul's behest,
 Pointing the power from it,
 60 While myself do steadfast sit -

XIII

Steadfast and still the same
 On my object bent,
 While the hands give vent
 To my ardour and my aim
 And break into very flame -

XIV

Then I reach, I must believe,
 Not her soul in vain,
 For to me again
 It reaches, and past retrieve
 70 Is wound in the toils I weave;

XV

And must follow as I require,
 As befits a thrall,
 Bringing flesh and all,
 Essence and earth-attire,
 To the source of the tractile fire:

XVI

Till the house called hers, not mine,
 With a growing weight
 Seems to suffocate
 If she break not its leaden line
 80 And escape from its close confine.

XVII

Out of doors into the night!
 On to the maze
 Of the wild wood-ways,
 Not turning to left nor right
 From the pathway, blind with sight -

XVIII

Making through rain and wind
 O'er the broken shrubs,
 'Twixt the stems and stubs,
 With a still, composed, strong mind,
 90 Nor a care for the world behind -

XIX

Swifter and still more swift,
 As the crowding peace
 Doth to joy increase
 In the wide blind eyes uplift
 Through the darkness and the drift!

XX

While I - to the shape, I too
 Feel my soul dilate
 Nor a whit abate,
 And relax not a gesture due,
 100 As I see my belief come true.

XXI

For, there! have I drawn or no
 Life to that lip?
 Do my fingers dip
 In a flame which again they throw
 On the cheek that breaks a-glow?

XXII

Ha! was the hair so first?
 What, unfileted,
 Made alive, and spread
 Through the void with a rich outburst,
 110 Chestnut gold-interspersed?

XXIII

Like the doors of a casket-shrine,
 See, on either side,
 Her two arms divide
 Till the heart betwixt makes sign,
 Take me, for I am thine!

XXIV

'Now - now' - the door is heard!
 Hark, the stairs! and near -
 Nearer - and here -
 'Now!' and at call the third
 120 She enters without a word.

XXV

On doth she march and on
 To the fancied shape;
 It is, past escape,
 Herself, now: the dream is done
 And the shadow and she are one.

XXVI

First I will pray. Do Thou
 That ownest the soul,
 Yet wilt grant control
 To another, nor disallow
 130 For a time, restrain me now!

XXVII

I admonish me while I may,
 Not to squander guilt,
 Since require Thou wilt
 At my hand its price one day!
 What the price is, who can say?

A Serenade at the Villa

I
That was I, you heard last night,
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small:
Life was dead and so was light.

II
Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm;
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
10 You heard music; that was I.

III
Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof:
In at heaven and out again,
Lightning! – where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV
What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
20 To my lute I left the rest.

V
So wore night; the East was grey,
White the broad-faced hemlock-flowers:
There would be another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

VI
What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you – 'When life gropes
Feebly for the path where fell
30 Light last on the evening slopes,

VII
'One friend in that path shall be,
To secure my step from wrong;
One to count night day for me,
Patient through the watches long,
Serving most with none to see.'

VIII
Never say – as something bodes –
'So, the worst has yet a worse!
When life halts 'neath double loads,
Better the taskmaster's curse
40 Than such music on the roads!

IX
'When no moon succeeds the sun,
Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
Any star, the smallest one,
While some drops, where lightning rent,
Show the final storm begun –

X
'When the fire-fly hides its spot,
When the garden-voices fail
In the darkness thick and hot, –
Shall another voice avail,
50 That shape be where these are not?

XI
'Has some plague a longer lease,
Proffering its help uncouth?
Can't one even die in peace?
As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
Is that face the last one sees?'

XII

Oh how dark your villa was,
 Windows fast and obdurate!
 How the garden grudged me grass
 Where I stood – the iron gate
 60 Ground its teeth to let me pass!

My Star

All that I know
 Of a certain star
 Is, it can throw
 (Like the angled spar)
 Now a dart of red,
 Now a dart of blue;
 Till my friends have said
 They would fain see, too,
 My star that dartles the red and the blue!
 10 Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:
 They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
 What matter to me if their star is a world?
 Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

Instans Tyrannus

I

Of the million or two, more or less,
 I rule and possess,
 One man, for some cause undefined,
 Was least to my mind.

II

I struck him, he grovelled of course –
 For, what was his force?
 I pinned him to earth with my weight
 And persistence of hate:
 And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
 10 As his lot might be worse.

III

'Were the object less mean, would he stand
 At the swing of my hand!
 For obscurity helps him and blots
 The hole where he squats.'
 So, I set my five wits on the stretch
 To inveigle the wretch.
 All in vain! Gold and jewels I threw,
 Still he couched there perdue;
 I tempted his blood and his flesh,
 20 Hid in roses my mesh,
 Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilth:
 Still he kept to his filth.

IV

Had he kith now or kin, were access
 To his heart, did I press:
 Just a son or a mother to seize!
 No such booty as these.
 Were it simply a friend to pursue
 'Mid my million or two,
 Who could pay me in person or pelf
 30 What he owes me himself!
 No: I could not but smile through my chafe:
 For the fellow lay safe
 As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
 – Through minuteness, to wit.

V

Then a humour more great took its place
 At the thought of his face,
 The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
 The trouble uncouth
 'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
 40 To put out of its pain.
 And, 'no!' I admonished myself,
 'Is one mocked by an elf,
 Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
 The gravamen's in that!
 How the lion, who crouches to suit
 His back to my foot,
 Would admire that I stand in debate!

But the small turns the great
 If it vexes you, – that is the thing!
 50 Toad or rat vex the king?
 Though I waste half my realm to unearth
 Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!

VI
 So, I soberly laid my last plan
 To extinguish the man.
 Round his creep-hole, with never a break
 Ran my fires for his sake;
 Over-head, did my thunder combine
 With my underground mine:
 Till I looked from my labour content
 60 To enjoy the event.

VII
 When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
 Did I say 'without friend'?
 Say rather, from marge to blue marge
 The whole sky grew his targe
 With the sun's self for visible boss,
 While an Arm ran across
 Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
 Where the wretch was safe prest!
 Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
 70 The man sprang to his feet,
 Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
 – So, I was afraid!

A Pretty Woman

I
 That fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
 And the blue eye
 Dear and dewy,
 And that infantine fresh air of hers!

II
 To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
 And enfold you,
 Ay, and hold you,
 And so keep you what they make you, Sweet!

III
 You like us for a glance, you know –
 10 For a word's sake
 Or a sword's sake,
 All's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

IV
 And in turn we make you ours, we say –
 You and youth too,
 Eyes and mouth too,
 All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V
 All's our own, to make the most of, Sweet –
 Sing and say for,
 Watch and pray for,
 20 Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet!

VI
 But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
 Though we prayed you,
 Paid you, brayed you
 In a mortar – for you could not, Sweet!

VII
 So, we leave the sweet face fondly there:
 Be its beauty
 Its sole duty!
 Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

VIII
 And while the face lies quiet there,
 30 Who shall wonder
 That I ponder
 A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX

As, – why must one, for the love foregone,
 Scout mere liking?
 Thunder-striking
 Earth, – the heaven, we looked above for, gone!

X

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
 Love with liking?
 Crush the fly-king
 40 In his gauze, because no honey-bee?

XI

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
 If love grew there
 'Twould undo there
 All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

XII

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
 Would you mend it
 And so end it?
 Since not all addition perfects aye!

XIII

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
 50 Just perfection –
 Whence, rejection
 Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
 Into tinder,
 And so hinder
 Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

XV

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
 Your love-fancies!
 – A sick man sees
 60 Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

XVI

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose, –
 Plucks a mould-flower
 For his gold flower,
 Uses fine things that efface the rose:

XVII

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
 Precious metals
 Ape the petals, –
 Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

XVIII

Then how grace a rose? I know a way!
 70 Leave it, rather.
 Must you gather?
 Smell, kiss, wear it – at last, throw away!

'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Game'

(See Edgar's song in *Lear*)

I

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
 That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
 Askance to watch the working of his lie
 On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
 Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
 Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

II

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
 What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
 All travellers who might find him posted there,
 10 And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
 Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
 For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III

If at his counsel I should turn aside
 Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
 Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
 I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
 Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
 So much as gladness that some end might be.

IV

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
 20 What with my search drawn out through years, my hope
 Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
 With that obstreperous joy success would bring, –
 I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
 My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

V

As when a sick man very near to death
 Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
 The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
 And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
 Freelier outside, ('since all is o'er,' he saith,
 30 'And the blow fallen no grieving can amend';)

VI

While some discuss if near the other graves
 Be room enough for this, and when a day
 Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
 With care about the banners, scarves and staves:
 And still the man hears all, and only craves
 He may not shame such tender love and stay.

VII

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
 Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
 So many times among 'The Band' – to wit,
 40 The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
 Their steps – that just to fail as they, seemed best,
 And all the doubt was now – should I be fit?

VIII

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
 That hateful cripple, out of his highway
 Into the path he pointed. All the day
 Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
 Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
 Red leer to see the plain catch its stray.

IX

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
 50 Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
 Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
 O'er the safe road, 'twas gone; grey plain all round:
 Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
 I might go on; naught else remained to do.

X

So, on I went. I think I never saw
 Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:
 For flowers – as well expect a cedar grove!
 But cockle, spurge, according to their law
 Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
 60 You'd think; a burr had been a treasure-trove.

XI

No! penury, inertness and grimace,
 In some strange sort, were the land's portion. 'See
 Or shut your eyes,' said Nature peevishly,
 'It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
 'Tis the Last Judgement's fire must cure this place,
 Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free.'

XII

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
 Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents
 Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
 70 In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to balk
 All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must walk
 Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

XIII

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
 In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
 Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
 One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
 Stood stupefied, however he came there:
 Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

XIV

80 Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
 With that red gaunt and coloped neck a-strain,
 And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
 Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;
 I never saw a brute I hated so;
 He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

XV

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
 As a man calls for wine before he fights,
 I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
 Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
 Think first, fight afterwards – the soldier's art:
 90 One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

XVI

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
 Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
 Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
 An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
 That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
 Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

XVII

Giles then, the soul of honour – there he stands
 Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
 What honest man should dare (he said) he durst.
 100 Good – but the scene shifts – faugh! what hangman-hands
 Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
 Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!

XVIII

Better this present than a past like that;
 Back therefore to my darkening path again!
 No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
 Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
 I asked: when something on the dismal flat
 Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

XIX

110 A sudden little river crossed my path
 As unexpected as a serpent comes.
 No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
 This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
 For the fiend's glowing hoof – to see the wrath
 Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

XX

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
 Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
 Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
 Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
 The river which had done them all the wrong,
 120 Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

XXI

Which, while I forded, – good saints, how I feared
 To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
 Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
 For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
 – It may have been a water-rat I speared,
 But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
 Now for a better country. Vain presage!
 Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,
 130 Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
 Soil to a splash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
 Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage –

XXIII

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
 What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
 No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
 None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
 Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
 Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

XXIV

And more than that – a furlong on – why, there!
 140 What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
 Or brake, not wheel – that harrow fit to reel
 Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
 Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
 Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

XXV

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
 Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
 Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,
 Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
 Changes and off he goes!) within a rood –
 150 Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

XXVI

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
 Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
 Broke into moss or substances like boils;
 Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
 Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
 Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII

And just as far as ever from the end!
 Naught in the distance but the evening, naught
 To point my footstep further! At the thought,
 160 A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
 Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
 That brushed my cap – perchance the guide I sought.

XXVIII

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
 'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
 All round to mountains – with such name to grace
 Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
 How thus they had surprised me, – solve it, you!
 How to get from them was no clearer case.

XXIX

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
 170 Of mischief happened to me, God knows when –
 In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
 Progress this way. When, in the very nick
 Of giving up, one time more, came a click
 As when a trap shuts – you're inside the den!

XXX

Burningly it came on me all at once,
 This was the place! those two hills on the right,
 Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight;
 While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,
 Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
 180 After a life spent training for the sight!

XXXI

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
 The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
 Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
 In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
 Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
 He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

XXXII

Not see? because of night perhaps? – why, day
 Came back again for that! before it left,
 The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
 190 The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
 Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay, –
 'Now stab and end the creature – to the heft!'

XXXIII

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled
 Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
 Of all the lost adventurers my peers, –
 How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
 And such was fortunate, yet each of old
 Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

XXXIV

200 There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met
 To view the last of me, a living frame
 For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
 I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
 Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
 And blew. 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.'

Respectability

I

Dear, had the world in its caprice
 Deigned to proclaim 'I know you both,
 Have recognized your plighted troth,
 Am sponsor for you: live in peace!' –
 How many precious months and years
 Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
 Before we found it out at last,
 The world, and what it fears?

II

10 How much of priceless life were spent
 With men that every virtue decks,
 And women models of their sex,
 Society's true ornament, –
 Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
 Through wind and rain, and watch the Seine,
 And feel the Boulevard break again
 To warmth and light and bliss?

III

I know! the world proscribes not love;
 Allows my finger to caress
 Your lips' contour and downiness,
 20 Provided it supply a glove.
 The world's good word! – the Institute!
 Guizot receives Montalembert!
 Eh? Down the court three lampions flare:
 Put forward your best foot!

A Light Woman

I

So far as our story approaches the end,
 Which do you pity the most of us three? –
 My friend, or the mistress of my friend
 With her wanton eyes, or me?

II

My friend was already too good to lose,
 And seemed in the way of improvement yet,
 When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose
 And over him drew her net.

III

10 When I saw him tangled in her toils,
 A shame, said I, if she adds just him
 To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
 The hundredth for a whim!

IV

And before my friend be wholly hers,
 How easy to prove to him, I said,
 An eagle's the game her pride prefers,
 Though she snaps at a wren instead!

V

So, I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,
 My hand sought hers as in earnest need,
 And round she turned for my noble sake,
 20 And gave me herself indeed.

VI

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,
 The wren is he, with his maiden face.
 - You look away and your lip is curled?
 Patience, a moment's space!

VII

For see, my friend goes shaking and white;
 He eyes me as the basilisk:
 I have turned, it appears, his day to night,
 Eclipsing his sun's disk.

VIII

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:
 30 'Though I love her - that, he comprehends -
 One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)
 And be loyal to one's friends!'

IX

And she, - she lies in my hand as tame
 As a pear late basking over a wall;
 Just a touch to try and off it came;
 'Tis mine, - can I let it fall?

X

With no mind to eat it, that's the worst!
 Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist?
 'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst
 40 When I gave its stalk a twist.

XI

And I, - what I seem to my friend, you see:
 What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess:
 What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?
 No hero, I confess.

XII

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,
 And matter enough to save one's own:
 Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals
 He played with for bits of stone!

XIII

One likes to show the truth for the truth;
 50 That the woman was light is very true:
 But suppose she says, - Never mind that youth!
 What wrong have I done to you?

XIV

Well, any how, here the story stays,
 So far at least as I understand;
 And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,
 Here's a subject made to your hand!

The Statue and the Bust

There's a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
 And a statue watches it from the square,
 And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
 At the farthest window facing the East
 Asked, 'Who rides by with the royal air?'

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;
 She leaned forth, one on either hand;
 They saw how the blush of the bride increased -

10 They felt by its beats her heart expand -
 As one at each ear and both in a breath
 Whispered, 'The Great-Duke Ferdinand.'

That self-same instant, underneath,
 The Duke rode past in his idle way,
 Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back – ‘Who is she?’
– ‘A bride the Riccardi brings home today.’

Hair in heaps lay heavily
20 Over a pale brow spirit-pure –
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed’s encolure –
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight’s emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man, –
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;
She looked at him, as one who awakes:
30 The past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic’s murder there
By Cosimo and his cursèd son.)

40 The Duke (with the statue’s face in the square)
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued –

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor –
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
50 If a word did pass, which I do not think,
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day’s brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bedchamber by a taper’s blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalque repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the East,
60 She could watch like a convent’s chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

‘Freely I choose too,’ said the bride –
‘Your window and its world suffice,’
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied –

‘If I spend the night with that devil twice,
May his window serve as my loop of hell
Whence a damned soul looks on paradise!

70 ‘I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
Ere I count another ave-bell.

‘Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
And tie my hair in a horse-boy’s trim,
And I save my soul – but not tomorrow’ –

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)
 'My father tarries to bless my state:
 I must keep it one day more for him.

'Is one day more so long to wait?
 80 Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;
 We shall see each other, sure as fate.'

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!
 So we resolve on a thing and sleep:
 So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, 'Dear or cheap
 As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
 To body or soul, I will drain it deep.'

And on the morrow, bold with love,
 He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
 90 As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled 'Twas a very funeral,
 Your lady will think, this feast of ours, -
 A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

'What if we break from the Arno bowers,
 And try if Petraja, cool and green,
 Cure last night's fault with this morning's flowers?'

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
 On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
 Said, 'Too much favour for me so mean!

100 'But, alas! my lady leaves the South;
 Each wind that comes from the Apennine
 Is a menace to her tender youth:

'Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
 If she quits her palace twice this year,
 To avert the flower of life's decline.'

Quoth the Duke, 'A sage and a kindly fear.
 Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:
 Be our feast tonight as usual here!'

And then to himself - 'Which night shall bring
 110 Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool -
 Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

'Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool -
 For tonight the Envoy arrives from France
 Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

'I need thee still and might miss perchance.
 Today is not wholly lost, beside,
 With its hope of my lady's countenance:

'For I ride - what should I do but ride?
 And passing her palace, if I list,
 120 May glance at its window - well betide!'

So said, so done: nor the lady missed
 One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
 Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
 No morrow's sun should arise and set
 And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
 With still fresh cause to wait one day more
 Ere each leaped over the parapet.

130 And still, as love's brief morning wore,
 With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
 They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
 But not in despite of heaven and earth:
 The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth
By store of fruits that supplant the rose:
The world and its ways have a certain worth:

140 And to press a point while these oppose
Were simple policy; better wait:
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,
Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she – she watched the square like a book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook:

150 When the picture was reached the book was done,
And she turned from the picture at night to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years; gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above:
But who can take a dream for a truth?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

160 The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked, –
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass –
'Summon here,' she suddenly said,
Before the rest of my old self pass,

'Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
Who fashions the clay no love will change,
And fixes a beauty never to fade.

170 'Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
Arrest the remains of young and fair,
And rivet them while the seasons range.

'Make me a face on the window there,
Waiting as ever, mute the while,
My love to pass below in the square!

'And let me think that it may beguile
Dreary days which the dead must spend
Down in their darkness under the aisle,

180 'To say, "What matters it at the end?
I did no more while my heart was warm
Than does that image, my pale-faced friend."

'Where is the use of the lip's red charm,
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
And the blood that blues the inside arm –

'Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
The earthly gift to an end divine?
A lady of clay is as good, I trow.'

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine,
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
Was set where now is the empty shrine –

190 (And, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
The passionate pale lady's face –

Eyeing ever, with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
Some one who ever is passing by –)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch
In Florence, 'Youth – my dream escapes!
Will its record stay?' And he bade them fetch

200 Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes –
'Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

'John of Douay shall effect my plan,
Set me on horseback here aloft,
Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

'In the very square I have crossed so oft:
That men may admire, when future suns
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

210 'While the mouth and the brow stay brave in bronze –
Admire and say, "When he was alive
How he would take his pleasure once!"

'And it shall go hard but I contrive
To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb
At idleness which aspires to strive.'

So! While these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

220 Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss –
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way through the world to this.

I hear you reproach, 'But delay was best,
For their end was a crime.' – Oh, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

230 As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment's view!

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?
Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham:
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table's a hat, and your prize a dram.

240 Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play! – is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin:
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

250 Is – the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you? *De te, fabula.*

Love in a Life

I
Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her –

Next time, herself! – not the trouble behind her
 Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
 As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew:
 Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II

Yet the day wears,
 10 And door succeeds door;
 I try the fresh fortune –
 Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
 Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
 Spend my whole day in the quest, – who cares?
 But 'tis twilight, you see, – with such suites to explore,
 Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

Life in a Love

Escape me?
 Never –
 Beloved!
 While I am I, and you are you,
 So long as the world contains us both,
 Me the loving and you the loth,
 While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
 My life is a fault at last, I fear:
 It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
 10 Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.
 But what if I fail of my purpose here?
 It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
 To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
 And, baffled, get up and begin again, –
 So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.
 While, look but once from your farthest bound
 At me so deep in the dust and dark,
 No sooner the old hope goes to ground
 Than a new one, straight to the self-same mark,
 20 I shape me –
 Ever
 Removed!

How It Strikes a Contemporary

I only knew one poet in my life:
 And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,
 A man of mark, to know next time you saw.
 His very serviceable suit of black
 Was courtly once and conscientious still,
 And many might have worn it, though none did:
 The cloak, that somewhat shone and showed the threads,
 Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.
 10 He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane,
 Scenting the world, looking it full in face,
 An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels.
 They turned up, now, the alley by the church,
 That leads nowhither; now, they breathed themselves
 On the main promenade just at the wrong time:
 You'd come upon his scrutinizing hat,
 Making a peaked shade blacker than itself
 Against the single window spared some house
 Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work, –
 20 Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick
 Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks
 Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.
 He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
 The man who slices lemons into drink,
 The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys
 That volunteer to help him turn its winch.
 He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
 And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,
 And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.
 30 He took such cognizance of men and things,
 If any beat a horse, you felt he saw;
 If any cursed a woman, he took note;
 Yet stared at nobody, – you stared at him,
 And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,
 He seemed to know you and expect as much.
 So, next time that a neighbour's tongue was loosed,
 It marked the shameful and notorious fact,
 We had among us, not so much a spy,

As a recording chief-inquisitor,
 40 The town's true master if the town but knew!
 We merely kept a governor for form,
 While this man walked about and took account
 Of all thought, said and acted, then went home,
 And wrote it fully to our Lord the King
 Who has an itch to know things, he knows why,
 And reads them in his bedroom of a night.
 Oh, you might smile! there wanted not a touch,
 A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease
 As back into your mind the man's look came.
 50 Stricken in years a little, – such a brow
 His eyes had to live under! – clear as flint
 On either side the formidable nose
 Curved, cut and coloured like an eagle's claw.
 Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate?
 When altogether old B. disappeared
 And young C. got his mistress, – was't our friend,
 His letter to the King, that did it all?
 What paid the bloodless man for so much pains?
 Our Lord the King has favourites manifold,
 60 And shifts his ministry some once a month;
 Our city gets new governors at whiles, –
 But never word or sign, that I could hear,
 Notified to this man about the streets
 The King's approval of those letters conned
 The last thing duly at the dead of night.
 Did the man love his office? Frowned our Lord,
 Exhorting when none heard – 'Beseech me not!
 Too far above my people, – beneath me!
 I set the watch, – how should the people know?
 70 Forget them, keep me all the more in mind!'

Was some such understanding 'twixt the two?

I found no truth in one report at least –
 That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes
 Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,
 You found he ate his supper in a room
 Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall,
 And twenty naked girls to change his plate!
 Poor man, he lived another kind of life
 In that new stuccoed third house by the bridge,

80 Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwise!
 The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat,
 Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back,
 Playing a decent cribbage with his maid
 (Jacynth, you're sure her name was) o'er the cheese
 And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears,
 Or treat of radishes in April. Nine,
 Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he was,
 Would point him out to me a dozen times;
 90 'St – 'St,' he'd whisper, 'the Corregidor!'
 I had been used to think that personage
 Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,
 And feathers like a forest in his hat,
 Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news,
 Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn,
 And memorized the miracle in vogue!
 He had a great observance from us boys;
 We were in error; that was not the man.

I'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,
 100 To have just looked, when this man came to die,
 And seen who lined the clean gay garret-sides
 And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,
 With the heavenly manner of relieving guard.
 Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,
 Through a whole campaign of the world's life and death,
 Doing the King's work all the dim day long,
 In his old coat and up to knees in mud,
 Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust, –
 And, now the day was won, relieved at once!
 110 No further show or need for that old coat,
 You are sure, for one thing! Bless us, all the while
 How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I!
 A second, and the angels alter that.
 Well, I could never write a verse, – could you?
 Let's to the Prado and make the most of time.

The Last Ride Together

I

I said – Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
 Since now at length my fate I know,
 Since nothing all my love avails,
 Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,

Since this was written and needs must be –
 My whole heart rises up to bless
 Your name in pride and thankfulness!
 Take back the hope you gave, – I claim
 Only a memory of the same,
 10 – And this beside, if you will not blame,
 Your leave for one more last ride with me.

II

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
 Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
 When pity would be softening through,
 Fixed me a breathing-while or two

With life or death in the balance: right!
 The blood replenished me again;
 My last thought was at least not vain:
 I and my mistress, side by side
 20 Shall be together, breathe and ride,
 So, one day more am I deified.
 Who knows but the world may end tonight?

III

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
 All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
 By many benedictions – sun's
 And moon's and evening-star's at once –

And so, you, looking and loving best,
 Conscious grew, your passion drew
 Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
 30 Down on you, near and yet more near,
 Till flesh must fade for heaven was here! –
 Thus leant she and lingered – joy and fear!
 Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV

Then we began to ride. My soul
 Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
 Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
 Fast hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry?
 Had I said that, had I done this,
 40 So might I gain, so might I miss.
 Might she have loved me? just as well
 She might have hated, who can tell!
 Where had I been now if the worst befell?
 And here we are riding, she and I.

V

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
 Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
 We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
 Saw other regions, cities new,

As the world rushed by on either side.
 50 I thought, – All labour, yet no less
 Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
 Look at the end of work, contrast
 The petty done, the undone vast,
 This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
 I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

VI

What hand and brain went ever paired?
 What heart alike conceived and dared?
 What act proved all its thought had been?
 What will but felt the fleshly screen?

60 We ride and I see her bosom heave.
 There's many a crown for who can reach.
 Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
 The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
 A soldier's doing! what atones?
 They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
 My riding is better, by their leave.

VII

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
 Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
 What we felt only; you expressed
 70 You hold things beautiful the best,
 And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
 'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
 Have you yourself what's best for men?
 Are you – poor, sick, old ere your time –
 Nearer one whit your own sublime
 Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
 Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

VIII

And you, great sculptor – so, you gave
 A score of years to Art, her slave,
 80 And that's your Venus, whence we turn
 To yonder girl that fords the burn!
 You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
 What, man of music, you grown grey
 With notes and nothing else to say,
 Is this your sole praise from a friend,
 'Greatly his opera's strains intend,
 But in music we know how fashions end!'
 I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

IX

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
 90 Proposed bliss here should sublimate
 My being – had I signed the bond –
 Still one must lead some life beyond,
 Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
 This foot once planted on the goal,
 This glory-garland round my soul,
 Could I descry such? Try and test!
 I sink back shuddering from the quest.
 Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
 Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

X

100 And yet – she has not spoke so long!
 What if heaven be that, fair and strong
 At life's best, with our eyes upturned
 Whither life's flower is first discerned,
 We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
 What if we still ride on, we two
 With life for ever old yet new,
 Changed not in kind but in degree,
 The instant made eternity, –
 And heaven just prove that I and she
 110 Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

The Patriot

An Old Story

I

It was roses, roses, all the way,
 With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:
 The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
 The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
 A year ago on this very day.

II

The air broke into a mist with bells,
 The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
 Had I said, 'Good folk, mere noise repels –
 But give me your sun from yonder skies!'
 10 They had answered, 'And afterward, what else?'

III

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
 To give it my loving friends to keep!
 Naught man could do, have I left undone:
 And you see my harvest, what I reap
 This very day, now a year is run.

IV

There's nobody on the house-tops now –
 Just a palsied few at the windows set;
 For the best of the sight is, all allow,
 At the Shambles' Gate – or, better yet,
 20 By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

V

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
 A rope cuts both my wrists behind;
 And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
 For they fling, whoever has a mind,
 Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

VI

Thus I entered, and thus I go!
 In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
 'Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
 Me?' – God might question; now instead,
 30 'Tis God shall repay: I am safer so.

Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha

I

Hist, but a word, fair and soft!
 Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
 Answer the question I've put you so oft:
 What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?
 See, we're alone in the loft, –

II

I, the poor organist here,
 Hugues, the composer of note,
 Dead though, and done with, this many a year:
 Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,
 10 Make the world prick up its ear!

