













**Riverside Edition**

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THE POETIC AND DRAMATIC WORKS  
OF ROBERT BROWNING

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOLUME I.

**£**









*Robert Browning,*





PAULINE: PARACELSUS  
STRAFFORD: SORDELLO: PIPPA PASSES  
KING VICTOR AND KING  
CHARLES

BY

ROBERT BROWNING



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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## PUBLISHERS' ADVERTISEMENT

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IN issuing a new American edition of Mr. Browning's works the Publishers purpose not only to place before the reader in convenient form the entire body of the poet's writings, but to follow with scrupulous care his latest revision of the text. It is well known that Mr. Browning has taken occasion, in each successive issue of his works, both to redistribute collections of poems and to alter, often materially, the form of many verses. Before the publication of *The Ring and the Book*, Mr. Browning gathered all of his previous poems and dramas and issued them, rearranged and revised, in a series of six volumes. The present edition follows that series, and continues with the other writings in the order of their first appearance. Dates or the author's memoranda sufficiently indicate the original publication. When issuing the collective edition referred to above, Mr. Browning prefixed the following note : —

The poems that follow are printed in the order of their publication. The first piece in the series (*Pauline*), I acknowledge and retain with extreme repugnance, indeed purely of necessity ; for not long ago I inspected one, and am certified of the existence of other transcripts, intended sooner or later to be published abroad : by forestalling these, I can at least correct some misprints (no syllable is changed) and introduce a boyish work by an exculpatory word. The thing was my earliest attempt at "poetry always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine," which I have since written according to a scheme less extravagant and scale less impracticable than were ventured upon in this crude preliminary sketch — a sketch that, on reviewal, appears not altogether wide of some hint of the characteristic features of that

particular *dramatis persona* it would fain have reproduced: good draughtsmanship, however, and right handling were far beyond the artist at that time.

R. B.

LONDON, *December 25, 1867.*

In the final volume of this series will be found Indexes of contents and of first lines. The portrait prefacing the present volume is from a steel-plate executed by J. A. J. Wilcox in 1887 from a recent photograph.



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*(Prefixed to the three-volume edition issued in 1863.)*

I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES TO MY OLD FRIEND JOHN FORSTER, GLAD AND GRATEFUL THAT HE WHO, FROM THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THE VARIOUS POEMS THEY INCLUDE, HAS BEEN THEIR PROMPTTEST AND STAUCHEST HELPER, SHOULD SEEM EVEN NEARER TO ME NOW THAN ALMOST THIRTY YEARS AGO.

R. B.

*London, April 21, 1863.*



## PAULINE

### A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION

*Plus ne suis ce que j'ai été,  
Et ne le saurois jamais être.*

MAROT.

NON dubito, quin titulus libri nostri raritate sua quamplurimos alliciat ad legendum: inter quos nonnulli obliquæ opinionis, mente languidi, multi etiam maligni, et in ingenium nostrum ingrati accedent, qui temeraria sua ignorantia, vix conspecto titulo clamabunt: Nos vetita docere, hæresium semina jacere: piis auribus offenculo, præclaris ingeniis scandalo esse: . . . adeo conscientiæ suæ consulentes, ut nec Apollo, nec Musæ omnes, neque Angelus de cælo me ab illorum execratione vindicare queant: quibus et ego nunc consulo, ne scripta nostra legant, nec intelligant, nec meminerint: nam noxia sunt, venenosa sunt: Acherontis ostium est in hoc libro, lapides loquitur, caveant, ne cerebrum illis excutiat. Vos autem, qui æqua mente ad legendum venitis, si tantam prudentiæ discretionem adhibueritis, quantam in melle legendo apes, jam securi legite. Puto namque vos et utilitatis haud parum et voluptatis plurimum accepturos. Quod si qua repereritis, quæ vobis non placeant, mittite illa, nec utimini. NAM ET EGO VOBIS ILLA NON PROBO, SED NARRO. Cætera tamen propertea non respuite . . . Ideo, si quid liberius dictum sit, ignoscite adolescentiæ nostræ, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui. — *Hen. Corn. Agrippa, De Occult. Philosoph. in Prefat.*

LONDON, January, 1833.

V. A. XX.

PAULINE, mine own, bend o'er me — thy soft breast  
Shall pant to mine — bend o'er me — thy sweet eyes,  
And loosened hair and breathing lips, and arms  
Drawing me to thee — these build up a screen  
To shut me in with thee, and from all fear;  
So that I might unlock the sleepless brood  
Of fancies from my soul, their lurking-place,  
Nor doubt that each would pass, ne'er to return  
To one so watched, so loved and so secured.  
But what can guard thee but thy naked love?  
Ah dearest, whoso sucks a poisoned wound  
Envenoms his own veins! Thou art so good,  
So calm — if thou shouldst wear a brow less light  
For some wild thought which, but for me, were kept  
From out thy soul as from a sacred star!  
Yet till I have unlocked them it were vain

To hope to sing ; some woe would light on me,  
 Nature would point at one whose quivering lip  
 Was bathed in her enchantments, whose brow burned  
 Beneath the crown to which her secrets knelt,  
 Who learned the spell which can call up the dead,  
 And then departed smiling like a fiend  
 Who has deceived God, — if such one should seek  
 Again her altars and stand robed and crowned  
 Amid the faithful : sad confession first,  
 Remorse and pardon and old claims renewed,  
 Ere I can be — as I shall be no more.

I had been spared this shame if I had sat  
 By thee forever from the first, in place  
 Of my wild dreams of beauty and of good,  
 Or with them, as an earnest of their truth :  
 No thought nor hope having been shut from thee,  
 No vague wish unexplained, no wandering aim  
 Sent back to bind on fancy's wings and seek  
 Some strange fair world where it might be a law ;  
 But doubting nothing, had been led by thee,  
 Through youth, and saved, as one at length awaked  
 Who has slept through a peril. Ah vain, vain !

Thou lovest me ; the past is in its grave  
 Though its ghost haunts us ; still this much is ours,  
 To cast away restraint, lest a worse thing  
 Wait for us in the darkness. Thou lovest me ;  
 And thou art to receive not love but faith,  
 For which thou wilt be mine, and smile and take  
 All shapes and shames, and veil without a fear  
 That form which music follows like a slave :  
 And I look to thee and I trust in thee,  
 As in a Northern night one looks alway  
 Unto the East for morn and spring and joy.  
 Thou seest then my aimless, hopeless state,  
 And, resting on some few old feelings won  
 Back by thy beauty, wouldst that I essay  
 The task which was to me what now thou art :  
 And why should I conceal one weakness more ?

Thou wilt remember one warm morn when winter  
 Crept aged from the earth, and spring's first breath  
 Blew soft from the moist hills ; the black-thorn boughs,  
 So dark in the bare wood, when glistening  
 In the sunshine were white with coming buds,

Like the bright side of a sorrow, and the banks  
Had violets opening from sleep like eyes.  
I walked with thee who knew'st not a deep shame  
Lurked beneath smiles and careless words which sought  
To hide it till they wandered and were mute,  
As we stood listening on a sunny mound  
To the wind murmuring in the damp copse,  
Like heavy breathings of some hidden thing  
Betrayed by sleep ; until the feeling rushed  
That I was low indeed, yet not so low  
As to endure the calmness of thine eyes ;  
And so I told thee all, while the cool breast  
I leaned on altered not its quiet beating,  
And long ere words like a hurt bird's complaint  
Bade me look up and be what I had been,  
I felt despair could never live by thee :  
Thou wilt remember. Thou art not more dear  
Than song was once to me ; and I ne'er sung  
But as one entering bright halls where all  
Will rise and shout for him : sure I must own  
That I am fallen, having chosen gifts  
Distinct from theirs — that I am sad and fain  
Would give up all to be but where I was,  
Not high as I had been if faithful found,  
But low and weak yet full of hope, and sure  
Of goodness as of life — that I would lose  
All this gay mastery of mind, to sit  
Once more with them, trusting in truth and love,  
And with an aim — not being what I am.  
O Pauline, I am ruined who believed  
That though my soul had floated from its sphere  
Of wild dominion into the dim orb  
Of self — that it was strong and free as ever !  
It has conformed itself to that dim orb,  
Reflecting all its shades and shapes, and now  
Must stay where it alone can be adored.  
I have felt this in dreams — in dreams in which  
I seemed the fate from which I fled ; I felt  
A strange delight in causing my decay ;  
I was a fiend in darkness chained forever  
Within some ocean-cave ; and ages rolled,  
Till through the cleft rock, like a moonbeam, came  
A white swan to remain with me ; and ages  
Rolled, yet I tired not of my first joy  
In gazing on the peace of its pure wings :  
And then I said, " It is most fair to me,

Yet its soft wings must sure have suffered change  
 From the thick darkness, sure its eyes are dim,  
 Its silver pinions must be cramped and numbed  
 With sleeping ages here ; it cannot leave me,  
 For it would seem, in light beside its kind,  
 Withered, though here to me most beautiful."  
 And then I was a young witch whose blue eyes,  
 As she stood naked by the river springs,  
 Drew down a god ; I watched his radiant form  
 Growing less radiant, and it gladdened me ;  
 Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine  
 Upon my knees, singing to me of heaven,  
 He turned to look at me, ere I could lose  
 The grin with which I viewed his perishing :  
 And he shrieked and departed and sat long  
 By his deserted throne, but sunk at last  
 Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and curled  
 Around him, " I am still a god — to thee."  
 Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall,  
 For all the wandering and all the weakness  
 Will be a saddest comment on the song :  
 And if, that done, I can be young again,  
 I will give up all gained, as willingly  
 As one gives up a charm which shuts him out  
 From hope or part of care in human kind.  
 As life wanes, all its cares and strife and toil  
 Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees  
 Which grew by our youth's home, the waving mass  
 Of climbing plants heavy with bloom and dew,  
 The morning swallows with their songs like words,  
 All these seem clear and only worth our thoughts :  
 So, aught connected with my early life,  
 My rude songs or my wild imaginings,  
 How I look on them — most distinct amid  
 The fever and the stir of after years !

I ne'er had ventured e'er to hope for this ;  
 Had not the glow I felt at His award,  
 Assured me all was not extinct within :  
 His whom all honor, whose renown springs up  
 Like sunlight which will visit all the world,  
 So that e'en they who sneered at him at first,  
 Come out to it, as some dark spider crawls  
 From his foul nets which some lit torch invades,  
 Yet spinning still new films for his retreat.  
 Thou didst smile, poet, but can we forgive ?



Sun-treader, life and light be thine forever !  
Thou art gone from us ; years go by and spring  
Gladdens and the young earth is beautiful,  
Yet thy songs come not, other bards arise,  
But none like thee : they stand, thy majesties,  
Like mighty works which tell some spirit there  
Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,  
Till, its long task completed, it hath risen  
And left us, never to return, and all  
Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain.  
The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,  
But thou art still for me as thou hast been  
When I have stood with thee as on a throne  
With all thy dim creations gathered round  
Like mountains, and I felt of mould like them,  
And creatures of my own were mixed with them,  
Like things half-lived, catching and giving life.  
But thou art still for me, who have adored  
Though single, panting but to hear thy name  
Which I believed a spell to me alone,  
Scarce deeming thou wast as a star to men !  
As one should worship long a sacred spring  
Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long grasses cross,  
And one small tree embowers droopingly,  
Joying to see some wandering insect won  
To live in its few rushes, or some locust,  
To pasture on its boughs, or some wild bird  
Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air :  
And then should find it but the fountain-head,  
Long lost, of some great river washing towns  
And towers, and seeing old woods which will live  
But by its banks untrod of human foot,  
Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering  
In light as some thing lieth half of life  
Before God's foot, waiting a wondrous change ;  
Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or stay  
Its course in vain, for it does ever spread  
Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,  
Being the pulse of some great country — so  
Wast thou to me, and art thou to the world !  
And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret,  
That I am not what I have been to thee :  
Like a girl one has loved long silently  
In her first loveliness in some retreat,  
When, first emerged, all gaze and glow to view  
Her fresh eyes and soft hair and lips which bleed

Like a mountain berry : doubtless it is sweet  
 To see her thus adored, but there have been  
 Moments when all the world was in his praise,  
 Sweeter than all the pride of after hours.  
 Yet, sun-treader, all hail ! From my heart's heart  
 I bid thee hail ! E'en in my wildest dreams,  
 I am proud to feel I would have thrown up all  
 The wreaths of fame which seemed o'erhanging me,  
 To have seen thee for a moment as thou art.  
 And if thou livest, if thou lovest, spirit !  
 Remember me who set this final seal  
 To wandering thought — that one so pure as thou  
 Could never die. Remember me who flung  
 All honor from my soul yet paused and said,  
 "There is one spark of love remaining yet,  
 For I have nought in common with him, shapes  
 Which followed him avoid me, and foul forms  
 Seek me, which ne'er could fasten on his mind ;  
 And though I feel how low I am to him,  
 Yet I aim not even to catch a tone  
 Of all the harmonies which he called up ;  
 So, one gleam still remains, although the last."  
 Remember me who praise thee e'en with tears,  
 For never more shall I walk calm with thee ;  
 Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,  
 A melody some wondrous singer sings,  
 Which, though it haunt men oft in the still eve,  
 They dream not to essay ; yet it no less  
 But more is honored. I was thine in shame,  
 And now when all thy proud renown is out,  
 I am a watcher whose eyes have grown dim  
 With looking for some star which breaks on him  
 Altered and worn and weak and full of tears.

Autumn has come like spring returned to us,  
 Won from her girliness ; like one returned  
 A friend that was a lover nor forgets  
 The first warm love, but full of sober thoughts  
 Of fading years ; whose soft mouth quivers yet  
 With the old smile but yet so changed and still !  
 And here am I the scoffer, who have probed  
 Life's vanity, won by a word again  
 Into my own life — for one little word  
 Of this sweet friend who lives in loving me,  
 Lives strangely on my thoughts and looks and words,  
 As fathoms down some nameless ocean thing

Its silent course of quietness and joy.  
O dearest, if indeed I tell the past,  
Mayst thou forget it as a sad sick dream !  
Or if it linger — my lost soul too soon  
Sinks to itself and whispers, we shall be  
But closer linked, two creatures whom the earth  
Bears singly, with strange feelings unrevealed  
But to each other ; or two lonely things  
Created by some power whose reign is done,  
Having no part in God or his bright world.  
I am to sing whilst ebbing day dies soft,  
As a lean scholar dies worn o'er his book,  
And in the heaven stars steal out one by one  
As hunted men steal to their mountain watch.  
I must not think, lest this new impulse die  
In which I trust ; I have no confidence :  
So, I will sing on fast as fancies come ;  
Rudely, the verse being as the mood it paints.

I strip my mind bare, whose first elements  
I shall unveil — not as they struggled forth  
In infancy, nor as they now exist,  
That I am grown above them and can rule —  
But in that middle stage when they were full  
Yet ere I had disposed them to my will ;  
And then I shall show how these elements  
Produced my present state, and what it is.

I am made up of an intensest life,  
Of a most clear idea of consciousness  
Of self, distinct from all its qualities,  
From all affections, passions, feelings, powers ;  
And thus far it exists, if tracked in all :  
But linked, in me, to self-supremacy,  
Existing as a centre to all things,  
Most potent to create and rule and call  
Upon all things to minister to it ;  
And to a principle of restlessness  
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all  
This is myself ; and I should thus have been  
Though gifted lower than the meanest soul.

And of my powers, one springs up to save  
From utter death a soul with such desire  
Confined to clay — which is the only one  
Which marks me — an imagination which

Has been an angel to me, coming not  
 In fitful visions but beside me ever  
 And never failing me ; so, though my mind  
 Forgets not, not a shred of life forgets,  
 Yet I can take a secret pride in calling  
 The dark past up to quell it regally.

A mind like this must dissipate itself,  
 But I have always had one lode-star ; now,  
 As I look back, I see that I have wasted  
 Or progressed as I looked towards that star —  
 A need, a trust, a yearning after God :  
 A feeling I have analyzed but late,  
 But it existed, and was reconciled  
 With a neglect of all I deemed his laws,  
 Which yet, when seen in others, I abhorred.

I felt as one beloved, and so shut in  
 From fear : and thence I date my trust in signs  
 And omens, for I saw God everywhere ;  
 And I can only lay it to the fruit  
 Of a sad after-time that I could doubt  
 Even his being — having always felt  
 His presence, never acting from myself,  
 Still trusting in a hand that leads me through  
 All danger ; and this feeling still has fought  
 Against my weakest reason and resolve.

And I can love nothing — and this dull truth  
 Has come the last : but sense supplies a love  
 Encircling me and mingling with my life.

These make myself : for I have sought in vain  
 To trace how they were formed by circumstance,  
 For I still find them turning my wild youth  
 Where they alone displayed themselves, converting  
 All objects to their use : now see their course.

They came to me in my first dawn of life  
 Which passed alone with wisest ancient books  
 All halo-girt with fancies of my own ;  
 And I myself went with the tale — a god  
 Wandering after beauty, or a giant  
 Standing vast in the sunset — an old hunter  
 Talking with gods, or a high-crested chief,  
 Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos.

I tell you, nought has ever been so clear  
 As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives :  
 I had not seen a work of lofty art,  
 Nor woman's beauty nor sweet nature's face,  
 Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those  
 On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea,  
 The deep groves and white temples and wet caves :  
 And nothing ever will surprise me now —  
 Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,  
 Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.

And strange it is that I who could so dream  
 Should e'er have stooped to aim at aught beneath —  
 Aught low, or painful ; but I never doubted,  
 So, as I grew, I rudely shaped my life  
 To my immediate wants ; yet strong beneath  
 Was a vague sense of powers folded up —  
 A sense that though those shadowy times were past  
 Their spirit dwelt in me, and I should rule.

Then came a pause, and long restraint chained down  
 My soul till it was changed. I lost myself,  
 And were it not that I so loathe that time,  
 I could recall how first I learned to turn  
 My mind against itself ; and the effects  
 In deeds for which remorse were vain as for  
 The wanderings of delirious dream ; yet thence  
 Came cunning, envy, falsehood, which so long  
 Have spotted me : at length I was restored.

Yet long the influence remained ; and nought  
 But the still life I led, apart from all,  
 Which left my soul to seek its old delights,  
 Could e'er have brought me thus far back to peace.  
 As peace returned, I sought out some pursuit ;  
 And song rose, no new impulse but the one  
 With which all others best could be combined.  
 My life has not been that of those whose heaven  
 Was lampless save where poesy shone out ;  
 But as a clime where glittering mountain-tops  
 And glancing sea and forests steeped in light  
 Give back reflected the far-flashing sun ;  
 For music (which is earnest of a heaven,  
 Seeing we know emotions strange by it,  
 Not else to be revealed,) is as a voice,  
 A low voice calling fancy, as a friend,

To the green woods in the gay summer time :  
 And she fills all the way with dancing shapes  
 Which have made painters pale, and they go on  
 While stars look at them and winds call to them  
 As they leave life's path for the twilight world  
 Where the dead gather. This was not at first,  
 For I scarce knew what I would do. I had  
 No wish to paint, no yearning ; but I sang.

And first I sang as I in dream have seen  
 Music wait on a lyrist for some thought,  
 Yet singing to herself until it came.  
 I turned to those old times and scenes where all  
 That 's beautiful had birth for me, and made  
 Rude verses on them all ; and then I paused —  
 I had done nothing, so I sought to know  
 What mind had yet achieved. No fear was mine  
 As I gazed on the works of mighty bards,  
 In the first joy at finding my own thoughts  
 Recorded and my powers exemplified,  
 And feeling their aspirings were my own.  
 And then I first explored passion and mind ;  
 And I began afresh ; I rather sought  
 To rival what I wondered at, than form  
 Creations of my own ; so, much was light  
 Lent back by others, yet much was my own.

I paused again, a change was coming on,  
 I was no more a boy, the past was breaking  
 Before the coming and like fever worked.  
 I first thought on myself, and here my powers  
 Burst out : I dreamed not of restraint but gazed  
 On all things : schemes and systems went and came,  
 And I was proud (being vainest of the weak)  
 In wandering o'er them to seek out some one  
 To be my own, as one should wander o'er  
 The white way for a star.

And my choice fell  
 Not so much on a system as a man —  
 On one, whom praise of mine would not offend,  
 Who was as calm as beauty, being such  
 Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline, —  
 Believing in them and devoting all  
 His soul's strength to their winning back to peace ;  
 Who sent forth hopes and longings for their sake,

Clothed in all passion's melodies, which first  
 Caught me and set me, as to a sweet task,  
 To gather every breathing of his songs :  
 And woven with them there were words which seemed  
 A key to a new world, the muttering  
 Of angels of some thing unguessed by man.  
 How my heart beat as I went on and found  
 Much there, I felt my own mind had conceived,  
 But there living and burning! Soon the whole  
 Of his conceptions dawned on me; their praise  
 Is in the tongues of men, men's brows are high  
 When his name means a triumph and a pride,  
 So, my weak hands may well forbear to dim  
 What then seemed my bright fate : I threw myself  
 To meet it, I was vowed to liberty,  
 Men were to be as gods and earth as heaven,  
 And I — ah, what a life was mine to be !  
 My whole soul rose to meet it. Now, Pauline,  
 I shall go mad, if I recall that time !

Oh let me look back ere I leave forever  
 The time which was an hour that one waits  
 For a fair girl that comes a withered hag !  
 And I was lonely, far from woods and fields,  
 And amid dullest sights, who should be loose  
 As a stag ; yet I was full of joy, who lived  
 With Plato and who had the key to life ;  
 And I had dimly shaped my first attempt,  
 And many a thought did I build up on thought,  
 As the wild bee hangs cell to cell ; in vain,  
 For I must still go on, my mind rests not.