III

See, the church empties apace:
 Fast they extinguish the lights.
 Hallo there, sacristan! Five minutes' grace!
 Here's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,
 Balks one of holding the bass.

IV

See, our huge house of the sounds,
 Hushing its hundreds at once,
 Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds!
 – O you may challenge them, not a response
 20 Get the church-saints on their rounds!

V

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
 – March, with the moon to admire,
 Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
 Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
 Put rats and mice to the rout –

VI

Aloys and Jurien and Just –
 Order things back to their place,
 Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
 Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament-lace,
 30 Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

VII

Here's your book, younger folks shelve!
 Played I not off-hand and runningly,
 Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?
 Here's what should strike, could one handle it cunningly:
 Help the axe, give it a helve!

VIII

Page after page as I played,
 Every bar's rest, where one wipes
 Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed,
 O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes
 40 Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX

Sure you were wishful to speak?
 You, with brow ruled like a score,
 Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
 Like two great breves, as they wrote them of yore,
 Each side that bar, your straight beak!

X

Sure you said – ‘Good, the mere notes!
 Still, couldst thou take my intent,
 Know what procured me our Company’s votes –
 A master were lauded and sciolists shent,
 50 Parted the sheep from the goats!’

XI

Well then, speak up, never flinch!
 Quick, ere my candle’s a snuff
 – Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch –
 I believe in you, but that’s not enough:
 Give my conviction a clinch!

XII

First you deliver your phrase
 – Nothing propound, that I see,
 Fit in itself for much blame or much praise –
 Answered no less, where no answer needs be:
 60 Off start the Two on their ways.

XIII

Straight must a Third interpose,
 Volunteer needlessly help;
 In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
 So the cry’s open, the kennel’s a-yelp,
 Argument’s hot to the close.

XIV

One dissertates, he is candid;
 Two must discept, – has distinguished;
 Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did;
 Four protests; Five makes a dart at the thing wished:
 70 Back to One, goes the case bandied.

XV

One says his say with a difference;
 More of expounding, explaining!
 All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance;
 Now there’s a truce, all’s subdued, self-restraining:
 Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

XVI

One is incisive, corrosive;
 Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant;
 Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive;
 Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant:
 80 Five . . . O Danaïdes, O Sieve!

XVII

Now, they ply axes and crowbars;
 Now, they prick pins at a tissue
 Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar’s
 Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?
 Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

XVIII

Est fuga, volvitur rota.
 On we drift: where looms the dim port?
 One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota;
 Something is gained, if one caught but the import –
 90 Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

XIX

What with affirming, denying,
 Holding, risposting, subjoining,
 All’s like . . . it’s like . . . for an instance I’m trying . . .
 There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
 Under those spider-webs lying!

XX

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
 Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
 Till we exclaim – ‘But where’s music, the dickens?
 Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens
 100 – Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?’

XXI

I for man's effort am zealous:

Prove me such censure unfounded!
 Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous –
 Hopes 'twas for something, his organ-pipes sounded,
 Tiring three boys at the bellows?

XXII

Is it your moral of Life?

Such a web, simple and subtle,
 Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
 Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
 110 Death ending all with a knife?

XXIII

Over our heads truth and nature –

Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
 Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature –
 God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
 Palled beneath man's usurpature.

XXIV

So we o'er shroud stars and roses,

Cherub and trophy and garland;
 Nothings grow something which quietly closes
 Heaven's earnest eye: not a glimpse of the far land
 120 Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV

Ah but traditions, inventions,

(Say we and make up a visage)
 So many men with such various intentions,
 Down the past ages, must know more than this age!
 Leave we the web its dimensions!

XXVI

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,

Proved a mere mountain in labour?
 Better submit; try again; what's the clef?
 'Faith, 'tis no trifle for pipe and for tabor –
 130 Four flats, the minor in F.

XXVII

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger:

Learning it once, who would lose it?
 Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,
 Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse it –
 Nature, through cobwebs we string her.

XXVIII

Hugues! I advise *meâ poenâ*

(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
 Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena!
 Say the word, straight I unstop the full-organ,
 140 Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

XXIX

While in the roof, if I'm right there,

. . . Lo you, the wick in the socket!
 Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
 Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
 What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
 Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,
 And find a poor devil has ended his cares
 At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs?
 Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

Bishop Blougram's Apology

No more wine? then we'll push back chairs and talk.
 A final glass for me, though: cool, i' faith!
 We ought to have our Abbey back, you see.
 It's different, preaching in basilicas,
 And doing duty in some masterpiece
 Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart!
 I doubt if they're half baked, those chalk rosettes,
 Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings everywhere;
 It's just like breathing in a lime-kiln: eh?
 10 These hot long ceremonies of our church
 Cost us a little – oh, they pay the price,
 You take me – amply pay it! Now, we'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr Gigadibs.
 No deprecation, – nay, I beg you, sir!
 Beside 'tis our engagement: don't you know,
 I promised, if you'd watch a dinner out,
 We'd see truth dawn together? – truth that peeps
 Over the glasses' edge when dinner's done,
 And body gets its sop and holds its noise
 20 And leaves soul free a little. Now's the time:
 Truth's break of day! You do despise me then.
 And if I say, 'despise me,' – never fear!
 I know you do not in a certain sense –
 Not in my arm-chair, for example: here,
 I well imagine you respect my place
 (*Status, entourage, worldly circumstance*)
 Quite to its value – very much indeed:
 – Are up to the protesting eyes of you
 In pride at being seated here for once –
 30 You'll turn it to such capital account!
 When somebody, through years and years to come,
 Hints of the bishop, – names me – that's enough:
 'Blougram? I knew him' – (into it you slide)
 'Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day,
 All alone, we two; he's a clever man:
 And after dinner, – why, the wine you know, –
 Oh, there was wine, and good! – what with the wine . . .
 'Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk!
 He's no bad fellow, Blougram; he had seen
 40 Something of mine he relished, some review:
 He's quite above their humbug in his heart,
 Half-said as much, indeed – the thing's his trade.
 I warrant, Blougram's sceptical at times:
 How otherwise? I liked him, I confess!
Che che, my dear sir, as we say at Rome,
 Don't you protest now! It's fair give and take;
 You have had your turn and spoken your home-truths:
 The hand's mine now, and here you follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays –
 50 You do despise me; your ideal of life
 Is not the bishop's: you would not be I.
 You would like better to be Goethe, now,
 Or Buonaparte, or, bless me, lower still,

Count D'Orsay, – so you did what you preferred,
 Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot help,
 Believed or disbelieved, no matter what,
 So long as on that point, whate'er it was,
 You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself.
 – That, my ideal never can include,
 60 Upon that element of truth and worth
 Never be based! for say they make me Pope –
 (They can't – suppose it for our argument!)
 Why, there I'm at my tether's end, I've reached
 My height, and not a height which pleases you:
 An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say.
 It's like those eerie stories nurses tell,
 Of how some actor on a stage played Death,
 With pasteboard crown, sham orb and tinselled dart,
 And called himself the monarch of the world;
 70 Then, going in the tire-room afterward,
 Because the play was done, to shift himself,
 Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly,
 The moment he had shut the closet door,
 By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope
 At unawares, ask what his baubles mean,
 And whose part he presumed to play just now.
 Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true!

So, drawing comfortable breath again,
 You weigh and find, whatever more or less
 80 I boast of my ideal realized
 Is nothing in the balance when opposed
 To your ideal, your grand simple life,
 Of which you will not realize one jot.
 I am much, you are nothing; you would be all,
 I would be merely much: you beat me there.

No, friend, you do not beat me: hearken why!
 The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,
 Is – not to fancy what were fair in life
 Provided it could be, – but, finding first
 90 What may be, then find how to make it fair
 Up to our means: a very different thing!
 No abstract intellectual plan of life
 Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws,

But one, a man, who is man and nothing more,
 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!

- 100 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 landsman'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;
 110 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!
 'Twere 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 Modenese! –
 Yet was not on your list before, perhaps.
 – Alas, friend, here's the agent . . . is't the name?
 120 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 accordingly –
 And if, in pique because he overhauls
 Your Jerome, piano, 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,
 130 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;
 'Tis stout and proper, and there's store of it:
 Though I've the better notion, all agree,
 Of fitting rooms up. Hang the carpenter,
 Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances –
 140 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; criticize!
 What's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too?

- 150 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,
 160 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,
 170 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
 Today, tomorrow 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
 180 The gain? how can we guard our unbelief,
 Make it bear fruit to us? – the problem here.
 Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-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 fantastic ring,
 Round the ancient idol, on his base again, –
 190 The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly.
 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 meant for a road;
 200 While, if he views it from the waste itself,
 Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,
 Not vague, mistakable! 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 unbelief
 210 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 unbelief
 Left to a man's choice, – we'll proceed a step,
 220 Returning to our image, which I like.

A man's choice, yes – but a cabin-passenger's –
 The man made for the special life o' 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
 Bears upon life, determines its whole course,
 230 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 naught 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.
 240 – For you, it does, however? – that, we'll try!
 'Tis 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
 250 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 recognize 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 unawares!
 260 And certainly at night you'll sleep and dream,
 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 o' 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;
 270 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
 280 For riches, honour, pleasure, work, repose,
 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 otherwise:
 We let him choose upon his own account
 So long as he's consistent with his choice.
 But certain points, left wholly to himself,
 290 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, whatso'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 mistake
 On such a point, the man himself being judge:
 300 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!
 310 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, but 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, Hildebrand'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,
 320 Who have a soul and body that exact
 A comfortable care in many ways.
 There's power in me and will to dominate
 Which I must exercise, they hurt me else:
 In many ways I need mankind's respect,
 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:
 330 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 folk 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 procured;
 And thus it could not be another way,
 340 I venture to imagine.

You'll reply,

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

But, friend,

We speak of what is; not of what might be,
 And how 'twere better if 'twere otherwise.
 I am the man you see here plain enough:
 Grant I'm a beast, why, beasts must lead beasts' lives!
 350 Suppose I own at once to tail and claws;
 The tailless man exceeds me: but being 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 prove me doomed
 To a viler berth still, to the steerage-hole,
 The sheep-pen or the pig-sty, I should strive
 To make what use of each were possible;
 360 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 tastes
 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?
 370 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,
 380 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,
 390 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
 400 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
 410 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 –
 420 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 Noodledom –
 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,
 430 I, to believe at this late time of day!
 Enough; you see, I need not fear contempt.

– Except it's yours! Admire me as these may,
 You don't. But whom at least do you admire?
 Present your own perfection, your ideal,
 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 element
 440 Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know –
 We're still at that admission, recollect!)
 Where do you find – apart from, towering o'er
 The secondary temporary aims
 Which satisfy the gross taste you despise –
 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
 450 Of working out our purpose straight as his,
 Nor bring a moment's trouble on success
 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 o' 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,
 460 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,
 470 More to their profit, most of all to his own;
 The whole to end that dismallest 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 judgement, life to come!
 With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt proves right?
 This present life is all? – you offer me
 480 Its dozen noisy years, without a chance
 That wedding an archduchess, wearing 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?
 490 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 probable, –
 500 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
 510 Lest I should wrong them' – I'll withdraw my plea.
 But does he say so? look upon his life!
 Himself, who only can, gives judgement there.
 He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces
 To build the trimmest house in Stratford town;
 Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things,
 Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's lute;
 Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too,
 And none more, had he seen its entry once,
 Than 'Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal.'
 520 Why then should I who play that personage,
 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,
 530 Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls,
 And English books, none equal to his own,
 Which I read, bound in gold (he never did).
 – Terni's fall, Naples' bay and Gothard'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 Saint Gothard last July
 With ten mules to the carriage and a bed
 Slung inside; is my hap the worse for that?
 We want the same things, Shakespeare and myself,
 540 And what I want, I have: he, gifted more,
 Could fancy he too had them when he liked,
 But not so thoroughly that, if fate allowed,
 He would not have them 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,
 550 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,
 560 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.
 570 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.
 580 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! 'twould 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
 590 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.
 600 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!
 610 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 underground
 By hell and all its brood, for aught I know?
 I say, whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt?
 620 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?
 630 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 despise?
 If you desire faith – then you've faith enough:
 What else seeks God – nay, what else seek ourselves?
 You form a notion of me, we'll suppose,
 On hearsay; it's a favourable one:
 'But still' (you add), 'there was no such good man,
 Because of contradiction in the facts.
 640 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 naught, born here or there.'

Pure faith indeed – you know not what you ask!
 Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
 Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much
 650 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 disimprisoned heart
 660 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 unbelief
 Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot
 Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.
 Or, if that's too ambitious, – here's my box –
 670 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,
 680 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 'twas getting dusk
 And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot!
 How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,
 How act? As other people felt and did;
 690 With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,
 Believe – and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate
 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, i' 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
 700 That used to puzzle people wholesomely:
 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 advice.
 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.
 710 That's better than acquitting God with grace
 As some folk 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,
 720 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, experienced much,
 Yet would die rather than avow my fear
 The Naples' liquefaction may be false,
 When set to happen by the palace-clock
 730 According to the clouds or dinner-time.
 I hear you recommend, I might at least
 Eliminate, degrassify 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.

740 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
750 As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,
Nor see more danger in it, – you retort.
Your taste's worth mine; 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 difference
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
760 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,
770 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 meanwhile.
Let us concede (gratuitously though)
Next life relieves the soul of body, yields

Pure spiritual enjoyment: well, my friend,
Why lose this life i' the meantime, since its use
May be to make the next life more intense?

780 Do you know, I have often had a dream
(Work it up in your next month's article)
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!
790 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 itself,
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,
800 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 today's 'Times,'
What odds is't, save to ourselves, what life we lead?

You meet me at this issue: you declare, –
All special-pleading done with – truth is truth,
And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
You don't fear but it's better, if we doubt,
810 To say so, act up to our truth perceived
However feebly. Do then, – act away!
'Tis 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 counterchecks.
 Put natural religion to the test
 820 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!
 Suppose 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
 830 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 matters 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, unreasoned-out,
 You dare not set aside, you can't tell why,
 840 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,
 850 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:
 860 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,
 870 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,
 880 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:
 890 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 sward
 By those obsequious wethers' very selves.
 Look at me, sir; my age is double yours:

At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed,
 What now I should be – as, permit the word,
 900 I pretty well imagine your whole range
 And stretch of tether twenty years to come.
 We both have minds and bodies much alike:
 In truth's name, don'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 –
 910 With much beside you know or may conceive?
 Suppose we die tonight: 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
 920 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
 930 Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile,
 Before the chaplain who reflects myself –
 My shade's so much more potent than your flesh.
 What's your reward, self-abnegating friend?
 Stood you confessed of those exceptional
 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 –

940 I should have nothing to object: such men
 Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,
 Their drugget'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 Magazine,
 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
 950 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 recognize 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 eyebrow's wink,
 Such terms as never you aspired to get
 960 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
 970 Defaming, but at least – despising me!

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour
 Sylvester Blougram, styled *in partibus*
Episcopus, 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 a mind
 Long crumpled, till creased consciousness lay smooth.

980 For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke.
 The other portion, as he shaped it thus
 For argumentatory 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)
 990 While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue
 Is never bold to utter in their truth
 Because styled hell-deep ('tis 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,
 1000 I close, he's worsted, that's enough for him.
 He's on the ground: if 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:
 1010 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 Saint John.

Memorabilia

I
 Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
 And did he stop and speak to you
 And did you speak to him again?
 How strange it seems and new!

II
 But you were living before that,
 And also you are living after;
 And the memory I started at -
 My starting moves your laughter.

III
 I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
 10 And a certain use in the world no doubt,
 Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
 'Mid the blank miles round about:

IV
 For there I picked up on the heather
 And there I put inside my breast
 A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
 Well, I forget the rest.

Andrea del Sarto

(Called 'The Faultless Painter')

But do not let us quarrel any more,
 No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
 You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
 Treat his own subject after his own way,
 Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
 And shut the money into this small hand
 When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?

10. Oh, I'll content him, – but tomorrow, Love!
 I often am much wearier than you think,
 This evening more than usual, and it seems
 As if – forgive now – should you let me sit
 Here by the window with your hand in mine
 And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,
 Both of one mind, as married people use,
 Quietly, quietly the evening through,
 I might get up tomorrow to my work
 Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
 20 Tomorrow, how you shall be glad for this!
 Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
 And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
 Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
 For each of the five pictures we require:
 It saves a model. So! keep looking so –
 My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds!
 – How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
 Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet –
 My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
 30 Which everybody looks on and calls his,
 And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
 While she looks – no one's: very dear, no less.
 You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
 There's what we painters call our harmony!
 A common greyness silvers everything, –
 All in a twilight, you and I alike
 – You, at the point of your first pride in me
 (That's gone you know), – but I, at every point;
 My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
 40 To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
 There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
 That length of convent-wall across the way
 Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
 The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
 And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
 Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
 As if I saw alike my work and self
 And all that I was born to be and do,
 A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
 50 How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead;
 So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!

I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
 This chamber for example – turn your head –
 All that's behind us! You don't understand
 Nor care to understand about my art,
 But you can hear at least when people speak:
 And that cartoon, the second from the door
 – It is the thing, Love! so such things should be –
 Behold Madonna! – I am bold to say.
 60 I can do with my pencil what I know,
 What I see, what at bottom of my heart
 I wish for, if I ever wish so deep –
 Do easily, too – when I say, perfectly,
 I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
 Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
 And just as much they used to say in France.
 At any rate 'tis easy, all of it!
 No sketches first, no studies, that's long past:
 I do what many dream of, all their lives,
 70 – Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
 On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
 Who strive – you don't know how the others strive
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared
 Carelessly passing with your robes afloat, –
 Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
 (I know his name, no matter) – so much less!
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
 There burns a truer light of God in them,
 80 In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
 Enter and take their place there sure enough,
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
 The sudden blood of these men! at a word –
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
 90 I, painting from myself and to myself,
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,

His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
 Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
 Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
 Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-grey
 Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
 100 I know both what I want and what might gain,
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
 'Had I been two, another and myself,
 Our head would have o'erlooked the world!' No doubt.
 Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
 The Urbinate who died five years ago.
 ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
 Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
 Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
 Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
 110 Above and through his art – for it gives way;
 That arm is wrongly put – and there again –
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
 Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
 He means right – that, a child may understand.
 Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch –
 Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
 Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
 We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
 120 Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think –
 More than I merit, yes, by many times.
 But had you – oh, with the same perfect brow,
 And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
 And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
 The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare –
 Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
 Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
 'God and the glory! never care for gain.
 The present by the future, what is that?
 130 Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo!
 Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!'
 I might have done it for you. So it seems:
 Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
 Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;
 The rest avail not. Why do I need you?

What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
 In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
 And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
 Yet the will's somewhat – somewhat, too, the power –
 140 And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
 God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
 'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
 That I am something underrated here,
 Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
 I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
 The best is when they pass and look aside;
 But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
 Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
 150 And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
 I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
 Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
 In that humane great monarch's golden look, –
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl
 Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
 One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
 The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
 I painting proudly with his breath on me,
 All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
 160 Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts, –
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
 This in the background, waiting on my work,
 To crown the issue with a last reward!
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
 And had you not grown restless . . . but I know –
 'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
 Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
 170 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
 How could it end in any other way?
 You called me, and I came home to your heart.
 The triumph was – to reach and stay there; since
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
 'Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;

The Roman's is the better when you pray,
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife –'
 180 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
 Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
 Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
 To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)
 'Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
 190 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
 Who, were he set to plan and execute
 As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!'
 To Rafael's! – And indeed the arm is wrong.
 I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
 Give the chalk here – quick, thus the line should go!
 Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
 (What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
 200 Do you forget already words like those?)
 If really there was such a chance, so lost, –
 Is, whether you're – not grateful – but more pleased.
 Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
 This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
 If you would sit thus by me every night
 I should work better, do you comprehend?
 I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
 See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
 Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
 210 The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
 Come from the window, love, – come in, at last,
 Inside the melancholy little house
 We built to be so gay with. God is just.
 King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
 When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
 The walls become illumined, brick from brick
 Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
 That gold of his I did cement them with!
 Let us but love each other. Must you go?

220 That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
 Must see you – you, and not with me? Those loans?
 More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
 Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
 While hand and eye and something of a heart
 Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
 I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
 The grey remainder of the evening out,
 Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
 How I could paint, were I but back in France,
 230 One picture, just one more – the Virgin's face,
 Not yours this time! I want you at my side
 To hear them – that is, Michel Agnolo –
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
 Will you? Tomorrow, satisfy your friend.
 I take the subjects for his corridor,
 Finish the portrait out of hand – there, there,
 And throw him in another thing or two
 If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
 To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
 240 What's better and what's all I care about,
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
 Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
 The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age tonight.
 I regret little, I would change still less.
 Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
 The very wrong to Francis! – it is true
 I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
 And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
 250 My father and my mother died of want.
 Well, had I riches of my own? you see
 How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
 They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
 And I have laboured somewhat in my time
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son
 Paint my two hundred pictures – let him try!
 No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
 You loved me quite enough, it seems tonight.
 This must suffice me here. What would one have?
 260 In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance –

Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
 For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
 To cover – the three first without a wife,
 While I have mine! So – still they overcome
 Because there's still Lucrezia, – as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

Before

I
 Let them fight it out, friend! things have gone too far.
 God must judge the couple: leave them as they are
 – Whichever one's the guiltless, to his glory,
 And whichever one the guilt's with, to my story!

II
 Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,
 Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,
 Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,
 Heaven with snaky hell, in torture and entoilment?

III
 Who's the culprit of them? How must he conceive
 10 God – the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve,
 'Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath her:
 Still, one must not be too much in earnest, either!

IV
 Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes;
 Then go live his life out! Life will try his nerves,
 When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
 And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

V
 Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
 Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes!
 For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
 20 With the sly mute thing, beside there, for a warden.

VI
 What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant at his side,
 A leer and lie in every eye of its obsequious hide?
 When will come an end to all the mock obeisance,
 And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

VII
 So much for the culprit. Who's the martyred man?
 Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can!
 He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,
 Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven!

VIII
 All or nothing, stake it! Trusts he God or no?
 30 Thus far and no farther? farther? be it so!
 Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
 Sage provisos, sub-intents and saving-clauses!

IX
 Ah, 'forgive' you bid him? While God's champion lives,
 Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why, he forgives.
 But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;
 Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him.

X
 Once more – Will the wronger, at this last of all,
 Dare to say, 'I did wrong,' rising in his fall?
 No? – Let go, then! Both the fighters to their places!
 40 While I count three, step you back as many paces!

After

Take the cloak from his face, and at first
 Let the corpse do its worst!

How he lies in his rights of a man!
 Death has done all death can.
 And, absorbed in the new life he leads,
 He recks not, he heeds

Nor his wrong nor my vengeance; both strike
 On his senses alike,
 And are lost in the solemn and strange
 10 Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase
 His offence, my disgrace?
 I would we were boys as of old
 In the field, by the fold:
 His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
 Were so easily borne!

I stand here now, he lies in his place:
 Cover the face!

In Three Days

I
 So, I shall see her in three days
 And just one night, but nights are short,
 Then two long hours, and that is morn.
 See how I come, unchanged, unworn!
 Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
 How fresh the splinters keep and fine, –
 Only a touch and we combine!

II
 Too long, this time of year, the days!
 But nights, at least the nights are short.
 10 As night shows where her one moon is,
 A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
 So life's night gives my lady birth
 And my eyes hold her! What is worth
 The rest of heaven, the rest of earth?

III
 O loaded curls, release your store
 Of warmth and scent, as once before
 The tingling hair did, lights and darks
 Outbreaking into fairy sparks,

When under curl and curl I pried
 After the warmth and scent inside,
 Through lights and darks how manifold –
 20 The dark inspired, the light controlled!
 As early Art embrowns the gold.

IV
 What great fear, should one say, 'Three days
 That change the world might change as well
 Your fortune; and if joy delays,
 Be happy that no worse befell!'
 What small fear, if another says,
 'Three days and one short night beside
 May throw no shadow on your ways;
 But years must teem with change untried,
 30 With chance not easily defied,
 With an end somewhere undescried.'
 No fear! – or if a fear be born
 This minute, it dies out in scorn.
 Fear? I shall see her in three days
 And one night, now the nights are short,
 Then just two hours, and that is morn.

In a Year

I
 Never any more,
 While I live,
 Need I hope to see his face
 As before.
 Once his love grown chill,
 Mine may strive:
 Bitterly we re-embrace,
 Single still.

II
 Was it something said,
 10 Something done,
 Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
 Turn of head?

Strange! that very way
 Love begun:
 I as little understand
 Love's decay.

III

When I sewed or drew,
 I recall
 How he looked as if I sung,
 20 – Sweetly too.
 If I spoke a word,
 First of all
 Up his cheek the colour sprung,
 Then he heard.

IV

Sitting by my side,
 At my feet,
 So he breathed but air I breathed,
 Satisfied!
 I, too, at love's brim
 30 Touched the sweet:
 I would die if death bequeathed
 Sweet to him.

V

'Speak, I love thee best!'
 He exclaimed:
 'Let thy love my own foretell!'
 I confessed:
 'Clasp my heart on thine
 Now unblamed,
 Since upon thy soul as well
 40 Hangeth mine!'

VI

Was it wrong to own,
 Being truth?
 Why should all the giving prove
 His alone?
 I had wealth and ease,
 Beauty, youth:

Since my lover gave me love,
 I gave these.

VII

That was all I meant,
 50 – To be just,
 And the passion I had raised,
 To content.
 Since he chose to change
 Gold for dust,
 If I gave him what he praised
 Was it strange?

VIII

Would he loved me yet,
 On and on,
 While I found some way undreamed
 60 – Paid my debt!
 Gave more life and more,
 Till, all gone,
 He should smile 'She never seemed
 Mine before.

IX

'What, she felt the while,
 Must I think?
 Love's so different with us men!'
 He should smile:
 'Dying for my sake –
 70 White and pink!
 Can't we touch these bubbles then
 But they break?'

X

Dear, the pang is brief,
 Do thy part,
 Have thy pleasure! How perplexed
 Grows belief!
 Well, this cold clay clod
 Was man's heart:
 Crumble it, and what comes next?
 80 Is it God?

Old Pictures in Florence

I

The morn when first it thunders in March,
 The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say:
 As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
 Of the villa-gate this warm March day,
 No flash snapped, no dumb thunder rolled
 In the valley beneath where, white and wide
 And washed by the morning water gold,
 Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

II

River and bridge and street and square
 10 Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
 Through the live translucent bath of air,
 As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
 And of all I saw and of all I praised,
 The most to praise and the best to see
 Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised:
 But why did it more than startle me?

III

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
 Could you play me false who loved you so?
 Some slights if a certain heart endures
 20 Yet it feels, I would have your fellows know!
 I' faith, I perceive not why I should care
 To break a silence that suits them best,
 But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
 When I find a Giotto join the rest.

IV

On the arch where olives overhead
 Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
 (That sharp-curved leaf which they never shed)
 'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in chief,
 And mark through the winter afternoons,
 30 By a gift God grants me now and then,
 In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
 Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

V

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
 For pleasure or profit, her men alive –
 My business was hardly with them, I trow,
 But with empty cells of the human hive;
 – With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
 The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
 Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
 40 Its face set full for the sun to shave.

VI

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
 Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
 Till the latest life in the painting stops,
 Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains:
 One, wishful each scrap should clutch the brick,
 Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
 – A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
 The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

VII

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!
 50 They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,
 The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
 Round the works of, you of the little wit!
 Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
 Now that they see God face to face,
 And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
 'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

VIII

Much they reckon of your praise and you!
 But the wronged great souls – can they be quit
 Of a world where their work is all to do,
 60 Where you style them, you of the little wit,
 Old Master This and Early the Other,
 Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows:
 A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
 Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

IX

And here where your praise might yield returns,
 And a handsome word or two give help,
 Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
 And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
 What, not a word for Stefano there,
 70 Of brow once prominent and starry,
 Called Nature's Ape and the world's despair
 For his peerless painting? (See Vasari.)