'T was in my plan to look on real life  
 Which was all new to me ; my theories  
 Were firm, so I left them, to look upon  
 Men and their cares and hopes and fears and joys ;  
 And as I pondered on them all I sought  
 How best life's end might be attained — an end  
 Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

And suddenly without heart-wreck I awoke  
 As from a dream : I said, "'T was beautiful  
 Yet but a dream, and so adieu to it !"  
 As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow  
 Strange towers and walled gardens thick with trees,  
 Where singing goes on and delicious mirth,

And laughing fairy creatures peeping over,  
 And on the morrow when he comes to live  
 Forever by those springs and trees fruit-flushed  
 And fairy bowers, all his search is vain.  
 First went my hopes of perfecting mankind,  
 And faith in them, then freedom in itself  
 And virtue in itself, and then my motives, ends  
 And powers and loves, and human love went last.  
 I felt this no decay, because new powers  
 Rose as old feelings left — wit, mockery  
 And happiness ; for I had oft been sad,  
 Mistrusting my resolves, but now I cast  
 Hope joyously away : I laughed and said.  
 “ No more of this ! ” I must not think : at length  
 I looked again to see how all went on.

My powers were greater : as some temple seemed  
 My soul, where nought is changed and incense rolls  
 Around the altar, only God is gone  
 And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat.  
 So, I passed through the temple and to me  
 Knelt troops of shadows, and they cried, “ Hail, king !  
 We serve thee now and thou shalt serve no more !  
 Call on us, prove us, let us worship thee ! ”  
 And I said, “ Are ye strong ? Let fancy bear me  
 Far from the past ! ” And I was borne away,  
 As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,  
 O'er deserts, towers and forests, I being calm ;  
 And I said, “ I have nursed up energies,  
 They will prey on me. ” And a band knelt low  
 And cried, “ Lord, we are here and we will make  
 A way for thee in thine appointed life !  
 Oh look on us ! ” And I said, “ Ye will worship  
 Me ; but my heart must worship too. ” They shouted,  
 “ Thyself, thou art our king ! ” So, I stood there  
 Smiling . . . .  
 And buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit  
 With which I looked out how to end my days :  
 I felt once more myself, my powers were mine ;  
 I found that youth or health so lifted me  
 That, spite of all life's vanity, no grief  
 Came nigh me, I must ever be light-hearted ;  
 And that this feeling was the only veil  
 Betwixt me and despair : so, if age came,  
 I should be as a wreck linked to a soul  
 Yet fluttering, or mind-broken and aware



Of my decay. So a long summer morn  
 Found me ; and ere noon came, I had resolved  
 No age should come on me ere youth's hope went,  
 For I would wear myself out, like that morn  
 Which wasted not a sunbeam ; every joy  
 I would make mine, and die. And thus I sought  
 To chain my spirit down which I had fed  
 With thoughts of fame. I said, "The troubled life  
 Of genius, seen so bright when working forth  
 Some trusted end, seems sad when all in vain —  
 Most sad when men have parted with all joy  
 For their wild fancy's sake, which waited first  
 As an obedient spirit when delight  
 Came not with her alone ; but alters soon,  
 Comes darkened, seldom, hastening to depart,  
 Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.  
 But I shall never lose her ; she will live  
 Brighter for such seclusion. I but catch  
 A hue, a glance of what I sing, so, pain  
 Is linked with pleasure, for I ne'er may tell  
 The radiant sights which dazzle me ; but now  
 They shall be all my own ; and let them fade  
 Untold — others shall rise as fair, as fast !  
 And when all 's done, the few dim gleams transferred,"—  
 (For a new thought sprung up that it were well  
 To leave all shadowy hope, and weave such lays  
 As would encircle me with praise and love,  
 So, I should not die utterly, I should bring  
 One branch from the gold forest, like the knight  
 Of old tales, witnessing I had been there) —  
 "And when all 's done, how vain seems e'en success  
 And all the influence poets have o'er men !  
 'T is a fine thing that one weak as myself  
 Should sit in his lone room, knowing the words  
 He utters in his solitude shall move  
 Men like a swift wind — that though he be forgotten,  
 Fair eyes shall glisten when his beauteous dreams  
 Of love come true in happier frames than his.  
 Ay, the still night brought thoughts like these, but morn  
 Came and the mockery again laughed out  
 At hollow praises, and smiles almost sneers ;  
 And my soul's idol seemed to whisper me  
 To dwell with him and his unhonored name :  
 And I well knew my spirit, that would be  
 First in the struggle, and again would make  
 All bow to it, and I should sink again.

"And then know that this curse will come on us,  
 To see our idols perish ; we may wither,  
 Nor marvel, we are clay, but our low fate  
 Should not extend to them, whom trustingly  
 We sent before into time's yawning gulf  
 To face whate'er might lurk in darkness there.  
 To see the painter's glory pass, and feel  
 Sweet music move us not as once, or, worst,  
 To see decaying wits ere the frail body  
 Decays ! Nought makes me trust in love so really  
 As the delight of the contented lowness  
 With which I gaze on souls I'd keep forever  
 In beauty ; I'd be sad to equal them ;  
 I'd feed their fame e'en from my heart's best blood,  
 Withering unseen that they might flourish still."

Pauline, my sweet friend, thou dost not forget  
 How this mood swayed me when thou first wast mine,  
 When I had set myself to live this life,  
 Defying all opinion. Ere thou camest  
 I was most happy, sweet, for old delights  
 Had come like birds again ; music, my life,  
 I nourished more than ever, and old lore  
 Loved for itself and all it shows — the king  
 Treading the purple calmly to his death,  
 While round him, like the clouds of eve, all dusk,  
 The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,  
 Pile the dim outline of the coming doom ;  
 And him sitting alone in blood while friends  
 Are hunting far in the sunshine ; and the boy  
 With his white breast and brow and clustering curls  
 Streaked with his mother's blood, and striving hard  
 To tell his story ere his reason goes.  
 And when I loved thee as I've loved so oft,  
 Thou lovedst me, and I wondered and looked in  
 My heart to find some feeling like such love,  
 Believing I was still what I had been ;  
 And soon I found all faith had gone from me,  
 And the late glow of life, changing like clouds,  
 'Twas not the morn-blush widening into day,  
 But evening colored by the dying sun  
 While darkness is quick hastening. I will tell  
 My state as though 'twere none of mine — despair  
 Cannot come near me — thus it is with me.  
 Souls alter not, and mine must progress still ;  
 And this I knew not when I flung away

My youth's chief aims. I ne'er supposed the loss  
 Of what few I retained, for no resource  
 Awaits me : now behold the change of all.  
 I cannot chain my soul, it will not rest  
 In its clay prison, this most narrow sphere :  
 It has strange powers and feelings and desires,  
 Which I cannot account for nor explain,  
 But which I stifle not, being bound to trust  
 All feelings equally, to hear all sides :  
 Yet I cannot indulge them, and they live,  
 Referring to some state or life unknown.

My selfishness is satiated not,  
 It wears me like a flame ; my hunger for  
 All pleasure, howsoe'er minute, is pain ;  
 I envy — how I envy him whose mind  
 Turns with its energies to some one end,  
 To elevate a sect or a pursuit  
 However mean ! So, my still baffled hopes  
 Seek out abstractions ; I would have but one  
 Delight on earth, so it were wholly mine,  
 One rapture all my soul could fill : and this  
 Wild feeling places me in dream afar  
 In some wild country where the eye can see  
 No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn  
 With shining towers and dwellings : I grow mad  
 Well-nigh, to know not one abode but holds  
 Some pleasure, for my soul could grasp them all  
 But must remain with this vile form. I look  
 With hope to age at last, which quenching much,  
 May let me concentrate the sparks it spares.

This restlessness of passion meets in me  
 A craving after knowledge : the sole proof  
 Of a commanding will is in that power  
 Repressed ; for I beheld it in its dawn,  
 That sleepless harpy with its budding wings,  
 And I considered whether I should yield  
 All hopes and fears, to live alone with it,  
 Finding a recompense in its wild eyes ;  
 And when I found that I should perish so,  
 I bade its wild eyes close from me forever,  
 And I am left alone with my delights ;  
 So, it lies in me a chained thing, still ready  
 To serve me if I loose its slightest bond :  
 I cannot but be proud of my bright slave.

And thus I know this earth is not my sphere,  
 For I cannot so narrow me but that  
 I still exceed it: in their elements  
 My love would pass my reason; but since here  
 Love must receive its objects from this earth  
 While reason will be chainless, the few truths  
 Caught from its wanderings have sufficed to quell  
 All love below; then what must be that love  
 Which, with the object it demands, would quell  
 Reason though it soared with the seraphim?  
 No, what I feel may pass all human love  
 Yet fall far short of what my love should be.  
 And yet I seem more warped in this than aught,  
 For here myself stands out more hideously:  
 I can forget myself in friendship, fame,  
 Or liberty, or love of mighty souls;  
 But I begin to know what thing hate is —  
 To sicken and to quiver and grow white —  
 And I myself have furnished its first prey.  
 All my sad weaknesses, this wavering will,  
 This selfishness, this still decaying frame . . .  
 But I must never grieve while I can pass  
 Far from such thoughts — as now, Andromeda!  
 And she is with me: years roll, I shall change,  
 But change can touch her not — so beautiful  
 With her dark eyes, earnest and still, and hair  
 Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze,  
 And one red beam, all the storm leaves in heaven,  
 Resting upon her eyes and face and hair  
 As she awaits the snake on the wet beach  
 By the dark rock and the white wave just breaking  
 At her feet; quite naked and alone; a thing  
 You doubt not, nor fear for, secure that God  
 Will come in thunder from the stars to save her.  
 Let it pass! I will call another change.  
 I will be gifted with a wondrous soul,  
 Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,  
 And in the wane of life, yet only so  
 As to call up their fears; and there shall come  
 A time requiring youth's best energies;  
 And straight I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,  
 And I rise triumphing over my decay.

And thus it is that I supply the chasm  
 'Twixt what I am and all that I would be.  
 But then to know nothing, to hope for nothing,

To seize on life's dull joys from a strange fear  
Lest, losing them, all 's lost and nought remains !

There 's some vile juggle with my reason here ;  
I feel I but explain to my own loss  
These impulses ; they live no less the same.  
Liberty ! what though I despair ? my blood  
Rose not at a slave's name prouder than now,  
And sympathy, obscured by sophistries !  
Why have not I sought refuge in myself,  
But for the woes I saw and could not stay ?  
And love ! do I not love thee, my Pauline ?  
I cherish prejudice, lest I be left  
Utterly loveless — witness this belief  
In poets, though sad change has come there too ;  
No more I leave myself to follow them —  
Unconsciously I measure me by them —  
Let me forget it : and I cherish most  
My love of England — how her name, a word  
Of hers in a strange tongue makes my heart beat !

Pauline, I could do anything — not now —  
All 's fever — but when calm shall come again,  
I am prepared : I have made life my own.  
I would not be content with all the change  
One frame should feel, but I have gone in thought  
Through all conjuncture, I have lived all life  
When it is most alive, where strangest fate  
New shapes it past surmise — the tales of men  
Bit by some curse or in the grasps of doom  
Half-visible and still increasing round,  
Or crowning their wide being's general aim.

These are wild fancies, but I feel, sweet friend,  
As one breathing his weakness to the ear  
Of pitying angel — dear as a winter flower,  
A slight flower growing alone, and offering  
Its frail cup of three leaves to the cold sun,  
Yet joyous and confiding like the triumph  
Of a child : and why am I not worthy thee ?  
I can live all the life of plants, and gaze  
Drowsily on the bees that flit and play,  
Or bare my breast for sunbeams which will kill,  
Or open in the night of sounds, to look  
For the dim stars ; I can mount with the bird  
Leaping airily his pyramid of leaves

And twisted boughs of some tall mountain tree,  
Or rise cheerfully springing to the heavens ;  
Or like a fish breathe-in the morning air  
In the misty sun-warm water ; or with flowers  
And trees can smile in light at the sinking sun  
Just as the storm comes, as a girl would look  
On a departing lover — most serene.

Pauline, come with me, see how I could build  
A home for us, out of the world, in thought !  
I am inspired : come with me, Pauline !

Night, and one single ridge of narrow path  
Between the sullen river and the woods  
Waving and muttering, for the moonless night  
Has shaped them into images of life,  
Like the upraising of the giant-ghosts,  
Looking on earth to know how their sons fare :  
Thou art so close by me, the roughest swell  
Of wind in the tree-tops hides not the panting  
Of thy soft breasts. No, we will pass to morning —  
Morning, the rocks and valleys and old woods.  
How the sun brightens in the mist, and here,  
Half in the air, like creatures of the place,  
Trusting the element, living on high boughs  
That swing in the wind — look at the golden spray  
Flung from the foam-sheet of the cataract  
Amid the broken rocks ! Shall we stay here  
With the wild hawks ? No ; ere the hot noon come,  
Dive we down — safe ! See this our new retreat  
Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs,  
Dark, tangled, old and green, still sloping down  
To a small pool whose waters lie asleep  
Amid the trailing boughs turned water-plants :  
And tall trees over-arch to keep us in,  
Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts,  
And in the dreamy water one small group  
Of two or three strange trees are got together  
Wondering at all around, as strange beasts herd  
Together far from their own land : all wildness,  
No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants pave all,  
And tongues of bank go shelving in the waters,  
Where the pale-throated snake reclines his head,  
And old gray stones lie making eddies there,  
The wild-mice cross them dry-shod : deeper in !  
Shut thy soft eyes — now look — still deeper in !

This is the very heart of the woods all round  
 Mountain-like heaped above us ; yet even here  
 One pond of water gleams ; far off the river  
 Sweeps like a sea, barred out from land ; but one —  
 One thin clear sheet has overleaped and wound  
 Into this silent depth, which gained, it lies  
 Still, as but let by sufferance ; the trees bend  
 O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl,  
 And through their roots long creeping plants stretch out  
 Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling ; farther on,  
 Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have combined  
 To narrow it ; so, at length, a silver thread,  
 It winds, all noiselessly through the deep wood  
 Till through a cleft-way, through the moss and stone,  
 It joins its parent-river with a shout.  
 Up for the glowing day, leave the old woods !  
 See, they part, like a ruined arch : the sky !  
 Nothing but sky appears, so close the roots  
 And grass of the hill-top level with the air —  
 Blue sunny air, where a great cloud floats laden  
 With light, like a dead whale that white birds pick,  
 Floating away in the sun in some north sea.  
 Air, air, fresh life-blood, thin and searching air,  
 The clear, dear breath of God that loveth us,  
 Where small birds reel and winds take their delight !  
 Water is beautiful, but not like air :  
 See, where the solid azure waters lie  
 Made as of thickened air, and down below,  
 The fern-ranks like a forest spread themselves  
 As though each pore could feel the element ;  
 Where the quick glancing serpent winds his way,  
 Float with me there, Pauline ! — but not like air.  
 Down the hill ! Stop — a clump of trees, see, set  
 On a heap of rocks, which look o'er the far plains,  
 And envious climbing shrubs would mount to rest  
 And peer from their spread boughs ; there they wave,  
     looking  
 At the muleteers who whistle as they go  
 To the merry chime of their morning bells, and all  
 The little smoking cots and fields and banks  
 And copses bright in the sun. My spirit wanders :  
 Hedge-rows for me — still, living hedge-rows where  
 The bushes close and clasp above and keep  
 Thought in — I am concentrated — I feel ;  
 But my soul saddens when it looks beyond :  
 I cannot be immortal nor taste all.

O God, where does this tend — these struggling aims? \*  
 What would I have? What is this "sleep" which seems  
 To bound all? can there be a "waking" point  
 Of crowning life? The soul would never rule;  
 It would be first in all things, it would have  
 Its utmost pleasure filled, but, that complete,  
 Commanding, for commanding, sickens it.  
 The last point I can trace is, rest, beneath  
 Some better essence than itself, in weakness;  
 This is "myself," not what I think should be:  
 And what is that I hunger for but God?  
 My God, my God, let me for once look on thee  
 As though nought else existed, we alone!  
 And as creation crumbles, my soul's spark  
 Expands till I can say, — Even from myself  
 I need thee and I feel thee and I love thee:  
 I do not plead my rapture in thy works  
 For love of thee, nor that I feel as one  
 Who cannot die: but there is that in me  
 Which turns to thee, which loves or which should love.  
 Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress?  
 Why have I labored to put out my life?  
 Is it not in my nature to adore,

\* Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne soit pas toujours parfaitement compris dans ce qui reste à lire de cet étrange fragment, mais il est moins propre que tout autre à éclaircir ce qui de sa nature ne peut jamais être que songe et confusion. D'ailleurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant à mieux co-ordonner certaines parties l'on ne courrait pas le risque de nuire au seul mérite auquel une production si singulière peut prétendre, celui de donner une idée assez précise du genre qu'elle n'a fait qu'ébaucher. Ce début sans prétention, ce remuement des passions qui va d'abord en accroissant et puis s'appaise par degrés, ces élans de l'âme, ce retour soudain sur soi-même, et par-dessus tout, la tournure d'esprit tout particulière de mon ami, rendent les changemens presque impossibles. Les raisons qu'il fait valoir ailleurs, et d'autres encore plus puissantes, ont fait trouver grâce à mes yeux pour cet écrié qu'autrement je lui eusse conseillé de jeter au feu. Je n'en crois pas moins au grand principe de toute composition — à ce principe de Shakespeare, de Raphaëlle, de Beethoven, d'où il suit que la concentration des idées est dûe bien plus à leur conception qu'à leur mise en execution: j'ai tout lieu de craindre que la première de ces qualités ne soit encore étrangère à mon ami, et je doute fort qu'un redoublement de travail lui fasse acquérir la seconde. Le mieux serait de brûler ceci; mais que faire?

Je crois que dans ce qui suit il fait allusion à un certain examen qu'il fit autrefois de l'âme ou plutôt de son âme, pour découvrir la suite des objets auxquels il lui serait possible d'attendre, et dont chacun en une fois obtenu devait former une espèce de plateau d'où l'on pouvait apercevoir d'autres buts, d'autres projets, d'autres jouissances qui, à leur tour, devaient être surmontés. Il en résultait que l'oubli et le sommeil devaient tout terminer. Cette idée, que je ne saisis pas parfaitement, lui est peut-être aussi inintelligible qu'à moi.

PAULINE.



And e'en for all my reason do I not  
 Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him — now ?  
 Can I forego the trust that he loves me ?  
 Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . . .  
 O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed !  
 I have denied thee calmly — do I not  
 Pant when I read of thy consummate deeds,  
 And burn to see thy calm pure truths out-flash  
 The brightest gleams of earth's philosophy ?  
 Do I not shake to hear aught question thee ?  
 If I am erring save me, madden me,  
 Take from me powers and pleasures, let me die  
 Ages, so I see thee ! I am knit round  
 As with a charm by sin and lust and pride,  
 Yet though my wandering dreams have seen all shapes  
 Of strange delight, oft have I stood by thee —  
 Have I been keeping lonely watch with thee  
 In the damp night by weeping Olivet,  
 Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less,  
 Or dying with thee on the lonely cross,  
 Or witnessing thy bursting from the tomb.

A mortal, sin's familiar friend, doth here  
 Avow that he will give all earth's reward,  
 But to believe and humbly teach the faith,  
 In suffering and poverty and shame,  
 Only believing he is not unloved.

And now, my Pauline, I am thine forever !  
 I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up  
 Deserting me, and old shades gathering on ;  
 Yet while its last light waits, I would say much,  
 And chiefly, I am glad that I have said  
 That love which I have ever felt for thee  
 But seldom told ; our hearts so beat together  
 That speech is mockery ; but when dark hours come,  
 And I feel sad, and thou, sweet, deem'st it strange  
 A sorrow moves me, thou canst not remove,  
 Look on this lay I dedicate to thee,  
 Which through thee I began, and which I end,  
 Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell  
 That I am thine, and more than ever now  
 That I am sinking fast : yet though I sink,  
 No less I feel that thou hast brought me bliss  
 And that I still may hope to win it back.  
 Thou knowest, dear friend, I could not think all calm,

For wild dreams followed me and bore me off,  
 And all was indistinct ; ere one was caught  
 Another glanced ; so, dazzled by my wealth,  
 Knowing not which to leave nor which to choose,  
 For all my thoughts so floated, nought was fixed.  
 And then thou saidst a perfect bard was one  
 Who shadowed out the stages of all life,  
 And so thou bad'st me tell this my first stage.  
 'T is done, and even now I feel all dim the shift  
 Of thought ; these are my last thoughts ; I discern  
 Faintly immortal life and truth and good.  
 And why thou must be mine is, that e'en now  
 In the dim hush of night, that I have done,  
 With fears and sad forebodings, I look through  
 And say, — E'en at the last I have her still,  
 With her delicious eyes as clear as heaven  
 When rain in a quick shower has beat down mist,  
 And clouds float white in the sun like broods of swans.  
 How the blood lies upon her cheek, all spread  
 As thinned by kisses ! only in her lips  
 It wells and pulses like a living thing,  
 And her neck looks like marble misted o'er  
 With love-breath, — a dear thing to kiss and love,  
 Standing beneath me, looking out to me,  
 As I might kill her and be loved for it.