X

There stands the Master. Study, my friends,
 What a man's work comes to! So he plans it,
 Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
 For the toiling and moiling, and then, *sic transit!*
 Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
 With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
 Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour!
 80 'Tis looking downward that makes one dizzy.

XI

'If you knew their work you would deal your dole.'
 May I take upon me to instruct you?
 When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
 Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu* –
 The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
 Which the actual generations garble,
 Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
 And Limbs (Soul informs) made new in marble.

XII

90 So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,
 As you might have been, as you cannot be;
 Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
 And grew content in your poor degree
 With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
 And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
 And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
 And your little date, by their forms that stay.

XIII

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?
 Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
 You would prove a model? The Son of Priam
 100 Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.
 You're wroth – can you slay your snake like Apollo?
 You're grieved – still Niobe's the grander!
 You live – there's the Racers' frieze to follow:
 You die – there's the dying Alexander.

XIV

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
 Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,
 Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
 You learned – to submit is a mortal's duty.
 – When I say 'you' 'tis the common soul,
 110 The collective, I mean: the race of Man
 That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
 And grow here according to God's clear plan.

XV

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
 You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
 And cried with a start – What if we so small
 Be greater and grander the while than they?
 Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
 In both, of such lower types are we
 Precisely because of our wider nature;
 120 For time, theirs – ours, for eternity.

XVI

Today's brief passion limits their range;
 It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
 They are perfect – how else? they shall never change:
 We are faulty – why not? we have time in store.
 The Artificer's hand is not arrested
 With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:
 They stand for our copy, and, once invested
 With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

XVII

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven –
 130 The better! What's come to perfection perishes.
 Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven:
 Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
 Thyself shalt afford the example, Giotto!
 Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
 Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) 'O!
 Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

XVIII

Is it true that we are now, and shall be hereafter,
 But what and where depend on life's minute?
 Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
 140 Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
 Shall Man, such step within his endeavour,
 Man's face, have no more play and action
 Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
 Or grief, an eternal petrification?

XIX

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
 To cries of 'Greek Art and what more wish you?' –
 Replied, 'To become now self-acquainters,
 And paint man man, whatever the issue!
 Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
 150 New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters:
 To bring the invisible full into play!
 Let the visible go to the dogs – what matters?'

XX

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and glory
 For daring so much, before they well did it.
 The first of the new, in our race's story,
 Beats the last of the old; 'tis no idle quiddit.
 The worthies began a revolution,
 Which if on earth you intend to acknowledge,
 Why, honour them now! (ends my allocution)
 160 Nor confer your degree when the folk leave college.

XXI

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate –
 That, when this life is ended, begins
 New work for the soul in another state,
 Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins:
 Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
 Repeat in large what they practised in small,
 Through life after life in unlimited series;
 Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

XXII

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
 170 By the means of Evil that Good is best,
 And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven's serene, –
 When our faith in the same has stood the test –
 Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
 The uses of labour are surely done;
 There remaineth a rest for the people of God:
 And I have had troubles enough, for one.

XXIII

But at any rate I have loved the season
 Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy;
 My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
 180 My painter – who but Cimabue?
 Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
 From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
 Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
 So, now to my special grievance – heigh ho!

XXIV

Their ghosts still stand, as I said before,
 Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
 Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er:
 – No getting again what the church has grasped!
 The works on the wall must take their chance;
 190 'Works never conceded to England's thick clime!'
 (I hope they prefer their inheritance
 Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV

When they go at length, with such a shaking
 Of heads o'er the old delusion, sadly
 Each master his way through the black streets taking,
 Where many a lost work breathes though badly –
 Why don't they bethink them of who has merited?
 Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
 Such doom, how a captive might be out-ferreted?
 200 Why is it they never remember me?

XXVI

Not that I expect the great Bigordi,
 Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose;
 Nor the wronged Lippino; and not a word I
 Say of a scrap of Frà Angelico's:
 But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
 To grant me a taste of your intonaco,
 Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?
 Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

XXVII

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
 210 My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
 Save me a sample, give me the hap
 Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman?
 No Virgin by him the somewhat petty,
 Of finical touch and tempera crumbly –
 Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
 Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

XXVIII

Margheritone of Arezzo,
 With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret
 (Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
 220 You bald old saturnine poll-clawed parrot?)
 Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
 Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
 If such remain, as is my conviction,
 The hoarding it does you but little honour.

XXIX

They pass; for them the panels may thrill,
 The tempera grow alive and tinglish;
 Their pictures are left to the mercies still
 Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English,
 Who, seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
 230 Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno
 At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
 Before some clay-cold vile Carlino!

XXX

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,
 Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble it, –
 Oh, never! it shall not be counted true –
 That a certain precious little tablet
 Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover, –
 Was buried so long in oblivion's womb
 And, left for another than I to discover,
 240 Turns up at last! and to whom? – to whom?

XXXI

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
 (Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
 Patient on altar-step planting a weary toe!
 Nay, I shall have it yet! *Detur amanti!*
 My Koh-i-noor – or (if that's a platitude)
 Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye;
 So, in anticipative gratitude,
 What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

XXXII

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain dotard
 250 Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
 To the worse side of the Mont Saint Gothard,
 We shall begin by way of rejoicing;
 None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
 Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer,
 Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
 Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII

This time we'll shoot better game and bag 'em hot –
 No mere display at the stone of Dante,
 But a kind of sober Witanagemot
 260 (Ex: 'Casa Guidi,' *quod videas ante*)
 Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to Florence,
 How Art may return that departed with her.
 Go, hated house, go each trace of the Lorraine's,
 And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!

XXXIV

How we shall prologize, how we shall perorate,
 Utter fit things upon art and history,
 Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood at zero rate,
 Make of the want of the age no mystery;
 Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
 270 Show – monarchy ever its uncouth cub licks
 Out of the bear's shape into Chimera's,
 While Pure Art's birth is still the republic's.

XXXV

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt Tuscan,
 Expúrgate and sober, with scarcely an '*issimo*,')
 To end now our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
 And turn the bell-tower's *alt* to *altissimo* :
 And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
 The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
 Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
 280 Completing Florence, as Florence Italy.

XXXVI

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
 Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,
 Like the golden hope of the world, unbaffled
 Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire
 While 'God and the People' plain for its motto,
 Thence the new tricolour flaps at the sky?
 At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
 And Florence together, the first am I!

In a Balcony

PERSONS

Norbert
Constance
The Queen

CONSTANCE and NORBERT

NORBERT: Now!

CONSTANCE: Not now!

NORBERT: 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 whate'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:

10 Let me ask now, Love!

CONSTANCE: Do, and ruin us.

NORBERT: 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 away,

If God please, with completion in my soul!

CONSTANCE: I am not yours then? How content this man!

20 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 cognizant

How he loves her and how she worships him.
 You have this woman, not as yet that world.
 30 Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me
 By saving what I cease to care about,
 The courtly name and pride of circumstance –
 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!'
 NORBERT: The world!
 CONSTANCE: You love it. Love me quite as well,
 40 And see if I shall pray for this in vain!
 Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?
 NORBERT: You pray for – what, in vain?
 CONSTANCE: 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!
 NORBERT: Thank God!
 CONSTANCE: Yes, Norbert, – but you fain would tell your love,
 And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her
 50 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.
 Tonight 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:
 That this mere dream is grown a stable truth,
 Tonight's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?
 60 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
 70 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?
 NORBERT: Wait. First, do you retain your old belief
 The Queen is generous, – nay, is just?
 CONSTANCE: 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 –
 80 Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then –
 The kiss, because you have a name at court;
 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?
 90 Access to her had not been easy else.
 You give my labour here abundant praise?
 'Faith, labour, which she overlooked, grew play.
 How shall your gratitude discharge itself?
 Give me her hand!'
 NORBERT: And still I urge the same.
 Is the Queen just? just – generous or no!
 CONSTANCE: 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.
 100 You told the Queen you served her for herself;
 If so, to serve her was to serve yourself,
 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 recognize its given things and facts,
 The fight of giants or the feast of gods,
 110 Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,
 Chases 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 composedly?
 – Say, 'that's his fellow in the hunting-piece
 120 Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times?'
 Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth,
 Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,
 Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.
 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!
 130 Things painted by a Rubens out of naught
 Into what kindness, friendship, love should be;
 All better, all more grandiose than the 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 –
 140 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?

NORBERT: The Queen's the Queen:
 I am myself – no picture, but alive
 150 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
 160 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.
 170 Neither she sought nor I declared my end.
 Her good is hers, my recompense be mine, –
 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!
 180 CONSTANCE: 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 folk 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

190 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
 200 Makes you 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.
 The world will show us with officious hand
 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,
 210 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.

NORBERT: 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!
 220 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 –
 230 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 'tis all of me and must have way.
 Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,
 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 resume
 240 Life after death, (it is no less than life,
 After such long unlovely labouring days)
 And liberate to beauty life's great need
 O' the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,
 Suppressed itself erewhile. This eve's the time,
 This eve intense with yon first trembling 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
 250 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,
 Nymph to her fawn, and 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!
 260 Take the first way, and let the second come!
 My first is to possess myself of you;
 The music sets the march-step – forward, then!
 And there's the Queen, I go to claim you of,
 The world to witness, wonder and applaud.
 Our flower of life breaks open. No delay!

CONSTANCE: And so shall we be ruined, both of us.
 Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone:
 You do not know her, were not born to it,
 To feel what she can see or cannot see.
 270 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 of 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.
 280 Suppose her some poor keeper of a school
 Whose business is to sit through summer months
 And dole out children leave to go and play,
 Herself superior to such lightness – she
 In the arm-chair's state and pedagogic 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
 290 To take the shape of tenderness, and mark
 If she'll not coldly pay its warmest debt!
 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:
 300 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,
 310 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 love Queens directly, none dare that,

And a thing's shadow or a name's mere echo
 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 –
 320 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!
 NORBERT: Then, if I turn it that way, you consent?
 'Tis 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?
 330 CONSTANCE: 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?
 I owe that withered woman everything –
 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.
 NORBERT: Remain here. How you know me!
 CONSTANCE: Ah, but still –
 [He breaks from her: she remains. Dance-music from within]
 [Enter the QUEEN]
 340 QUEEN: Constance? She is here as he said. Speak quick!
 Is it so? Is it true or false? One word!
 CONSTANCE: True.
 QUEEN: Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee!
 CONSTANCE: Madam?
 QUEEN: I love you, Constance, from my soul.
 Now say once more, with any words you will,
 'Tis true, all true, as true as that I speak.
 CONSTANCE: 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.
 350 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;
 Yet still we let our whims prescribe despair,
 Our fancies thwart and cramp our will and power,
 And while, accepting life, abjure its use.
 Constance, I had abjured the hope of love
 And being loved, as truly as yon palm
 The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.
 CONSTANCE: Heaven!
 QUEEN: But it was so, Constance, it was so!
 360 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 forsooth.'
 So it goes on; so a face grows like this,
 Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,
 370 Till, – nay, it does not end so, I thank God!
 CONSTANCE: 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!
 CONSTANCE: I love you.
 380 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!
 CONSTANCE: 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.'
 390 Well, so I feared – the curse! so I felt sure!
 CONSTANCE: 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 naught to me:
 What would he with my marble stateliness?'
 Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;
 The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,
 400 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
 To labour at those state-affairs, absorbed
 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
 410 They praise and point at as preferred to life,
 Yet leave for the first breathing woman's smile,
 First dancer's, gypsy'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,
 Wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,
 420 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 knees,
 I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.
 CONSTANCE: 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.

CONSTANCE: I wait to tell it.

QUEEN: Well, you see, he came,

430 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 –
Souls need a finer aim to light and lure!
I felt, I saw, he loved – loved somebody.
440 And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,
I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.

CONSTANCE: 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 his love,
And both of you were in intelligence.
You could not loiter in that 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,
450 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!
460 These two shall have their joy and leave me here.'
Yes – yes!

CONSTANCE: Thanks!

QUEEN: And the word was on my lips
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? lightning on my eyes
And thunder in my ears proved that first word

Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all –
He loved me – from the first step to the last,
Loved me!

CONSTANCE: You hardly saw, scarce heard him speak
470 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 came at 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,
480 Teach me but 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
490 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!
500 You know you never named his name to me:
You know, I cannot give him up – ah God,
Not up now, even to you!

CONSTANCE: Then calm yourself.

QUEEN: See, I am old – look here, you happy girl!
I will not play the fool, deceive – ah, whom?
'Tis all gone: put your cheek beside my cheek

And what a contrast does the moon behold!
 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
 510 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 passionate faith, the pride of sacrifice,
 Life-long, death-long? I throw them at his feet.
 Who cares to see the fountain's very shape,
 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.
 520 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 'tis not beauty makes the lasting love –
 They spend a day with such and tire the next:
 They like soul, – well then, they like phantasy,
 530 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?
 CONSTANCE: How can he? You are wedded: 'tis 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?
 540 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 retrieve
 My youth from its enforced calamity,

Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,
 His own in the eyes alike of God and man.
 550 CONSTANCE: 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 remarks,
 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
 560 Than this; God sends the accident express:
 And were it for my subjects' good, no more,
 'Twere 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!
 CONSTANCE: Let me consider. It is all too strange.
 QUEEN: You, Constance, learn of me; do you, like me!
 570 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:
 Taller than he is, since 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,
 580 Do all but just unlove him! He loves me.
 CONSTANCE: He shall.
 QUEEN: You, step inside my inmost 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,

590 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,
 Wear my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms,
 And then come back and tell you how it feels.
 How soon a smile of God can change the world!
 How we are made for happiness – how work
 Grows play, adversity a winning fight!
 600 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 mankind, God's moon!
 [*She goes out, leaving CONSTANCE. Dance-music from within*]

[NORBERT enters]

NORBERT: Well? we have but one minute and one word!

CONSTANCE: I am yours, Norbert!

NORBERT: Yes, mine.

CONSTANCE: Not till now!

You were mine. Now I give myself to you.

NORBERT: Constance?

CONSTANCE: Your own! I know the thriftier way

610 Of giving – haply, 'tis 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!
 620 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 myself.

NORBERT: I take you and thank God.

CONSTANCE: Look on through years!

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

NORBERT: With this day's heat
 We shall go on through years of cold.

CONSTANCE: So, best!

– I try to see those years – I think I see.
 You walk quick and new warmth comes; you look back
 630 And lay all to the first glow – not sit down
 For ever brooding on a day like this
 While seeing embers whiten and love die.
 Yes, love lives best in its effect; and mine,
 Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

NORBERT: 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
 640 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.
 'Tis 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.

CONSTANCE: But how prove, how?

650 NORBERT: Prove in my life, you ask?

CONSTANCE: Quick, Norbert – how?

NORBERT: 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:
 So must I seize and task all means to prove
 And show this soul of mine, you crown as yours,
 And justify us both.

CONSTANCE: Could you write books,
 Paint pictures! One sits down in poverty

660 And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.
 NORBERT: 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
 670 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.
 I come to you; I leave you not, to write
 Or paint. You are, I am: let Rubens there
 Paint us!

CONSTANCE: So, best!

NORBERT: I understand your soul.
 You live, and rightly sympathize with life,
 680 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 thence fruit
 First for themselves, and afterward for me
 In the due tithe; the task of some one soul,
 Through ways of work appointed by the world.
 I am not bid create – men see no star
 Transfiguring my brow to warrant that –
 690 But find and bind and bring to bear their wills.
 So I began: tonight sees how I end.
 What if it see, too, power's first outbreak here
 Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,
 And instincts of the heart that teach the head?
 What if the people have discerned at length
 The dawn of the next nature, novel brain
 Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,
 Whose work, they trust, shall find them as novel ways
 To untried heights which yet he only sees?

700 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
 Now that my hand is plastic, with 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 success
 And consummation of the spirit-work,
 710 Some vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,
 While rounded fair for human sense to see
 The Graces in a dance men recognize
 With turbulent applause and laughs of heart!
 So triumph ever shall renew itself;
 Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,
 Ever begin . . .

CONSTANCE: I ever helping?

NORBERT: Thus!

[As he embraces her, the QUEEN enters]

CONSTANCE: Hist, madam! So have I performed my part.
 You see your gratitude's true decency,
 Norbert? A little slow in seeing it!

720 Begin, to end the sooner! What's a kiss?

NORBERT: Constance?

CONSTANCE: 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 beyond,
 So very far beyond him, as he says –
 So hopelessly in love that but to speak
 Would prove him mad, – he thinks judiciously,
 730 And makes some insignificant good soul,
 Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant,
 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 –
 740 Why, in the moment when such joy explodes,
 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.
 750 And though I shall forget her in due time,
 Her use being answered now, as reason 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 prosperous tool,
 And the first – which is the last – rewarding kiss.'
 NORBERT: Constance, it is a dream – ah, see, you smile!
 CONSTANCE: So, now his part being properly performed,
 Madam, I turn to you and finish mine
 As duly; I do justice in my turn.
 760 Yes, madam, he has loved you – long and well;
 He could not hope to tell you so – 'twas I
 Who served to prove your soul accessible,
 I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place
 When they had wandered else into despair,
 And kept love constant toward its natural aim.
 Enough, my part is played; you stoop half-way
 And meet us royally and spare our fears:
 'Tis like yourself. He thanks you, so do I.
 Take him – with my full heart! my work is praised
 770 By what comes of it. Be you happy, both!
 Yourself – the only one on earth who can –
 Do all for him, much more than a mere heart
 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!
 NORBERT: Have you done?
 I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?
 Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child,

Or did you but accept it? Well – at least
 780 You lose by it.
 CONSTANCE: Nay, madam, 'tis your turn!
 Restrain him still from speech a little more,
 And make him happier as more confident!
 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
 790 Anything – frankly say you love him! Else
 He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in
 His fear than you conceive: I know the man!
 NORBERT: 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 recognize
 Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,
 Eccentric speech and variable mirth,
 800 Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold,
 Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)
 – May still be right: I may do well to speak
 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 'tis said.
 810 Your courage helps mine: you did well to speak
 Tonight, 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 hazarded the truth. 'Tis very strange,
 But takes a happy ending – in your love
 Which mine meets: be it so! as you chose me,
 So I choose you.

NORBERT: And worthily you choose.
 820 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 experiment,
 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 beauteousest and best
 Of women to my arms: 'tis like yourself.
 830 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 yon magnolia-bell superb with scent
 Invites a certain insect – that's myself –
 But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground.
 I take this lady.
 CONSTANCE: Stay – not hers, the trap –
 Stay, Norbert – that mistake were worst of all!
 840 He is too cunning, madam! It was I,
 I, Norbert, who . . .

NORBERT: You, was it, Constance? Then,
 But for the grace of this divinest hour
 Which gives me you, I might not pardon here!
 I am the Queen's; she only knows my brain:
 She may experiment upon 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!
 850 CONSTANCE: Tush! I have said it, did I not say it all?
 The life, for her – the heart-beats, for her sake!
 NORBERT: Enough! my cheek grows red, I think. Your test?
 There's not the meanest woman in the world,
 Not she I least could love in all the world,
 Whom, did she love me, had love proved itself,
 I dare 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,
 860 The soul so offered, which I cannot use,
 And, please you, give it to some playful 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 succumb?
 No: fearing God and standing 'neath his heaven,
 I would not dare insult a woman so,
 Were she the meanest woman in the world,
 And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!
 CONSTANCE: Norbert!
 NORBERT: I love once as I live but once.
 870 What case is this to think or talk about?
 I love you. Would it mend the case at all
 If such a step as this killed love in me?
 Your part were done: account to God for it!
 But mine – could murdered love get up again,
 And kneel to whom you please to designate,
 And make you mirth? It is too horrible.
 You did not know this, Constance? now you know
 That body and soul have each one life, but one:
 And here's my love, here, living, at your feet.
 880 CONSTANCE: See the Queen! Norbert – this one more last
 word –
 If thus you have taken jest for earnest – thus
 Loved me in earnest . . .

NORBERT: Ah, no jest holds here!
 Where is the laughter in which jests break up,
 And what this horror that grows palpable?
 Madam – why grasp you thus the balcony?
 Have I done ill? Have I not spoken truth?
 How could I other? Was it not your test,
 To try me, what my love for Constance meant?
 Madam, your royal soul itself approves,
 890 The first, that I should choose thus! so one takes
 A beggar, – asks him, what would buy his child?
 And then approves the expected laugh of scorn
 Returned as something noble from the rags.
 Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha, what's this?
 You two glare each at each like panthers now.
 Constance, the world fades; only you stand there!
 You did not, in tonight's wild whirl of things,

Sell me – your soul of souls, for any price?
No – no – 'tis easy to believe in you!

900 Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop
Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still –
Though I might curse, I love you. I am love
And cannot change: love's self is at your feet!

[*The QUEEN goes out*]

CONSTANCE: Feel my heart; let it die against your own!

NORBERT: Against my own. Explain not; let this be!
This is life's height.

CONSTANCE: Yours, yours, yours!

NORBERT: You and I –

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

910 CONSTANCE: Found, found!

NORBERT: Sweet, never fear what she can do!

We are past harm now.

CONSTANCE: On the breast of God.

I thought of men – as if you were a man.

Tempting him with a crown!

NORBERT: This must end here:

It is too perfect.

CONSTANCE: There's the music stopped.

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

NORBERT: Oh, some death

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

CONSTANCE: And so do well.

Now the doors open.

NORBERT: 'Tis the guard comes.

CONSTANCE: Kiss!

Saul

I

Said Abner, 'At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!' Then I wished it, and did kiss his
cheek.

And he, 'Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent
Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,
10 And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

II

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

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and
gone,

That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on
20 Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I
prayed,

And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid
But spoke, 'Here is David, thy servant!' And no voice replied.
At the first I saw naught but the blackness; but soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness – the vast, the
upright

Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst through the tent-roof, showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out wide
 On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to each side;
 30 He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in his pangs
 And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily hangs,
 Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
 With the spring-time, – so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind
 and dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp, – took off the lilies we twine round its
 chords
 Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide – those sunbeams
 like swords!
 And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,
 So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.
 They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
 Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;
 40 And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star
 Into eve and the blue far above us, – so blue and so far!

VI

– Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each leave
 his mate
 To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate
 Till for boldness they fight one another: and then, what has
 weight
 To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house –
 There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half
 mouse!
 God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,
 To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song,
 when hand
 50 Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great
 hearts expand
 And grow one in the sense of this world's life. – And then, the
 last song
 When the dead man is praised on his journey – 'Bear, bear him
 along

With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm-seeds
 not here

To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.
 Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!' – And then, the
 glad chaunt

Of the marriage, – first go the young maidens, next, she whom
 we vaunt

As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling. – And then, the great
 march

Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
 Naught can break; who shall harm them, our friends? – Then,
 the chorus intoned

60 As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
 But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;
 And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and sparkles
 'gan dart

From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a start,
 All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
 So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
 And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
 As I sang, –

IX

'Oh, our manhood's prime vigour! No spirit feels waste,
 Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
 70 Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
 The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver
 shock
 Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
 And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
 And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,
 And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of
 wine,
 And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
 That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
 How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
 All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!
 80 Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou
 didst guard

When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward?
 Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung
 The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint tongue
 Joining in while it could to the witness, "Let one more attest,
 I have lived, seen God's hand through a lifetime, and all was for
 best"?

Then they sung through their tears in strong triumph, not much,
 but the rest.

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

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

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

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

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;
 And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!
 On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like the
 throe

That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour and lets the gold go)
 High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them,
 – all

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

x

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, – heart, hand, harp and voice,
 Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice
 Saul's fame in the light it was made for – as when, dare I say,

100 The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its array,
 And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot – 'Saul!' cried I, and
 stopped,

And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung
 propped

By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his name:
 Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the
 aim,

And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held (he
 alone,

While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust
 of stone

A year's snow bound about for a breastplate, – leaves grasp of the
 sheet?

Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,
 And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain
 of old,

110 With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold –
 Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and scar
 Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest – all hail, there
 they are!

– Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest
 Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on his
 crest

For their food in the ardours of summer. One long shudder
 thrilled

All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled
 At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.
 What was gone, what remained? All to traverse, 'twixt hope and
 despair;

Death was past, life not come: so he waited. Awhile his right
 hand

120 Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith to
 remand

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

I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any more
 Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the shore,
 At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean – a sun's slow decline
 Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and entwine
 Base with base to knit strength more intensely: so, arm folded
 arm

O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI

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

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

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

Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye

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

He saith, 'It is good'; still he drinks not: he lets me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII

Then fancies grew rife

Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round me the
sheep

Fed in silence – above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep;
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the
sky:

140 And I laughed – 'Since my days are ordained to be passed with
my flocks,

Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the rocks,
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!
Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that
gains,

And the prudence that keeps what men strive for.' And now
these old trains

Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once more the
string

Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus –

XIII

'Yea, my King,'

I began – 'thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that spring
From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by brute:

150 In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears
fruit.

Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree, – how its stem
trembled first

Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely outburst
The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when these too,
in turn

Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet more was
to learn,

E'en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our dates shall
we slight,

When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the
plight

Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them? Not so!
stem and branch

Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-wine
shall staunch

Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such wine.

160 Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be thine!
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still shalt enjoy
More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life of a boy.
Crush that life, and behold its wine running! Each deed thou
hast done

Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as the sun
Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though
tempests efface,

Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must everywhere
trace

The results of his past summer-prime, – so, each ray of thy will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill
Thy whole people, the countless, with ardour, till they too give
forth

170 A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South and the
North

With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the past!
But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last:
As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her height
So with man – so his power and his beauty for ever take flight.
No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine! Look forth o'er the
years!

Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the
seer's!

Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his tomb – bid arise
A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till, built to the
skies,

Let it mark where the great First King slumbers: whose fame
would ye know?

180 Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe, – Such was Saul, so he did;
With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid, –
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault to
amend,

In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall
 spend
 (See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and record
 With the gold of the graver, Saul's story, – the statesman's great
 word
 Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's a-wave
 With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet-
 winds rave:

So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part
 190 In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou art!

XIV

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst grant me that
 day,

And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,
 Carry on and complete an adventure, – my shield and my sword
 In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my
 word, –

Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavour
 And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed hopeless as
 ever

On the new stretch of heaven above me – till, mighty to save,
 Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance – God's throne
 from man's grave!

Let me tell out my tale to its ending – my voice to my heart
 200 Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night I took
 part,

As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,
 And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish like sleep!
 For I wake in the grey dew covert, while Hebron upheaves
 The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron
 retrieves

Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV

I say then, – my song

While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong
 Made a proffer of good to console him – he slowly resumed
 His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right-hand replumed
 His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
 210 Of his turban, and see – the huge sweat that his countenance
 bathes,

He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,
 And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.
 He is Saul, ye remember in glory, – ere error had bent
 The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though
 much spent

Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did
 choose,

To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.
 So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the pile
 Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there
 awhile,

And sat out my singing, – one arm round the tent-prop, to raise
 220 His bent head, and the other hung slack – till I touched on the
 praise

I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there;
 And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware
 That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
 Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak-roots
 which please

To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
 If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow
 Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
 Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: through my
 hair

The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with
 kind power –

230 All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
 Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized mine –
 And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?
 I yearned – 'Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
 I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this;
 I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
 As this moment, – had love but the warrant, love's heart to
 dispense!'

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more – no song more!
 outbroke –

XVII

'I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke:
 I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
 240 And pronounced on the rest of his handwork – returned him
 again
 His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw:
 I report, as a man may of God's work – all's love, yet all's law.
 Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
 To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dew-drop was
 asked.
 Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
 Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite
 Care!
 Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
 I but open my eyes, – and perfection, no more and no less,
 In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
 250 In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.
 And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
 (With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
 The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
 As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.
 Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known,
 I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.
 There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hood-wink,
 I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)
 260 Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
 E'en the Giver in one gift. – Behold, I could love if I durst!
 But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
 God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's sake.
 – What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great
 and small,
 Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth
 appal?
 In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
 Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
 That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts
 shift?
 Here, the creature surpass the Creator, – the end, what Began?
 Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
 270 And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
 Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less
 power,

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
 Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
 Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
 And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
 These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the
 best?

Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
 This perfection, – succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute
 of night?

Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the mistake,
 280 Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now, – and bid him awake
 From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
 Clear and safe in new light and new life, – a new harmony yet
 To be run, and continued, and ended – who knows? – or endure!
 The man taught enough, by life's dream, of the rest to make sure;
 By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
 And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in this.

XVIII

'I believe it! 'Tis thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:
 In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
 All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my
 prayer
 290 As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.
 From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread
 Sabaoth:
 I will? – the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not loth
 To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I dare
 Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my despair?
 This; – 'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what man
 Would do!
 See the King – I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall
 through.
 Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
 To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would – knowing which,
 I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now!
 300 Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou – so wilt
 thou!
 So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown –
 And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
 One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
 Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!

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

'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
 In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
 310 A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
 Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand
 Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ
 stand!

XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.
 There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,
 Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware:
 I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,
 As a runner beset by the populace famished for news –
 Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with
 her crews;

320 And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
 Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted not,
 For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed
 All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,
 Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
 Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth –
 Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth;
 In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills;
 In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden wind-
 thrills;
 In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling
 still
 Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff and
 chill

330 That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with awe:
 E'en the serpent that slid away silent, – he felt the new law.
 The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the
 flowers;

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

And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
 With their obstinate, all but hushed voices – 'E'en so, it is so!'

'De Gustibus –'

I

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
 (If our loves remain)
 In an English lane,
 By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
 Hark, those two in the hazel coppice –
 A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
 Making love, say, –
 The happier they!

Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
 10 And let them pass, as they will too soon,
 With the bean-flowers' boon,
 And the blackbird's tune,
 And May, and June!

II

What I love best in all the world
 Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
 In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
 Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
 (If I get my head from out the mouth
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
 20 And come again to the land of lands) –
 In a sea-side house to the farther South,
 Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
 And one sharp tree – 'tis a cypress – stands,
 By the many hundred years red-rusted,
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'erusted,
 My sentinel to guard the sands
 To the water's edge. For, what expands
 Before the house, but the great opaque
 Blue breadth of sea without a break?
 30 While, in the house, for ever crumbles
 Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
 From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
 A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
 Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
 And says there's news today – the king
 Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,

Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
 – She hopes they have not caught the felons.
 Italy, my Italy!

- 40 Queen Mary's saying serves for me –
 (When fortune's malice
 Lost her – Calais) –
 Open my heart and you will see
 Graved inside of it, 'Italy.'
 Such lovers old are I and she:
 So it always was, so shall ever be!

Women and Roses

I

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

II

- Round and round, like a dance of snow
 In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
 Floating the women faded for ages,
 Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
 Then follow women fresh and gay,
 Living and loving and loved today.
 10 Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
 Beauties yet unborn. And all, to one cadence,
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III

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

IV

- Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
 You, great shapes of the antique time!
 How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
 Break my heart at your feet to please you?
 20 Oh, to possess and be possessed!

Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!
 Once but of love, the poesy, the passion,
 Drink but once and die! – In vain, the same fashion,
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

- 40 Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear!
 What is far conquers what is near.
 Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
 Sprung from the dust where our flesh moulders.
 What shall arrive with the cycle's change?
 A novel grace and a beauty strange.
 I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,
 Shaped her to his mind! – Alas! in like manner
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

Protus

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

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

– Stop! Have you turned two pages? Still the same.
 New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say
 How that same year, on such a month and day,
 'John the Pannonian, groundedly believed
 A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprieved

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

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

Holy-Cross Day

On which the Jews were forced to attend an annual Christian
 sermon in Rome

['Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his
 first sermon to the Jews: as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of
 the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table
 here in Rome should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing
 dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests.
 And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted blind restif and
 ready-to-perish Hebrews! now maternally brought – nay (for He saith
 "Compel them to come in") haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and
 against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awaken-
 ing, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience! Nor was
 my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion; witness the abundance of
 conversions which did incontinently reward him: though not to my lord be
 altogether the glory.' – *Diary by the Bishop's Secretary, 1600.*]

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

I

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

II

Boh, here's Barnabas! Job, that's you?
 Up stumps Solomon - bustling too?
 Shame, man! greedy beyond your years
 10 To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?
 Fair play's a jewel! Leave friends in the lurch?
 Stand on a line ere you start for the church!

III

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

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

XI

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

XII

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

XIII

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

XIV

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

XV

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

XVI

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

XVII

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

XVIII

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

XIX

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

XX

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

[Pope Gregory XVI abolished this bad business of the Sermon.
– R. B.]

The Guardian-Angel

A Picture at Fano

I

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

II

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

III

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

IV

If this was ever granted, I would rest
 My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
 Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
 Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,
 Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
 Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
 And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

Cleon

'As certain also of your own poets have said' -

Cleon the poet (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps 'Greece') -
To 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
10 Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee:
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed
Of black and white slaves (like the chequer-work
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves),
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands
Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!
20 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
30 Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect, -
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake -
Had'st 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
40 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
Is mine, - and also mine the little chant,
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
50 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 Poecile, 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.
60 For music, - why, I have combined the moods,
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;
Thus much the people know and recognize,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.
We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,
Look not so great, beside their simple way,
To a judge who only sees one way at once,
One mind-point and no other at a time, -
Compares the small part of a man of us
70 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 achievements here
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually.

As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
 But each part having reference to all, –
 How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
 80 Endure effacement by another part?
 Was the thing done? – then, what's to do again?
 See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
 Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
 And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid –
 He did not overlay them, superimpose
 The new upon the old and blot it out,
 But laid them on a level in his work,
 Making at last a picture; there it lies.
 So, first the perfect separate forms were made,
 90 The portions of mankind; and after, so,
 Occurred the combination of the same.
 For where had been a progress, otherwise?
 Mankind, made up of all the single men, –
 In such a synthesis the labour ends.
 Now mark me! those divine men of old time
 Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point
 The outside verge that rounds our faculty;
 And where they reached, who can do more than reach?
 It takes but little water just to touch
 100 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
 110 Up to the visible height – and after, void;
 Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
 And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
 To vindicate his purpose in 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 simultaneously
 What, in its nature, never can be shown,

Piecemeal or in succession; – showed, I say,
 120 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 judgement which should give the due to each,
 Show where the labour lay and where the ease,
 And prove Zeus' self, the latent everywhere!
 This is a dream: – but no dream, let us hope,
 That years and days, the summers and the springs,
 Follow each other with unwaning powers.
 130 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 above her robe as buoyed by clouds,
 Refines upon the women of my youth.
 What, and the soul alone deteriorates?
 I have not chanted verse like Homer, no –
 140 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 other's art.
 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,
 150 And show a better flower if not so large:
 I stand myself. Refer this to the gods
 Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare
 (All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
 That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
 Discourse of lightly or depreciate?
 It might have fallen to another's hand: what then?
 I pass too surely: let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask,
 This being with me as I declare, O king,
 160 My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,
 So done by me, accepted so by men –
 Thou askest, if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
 I must not be accounted to attain
 The very crown and proper end of life?
 Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
 I face death with success in my right hand:
 Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
 The fortunate of men? 'For' (writest thou)
 'Thou leavest much behind, while I leave naught.
 170 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.
 180 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 perceived,
 Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
 190 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 questioned 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,
 200 The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
 And slides, forth range the beasts, the birds take flight,
 Till life's mechanics can no further go –
 And all this joy in natural life is put
 Like fire from off thy finger into each,
 So exquisitely perfect is the same.
 But 'tis pure fire, and they mere matter are;
 It has them, not they it: and so I choose
 For man, thy last premeditated work
 (If I might add a glory to the scheme)
 210 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.
 220 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,
 230 Take each step higher over the brute's head.
 This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
 Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
 Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
 Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;
 A tower that crowns a country. But alas,
 The soul now climbs it just to perish there!
 For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream –
 We know this, which we had not else perceived)
 That there's a world of capability

240 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 clombst 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 recipiency,
 Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
 Repair the waste of age and sickness: no,
 It skills not! life's inadequate to joy,
 250 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?
 260 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; 'tis not so –
 Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?
 Still, no. If care – where is the sign? I ask,
 And get no answer, and agree in sum,
 270 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
 280 (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 Phoebus, am I therefore young?
 Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
 290 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 naught, 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.
 300 I know the joy of kingship: well, thou art king!

'But,' sayest thou – (and I marvel, I repeat
 To find thee trip on such a mere word) 'what
 Thou writest, paintest, stays; that does not die:
 Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
 And Aeschylus, 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,
 310 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,
 320 Alive still, in the praise of such as thou,
 I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,

The man who loved his life so over-much,
 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
 330 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
 340 To one called Paulus; we have heard his fame
 Indeed, if Christus be not one with him –
 I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
 Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
 As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
 Hath access to a secret shut from us?
 Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
 In stooping to inquire of such an one,
 As if his answer could impose at all!
 He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.
 350 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.

The Twins

'Give' and 'It-shall-be-given-unto-you.'

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

II
 A beggar asked an alms
 One day at an abbey-door,
 Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,
 The abbot replied, 'We're poor!

III
 'Poor, who had plenty once,
 10 When gifts fell thick as rain:
 But they give us naught, for the nonce,
 And how should we give again?'

IV
 Then the beggar, 'See your sins!
 Of old, unless I err,
 Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
 Date and Dabitur.

V
 'While Date was in good case
 Dabitur flourished too:
 For Dabitur's lenten face
 20 No wonder if Date rue.

VI
 'Would ye retrieve the one?
 Try and make plump the other!
 When Date's penance is done,
 Dabitur helps his brother.

VII

'Only, beware relapse!
The Abbot hung his head.
This beggar might be perhaps
An angel, Luther said.

Popularity

I

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

II

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

III

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

IV

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
'Others give best at first, but thou
Forever set'st our table praising,
20 Keep'st the good wine till now!'

V

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder:
I'll say – a fisher, on the sand
By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

XI

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
 Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
 And clarify, – refine to proof
 The liquor filtered by degrees,
 While the world stands aloof.

XII

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

XIII

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

The Heretic's Tragedy

A Middle-Age Interlude

ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER
 GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES
 CITY. CANTUQUE, *Virgilius*. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE
 AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314; as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries.)

I

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET
 The Lord, we look to once for all,
 Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:
 He knows not to vary, saith Saint Paul,
 Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.

See him no other than as he is!

Give both the infinitudes their due –
 Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
 As infinite a justice too.
 [*Organ: plagal-cadence*].
 As infinite a justice too.

II

ONE SINGETH

10 John, Master of the Temple of God,
 Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,
 What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,
 He sold it to Sultan Saladin:
 Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,
 Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,
 And clipt of his wings in Paris square,
 They bring him now to be burned alive.
 [*And wanteth there grace of lute or clavichthern, ye shall say to
 confirm him who singeth –*]
 We bring John now to be burned alive.

III

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;
 20 'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck;
 But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,
 Make a trench all round with the city muck;
 Inside they pile log upon log, good store;
 Faggots no few, blocks great and small,
 Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more, –
 For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

CHORUS

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

IV

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith;
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow;
 30 Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow:
 Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
 Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,

Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
Sing 'Laudes' and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS

Laus Deo – who bids clap-to the torch.

V

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

VI

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

CHORUS

'Tis John the mocker cries, 'Save thou me!'

VII

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

CHORUS

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

VIII

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!
Some, honied of taste like your leman's tongue:
Some, bitter; for why? (roast gaily on!)
Their tree struck root in devil's-dung.
When Paul once reasoned of righteousness
And of temperance and of judgement to come,
Good Felix trembled, he could no less:
70 John, snickering, crooked his wicked thumb.

CHORUS

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb?

IX

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

CHORUS

80 What maketh heaven, That maketh hell.

X

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

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

God help all poor souls lost in the dark!

Two in the Campagna

I

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

II

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

III

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

IV

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

V

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

VI

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
 Such miracles performed in play,
 Such primal naked forms of flowers,
 Such letting nature have her way
 30 While heaven looks from its towers!

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

XI

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

XII

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

A Grammarian's Funeral

Shortly after the Revival of Learning in Europe

Let us begin and carry up this corpse,
 Singing together.
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes
 Each in its tether
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
 Cared-for till cock-crow:
 Look out if yonder be not day again
 Rimming the rock-row!
 That's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,
 10 Rarer, intenser,
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
 Chafes in the censer.
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;
 Seek we sepulture
 On a tall mountain, citted to the top,
 Crowded with culture!
 All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
 Clouds overcome it;
 No! yonder sparkle is the citadel's
 20 Circling its summit.
 Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:
 Wait ye the warning?
 Our low life was the level's and the night's;
 He's for the morning.
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,
 'Ware the beholders!
 This is our master, famous calm and dead,
 Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
 30 Safe from the weather!
 He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
 Singing together,
 He was a man born with thy face and throat,
 Lyric Apollo!
 Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note
 Winter would follow?
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!
 Cramped and diminished,
 Moaned he, 'New measures, other feet anon!
 40 My dance is finished?'
 No, that's the world's way: (keep the mountain-side,
 Make for the city!)
 He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
 Over men's pity;
 Left play for work, and grappled with the world
 Bent on escaping:
 'What's in the scroll,' quoth he, 'thou keepest furled?
 Show me their shaping,
 Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage, –
 50 Give!' – So, he gowned him,
 Straight got by heart that book to its last page:
 Learned, we found him.
 Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
 Accents uncertain:
 'Time to taste life,' another would have said,
 'Up with the curtain!'
 This man said rather, 'Actual life comes next?
 Patience a moment!
 Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
 60 Still there's the comment.
 Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,
 Painful or easy!
 Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
 Ay, nor feel queasy.'
 Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
 When he had learned it,
 When he had gathered all books had to give!
 Sooner, he spurned it.
 Image the whole, then execute the parts –
 70 Fancy the fabric

Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached: there's the market-place
Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
(Hearten our chorus!)

That before living he'd learn how to live –
No end to learning:

Earn the means first – God surely will contrive

80 Use for our earning.

Others mistrust and say, 'But time escapes:
Live now or never!'

He said, 'What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
Man has Forever.'

Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:
Calculus racked him:

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead:
Tussis attacked him.

'Now, master, take a little rest!' – not he!

90 (Caution redoubled,

Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly!)
Not a whit troubled

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
Fierce as a dragon

He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure

100 Bad is our bargain!

Was it not great? did not he throw on God,
(He loves the burthen) –

God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant?

He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment.

He ventured neck or nothing – heaven's success

110 Found, or earth's failure:

'Wilt thou trust death or not?' He answered 'Yes:

Hence with life's pale lure!

That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:

This high man, aiming at a million,
120 Misses an unit.

That, has the world here – should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!

This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him.

So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,
Ground he at grammar;

Still, through the rattle, parts of speech were rife:
While he could stammer

He settled *Hoti's* business – let it be! –

130 Properly based *Oun* –

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.

Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place:
Hail to your purlieus,

All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews!

Here's the top-peak; the multitude below
Live, for they can, there:

This man decided not to Live but Know –

140 Bury this man there?

Here – here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
Lightnings are loosened,

Stars come and go! Let joy break with the storm,
Peace let the dew send!

Lofty designs must close in like effects:
Loftily lying,

Leave him – still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying.

One Way of Love

I

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

II

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

III

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

Another Way of Love

I

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

II

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

III

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

'Transcendentalism: A Poem in Twelve Books'

Stop playing, poet! May a brother speak?
 'Tis you speak, that's your error. Song's our art:
 Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts
 Instead of draping them in sights and sounds.
 – True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure up!
 But why such long prolusion and display,
 Such turning and adjustment of the harp,
 And taking it upon your breast, at length,
 Only to speak dry words across its strings?
 10 Stark-naked thought is in request enough:
 Speak prose and hollo it till Europe hears!

The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,
Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp –
Exchange our harp for that, – who hinders you?

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

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

Misconceptions

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

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

One Word More

TO E. B. B.
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.
10 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)
 20 Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
 Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas –
 Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
 Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
 Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre –
 Seen by us and all the world in circle.

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
 30 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 retraced it,
 (Peradventure with a pen corroded
 Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
 When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
 Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
 Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
 40 Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
 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

50 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
 60 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,
 70 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,
 80 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.
 90 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

100 Did he love one face from out the thousands,
 (Were she Jethro’s daughter, white and wifely,
 Were she but the Aethiopian 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

110 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,
 120 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 through bronze, may breathe through silver,
 Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
 He who writes, may write for once as I do.

XIV

130 Love, you saw me gather men and women,
 Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
 Enter each and all, and use their service,
 Speak from every mouth, – the speech, a poem.
 Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
 Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:
 I am mine and yours – the rest be all men’s,
 Karshish, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
 Let me speak this once in my true person,
 Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
 Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence:
 140 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 Florence,
 Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
 Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
 Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
 Came she, our new crescent of a hair’s-breadth.
 150 Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
 Rounder ’twixt the cypresses and rounder,
 Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
 Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,

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

XVI

What, there's nothing in the moon noteworthy?
Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal,
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),
160 All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos)
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 iceberg
170 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 sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,
When they ate and drank and saw God also!

XVII

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

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,

190 Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you!
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you –
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

XIX

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

R.B.

- 277-8 *pearl of price*... Caesar 'pearl of great price' (Matthew xiii 46).. Emperor.
 279 *fought with beasts* Saint Paul 'fought with beasts' (1 Corinthians xv 32).
 286 *Sergius* Sergius Paulus, proconsul in Cyprus, friendly to Paul (Acts xiii 7)?
 322 *wis... wot think... know* (archaisms).
 330 *leave Saint Paul for Aeschylus* leave Saint Paul's faith in immortality for the 'blind hopes' of the Titan Prometheus of Aeschylus.
 332 *blind hopes* Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 255.
 382 *overwent* traversed.
 393 *Lucumons* ancient Etruscan priest-king patriarchs.
 394 *Fourier's scheme* François Fourier (1772-1837), socialist writer, advocated communes.
 403 *perdue* hidden.
 411 *scout* spy, skulker.
 447 *'tice* entice.
 458 *God's kingdom come* 'Thy kingdom come' (Lord's Prayer).
 476 *At night it cometh like a thief* 'But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night' (2 Peter iii 10).
 487 *mage* magus, magician.
 488 *Queen Mab* here, apparently, Queen of the fairies; usually the 'fairies' midwife' delivering the brain of dreams, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, I. 4. 53.
 498-9 *in memory keep | Her precept* 'These few precepts in thy memory' (*Hamlet* I. 3. 58).
 520 *'gan suspire* began to breathe.
 598 *Tophet* place of burning (Isaiah xxx 33), often roughly synonymous with Hell.
 609 *a waking dream* 'Was it a vision or a waking dream?' (Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale', 79). Both 'Christmas-Eve' and 'Easter-Day' often suggest, if only faintly, that Browning had been reading Keats.
 615 *great white throne* 'And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them' (Revelation xx 11).
 616 *quick and dead* 'Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead' (1 Peter iv 5).
 617-18 *Where stood they, small and great? Who read | The sentence from the opened book?* 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works' (Revelation xx 12).
 625 *palm-tree-cinctured city* In a letter of 7 June 1887 Browning wrote: 'the "Palm-cinctured City" is merely typical, - "such a thing might be, and doubtless has been" - enough for an illustration, that's all' (T. J. Collins, 'Letters from Robert Browning To the Rev. J. D. Williams, 1874-1889', *BIS* IV, 1976, 46).
 640-41 *smoke | Pillared o'er Sodom* Genesis xix 28.
 697-8 *glut | Thy sense* 'glut thy sorrow on a morning rose' (Keats, 'Ode on Melancholy', 15).
 712-13 *Let the unjust usurp at will: | The filthy shall be filthy still* 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still' (Revelation xxii 11).
 749 *bee-bird* humming-bird.
 767-8] About seven lines of manuscript have been cut out here, presumably by Browning himself.
 799 *Buonarroti* Michelangelo.

- 827 *very good* Genesis i 31.
 840] One minute after you dispense *MS.*, 1850; One minute after day dispense 1863-8.
 841 *Of all the sounds*] The thousand sounds *MS.*, 1850-68.
 842 *Innumeros]* In, on him, *MS.*, 1850-63; In on him 1868.
 910 *wind-lyres* Almost certainly, Browning refers to the Aeolian harp and is mistranslating the German *Windharfe* (wind harp). Probably a unique use of the word.
waft breath of wind.
 932-3] Able to wound it, not sustain -
 But let me not choose all in vain! *MS. first reading.*
 937 *living]* loving *MS.*, 1850-68.
 943' *look on]* live with *MS.*, 1850-63.
 945 *Old memories to new dreams]* Its fragments to my whole *MS.*, 1850-68.
 1010 *Was this a vision?* 'Was it a vision or a waking dream?' (Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale', 79).

Men and Women

The two volumes of *Men and Women* were published by Chapman and Hall on 10 November 1855. In later collections, all fifty-one poems in the collection were reprinted, sometimes after fairly extensive revision. In 1863 'In a Balcony' became independent, and the other poems were rearranged in three groupings together with poems from *Dramatic Lyrics* and *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*: thirty poems went to 'Lyrics', twelve to 'Romances', eight to 'Men, and Women' (details of the groupings are in the Appendix to Volume II of the present edition). The same groupings were retained in 1868 and 1888 under the titles of 'Dramatic Lyrics', 'Dramatic Romances' and 'Men and Women'. Of the poems printed in 1855 only 'The Twins' (1854) and the first nine sections of 'Saul' had appeared before.

The volume title probably alludes to the twenty-sixth sonnet in Mrs Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850), the opening lines of which are: 'I lived with visions for my company | Instead of men and women, years ago'. The dates of composition of most poems in *Men and Women* are unknown, and difficult or impossible to determine with any precision. The dedication to (and the epilogue of) the collection, 'One Word More', was the last written (September 1855). 'The Guardian-Angel' (July 1848) may have been the first written, and it is the only poem that can positively be said, despite frequent conjectures masquerading as facts, to have been written before 1853. On 5 June 1854 Browning wrote to his friend John Forster that the poems were 'not written before last year' (*New Letters*, 77), and it is almost certain that the vast mass of the poems in *Men and Women* was written in 1853-5. On 24 February 1853 Browning wrote of 'writing - a first step towards popularity for me - lyrics with more music and painting than before, so as to get people to hear and see' (W. Thomas, 'Deux lettres inédites de Robert Browning à Joseph Milsand', *Revue Germanique* XII, 1921, 253). Mrs Browning described her husband as being at work on 24 August 1853, and in September 1854 she is reported to have said that her husband was ready to publish and that he had considered publication in the Summer of 1854. Browning, however, continued work on the collection. On 12 July 1855 he brought the manuscript, which has apparently perished, to London. There are, however, extant MSS. of a handful of the poems. Further MS. readings are also preserved in a set of proofs in the Huntington Library (see W. S. Peterson, 'The Proofs of Browning's *Men and Women*', *SBHC* III, No. 2, 1975, 23-39).

With the possible exception of *The Ring and the Book*, *Men and Women* is the most highly regarded of all Browning's works. Now agreed to be one of Victorian England's most distinguished books, it had little impact at the time: of the fairly small run (2,000?), many copies were still available a decade later, and there was no second edition. Browning continued to be known as his wife's husband.

There are two important editions of *Men and Women* published in this century; both reprint the text of 1855: B. Worsfold's of 1904, and P. Turner's of 1972. J. R. Watson collected some essays in a Macmillan casebook (1974) on the *Men and Women* of the later grouping; and M. Willy offers a brief introduction in *A Critical Commentary on Browning's 'Men and Women'*, Macmillan, 1968. Books on Browning normally focus heavily on the poems of *Men and Women*. See also R. A. Foakes, *The Romantic Assertion*, Methuen, 1958, 138-48; and W. Irvine, 'Four Monologues in Browning's *Men and Women*', *VP* II, 1964, 155-64 ('Lippo', 'Blougram', 'Karshish', 'Cleon').

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

First published as the first poem of *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. In these printings it was divided into fourteen stanzas of six lines each; for 1868 Browning made the final division into seven stanzas of twelve lines each. There were no verbal revisions after 1855. A manuscript, entitled 'Sicilian Pastoral', is in Harvard's Houghton Library; see J. Maynard, 'Browning's "Sicilian Pastoral"', *Harvard Library Bulletin* XX, 1972, 436-43.

DeVane (*Handbook*, 212) states that the poem was written in an apartment on the Champs Elysées on 3 January 1853, but one of the two references he cites does not support his statement, and the other contradicts it (see J. Parr, 'The Date and Composition of Browning's *Love Among the Ruins*', *PQ* XXXII, 1953, 443-6, and J. Huebenthal's note in *VP* IV, 1966, 51-4). F. J. Furnivall (*BSP* I, 159), probably reporting Browning, stated that the poet wrote '*Love Among the Ruins*, *Women and Roses*, and *Childe Roland* in three successive days 1, 2 and 3 January 1852'; but the date of composition remains uncertain, especially since Furnivall was never addicted to accuracy and since Browning wrote on 5 June 1854 that the *Men and Women* poems were not written before 1853. Parr's suggestion that the poem was written in Florence in 1853 is as reasonable as any, and it has implicit support in Whiting, *The Brownings*, 261.

Despite the MS. title, the setting of the poem derives in part from visits to the Campagna, the countryside around Rome. In part it comes from Browning's reading about ancient ruined cities, notably Nineveh and Babylon (see J. Parr, 'The Site and Ancient City of Browning's *Love Among the Ruins*', *PMLA* LXVIII, 1953, 128-37). Debts have also been suggested to such writings as Herodotus' description of Babylon, Revelation, Raleigh's *History of the World*, and Spenser's *Complaints* (see R. K. R. Thornton, in *N & Q* CCXIII, 1968, 178-9). For criticism, see W. Cadbury, 'Lyric and Anti-Lyric Forms', *TQ* XXXIV, 1964, 49-67 (reprinted in Tracy, *Browning's Mind and Art*, 32-50), and Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 163-73.

7 *a city great and gay* 'all that in this world is great or gay, / Doth as a vapour vanish, and decay' (Spenser, *Ruines of Time*, 55-6).

9 *Of*] Was MS.

11 *gathered . . . wielding far*] had his . . . sent afar MS.

19 *shot its spires* 'sharped steeples high shot up in air' (Spenser, *Ruines of Rome*, 16).

21 *hundred-gated* Babylon and the Egyptian Thebes were reputed to have had a hundred gates.

39 *By the caper over-rooted*] Which the caper roots a-top of MS.
caper a small shrub.

41 *houseleek* a flowering plant that generally grows on walls or roofs.

43 *Marks*] Was MS.

61 *he looked upon the city*] the city he looked out on MS.

65 *causeys* causeways.

77 *Yet reserved a thousand*] And yet mustered five-score MS.

79 *freezes*] The MS. shows Browning debating between the first reading *freezes* and the second reading *tingles*.

84 *Love is best.*] *This is best!* MS.; *Love is best!* 1855-63.

A LOVERS' QUARREL

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. Revisions after 1855 were trifling. The poem was probably written in Florence in March 1853. The Brownings disagreed about Napoleon III, and about spiritualism, a major fad in Florence in 1852-3. On the poem, see Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 138-41.

7 *as lief that* rather.

8 *rilletts* small rivulets.

11 *beryl* light-green.

20 *ingle* fireplace.

30 *Emperor* Napoleon III of France married on 30 January 1853; *The Times* criticized the extravagance.

36 *Pampas* the plains of South America.

43 *will our table turn?* that is, in a spiritualist ritual. Mrs Browning believed in spiritualism, her husband did not.

64 *flirt* open and close quickly, or wave smartly (*OED*).

69 *two spots* of the nostrils.

90-91 'Death and life are in the power of the tongue' (Proverbs xviii 21).

105 *threats* threatens (archaism).

123 *minor third* The interval in the cuckoo's notes increases as spring progresses. The time of the minor third is towards the middle of spring.

125 *guelder-rose* a variety of cranberry.

131-3 The giant's speech is from the folk-tale of Jack the Giant-killer. Jack, unlike Tom Thumb, is valiant; Browning probably confused two stories.

EVELYN HOPE

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. Later revisions were trifling. The date of composition is unknown.

UP AT A VILLA - DOWN IN THE CITY

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. Later revisions were trifling. The date of writing is unknown; the setting is Tuscan. D. C. Allen (*Andrew Marvell*, 123) suggests a debt to Martial. See Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 178-80.

- 4 *Bacchus* (Dionysus) god of wine, associated with revels.
 9 *shag* tangled mass.
 28 *pash* strike with hoofs.
 34 *thrid* thread (archaism).
 39 *diligence* stage-coach.
 42 *Pulcinello-trumpet* the trumpet announcing the puppet-show. (Pulcinello is a kind of Punch-figure.)
 46 *Duke* the Tuscan Grand-Duke, Leopold II.
 48-9 That is, roughly, the priest combines great philosophical poet, fiction writer, love poet, translator, rhetorician and preacher.
 52 *seven swords* representing the Virgin's Seven Sorrows.
 56 *new tax . . . gate* In Italy, taxes on salt and on produce entering cities were fairly heavy.

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. There were no verbal changes after 1855. Date of composition is unknown. That a woman always gets the last word had been further popularized by Mrs Caudle in Douglas Jerrold's *Mrs Caudle's Curtain Lectures*, first published in 1845. See M. R. Sullivan, 'Irony in "A Woman's Last Word"', *BSN V*, No. 2, 1975, 14-17.

FRA LIPPO LIPPI

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it remained in 'Men, and Women'. Revisions after 1855 were trifling. The poem was probably written in Florence in the first half of 1853. Its main and only really essential source, apart from Browning's familiarity with the paintings of Fra Filippo Lippi (c. 1406-69), is Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*, which gave many of the facts, and supports the general tenor, of Browning's poem.

It is generally agreed that Lippo's artistic creed reflects much in Browning's, and that he is really a kind of spokesman for the poet, paralleling in his comments much that Browning had said in his essay on Shelley. In the reorganized 'Men, and Women' of 1863 and later collected editions, 'Andrea del Sarto', an obvious companion poem, followed 'Pictor Ignotus' and 'Fra Lippo Lippi'. Among a host of essays on this perennial favourite are: Jack, *Browning's Major Poetry*, 213-24; J. L. Kendall, 'Lippo's Vision', *VNL* 18, 1960, 18-21; King, *The Bow and the Lyre*, 32-51; W. D. Shaw, 'Character and Philosophy in "Fra Lippo Lippi"', *VP* II, 1964, 127-32.

- 3 *Zooks* abbreviation of 'Gadzooks' (God's hooks), a mild oath.
 7 *Carmine* the monastery of the religious order of the Carmelites in Florence. Vasari says Lippo left the order at the age of seventeen.
 17 *Cosimo of the Medici* the Florentine ruler and patron of the arts.
 18 *house* the Medici-Riccardi Palace, built 1444-60.
caps crowns.
 28 *florin* a word applied imprecisely to various continental coins.
 34 *John Baptist* Vasari mentions the saint as a subject painted by Lippo; his frescoes of the saint are at Prato.

- 41 *take* catch the fancy of (*OED* 10).
 47 *mew* cage.
 52 *whifts* whiffs.
 53-7 The three-line Tuscan folksong beginning with a reference to a flower is called a *stornello*.
 67 *Saint Laurence* the church of San Lorenzo.
 73 *Jerome* the highly ascetic saint (340-420) whom Lippo painted for Cosimo in his *Virgin Adoring the Child with Saint Hilarion*. The work is now in the Uffizi in Florence (for a photograph, see *SIB* I, No. 2, 1973, 34).
 75 *snaf* seize.
 81-2 Vasari says Lippo was orphaned at the age of two, and then for six years brought up by his aunt, Mona Lapaccia.
 121 *Eight* the eight magistrates of Florence.
 130 *antiphonary* book with choral music.
 135 *looked black*] were mazed *Huntington proof*.
 139 *Camaldolese* The religious order had a convent near Florence.
 140 *Preaching Friars* Dominicans.
 146 *fat and lean*] good and bad *Huntington proof*.
 148 *cribs* petty thefts.
 160 *dropped*] threw *Huntington proof*.
 170 *niece* almost certainly not a relation, but one with whom he has relations.
 172 *funked* expired in smoke.
 186 *when you die it leaves your mouth* There is an old doctrine (referred to again in 'An Epistle', 6) that the soul departs from the body in the form of vapour with the last breath.
 189 *Giotto* the great Florentine painter and architect (1267-1337).
 196 *Herodias* mother of Salome, who, after dancing for Herod, asked him for the head of John the Baptist (Matthew xiv). The same error is in Vasari.
 229 *Those great rings* The iron rings referred to still survive.
 235 *Angelico* Fra Angelico (1387-1455), one of the most ethereal of painters. J. Parr, 'Browning's *Fra Lippo Lippi*, Vasari's Masaccio, and Mrs. Jameson', *English Language Notes* V, 1968, 277-83, suggests that the contrast between Lippo and Fra Angelico may have been suggested by the writings of the Brownings' friend, Mrs Jameson.
 236 *Lorenzo* Lorenzo Monaco (c. 1370-c. 1425), painter, Fra Angelico's master.
 237 *Fag* toil.
 250 *the cup runs over* 'my cup runneth over' (Psalm xxiii, 5).
 276 *Guidi* Tommaso Guidi, Masaccio (1401-28?), was, despite Browning's protests to the contrary, Lippo's teacher, not pupil. The error stems from footnotes in the Brownings' edition of Vasari - see J. Parr, 'Browning's *Fra Lippo Lippi*, Baldinucci, and the Milanese Edition of Vasari', *English Language Notes* III, 1966, 197-201.
 313 *blot*] trap *Huntington proof*.
 323-4 *Saint Laurence . . . Prato* The saint was roasted to death in 258. Some of Lippo's best work was done in the town near Florence. The painting is probably invented, though Lippo did treat Saint Laurence at least twice.
 327 *phiz* face (slang).
 328 *turn*] turned *Huntington proof*.
 337 *wot* knows (archaism).
 346 *Sant'Ambrogio's* a convent in Florence for which Lippo painted his *Coronation*

of the *Virgin* (now in the Uffizi), the painting described in the following lines. It was, Vasari says, this painting that got Cosimo interested in Lippo. (A photograph faces page 202 in Griffin and Minchin, *Life*.)

347 *cast o' my office* sample of my work.

351 *orris-root* iris-root. Some kinds are used in perfumes.

354 *Saint John* the patron-saint of Florence.

355 *Saint Ambrose* Lippo seems confused. Saint Ambrose, patron-saint of Sant'Ambrogio, was the fourth-century Archbishop of Milan, but Lippo seems to mean Ambrose the Camaldulian (1386-1439), friend of Cosimo de Medici and translator of Greek theologians, born near Florence.

358 *Uz* Job i i.

364 *Mazed* bewildered (archaism).

370 *slip* Saint Lucy, a figure in *The Coronation of the Virgin*.

375 *camel-hair* Saint John wore camel hair (Matthew iii 4; Mark i 6).

377 *Iste perfecit opus* Latin (actually, *Is perfecit opus*): 'This man arranged the work'. In Browning's time, the words, occurring on a scroll in the painting, were thought to mean 'This man did the work'; the figure then thought to be Lippo himself, as in the poem, is now known to be the Canon Maringhi who commissioned the painting in 1441.

380 *kirtles* skirts.

381 *hot cockles* technically a rustic game; here a euphemism for vigorous amorous activity.

387 *Saint Lucy* The martyr was a virgin; the Prior's 'niece' is almost certainly not.

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. Revisions after 1855 were trifling. Date of composition is unknown. J. C. Maxwell (*N & Q*, n.s. XX, 1973, 270) suggests that it was not written before 1850, the date of publication of Thackeray's poem in the same metre on King Canute in *Rebecca and Rowena*.

A toccata (*toccare*, 'to touch' in Italian) is a fast-moving keyboard piece, often written to display technical prowess. Baldassare Galuppi (1706-85), the Venetian composer, is known mainly for his light operas, for many of which Goldoni was librettist. He visited England in 1741, and had considerable influence on English music. In 1887 Browning wrote that he had two manuscript volumes of Galuppi 'toccata-pieces' which he described as 'apparently a slighter form of the Sonata to be "touched" lightly off'. The poem and its intention have been much discussed. Essays include: Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 173-8; E. F. Harden, 'A New Reading of Browning's "A Toccata of Galuppi's"', *VP XI*, 1973, 330-36.

1 *Baldassaro* an error for 'Baldassare'.

6 *Saint Mark's* . . . *wed the sea with rings* Saint Mark's is the cathedral of Venice. The Dukes of Venice used annually to symbolize the maritime power of the city by wedding it to the sea in a ceremony in which a ring was cast into the sea.

8 *Shylock's bridge* the Rialto.

18 *clavichord* a stringed keyboard instrument, ancestor of the modern piano.

19 *lesser thirds* This technical term and those that follow are, in terms of their effects, given their traditional associations within the poem itself. Here, 'lesser' means 'minor'; a 'third' is a chord of two notes four semitones apart.

sixths diminished A 'sixth' is a chord made up of two notes nine semitones apart; 'diminished' (by two semitones) it becomes one of two notes seven semitones apart. It is going a little far to suggest that 'mentioning diminished sixths in this off-hand way is rather like casually speaking of breakfasting off roc's egg as a matter of everyday occurrence' (see H. E. Greene, 'Browning's Knowledge of Music', *PMLA* LXII, 1947, 1097). It would seem that by 'diminished' Browning may have meant 'minor'.

20 *suspensions* A suspension is a note held from one chord to another, first producing a discord, and then resolving concordantly.

solutions resolutions. A 'resolution' (technical term) is a concord following a discord.

21 *sevenths* chords of two notes eleven semitones apart, producing mild dissonances.

24 *the dominant's persistence till it must be answered to* A 'dominant' is 'the note in a mode or scale which, in traditional harmonic procedures, most urgently demands resolution upon the tonic' (Grove): it is the fifth note above the tonic or key-note.

25 *octave* The octave, being a perfect consonance, gives the 'answer' to (resolves) the dominant.

30 *tacitly* punning on '*tacet*' (Latin: 'it is silent'), the word indicating an extended rest for a player on an orchestral score.

43 *want* lack.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 there were a few verbal revisions, and many in punctuation. The poem is traditionally thought to have been written late in 1853, after a summer in which the Brownings had occupied a house near Lucca, from which they had made a number of trips, including one in mid-September with their friends, the Storys, to Prato Fiorito, which, it has been said, provides most of the details for the setting of the poem. The poem, however, may have been written as early as 1847, since the locale has been clearly shown to be based on information given in a guidebook consulted by the Brownings in planning a tour, which they never made, to the Lake of Orta, and perhaps also on descriptions by friends (see J. S. Lindsay, 'The Central Episode of Browning's *By the Fire-Side*', *SP* XXXIX, 1942, 571-9, and D. Robertson, 'Browning on the Colle di Colma', *BSN* V, No. 2, 1975, 6-13). Probable are the traditional date, and a composite landscape of the imagination rather than a factual one. While biographical elements are subdued, the poem is one of Browning's rare more personal utterances, and the portrait of 'Leonor' is one of Mrs Browning. In a letter of 6 April 1888 (see *SBHC* II, No. 1, 1974, 62), Browning wrote of the poem: 'all but the personality is fictitious - that is, the portraiture only is intended to be like - the circumstances are a mere imaginary framework'. Among discussions are: I. Armstrong, 'Browning and the Grotesque Style', *The Major Victorian Poets: Reconsiderations*, 105-11; Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 214-27; Jacob Korg, 'Browning's Art and "By the Fire-Side"', *VP* XV, 1977, 147-58; G. Tillotson, 'A Word for Browning,' *Sewanee Review* LXXII, 1964, 389-97.

22 *widens*] narrows 1855-63.

43 *Pella* village in north-west Italy.

45 *Alp* Monte Rosa?

58 *boss* the protuberance at the centre of a shield.

- 64 *freaked* streaked.
 74 *fret* eat into.
 77 *festa* 'feast' (Italian).
 84 *wattled cote* rough shelter of woven sticks.
 92 *pent-house* projecting cover.
 95 'Five, six, nine' 1569.
 101 *Leonor* the name of the good wife in Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*.
 113-14 *that great brow | And the spirit-small hand propping it* Mrs Browning in a characteristic pose.
 132 *The great Word which makes all things new* 'And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new' (Revelation xxi 5).
 135 *house not made with hands* quoting 2 Corinthians v 1.
 171 *settle* bench.
 182 *stock* log, stump.
 185 *chrysolite* a yellow or green semi-precious stone.
 237 *moment*] second 1855-63.
 251 *moment's*] hour's 1855-63.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863, it was included in 'Lyrics'. Revisions were trifling. The date of writing is unknown. It has been suggested that the poem was prompted by Browning's father's being sued for breach-of-promise in 1852, three years after the death of Browning's mother.

- 18 *soul makes all things new* 'Behold, I make all things new' (Revelation xxi 5).
 71 *wilding* growing wild.
 77 *Titian's Venus* Probably Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538), in the Uffizi in Florence.
 94 *sealing up the sum* 'Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty' (Ezekiel xxviii 12).

AN EPISTLE . . . OF KARSHISH

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863-88 it was retained in 'Men and Women'. After 1855, revisions were extensive, but of minor significance. The date of writing is unknown. 'Cleon' is a companion poem.

Karshish and his master Abib are Browning's inventions. The story of Lazarus is in John xi 1-44. The poem is set in A.D. 66 or 69-70. On it, see W. L. Guerin, 'Irony and Tension in Browning's "Karshish"', *VP* I, 1963, 132-9; and R. A. King, Jr, 'Karshish Encounters Himself: An Interpretation of Browning's "Epistle"', *Concerning Poetry* I, 1968, 23-33.

- 1 *Karshish* Arabic for 'one who gathers', or, roughly, 'the picker-up of learning's crumbs' (see M. Wright's letter in *TLS*, 1 May 1953, 285).
 6 Karshish refers to the old doctrine that the soul leaves the body with the last breath in the form of vapour. Compare 'Fra Lippo Lippi', 186.
 15 *vagrant* wandering.
 17 *snakestone* a stone used in treating snake bites.
 20 Karshish's formal opening to his epistle is rather like that to a Pauline one -

- compare the opening to Romans (see R. D. Altick, 'Browning's "Karshish" and Saint Paul', *MLN* LXXII, 1957, 494-6).
 21 *Jericho* the city east of Jerusalem.
 28 *Vespasian* Roman Emperor (70-79). He invaded Palestine in 66; his son Titus, in 70.
 30 *balls* eyeballs.
 32 Compare 2 Corinthians xi 25-6.
 36 *Bethany* a small village near Jerusalem, the home of Lazarus.
 40 *scrip* small bag.
 42 *viscid choler* sticky bile.
 43 *tertians* fevers recurring every other day.
 44 *falling-sickness* epilepsy.
 49 *runagate* renegade, vagabond.
 50 *payeth me* payeth me for.
 sublimate product of a refining process.
 55 *gum-tragacanth* a salve.
 57 *porphyry* a hard rock.
 60 *Zoar* town north of the Dead Sea.
 67 *tang* sting.
 79 *subinduced* brought about as a result of something else.
 81 *three days* actually four days (John xi 17, 39); Karshish errs often in 'facts'.
 82 *exhibition* administration.
 89 *conceit* fancy.
 103 *fume* hallucination.
 106 *saffron* drug from the plant of the same name.
 109 *Sanguine* robust.
 fifty Karshish's 'facts' are often wrong: Lazarus would have been well over sixty.
 110 *laudable* healthy (a medical term).
 112 *As* as if (a frequent meaning in Browning).
 161 *pretermission* neglecting.
 169 *mind* remember.
 177 *Greek fire* an incendiary mixture, not used till the seventh century. Browning may have meant burning oil.
 194 *tick* pulse-beat.
 213 *affects* aspires.
 222 *Sufficeth* may it satisfy (archaism).
 228 *affects* has affection for (archaism).
 240 *conceit* fancy (but perhaps used ambiguously for 'vanity' also).
 sublimed refined.
 248-59 The historical facts have become garbled. The 'earthquake' (line 252) is reported in Matthew xxvii 51.
 251 *prodigious* monstrous.
 281 *borage* herb, anciently used medicinally.
 Aleppo town in northern Syria.
 304-12 The thought and feeling of the conclusion parallel those in 'Saul'.
 312 *He* The capital letter may be enough in itself to refute the traditional arguments that Karshish (like Cleon) rejects the new religion.

MESMERISM

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it was included in 'Romances'. Revisions after 1855 were trifling. Date of writing is unknown, but similarities to 'A Lovers' Quarrel' make a date of March 1853 a reasonable guess. Mesmerism was a topic of much interest in the decade before *Men and Women* (Arnold had seen his Scholar-Gypsy of 1853 as the first mesmerist). Mrs Browning believed in it, Browning disliked it. Jack, *Browning's Major Poetry*, 159-61, suggests that the speaker may be insane and the action imaginary. J. C. Austin suggests a debt to Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* in 'The Hawthorne and Browning Acquaintance: Including an Unpublished Browning Letter', *VNL* 20, 1961, 13-18.

- 26 *to have and hold* 'to have and to hold' (marriage service).
 45 *calotypist* photographer.
 75 *tractile* capable of being drawn out.

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 revisions were trifling. Date of composition is unknown. Arthur Symons suggested the influence of a song from Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* with the same metre and subject. There has been some disagreement as to the poem's attitude towards the speaker, and as to whether he is dead or alive. On the poem, see Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 135-8, and J. Maynard in *BSN* VI, No. 1, 1976, 3-10.

- 6 *fly* fire-fly.
 7 *worm* glow-worm.
 9 *forbore a term* were quiet for a while.

MY STAR

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 there were minor revisions only in punctuation. The date of composition is unknown. The MS. in the Boston Public Library reported in *Robert Browning: A Bibliography*, 13, is, as suggested there, a late souvenir autograph. On 9 November 1845 Browning wrote to Elizabeth Barrett: 'Dearest, I believed in your glorious genius and knew it for a true star from the moment I saw it, - long before I had the blessing of knowing it was MY star, with my fortune and futurity in it'; that the poem pays tribute to Mrs Browning is almost universally agreed. Most readers have, however, not limited the poem's symbolism only to her, especially since Browning often uses imagery of white light and the colours composing it with reference to poetry and its creation. On the poem, see Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 204-8; and J. F. Loucks, Jr, 'New Light on "My Star"', *BSN* IV, No. 2, 1974, 25-7.

- 4 *angled spar* crystalline mineral substance with sparkling facets.
 9 *dartiles* darts, shoots forth repeatedly. Perhaps a Browning neologism.
 11 *Saturn* the second largest planet, and a bright one.

INSTANS TYRANNUS

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Romances'. After 1855 revisions were trifling. Date of composition is unknown. The title, 'The Threatening Tyrant', is from Horace, *Odes* III, iii, 3; and details come from the same ode, in which Horace says that the just man cannot be frightened by a threatening tyrant or Jove's thunder and lightning, or a falling sky.

- 18 *perdue* concealed.
 21 *spilth* effusion.
 33 *nit* young louse.
 44 *gravamen* grievance.
 47 *admire* wonder.
 64 *targe* shield.
 65 *boss* protuberance at the centre of a shield.

A PRETTY WOMAN

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 there were no verbal changes. The date of composition is uncertain; DeVane (*Handbook*, 228) suggests 1847, proposing that the poem's model was Gerardine Bate, niece of the Brownings' friend, Mrs Anna Jameson. Miss Bate visited the Brownings in April 1847, irritated Browning, and was described by Mrs Browning as 'just pretty and no more at most'.

- 23 *brayed* ground.
 34 *Scout* reject with disdain.
 61 *grace the rose* gild the lily.

'CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME'

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Romances'; after 1855 revisions were few and minor. The date of writing is uncertain (see J. Huebenthal's note in *VP* IV, 1966, 51-4), despite DeVane's statement (*Handbook*, 229) that Browning himself gave the date of 2 January 1852 (Browning did not). F. J. Furnivall (*Browning Society's Papers* I, 159), probably citing Browning himself, gives 3 January 1852 as the date, and Griffin and Minchin (*Life*, 189) echo him. The information given by L. Whiting (*The Brownings*, 251), if correct, makes the accepted date impossible, since she reports Browning as saying he wrote the poem in Florence (in 1866, however, he wrote that he composed it in Paris). The one thing that seems likely from the conflicting evidence is that Browning wrote 'Childe Roland' the day after he wrote 'Women and Roses'. The poet recalled that he had written the poem in one day.

Often questioned about the poem, Browning said that it came upon him 'as a kind of dream' that had to be written, that he did not know what it meant, that he was 'very fond' of it, that it was 'only a fantasy' with 'no allegorical intention'. Asked if it meant that 'he that endureth to the end shall be saved', Browning replied 'Just about that'. The debt to *King Lear* he acknowledged in the title. He also pointed to the influence of a horse from a tapestry (now in Vizcaya in Miami) in his living-room, a painting seen in Paris, a strange tower in Massa-Carrara among low hills. Scholars

have suggested scores of other debts: to the Bible (see L. M. Thompson, 'Biblical Influence in *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*', *Papers on Language and Literature* III, 1967, 339-53), to fairy-tale and folk-lore (and perhaps especially the stories of Jack the Giant-Killer and Jack and the Bean-Stalk), to medieval literature generally and Malory's story of Gareth of Orkney, to *Pilgrim's Progress*, to Gerard de Lairese on *The Art of Painting* (see W. C. DeVane, 'The Landscape of Browning's *Childe Roland*', *PMLA* XL, 1925, 426-32), to *Inferno* (see R. Sullivan, 'Browning's "Childe Roland" and Dante's "Inferno"', *VP* V, 1967, 296-302), to Wordsworth's 'Peter Bell' (see T. P. Harrison, 'Browning's *Childe Roland* and Wordsworth', *Tennessee Studies in Literature* VI, 1961, 119-23), to Keats, to Poe's 'Metzengerstein', to Shelley. Among other source studies are: C. C. Clarke, 'Humor and Wit in "Childe Roland"', *MLQ* XXIII, 1962, 323-36; and H. Golder, 'Browning's *Childe Roland*', *PMLA* XXXIX, 1924, 358-76. Critical studies multiply. Among them are: D. V. Erdman, 'Browning's Industrial Nightmare', *PQ* XXXVI, 1957, 417-35; Jack, *Browning's Major Poetry*, 179-94; E. R. Kintgen, 'Childe Roland and the Perversity of the Mind', *VP* IV, 1966, 253-8; Langbaum, *Poetry of Experience*, 92-9; J. S. Meyers, '"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came": A Nightmare Confrontation with Death', *VP* VIII, 1970, 335-9; P. Raisor, 'The Failure of Browning's *Childe Roland*', *Tennessee Studies in Literature* XVIII, 1972, 99-110; C. Short, 'Childe Roland, Pedestrian', *VP* VI, 1968, 175-7; J. W. Willoughby, 'Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came"', *VP* I, 1963, 291-9; C. R. Woodward, 'The Road to the Dark Tower: An Interpretation of Browning's "Childe Roland"', *Studies in Honor of John C. Hodges and Alwin Thaler*, ed. R. B. Davis and J. L. Lievsay, University of Tennessee Press, 1961, 93-9.

Title The title quotes Edgar (in his role as the madman, Poor Tom) in *King Lear* III. 4.187 (Browning originally thought the Fool spoke the words). A *childe* is a candidate for knighthood.

25-36 'As virtuous men pass mildly away, / And whisper to their souls, to go, / Whilst some of their sad friends do say, / The breath goes now, and some say, no' (Donne, 'A Valediction: forbidding Mourning', 1-4) - see R. L. Lowe in *N&Q* CXCVIII, 1953, 491-2. 'I could no more, but lay like one in trance, / That hears his burial talked of by his friends, / And cannot speak, nor move, nor make one sign, / But lies and dreads his doom' (Tennyson, 'The Princess' VII, 136-9) - see C. Ricks in *N&Q*, n.s. XIV, 1967, 374.

48 *estrays* stray animal.

58 *cockle, spurge* weeds.

64 *nothing skills* is no use.

66 *Calcine* burn to ashes.

68 *bents* coarse grasses.

72 *Pashing* trampling (dialectal).

76 *stiff blind horse* While Browning said that the portrait of the horse derived from a tapestry he owned, B. Melchiori argues convincingly also for the influence of the tapestry horse in Poe's 'Metzengerstein' (see *Browning's Poetry of Reticence*, 208-13).

80 *colloped* cut up like pieces of meat? An unusual usage: *OED* defines the participial adjective, 'Having collops or thick folds of fat or flesh'. That is clearly not the meaning here. Browning seems to have formed his participial adjective from the noun in its sense of 'a slice of meat' (*OED* 2b). Even for Browning, the use of language in 'Childe Roland' is unusually unusual.

99 'I dare do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more is none' (*Macbeth* I. 7.46-7).

106 *howlet* owl (dialectal).

114 *bespate* bespattered (archaism).

130 *pad* tread down (dialectal in this sense).

131 *plash* puddle.

133 *cirque* circus, or circular space, or natural amphitheatre.

135 *mews* The word means 'stables', but is used here to mean 'place of confinement' (mew).

141 *brake* heavy harrow for crushing clods.

143 *Tophet* the Biblical valley of burning; symbolic of Hell.

145 *stubbed* abounding in stubs (*OED*'s first recorded usage in this sense).

147-8 *a fool finds mirth, / Makes a thing and then mars it* 'Making and marring' ('Caliban upon Setebos', 97).

149 *rood* a quarter of an acre.

160 *Apollyon* the Devil (Revelation ix 11), and a monster with 'wings like a dragon' in *Pilgrim's Progress*.

161 *penned* winged.

182 *blind as the fool's heart* 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good' (Psalm xiv, 1).

187-204 There are clear debts here to *Inferno* xxxi, and to the end of *Jack the Giant-Killer*.

203 *slug-horn* 'Slughorn' is an early form of 'slogan'. Probably Browning was misled by Chatterton into thinking it meant 'trumpet', but the suggestion of 'slogan' has point, and the use of language here is like that in the poem generally. The situation here, given the hero's name, leads many readers to recall Roland and his horn (which he three times refused to sound until it was too late) at Roncesvalles.

RESPECTABILITY

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 there were minor changes in punctuation only. The reference in line 22 suggests a date soon after 5 February 1852. See L. Perrine, 'Browning's "Respectability"', *College English* XIV, 1953, 347-8.

15 *Boulevard* Boulevard.

21 *Institute* The French Academy is a branch of the Institute of France.

22 *Guizot receives Montalembert* On 5 February 1852, at a ceremony at which Browning was apparently present, François Guizot had to welcome his enemy Charles Montalembert into the French Academy.

23 *lampions* small oil-burning lamps, in the courtyard of the Institute.

A LIGHT WOMAN

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. Changes after 1855 were very minor. The date of writing is unknown.

26 *basilisk* the fabulous monster, which killed with a look.

34 *late*] hung 1855.

55 *writer of plays* Until *Men and Women*, Browning had published more volumes of plays than poems.

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it was included in 'Romances'. After 1855 revisions were fairly extensive, but of minor significance. The date of composition is unknown. It has been suggested that the story probably had special appeal for Browning because of his strong belief that it would have been wrong had he and Elizabeth Barrett not married, and/or because of the extended platonic relation of J. S. Mill and Harriet Taylor (the two finally married in 1851).