Love me — love me, Pauline, love nought but me,  
 Leave me not ! All these words are wild and weak,  
 Believe them not, Pauline ! I stooped so low  
 But to behold thee purer by my side,  
 To show thou art my breath, my life, a last  
 Resource, an extreme want : never believe  
 Aught better could so look to thee ; nor seek  
 Again the world of good thoughts left for me !  
 There were bright troops of undiscovered suns,  
 Each equal in their radiant course ; there were  
 Clusters of far fair isles which ocean kept  
 For his own joy, and his waves broke on them,  
 Without a choice ; and there was a dim crowd  
 Of visions, each a part of the dim whole :  
 And one star left his peers and came with peace  
 Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for him ;  
 And one isle harbored a sea-beaten ship,  
 And the crew wandered in its bowers and plucked  
 Its fruits and gave up all their hopes for home ;  
 And one dream came to a pale poet's sleep,

And he said, "I am singled out by God,  
No sin must touch me." I am very weak,  
But what I would express is, — Leave me not,  
Still sit by me with beating breast and hair  
Loosened, be watching earnest by my side,  
Turning my books or kissing me when I  
Look up — like summer wind! Be still to me  
A key to music's mystery when mind fails,  
A reason, a solution and a clue!  
You see I have thrown off my prescribed rules:  
I hope in myself — and hope and pant and love.  
You'll find me better, know me more than when  
You loved me as I was. Smile not! I have  
Much yet to gladden you, to dawn on you;  
No more of the past! I'll look within no more:  
I have too trusted to my own wild wants,  
Too trusted to myself, to intuition —  
Draining the wine alone in the still night,  
And seeing how, as gathering films arose,  
As by an inspiration life seemed bare  
And grinning in its vanity, and ends  
Hard to be dreamed of, stared at me as fixed,  
And others suddenly became all foul  
As a fair witch turned an old hag at night.  
No more of this! We will go hand in hand;  
I will go with thee, even as a child,  
Looking no farther than thy sweet commands,  
And thou hast chosen where this life shall be:  
The land which gave me thee shall be our home,  
Where nature lies all wild amid her lakes  
And snow-swathed mountains and vast pines all girt  
With ropes of snow — where nature lies all bare,  
Suffering none to view her but a race  
Most stunted and deformed, like the mute dwarfs  
Which wait upon a naked Indian queen.  
And there (the time being when the heavens are thick  
With storms) I'll sit with thee while thou dost sing  
Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird  
Who crieth as he flies for perfect joy,  
Or telling me old stories of dead knights;  
Or I will read old lays to thee — how she,  
The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave  
With power to love and to be loved and live:  
Or we will go together, like twin gods  
Of the infernal world, with scented lamp,  
Over the dead, to call and to awake,

Over the unshaped images which lie  
 Within my mind's cave : only leaving all  
 That tells of the past doubts. So, when spring comes,  
 And sunshine comes again like an old smile,  
 And the fresh waters and awakened birds  
 And budding woods await us, I shall be  
 Prepared, and we will go and think again,  
 And all old loves shall come to us, but changed  
 As some sweet thought which harsh words veiled before :  
 Feeling God loves us, and that all that errs  
 Is a strange dream which death will dissipate.  
 And then when I am firm, we'll seek again  
 My own land, and again I will approach  
 My old designs, and calmly look on all  
 The works of my past weakness, as one views  
 Some scene where danger met him long before.  
 Ah that such pleasant life should be but dreamed !

But whate'er come of it, and though it fade,  
 And though ere the cold morning all be gone,  
 As it will be ; — though music wait for me,  
 And fair eyes and bright wine laughing like sin  
 Which steals back softly on a soul half saved,  
 And I be first to deny all, and despise  
 This verse, and these intents which seem so fair, —  
 Still this is all my own, this moment's pride,  
 No less I make an end in perfect joy.  
 E'en in my brightest time, a lurking fear  
 Possessed me : I well knew my weak resolves,  
 I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep  
 Over its treasure, as one half afraid  
 To make his riches definite : but now  
 These feelings shall not utterly be lost,  
 I shall not know again that nameless care  
 Lest, leaving all undone in youth, some new  
 And undreamed end reveal itself too late :  
 For this song shall remain to tell forever  
 That when I lost all hope of such a change,  
 Suddenly beauty rose on me again.

• No less I make an end in perfect joy,  
 For I, having thus again been visited,  
 Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits,  
 And, though this weak soul sink and darkness come,  
 Some little word shall light it up again,  
 And I shall see all clearer and love better,  
 I shall again go o'er the tracts of thought

As one who has a right, and I shall live  
With poets, calmer, purer still each time,  
And beauteous shapes will come to me again,  
And unknown secrets will be trusted me  
Which were not mine when wavering ; but now  
I shall be priest and lover as of old.

Sun-treader, I believe in God and truth  
And love ; and as one just escaped from death  
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel  
He lives indeed, so, I would lean on thee !  
Thou must be ever with me, most in gloom  
When such shall come, but chiefly when I die,  
For I seem, dying, as one going in the dark  
To fight a giant : and live thou forever,  
And be to all what thou hast been to me !  
All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts of me,  
Know my last state is happy, free from doubt  
Or touch of fear. Love me and wish me well !

RICHMOND, *October 22, 1832.*



# PARACELSUS

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INSCRIBED TO

AMÉDÉE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

LONDON, *March* 15, 1835.

R. B.

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## PERSONS.

AUREOLUS PARACELSUS, a student.

FESTUS and MICHAL, his friends.

APRILE, an Italian poet.

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## I. PARACELSUS ASPIRES.

SCENE, *Wurzburg; a garden in the environs.* 1512.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL.

*Par.* Come close to me, dear friends; still closer; thus!  
Close to the heart which, though long time roll by  
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,  
As now it beats — perchance a long, long time —  
At least henceforth your memories shall make  
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.  
Nor shall my memory want a home in yours —  
Alas, that it requires too well such free  
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there!  
For if you would remember me aright,  
As I was born to be, you must forget  
All fitful, strange and moody waywardness  
Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell  
Only on moments such as these, dear friends!  
— My heart no truer, but my words and ways  
More true to it: as Michal, some months hence,  
Will say, “this autumn was a pleasant time,”  
For some few sunny days; and overlook  
Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.  
Autumn would fain be sunny; I would look

Liker my nature's truth : and both are frail,  
And both beloved, for all our frailty.

*Mich.*

Aureole !

*Par.* Drop by drop ! she is weeping like a child !  
Not so ! I am content — more than content ;  
Nay, autumn wins you best by this its mute  
Appeal to sympathy for its decay :  
Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less  
Your stained and drooping vines their grapes bow down,  
Nor blame those creaking trees bent with their fruit,  
That apple-tree with a rare after-birth  
Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among !  
Then for the winds — what wind that ever raved  
Shall vex that ash which overlooks you both,  
So proud it wears its berries ? Ah, at length,  
The old smile meet for her, the lady of this  
Sequestered nest ! — this kingdom, limited  
Alone by one old populous green wall  
Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,  
Gray crickets and shy lizards and quick spiders,  
Each family of the silver-threaded moss —  
Which, look through near, this way, and it appears  
A stubble-field or a cane-brake, a marsh  
Of bulrush whitening in the sun : laugh now !  
Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,  
Looking out, wondering at the world — or best,  
Yon painted snail with his gay shell of dew,  
Travelling to see the glossy balls high up  
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps.

*Mich.* In truth we have lived carelessly and well.

*Par.* And shall, my perfect pair ! — each, trust me, born  
For the other ; nay, your very hair, when mixed,  
Is of one hue. For where save in this nook  
Shall you two walk, when I am far away,  
And wish me prosperous fortune ? Stay : that plant  
Shall never wave its tangles lightly and softly,  
As a queen's languid and imperial arm  
Which scatters crowns among her lovers, but you  
Shall be reminded to predict to me  
Some great success ! Ah see, the sun sinks broad  
Behind Saint Saviour's : wholly gone, at last !

*Fest.* Now, Aureole, stay those wandering eyes awhile !  
You are ours to-night, at least ; and while you spoke  
Of Michal and her tears, I thought that none  
Could willing leave what he so seemed to love :  
But that last look destroys my dream — that look



As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star!  
 How far was Würzburg with its church and spire  
 And garden-walls and all things they contain,  
 From that look's far alighting?

*Par.* I but spoke  
 And looked alike from simple joy to see  
 The beings I love best, shut in so well  
 From all rude chances like to be my lot,  
 That, when afar, my weary spirit, — disposed  
 To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts  
 Of them, their pleasant features, looks and words, —  
 Needs never hesitate, nor apprehend  
 Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,  
 Nor have recourse to fancy's busy aid  
 And fashion even a wish in their behalf  
 Beyond what they possess already here;  
 But, unobstructed, may at once forget  
 Itself in them, assured how well they fare.  
 Beside, this Festus knows he holds me one  
 Whom quiet and its charms arrest in vain,  
 One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,  
 Too filled with airy hopes to make account  
 Of soft delights his own heart garners up:  
 Whereas behold how much our sense of all  
 That's beauteous proves alike! When Festus learns  
 That every common pleasure of the world  
 Affects me as himself; that I have just  
 As varied appetite for joy derived  
 From common things; a stake in life, in short,  
 Like his; a stake which rash pursuit of aims  
 That life affords not, would as soon destroy; —  
 He may convince himself that, this in view,  
 I shall act well advised. And last, because,  
 Though heaven and earth and all things were at stake,  
 Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting eve.

*Fest.* True: and the eve is deepening, and we sit  
 As little anxious to begin our talk  
 As though to-morrow I could hint of it  
 As we paced arm-in-arm the cheerful town  
 At sun-dawn; or could whisper it by fits  
 (Trithemius busied with his class the while)  
 In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer  
 Half-frightened by the awful tomes around;  
 Or in some grassy lane unbosom all  
 From even-blush to midnight: but, to-morrow!  
 Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind?

We have been brothers, and henceforth the world  
Will rise between us : — all my freest mind ?  
’T is the last night, dear Aureole !

*Par.*

Oh, say on !

Devise some test of love, some arduous feat  
To be performed for you : say on ! If night  
Be spent the while, the better ! Recall how oft  
My wondrous plans and dreams and hopes and fears  
Have — never wearied you, oh no ! — as I  
Recall, and never vividly as now,  
Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln  
And its green hills were all the world to us ;  
And still increasing to this night which ends  
My further stay at Würzburg. Oh, one day  
You shall be very proud ! Say on, dear friends !

*Fest.* In truth ? ’T is for my proper peace, indeed,  
Rather than yours ; for vain all projects seem  
To stay your course : I said my latest hope  
Is fading even now. A story tells  
Of some far embassy dispatched to win  
The favor of an eastern king, and how  
The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust  
Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime.  
Just so, the value of repose and love,  
I meant should tempt you, better far than I  
You seem to comprehend ; and yet desist  
No whit from projects where repose nor love  
Have part.

*Par.* Once more ? Alas ! As I foretold.

*Fest.* A solitary brier the bank puts forth  
To save our swan’s nest floating out to sea.

*Par.* Dear Festus, hear me. What is it you wish ?  
That I should lay aside my heart’s pursuit,  
Abandon the sole ends for which I live,  
Reject God’s great commission, and so die !  
You bid me listen for your true love’s sake :  
Yet how has grown that love ? Even in a long  
And patient cherishing of the self-same spirit  
It now would quell ; as though a mother hoped  
To stay the lusty manhood of the child  
Once weak upon her knees. I was not born  
Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank  
From aught which marked me out apart from men :  
I would have lived their life, and died their death,  
Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny :  
But you first guided me through doubt and fear,

Taught me to know mankind and know myself ;  
 And now that I am strong and full of hope,  
 That, from my soul, I can reject all aims  
 Save those your earnest words made plain to me,  
 Now that I touch the brink of my design,  
 When I would have a triumph in their eyes,  
 A glad cheer in their voices — Michal weeps,  
 And Festus ponders gravely !

*Fest.* When you deign  
 To hear my purpose . . .

*Par.* Hear it ? I can say  
 Beforehand all this evening's conference !  
 'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses : first,  
 Or he declares, or I, the leading points  
 Of our best scheme of life, what is man's end  
 And what God's will ; no two faiths e'er agreed  
 As his with mine. Next, each of us allows  
 Faith should be acted on as best we may ;  
 Accordingly, I venture to submit  
 My plan, in lack of better, for pursuing  
 The path which God's will seems to authorize.  
 Well, he discerns much good in it, avows  
 This motive worthy, that hope plausible,  
 A danger here to be avoided, there  
 An oversight to be repaired : in fine,  
 Our two minds go together — all the good  
 Approved by him, I gladly recognize,  
 All he counts bad, I thankfully discard,  
 And nought forbids my looking up at last  
 For some stray comfort in his cautious brow,  
 When, lo ! I learn that, spite of all, there lurks  
 Some innate and inexplicable germ  
 Of failure in my scheme ; so that at last  
 It all amounts to this — the sovereign proof  
 That we devote ourselves to God, is seen  
 In living just as though no God there were ;  
 A life which, prompted by the sad and blind  
 Folly of man, Festus abhors the most ;  
 But which these tenets sanctify at once,  
 Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,  
 Consider it how they may.

*Mich.* Is it so, Festus ?  
 He speaks so calmly and kindly : is it so ?

*Par.* Reject those glorious visions of God's love  
 And man's design ; laugh loud that God should send  
 Vast longings to direct us ; say how soon

Power satiates these, or lust, or gold ; I know  
 The world's cry well, and how to answer it.  
 But this ambiguous warfare . . .

*Fest.* . . . Wearies so  
 That you will grant no last leave to your friend  
 To urge it ? — for his sake, not yours ? I wish  
 To send my soul in good hopes after you ;  
 Never to sorrow that uncertain words  
 Erringly apprehended, a new creed  
 Ill understood, begot rash trust in you,  
 Had share in your undoing.

*Par.* Choose your side,  
 Hold or renounce : but meanwhile blame me not  
 Because I dare to act on your own views,  
 Nor shrink when they point onward, nor espy  
 A peril where they most ensure success.

*Fest.* Prove that to me — but that ! Prove you abide  
 Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast  
 God's labor laid on you ; prove, all you covet,  
 A mortal may expect ; and, most of all,  
 Prove the strange course you now affect, will lead  
 To its attainment — and I bid you speed,  
 Nay, count the minutes till you venture forth !  
 You smile ; but I had gathered from slow thought —  
 Much musing on the fortunes of my friend —  
 Matter I deemed could not be urged in vain ;  
 But it all leaves me at my need : in shreds  
 And fragments I must venture what remains.

*Mich.* Ask at once, Festus, wherefore he should scorn.

*Fest.* Stay, Michal : Aureole, I speak guardedly  
 And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your error,  
 This is no ill-considered choice of yours,  
 No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.  
 Not from your own confiding words alone  
 Am I aware your passionate heart long since  
 Gave birth to, nourished and at length matures  
 This scheme. I will not speak of Einsiedeln,  
 Where I was born your elder by some years  
 Only to watch you fully from the first :  
 In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed  
 Even then — 't was mine to have you in my view  
 As you had your own soul and those intents  
 Which filled it when, to crown your dearest wish,  
 With a tumultuous heart, you left with me  
 Our childhood's home to join the favored few  
 Whom, here, Trithemius condescends to teach

A portion of his lore : and not one youth  
Of those so favored, whom you now despise,  
Came earnest as you came, resolved, like you,  
To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve  
By patient toil a wide renown like his.  
Now, this new ardor which supplants the old  
I watched, too ; 't was significant and strange,  
In one matched to his soul's content at length  
With rivals in the search for wisdom's prize,  
To see the sudden pause, the total change ;  
From contest, the transition to repose —  
From pressing onward as his fellows pressed,  
To a blank idleness, yet most unlike  
The dull stagnation of a soul, content,  
Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.  
That careless bearing, free from all pretence  
Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek —  
Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving  
What it professed to praise — though not so well  
Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce and brief,  
Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly curbed.  
That ostentatious show of past defeat,  
That ready acquiescence in contempt,  
I deemed no other than the letting go  
His shivered sword, of one about to spring  
Upon his foe's throat ; but it was not thus :  
Not that way looked your brooding purpose then.  
For after-signs disclosed, what you confirmed,  
That you prepared to task to the uttermost  
Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim  
Which — while it bore the name your rivals gave  
Their own most puny efforts — was so vast  
In scope that it included their best flights,  
Combined them, and desired to gain one prize  
In place of many, — the secret of the world,  
Of man, and man's true purpose, path and fate.  
— That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream  
This purpose, with the sages of the past,  
Have struck upon a way to this, if all  
You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,  
You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW :  
And that this aim shall differ from a host  
Of aims alike in character and kind,  
Mostly in this, — that in itself alone  
Shall its reward be, not an alien end  
Blending therewith ; no hope nor fear nor joy

Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure  
Devotion to sustain you or betray :  
Thus you aspire.

*Par.* You shall not state it thus :  
I should not differ from the dreamy crew  
You speak of. I profess no other share  
In the selection of my lot, than this  
My ready answer to the will of God  
Who summons me to be his organ. All  
Whose innate strength supports them shall succeed  
No better than the sages.

*Fest.* Such the aim, then,  
God sets before you ; and 't is doubtless need  
That he appoint no less the way of praise  
Than the desire to praise ; for, though I hold,  
With you, the setting forth such praise to be  
The natural end and service of a man,  
And hold such praise is best attained when man  
Attains the general welfare of his kind —  
Yet this, the end, is not the instrument.  
Presume not to serve God apart from such  
Appointed channel as he wills shall gather  
Imperfect tributes, for that sole obedience  
Valued perchance. He seeks not that his altars  
Blaze, careless how, so that they do but blaze.  
Suppose this, then ; that God selected you  
To KNOW (heed well your answers, for my faith  
Shall meet implicitly what they affirm),  
I cannot think you dare annex to such  
Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,  
An intense hope ; nor let your gifts create  
Scorn or neglect of ordinary means  
Conducive to success, make destiny  
Dispense with man's endeavor. Now, dare you search  
Your inmost heart, and candidly avow  
Whether you have not rather wild desire  
For this distinction than security  
Of its existence ? whether you discern  
The path to the fulfilment of your purpose  
Clear as that purpose — and again, that purpose  
Clear as your yearning to be singled out  
For its pursuer. Dare you answer this ?

*Par.* (after a pause). No, I have nought to fear ! Who  
will may know  
The secret'st workings of my soul. What though  
It be so ? — if indeed the strong desire

Eclipse the aim in me? — if splendor break  
 Upon the outset of my path alone,  
 And duskest shade succeed? What fairer seal  
 Shall I require to my authentic mission  
 Than this fierce energy? — this instinct striving  
 Because its nature is to strive? — enticed  
 By the security of no broad course,  
 Without success forever in its eyes!  
 How know I else such glorious fate my own,  
 But in the restless irresistible force  
 That works within me? Is it for human will  
 To institute such impulses? — still less,  
 To disregard their promptings! What should I  
 Do, kept among you all; your loves, your cares,  
 Your life — all to be mine? Be sure that God  
 Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart!  
 Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once  
 Into the vast and unexplored abyss,  
 What full-grown power informs her from the first,  
 Why she not marvels, strenuously beating  
 The silent boundless regions of the sky!  
 Be sure they sleep not whom God needs! Nor fear  
 Their holding light his charge, when every hour  
 That finds that charge delayed, is a new death.  
 This for the faith in which I trust; and hence  
 I can abjure so well the idle arts  
 These pedants strive to learn and teach; **Black Arts,**  
**Great Works, the Secret and Sublime, forsooth —**  
 Let others prize: too intimate a tie  
 Connects me with our God! A sullen fiend  
 To do my bidding, fallen and hateful sprites  
 To help me — what are these, at best, beside  
 God helping, God directing everywhere,  
 So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,  
 And every object there be charged to strike,  
 Teach, gratify her master God appoints?  
 And I am young, my Festus, happy and free!  
 I can devote myself; I have a life  
 To give; I, singled out for this, the One!  
 Think, think; the wide East, where all Wisdom sprung;  
 The bright South, where she dwelt; the hopeful North,  
 All are passed o'er — it lights on me! 'T is time  
 New hopes should animate the world, new light  
 Should dawn from new revealings to a race  
 Weighed down so long, forgotten so long; thus shall  
 The heaven reserved for us at last receive

Creatures whom no unwonted splendors blind,  
 But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze,  
 Whose beams not seldom blessed their pilgrimage,  
 Not seldom glorified their life below.

*Fest.* My words have their old fate and make faint stand  
 Against your glowing periods. Call this, truth —  
 Why not pursue it in a fast retreat,  
 Some one of Learning's many palaces,  
 After approved example? — seeking there  
 Calm converse with the great dead, soul to soul,  
 Who laid up treasure with the like intent  
 — So lift yourself into their airy place,  
 And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,  
 Unravelling the knots their baffled skill  
 Pronounced inextricable, true! — but left  
 Far less confused. A fresh eye, a fresh hand,  
 Might do much at their vigor's waning-point;  
 Succeeding with new-breathed new-hearted force,  
 As at old games the runner snatched the torch  
 From runner still: this way success might be.  
 But you have coupled with your enterprise  
 An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme  
 Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.  
 What books are in the desert? Writes the sea  
 The secret of her yearning in vast caves  
 Where yours will fall the first of human feet?  
 Has wisdom sat there and recorded aught  
 You press to read? Why turn aside from her  
 To visit, where her vesture never glanced,  
 Now — solitudes consigned to barrenness  
 By God's decree, which who shall dare impugn?  
 Now — ruins where she paused but would not stay,  
 Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,  
 She called an endless curse on, so it came:  
 Or worst of all, now — men you visit, men,  
 Ignoblest troops who never heard her voice  
 Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome  
 Or Athens, — these shall Aureole's teachers be!  
 Rejecting past example, practice, precept,  
 Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand alone:  
 Thick like a glory round the Stagirite  
 Your rivals throng, the sages: here stand you!  
 Whatever you may protest, knowledge is not  
 Paramount in your love; or for her sake  
 You would collect all help from every source —  
 Rival, assistant, friend, foe, all would merge



In the broad class of those who showed her haunts,  
And those who showed them not.

*Par.*

What shall I say?

Festus, from childhood I have been possessed  
By a fire — by a true fire, or faint or fierce,  
As from without some master, so it seemed,  
Repressed or urged its current: this but ill  
Expresses what I would convey: but rather  
I will believe an angel ruled me thus,  
Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature,  
So became manifest. I knew not then  
What whispered in the evening, and spoke out  
At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,  
Were laid away in some great trance — the ages  
Coming and going all the while — till dawned  
His true time's advent; and could then record  
The words they spoke who kept watch by his bed, —  
Then I might tell more of the breath so light  
Upon my eyelids, and the fingers light  
Among my hair. Youth is confused; yet never  
So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,  
I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns  
A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.  
And having this within me and about me  
While Einsicdeln, its mountains, lakes and woods  
Confined me — what oppressive joy was mine  
When life grew plain, and I first viewed the thronged,  
The everlasting concourse of mankind!  
Believe that ere I joined them, ere I knew  
The purpose of the pageant, or the place  
Consigned me in its ranks — while, just awake,  
Wonder was freshest and delight most pure —  
'T was then that least supportable appeared  
A station with the brightest of the crowd,  
A portion with the proudest of them all.  
And from the tumult in my breast, this only  
Could I collect, that I must thenceforth die  
Or elevate myself far, far above  
The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long  
At once to trample on yet save mankind,  
To make some unexampled sacrifice  
In their behalf, to wring some wondrous good  
From heaven or earth for them, to perish, winning  
Eternal weal in the act: as who should dare  
Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,  
That, all its gathered flame discharged on him,

No storm might threaten summer's azure sleep :  
 Yet never to be mixed with men so much  
 As to have part even in my own work, share  
 In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,  
 I would withdraw from their officious praise,  
 Would gently put aside their profuse thanks.  
 Like some knight traversing a wilderness,  
 Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe  
 Of desert-people from their dragon-foe ;  
 When all the swarthy race press round to kiss  
 His feet, and choose him for their king, and yield  
 Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-hills, for  
 His realm : and he points, smiling, to his scarf  
 Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet  
 Gay set with twinkling stones — and to the East,  
 Where these must be displayed !