In a hitherto neglected letter of 22 April 1888 to Edmund Yates (printed in the *World*, 18 December 1889), Browning wrote: 'the fiction in the poem . . . comprises everything but the (legendary) fact that the lady was shut up there by a jealous husband, and that the Duke commemorated his riding past her window by the statue's erection, as you see it; so my old friend Kirkup, preeminently learned in such legends, told me. There are niches in the palace wall where such a bust *might* have been placed, "and if not, why not?" "The poets are such liars", says the veracious Byron.' The equestrian statue of Ferdinand de Medici (1549-1608), who became Grand-Duke of Florence in 1587, dominates the Piazza Annunziata in Florence (Griffin and Minchin, *Life*, facing page 198, has a photograph). It is the work of John of Douay (line 202), better known as Giovanni da Bologna (1524-1608). The bust is fictional. About the two palaces in the poem, Browning himself does not appear to be clear, and the result has been interminable confusion - DeVane's attempt (*Handbook*, 234) to clear things up makes them worse. The palace of line 33, where the Duke holds his feast, is the one now called the Medici-Riccardi Palace. It stands on the Via Larga (line 34), now called the Via Cavour, is the palace from which Lippo escaped, is famous, and plays little part in 'The Statue and the Bust'. The other palace (line 1), the one from which the Lady looks out on the Duke and in which she is imprisoned, is, probably, the one now known as the Budini-Gattai. It is not famous (despite line 1), and Browning does not seem to distinguish it clearly from the other palace.

Among essays are: B. Litzinger, 'Browning's "The Statue and the Bust" Once More', in *Studies in Honor of John C. Hodges and Alwin Thaler*, ed. R. B. Davis and J. L. Lievsay, University of Tennessee Press, 1961, 87-92; and W. O. Raymond, 'The Statue and the Bust', in his *The Infinite Moment*, 214-35 (reprinted in Tracy, *Browning's Mind and Art*, 143-62).

- 18 *the Riccardi* a leading Florentine family.
 21 *coal-black tree* ebony.
 22 *encolure* a nonce-word, here used to mean 'mane' (it is the French word for the neck of a horse).
 23 *dissemble* simulate by imitation (an obsolete usage).
 25 *emprise* enterprise.
 36 *crime* the suppression of Florentine liberty following the return of Cosimo de Medici in 1434. The cursed son's name was Piero; Browning probably meant the grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent.
 57 *catafalque* structure supporting a coffin or corpse.
 68 *loop* loop-hole.
 72 *ave-bell* the bell calling to evening prayer.
 94 *Arno* the river on which Florence stands.

- 95 *Petraja* Ferdinand had a villa here, just north of Florence.
 100 *leaves* comes from.
 140 *simple* foolish.
 143 *pass*] lean 1855.
 149 *the picture at*] it all 1855.
 151 *years*] not in *Huntington proof*.
 159 *serpent's tooth* The phrase, normally associated with ingratitude (*King Lear* I. 4.310), has other associations here.
 163 *Fronting* confronting.
 169 *Robbia* name of a family of Florentine sculptors, the most notable of whom was Luca della Robbia (1400-1482). Della Robbia ware became famous.
 191 *lean*] not in 1855.
 203 *Set*] Mould 1855.
 213 *idleness*] indolence 1855.
 219 *chapel* church of the Santissima Annunziata.
 220 *Only*] Surely 1855.
 know] trow *Huntington proof*.
 221 *chivalry* band of knights.
 225 *burned*] cut 1855.
 234 *Guelph* A *Guelpho* or *Grosso Guelpho* was a fourteenth-century Florentine coin.
 237 *When your table's a hat* for rolling dice on?
 dram a very light weight, that is, a trifling stake.
 239 *warily*] truly 1855-63.
 247 *the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin* Luke xii 35-7. Probably also relevant are the unlit lamps of the foolish virgins (Matthew xxv), and 'gird up the loins of your mind' (1 Peter i 13).
 248 *vice*] crime 1855.
 250 *De te, fabula* 'The story is about you' (Horace, *Satires* I, i, 69-70).

LOVE IN A LIFE

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 there were minor punctuation changes only. Date of composition is unknown. The poem's imagery is characteristic of Browning; a parallel is provided by his letter to Elizabeth Barrett of 5 April 1846: 'Oh, how different it all *might* be! In this House of Life - where I go, you go, - where I ascend you run before, - where I descend, it is after you. Now, one might have a *piece* of Ba, but a very little of her, and make it up into a Lady and a Mistress, and find her a room to her mind . . . visit her there . . . and then, - after a time, leave her there and go . . . whither one liked - after, to me, the most melancholy fashion in the world. How different with us! If it were *not*, indeed - what a mad folly would marriage be!' On the poem, see Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 143-7.

LIFE IN A LOVE

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it joined its companion in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 there were two minor verbal changes, and some in punctuation. On the poem, see Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 143-7.

- 18 *goes*] drops 1855.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; it remained with 'Men and Women'. After 1855 there were several revisions, none of much significance although the allegory was made less obtrusive by reducing the number of capital letters. Date of composition is unknown, but the poem may have been written soon after Browning completed his essay on Shelley late in 1851. For the title, Browning is indebted to 'How It Strikes a Stranger', a story by Jane Taylor (1783-1824) which Browning later used for 'Rephan' (1889); a 'corrégidor de Valladolid' and a house-keeper called Jacinte appear in LeSage's *Le Gil Blas de la Jeunesse*. Carlyle has been suggested as the model for the poem's hero. The poem is one of Browning's most important poetic statements about the nature of his art.

3 *Valladolid* town about 100 miles north-west of Madrid.

12 *old dog* rather like Mrs Browning's Flush.

28 *fly-leaf* broadside; printed on one sheet.

39-44 The lines recall Lear's speech to Cordelia on their way to prison, and especially the reference to 'God's spies' (V. 3.17). On 10 December 1855 Browning wrote to Ruskin: 'A poet's affair is with God, to whom he is accountable, and of whom is his reward.'

48 *tang* sting.

73-7 *his home . . . change his plate* 'there's no denying the deep delight of playing the Eastern Jew's part here in this London - they go about, you know by travel-books, with the tokens of extreme destitution and misery, and steal by blind ways and by-paths to some blank dreary house, one obscure door in it - which being well shut behind them, they grope on through a dark corridor or so, and then, a blaze follows the lifting a curtain or the like, for they are in a palace-hall with fountains and light, and marble and gold, of which the envious are never to dream' (Robert Browning to Elizabeth Barrett, 9 July 1845).

76 *Titians* paintings by Titian, the Venetian artist (c. 1485-1577).

90 *Corregidor* Chief Magistrate.

96 *memorized* memorialized.

115 *Prado* Promenade.

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it was included in 'Romances'. After 1855 there were no verbal revisions. Date of composition is unknown. Possible significances of *ride* have been explored; one commentator fancies that the poem is about sexual intercourse. I. Orenstein associates the lady with the Muse in 'A Fresh Interpretation of "The Last Ride Together"', *Baylor Browning Interests* 18, 1961, 3-10. The poem is one of Browning's most-loved lyrics. J. K. Stephen wrote a celebrated parody in which the lady replies to Mr B.

65 They honour him with burial in Westminster Abbey.

90 *sublimate* refine, exalt.

THE PATRIOT

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; it was included in 'Romances' in 1863. Except for the sixth stanza, which was heavily revised, changes

after 1855 were extremely minor. The original title was 'The Old Story' (Huntington proof). Date of composition is unknown, but the poem may belong to the spring of 1849 after the Battle of Novara and the collapse of the Italian struggle for freedom. The 'Old' of the title has the sense of 'Recurring'; no particular story lies behind the poem. On it, see D. J. DeLaura, 'The Religious Imagery in Browning's "The Patriot"', *VNL* 21, 1962, 16-18.

19 *Shambles* slaughter-house.

26 *entered*] entered Brescia 1855. (The change was probably made to avoid the identification, denied by Browning, of his hero with Arnold of Brescia, hanged in 1155.)

30 *repay*:] requite! 1855.

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; in 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 revisions were minor. Date of composition is unknown, but it may well have been 1853. Master Hugues is fictional; his name, despite frequent spellings and pronunciations to the contrary, conveniently rhymes with 'fugues'. Saxe-Gotha, a duchy in central Germany, was near the birthplace of J. S. Bach (1685-1750), but Browning in a letter of 30 June 1887 said that his composer of fugues was not 'meant for the glorious Bach' but for 'one of the dry-as-dust imitators who would elaborate . . . [a trifling subject] for a dozen pages altogether' (see H. E. Greene, 'Browning's Knowledge of Music', *PMLA* LXII, 1947, 1095-9). A fugue is a composition in which a 'subject' is introduced, repeated, and complexly developed. In 1886 Browning, who himself played the organ, said 'that he had no allegorical intent in his head when he wrote the poem; that it was composed in an organ-loft and was merely the expression of a fugue - the construction of which he understood . . . because he had composed fugues himself: it was an involved labyrinth of entanglement *leading to nothing* - the only allegory in it was the possible reflection of the labyrinth of human life. That was all . . .' (L. C. Collins, *Life and Memoirs of J. C. Collins*, 1912). On the poem see R. D. Altick, 'The Symbolism of Browning's "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha"', *VP* III, 1965, 1-7.

16 *house of the sounds* organ.

26 *Aloys and Jurien and Just* presumably the Church's saints.

29 *sacrament-lace* the lace of the altar-cloth.

35 *helve* handle.

39 *claviers* keyboards.

42 *ruled like a score* furrowed as with horizontal lines on a musical score.

44 *breves* double long notes used to be written as solid black rectangles.

45 *bar* vertical line at the end of a bar.

48 *Company's votes* the ones that made Hugues church organist.

49 *sciolists shent* people with superficial knowledge shamed.

52 *snuff* charred part of a wick.

56 *phrase* 'subject' of the fugue.

57 *propound* The *proposta* is the 'subject'.

60 *Two* The 'subject' is answered by the second 'voice'. This fugue is a 'five-voiced' one.

67 *discept* disagree.

73 *vociferance* clamour.

- 77 *crepitant* crackling.
 79 *strepitant* noisy (the first recorded usage in *OED*).
 80 *O Danaïdes, O Sieve* The legendary daughters of Danaus, having killed their husbands on their wedding night, were condemned to pour water into sieves forever.
 83 *Escobar* the Jesuit casuist (1589-1669) from whose name was formed the French word for 'equivocate'.
 85 *Two-bars* A double bar marks the end of a section or composition.
 86 *Est fuga, volvitur rota* 'It's a fugue [or 'flight'], the wheel turns' (Latin). Given the speaker's exasperation, he may well be thinking of the wheel on which Ixion was bound in Hades.
 92 *risposting* riposting (the *risposta* is the 'answer' in a fugue).
 94 *groining* groin, the edge formed by the intersection of two vaults (*OED* does not record the word in this sense).
 100 *tickens* ticking.
 127 *mountain in labour* 'Mountains will be in labour, the birth will be a single laughable little mouse' (Horace, *Art of Poetry*, 139).
 135 *cobwebs we string*] dust-clouds we fling 1855.
 136 *meâ poenâ* 'at my risk' (Latin).
 137 *Gorgon* Greek mythical female whose face turned men to stone.
 140 *mode Palestrina* The organist Palestrina (1525-94), most distinguished of Renaissance composers, wrote mainly unaccompanied choral works (he probably never wrote for the organ). Browning defined his meaning in a letter of 30 June 1887: 'The "mode Palestrina" has no reference to organ-playing; it was the name given by old Italian writers on Composition to a certain simple and severe style like that of the Master; just as, according to Byron, "the word Miltonic means sublime."' "
 148 *runged*] planked 1855.
 149 *carry the moon in my pocket* 'If Caesar can hide the sun from us with a blanket, or put the moon in his pocket, we will pay him tribute for light' (*Cymbeline* III. 1.43-5).

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855; afterwards it remained in 'Men and Women' and underwent some revision. Details within the poem support DeVane's suggestion (*Handbook*, 241) that the poem was begun in 1850-51, and given final form about the middle of 1854.

Browning himself stated that Cardinal Wiseman (1801-65) had served as a model for Blougram. Wiseman became Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster and head of the Roman Catholic Church in England in 1850; the appointment had created much controversy. The fictional Bishop is, however, not a realistic portrait of the real one - and the old persistent myth that Wiseman himself reviewed the poem was finally exploded by E. R. Houghton (*VNL* 33, 1968, 46). Elements of John Henry Newman too, it is generally agreed, went into Browning's Bishop (see C. R. Tracy, 'Bishop Blougram', *MLR* XXXIV, 1939, 422-5). With the Oxford Movement in full flower and with a wealth of topical allusions not altogether characteristic of Browning, the poem is firmly set in its own time and place. For the view that the poem is indebted to Emerson's 'Montaigne; Or, the Skeptic', in *Representative Men* (1850), see C. E. Tanzy, 'Browning, Emerson, and Bishop Blougram', *VS* I, 1958, 255-66.

The names of protagonist and antagonist are suggestive. 'Blougram' may remind one of a leading nineteenth-century figure who may have contributed to Browning's portrait, Lord Brougham (1778-1868), the magnificent orator and debater, arrogant

and eccentric, of whom Rogers remarked, 'There goes Solon, Lycurgus, Demosthenes, Archimedes, Sir Isaac Newton, Lord Chesterfield, and a great many more in one post-chaise.' The heavy, closed and normally four-wheeled carriage is named after him, while a 'gig' is a light, open, two-wheeled carriage. The name 'Gigadibs' is, quite apart from its triviality and silliness of sound, otherwise suggestive: a 'gig' is a fish-spear, to 'dib' is to fish. *OED* also defines 'gig' as 'a whipping top', 'a set of feathers', 'a flighty, giddy girl', 'a fancy, joke, whim', 'fun, merriment, glee', 'a squeaking noise'. *OED* definitions of 'dib' and 'dibs' include 'a small hollow', 'a game played by children', 'a counter used in playing at cards, etc. as a substitute for money', 'a slang term for money', 'a puddle', 'to dibble'.

The word 'Apology' in the title is probably deliberately ambiguous, having the senses of 'statement of regret for error' and 'justification'. Critical argument about the poem has concentrated mainly on suggesting which of the senses dominates: the two poles are represented by, say, Chesterton's view of 'a vulgar, fashionable priest, justifying his own cowardice' (page 201), and F. E. L. Priestley's of the Bishop as one whose argument is dictated by the vulgar nature of his petty opponent ('Blougram's Apologetics', *TQ* XV, 139-47; reprinted in Litzinger and Knickerbocker, *The Browning Critics*, 167-80). Chesterton's often-cited statement that Browning had said the poem was not a satire ('there is nothing hostile about it') has been shown to be apocryphal. What Browning probably did say is that Blougram 'was not treated ungenerously' (see Sir Charles Duffy, *My Life in Two Hemispheres* II, 1898, 259-61, from which it appears, incidentally, that Browning may have pronounced his character's name 'Blogram').

Among the more important critical treatments are: Susan Hardy Aiken, 'Bishop Blougram and Carlyle', *VP* XVI, 1978, 323-40; Drew, *Poetry of Browning*, 122-43; King, *The Bow and the Lyre*, 76-99; R. G. Laird, 'He Did Not Sit Five Minutes': The Conversion of Gigadibs', *TQ* XLV, 1976, 295-313; Julia Marcus, 'Bishop Blougram and the Literary Men', *VS* XXI, 1978, 171-95; R. E. Palmer, Jr, 'The Uses of Character in "Bishop Blougram's Apology"', *MP* LVIII, 1960, 108-18, and Priestley's essay.

- 3 *Abbey* Westminster Abbey, taken over by Henry VIII.
 6 *Pugin* A. W. N. Pugin (1812-52), a convert to Roman Catholicism, and an architect of the Gothic Revival.
 21 *Truth's*] 'Tis 1855-88. (Browning made the revision for the second impression of 1888.)
 26 *Status, entourage* rank, household.
 34 *Corpus Christi Day* commemorating the celebration of the Eucharist, the Thursday after Trinity Sunday.
 38 *Faith* in faith.
 45 *Che che* an Italian exclamation; here, roughly, 'Come, come!'
 54 *D'Orsay* Count D'Orsay (1801-52), famous Victorian dandy.
 70 *tire-room* dressing room.
 78 *comfortable* used in the archaic or obsolete sense of sustaining or inspiring.
 108-9 *Balzac's novels* A set of the French novelist (1799-1850) in fifty-five volumes began to appear in 1856; it had been advertised in 1855.
 111 *Leipsic* The Teubner series of classical works began to appear in 1849.
 113 *Parma's pride, the Jerome* The picture of Saint Jerome is in the Ducal Academy in Parma.
 114 *Correggio* The Italian painter (c. 1489-1534) studied in Modena (line 117).
 125 *overhauls* hauls overboard.

- 182-3 'The sound of distant music or a plaintive note, a passing word, or the momentary scent of a flower, or the sound of a bell, or the retiring of the day, or the falling leaf of autumn . . . all these will touch a chord' (Isaac Williams, *The Passion*, 1848, 434). Williams (1802-65) participated in the Oxford Movement.
- 184 *Euripides* Browning's favourite Greek dramatist.
- 190 *The grand Perhaps* 'I go to seek a grand perhaps (*un grand peut-être*)' - attributed to Rabelais on his death-bed.
- 197 *The Way, the Truth, the Life* 'Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life' (John xiv 6).
- 199 *it be meant for*] it's indeed 1855; it be indeed 1863-8.
- 269 *may*] can 1855.
- 283 *Comport* accord.
- 291 *go hang*] be lost *Huntington proof*.
- 315 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread' (Matthew iv 3).
- 316 *Peter's creed, or rather, Hildebrand's* Saint Peter was the first Pope; Hildebrand (Gregory VII, Pope 1073-85) fought for Papal temporal power.
- 353 *haunches*] buttocks *Huntington proof*.
- 369 *should judge*] I need 1855-63.
- 377 *winking Virgin* Newman defended the belief that the Virgin's eyes move in some pictures.
- 381 *Verdi . . . worst opera* The allusion is probably to the *Macbeth* of Verdi (1813-1901), first produced at Florence in 1847.
- 386 *Rossini* The composer (1792-1868) was in Florence in 1847.
- 388 *prime men* journalists.
- 397 *demirep* woman of doubtful reputation.
- 411 *Schelling* the German Idealist philosopher (1775-1854). He stressed the ultimate compatibility of apparently incompatible ideas.
- 425 *Peter's chains* Saint Peter's chains were miraculously removed by an angel (Acts xii 7).
- 426 *Brave* splendid.
- Noodledom* The word was coined by Sydney Smith in 1810.
- 465 *puff* bombast.
- 466 *The State, that's I* 'L'État, c'est moi' was said by Louis XIV, not Napoleon.
- 472 *Austrian marriage* Napoleon married Marie Louise of Austria in 1810.
- 473 *resurrection of the old régime* The *ancien régime* was the period before the French Revolution; Napoleon was crowned Emperor in 1804.
- 475 *Austerlitz* Napoleon's victory of 1805 over the Russians and Austrians.
- 513 *towers and gorgeous palaces* 'The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces' (*The Tempest* IV. 1.152).
- 514 *trimmest house* New Place, bought by Shakespeare in 1597.
- 516 *Giulio Romano* Italian painter (c. 1492-1546), referred to anachronistically in *The Winter's Tale* (V. 2.106).
- Dowland* The English lutanist and composer (1563-1626) is mentioned in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, a book attributed to Shakespeare.
- 519 *Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal* a quotation from Shakespeare's Pandulph, powerful spokesman for expediency, in *King John* (III. 1.138).
- 533 *Terni's fall* the waterfall north of Rome.
- Gothard's top* The Saint Gothard is the major pass between Switzerland and Italy.
- 538 *hap* fate.
- 550 *coat of arms* Shakespeare's father received his coat of arms in 1596.

- 553 *cousin of Queen Bess* close acquaintance of Queen Elizabeth I.
- 572 *Re-opens a shut book* has the Bible translated.
- 577 *Strauss* The author of the *Life of Jesus* (1835) here represents, as in 'Christmas Eve', the Higher Criticism in Biblical studies.
- 585 *farthing* the least valuable of English coins (a quarter of a penny).
- 592 *you lack*] I lack 1855.
- 593 *You*] I 1855.
- 608 *soil*] 1855-68; soul 1888.
- 626 'What think ye of Christ' Matthew xxii 42.
- 640 *born in Rome* Wiseman was born in Seville; he served in Rome 1828-40.
- 664 *ichors* liquids issuing from wounds to help healing.
- 667 *Michael* The archangel who threw Satan out of Heaven is often represented astride a snake or dragon.
- 669 *box* snuff-box.
- 681 *Greek endings* suffixes like *-logy* (study).
- 685 *Ararat* the mountain in Turkey where Noah's ark landed (Genesis viii 4).
- 703 *Newman* John Henry Newman, who had become a Roman Catholic in 1845, was a strong spokesman for miracles.
- 704 *Inmaculate Conception* The Pope proclaimed the Doctrine (that the Virgin was free from original sin with Christ's birth) in 1854. Browning seems to have shared a general misunderstanding of the Doctrine which confuses it with the perpetual virginity (see J. Britton, S.J., in *Explicator* XVII, 1959, Item 50).
- 715 *King Bomba* nickname of Ferdinand II, King of the Two Sicilies 1810-59.
- lazzaroni* beggars.
- 716 *Antonelli* Cardinal Antonelli, secretary to Pius IX.
- 728 *Naples' liquefaction* In 1851 in *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics*, Newman defended the belief that some of the blood of the patron saint of Naples, Saint Januarius, liquefies regularly.
- 732 *decrassify* remove the crass from, purify (a Blougram neologism).
- 744 *Fichte's clever cut* The German philosopher (1762-1814) thought God an idea created by man.
- 770 *prizes*] calls for 1855-63.
- 791 *Scouts* mocks at.
- 819 *natural religion* one based on natural things, not on revelation.
- 833 *French book* possibly Balzac's *Physiologie du Mariage* (R. E. N. Dodge in *TLN*, 21 March 1935, 176); probably Diderot's *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (O. Maurer, 'Bishop Blougram's French Book', *VP* VI, 1968, 177-9).
- 864] Men are not gods, but, properly, are brutes. 1855.
- 868 *Pan's*] man's 1855.
- 877 *Pastor est tui Dominus* 'The Lord is your shepherd' (Latin). 'The Lord is my shepherd' (Psalm xxiii, 1).
- 914 *ficile* moulded.
- 915 *Albano* a few miles south-east of Rome, site of Roman ruins.
- Anacreon* Greek lyric poet of the sixth century B.C.
- 938 *this war* The Crimean War began in March 1854.
- 942 *drugget* coarse material.
- purple* the colour of rulers.
- 945 *Blackwood's Magazine* the leading and powerful magazine.
- 947 *Germans* German criticism of Shakespeare was dominant in much of the nineteenth century.
- 951 *Whitechapel* district in eastern London.

957 *Dublin* Wiseman founded the *Dublin Review* in 1836; Brougham had helped to found (and contributed extensively to) the *Edinburgh Review*.

972-3 *in partibus* | *Episcopus, nec non* 'Bishop in regions, and also' (Latin). In 1850 Wiseman ceased to be titular Archbishop of Melipotamus *in partibus infidelium* (in unbelieving regions), and became Archbishop of Westminster.

979] *not in 1855-68.*

999 *fence* swordsmanship.

1014 The point of the line has been much disputed. Gigadibs has read the primary rather than the secondary sources? He has been studying the Gospels intensively? Revolted by people like Blougram, Gigadibs has fled (like the hero of Clough's *Bothie*, 1849) to Australia? He has read an after-dinner speech in the last chapter of John of a kind very different from Blougram's?

MEMORABILIA

First published as the last poem in the first volume of *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855, and included in 'Lyrics' in 1863. Later revisions were minor. The poem may have been written soon after the essay on Shelley was completed in late 1851. H. Reynolds gives a description and facsimile of what may be an early draft of the poem, titled 'Incident in a Life', in *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 September 1956, 8.

One well-known account of the incident that probably led to the poem is that of W. G. Kingsland, who reports Browning as saying: 'I was one day in the shop of Hodgson, the well-known London bookseller, when a stranger came in, who, in the course of conversation with the bookseller, spoke of something that Shelley had once said to him. Suddenly the stranger paused, and burst into laughter as he observed me staring at him with blanched face; and . . . I still vividly remember how strangely the presence of a man who had seen and spoken with Shelley affected me.' A different account is, however, given in an unpublished letter of 30 March 1881 (now in the Pforzheimer Library) to Buxton Forman. Here Browning writes that the man who saw Shelley plain was a composite of a bookseller whom Browning met only once and who happened to mention seeing the poet, and of a friend who was with Browning in the shop and was surprised by Browning's amazement. DeVane (*Handbook*, 244) suggests a date of 1851 for the incident but gives no reasons; Browning wrote, however, that he was a boy at the time. The young Browning's reverence for Shelley had diminished by 1855, and was profoundly affected when Browning later learned, probably in 1858, more biographical details. The Latin title of the poem means 'Memorable things'.

9 *moor* Browning wrote that it was imaginary.

10 *certain*] *not in 1855.*

15 *eagle-feather* Perhaps suggested by some such passage as this (from Shelley's 'Ode to Liberty', 5-8): 'My soul spurned the chains of its dismay, / And in the rapid plumes of song / Clothed itself, sublime and strong, / (As a young eagle soars the morning clouds among)'.

ANDREA DEL SARTO

First published as the first poem of the second volume of *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863-88 it remained in 'Men and Women', now placed after its

companion poem, 'Fra Lippo Lippi'. Revisions after 1855 were minor. The word 'Painter' was added to the subtitle in proof.

The poem's origin probably lies in the request by John Kenyon, the Brownings' friend, for a copy (not a photograph) of a painting in the Pitti Palace in Florence, then supposed to be del Sarto's portrait of himself and his wife; it is now known to be two portraits joined together, is no longer attributed to del Sarto, is not thought to depict the painter or his wife, and has been relegated to storage. Unable to get a copy of the painting, Browning instead sent the poem, which was probably written in 1853. Browning was generally familiar with the paintings of del Sarto (1486-1531), and the particular painting behind this poem is clearly a major source (a photograph of it faces page 200 in Griffin and Minchin, *Life*). As with 'Fra Lippo Lippi', the main source is Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*, which gives most of the facts, and supports the general tenor, of Browning's poem (Vasari may have been Andrea's pupil). Browning may have consulted Baldinucci's *Notizie*, and may be indebted to Musset's play *André del Sarto* (1833) - see B. Melchiori's note in *VP* IV, 1966, 132-6. J. Markus has argued that the poem is influenced by the break-up of the marriage of Browning's friend, the artist William Page, and Mrs Page in "Andrea del Sarto (Called 'The Faultless Painter')" and William Page (Called "The American Titian")", *BIS* II, 1974, 1-24.

Andrea was called 'del Sarto' because his father was a tailor, and 'the Faultless Painter' (*Il Pittore senza Errori*) because of his technique. He married the widowed Lucrezia in 1513; she often served as his model. In 1518-19 he was in the French court of Francis I. The poem is set in 1525, six years before Andrea died of the plague. Recent authorities see as valid Browning's (and Vasari's) basic judgement about Andrea, but generally see his treatment (one that twists Vasari's materials at times) as being somewhat unfair (see D. B. Maceachen's attack on Browning's 'libel' in *VP* VIII, 1970, 61-4). Mrs Miller's fancy, presented briefly in her biography (175-6), that the poem owes much to Browning's feeling that his wife was stifling his genius is notorious.

The poem, often judged to be Browning's finest achievement, has been much discussed. Among essays are: R. D. Altick, "Andrea del Sarto": The Kingdom of Hell is Within', in Tracy, *Browning's Mind and Art*, 18-31; E. Bieman, 'An Eros Manqué: Browning's "Andrea del Sarto"', *Studies in English Literature* X, 1970, 651-68; Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 126-35; M. L. D'Avanzo, 'King Francis, Lucrezia, and the Figurative Language of "Andrea del Sarto"', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* IX, 1958, 523-36; F. Kaplan *Miracles of Rare Device*, Wayne State University Press, 1972, 94-108; King, *The Bow and the Lyre*, 11-31; Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience*, 148-54.

15 *Fiesole* the hill-town just north-east of Florence.

35 *common greyness* according to modern scholars, not so much a characteristic of Andrea's art as of the effects of time and light.

57 *cartoon* sketch for a painting.

76 *Someone* Michelangelo.

83-4 'My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: / Words without thoughts never to heaven go' (*Hamlet* III. 3.97-8).

93 *Morello* mountain north of Florence.

96] *not in 1855.*

105 *the Urbinate* Raphael (1483-1520) was born at Urbino.

106 *Vasari* Giorgio Vasari (1512-74), main source for Browning's poem, was introduced to Andrea by Michelangelo.

- 130 *Agnolo* Michelangelo (Michel Agnolo Buonarroti) (1475-1564).
 150 *Fontainebleau* the town south-east of Paris where Francis I built the royal palace.
 160 *frank* with a pun on Frank (the Franks gave France its name).
 178 *the Roman* Raphael worked in Rome for the last twelve years of his life.
 210 *cue-owls* scops-owls. Browning anglicizes the Italian name imitative of the birds' cries (*ciù*). A neologism which Mrs Browning picked up in *Aurora Leigh* (1856).
 241 *scudi* Roman coins.
 250 Vasari says that Andrea abandoned his own parents for Lucrezia's relatives.
 261-2 *Four great walls . . . angel's reed* Revelation xxi 10-21.
 263 *Leonard* Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519).

BEFORE

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'; after 1855 revisions were minor. The date of writing is unknown. In letters of April 1846 Browning had supported duelling, while Miss Barrett had opposed it. The initial opposition and Browning's move to his wife's views are reflected in 'Before' and its companion. On the poem, see Drew, *Poetry of Browning*, 82-3.

- 8 *entailment* state of being trapped (the only usage recorded in *OED*).
 10 *caps* doffs his cap.
 18 *grape-trees* grape-vines.
 24 *misfeasance* transgression (a legal term).
 27 *evil's lump with good to leaven* 'Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump' (1 Corinthians v 6).
 32 *sub-intents* subordinate purposes (not in *OED*).

AFTER

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'; after 1855 there were minor revisions in punctuation only. The date of writing is unknown. In letters of April 1846 Browning had supported duelling, while Miss Barrett had opposed it. The initial opposition and Browning's move to his wife's views are reflected in 'After' and its companion.

- 18 *Cover the face* 'Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young' (Webster, *Duchess of Malfi* IV. 2.267).

IN THREE DAYS

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 there were a few changes in punctuation and one verbal change. The date of composition is unknown, though Mrs Miller suggests in her biography (170n.) that it may have been written about 23 July 1852 when, for the only time in their married life, Browning and his wife were separated for a few days. On the poem, see Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 211-14.

IN A YEAR

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it joined its companion in 'Lyrics'; after 1855 revisions were trifling. The date of writing is unknown.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. The Huntington proof shows the original title as 'Opus Magistri Jocti'. In 1863 the poem was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 Browning revised the poem extensively but not very significantly. The poem may well have been begun in 1850, when the Brownings were excitedly collecting old pictures in Florence, but most of the work on it would seem to belong to the spring of 1853. Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* and Browning's direct exposure to Italian art, and especially Florentine art, are the poem's major sources.

Browning speaks here in his own person in a way not characteristic of most of his work. The poem expands on themes of perennial interest to him, especially on the 'philosophy of the imperfect' (to which the unfinished bell-tower of Giotto in the centre of Florence gives body).

- 3 *aloed* covered with aloe, a kind of lily (only example in this sense in *OED*).
 15 *bell-tower Giotto raised* Giotto di Bondone (1267-1337), the greatest early Florentine artist, designed the campanile shortly before his death. Nearly a hundred yards high, it is generally regarded as the world's most beautiful campanile, and as among the greatest examples of Gothic art. His plans included a spire which has never been placed on 'Giotto's Tower'.
 28 *in chief* as my favourite spot.
 33 *chaffer* haggle about price.
 38 *apsis* apse.
 51 *Michaels* paintings by Michelangelo.
 59 *their work is all* all their work is *Huntington proof*.
 64 *Dellos* Dello di Niccolo Delli was a minor fifteenth-century artist.
 67 *girns* snarls (Scotticism).
 69-72 *Stefano . . . Vasari* Stefano Fiorentino (1301-50), pupil of Giotto, highly praised by Vasari, and known as the Ape of Nature for his realism.
 76 *sic transit 'sic transit gloria mundi'*: 'thus passes the world's glory' (Latin).
 84 *in fructu* 'as fruit' (Latin).
 86 *actual* present.
 91-2 *Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there: | And]* And bringing your own shortcomings there, | You 1855 (in *Huntington proof* the printed 1855 reading is changed in Browning's hand to: Earth-here rebuked by Olympus there - And).
 98 *Theseus* mythical King of Athens, and Greek hero.
 99 *Son of Priam* either Hector or Paris, both sons of the Trojan King. If Browning has specific works in mind, he may be thinking, as with Theseus, of representations on the Parthenon. One famous Greek sculpture depicted Paris as a kneeling archer.
 101 *Apollo* The Greek god of poetry killed the Python when still a child.
 102 *Niobe* The Queen of Thebes grieved because the gods killed all her children. The Uffizi has a Greek sculpture of her.
 103 *Racers' frieze* the Procession of Horsemen on the Parthenon frieze.
 104 *Alexander* presumably Alexander the Great.

- 108 *a mortal's*] the worsted's 1855.
 127 *for our copy* to be copied by us.
 129 'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump' (Galatians v 9).
 135 *O* Giotto (the famous story is told by Vasari), asked for a sample of his skill by a Papal envoy, immediately drew with one stroke a perfect circle.
 149 *fray* rub away.
 156 *quiddit* quiddity: captious nicety in argument.
 159 *allocution* formal address.
 179 *Nicolo the Pisan* early Italian sculptor and architect (c. 1225-c. 1284).
 180 *Cimabue* Giovanni Cimabue (1240-1302), great early Italian painter, reputedly the teacher of Giotto.
 182 *Ghiberti* Lorenzo Ghiberti (1381-1455), Florentine sculptor, best known for the 'Gate of Paradise', the eastern doors of Florence's Baptistery.
Ghirlandajo Domenico Bigordi or Ghirlandaio (1449-94), Florentine fresco painter and teacher of Michelangelo.
 198 *dree* suffer (Scotticism or archaism).
 201 *Bigordi* Ghirlandaio.
 202 *Sandro* Botticelli (Alessandro dei Filipepi) (1444-1510), Florentine painter.
 203 *wronged Lippino* Filippino Lippi (1457-1504), son of Fra Filippo Lippi, painter, 'wronged' presumably either because paintings of his were attributed to others or because he was illegitimate.
 204 *Frà Angelico* Florentine painter (1387-1455).
 205 *Taddeo Gaddi* fourteenth-century Florentine painter, pupil of Giotto.
 206 *intonaco* plaster background for fresco painting.
 207 *Jerome* the fourth-century saint, and a favourite subject for painters.
 208 *Lorenzo Monaco* Florentine painter (c. 1370-c. 1425).
 209-10 *close red cap*, | *My Pollajolo* Antonio Pollaiuolo (c. 1432-98), Florentine artist, painted what Browning thought was a self-portrait in which the subject wears a 'close red cap'. He is 'twice a craftsman' presumably because he turned from goldsmith's work to painting.
 211 *hap* chance.
 212 *muscular Christ* Browning probably alludes to Pollaiuolo's *Christ at the Column*, depicted on a panel owned by the Brownings.
 215 *Alesso Baldovinetti* Florentine painter (1427-99).
 217 *Margheritone of Arezzo* Margarito of Arezzo, thirteenth-century Siennese painter, is treated with some disdain by Vasari, and by Mrs Browning in *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851).
 218 *barret* biretta, a priest's flat cap.
 220 *poll-clawed parrot* 'poll clawed like a parrot' (2 *Henry IV* II. 4.282).
 226 *tinglish* the only recorded usage in *OED*.
 227 *Their pictures*] Works rot or *Huntington proof*.
 230 *Zeno* founder of the Stoic philosophy.
 232 *Carlino* a painting by Carlo Dolci (1616-86), Florentine painter.
 236 *tablet* Browning in a letter of 1886 described this as 'a famous "Last Supper" (page 232), mentioned by Vasari, and gone astray long ago from the Church of S. Spirito: it turned up, according to report, in some obscure corner, while I was in Florence, and was at once acquired by a stranger'.
 237 *Buonarroti* Michelangelo.
 241 *San Spirito* church in Florence.
 242 *Ognissanti* church in Florence.
 244 *Detur amanti* 'It is to be given to one who loves it' (Latin).

- 245 *Koh-i-noor* 'Mountain of Light', the famous diamond given to Queen Victoria in 1849.
 246 *Giamschid* a legendary Persian king, owner of a remarkable ruby.
Persian Sofi's eye 'Sophy' is the former title of Persian kings. In Byron's *Giaour* (479), Soul, from Leila's eye, beams 'Bright as the jewel of Giamschid'.
 251 *Mont Saint Gothard* mountain in the Alps.
 255 *Radetzky* Count Radetzky (1766-1858), Austrian general, was governor of Upper Italy (1849-57). He is the 'dotard' of line 249.
 256 *Morello* mountain north of Florence.
 258 *stone of Dante* 'the stone / Called Dante's, - a plain flat stone scarce discerned / From others in the pavement, - whereupon / He used to bring his quiet chair out, turned to Brunelleschi's church, and pour alone / The lava of his spirit when it burned' (Mrs Browning, *Casa Guidi Windows* I). She goes on to see it as a focal point for the exiled Dante's thoughts of his city, and to say, 'thy favourite stone's elected right / As tryst-place for the Tuscans to foresee / Their earliest chartas from'.
 259 *Witanagemot* governing council in Anglo-Saxon England.
 260 *Casa Guidi* Mrs Browning's long poem, *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851); it pressed the cause of Italian freedom.
quod videas ante 'which you may have seen before' (Latin).
 263 *Lorraine* The Austrian emperors were of the house of Habsburg-Lorraine.
 264 *Orgagna* Andrea di Cione, fourteenth-century Florentine artist, generally known as Orcagna.
 269 *fructuous* fruitful.
 271 *Chimera* legendary fire-breathing monster.
 274 *issimo* the superlative ending for Italian adjectives.
 275 *half-told tale of Cambuscan* Chaucer's unfinished 'Squire's Tale': 'Or call up him that left half told / The story of Cambuscan bold' (Milton, 'Il Penseroso', 109-10).
 276 *alt to altissimo* 'high to highest' (Italian).
 277 *beccaccia* woodcock (Italian). The only recorded usage in *OED*.
 279 *braccia* A braccio is an Italian measure of length, a cubit, or nearly two feet. Giotto's plans called for a fifty-braccia spire on the campanile.
 285 '*God and the People*' the motto of Mazzini.
 286 *tricolour* The flag of Italy is green, white and red.
 287-8] Why, to hail him, the vindicated Giotto / Thanking God for it all, the first am I! *Huntington proof*; Foreseeing the day that vindicates Giotto / And Florence together, the first am I! 1855.

IN A BALCONY

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included with 'Tragedies and Other Plays'. In 1868 (and 1888) it was made independent, in both editions appearing in a volume with, but not as part of, 'Dramatis Personae'. After 1855 it was extensively revised, an unusually large number of changes being made for 1888, but the total results are not of much significance. In 1855 the poem was in three parts (1-339, 340-605, 606-919). The divisions were permanently dropped in 1863, in which edition alone the title had '*A Scene*' added to it.

In 1868 and 1888 Browning dates the play 1853, and indicates that it was written in Bagni di Lucca. The Brownings stayed there between July and October 1853, and the fairly successful revival of *Colombe's Birthday* in London in April 1853 may well have prompted further dramatic experiment. Though written as a closet drama, the

work has been staged several times. The plot and characters are Browning's own. It has been suggested that the contrasting views of Constance and Norbert as to the right approach to the Queen reflect those of Elizabeth Barrett and Browning as to their approach to Mr Barrett in 1846.

On the play, see P. G. Mudford, 'The Artistic Consistency of Browning's *In a Balcony*', *VP* VII, 1969, 31-40; and E. E. Stoll, 'Browning's *In a Balcony*', *MLQ* III, 1942, 407-17 (reprinted in his *From Shakespeare to Joyce*, Doubleday Doran, 1944, 328-38; and in Drew, *Robert Browning*, 178-88).

- 17 *Hold you and have you* 'to have and to hold' (marriage service).
 106 *dome* mansion.
 130 *Rubens* the great Flemish artist (1577-1640).
 333 *conceit* concept.
 342 *Mother* the Virgin Mary.
 355] And so accepting life, abjure ourselves! 1855; And so, accepting life, abjure ourselves. 1863-8.
 358 *plot*] turf 1855.
 400 *change* give up in exchange.
 411 *smile*] cheek 1855-68.
 412 *baladine* female public dancer.
 422 *halbert* halberd, long-handled weapon with head combining spear-point and axe.
 445 *in intelligence* mutually aware of the situation.
 465 *lightning*] cloud was 1855-68.
 466 *proved*] at 1855-68.
 504 *deceive - ah, whom?*] deceive myself; 1855-68.
 513] The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice, 1855-68.
 514 *Life-long, death-long*] The constancy 1855-68.
 516 *Triton* merman-like sea-god.
 605 *God's moon* love. (As moon reflects sun, so love reflects God.)
 645-6 *fire was crammed | In that mere stone you struck* 'fire i' the flint | Shows not till it be struck' (*Timon of Athens* I. i. 22-3).
 686 *soul*] man 1855-68.
 690] But bind in one and carry out their wills. 1855-68.
 696 *novel brain*] the new man 1855-68.
 698] And whom they trust to find them out new ways 1855.
 And who, they trust, shall find them out new ways 1863-8.
 699 *To untried heights*] To the new heights 1855; To heights as new 1863-8.
 707-10 The image is developed in 'Rabbi Ben Ezra', 145-92.
 709 *And consummation*] In that uprising 1855.
 711 *human sense*] lower men 1855-68.
 712 *men*] they 1855; all 1863-8.
 742 *stalking-horse* something serving to hide one's intention.
 765 *constant* The heroine's name is clearly used punningly.
 795 *overcharge her part* overact.
 816 *hazarded*] opened out 1855-68.
 837 *eye-flower* Perhaps eyebright, the scarlet pimpernel.
 919 The question as to what happens at the play's end has been much discussed. Browning himself said, 'The queen had a large and passionate temperament, which had only once been touched and brought into intense life. She would have died, as by a knife in her heart. The guard would have come to carry away her dead body.' And

he thought it might be well to add stage directions, 'and have it seen that they were carrying her [the queen] across the back of the stage' (K. de K. Bronson, 'Browning in Venice', *Century Magazine* LXIII, 1902, 578).

SAUL

The first nine sections of 'Saul' were first published on 6 November 1845 in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, with a note ('End of Part the First') to indicate that the poem was incomplete. The same sections, again unnumbered (though in manuscript the fragment was divided into four parts), were reprinted with some revisions in 1849. In both printings, each long line of the final text was printed as two lines (with the divisions in the obvious places). On 10 November 1855 when the completed poem was printed in *Men and Women*, 239 lines (the last ten sections) had been added, and the poem's length more than tripled; the first nine sections, and especially the last few lines of the ninth, had been extensively revised. In 1855, as in later printings, the verse paragraphs were numbered, and the long lines used. After 1855 punctuation revisions were extensive, verbal revisions few and insignificant. In 1863 the poem appeared in 'Lyrics'.

The fragment published in 1845 was probably written in that year: Browning later indicated that he reread Christopher Smart's *Song to David* (1763) in 1845 (he had first been impressed by it in 1827). On 3 May 1845 Browning told Miss Barrett that he would one day show her 'Saul'; by 27 August she had read it and urged its completion. Browning, however, could not finish it; and it would seem clear that he had not worked out his religious ideas in a way that would have allowed him to finish it. Thus he adopted Miss Barrett's suggestion of 9 September that he publish the fragment. When he later completed the poem is not known; *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day* shows that by 1850 Browning's religious views were such as to make completion of 'Saul' possible. Thematically, 'Saul' has much in common with 'An Epistle . . . of Karshish', and 1853 seems a likely date for both poems.

The Biblical source is 1 Samuel xvi 14-23. Smart's *Song to David*, as Browning says in his 'Parleying with Christopher Smart', led him in 1845 to other of Smart's works including the preface in which Smart writes of the 'fine subject' suggested to him of 'David's playing to King Saul when he was troubled with the evil spirit'. The story was well known to the nineteenth century and other sources have been suggested, including a letter of Wordsworth published in 1851 which may have influenced the arguments for a future life in sections XV-XVIII (see M. M. Bevington, *VNL* 20, 1961, 19-21). The only other significant and demonstrable source is, however, Thomas Wyatt's *Seven Penitential Psalms*, especially important in its influence on the structure of 'Saul' (see J. A. S. McPeck, 'The Shaping of Saul', *JEGP* XLIV, 1945, 360-66). Other important treatments include: E. Bieman, 'The Ongoing Testament in Browning's "Saul"', *TQ* XLIII, 1974, 151-68; A. W. Crawford, 'Browning's "Saul"', *Queen's Quarterly* XXXIV, 1927, 448-54; C. Dahl and J. L. Brewer, 'Browning's "Saul" and the Fourfold Vision: A Neoplatonic-Hermetic Approach', *BIS* III, 1975, 101-18; W. Hellstrom, 'Time and Type in Browning's *Saul*', *ELH* XXXIII, 1966, 370-89; King, *The Bow and the Lyre*, 100-123; W. D. Shaw, 'The Analogical Argument of Browning's "Saul"', *VP* II, 1964, 277-82.

The poem was a favourite of the Pre-Raphaelites, and of Browning, who, asked to name four representative poems of moderate length, selected 'Saul' as one of two lyrics. Miss Barrett also admired it; without exception, Browning changed passages she criticized (see *New Poems*, 155-9), in most cases adopting her suggested change (as indicated in notes that follow).

- 1 *Abner* the captain of Saul's 'host' (1 Samuel xxvi 5), Saul's cousin.
- 4 *until*] till *MS.* (Browning followed Miss Barrett's suggestion, one designed 'to break the course of monosyllables'.)
- 7] For in the black midtent silence / Three drear days, *MS.* (Miss Barrett wrote, 'the short line is too short to the ear - not to say that "drear days" conspires against "dread ways" found afterwards'.)
- 9 *ended their strife*] gone their dread ways 1845.
- 10] *not in 1845.*
- 12 *lilies still living and blue* In a letter of 16 March 1846 to Miss Barrett, Browning wrote 'lilies are of all colours in Palestine - . . . the water lily, lotos, which I think I meant, is *blue* altogether'.
- 13 *Just broken*] As thou brak'st them 1845-9.
- 19 *extends*] leads 1845-9.
- 24] Something more black than the blackness - / The vast, upright *MS.* (Browning adopted Miss Barrett's suggestions to improve the rhythm.)
- 27 *that burst through the tent-roof*] burst through the blind tent-roof *MS.* (Browning adopted the suggestion of Miss Barrett, who found 'blind' a clogging - and repeated - epithet, and who thought the earlier rapidity of rhythm gave greater force to 'showed Saul'.)
- 30 *He relaxed*] So he bent 1845-9.
- 33 *stark*] black 1845.
- 37 *So docile*] Docile *MS.* (Browning adopted Miss Barrett's suggestion.)
- 40 *And now*] *not in MS.* (Browning adopted Miss Barrett's suggestion.)
- 41 *eve and*] *not in MS.* (Browning adopted Miss Barrett's suggestion.)
- 45 *jerboa* a rodent with long back legs for leaping.
- 51 *last*] low 1845.
- 55 *Oh*] *not in MS.* (Miss Barrett's suggestion: 'it throws a wail into the line, and swells the rhythm rightly, I think'.)
- 57 *As*] *not in MS.* (Browning adopted Miss Barrett's suggestion.)
- 59 *friends*] brothers 1845.
- 60 *Levites* Those assisting the priests in the Temple were traditionally chosen from the tribe of Levi.
- 61 *stopped here*] stopped *MS.* (Browning adopted Miss Barrett's suggestion.)
- 65 *male* very blue.
courageous lively (the word's etymological roots lie in the Latin *cor*, 'heart').
- 66 *still moved*] stirred *MS.* (Miss Barrett suggested 'that stirred'.)
- 71 *The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree*] The rending their boughs from the palm-trees 1845-9.
- 72 *hunt*] haunt 1849.
- 77 *so*] *not in MS.* (Elizabeth Barrett suggested 'right'.)
- 78 *life, the*] life here, 1845-9.
- 81 *with the armies*] to the wolf hunt 1845-9.
- 84 *Joining*] Join *MS.* (Browning adopted Miss Barrett's suggestion.)
- 90 *Present*] And *MS.*; And the 1845. (Browning adopted Miss Barrett's suggestion, but reverted to the *MS.* reading in 1849.)
of] for *MS.*; in 1845-9.
- 92 *And all gifts, which*] Oh all, all 1845; Oh all gifts 1849.
- 93-6] On one head the joy and the pride,
Even rage like the throe
That opes the rock, helps its glad labour,
And lets the gold go -

And ambition that sees a sun lead it[- 1849]

Oh, all of these - all

Combine to unite in one creature

- Saul! 1845-9.

97-335] *not in 1845-9.*

100 *Strains* feels high tension.

101 *cherubim-chariot* Ezekiel x 3-17.

162 *inconscious* unconscious (rare).

179 *First King* Saul was the first king of Israel.

188 *paper-reeds* plants from which papyrus is made.

200 *last*] that 1855.

203 *Hebron* mountain and city south of Jerusalem, the home of David.

204 *Kidron* brook or gully near Jerusalem.

204-5 *retrieves*] *Slow the damage* probably influenced by Horace, *Odes* IV, vii, 13; see J. C. Maxwell in *VP* III, 1965, 144.

213 *error* Saul had disobeyed God (1 Samuel xv).

245 *Wisdom*] wisdom 1855.

291 *Sabaoth* hosts or armies.

292 *not*] *not in 1855.*

327 *held breath*] new awe 1855-63.

'DE GUSTIBUS -'

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 revisions were minor. The date of composition is unknown. The title is from the Latin proverb, '*De gustibus non est disputandum*': 'About tastes there's no arguing' (*not* 'There's no accounting for tastes').

4 *cornfield* field of grain (English usage, not North American).

28 *Before*] Without 1855.

35 *king* Ferdinand II, the Bourbon King of the Two Sicilies (King 'Bomba').

36 *liver-wing* right arm.

40 *Queen Mary's saying* 'When I am dead and opened, you shall find "Calais" lying in my heart.' (The saying, known to every English schoolboy, referred to her grief at the loss of Calais, last British possession in France, in 1558, just before Mary Tudor's death.)

46 *shall ever*] it still shall 1855. Browning left Italy for England in 1861.

WOMEN AND ROSES

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 there were eight verbal changes, and a few in punctuation. The date of composition is uncertain despite the precision of DeVane's invention (*Handbook*, 259) of 1 January 1852, a date not supported by any evidence and contradicted by some. The evidence for dating is contradictory (see J. Huebenthal's note in *VP* IV, 1966, 51-4). Late in 1887 Browning is reported to have said, 'One year in Florence I had been rather lazy; I resolved that I would write something every day. Well, the first day I wrote about some roses, suggested by a magnificent basket that some one had sent my wife. The next day *Childe Roland* came upon me as a kind of dream' (Whiting, *The Brownings*, 261). In 1866, however, Browning said he wrote 'Childe Roland' in Paris; if so, 'Women and Roses' belongs to January 1852. On

balance, 1853 seems the likely date, a day before 'Childe Roland'. There is no support for the frequently made statement (see DeVane, *Handbook*, 259) that *this* poem records a vivid (or any other kind of) dream. What is sure is that the meaning of the poem has occasioned dispute, and that (like many other poems of Browning) it is most uncharacteristic of its author. On it, see Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 181-92; L. Poston III, "A Novel Grace and a Beauty Strange": Browning's "Women and Roses", *BSN* IV, No. 3, 1974, 15-17; G. Tillotson, 'A Word for Browning', *Sewanee Review* LXXII, 1964, 389-97.

15 *unimpeached* unentangled.

PROTUS

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 the poem was included in 'Romances'. After 1855 revisions were trifling. The date of writing is unknown, but the poem may date from the Brownings' visit to Rome from December 1853 to May 1854. The characters are imaginary. Browning is, of course, casting an ironic eye on later Roman emperors.

2 *Half-emperors and quarter-emperors* After 285 there were usually two or more emperors.

4 *Loric and low-browed Gorgon* The Roman *lorica* (Browning anglicizes the word) was a leather cuirass. The breast is decorated with a Gorgon's head, low-browed because of the snaky hair designed to petrify opponents.

9 *god* Augustus, first Roman emperor, was deified in A.D. 14.

10 *porphyry* a hard richly coloured rock.

Byzant Byzantium, site of the new capital of the Roman Empire after 330.

36 *Pannonian* from the Roman province south and west of the Danube.

49-50 *hunting-stables . . . dogs* Pannonia was famous for its hunting-dogs.

53 *Thrace* Roman province in the eastern Balkans.

HOLY-CROSS DAY

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Romances'. Revisions after 1855 were trifling. As with 'Protus', it seems reasonable to assume that the poem is a product of the Brownings' stay in Rome, December 1853 to May 1854.

Holy Cross Day is 14 September, but in fact the sermons were not annual but frequent events. They were introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1584 and abolished by Pope Gregory XVI in 1846 ('*Pope Gregory XVI*' in the final note of the poem read 'The present Pope' in 1855). Evelyn's *Diary* for 7 January 1645 records the Jews' sitting at the sermon 'with so much malice in their countenances, spitting, coughing, humming, and motion, that it is almost impossible they should hear a word from the preacher' - the passage may have suggested the spirit of the opening of Browning's poem, and the 'quotation' from the Secretary's *Diary*, which is, of course, by Browning. The concluding stanzas are often said to have been based on the *Song of Death* of Rabbi Ben Ezra (1092-1167), but the supposed *Song* is probably Browning's invention. On the poem see B. Melchiori, *Browning's Poetry of Reticence*, 90-113.

Epigraph 3-5 *crumb . . . dogs* Matthew xv 22-7.

Epigraph 8 "*Compel them to come in*" Luke xiv 23.

1 *Fee, faw, fum* possibly an echo of the Giant in stories of Jack the Giant-killer; in some versions the Giant goes on to smell the blood of a Christian man.

bubble and squeak a mixture of meat and cabbage which, in England, masquerades as food.

2 *Blessedest Thursday* presumably, the Thursday before Lent.

4 *smug and gruff* smooth and rough.

10 *handsel* use first.

shaving-shears To be shaved (see line 41) is to display one's conversion.

20 *acorned* full of acorns - 'full-acorned boar' (*Cymbeline* II. 5.16).

22 *hour-glass* to time the sermon.

23 *chine* backbone.

24 *laps* folds of skin.

29 *quotha* forsooth.

31 *doomed black dozen* the 'converts'.

32 *cog . . . cozen* cheat . . . trick.

38 *from a Jew you mount to a Turk* move some way up the scale of Christian regard.

52 *Corso* then the main street of Rome.

66 *Ben Ezra's Song of Death* Ben Ezra was the Spanish Jew and scholar (1092-1167) whom Browning used as a spokesman in 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' (1864). The *Song of Death* that follows is in all probability not a translation but original Browning. In 1888 Browning wrote to Furnivall: 'in *Holy Cross Day*, Ben Ezra is not supposed to acknowledge Christ as the Messiah because he resorts to the obvious argument "even on your own showing, and accepting for the moment the authority of your accepted Lawgiver, you are condemned by His precepts - let alone ours"' (Hood, *Letters*, 287-8).

73-8 'For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob' (Isaiah xiv 1).

85-90 Mark xiii 32-7.

91 *He* Jesus.

104 *Barabbas* the murderer whom Pilate released after giving the mob their choice between Barabbas and Jesus.

111 *Ghetto* the area to which Jews were confined (*Borghetto* is Italian for 'little town').

120 *Pleasant Land* Jeremiah iii 19.