*Fest.*

Good : let us hear

No more about your nature, " which first shrank  
 From all that marked you out apart from men ! "

*Par.* I touch on that ; these words but analyze  
 The first mad impulse : 't was as brief as fond,  
 For as I gazed again upon the show,  
 I soon distinguished here and there a shape  
 Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and full eye.  
 Well pleased was I their state should thus at once  
 Interpret my own thoughts : — " Behold the clue  
 To all," I rashly said, " and what I pine  
 To do, these have accomplished : we are peers.  
 They know, and therefore rule : I, too, will know ! "

You were beside me, Festus, as you say ;  
 You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom fame  
 Is lavish to attest the lords of mind,  
 Not pausing to make sure the prize in view  
 Would satiate my cravings when obtained,  
 But since they strove I strove. Then came a slow  
 And strangling failure. We aspired alike,  
 Yet not the meanest plodder, Tritheim counts  
 A marvel, but was all-sufficient, strong,  
 Or staggered only at his own vast wits ;  
 While I was restless, nothing satisfied,  
 Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slur over  
 That struggle ; suffice it, that I loathed myself  
 As weak compared with them, yet felt somehow  
 A mighty power was brooding, taking shape  
 Within me ; and this lasted till one night  
 When, as I sat revolving it and more,

A still voice from without said — “ Seest thou not,  
 Desponding child, whence spring defeat and loss ?  
 Even from thy strength. Consider : hast thou gazed  
 Presumptuously on wisdom’s countenance,  
 No veil between ; and can thy faltering hands,  
 Unguided by the brain the sight absorbs,  
 Pursue their task as earnest blinkers do  
 Whom radiance ne’er distracted ? Live their life  
 If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose their eyes  
 Unfed by splendor. Let each task present  
 Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts  
 In profitless waiting for the gods’ descent,  
 But have some idol of thine own to dress  
 With their array. Know, not for knowing’s sake,  
 But to become a star to men forever ;  
 Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,  
 The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds :  
 Look one step onward, and secure that step ! ”  
 And I smiled as one never smiles but once,  
 Then first discovering my own aim’s extent,  
 Which sought to comprehend the works of God,  
 And God himself, and all God’s intercourse  
 With the human mind ; I understood, no less,  
 My fellows’ studies, whose true worth I saw,  
 But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.  
 And softer came the voice — “ There is a way :  
 ’T is hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued  
 With frailty — hopeless, if indulgence first  
 Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength :  
 Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man’s,  
 Apart from all reward ? ” And last it breathed —  
 Be happy, my good soldier ; I am by thee,  
 Be sure, even to the end ! ” — I answered not,  
 Knowing him. As he spoke, I was endued  
 With comprehension and a steadfast will ;  
 And when he ceased, my brow was sealed his own.  
 If there took place no special change in me,  
 How comes it all things wore a different hue  
 Thenceforward ? — pregnant with vast consequence,  
 Teeming with grand result, loaded with fate ?  
 So that when, quailing at the mighty range  
 Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste  
 To contemplate undazzled some one truth,  
 Its bearings and effects alone — at once  
 What was a speck expands into a star,  
 Asking a life to pass exploring thus,

Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul !  
 I see my way as birds their trackless way.  
 I shall arrive ! what time, what circuit first,  
 I ask not : but unless God send his hail  
 Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,  
 In some time, his good time, I shall arrive :  
 He guides me and the bird. In his good time !

*Mich.* Vex him no further, Festus ; it is so !

*Fest.* Just thus you help me ever. This would hold  
 Were it the trackless air, and not a path  
 Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet  
 Of many a mighty marcher gone that way.  
 You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,  
 But they were famous in their day — the proofs  
 Remain. At least accept the light they lend.

*Par.* Their light ! the sum of all is briefly this :  
 They labored and grew famous, and the fruits  
 Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth  
 Given over to a blind and endless strife  
 With evils, what of all their lore abates ?  
 No ; I reject and spurn them utterly  
 And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside  
 Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye,  
 While in the distance heaven is blue above  
 Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns ?

*Fest.*

And yet

As strong delusions have prevailed ere now  
 Men have set out as gallantly to seek  
 Their ruin. I have heard of such : yourself  
 Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.

*Mich.* Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint  
 Through the drear way, do you expect to see  
 Their city dawn amid the clouds afar ?

*Par.* Ay, sounds it not like some old well-known tale ?  
 For me, I estimate their works and them  
 So rightly, that at times I almost dream  
 I too have spent a life the sages' way,  
 And tread once more familiar paths. Perchance  
 I perished in an arrogant self-reliance  
 Ages ago ; and in that act, a prayer  
 For one more chance went up so earnest, so  
 Instinct with better light let in by death,  
 That life was blotted out — not so completely  
 But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,  
 Dim memories, as now, when once more seems  
 The goal in sight again. All which, indeed,

Is foolish, and only means — the flesh I wear,  
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me  
Than my belief, explained to you or no.

*Fest.* And who am I, to challenge and dispute  
That clear belief? I will divest all fear.

*Mich.* Then Aureole is God's commissary! he shall  
Be great and grand — and all for us!

*Par.* No, sweet!

Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind  
'T is well; but there our intercourse must end:  
I never will be served by those I serve.

*Fest.* Look well to this; here is a plague-spot, here,  
Disguise it how you may! 'T is true, you utter  
This scorn while by our side and loving us;  
'T is but a spot as yet: but it will break

Into a hideous blotch if overlooked;  
How can that course be safe which from the first  
Produces carelessness to human love?

It seems you have abjured the helps which men  
Who overpass their kind, as you would do,  
Have humbly sought; I dare not thoroughly probe  
This matter, lest I learn too much. Let be  
That popular praise would little instigate  
Your efforts, nor particular approval

Reward you; put reward aside; alone  
You shall go forth upon your arduous task,  
None shall assist you, none partake your toil,  
None share your triumph: still you must retain  
Some one to cast your glory on, to share  
Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,

I would encircle me with love, and raise  
A rampart of my fellows; it should seem  
Impossible for me to fail, so watched  
By gentle friends who made my cause their own.  
They should ward off fate's envy — the great gift,  
Extravagant when claimed by me alone,  
Being so a gift to them as well as me.  
If danger daunted me or ease seduced,  
How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach!

*Mich.* O Aureole, can I sing when all alone,  
Without first calling, in my fancy, both  
To listen by my side — even I! And you?  
Do you not feel this? Say that you feel this!

*Par.* I feel 't is pleasant that my aims, at length  
Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need  
A further strengthening in these goodly helps!

My course allures for its own sake, its sole  
 Intrinsic worth ; and ne'er shall boat of mine  
 Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.  
 Your sages say, " if human, therefore weak : "  
 If weak, more need to give myself entire  
 To my pursuit ; and by its side, all else . . .  
 No matter ! I deny myself but little  
 In waiving all assistance save its own.  
 Would there were some real sacrifice to make !  
 Your friends the sages threw their joys away,  
 While I must be content with keeping mine.

*Fest.* But do not cut yourself from human weal !  
 You cannot thrive — a man that dares affect  
 To spend his life in service to his kind  
 For no reward of theirs, unbound to them  
 By any tie ; nor do so, Aureole ! No —  
 There are strange punishments for such. Give up  
 (Although no visible good flow thence) some part  
 Of the glory to another ; hiding thus,  
 Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.  
 Say, say almost to God — " I have done all  
 For her, not for myself ! "

*Par.* And who but lately  
 Was to rejoice in my success like you ?  
 Whom should I love but both of you ?

*Fest.* I know not :  
 But know this, you, that 't is no will of mine  
 You should abjure the lofty claims you make ;  
 And this the cause — I can no longer seek  
 To overlook the truth, that there would be  
 A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,  
 Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees :  
 — A being knowing not what love is. Hear me !  
 You are endowed with faculties which bear  
 Annexed to them as 't were a dispensation  
 To summon meaner spirits to do their will  
 And gather round them at their need ; inspiring  
 Such with a love themselves can never feel,  
 Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.  
 I know not if you joy in this or no,  
 Or ever dream that common men can live  
 On objects you prize lightly, but which make  
 Their heart's sole treasure : the affections seem  
 Beauteous at most to you, which we must taste  
 Or die : and this strange quality accords,  
 I know not how, with you ; sits well upon

That luminous brow, though in another it scowls  
 An eating brand, a shame. I dare not judge you.  
 The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,  
 There's no alternative — I own you one  
 Of higher order, under other laws  
 Than bind us; therefore, curb not one bold glance!  
 'T is best aspire. Once mingled with us all . . .

*Mich.* Stay with us, Aureole! cast those hopes away,  
 And stay with us! An angel warns me, too,  
 Man should be humble; you are very proud:  
 And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues for such!  
 — Warns me to have in dread no quick repulse,  
 No slow defeat, but a complete success:  
 You will find all you seek, and perish so!

*Par.* (after a pause). Are these the barren first-fruits  
 of my quest?

Is love like this the natural lot of all?  
 How many years of pain might one such hour  
 O'erbalance? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus,  
 What shall I say, if not that I desire  
 To justify your love; and will, dear friends,  
 In swerving nothing from my first resolves.  
 See, the great moon! and ere the mottled owls  
 Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems  
 You acquiesce at last in all save this —  
 If I am like to compass what I seek  
 By the untried career I choose; and then,  
 If that career, making but small account  
 Of much of life's delight, will yet retain  
 Sufficient to sustain my soul: for thus  
 I understand these fond fears just expressed.  
 And first; the lore you praise and I neglect,  
 The labors and the precepts of old time,  
 I have not lightly disesteemed. But, friends,  
 Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise  
 From outward things, whate'er you may believe.  
 There is an inmost centre in us all,  
 Where truth abides in fulness; and around,  
 Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,  
 This perfect, clear perception — which is truth,  
 A baffling and perverting carnal mesh  
 Blinds it, and makes all error: and, to KNOW,  
 Rather consists in opening out a way  
 Whence the imprisoned splendor may escape,  
 Than in effecting entry for a light  
 Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly

The demonstration of a truth, its birth,  
And you trace back the effluence to its spring  
And source within us ; where broods radiance vast,  
To be elicited ray by ray, as chance  
Shall favor : chance — for hitherto, your sage  
Even as he knows not how those beams are born,  
As little knows he what unlocks their fount.  
And men have oft grown old among their books  
To die case-hardened in their ignorance,  
Whose careless youth had promised what long years  
Of unremitted labor ne'er performed :  
While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,  
To autumn loiterers just as fancy-free  
As the midges in the sun, gives birth at last  
To truth — produced mysteriously as cape  
Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.  
Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,  
The lowest as the highest ? some slight film  
The interposing bar which binds a soul  
And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage  
Some film removed, the happy outlet whence  
Truth issues proudly ? See this soul of ours !  
How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed  
In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled  
By age and waste, set free at last by death :  
Why is it, flesh enthalls it or enthrones ?  
What is this flesh we have to penetrate ?  
Oh, not alone when life flows still, do truth  
And power emerge, but also when strange chance  
Ruffles its current ; in unused conjuncture,  
When sickness breaks the body — hunger, watching,  
Excess or languor — oftenest death's approach,  
Peril, deep joy or woe. One man shall crawl  
Through life surrounded with all stirring things,  
Unmoved ; and he goes mad : and from the wreck  
Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,  
You first collect how great a spirit he hid.  
Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,  
Discovering the true laws by which the flesh  
Accloys the spirit ! We may not be doomed  
To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest  
Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God,  
But elevate the race at once ! We ask  
To put forth just our strength, our human strength,  
All starting fairly, all equipped alike,  
Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted —



See if we cannot beat thine angels yet !  
 Such is my task. I go to gather this  
 The sacred knowledge, here and there dispersed  
 About the world, long lost or never found.  
 And why should I be sad or lorn of hope ?  
 Why ever make man's good distinct from God's,  
 Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust ?  
 Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me ?  
 Mine is no mad attempt to build a world  
 Apart from his, like those who set themselves  
 To find the nature of the spirit they bore,  
 And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous dreams  
 Were only born to vanish in this life,  
 Refused to fit them to its narrow sphere,  
 But chose to figure forth another world  
 And other frames meet for their vast desires, —  
 And all a dream ! Thus was life scorned ; but life  
 Shall yet be crowned : twine amaranth ! I am priest !  
 And all for yielding with a lively spirit  
 A poor existence, parting with a youth  
 Like those who squander every energy  
 Convertible to good, on painted toys,  
 Breath-bubbles, gilded dust ! And though I spurn  
 All adventitious aims, from empty praise  
 To love's award, yet whoso deems such helps  
 Important, and concerns himself for me,  
 May know even these will follow with the rest —  
 As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep  
 Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.  
 My own affections, laid to rest awhile,  
 Will waken purified, subdued alone  
 By all I have achieved. Till then — till then . . .  
 Ah, the time-wiling loitering of a page  
 Through bower and over lawn, till eve shall bring  
 The stately lady's presence whom he loves —  
 The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough coat  
 Enwraps the queenly pearl — these are faint types !  
 See, see they look on me : I triumph now !  
 But one thing, Festus, Michal ! I have told  
 All I shall e'er disclose to mortal : say —  
 Do you believe I shall accomplish this ?

*Fest.* I do believe !

*Mich.* I ever did believe !

*Par.* Those words shall never fade from out my brain !  
 This earnest of the end shall never fade !  
 Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,

Two points in the adventure of the diver,  
 One — when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge,  
 One — when, a prince, he rises with his pearl?  
 Festus, I plunge!

*Fest.*

We wait you when you rise!

## II. PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE, *Constantinople ; the house of a Greek conjurer.* 1521.

PARACELSUS.

Over the waters in the vaporous West  
 The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold  
 Behind the arm of the city, which between,  
 With all that length of domes and minarets,  
 Athwart the splendor, black and crooked runs  
 Like a Turk verse along a scimitar.  
 There lie, sullen memorial, and no more  
 Possess my aching sight! 'T is done at last.  
 Strange — and the juggles of a sallow cheat  
 Have won me to this act! 'T is as yon cloud  
 Should voyage unwrecked o'er many a mountain-top  
 And break upon a molchill. I have dared  
 Come to a pause with knowledge; scan for once  
 The heights already reached, without regard  
 To the extent above; fairly compute  
 All I have clearly gained; for once excluding  
 A brilliant future to supply and perfect  
 All half-gains and conjectures and crude hopes:  
 And all because a fortune-teller wills  
 His credulous seekers should inscribe thus much,  
 Their previous life's attainment, in his roll,  
 Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,  
 Make up the sum: and here, amid the scrawled  
 Uncouth recordings of the dupes of this  
 Old arch-genethliac, lie my life's results!

A few blurred characters suffice to note  
 A stranger wandered long through many lands  
 And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few  
 Discoveries, as appended here and there,  
 The fragmentary produce of much toil,  
 In a dim heap, fact and surmise together  
 Confusedly massed as when acquired; he was

Intent on gain to come too much to stay  
 And scrutinize the little gained : the whole  
 Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber  
 And a mad lover's ditty — there it lies.

And yet those blottings chronicle a life —  
 A whole life, and my life! Nothing to do,  
 No problem for the fancy, but a life  
 Spent and decided, wasted past retrieve  
 Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, what does this  
 Remembrancer set down concerning "life" ?  
 " 'Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream,'  
 It is the echo of time ; and he whose heart  
 Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech  
 Was copied from a human tongue, can never  
 Recall when he was living yet knew not this.  
 Nevertheless long seasons pass o'er him  
 Till some one hour's experience shows what nothing,  
 It seemed, could clearer show ; and ever after,  
 An altered brow and eye and gait and speech  
 Attest that now he knows the adage true,  
 'Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.' "

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same hour  
 As well as any : now, let my time be !

Now ! I can go no farther ; well or ill,  
 'Tis done. I must desist and take my chance.  
 I cannot keep on the stretch : 't is no back-shrinking —  
 For let but some assurance beam, some close  
 To my toil grow visible, and I proceed  
 At any price, though closing it, I die.  
 Else, here I pause. The old Greek's prophecy  
 Is like to turn out true : " I shall not quit  
 His chamber till I know what I desire ! "  
 Was it the light wind sang it o'er the sea ?

An end, a rest ! strange how the notion, once  
 Encountered, gathers strength by moments ! Rest !  
 Where has it kept so long ? this throbbing brow  
 To cease, this beating heart to cease, all cruel  
 And gnawing thoughts to cease ! To dare let down  
 My strung, so high-strung brain, to dare unnerve  
 My harassed o'ertasked frame, to know my place,  
 My portion, my reward, even my failure,  
 Assigned, made sure forever ! To lose myself

Among the common creatures of the world,  
 To draw some gain from having been a man,  
 Neither to hope nor fear, to live at length!  
 Even in failure, rest! But rest in truth  
 And power and recompense . . . I hoped that once!

What, sunk insensibly so deep? Has all  
 Been undergone for this? This the request  
 My labor qualified me to present  
 With no fear of refusal? Had I gone  
 Slightly through my task, and so judged fit  
 To moderate my hopes; nay, were it now  
 My sole concern to exculpate myself,  
 End things or mend them, — why, I could not choose  
 A humbler mood to wait for the event!  
 No, no, there needs not this; no, after all,  
 At worst I have performed my share of the task;  
 The rest is God's concern; mine, merely this,  
 To know that I have obstinately held  
 By my own work. The mortal whose brave foot  
 Has trod, unscathed, the temple-court so far  
 That he descries at length the shrine of shrines,  
 Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,  
 Whom he could pass unquailing, fasten now  
 Upon him, fairly past their power; no, no —  
 He must not stagger, faint, fall down at last,  
 Having a charm to baffle them; behold,  
 He bares his front: a mortal ventures thus  
 Serene amid the echoes, beams and glooms!  
 If he be priest henceforth, if he wake up  
 The god of the place to ban and blast him there,  
 Both well! What's failure or success to me?  
 I have subdued my life to the one purpose  
 Whereto I ordained it; there alone I spy,  
 No doubt, that way I may be satisfied.  
 Yes, well have I subdued my life! beyond  
 The obligation of my strictest vow,  
 The contemplation of my wildest bond,  
 Which gave my nature freely up, in truth,  
 But in its actual state, consenting fully  
 All passionate impulses its soil was formed  
 To rear, should wither; but foreseeing not  
 The tract, doomed to perpetual barrenness,  
 Would seem one day, remembered as it was,  
 Beside the parched sand-waste which now it is,  
 Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.

I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail  
 I felt them not ; yet now, 't is very plain  
 Some soft spots had their birth in me at first,  
 If not love, say, like love : there was a time  
 When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge  
 Set not remorselessly love's claims aside.  
 This heart was human once, or why recall  
 Einsiedeln, now, and Wurzburg which the Main  
 Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm ?

And Festus — my poor Festus, with his praise  
 And counsel and grave fears — where is he now  
 With the sweet maiden, long ago his bride ?  
 I surely loved them — that last night, at least,  
 When we . . . gone ! gone ! the better. I am saved  
 The sad review of an ambitious youth  
 Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,  
 But let grow up and wind around a will  
 Till action was destroyed. No, I have gone  
 Purging my path successively of aught  
 Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts.  
 I have made life consist of one idea :  
 Ere that was master, up till that was born,  
 I bear a memory of a pleasant life  
 Whose small events I treasure ; till one morn  
 I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,  
 Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell  
 Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,  
 To leave all trouble for my future plans,  
 Since I had just determined to become  
 The greatest and most glorious man on earth.  
 And since that morn all life has been forgotten ;  
 All is one day, one only step between  
 The outset and the end : one tyrant all-  
 Absorbing aim fills up the interspace,  
 One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up  
 Through a career apparently adverse  
 To its existence : life, death, light and shadow,  
 The shows of the world, were bare receptacles  
 Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,  
 Not ministers of sorrow or delight :  
 A wondrous natural robe in which she went.  
 For some one truth would dimly beacon me  
 From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink  
 O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble  
 Into assured light in some branching mine

Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold —  
 And all the beauty, all the wonder fell  
 On either side the truth, as its mere robe ;  
 I see the robe now — then I saw the form.  
 So far, then, I have voyaged with success,  
 So much is good, then, in this working sea  
 Which parts me from that happy strip of land :  
 But o'er that happy strip a sun shone, too !  
 And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough,  
 And still more faint as the sea widens ; last  
 I sicken on a dead gulf streaked with light  
 From its own putrefying depths alone.  
 Then, God was pledged to take me by the hand ;  
 Now, any miserable juggle can bid  
 My pride depart. All is alike at length :  
 God may take pleasure in confounding pride  
 By hiding secrets with the scorned and base —  
 I am here, in short : so little have I paused  
 Throughout ! I never glanced behind to know  
 If I had kept my primal light from wane,  
 And thus insensibly am — what I am !

Oh, bitter ; very bitter !

And more bitter,

To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin,  
 Plague beneath plague, the last turning the first  
 To light beside its darkness. Let me weep  
 My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone,  
 In tears which burn ! Would I were sure to win  
 Some startling secret in their stead, a tincture  
 Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed  
 Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change  
 To opal shafts ! — only that, hurling it  
 Indignant back, I might convince myself  
 My aims remained supreme and pure as ever !  
 Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,  
 That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,  
 That, though I sink, another may succeed ?  
 O God, the despicable heart of us !  
 Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart !

'T was politic in you, Aureole, to reject  
 Single rewards, and ask them in the lump ;  
 At all events, once launched, to hold straight on :  
 For now 't is all or nothing. Mighty profit  
 Your gains will bring if they stop short of such

Full consummation ! As a man, you had  
 A certain share of strength ; and that is gone  
 Already in the getting these you boast.  
 Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say —  
 “ Great master, we are here indeed, dragged forth  
 To light ; this hast thou done : be glad ! Now, seek  
 The strength to use which thou hast spent in getting ! ”

And yet 't is much, surely 't is very much,  
 Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,  
 To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn  
 Arrived with inexhaustible light ; and lo,  
 I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not !  
 And I am left with gray hair, faded hands,  
 And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,  
 Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast ?  
 Knowledge it seemed, and power, and recompense !  
 Was she who glided through my room of nights,  
 Who laid my head on her soft knees and smoothed  
 The damp locks, — whose sly soothings just began  
 When my sick spirit craved repose awhile —  
 God ! was I fighting sleep off for death's sake ?

God ! Thou art mind ! Unto the master-mind  
 Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone !  
 All else I will endure ; if, as I stand  
 Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,  
 I bow me ; 't is thy will, thy righteous will ;  
 I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die ;  
 And if no trace of my career remain  
 Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind  
 In these bright chambers level with the air,  
 See thou to it ! But if my spirit fail,  
 My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,  
 Hast thou done well by me ? So do not thou !  
 Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed !  
 Hold me before the frequency of thy seraphs  
 And say — “ I crushed him, lest he should disturb  
 My law. Men must not know their strength : behold,  
 Weak and alone, how he had raised himself ! ”

But if delusions trouble me, and thou,  
 Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help  
 Throughout my toils and wanderings, dost intend  
 To work man's welfare through my weak endeavor,  
 To crown my mortal forehead with a beam

From thine own blinding crown, to smile, and guide  
 This puny hand and let the work so wrought  
 Be styled my work, — hear me ! I covet not  
 An influx of new power, an angel's soul :  
 It were no marvel then — but I have reached  
 Thus far, a man ; let me conclude, a man !  
 Give but one hour of my first energy,  
 Of that invincible faith, but only one !  
 That I may cover with an eagle-glance  
 The truths I have, and spy some certain way  
 To mould them, and completing them, possess !

Yet God is good : I started sure of that,  
 And why dispute it now ? I'll not believe  
 But some undoubted warning long ere this  
 Had reached me : a fire-labarum was not deemed  
 Too much for the old founder of these walls.  
 Then, if my life has not been natural,  
 It has been monstrous : yet, till late, my course  
 So ardently engrossed me, that delight,  
 A pausing and reflecting joy, 't is plain,  
 Could find no place in it. True, I am worn ;  
 But who clothes summer, who is life itself ?  
 God, that created all things, can renew !  
 And then, though after-life to please me now  
 Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders  
 Reward from springing out of toil, as changed  
 As bursts the flower from earth and root and stalk ?  
 What use were punishment, unless some sin  
 Be first detected ? let me know that first !  
 No man could ever offend as I have done . . .

(A voice from within.)

I hear a voice, perchance I heard  
 Long ago, but all too low,  
 So that scarce a care it stirred  
 If the voice were real or no :  
 I heard it in my youth when first  
 The waters of my life outburst :  
 But, now their stream ebbs faint, I hear  
 That voice, still low, but fatal-clear —  
 As if all poets, God ever meant  
 Should save the world, and therefore lent  
 Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused  
 To do his work, or lightly used  
 Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavor,



So, mourn cast off by him forever, —  
As if these leaned in airy ring  
To take me; this the song they sing.

“Lost, lost! yet come,  
With our wan troop make thy home.  
Come, come! for we  
Will not breathe, so much as breathe  
Reproach to thee,  
Knowing what thou sink'st beneath.  
So sank we in those old years,  
We who bid thee, come! thou last  
Who, living yet, hast life o'erpast.  
And altogether we, thy peers,  
Will pardon ask for thee, the last  
Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast  
With those who watch but work no more,  
Who gaze on life but live no more.  
Yet we trusted thou shouldst speak  
The message which our lips, too weak,  
Refused to utter, — shouldst redeem  
Our fault: such trust, and all a dream!  
Yet we chose thee a birthplace  
Where the richness ran to flowers:  
Couldst not sing one song for grace?  
Not make one blossom man's and ours?  
Must one more recreant to his race  
Die with unexerted powers,  
And join us, leaving as he found  
The world, he was to loosen, bound?  
Anguish! ever and forever;  
Still beginning, ending never!  
Yet, lost and last one, come!  
How couldst understand, alas,  
What our pale ghosts strove to say,  
As their shades did glance and pass  
Before thee night and day?  
Thou wast blind as we were dumb:  
Once more, therefore, come, O come!  
How shall we clothe, how arm the spirit  
Shall next thy post of life inherit —  
How guard him from thy speedy ruin?  
Tell us of thy sad undoing  
Here, where we sit, ever pursuing  
Our weary task, ever renewing  
Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave  
Our powers, and man they could not save!”

(APRILE enters.)

Ha, ha ! our king that wouldst be, here at last ?  
 Art thou the poet who shall save the world ?  
 Thy hand to mine ! Stay, fix thine eyes on mine !  
 Thou wouldst be king ? Still fix thine eyes on mine !

*Par.* Ha, ha ! why crouchest not ? Am I not king ?  
 So torture is not wholly unavailing !  
 Have my fierce spasms compelled thee from thy lair ?  
 Art thou the sage I only seemed to be,  
 Myself of after-time, my very self  
 With sight a little clearer, strength more firm,  
 Who robes him in my robe and grasps my crown  
 For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect ?  
 I scarcely trusted God with the surmise  
 That such might come, and thou didst hear the while !

*Apr.* Thine eyes are lustreless to mine ; my hair  
 Is soft, nay silken soft : to talk with thee  
 Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale.  
 Truly, thou hast labored, hast withstood her lips,  
 The siren's ! Yes, 't is like thou hast attained !  
 Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou comest ?  
 I thought thy solemn songs would have their meed  
 In after-time ; that I should hear the earth  
 Exult in thee and echo with thy praise,  
 While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

*Par.* Ah fiend, I know thee, I am not thy dupe !  
 Thou art ordained to follow in my track,  
 Reaping my sowing, as I scorned to reap  
 The harvest sown by sages passed away.  
 Thou art the sober searcher, cautious striver,  
 As if, except through me, thou hast searched or striven !  
 Ay, tell the world ! Degrade me, after all,  
 To an aspirant after fame, not truth —  
 To all but envy of thy fate, be sure !

*Apr.* Nay, sing them to me ; I shall envy not :  
 Thou shalt be king ! Sing thou, and I will sit  
 Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,  
 And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant  
 To fill thy throne : but none shall ever know !  
 Sing to me ; for already thy wild eyes  
 Unlock my heart-strings, as some crystal-shaft  
 Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount  
 After long time : so thou reveal'st my soul.  
 All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear !

*Par.* (His secret ! I shall get his secret — fool !)  
 I am he that aspired to know : and thou ?

*Apr.* I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved !

*Par.* Poor slave ! I am thy king indeed.

*Apr.*

Thou deem'st

That — born a spirit, dowered even as thou,  
 Born for thy fate — because I could not curb  
 My yearnings to possess at once the full  
 Enjoyment, but neglected all the means  
 Of realizing even the frailest joy,  
 Gathering no fragments to appease my want,  
 Yet nursing up that want till thus I die —  
 Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe sure march  
 O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,  
 Neglecting nought below for aught above,  
 Despising nothing and ensuring all —  
 Nor that I could (my time to come again)  
 Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own.  
 Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well.  
 I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost ! lost !

Oh ye who armed me at such cost,

How shall I look on all of ye

With your gifts even yet on me ?

*Par.* (Ah, 't is some moonstruck creature after all !

Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den :  
 They spread contagion, doubtless : yet he seemed  
 To echo one foreboding of my heart  
 So truly, that . . . no matter ! How he stands  
 With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair  
 Which turns to it as if they were akin :  
 And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue  
 Nearly set free, so far they rise above  
 The painful fruitless striving of the brow  
 And enforced knowledge of the lips, firm-set  
 In slow despondency's eternal sigh !  
 Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the cause ?)  
 I charge thee, by thy fealty, be calm !  
 Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

*Apr.* I would love infinitely, and be loved.

First : I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,  
 The forms of earth. No ancient hunter lifted  
 Up to the gods by his renown, no nymph  
 Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree  
 Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,  
 Should be too hard for me ; no shepherd-king  
 Regal for his white locks ; no youth who stands  
 Silent and very calm amid the throng,  
 His right hand ever hid beneath his robe

Until the tyrant pass ; no lawgiver,  
 No swan-soft woman rubbed with lucid oils  
 Given by a god for love of her — too hard !  
 Every passion sprung from man, conceived by man,  
 Would I express and clothe it in its right form,  
 Or blend with others struggling in one form,  
 Or show repressed by an ungainly form.  
 Oh, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit  
 With a fit frame to execute its will —  
 Even unconsciously to work its will —  
 You should be moved no less beside some strong  
 Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,  
 Endeavoring to subdue it and inform it  
 With its own splendor ! All this I would do :  
 And I would say, this done, “ His sprites created,  
 God grants to each a sphere to be its world,  
 Appointed with the various objects needed  
 To satisfy its own peculiar want ;  
 So, I create a world for these my shapes  
 Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength ! ”  
 And, at the word, I would contrive and paint  
 Woods, valleys, rocks and plains, dells, sands and wastes,  
 Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering bed,  
 Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun,  
 And ocean-isles so small, the dog-fish tracking  
 A dead whale, who should find them, would swim thrice  
 Around them, and fare onward — all to hold  
 The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone :  
 Bronze labyrinth, palace, pyramid and crypt,  
 Baths, galleries, courts, temples and terraces,  
 Marts, theatres and wharfs — all filled with men,  
 Men everywhere ! And this performed in turn,  
 When those who looked on, pined to hear the hopes  
 And fears and hates and loves which moved the crowd,  
 I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,  
 And I would speak ; no thought which ever stirred  
 A human breast should be untold ; all passions,  
 All soft emotions, from the turbulent stir  
 Within a heart fed with desires like mine,  
 To the last comfort shutting the tired lids  
 Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away  
 Beneath the tent-tree by the wayside well :  
 And this in language as the need should be,  
 Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,  
 Now piled up in a grand array of words.  
 This done, to perfect and consummate all,

Even as a luminous haze links star to star,  
 I would supply all chasms with music, breathing  
 Mysterious motions of the soul, no way  
 To be defined save in strange melodies.  
 Last, having thus revealed all I could love,  
 Having received all love bestowed on it,  
 I would die : preserving so throughout my course  
 God full on me, as I was full on men :  
 He would approve my prayer, " I have gone through  
 The loveliness of life ; create for me  
 If not for men, or take me to thyself,  
 Eternal, infinite love ! "

If thou hast ne'er  
 Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,  
 Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou art  
 No king of mine.

*Par.* Ah me !

*Apr.* But thou art here !

Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end  
 Till thine own powers for compassing the bliss  
 Were blind with glory ; nor grow mad to grasp  
 At once the prize long patient toil should claim,  
 Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I  
 Would do as thou, a second time : nay, listen !  
 Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,  
 Our time so brief, 't is clear if we refuse  
 The means so limited, the tools so rude  
 To execute our purpose, life will fleet,  
 And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.  
 We will be wise in time : what though our work  
 Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,  
 Be crippled every way ? 'T were little praise  
 Did full resources wait on our goodwill  
 At every turn. Let all be as it is.  
 Some say the earth is even so contrived  
 That tree and flower, a vesture gay, conceal  
 A bare and skeleton framework. Had we means  
 Answering to our mind ! But now I seem  
 Wrecked on a savage isle : how rear thereon  
 My palace ? Branching palms the props shall be,  
 Fruit glossy mingling ; gems are for the East ;  
 Who heeds them ? I can pass them. Serpents' scales,  
 And painted birds' down, furs and fishes' skins  
 Must help me ; and a little here and there  
 Is all I can aspire to : still my art  
 Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.

"Had I green jars of malachite, this way  
 I'd range them : where those sea-shells glisten above,  
 Cressets should hang, by right : this way we set  
 The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,  
 Woven of fern and rush and blossoming flag."  
 Or if, by fortune, some completer grace  
 Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight sample  
 Of the prouder workmanship my own home boasts,  
 Some trifle little heeded there, but here  
 The place's one perfection — with what joy  
 Would I enshrine the relic, cheerfully  
 Foregoing all the marvels out of reach !  
 Could I retain one strain of all the psalm  
 Of the angels, one word of the fiat of God,  
 To let my followers know what such things are !  
 I would adventure nobly for their sakes :  
 When nights were still, and still the moaning sea,  
 And far away I could descry the land  
 Whence I departed, whither I return,  
 I would dispart the waves, and stand once more  
 At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,  
 And fling my gains to them, worthless or true.

"Friends," I would say, "I went far, far for them,  
 Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the mounds  
 Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow out,  
 Past tracts of milk-white minute blinding sand,  
 Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly  
 Gathered these magic herbs, berry and bud,  
 In haste, not pausing to reject the weeds,  
 But happy plucking them at any price.  
 To me, who have seen them bloom in their own soil,  
 They are scarce lovely : plait and wear them, you !  
 And guess, from what they are, the springs that fed them,  
 The stars that sparkled o'er them, night by night,  
 The snakes that travelled far to sip their dew !"  
 Thus for my higher loves ; and thus even weakness  
 Would win me honor. But not these alone  
 Should claim my care ; for common life, its wants  
 And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues :  
 The lowest hind should not possess a hope,  
 A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better  
 Than he his own heart's language. I would live  
 Forever in the thoughts I thus explored,  
 As a discoverer's memory is attached  
 To all he finds ; they should be mine henceforth,  
 Imbued with me, though free to all before :

For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine,  
 Should come up crusted o'er with gems. Nor this  
 Would need a meaner spirit than the first ;  
 Nay, 't would be but the selfsame spirit, clothed  
 In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit :  
 As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow  
 And comforts violets in their hermitage.  
 But, master, poet, who hast done all this,  
 How didst thou 'scape the ruin whelming me ?  
 Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,  
 Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall,  
 Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,  
 Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey,  
 That will not wait thy summons, will not rise  
 Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand  
 Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd  
 By thee forever, bright to thy despair ?  
 Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er  
 Resolve to single out one, though the rest  
 Should vanish, and to give that one, entire  
 In beauty, to the world ; forgetting, so,  
 Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power ?  
 And, this determined, wast thou ne'er seduced  
 By memories and regrets and passionate love,  
 To glance once more farewell ? and did their eyes  
 Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until  
 Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,  
 And laugh that man's applause or welfare ever  
 Could tempt thee to forsake them ? Or when years  
 Had passed and still their love possessed thee wholly,  
 When from without some murmur startled thee  
 Of darkling mortals famished for one ray  
 Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,  
 Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those spells  
 And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil  
 Thy early mission, long ago renounced,  
 And to that end, select some shape once more ?  
 And did not mist-like influences, thick films,  
 Faint memories of the rest that charmed so long  
 Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee off,  
 As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who treads  
 A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm ?  
 Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall ;  
 Say, I was tempted sorely : say but this,  
 Dear lord, Aprile's lord !

*Par.*

Clasp me not thus,

Aprile! That the truth should reach me thus!  
 We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not or I faint!  
*Apr.* My king! and envious thoughts could outrage  
 thee?

Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice  
 In thy success, as thou! Let our God's praise  
 Go bravely through the world at last! What care  
 Through me or thee? I feel thy breath. Why, tears?  
 Tears in the darkness, and from thee to me?

*Par.* Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn  
 To love; and, merciful God, forgive us both!  
 We wake at length from weary dreams; but both  
 Have slept in fairy-land: though dark and drear  
 Appears the world before us, we no less  
 Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled still.  
 I too have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE —  
 Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.  
 Still thou hast beauty, and I, power. We wake:  
 What penance canst devise for both of us?

*Apr.* I hear thee faintly. The thick darkness! Even  
 Thine eyes are hid. 'T is as I knew: I speak,  
 And now I die. But I have seen thy face!  
 O poet, think of me, and sing of me!  
 But to have seen thee and to die so soon!

*Par.* Die not, Aprile! We must never part.  
 Are we not halves of one dissevered world,  
 Whom this strange chance unites once more? Part?  
 never!

Till thou the lover, know; and I, the knower,  
 Love — until both are saved. Aprile, hear!  
 We will accept our gains, and use them — now!  
 God, he will die upon my breast! Aprile!

*Apr.* To speak but once, and die! yet by his side.  
 Hush! hush!

Ha! go you ever girt about  
 With phantoms, powers? I have created such,  
 But these seem real as I.

*Par.* Whom can you see  
 Through the accursed darkness?

*Apr.* Stay; I know,  
 I know them: who should know them well as I?  
 White brows, lit up with glory; poets all!

*Par.* Let him but live, and I have my reward!

*Apr.* Yes; I see now. God is the perfect poet,  
 Who in his person acts his own creations.  
 Had you but told me this at first! Hush! hush!



*Par.* Live! for my sake, because of my great sin,  
To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words  
And their deep import. Live! 't is not too late.  
I have a quiet home for us, and friends.  
Michal shall smile on you. Hear you? Lean thus,  
And breathe my breath. I shall not lose one word  
Of all your speech, one little word, Aprile!

*Apr.* No, no. Crown me? I am not one of you!  
'T is he, the king, you seek. I am not one.

*Par.* Thy spirit, at least, Aprile! Let me love.

I have attained, and now I may depart.

### III. PARACELSUS.

SCENE, *Basel*; a chamber in the house of *Paracelsus*. 1526.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

*Par.* Heap logs and let the blaze laugh out!

*Fest.*

True, true!

'T is very fit all, time and chance and change  
Have wrought since last we sat thus, face to face  
And soul to soul — all cares, far-looking fears,  
Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred  
By your long absence, should be cast away,  
Forgotten in this glad unhop'd renewal  
Of our affections.

*Par.* Oh, omit not aught  
Which witnesses your own and Michal's own  
Affection: spare not that! Only forget  
The honors and the glories and what not,  
It pleases you to tell profusely out.

*Fest.* Nay, even your honors, in a sense, I waive:  
The wondrous Paracelsus, life's dispenser,  
Fate's commissary, idol of the schools  
And courts, shall be no more than Aureole still,  
Still Aureole and my friend as when we parted  
Some twenty years ago, and I restrained  
As best I could the promptings of my spirit  
Which secretly advanced you, from the first,  
To the pre-eminent rank which, since, your own  
Adventurous ardor, nobly triumphing,  
Has won for you.

*Par.* Yes, yes. And Michal's face  
Still wears that quiet and peculiar light  
Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl?

*Fest.* Just so.

*Par.* And yet her calm sweet countenance,  
Though saintly, was not sad ; for she would sing  
Alone. Does she still sing alone, bird-like,  
Not dreaming you are near ? Her carols dropt  
In flakes through that old leafy bower built under  
The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice  
Among the trees above, while I, unseen,  
Sat conning some rare scroll from Tritheim's shelves,  
Much wondering notes so simple could divert  
My mind from study. Those were happy days.  
Respect all such as sing when all alone !

*Fest.* Scarcely alone : her children, you may guess,  
Are wild beside her.

*Par.* Ah, those children quite  
Unsettle the pure picture in my mind :  
A girl, she was so perfect, so distinct.  
No change, no change ! Not but this added grace  
May blend and harmonize with its compeers,  
And Michal may become her motherhood ;  
But 't is a change, and I detest all change,  
And most a change in aught I loved long since.  
So, Michal — you have said she thinks of me ?

*Fest.* O very proud will Michal be of you !  
Imagine how we sat, long winter-nights,  
Scheming and wondering, shaping your presumed  
Adventure, or devising its reward ;  
Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.  
For it was strange how, even when most secure  
In our domestic peace, a certain dim  
And fitting shade could sadden all ; it seemed  
A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,  
A sense of something wanting, incomplete —  
Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided  
By mute consent — but, said or unsaid, felt  
To point to one so loved and so long lost.  
And then the hopes rose and shut out the fears —  
How you would laugh should I recount them now !  
I still predicted your return at last  
With gifts beyond the greatest of them all,  
All Tritheim's wondrous troop ; did one of which  
Attain renown by any chance, I smiled,  
As well aware of who would prove his peer.  
Michal was sure some woman, long ere this,  
As beautiful as you were sage, had loved . . .

*Par.* Far-seeing, truly, to discern so much

In the fantastic projects and day-dreams  
Of a raw restless boy!

*Fest.* Oh, no: the sunrise  
Well warranted our faith in this full noon!  
Can I forget the anxious voice which said,  
“Festus, have thoughts like these e’er shaped themselves  
In other brains than mine? have their possessors  
Existed in like circumstance? were they weak  
As I, or ever constant from the first,  
Despising youth’s allurements and rejecting  
As spider-films the shackles I endure?  
Is there hope for me?” — and I answered gravely  
As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,  
More gifted mortal. O you must remember,  
For all your glorious . . .

*Par.* Glorious? ay, this hair,  
These hands — nay, touch them, they are mine! Recall  
With all the said recallings, times when thus  
To lay them by your own ne’er turned you pale  
As now. Most glorious, are they not?

*Fest.* Why — why —  
Something must be subtracted from success  
So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,  
Who should object such drawbacks. Still, still, Aureole,  
You are changed, very changed! ’Twere losing nothing  
To look well to it: you must not be stolen  
From the enjoyment of your well-won meed.

*Par.* My friend! you seek my pleasure, past a doubt:  
You will best gain your point, by talking, not  
Of me, but of yourself.

*Fest.* Have I not said  
All touching Michal and my children? Sure  
You know, by this, full well how Aennchen looks  
Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown hair;  
And Aureole’s glee when some stray gannet builds  
Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope  
Have I that he will honor (the wild imp)  
His namesake. Sigh not! ’t is too much to ask  
That all we love should reach the same proud fate.  
But you are very kind to humor me  
By showing interest in my quiet life;  
You, who of old could never tame yourself  
To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .

*Par.* Festus, strange secrets are let out by death  
Who blabs so oft the follies of this world:  
And I am death’s familiar, as you know.

I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,  
 Warped even from his go-cart to one end —  
 The living on princes' smiles, reflected from  
 A mighty herd of favorites. No mean trick  
 He left untried, and truly well-nigh wormed  
 All traces of God's finger out of him :  
 Then died, grown old. And just an hour before,  
 Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes,  
 He sat up suddenly, and with natural voice  
 Said that in spite of thick air and closed doors  
 God told him it was June ; and he knew well,  
 Without such telling, harebells grew in June ;  
 And all that kings could ever give or take  
 Would not be precious as those blooms to him.  
 Just so, allowing I am passing sage,  
 It seems to me much worthier argument  
 Why pausies,\* eyes that laugh, bear beauty's prize  
 From violets, eyes that dream — (your Michal's choice) —  
 Than all fools find to wonder at in me  
 Or in my fortunes. And be very sure  
 I say this from no prurient restlessness,  
 No self-complacency, itching to turn,  
 Vary and view its pleasure from all points,  
 And, in this instance, willing other men  
 Should be at pains, demonstrate to itself  
 The realness of the very joy it tastes.  
 What should delight me like the news of friends  
 Whose memories were a solace to me oft,  
 As mountain-paths to wild fowls in their flight ?  
 Offer than you had wasted thought on me  
 Had you been wise, and rightly valued bliss.  
 But there 's no taming nor repressing hearts :  
 God knows I need such ! — So, you heard me speak ?

*Fest.* Speak ? when ?

*Par.* When but this morning at my class ?  
 There was noise and crowd enough. I saw you not.  
 Surely you know I am engaged to fill  
 The chair here ? — that 't is part of my proud fate  
 To lecture to as many thick-skulled youths  
 As please, each day, to throng the theatre,  
 To my great reputation, and no small  
 Danger of Basel's benches long unused  
 To crack beneath such honor ?

*Fest.* I was there ;  
 I mingled with the throng : shall I avow

\* Citrinula (flammula) herba Paracelso multum familiaris. — DOERN.

Small care was mine to listen? — too intent  
 On gathering from the murmurs of the crowd  
 A full corroboration of my hopes!  
 What can I learn about your powers? but they  
 Know, care for nought beyond your actual state,  
 Your actual value; yet they worship you,  
 Those various natures whom you sway as one!  
 But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .

*Par.* Stop, o' God's name: the thing's by no means yet  
 Past remedy! Shall I read this morning's labor  
 — At least in substance? Nought so worth the gaining  
 As an apt scholar! Thus then, with all due  
 Precision and emphasis — you, beside, are clearly  
 Guiltless of understanding more, a whit,  
 The subject than your stool — allowed to be  
 A notable advantage.

*Fest.* Surely, Aureole,  
 You laugh at me!

*Par.* I laugh? Ha, ha! thank heaven,  
 I charge you, if 't be so! for I forget  
 Much, and what laughter should be like. No less,  
 However, I forego that luxury  
 Since it alarms the friend who brings it back.  
 True, laughter like my own must echo strangely  
 To thinking men; a smile were better far;  
 So, make me smile! If the exulting look  
 You wore but now be smiling, 't is so long  
 Since I have smiled! Alas, such smiles are born  
 Alone of hearts like yours, or herdsmen's souls  
 Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,  
 Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,  
 And in the earth a stage for altars only.  
 Never change, Festus: I say, never change!

*Fest.* My God, if he be wretched after all!

*Par.* When last we parted, Festus, you declared,  
 — Or Michal, yes, her soft lips whispered words  
 I have preserved. She told me she believed  
 I should succeed (meaning, that in the search  
 I then engaged in, I should meet success)  
 And yet be wretched: now, she augured false.

*Fest.* Thank heaven! but you spoke strangely: could I  
 venture  
 To think bare apprehension lest your friend,  
 Dazzled by your resplendent course, might find  
 Henceforth less sweetness in his own, could move  
 Such earnest mood in you? Fear not, dear friend,

That I shall leave you, inwardly repining  
Your lot was not my own !

*Par.* And this forever !  
Forever ! gull who may, they will be gulled !  
They will not look nor think ; 't is nothing new  
In them : but surely he is not of them !  
My Festus, do you know, I reckoned, you —  
Though all beside were sand-blind — you, my friend,  
Would look at me, once close, with piercing eye  
Untroubled by the false glare that confounds  
A weaker vision ; would remain serene,  
Though singular amid a gaping throng.  
I feared you, or I had come, sure, long ere this,  
To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,  
And Rhasis is a sage, and Basel boasts  
A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest  
Past all dispute ! 'T is vain to fret at it.  
I have vowed long ago my worshippers  
Shall owe to their own deep sagacity  
All further information, good or bad.  
Small risk indeed my reputation runs,  
Unless perchance the glance now searching me  
Be fixed much longer ; for it seems to spell  
Dimly the characters a simpler man  
Might read distinct enough. Old eastern books  
Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space  
Remained unchanged in semblance ; nay, his brow  
Was hued with triumph : every spirit then  
Praising, *his* heart on flame the while : — a tale !  
Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray ?

*Fest.* Some foul deed sullies then a life which else  
Were raised supreme ?

*Par.* Good : I do well, most well !  
Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret themselves  
With what 't is past their power to comprehend ?  
I should not strive now : only, having nursed  
The faint surmise that one yet walked the earth,  
One, at least, not the utter fool of show,  
Not absolutely formed to be the dupe  
Of shallow plausibilities alone ;  
One who, in youth, found wise enough to choose  
The happiness his riper years approve,  
Was yet so anxious for another's sake,  
That, ere his friend could rush upon a mad  
And ruinous course, the converse of his own,  
His gentle spirit essayed, prejudged for him

The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,  
 And warned the weak one in such tender words,  
 Such accents — his whole heart in every tone —  
 That oft their memory comforted that friend  
 When it by right should have increased despair :  
 — Having believed, I say, that this one man  
 Could never lose the light thus from the first  
 His portion — how should I refuse to grieve  
 At even my gain if it disturb our old  
 Relation, if it make me out more wise ?  
 Therefore, once more reminding him how well  
 He prophesied, I note the single flaw  
 That spoils his prophet's title. In plain words,  
 You were deceived, and thus were you deceived —  
 I have not been successful, and yet am  
 Most miserable ; 't is said at last ; nor you  
 Give credit, lest you force me to concede  
 That common sense yet lives upon the world !

*Fest.* You surely do not mean to banter me ?

*Par.* You know, or — if you have been wise enough  
 To cleanse your memory of such matters — knew,  
 As far as words of mine could make it clear,  
 That 't was my purpose to find joy or grief  
 Solely in the fulfilment of my plan  
 Or plot or whatsoe'er it was ; rejoicing  
 Alone as it proceeded prosperously,  
 Sorrowing then only when mischance retarded  
 Its progress. That was in those Würzburg days !  
 Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,  
 I have pursued this plan with all my strength ;  
 And having failed therein most signally,  
 Cannot object to ruin utter and drear  
 As all-excelling would have been the prize  
 Had fortune favored me. I scarce have right  
 To vex your frank good spirit late so glad  
 In my supposed prosperity, I know,  
 And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,  
 Would well agree to let your error live,  
 Nay, strengthen it with fables of success.  
 But mine is no condition to refuse  
 The transient solace of so rare a godsend,  
 My solitary luxury, my one friend :  
 Accordingly I venture to put off  
 The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me,  
 Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,  
 Prone at his mercy — but he is my friend !

Not that he needs retain his aspect grave ;  
 That answers not my purpose ; for 't is like,  
 Some sunny morning — Basel being drained  
 Of its wise population, every corner  
 Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned clerks,  
 Here Ecolampadius, looking worlds of wit,  
 Here Castellanus, as profound as he,  
 Munsterus here, Frobenius there, all squeezed  
 And staring, — that the zany of the show,  
 Even Paracelsus, shall put off before them  
 His trappings with a grace but seldom judged  
 Expedient in such cases : — the grim smile  
 That will go round ! Is it not therefore best  
 To venture a rehearsal like the present  
 In a small way ? Where are the signs I seek,  
 The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn  
 Due to all quacks ? Why, this will never do !

*Fest.* These are foul vapors, Aureole ; nought beside !  
 The effect of watching, study, weariness.  
 Were there a spark of truth in the confusion  
 Of these wild words, you would not outrage thus  
 Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard  
 These wanderings, bred of faintness and much study.  
 'T is not thus you would trust a trouble to me,  
 To Michal's friend.

*Par.* I have said it, dearest Festus !  
 For the manner, 't is ungracious probably ;  
 You may have it told in broken sobs, one day,  
 And scalding tears, ere long : but I thought best  
 To keep that off as long as possible.  
 Do you wonder still ?

*Fest.* No ; it must oft fall out  
 That one whose labor perfects any work,  
 Shall rise from it with eye so worn that he  
 Of all men least can measure the extent  
 Of what he has accomplished. He alone  
 Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,  
 May clearly scan the little he effects :  
 But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,  
 Estimate each aright.

*Par.* This worthy Festus  
 Is one of them, at last ! 'T is so with all !  
 First, they set down all progress as a dream ;  
 And next, when he whose quick discomfiture  
 Was counted on, accomplishes some few  
 And doubtful steps in his career, — behold,



They look for every inch of ground to vanish  
Beneath his tread, so sure they spy success!

*Fest.* Few doubtful steps? when death retires before  
Your presence — when the noblest of mankind,  
Broken in body or subdued in soul,  
May through your skill renew their vigor, raise  
The shattered frame to pristine stateliness?  
When men in racking pain may purchase dreams  
Of what delights them most, swooning at once  
Into a sea of bliss or rapt along  
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light?  
When we may look to you as one ordained  
To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees  
Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul?  
When . . .

*Par.* When and where, the devil, did you get  
This notable news?

*Fest.* Even from the common voice;  
From those whose envy, daring not dispute  
The wonders it decries, attributes them  
To magic and such folly.

*Par.* Folly? Why not  
To magic, pray? You find a comfort doubtless  
In holding, God ne'er troubles him about  
Us or our doings: once we were judged worth  
The devil's tempting . . . I offend: forgive me,  
And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole  
Was fair enough as prophesyings go;  
At fault a little in detail, but quite  
Precise enough in the main; and hereupon  
I pay due homage: you guessed long ago  
(The prophet!) I should fail — and I have failed.

*Fest.* You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which fed  
Your youth have not been realized as yet?  
Some obstacle has barred them hitherto?  
Or that their innate . . .

*Par.* As I said but now,  
You have a very decent prophet's fame,  
So you but shun details here. Little matter  
Whether those hopes were mad, — the aims they sought,  
Safe and secure from all ambitious foals;  
Or whether my weak wits are overcome  
By what a better spirit would scorn: I fail.  
And now methinks 't were best to change a theme  
I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.  
I say confusedly what comes uppermost;

But there are times when patience proves at fault,  
 As now : this morning's strange encounter — you  
 Beside me once again ! you, whom I guessed  
 Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)  
 No friend have I among the saints at peace,  
 To judge by any good their prayers effect :  
 I knew you would have helped me — why not he,  
 My strange competitor in enterprise,  
 Bound for the same end by another path,  
 Arrived, or ill or well, before the time  
 At our disastrous journey's doubtful close ?  
 How goes it with Aprile ? Ah, they miss  
 Your lone sad sunny idleness of heaven,  
 Our martyrs for the world's sake ; heaven shuts fast :  
 'The poor mad poet is howling by this time !  
 Since you are my sole friend then, here or there,  
 I could not quite repress the varied feelings  
 This meeting wakens ; they have had their vent,  
 And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still  
 Hang like a fretwork on the gate (or what  
 In my time was a gate) fronting the road  
 From Einsiedeln to Lachen ?

*Fest.*

Trifle not :

Answer me, for my sake alone ! You smiled  
 Just now, when I supposed some deed, unworthy  
 Yourself, might blot the else so bright result ;  
 Yet if your motives have continued pure,  
 Your will unfaltering, and in spite of this,  
 You have experienced a defeat, why then  
 I say not you would cheerfully withdraw  
 From contest — mortal hearts are not so fashioned —  
 But surely you would ne'ertheless withdraw.  
 You sought not fame nor gain nor even love,  
 No end distinct from knowledge, — I repeat  
 Your very words : once satisfied that knowledge  
 Is a mere dream, you would announce as much,  
 Yourself the first. But how is the event ?  
 You are defeated — and I find you here !

*Par.* As though "here" did not signify defeat !  
 I spoke not of my little labors here  
 But of the break-down of my general aims :  
 For you, aware of their extent and scope,  
 To look on these sage lecturings, approved  
 By beardless boys, and bearded dotards worse,  
 As a fit consummation of such aims,  
 Is worthy notice. A professorship

At Basel! Since you see so much in it,  
And think my life was reasonably drained  
Of life's delights to render me a match  
For duties arduous as such post demands, —  
Be it far from me to deny my power  
To fill the petty circle lotted out  
Of infinite space, or justify the host  
Of honors thence accruing. So, take notice,  
This jewel dangling from my neck preserves  
The features of a prince, my skill restored  
To plague his people some few years to come:  
And all through a pure whim. He had eased the earth  
For me, but that the droll despair which seized  
The vermin of his household, tickled me.  
I came to see. Here, drivelled the physician,  
Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault;  
There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscope  
Had promised him interminable years;  
Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's mouth  
With some undoubted relic — a sudary  
Of the Virgin; while another piebald knave  
Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)  
Was actively preparing 'neath his nose  
Such a suffumigation as, once fired,  
Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.  
I cursed the doctor and upset the brother,  
Brushed past the conjurer, vowed that the first gust  
Of stench from the ingredients just alight  
Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,  
Not easily laid: and ere an hour the prince  
Slept as he never slept since prince he was.  
A day — and I was posting for my life,  
Placarded through the town as one whose spite  
Had near availed to stop the blessed effects  
Of the doctor's nostrum, which, well seconded  
By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke —  
Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up  
Hard by in the abbey — raised the prince to life;  
To the great reputation of the seer  
Who, confident, expected all along  
The glad event — the doctor's recompense —  
Much largess from his highness to the monks —  
And the vast solace of his loving people,  
Whose general satisfaction to increase,  
The prince was pleased no longer to defer  
The burning of some dozen heretics

Remanded till God's mercy should be shown  
 Touching his sickness : last of all were joined  
 Ample directions to all loyal folk  
 To swell the complement by seizing me  
 Who — doubtless some rank sorcerer — endeavored  
 To thwart these pious offices, obstruct  
 The prince's cure, and frustrate heaven by help  
 Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.  
 By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks  
 Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest  
 Of further favors. This one case may serve  
 To give sufficient taste of many such,  
 So, let them pass. Those shelves support a pile  
 Of patents, licenses, diplomas, titles,  
 From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy ;  
 They authorize some honor ; ne'ertheless,  
 I set more store by this Erasmus sent ;  
 He trusts me ; our Frobenius is his friend,  
 And him " I raised " (nay, read it) " from the dead."  
 I weary you, I see. I merely sought  
 To show, there 's no great wonder after all  
 That, while I fill the class-room and attract  
 A crowd to Basel, I get leave to stay ;  
 And therefore need not scruple to accept  
 The utmost they can offer, if I please :  
 For 't is but right the world should be prepared  
 To treat with favor e'en fantastic wants  
 Of one like me, used up in serving her.  
 Just as the mortal, whom the gods in part  
 Devoured, received in place of his lost limb  
 Some virtue or other — cured disease, I think ;  
 You mind the fables we have read together.

*Fest.* You do not think I comprehend a word.  
 The time was, Aureole, you were apt enough  
 To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious breath ;  
 But surely you must feel how vague and strange  
 These speeches sound.

*Par.* Well, then : you know my hope  
 I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain ;  
 That truth is just as far from me as ever ;  
 That I have thrown my life away ; that sorrow  
 On that account is idle, and further effort  
 To mend and patch what 's marred beyond repairing,  
 As useless : and all this was taught your friend  
 By the convincing good old-fashioned method  
 Of force — by sheer compulsion. Is that plain ?

*Fest.* Dear Aureole, can it be my fears were just ?  
God wills not . . .

*Par.* Now, 't is this I most admire —  
The constant talk men of your stamp keep up  
Of God's will, as they style it ; one would swear  
Man had but merely to uplift his eye,  
And see the will in question charactered  
On the heaven's vault. 'T is hardly wise to moot  
Such topics : doubts are many and faith is weak.  
I know as much of any will of God  
As knows some dumb and tortured brute what Man,  
His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows  
That plague him every way ; but there, of course,  
Where least he suffers, longest he remains —  
My case ; and for such reasons I plod on,  
Subdued but not convinced. I know as little  
Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped  
Better things in my youth. I simply know  
I am no master here, but trained and beaten  
Into the path I tread ; and here I stay,  
Until some further intimation reach me,  
Like an obedient drudge. Though I prefer  
To view the whole thing as a task imposed  
Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be done —  
Yet, I deny not, there is made provision  
Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect ;  
Nay, some which please me too, for all my pride —  
Pleasures that once were pains : the iron ring  
Festering about a slave's neck grows at length  
Into the flesh it eats. I hate no longer  
A host of petty vile delights, undreamed of  
Or spurned before ; such now supply the place  
Of my dead aims : as in the autumn woods  
Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots  
Springs up a fungous brood sickly and pale,  
Chill mushrooms colored like a corpse's cheek.

*Fest.* If I interpret well your words, I own  
It troubles me but little that your aims,  
Vast in their dawning and most likely grown  
Extravagantly since, have baffled you.  
Perchance I am glad ; you merit greater praise ;  
Because they are too glorious to be gained,  
You do not blindly cling to them and die ;  
You fell, but have not sullenly refused  
To rise, because an angel worsted you  
In wrestling, though the world holds not your peer ;

And though too harsh and sudden is the change  
 To yield content as yet, still you pursue  
 The ungracious path as though 't were rosy-strewn.  
 'T is well: and your reward, or soon or late,  
 Will come from him whom no man serves in vain.

*Par.* Ah, very fine! For my part, I conceive  
 The very pausing from all further toil,  
 Which you find heinous, would become a seal  
 To the sincerity of all my deeds.  
 To be consistent I should die at once;  
 I calculated on no after-life;  
 Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)  
 Here am I with as passionate regret  
 For youth and health and love so vainly lavished,  
 As if their preservation had been first  
 And foremost in my thoughts; and this strange fact  
 Humbled me wondrously, and had due force  
 In rendering me the less averse to follow  
 A certain counsel, a mysterious warning —  
 You will not understand — but 't was a man  
 With aims not mine and yet pursued like mine,  
 With the same fervor and no more success,  
 Perishing in my sight; who summoned me,  
 As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,  
 To serve my race at once; to wait no longer  
 That God should interfere in my behalf,  
 But to distrust myself, put pride away,  
 And give my gains, imperfect as they were,  
 To men. I have not leisure to explain  
 How, since, a singular series of events  
 Has raised me to the station you behold,  
 Wherein I seem to turn to most account  
 The mere wreck of the past, — perhaps receive  
 Some feeble glimmering token that God views  
 And may approve my penance: therefore here  
 You find me, doing most good or least harm.  
 And if folks wonder much and profit little  
 'T is not my fault; only, I shall rejoice  
 When my part in the farce is shuffled through,  
 And the curtain falls: I must hold out till then.

*Fest.* Till when, dear Aureole?

*Par.* Till I 'm fairly thrust  
 From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle,  
 And even professors fall: should that arrive,  
 I see no sin in ceding to my bent.  
 You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us

We sin ; God's intimations rather fail  
 In clearness than in energy : 't were well  
 Did they but indicate the course to take  
 Like that to be forsaken. I would fain  
 Be spared a further sample. Here I stand,  
 And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.

*Fest.* Be you but firm on that head ; long ere then  
 All I expect will come to pass, I trust :  
 The cloud that wraps you will have disappeared.  
 Meantime, I see small chance of such event :  
 They praise you here as one whose lore, already  
 Divulged, eclipses all the past can show,  
 But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,  
 Are faint anticipations of a glory  
 About to be revealed. When Basel's crowds  
 Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content  
 That he depart.

*Par.* This favor at their hands  
 I look for earlier than your view of things  
 Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw to-day,  
 Remove the full half sheer amazement draws,  
 Mere novelty, nought else ; and next, the tribe  
 Whose innate blockish dulness just perceives  
 That unless miracles (as seem my works)  
 Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight  
 To puzzle the devil ; next, the numerous set  
 Who bitterly hate established schools, and help  
 The teacher that oppugns them, till he once  
 Have planted his own doctrine, when the teacher  
 May reckon on their rancor in his turn ;  
 Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves  
 Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue,  
 But seeks, by flattery and crafty nursing,  
 To force my system to a premature  
 Short-lived development. Why swell the list ?  
 Each has his end to serve, and his best way  
 Of serving it : remove all these, remains  
 A scantling, a poor dozen at the best,  
 Worthy to look for sympathy and service,  
 And likely to draw profit from my pains.

*Fest.* 'T is no encouraging picture : still these few  
 Redeem their fellows. Once the germ implanted,  
 Its growth, if slow, is sure.

*Par.* God grant it so !  
 I would make some amends : but if I fail,  
 The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,

That much is in my method and my manner,  
 My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,  
 Which hinders of reception and result  
 My doctrine : much to say, small skill to speak !  
 These old aims suffered not a looking-off  
 Though for an instant ; therefore, only when  
 I thus renounced them and resolved to reap  
 Some present fruit — to teach mankind some truth  
 So dearly purchased — only then I found  
 Such teaching was an art requiring cares  
 And qualities peculiar to itself ;  
 That to possess was one thing — to display  
 Another. With renown first in my thoughts,  
 Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it :  
 One grows but little apt to learn these things.

*Fest.* If it be so, which nowise I believe,  
 There needs no waiting fuller dispensation  
 To leave a labor of so little use.

Why not throw up the irksome charge at once ?

*Par.* A task, a task !