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. Revisions after 1855 were trifling. The poem was written in Ancona in the last week of July 1848, when the Brownings had just seen what Mrs Browning called 'a divine picture' in the Church of San Agostino in Fano, the town a few miles north of Ancona on the east coast of Italy. Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (1591-1666), Guercino ('Squinter'), was a Bolognese artist of some distinction; Browning's initial enthusiasm for his picture at Fano would seem later to have moderated. (A photograph of *The Guardian-Angel* faces page 166 in Griffin and Minchin's *Life*.) Browning had seen his work in England, at Dulwich, with his old friend Alfred Domett, whom he addresses in the poem. This is the only poem of Browning's known to have been written in the first three years of his marriage.

2 *child* In the painting, the Angel guards a young child standing on a tomb.

- 4 *performed thy special ministry* 'performs its secret ministry' (Coleridge, 'Frost at Midnight', 1).
 18 *bird of God* Dante, *Purgatorio* ii, 38 (and elsewhere).
 33-5 Browning may be recalling the last lines of Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'.
 40 'The world was all before them' (Milton, *Paradise Lost* XII, 646).
 46 *My angel* Mrs Browning.
 51 *wrong* perhaps a reference to hostile remarks about Guercino in Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, and/or in a book by the Brownings' friend, Mrs Jameson, about which they had remonstrated with her.
 55 *Wairoa* river in New Zealand, where Alfred Domett had gone.

CLEON

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In later collections it stayed in 'Men and Women'. Revisions after 1855 were trifling. The poem is a companion to 'An Epistle . . . of Karshish', and would seem to have been written after it; its date may well be 1854. It has affinities with Arnold's *Empedocles on Etna*, which had been published in 1852 but withdrawn in 1853; in 1867 it was reprinted at the request of Browning. Browning's epigraph comes from Acts xvii 28: 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.' Cleon and Protus are fictional; the time of the poem is about A.D. 52.

The poem's relationship to *Empedocles on Etna* is explored in A. W. Crawford, 'Browning's "Cleon"', *JEGP* XXVI, 1927, 485-90. E. C. McAleer sees the poem as a critique of Positivism in 'Browning's "Cleon" and Auguste Comte', *Comparative Literature* VIII, 1956, 142-5. For criticism, see R. A. King, Jr, 'Browning: "Mage" and "Maker" - A Study in Poetic Purpose and Method', *VNL* 20, 1961, 22-5 (reprinted in Drew, *Robert Browning*, 189-98).

- 1 *sprinkled isles* probably the Sporades: scattered islands in the Aegean Sea. In *Pauline* 331, 'clustered isles' (probably the Cyclades) are referred to.
 4 *Tyranny* The word is used in its Greek sense as a description of a kind of rule, and without its modern implications.
 14 *settle-down* flock settling down (*OED* describes it as a nonce word).
 15 *crocus* saffron.
 16 *sea-wools* wools dyed with sea-purple.
 43 *requirement* request, inquiry.
 47 *epos . . . plates* epic poem . . . tablets.
 51 *sun-god on the phare* statue of Apollo on the lighthouse.
 53 *Poecile* the painted Portico at Athens.
 60 *moods* modes (types of musical scale).
 83 *rhomb* rhombus, equilateral parallelogram.
 84 *lozenge* diamond-shaped figure.
trapezoid trapezium (British usage), four-sided figure without any parallel sides.
 132 *suave . . . drupe* sweet . . . wild plum.
 138 *soul* Cleon uses the word in a sense lacking in spirituality and therefore ironic to Christian readers, to mean, roughly, 'inner essence' or 'consciousness'.
 140 *Terpander* seventh-century B.C. founder of Greek music.
 141 *Phidias and his friend* the Greek sculptor of the fifth century B.C., and (probably) Pericles, the great Athenian statesman, or (possibly) Polygnotus, the painter.
 191 *man, her last,*] man had yet 1855-63.

- 212 *intro-active* internally active; apparently a neologism.
 224 *sense of sense* analytic self-consciousness.
 226 *inconscious* unconscious (rare).
 231 *pleasure-house* 'I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house' (Tennyson, 'The Palace of Art', 1). Browning is probably thinking of Tennyson's isolated 'Soul' in the lines that follow.
 243 *clombst* climbed (archaic form).
 246 *reciency* receptivity.
 249 *skills* avails (archaism).
 252 *Naiad* (statue of a) water-nymph.
 258 *boots* use (archaism).
 273-335 In replying to Protus' suggestion about a kind of immortality, Cleon would seem to be replying also to the widely held views of the Utilitarians and Comtists in Victorian England.
 288 *Phoebus* Apollo, god of the sun and poetry.
 304 *Sappho* Greek lyric poet of the seventh century B.C.
 330 *prized*] sweet 1855.
 332 *fly* butterfly (emblem of the soul).
 333 *wants* lacks - but perhaps used ambiguously here.
 340 *Paulus* Saint Paul.

THE TWINS

First published in a small pamphlet, *Two Poems*, with Mrs Browning's 'A Plea for the Ragged Schools of London', on or about 19 April 1854. The pamphlet was sold at a bazaar to raise money for a 'refuge for young destitute girls'; the poems were a response to a request from Arabel Barrett (see DeVane and Knickerbocker, *New Letters*, 70-72). In 1854 the poem is dated 30 March 1854. With one verbal change and a few revisions in punctuation, it was reprinted in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Romances'. The manuscript is in the Pierpont Morgan Library.

The story is an old one, but Browning found it in Luther's *Table-Talk*, where it illustrates 'Give, and it shall be given unto you' (Luke vi 38; in the Vulgate, 'Date, et dabitur vobis').

- 24 *helps*] joins *MS.*, 1854.
 28 *Luther said* not in the parable. Luther remarks later in *Table-Talk* that angels perform tasks that even mendicants would not.

POPULARITY

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 there were a few verbal and punctuational changes. The date of composition is unknown, but the poem may possibly have been prompted by Milnes's *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats* (1848). The subject of the poem has generally been taken to be John Keats, an identification perhaps made difficult by the use of the third person in the poem's final line after the poet has been addressed in the other sixty-four lines in the second person. B. Worsfold, in his edition of *Men and Women* (II, 313) proposed Alfred Domett, a suggestion endorsed by Drew, *Poetry of Browning*, 84-7. In a valuable note (*VP* I, 1963, 65-6), R. D. Altick persuasively argues that the poet addressed is 'a projection of Browning him-

self' and that a sonnet praising Keats in Milnes's *Life* (I, 254) was quite possibly in Browning's mind, helping to prompt 'Popularity'. Certainly Browning's sense of his own originality and lack of popularity was very strong. Finally, of course, it is not necessary and may well be undesirable to particularize in reference what was probably intended to be general. On the poem see Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 232-4, and Drew, *Poetry of Browning*, 84-7.

4 *one man* If Browning did have Domett in mind as his subject, the reference is probably to Browning himself - 'never star / Was lost here but it rose afar' ('Waring', 258-9). If Keats is the subject, Shelley may be meant (in *Adonais* Keats becomes a star) or the author of the sonnet in Milnes's *Life* ('Star of high promise! Not to this dark age / Do thy mild light and loveliness belong'). If the subject is a projection of Browning himself, the referent might be any one of such people as Fox, Domett, Forster.

18-20 'When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine . . . [he] called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now' (John ii 9-10).

24 *Tyre* the ancient Phoenician port-city in the eastern Mediterranean.

26-30 The Phoenicians discovered that some Tyrian shellfish contained a liquid that turned purple in air and made a superior dye. Astarte was the Phoenician goddess of love.

33 *sublimed some pall* made sublime some cloak.

42 *hangings* possibly suggested by those in Esther i 6.
cedar-house 1 Kings vii 2-3.

44 *Spouse* Pharaoh's daughter, Solomon's wife.

48 *What time* a Miltonism.

52 *cunning come*] art comes, - comes 1855.

53 *proof* greater purity.

58 *Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes* The names of literary hacks are invented.

60 *line* punning, as Altick points out, on the word in the artist's sense, as a line of verse, as a commercial term, as 'lineage'.

64 *murex* a kind of whelk from which the dye comes.

65 That is, the innovative Keats did not benefit from his discovery; only his imitators did.

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Romances'. After 1855 changes were trifling. The date of composition is unknown.

The work is described as an 'interlude', a dramatic form that flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that is brief and generally farcical. Chatterton used the term in two of his subtitles, and Browning's form may owe a debt to the young poet whose work he so much admired. Browning attributes his interlude to an imaginary Master Gysbrecht. His 'conceit' (fancy) is entitled (to translate the Latin) 'Rose of the World; or, Support Me with Flowers'. *Cantuque, Virgilius*: 'and in song, a Vergil' (Master Gysbrecht is a master-poet). *Hock-tide*: the second Monday and Tuesday after Easter were holidays. The garbled Latin at the end of the poem's 'title-page' means 'I had rejoiced, The Son of Jesse' - the scribe is trying to quote Psalm cxvii 1 (by David, son of Jesse), but making a hash of it. The English note was signed 'R.B.' in 1855.

The poem's hero (mistakenly called 'John' in the interlude itself) is Jacques du Bourg-Molay, last Grand Master of the Knights Templar, an order which, during the Crusades, had exercised enormous power and acquired great wealth. The order was repressed by Philip IV of France with the support of Pope Clement V; the Grand Master was tortured in prison into confession, and finally burned in Paris, in March 1314.

3 *Saint Paul* an error; the Abbot paraphrases James i 17.

8,9 *plagal-cadence* a cadence in which the subdominant chord immediately precedes the tonic. The cadence is a closing one.

12 *Aldabrod* The gentleman never existed.

13 *Saladin* The Sultan died fifty years before Jacques was born.

17,18 *clavicithern* early keyboard instrument.

28 *bavins* bundles of brushwood.

29 *Billets* short thick sticks of firewood.

32 *chafe* fury.

35 *Laudes* Lauds, a Church service including psalms of praise.

36 *Laus Deo* 'Praise to God' (Latin).

42 *threat* threaten (archaism).

48 *Salvā reverentiā* 'a saving reverence' (Latin); that is, a bow or genuflection is called for.

60 *Sharon's rose* Song of Solomon ii 1.

64 *leman* lover.

67-9 'And as he [Paul] reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come, Felix [Governor of Judea] trembled' (Acts xxiv 25).

75 *Anther* pollen-bearing part of a stamen.

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. The poem was virtually unchanged after 1855. It was probably written in May 1854, a month in which the Brownings spent what Mrs Browning called 'some exquisite hours on the Campagna'. The countryside around Rome is also featured in 'Love Among the Ruins'. Among essays are: R. D. Altick, 'Lovers' Finiteness: Browning's "Two in the Campagna"', *Papers on Language and Literature* III, 1967, 75-80; Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 149-61.

15 *weft* web.

21 *champaign* campagna.

33 *As earth lies bare to heaven above* probable allusion to the myth in which Zeus came to Danaë in a shower of gold: 'Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars' (Tennyson, *The Princess* VII, 168).

48 *pluck the rose* 'When I have plucked the rose, / I cannot give it vital growth again, / It needs must wither' (*Othello* V. 2. 13-5).

55 *Fixed* guided (by a 'fix' on a star).

Fixed by no friendly star 'it [Love] is an ever-fixed mark / That looks on tempests and is never shaken; / It is the star to every wandering bark' (Shakespeare, Sonnet 116).

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Romances'. There were a few minor revisions after 1855. The date of composition is unknown. There has been much discussion as to whether the grammarian is praised or satirized. A page in Browning's autograph transcribing the last twelve lines is in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, dated 1 November 1869; headed 'In memoriam Johannis Conington', it would indicate that – at the very least – Browning did not mean the poem to be entirely satirical (John Conington was the industrious Oxford scholar, 1825–69). Many models for the grammarian have been presented, among them Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614), Thomas Linacre (c. 1460–1524), the sixteenth-century German physician Jacobus Milichius, and Erasmus himself (1466–1536) – no case as yet is convincing. The poem seems to be indebted for form, and in part subject, to an obscure poem by John Davies of Hereford of about 1610, 'Invention's Life, Death, and Funeral'.

Treatments include: R. D. Altick, 'A Grammarian's Funeral: Browning's Praise of Foily', *Studies in English Literature* III, 1963, 449–60; R. L. Kelly, 'Dactyls and Curlews: Satire in "A Grammarian's Funeral"', *VP* V, 1967, 105–12; G. Monteiro, 'A Proposal for Settling the Grammarian's Estate', *VP* III, 1965, 266–70; R. C. Schweik, 'The Structure of "A Grammarian's Funeral"', *College English* XXII, 1961, 411–12; M. J. Svaglic, 'Browning's Grammarian: Apparent Failure or Real?', *VP* V, 1967, 93–104.

- 3 *croft*s small farms, or small fields.
thorpes country villages.
 14 *sepulture* burial.
 22 *warning* the signal to begin.
 50 *gowned him* donned the symbol of academic life.
 86 *Calculus* gallstones.
 88 *Tussis* bronchial coughing.
 95 *hydroptic* excessively thirsty.
 120 *Misses an unit* misses by only a unit.
 127 *rattle* death-rattle.
 129 *Hoti* 'that' (Greek particle).
 130 *Oun* 'then' (Greek particle).
 131 *enclitic De* 'towards' (Greek suffix). Browning wrote to Tennyson in 1863 that he wanted his grammarian working on 'the biggest of the littlenesses'.
 132 *waist* punning on 'waste'.
 134 *purlieus* haunts.

ONE WAY OF LOVE

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 there were minor changes in punctuation only. The date of composition is unknown.

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 it was included with its companion in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 there were minor revisions. The date of composition is unknown.

- 17 *Clear scores* settle accounts.
 19 *Eadem semper* 'always the same' (Latin).
 21 *mend* improve.
 33 *And stop the fresh film-work*] To stop the fresh spinning 1855; And stop the fresh spinning 1863.
film-work cobweb.

'TRANSCENDENTALISM: A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS'

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. It later remained in 'Men and Women' as the first poem, presumably designed as prefatory to a group for which its subject-matter otherwise scarcely qualifies it. There were minor revisions after 1855. The date of composition may well be 1853, when the Brownings were reading Swedenborg, who was interested in Boehme. Inevitably, various models, including Wordsworth, have been suggested for the prosy poet chastised in this poem; R. D. Altick suggests that Browning is chastising the earlier Browning (and that he is indebted to Carlyle): 'Browning's "Transcendentalism"', *JEGP* LVIII, 1959, 24–8.

- 4 *draping them in sights and sounds* 'I am writing – a first step towards popularity for me – lyrics with more music and painting than before, so as to get people to hear and see' (Browning to his friend J. Milsand, 24 February 1853).
 6 *prolusion* prologue or preliminary flourish.
 12 *Swiss tube* alpenhorn.
 22 *German*] Swedish 1855–63 (Edward Dowden suggested the correction in 1866).
Boehme Jacob Boehme (1575–1624), the German shoemaker and mystic. It was probably in a translation of 1764 of Boehme's *Works* that Browning read about Boehme's communion with 'the Herbs and Grass of the field', when 'in his inward Light he saw into their Essences, Use and Properties'. What, if any, particular 'tough book' (line 30) Browning may have had in mind is not known, but the context suggests *De Signatura Rerum*.
 26 *the daisy had an eye* 'Daisy' means 'day's eye'.
 37–8 John of Halberstadt was an obscure German canon of the fifteenth century, whose name Browning would have met in Wanley's *Wonders of the Little World*, a favourite childhood book. There he is remarkable chiefly for being turned into a black horse, and is said to have 'performed a number of prestigious feats almost incredible'. His skill with rose-growing is apparently Browning's invention.
 48 *showed*] did 1855–63.
 49 *finer* thinner. The harp's higher notes come from thinner strings placed nearest the harpist's head.

MISCONCEPTIONS

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. In 1863 the poem was included in 'Lyrics'. After 1855 the only changes were in indentation. The date of composition is unknown.

- 11 *dalmatic* royal coronation robe.

ONE WORD MORE

First published in *Men and Women* on 10 November 1855. Later it remained with the collection, with a note to explain that it had originally been appended to the larger

ollection bearing that title. Changes after 1855 were minor. The printer's manuscript is in the Pierpont Morgan Library; there the poem is called 'A Last Word, to E.B.B.'. In changing the title, Browning probably was mindful of the unfortunate echo of 'A Woman's Last Word'; in choosing the new one, he may well have thought of his wife's remark in a letter of 31 August 1845 as she discouraged his love: 'Therefore we must leave this subject - and I must trust you to leave it without one word more.' Between manuscript and 1855 there were many revisions, which were clearly made in proof. The poem, a favourite of all lovers of the Brownings, was written in London while the other poems of *Men and Women* were in the printer's hands; the manuscript dates the poem 22 September 1855. It seems altogether probable that Browning wished to dedicate the collection to his wife (especially after her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, first published in 1850), and that 'One Word More' stemmed from his thinking about an appropriate form for the dedication. Browning stressed the unusually intensely personal nature of the poem by signing it 'R.B.' in editions after 1855 (after his wife's death). On the poem, see Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 229-38.

1 *fifty* The poem is the fifty-first in *Men and Women*.

4 *Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.* 'where your treasure is, there will your heart be also' (Matthew vi 21). The line is echoed in 142.

lies] is *MS*.

5 *Rafael made a century of sonnets* Browning was long said to have erred here. But Baldinucci, *Notizie* (used elsewhere by Browning), refers to 'the famous book of a hundred sonnets from the hand of Raphael, which Guido had bought in Rome' (F. Page, *TLS*, 25 May 1940, 255). Raphael, the great Italian painter (1483-1520), was a special favourite of Browning's.

9-10 *but one . . . Who that one*] one eye . . . Whose that eye *cancelled MS. readings*. (Did Browning recall his wife's earlier strictures against his reference to a single eye in 'The Flower's Name', 16?)

12 *lady of the sonnets* probably the reputed model, whose name may have been Margherita, for some of Raphael's paintings, including *La Fornarina*. Baldinucci refers to a mistress whom Raphael 'loved until his death', and Vasari also records the devotion.

22 *San Sisto* the *Sistine Madonna* at Dresden.

Foligno the *Madonna di Foligno* in the Vatican.

23 the *Madonna del Granduca* in the Pitti Palace, Florence.

24-5 *La Belle Jardinière* in the Louvre, Paris. The upper part of the picture is semi-circular.

27 *Guido Reni* Bolognese painter (1575-1642). Baldinucci records that Raphael's sonnets disappeared at the time of Reni's death.

28 *Guarded long*] Laid away *MS*.

30 *cried too*] with it *MS*.

32 On the first anniversary of Beatrice's death, Dante wrote, 'I was drawing an angel upon my tablets, . . . I turned my eyes and saw at my side certain people of importance' (*Vita Nuova*, xxxv). Beatrice (abbreviated 'Bice') is Dante's platonic love and heroine in the *Divine Comedy* and the *Vita Nuova*.

35 *pen corroded* The phrase and the following lines refer to Dante's attacks on enemies in *Inferno* (probably begun, in fact, about ten years after Beatrice's death).

37 *Inferno* xxxii, 97-104.

42 *who loved well*] the who loved *MS*.

46 See 32n.

48-9 The points about seizing and stopping are Browning's, not Dante's.

54 *love and Beatrice*] heaven and on Bice *cancelled MS. reading*.

58] The one line formed section VIII in *MS*. and 1855.

60 *for one*] but once *MS*.

64 *one time, art*] time, an art *MS*.

65 *Ay,*] Out *MS*.

72 *Gain*] Save *MS*.

73 *Wherefore? Heaven's*] Ah, - for heaven's *MS*.

74 *He who smites the rock* Moses. Exodus xvii 6; Numbers xx 11.

77 *but*] his *MS.*, 1855-63.

82 *sneered*] smiled *MS*.

85 *actual* present (the usual meaning in Browning).

89, 90] Make precipitate or more retarding *cancelled MS. reading*.

95 The children of Israel 'murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness' and 'said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots' (Exodus xvi 2-3).

97-8 While Moses was in a 'clift' of Mount Sinai, God showed him His glory (Exodus xxxiii 17-23). His face shone as he returned with the Ten Commandments (Exodus xxxiv 30).

98 *rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat*] rod-sweep and tongue's regal fiat *MS*.

101 *Jethro's daughter* Zipporah, wife of Moses (Exodus ii 21, iii 1).

102 *Aethiopian bondslave* wife of Moses (Numbers xii 1).

103 *He would*] Why - he'd *MS*.

119 *these lines*] this verse *MS*.

120 Only in 'One Word More' did Browning use unrhymed trochaic pentameter.

Lines] Verse *MS*.

121 *a hair*] an oil *MS*.

125 *missal-marge* margin of a prayer-book.

136 *Karshish*] Karshook *MS.*, 1855-68. The error was first corrected in the Tauchnitz edition of 1872, and then in late reprints of 1868. 'Ben Karshook's Wisdom' had been written in April 1854, but was not published until 1856; presumably Browning simply confused names. In 'The Return of the Druses' (1843), one of the Druses is called Karshook.

Norbert the hero of 'In a Balcony'.

142 *lies*] is *MS*. (Compare 4 and note.)

146 *thrice-transfigured* perhaps new, full, and waning; perhaps Browning alludes to the (roughly) three lunar months that have passed between the Brownings' departure from Florence and the writing of the poem.

148 *Fiesole* small hill-town a few miles north-east of Florence.

150 *Samminiato* San Miniato, a church on a hill south-east of Florence.

151 *Rounder*] Rounded *MS*.

160 *mythos* the story of the love of Diana, the moon goddess, for Endymion.

163 *Zoroaster on his terrace* Zoroaster (Zarathustra), sixth-century(?) religious figure and astronomer. The ziggurat was a terraced temple tower pyramidal in form with extensive terrace space at each storey.

164 *Galileo on his turret* The leading Renaissance scientist (1564-1642) made discoveries about the moon. The 'turret' is probably the Leaning Tower of Pisa from which Galileo conducted experiments.

165 *Homer* The *Homeric Hymns* (translated by Shelley) include one addressed to the moon.

Keats Keats told the story of *Endymion* (1818), which includes an invocation to the moon (iii 40-71).

- 172-3] Proves she as when Moses climbed the mountain.
Saw the paved-work of a stone, a sapphire, *MS*.
- 172-9 'Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink!' (Exodus xxiv 9-11).
186 when] if *MS*.
- 192, 3] Seeing - mine with all the eyes - our wonder. *MS*.
- 197 silence] beauty *MS*.
- 198-201] part of the preceding section in *MS*., not a separate section.

Dramatis Personae

Dramatis Personae, with its eighteen poems, was first published on 28 May 1864 by Chapman and Hall. Thirty lines of 'James Lee' had been published in 1836, and 'May and Death' in 1857. With these exceptions, the poems were new, though 'Prospice' and the sixth section of 'James Lee' had appeared a few days before in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and 'Gold Hair' a month or so before in the same journal. A second printing was called for, and the revised second edition was published later in 1864. Two brief occasional poems, 'Deaf and Dumb' and 'Eurydice to Orpheus', were added to *Dramatis Personae* when it appeared with substantial revisions in 1868. Further revisions for 1888 were trifling. The title of course means 'Persons of the Drama' and is the Latin phrase often prefixed to the names of a play's characters.

Browning appears to have written very little in the four years or so after the publication of *Men and Women*. In May 1860 Mrs Browning reported: 'he has been writing a good deal this winter - working at a long poem which I have not seen a line of, and producing short lyrics which I have seen, and may declare worthy of him'. Nevertheless, for a poet as productive as Browning could be, the winter of 1859-60 seems to have produced little, and the next eighteen months or so virtually nothing. In March 1861 Mrs Browning optimistically wrote of her husband's plans for working on a new volume in the summer, but her death on 29 June further delayed progress. Browning planned a volume for April or May in 1863, but publication of *Dramatis Personae* was held back so as not to interfere with the collected edition of 1863 (the first *Selections* published in the same year also sold well). In the meantime Browning added further work to the volume that appeared in 1864. The printers' manuscript, very clean except for 'Mr Sludge', is in the Pierpont Morgan Library, and a proof-copy with extensive corrections, which were incorporated in the published text, is in the Beinecke Library of Yale University.

Except for the rather special case of *A Blot in the Scutcheon* (1843), *Dramatis Personae* was Browning's first work to go into a second edition. For him, sales were reasonably good; Browning, in his fifties, was beginning to attract a fair number of readers. In 1868, however, Chapman and Hall still had 550 copies on hand.

There is only one twentieth-century edition of significance, that of F. B. Pinion (1969); its text is based substantially on the first edition. A brief essay on the volume as a whole is L. Poston III, *Loss and Gain: An Essay on Browning's 'Dramatis Personae'*, University of Nebraska, 1974.

JAMES LEE'S WIFE

'James Lee' was first published in *Dramatis Personae* on 28 May 1864. The first six stanzas of VI had appeared in the *Monthly Repository*, n.s. X, May 1836, 270-71, called 'Lines' and signed 'Z.', Browning's regular pseudonym for contributions to the journal. The whole section had appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for June 1864, published a few days before *Dramatis Personae*. The text (two section-titles excepted) was not revised for the second edition, but there were minor revisions and very substantial additions in 1868, in which the final text was virtually established. The poem's title was changed to 'James Lee's Wife' in 1868. Two section titles were changed: I (originally 'At the Window'), and VI (originally 'Under the Cliff') were given their final titles in the second edition. In the manuscript there are no titles, the sections being merely numbered; Browning made many revisions in proof. On 31 December 1864 the poet wrote, somewhat misleadingly, 'I misled you into thinking the couple were "prolétaire" - but I meant them for just the opposite - people newly-married, trying to realize a dream of being sufficient to each other, in a foreign land (where you can try such an experiment) and finding it break up, - the man being tired first, - and tired precisely of the love: - but I have expressed it all insufficiently, and will break the chain up, one day, and leave so many separate little round rings to roll each its way, if it can' (Curle, *Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood*, 123).

It is almost certain that most of the poem was written in southern Brittany, where Browning spent the summers of 1862 and 1863, staying near Pornic in Sainte Marie, then a sea-coast hamlet (the view from the house provided the fig-tree and field of III, as well as the doorway). Most of the poem was probably composed in 1862, and the mood doubtless reflects a frequent one of Browning himself at the time. The poem may also reflect the general influence of Meredith's *Modern Love* and *Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn* (both published in April 1862); and, especially in V, of Tennyson's *Maud*.

Swinburne's parody is called 'James Lee and John Jones'. See P. M. Ball, *The Heart's Desire*, Athlone Press, 1976, 144-66; Cook, *Browning's Lyrics*, 247-61; F. E. Faverty, 'Browning's Debt to Meredith in *James Lee's Wife*', in *Essays in American and English Literature Presented to Bruce Robert McElderry, Jr.*, ed. M. F. Schulz, Ohio University Press, 1968, 290-305; Poston, *Loss and Gain*, 1-8; G. Sandstrom, "'James Lee's Wife'" - and Browning's', *VP IV*, 1966, 259-70.

- 21, 2 Title 'By the Fire-Side' is the title of a poem in *Men and Women*.
- 72 bent coarse grass stalk.
- 95 harvest] beauty *MS*.
- 105-6 rivers of oil and wine . . . Book assures The Bible does not in fact speak of rivers of oil and wine; possibly Browning had in mind Deuteronomy viii 7-10, or Joel ii 24: 'the fats [troughs] shall overflow with wine and oil'.
- 121 you] love *MS*.
- 126 Dead] Red *MS*.
- 137 barded and chanfroned breast-plated and with frontlets of armour (*OED* does not record Browning's form of the word 'chamfrond').
- 138 quixote-mage magician or wise man with Don Quixote qualities.
- 143 fans wings.
- 174 Close.] So *MS*., 1836.
- 182 young man Robert Browning, at age twenty-three.
- 195 eternity] cancelled *MS*. reading, 1864-88; serenity *MS*.
- 196 Too] So *MS*.