But wherefore hide the whole

Extent of degradation, once engaged  
 In the confessing vein ? Despite of all  
 My fine talk of obedience and repugnance,  
 Docility and what not, 't is yet to learn  
 If when the task shall really be performed,  
 My inclination free to choose once more,  
 I shall do aught but slightly modify  
 The nature of the hated task I quit.  
 In plain words, I am spoiled ; my life still tends  
 As first it tended ; I am broken and trained  
 To my old habits : they are part of me.  
 I know, and none so well, my darling ends  
 Are proved impossible : no less, no less,  
 Even now what humors me, fond fool, as when  
 Their faint ghosts sit with me and flatter me  
 And send me back content to my dull round ?  
 How can I change this soul ? — this apparatus  
 Constructed solely for their purposes,  
 So well adapted to their every want,  
 To search out and discover, prove and perfect ;  
 This intricate machine whose most minute  
 And meanest motions have their charm to me  
 Though to none else — an aptitude I seize,  
 An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,  
 A property, a fitness, I explain



And I alone : — how can I change my soul?  
 And this wronged body, worthless save when tasked  
 Under that soul's dominion — used to care  
 For its bright master's cares and quite subdued  
 Its proper cravings — not to ail nor pine  
 So he but prosper — whither drag this poor  
 Tried patient body? God! how I essayed  
 To live like that mad poet, for a while,  
 To love alone; and how I felt too warped  
 And twisted and deformed! What should I do,  
 Even though released from drudgery, but return  
 Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and sore,  
 To my old life and die as I began!  
 I cannot feed on beauty for the sake  
 Of beauty only, nor can drink in balm  
 From lovely objects for their loveliness;  
 My nature cannot lose her first imprint;  
 I still must hoard and heap and class all truths  
 With one ulterior purpose: I must know!  
 Would God translate me to his throne, believe  
 That I should only listen to his word  
 To further my own aim! For other men,  
 Beauty is prodigally strewn around,  
 And I were happy could I quench as they  
 This mad and thriveless longing, and content me  
 With beauty for itself alone: alas,  
 I have addressed a frock of heavy mail  
 Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights;  
 And now the forest-creatures fly from me,  
 The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more.  
 Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrive,  
 I shall o'ertake the company and ride  
 Glittering as they!

*Fest.* I think I apprehend  
 What you would say: if you, in truth, design  
 To enter once more on the life thus left,  
 Seek not to hide that all this consciousness  
 Of failure is assumed!

*Par.* My friend, my friend,  
 I tell, you listen; I explain, perhaps  
 You understand: there our communion ends.  
 Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse?  
 When we would thoroughly know the sick man's state  
 We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft  
 The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,  
 And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare

My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up  
 My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem  
 Enough made known? You! who are you, forsooth?  
 That is the crowning operation claimed  
 By the arch-demonstrator — heaven the hall,  
 And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you  
 Secure good places: 't will be worth the while.

*Fest.* Are you mad, Aureole? What can I have said  
 To call for this? I judged from your own words.

*Par.* Oh, doubtless! A sick wretch describes the ape  
 That mocks him from the bed-foot, and all gravely  
 You thither turn at once: or he recounts  
 The perilous journey he has late performed,  
 And you are puzzled much how that could be!  
 You find me here, half stupid and half mad;  
 It makes no part of my delight to search  
 Into these matters, much less undergo  
 Another's scrutiny; but so it chances  
 That I am led to trust my state to you:  
 And the event is, you combine, contrast  
 And ponder on my foolish words as though  
 They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here —  
 Here, loathsome with despair and hate and rage!  
 Is there no fear, no shrinking and no shame?  
 Will you guess nothing? will you spare me nothing?  
 Must I go deeper? Ay or no?

*Fest.* Dear friend . . .

*Par.* True: I am brutal — 't is a part of it;  
 The plague's sign — you are not a lazar-haunter.  
 How should you know? Well then, you think it strange  
 I should profess to have failed utterly,  
 And yet propose an ultimate return  
 To courses void of hope: and this, because  
 You know not what temptation is, nor how  
 'T is like to ply men in the sickliest part.  
 You are to understand that we who make  
 Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end:  
 There is not one sharp volley shot at us,  
 Which 'scaped with life, though hurt, we slacken pace  
 And gather by the wayside herbs and roots  
 To stanch our wounds, secure from further harm:  
 We are assailed to life's extremest verge.  
 It will be well indeed if I return,  
 A harmless busy fool, to my old ways!  
 I would forget hints of another fate,  
 Significant enough, which silent hours  
 Have lately scared me with.

*Fest.* Another! and what?

*Par.* After all, Festus, you say well: I am  
A man yet: I need never humble me.  
I would have been — something, I know not what;  
But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl.  
There are worse portions than this one of mine.  
You say well!

*Fest.* Ah!

*Par.* And deeper degradation!  
If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,  
If vanity should become the chosen food  
Of a sunk mind, should stifle even the wish  
To find its early aspirations true,  
Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-breath —  
An atmosphere of craft and trick and lies;  
Should make it proud to emulate, surpass  
Base natures in the practices which woke  
Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no!  
Utter damnation is reserved for hell!  
I had immortal feelings; such shall never  
Be wholly quenched: no, no!

My friend, you wear

A melancholy face, and certain 't is  
There 's little cheer in all this dismal work.  
But was it my desire to set abroad  
Such memories and forebodings? I foresaw  
Where they would drive. 'T were better we discuss  
News from Lucerne or Zurich; ask and tell  
Of Egypt's flaring sky or Spain's cork-groves.

*Fest.* I have thought: trust me, this mood will pass  
away!

I know you and the lofty spirit you bear,  
And easily ravel out a clue to all.  
These are the trials meet for such as you,  
Nor must you hope exemption: to be mortal  
Is to be plied with trials manifold.  
Look round! The obstacles which kept the rest  
From your ambition, have been spurned by you;  
Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind them all,  
Were flax before your resolute soul, which nought  
Avails to awe save these delusions bred  
From its own strength, its selfsame strength disguised,  
Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole! Since  
The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,  
The fawn a rustling bough, mortals their cares,  
And higher natures yet would slight and laugh

At these entangling fantasies, as you  
 At trammels of a weaker intellect, —  
 Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts !  
 I know you.

*Par.*           And I know you, dearest Festus !  
 And how you love unworthily ; and how  
 All admiration renders blind.

*Fest.*                               You hold  
 That admiration blinds ?

*Par.*                               Ay and alas !

*Fest.*   Nought blinds you less than admiration, friend !  
 Whether it be that all love renders wise  
 In its degree ; from love which blends with love —  
 Heart answering heart — to love which spends itself  
 In silent mad idolatry of some  
 Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of souls,  
 Which ne'er will know how well it is adored.  
 I say, such love is never blind ; but rather  
 Alive to every the minutest spot  
 Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed  
 So vigilant and searching) dreams not of.  
 Love broods on such : what then ? When first perceived  
 Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,  
 To overflush those blemishes with all  
 The glow of general goodness they disturb ?  
 — To make those very defects an endless source  
 Of new affection grown from hopes and fears ?  
 And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand  
 Made even for much proved weak ? no shrinking-back  
 Lest, since all love assimilates the soul  
 To what it loves, it should at length become  
 Almost a rival of its idol ? Trust me,  
 If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,  
 To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits  
 Even at God's foot, 't will be from such as love,  
 Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause ;  
 And least from those who hate, who most essay  
 By contumely and scorn to blot the light  
 Which forces entrance even to their hearts :  
 For thence will our defender tear the veil  
 And show within each heart, as in a shrine,  
 The giant image of perfection, grown  
 In hate's despite, whose calumnies were spawned  
 In the untroubled presence of its eyes.  
 True admiration blinds not ; nor am I  
 So blind. I call your sin exceptional ;

It springs from one whose life has passed the bounds  
 Prescribed to life. Compound that fault with God !  
 I speak of men ; to common men like me  
 The weakness you reveal endears you more,  
 Like the far traces of decay in suns.  
 I bid you have good cheer !

*Par.* *Præclare ! Optime !*  
 Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest  
 Instructing Paracelsus ! yet 't is so.  
 Come, I will show you where my merit lies.  
 'Tis in the advance of individual minds  
 That the slow crowd should ground their expectation  
 Eventually to follow ; as the sea  
 Waits ages in its bed till some one wave  
 Out of the multitudinous mass, extends  
 The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,  
 Over the strip of sand which could confine  
 Its fellows so long time : thenceforth the rest,  
 Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,  
 And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad  
 If all my labors, failing of aught else,  
 Suffice to make such inroad and procure  
 A wider range for thought : nay, they do this ;  
 For, whatsoe'er my notions of true knowledge  
 And a legitimate success, may be,  
 I am not blind to my undoubted rank  
 When classed with others : I precede my age :  
 And whoso wills is very free to mount  
 These labors as a platform whence his own  
 May have a prosperous outset. But, alas !  
 My followers — they are noisy as you heard ;  
 But, for intelligence, the best of them  
 So clumsily wield the weapons I supply  
 And they extol, that I begin to doubt  
 Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-stones  
 Would not do better service than my arms  
 Thus vilely swayed — if error will not fall  
 Sooner before the old awkward batterings,  
 Than my more subtle warfare, not half learned.

*Fest.* I would supply that art, then, or withhold  
 New arms until you teach their mystery.

*Par.* Content you, 't is my wish ; I have recourse  
 To the simplest training. Day by day I seek  
 To wake the mood, the spirit which alone  
 Can make those arms of any use to men.  
 Of course they are for swaggering forth at once

Graced with Ulysses' bow, Achilles' shield —  
 Flash on us, all in armor, thou Achilles!  
 Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step!  
 A proper sight to scare the crows away!  
*Fest.* Pity you choose not then some other method  
 Of coming at your point. The marvellous art  
 At length established in the world bids fair  
 To remedy all hindrances like these:  
 Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore  
 Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit  
 For raw beginners; let his types secure  
 A deathless monument to after-time;  
 Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy  
 The ultimate effect: sooner or later  
 You shall be all-revealed.

*Par.* The old dull question  
 In a new form; no more. Thus: I possess  
 Two sorts of knowledge; one, — vast, shadowy,  
 Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued:  
 The other consists of many secrets, caught  
 While bent on nobler prize, — perhaps a few  
 Prime principles which may conduct to much:  
 These last I offer to my followers here.  
 Now, bid me chronicle the first of these,  
 My ancient study, and in effect you bid  
 Revert to the wild courses just abjured:  
 I must go find them scattered through the world  
 Then, for the principles, they are so simple  
 (Being chiefly of the overturning sort),  
 That one time is as proper to propound them  
 As any other — to-morrow at my class,  
 Or half a century hence embalmed in print.  
 For if mankind intend to learn at all,  
 They must begin by giving faith to them  
 And acting on them; and I do not see  
 But that my lectures serve indifferent well:  
 No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,  
 For all their novelty and rugged setting.  
 I think my class will not forget the day  
 I let them know the gods of Israel,  
 Actius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,  
 Serapion, Avicenna, Averroës,  
 Were blocks!

*Fest.* And that reminds me, I heard something  
 About your waywardness: you burned their books,  
 It seems, instead of answering those sages.

*Par.* And who said that?

*Fest.* Some I met yesternight  
With Ecolampadius. As you know, the purpose  
Of this short stay at Basel was to learn  
His pleasure touching certain missives sent  
For our Zuinglius and himself. 'T was he  
Apprised me that the famous teacher here  
Was my old friend.

*Par.* Ah, I forgot: you went . . .

*Fest.* From Zurich with advices for the ear  
Of Luther, now at Wittenberg — (you know,  
I make no doubt, the differences of late  
With Carolostadius) — and returning sought  
Basel and . . .

*Par.* I remember. Here's a case, now,  
Will teach you why I answer not, but burn  
The books you mention: pray, does Luther dream  
His arguments convince by their own force  
The crowds that own his doctrine? No, indeed:  
His plain denial of established points  
Ages had sanctified and men supposed  
Could never be oppugned while earth was under  
And heaven above them — points which chance or time  
Affected not — did more than the array  
Of argument which followed. Boldly deny!  
There is much breath-stopping, hair-stiffening  
Awhile; then, amazed glances, mute awaiting  
The thunderbolt which does not come: and next,  
Reproachful wonder and inquiry: those  
Who else had never stirred, are able now  
To find the rest out for themselves, perhaps  
To outstrip him who set the whole at work,  
— As never will my wise class its instructor.  
And you saw Luther?

*Fest.* 'T is a wondrous soul!

*Par.* True: the so-heavy chain which galled mankind  
Is shattered, and the noblest of us all  
Must bow to the deliverer — nay, the worker  
Of our own project — we who long before  
Had burst our trammels but forgot the crowd,  
We should have taught, still groaned beneath the load:  
This he has done and nobly. Speed that may!  
Whatever be my chance or my mischance,  
What benefits mankind must glad me too:  
And men seem made, though not as I believed,  
For something better than the times produce.

Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights  
 From Suabia have possessed, whom Munzer leads,  
 And whom the duke, the landgrave and the elector  
 Will calm in blood! Well, well; 't is not my world!

*Fest.* Hark!

*Par.* 'T is the melancholy wind astir  
 Within the trees; the embers too are gray:  
 Morn must be near.

*Fest.* Best ope the casement: see,  
 The night, late strewn with clouds and flying stars,  
 Is blank and motionless: how peaceful sleep  
 The tree-tops altogether! Like an asp,  
 The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.

*Par.* Ay; you would gaze on a wind-shaken tree  
 By the hour, nor count time lost.

*Fest.* So you shall gaze:  
 Those happy times will come again.

*Par.* Gone, gone,  
 Those pleasant times! Does not the moaning wind  
 Seem to bewail that we have gained such gains  
 And bartered sleep for them?

*Fest.* It is our trust  
 That there is yet another world to mend  
 All error and mischance.

*Par.* Another world!  
 And why this world, this common world, to be  
 A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,  
 To some fine life to come? Man must be fed  
 With angels' food, forsooth; and some few traces  
 Of a diviner nature which look out  
 Through his corporeal baseness, warrant him  
 In a supreme contempt of all provision  
 For his inferior tastes — some straggling marks  
 Which constitute his essence, just as truly  
 As here and there a gem would constitute  
 The rock, their barren bed, one diamond.  
 But were it so — were man all mind — he gains  
 A station little enviable. From God  
 Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,  
 Intelligence exists which casts our mind  
 Into immeasurable shade. No, no:  
 Love, hope, fear, faith — these make humanity;  
 These are its sign and note and character,  
 And these I have lost! — gone, shut from me forever,  
 Like a dead friend safe from unkindness more!  
 See, morn at length. The heavy darkness seems



Diluted ; gray and clear without the stars ;  
 The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves, as if  
 Some snake, that weighed them down all night, let go  
 His hold ; and from the East, fuller and fuller  
 Day, like a mighty river, flowing in ;  
 But clouded, wintry, desolate and cold.  
 Yet see how that broad prickly star-shaped plant,  
 Half-down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves  
 All thick and glistening with diamond dew.  
 And you depart for Einsiedeln this day,  
 And we have spent all night in talk like this !  
 If you would have me better for your love,  
 Revert no more to these sad themes.

*Fest.* One favor,  
 And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved ;  
 Unwilling to have fared so well, the while  
 My friend has changed so sorely. If this mood  
 Shall pass away, if light once more arise  
 Where all is darkness now, if you see fit  
 To hope and trust again, and strive again,  
 You will remember — not our love alone —  
 But that my faith in God's desire that man  
 Should trust on his support, (as I must think  
 You trusted) is obscured and dim through you ;  
 For you are thus, and this is no reward.  
 Will you not call me to your side, dear Aureole ?

#### IV. PARACELSUS ASPIRES.

SCENE, *Colmar in Alsatia ; an Inn.* 1528.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

*Par.* (to JOHANNES OPORINUS, *his secretary*). *Sic itur  
 ad astra!* Dear Von Visenburg  
 Is scandalized, and poor Torinus paralyzed,  
 And every honest soul that Basel holds  
 Aghast ; and yet we live, as one may say,  
 Just as though Liechtenfels had never set  
 So true a value on his sorry carcass,  
 And learned Pütter had not frowned us dumb.  
 We live ; and shall as surely start to-morrow  
 For Nuremberg, as we drink speedy scathe  
 To Basel in this mantling wine, suffused

A delicate blush, no fainter tinge is born  
 I' the shut heart of a bud. Pledge me, good John —  
 “Basel ; a hot plague ravage it, and Pütter  
 Oppose the plague !” Even so ! Do you too share  
 Their panic, the reptiles ? Ha, ha ; faint through these,  
 Desist for these ! They manage matters so  
 At Basel, 't is like : but others may find means  
 To bring the stoutest braggart of the tribe  
 Once more to crouch in silence — means to breed  
 A stupid wonder in each fool again,  
 Now big with admiration at the skill  
 Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes ;  
 And, that done, — means to brand each slavish brow  
 So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,  
 That henceforth flattery shall not pucker it  
 Out of the furrow ; there that stamp shall stay  
 To show the next they fawn on, what they are,  
 This Basel with its magnates, — fill my cup, —  
 Whom I curse soul and limb. And now dispatch,  
 Dispatch, my trusty John ; and what remains  
 To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip  
 Are yet to be completed, see you hasten  
 This night ; we 'll weather the storm at least : to-morrow  
 For Nuremberg ! Now leave us ; this grave clerk  
 Has divers weighty matters for my ear :

[OPORINUS goes out.]

And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Festus,  
 I am rid of this arch-knave that dogs my heels  
 As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep ; at last  
 May give a loose to my delight. How kind,  
 How very kind, my first best only friend !  
 Why, this looks like fidelity. Embrace me !  
 Not a hair silvered yet ? Right ! you shall live  
 Till I am worth your love ; you shall be proud,  
 And I — but let time show. Did you not wonder ?  
 I sent to you because our compact weighed  
 Upon my conscience — (you recall the night  
 At Basel, which the gods confound !) — because  
 Once more I aspire. I call you to my side ;  
 You come. You thought my message strange ?

*Fest.*

So strange

That I must hope, indeed, your messenger  
 Has mingled his own fancies with the words  
 Purporting to be yours.

*Par.*

He said no more,  
 'T is probable, than the precious folks I leave

Said fiftyfold more roughly. Well-a-day,  
 'T is true ! poor Paracelsus is exposed  
 At last ; a most egregious quack he proves !  
 And those he overreached must spit their hate  
 On one who, utterly beneath contempt,  
 Could yet deceive their topping wits. You heard  
 Bare truth ; and at my bidding you come here  
 To speed me on my enterprise, as once  
 Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend !

*Fest.* What is your purpose, Aureole ?

*Par.*

Oh, for purpose,

There is no lack of precedents in a case  
 Like mine ; at least, if not precisely mine,  
 The case of men cast off by those they sought  
 To benefit.

*Fest.* They really cast you off ?

I only heard a vague tale of some priest,  
 Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim  
 Knowing his life's worth best ; and how the judge  
 The matter was referred to, saw no cause  
 To interfere, nor you to hide your full  
 Contempt of him ; nor he, again, to smother  
 His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame  
 That Basel soon was made no place for you.

*Par.* The affair of Liechtenfels ? the shallowest fable,  
 The last and silliest outrage — mere pretence !  
 I knew it, I foretold it from the first,  
 How soon the stupid wonder you mistook  
 For genuine loyalty — a cheering promise  
 Of better things to come — would pall and pass ;  
 And every word comes true. Saul is among  
 The prophets ! Just so long as I was pleased  
 To play off the mere antics of my art,  
 Fantastic gambols leading to no end,  
 I got huge praise : but one can ne'er keep down  
 Our foolish nature's weakness. There they flocked,  
 Poor devils, jostling, swearing and perspiring,  
 Till the walls rang again ; and all for me !  
 I had a kindness for them, which was right ;  
 But then I stopped not till I tacked to that  
 A trust in them and a respect — a sort  
 Of sympathy for them ; I must needs begin  
 To teach them, not amaze them, "to impart  
 The spirit which should instigate the search  
 Of truth," just what you bade me ! I spoke out.  
 Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,

Filed off — “the sifted chaff of the sack,” I said,  
 Redoubling my endeavors to secure  
 The rest. When lo! one man had tarried so long  
 Only to ascertain if I supported  
 This tenet of his, or that; another loved  
 To hear impartially before he judged,  
 And having heard, now judged; this bland disciple  
 Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,  
 Spied error where his neighbors marvelled most;  
 That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,  
 Did it because my by-paths, once proved wrong  
 And beacons properly, would commend again  
 The good old ways our sires jogged safely o'er,  
 Though not their squeamish sons; the other worthy  
 Discovered divers verses of St. John,  
 Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,  
 But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,  
 The colic and what not. *Quid multa?* The end  
 Was a clear class-room, and a quiet leer  
 From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance  
 From those in chief who, cap in hand, installed  
 The new professor scarce a year before;  
 And a vast flourish about patient merit  
 Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure  
 Sooner or later to emerge in splendor —  
 Of which the example was some luckless wight  
 Whom my arrival had discomfited,  
 But now, it seems, the general voice recalled  
 To fill my chair and so efface the stain  
 Basel had long incurred. I sought no better,  
 Only a quiet dismissal from my post,  
 And from my heart I wished them better suited  
 And better served. Good night to Basel, then!  
 But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe  
 Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them  
 The pleasure of a parting kick.

*Fest.*

You smile:

Despise them as they merit!

*Par.*

If I smile,

’Tis with as very contempt as ever turned  
 Flesh into stone. This courteous recompense,  
 This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature fit  
 To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache  
 At gangrene-blotches, eating poison-blains,  
 The ulcerous barky scurf of leprosy  
 Which finds — a man, and leaves — a hideous thing

That cannot but be mended by hell-fire,  
 — I would lay bare to you the human heart  
 Which God cursed long ago, and devils make since  
 Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.  
 Oh, sages have discovered we are born  
 For various ends — to love, to know: has ever  
 One stumbled, in his search, on any signs  
 Of a nature in us formed to hate? To hate?  
 If that be our true object which evokes  
 Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 't is hate!  
 Yet men have doubted if the best and bravest  
 Of spirits can nourish him with hate alone.  
 I had not the monopoly of fools,  
 It seems, at Basel.

*Fest.* But your plans, your plans!  
 I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole!

*Par.* Whether to sink beneath such ponderous shame,  
 To shrink up like a crushed snail, undergo  
 In silence and desist from further toil  
 And so subside into a monument  
 Of one their censure blasted? or to bow  
 Cheerfully as submissively, to lower  
 My old pretensions even as Basel dictates,  
 To drop into the rank her wits assign me  
 And live as they prescribe, and make that use  
 Of my poor knowledge which their rules allow,  
 Proud to be patted now and then, and careful  
 To practise the true posture for receiving  
 The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance  
 When they shall condescend to tutor me?  
 Then, one may feel resentment like a flame  
 Within, and deck false systems in truth's garb,  
 And tangle and entwine mankind with error,  
 And give them darkness for a dower and falsehood  
 For a possession, ages: or one may mope  
 Into a shade through thinking, or else drowse  
 Into a dreamless sleep and so die off.  
 But I, — now Festus shall divine! — but I  
 Am merely setting out once more, embracing  
 My earliest aims again! What thinks he now?

*Fest.* Your aims? the aims? — to Know? and where  
 is found  
 The early trust . . .

*Par.* Nay, not so fast; I say,  
 The aims — not the old means. You know they made me  
 A laughing-stock; I was a fool; you know

The when and the how : hardly those means again !  
 Not but they had their beauty ; who should know  
 Their passing beauty, if not I ? Still, dreams  
 They were, so let them vanish, yet in beauty  
 If that may be. Stay : thus they pass in song !

[*He sings.*

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes  
 Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,  
 Smear'd with dull nard an Indian wipes  
 From out her hair : such balsam falls  
 Down sea-side mountain pedestals,  
 From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,  
 Spent with the vast and howling main,  
 To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old  
 Egyptian's fine worm-caten shroud  
 Which breaks to dust when once unrolled ;  
 Or shredded perfume, like a cloud  
 From closet long to quiet vowed,  
 With moth'd and dropping arras hung,  
 Mouldering her lute and books among,  
 As when a queen, long dead, was young.

Mine, every word ! And on such pile shall die  
 My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,  
 Themselves fair and forgotten ; yes, forgotten,  
 Or why abjure them ? So, I made this rhyme  
 That fitting dignity might be preserved ;  
 No little proud was I ; though the list of drugs  
 Snacks of my old vocation, and the verse  
 Halts like the best of Luther's psalms.

*Fest.*

But, Aureole,

Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here —  
 Did you know all ! I have travelled far, indeed,  
 To learn your wishes. Be yourself again !  
 For in this mood I recognize you less  
 Than in the horrible despondency  
 I witnessed last. You may account this, joy ;  
 But rather let me gaze on that despair  
 Than hear these incoherent words and see  
 This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling eye.

*Par.* Why, man, I was light-hearted in my prime,  
 I am light-hearted now ; what would you have ?  
 Aprile was a poet, I make songs —

'Tis the very augury of success I want !

Why should I not be joyous now as then ?

*Fest.* Joyous ! and how ? and what remains for joy ?

You have declared the ends (which I am sick  
Of naming) are impracticable.

*Par.*

Ay,

Pursued as I pursued them — the arch-fool !

Listen : my plan will please you not, 't is like,

But you are little versed in the world's ways.

This is my plan — (first drinking its good luck) —

I will accept all helps ; all I despised

So rashly at the outset, equally

With early impulses, late years have quenched :

I have tried each way singly : now for both !

All helps ! no one sort shall exclude the rest.

I seek to know and to enjoy at once,

Not one without the other as before.

Suppose my labor should seem God's own cause

Once more, as first I dreamed, — it shall not balk me

Of the meanest earthliest sensualest delight

That may be snatched ; for every joy is gain,

And gain is gain, however small. My soul

Can die then, nor be taunted — “ what was gained ? ”

Nor, on the other hand, should pleasure follow

As though I had not spurned her hitherto,

Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt communion

With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,

Glorious with visions of a full success.

*Fest.* Success !

*Par.*

And wherefore not ? Why not prefer

Results obtained in my best state of being,

To those derived alone from seasons dark

As the thoughts they bred ? When I was best, my youth

Unwasted, seemed success not surest too ?

It is the nature of darkness to obscure.

I am a wanderer : I remember well

One journey, how I feared the track was missed,

So long the city I desired to reach

Lay hid ; when suddenly its spires afar

Flashed through the circling clouds ; you may conceive

My transport. Soon the vapors closed again,

But I had seen the city, and one such glance

No darkness could obscure : nor shall the present —

A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,

Destroy the vivid memories of the past.

I will fight the battle out ; a little spent

Perhaps, but still an able combatant.  
 You look at my gray hair and furrowed brow?  
 But I can turn even weakness to account:  
 Of many tricks I know, 't is not the least  
 To push the ruins of my frame, whereon  
 The fire of vigor trembles scarce alive,  
 Into a heap, and send the flame aloft.  
 What should I do with age? So, sickness lends  
 An aid; it being, I fear, the source of all  
 We boast of: mind is nothing but disease,  
 And natural health is ignorance.

*Fest.* I see  
 But one good symptom in this notable scheme.  
 I feared your sudden journey had in view  
 To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes;  
 'T is not so: I am glad.

*Par.* And if I please  
 To spit on them, to trample them, what then?  
 'T is sorry warfare truly, but the fools  
 Provoke it. I would spare their self-conceit,  
 But if they must provoke me, cannot suffer  
 Forbearance on my part, if I may keep  
 No quality in the shade, must needs put forth  
 Power to match power, my strength against their strength,  
 And teach them their own game with their own arms —  
 Why, be it so and let them take their chance!  
 I am above them like a god, there 's no  
 Hiding the fact: what idle scruples, then,  
 Were those that ever bade me soften it,  
 Communicate it gently to the world,  
 Instead of proving my supremacy,  
 Taking my natural station o'er their head,  
 Then owning all the glory was a man's!  
 — And in my elevation man's would be.  
 But live and learn, though life 's short, learning, hard!  
 And therefore, though the wreck of my past self,  
 I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-room  
 Must wait awhile for its best ornament,  
 The penitent empiric, who set up  
 For somebody, but soon was taught his place;  
 Now, but too happy to be let confess  
 His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate  
 (*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)  
 Your medicine's soundness in his person. Wait,  
 Good Pütter!

*Fest.* He who sneers thus, is a god!



*Par.* Ay, ay, laugh at me! I am very glad  
 You are not gulled by all this swaggering; you  
 Can see the root of the matter! — how I strive  
 To put a good face on the overthrow  
 I have experienced, and to bury and hide  
 My degradation in its length and breadth;  
 How the mean motives I would make you think  
 Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,  
 The appetites I modestly allow  
 May influence me as being mortal still —  
 Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant  
 My youth's desires. You are no stupid dupe:  
 You find me out! Yes, I had sent for you  
 To palm these childish lies upon you, Festus!  
 Laugh — you shall laugh at me!

*Fest.* The past, then, Aureole,  
 Proves nothing? Is our interchange of love  
 Yet to begin? Have I to swear I mean  
 No flattery in this speech or that? For you,  
 Whate'er you say, there is no degradation;  
 These low thoughts are no inmates of your mind,  
 Or wherefore this disorder? You are vexed  
 As much by the intrusion of base views,  
 Familiar to your adversaries, as they  
 Were troubled should your qualities alight  
 Amid their murky souls; not otherwise,  
 A stray wolf which the winter forces down  
 From our bleak hills, suffices to affright  
 A village in the vales — while foresters  
 Sleep calm, though all night long the famished troop  
 Snuff round and scratch against their crazy huts.  
 These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee.

*Par.* May you be happy, Festus, my own friend!

*Fest.* Nay, further; the delights you fain would think  
 The superseders of your nobler aims,  
 Though ordinary and harmless stimulants,  
 Will ne'er content you. . . .

*Par.* Hush! I once despised them,  
 But that soon passes. We are high at first  
 In our demand, nor will abate a jot  
 Of toil's strict value; but time passes o'er,  
 And humbler spirits accept what we refuse:  
 In short, when some such comfort is doled out  
 As these delights, we cannot long retain  
 Bitter contempt which urges us at first  
 To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast

And thankfully retire. This life of mine  
 Must be lived out and a grave thoroughly earned :  
 I am just fit for that and nought beside.  
 I told you once, I cannot now enjoy,  
 Unless I deem my knowledge gains through joy ;  
 Nor can I know, but straight warm tears reveal  
 My need of linking also joy to knowledge :  
 So, on I drive, enjoying all I can,  
 And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,  
 Confusedly ; this will better explain — feel here !  
 Quick beating, is it not ? — a fire of the heart  
 To work off some way, this as well as any.  
 So, Festus sees me fairly launched ; his calm  
 Compassionate look might have disturbed me once,  
 But now, far from rejecting, I invite  
 What bids me press the closer, lay myself  
 Open before him, and be soothed with pity ;  
 I hope, if he command hope, and believe  
 As he directs me — satiating myself  
 With his enduring love. And Festus quits me  
 To give place to some credulous disciple  
 Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus  
 Has his peculiar merits : I suck in  
 That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,  
 And then dismiss the fool ; for night is come.  
 And I betake myself to study again,  
 Till patient searchings after hidden lore  
 Half wring some bright truth from its prison ; my frame  
 Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out, my hair  
 Tingles for triumph. Slow and sure the morn  
 Shall break on my pent room and dwindling lamp  
 And furnace dead, and scattered earths and ores ;  
 When, with a failing heart and throbbing brow,  
 I must review my captured truth, sum up  
 Its value, trace what ends to what begins,  
 Its present power with its eventual bearings,  
 Latent affinities, the views it opens,  
 And its full length in perfecting my scheme.  
 I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down  
 From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,  
 Proved worthless — which, in getting, yet had cost  
 Another wrench to this fast-falling frame.  
 Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that chases sorrow !  
 I lapse back into youth, and take again  
 My fluttering pulse for evidence that God  
 Means good to me, will make my cause his own.

See! I have cast off this remorseless care  
 Which clogged a spirit born to soar so free,  
 And my dim chamber has become a tent,  
 Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal . . .  
 Why do you start? I say, she listening here,  
 (For yonder — Würzburg through the orchard-bough!)  
 Motions as though such ardent words should find  
 No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,  
 But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill fast  
 With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the while!  
 Ha, ha!

*Fest.* It seems, then, you expect to reap  
 No unreal joy from this your present course,  
 But rather . . .

*Par.* Death! To die! I owe that much  
 To what, at least, I was. I should be sad  
 To live contented after such a fall,  
 To thrive and fatten after such reverse!  
 The whole plan is a makeshift, but will last  
 My time.

*Fest.* And you have never mused and said,  
 "I had a noble purpose, and the strength  
 To compass it; but I have stopped half-way,  
 And wrongly given the first-fruits of my toil  
 To objects little worthy of the gift.  
 Why linger round them still? why clench my fault?  
 Why seek for consolation in defeat,  
 In vain endeavors to derive a beauty  
 From ugliness? why seek to make the most  
 Of what no power can change, nor strive instead  
 With mighty effort to redeem the past  
 And, gathering up the treasures thus cast down,  
 To hold a steadfast course till I arrive  
 At their fit destination and my own?"  
 You have never pondered thus?

*Par.* Have I, you ask?  
 Often at midnight, when most fancies come,  
 Would some such airy project visit me:  
 But ever at the end . . . or will you hear  
 The same thing in a tale, a parable?  
 You and I, wandering over the world wide,  
 Chance to set foot upon a desert coast.  
 Just as we cry, "No human voice before  
 Broke the inveterate silence of these rocks!"  
 — Their querulous echo startles us; we turn:  
 What ravaged structure still looks o'er the sea?

Some characters remain, too! While we read,  
 The sharp salt wind, impatient for the last  
 Of even this record, wistfully comes and goes,  
 Or sings what we recover, mocking it.  
 This is the record; and my voice, the wind's.

[*He sings.*]

Over the sea our galleys went,  
 With cleaving prows in order brave,  
 To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,  
 A gallant armament :  
 Each bark built out of a forest-tree,  
 Left leafy and rough as first it grew,  
 And nailed all over the gaping sides,  
 Within and without, with black bull-hides,  
 Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,  
 To bear the playful billows' game :  
 So, each good ship was rude to see,  
 Rude and bare to the outward view,  
 But each upbore a stately tent  
 Where cedar pales in scented row  
 Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,  
 And an awning drooped the mast below,  
 In fold on fold of the purple fine,  
 That neither noontide nor starshine  
 Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,  
 Might pierce the regal tenement.  
 When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad  
 We set the sail and plied the oar ;  
 But when the night-wind blew like breath,  
 For joy of one day's voyage more,  
 We sang together on the wide sea,  
 Like men at peace on a peaceful shore ;  
 Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,  
 Each helm made sure by the twilight star,  
 And in a sleep as calm as death,  
 We, the voyagers from afar,  
 Lay stretched along, each weary crew  
 In a circle round its wondrous tent  
 Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,  
 And with light and perfume, music too :  
 So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,  
 And at morn we started beside the mast,  
 And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared — a speck  
 Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky :

“ Avoid it,” cried our pilot, “ check  
 The shout, restrain the eager eye ! ”  
 But the heaving sea was black behind  
 For many a night and many a day,  
 And land, though but a rock, drew nigh ;  
 So, we broke the cedar pales away,  
 Let the purple awning flap in the wind,  
 And a statue bright was on every deck !  
 We shouted, every man of us,  
 And steered right into the harbor thus,  
 With pomp and pæan glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone !  
 All day we built its shrine for each,  
 A shrine of rock for every one,  
 Nor paused till in the westering sun  
 We sat together on the beach  
 To sing because our task was done.  
 When lo ! what shouts and merry songs !  
 What laughter all the distance stirs !  
 A loaded raft with happy throngs  
 Of gentle islanders !

“ Our isles are just at hand,” they cried,  
 “ Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping ;  
 Our temple-gates are opened wide,  
 Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping  
 For these majestic forms ” — they cried.  
 Oh, then we awoke with sudden start  
 From our deep dream, and knew, too late,  
 How bare the rock, how desolate :  
 Which had received our precious freight :  
 Yet we called out — “ Depart !  
 Our gifts, once given, must here abide.  
 Our work is done ; we have no heart  
 To mar our work,” — we cried.

*Fest.* In truth ?

*Par.* Nay, wait : all this in tracings faint  
 On rugged stones strewn here and there, but piled  
 In order once : then follows — mark what follows !  
 “ The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung  
 To their first fault, and withered in their pride.”

*Fest.* Come back then, Aureole ; as you fear God, come !  
 This is foul sin ; come back ! Renounce the past,  
 Forswear the future ; look for joy no more,  
 But wait death's summons amid holy sights,

And trust me for the event — peace, if not joy.  
Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear Aureole!

*Par.* No way, no way! it would not turn to good.  
A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss —  
'T is well for him; but when a sinful man,  
Envyng such slumber, may desire to put  
His guilt away, shall he return at once  
To rest by lying there? Our sires knew well  
(Spite of the grave discoveries of their sons)  
The fitting course for such; dark cells, dim lamps,  
A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm:  
No mossy pillow blue with violets!

*Fest.* I see no symptom of these absolute  
And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now.  
This verse-making can purge you well enough  
Without the terrible penance you describe.  
You love me still: the lusts you fear will never  
Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once more!  
Say but the word!

*Par.* No, no; those lusts forbid:  
They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut eye  
Beside you; 't is their nature. Thrust yourself  
Between them and their prey; let some fool style me  
Or king or quack, it matters not, and try  
Your wisdom, urge them to forego their treat!  
No, no; learn better and look deeper, Festus!  
If you knew how a devil sneers within me  
While you are talking now of this, now that,  
As though we differed scarcely save in trifles!

*Fest.* Do we so differ? True, change must proceed,  
Whether for good or ill; keep from me, which!  
Do not confide all secrets: I was born  
To hope, and you . . .

*Par.* To trust: you know the fruits!

*Fest.* Listen: I do believe, what you call trust  
Was self-delusion at the best: for, see!  
So long as God would kindly pioneer  
A path for you, and screen you from the world,  
Procure you full exemption from man's lot,  
Man's common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext  
Of your engagement in his service — yield you  
A limitless license, make you God, in fact,  
And turn your slave — you were content to say  
Most courtly praises! What is it, at last,  
But selfishness without example? None  
Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours

Remained implied in it ; but now you fail,  
 And we, who prate about that will, are fools !  
 In short, God's service is established here  
 As he determines fit, and not your way,  
 And this you cannot brook. Such discontent  
 Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at once !  
 Affirm an absolute right to have and use  
 Your energies ; as though the rivers should say —  
 “ We rush to the ocean ; what have we to do  
 With feeding streamlets, lingering in the vales,  
 Sleeping in lazy pools ? ” Set up that plea,  
 That will be bold at least !

*Par.* 'Tis like enough.  
 The serviceable spirits are those, no doubt,  
 The East produces : lo, the master nods,  
 And they raise terraces and garden-grounds  
 In one night's space ; and, this done, straight begin  
 Another century's sleep, to the great praise  
 Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,  
 Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,  
 Wake them again. I am of different mould.  
 I would have soothed my lord, and slaved for him,  
 And done him service past my narrow bond,  
 And thus I get rewarded for my pains !  
 Beside, 't is vain to talk of forwarding  
 God's glory otherwise ; his is alone  
 The sphere of its increase, as far as men  
 Increase it ; why, then, look beyond this sphere ?  
 We are his glory ; and if we be glorious,  
 Is not the thing achieved ?

*Fest.* Shall one like me  
 Judge hearts like yours ? Though years have changed you  
 much,  
 And you have left your first love, and retain  
 Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,  
 Yet I still hold that you have honored God.  
 And who shall call your course without reward ?  
 For, wherefore this repining at defeat  
 Had triumph ne'er inured you to high hopes ?  
 I urge you to forsake the life you curse,  
 And what success attends me ? — simply talk  
 Of passion, weakness and remorse ; in short,  
 Anything but the naked truth — you choose  
 This so-despised career, and cheaply hold  
 My happiness, or rather other men's.  
 Once more, return !

*Par.* And quickly. Oporinus  
 Has pilfered half my secrets by this time :  
 And we depart by daybreak. I am weary,  
 I know not how ; not even the wine-cup soothes  
 My brain to-night . . .  
 Do you not thoroughly despise me. Festus ?  
 No flattery ! One like you needs not be told  
 We live and breathe deceiving and deceived.  
 Do you not scorn me from your heart of hearts,  
 Me and my cant, each petty subterfuge,  
 My rhymes and all this frothy shower of words,  
 My glozing self-deceit, my outward crust  
 Of lies which wrap, as tetter, morphew, furfair  
 Wrap the sound flesh ? — so, see you flatter not !  
 Even God flatters : but my friend, at least,  
 Is true. I would depart. secure henceforth  
 Against all further insult, hate and wrong  
 From puny foes ; my one friend's scorn shall brand me :  
 No fear of sinking deeper !

*Fest.* No, dear Aureole !  
 No, no ; I came to counsel faithfully.  
 There are old rules, made long ere we were born,  
 By which I judge you. I, so fallible,  
 So infinitely low beside your mighty  
 Majestic spirit ! — even I can see  
 You own some higher law than ours which call  
 Sin, what is no sin — weakness, what is strength.  
 But I have only these, such as they are,  
 To guide me ; and I blame you where they bid,  
 Only so long as blaming promises  
 To win peace for your soul : the more, that sorrow  
 Has fallen on me of late, and they have helped me  
 So that I faint not under my distress.  
 But wherefore should I scruple to avow  
 In spite of all, as brother judging brother,  
 Your fate to me is most inexplicable ?  
 And should you perish without recompense  
 And satisfaction yet — too hastily  
 I have relied on love : you may have sinned,  
 But you have loved. As a mere human matter —  
 As I would have God deal with fragile men  
 In the end — I say that you will triumph yet !

*Par.* Have you felt sorrow, Festus ? — 't is because  
 You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours !  
 Well thought on : never let her know this last  
 Dull winding-up of all : these miscreants dared  
 Insult me — me she loved : — so, grieve her not !



*Fest.* Your ill success can little grieve her now.

*Par.* Michal is dead ! pray Christ we do not craze !

*Fest.* Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me thus !

Fool, fool ! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof —  
I cannot bear those eyes.

*Par.* Nay, really dead ?

*Fest.* 'T is scarce a month.

*Par.* Stone dead ! — then you have laid her  
Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,  
I can reveal a secret which shall comfort  
Even you. I have no julep, as men think,  
To cheat the grave ; but a far better secret.  
Know, then, you did not ill to trust your love  
To the cold earth : I have thought much of it :  
For I believe we do not wholly die.

*Fest.* Aureole !

*Par.* Nay, do not laugh ; there is a reason  
For what I say : I think the soul can never  
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,  
Very unfit to put so strange a thought  
In an intelligible dress of words ;  
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

*Fest.* But not on this account alone ? you surely,  
— Aureole, you have believed this all along ?

*Par.* And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,  
While I am moved at Basel, and full of schemes  
For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,  
As though it mattered how the farce plays out,  
So it be quickly played. Away, away !  
Have your will, rabble ! while we fight the prize,  
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats  
And leave a clear arena for the brave  
About to perish for your sport ! — Behold !

## V. PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE, *Salzburg ; a cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian.* 1541.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS.

*Fest.* No change ! The weary night is well-nigh spent,  
The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars  
Gray morning glimmers feebly : yet no change !  
Another night, and still no sigh has stirred  
That fallen discolored mouth, no pang relit

Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,  
 Like torch-flame choked in dust. While all beside  
 Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,  
 As a stronghold where life intrenched itself ;  
 But they are dead now — very blind and dead :  
 He will drowse into death without a groan.

My Aureole — my forgotten, ruined Aureole !  
 The days are gone, are gone ! How grand thou wast !  
 And now not one of those who struck thee down —  
 Poor glorious spirit — concerns him even to stay  
 And satisfy himself his little hand  
 Could turn God's image to a livid thing.  
 Another night, and yet no change ! 'T is much  
 That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,  
 And chafe his hands ; 't is much : but he will sure  
 Know me, and look on me, and speak to me  
 Once more — but only once ! His hollow cheek  
 Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh  
 At his own state were just about to break  
 From the dying man : my brain swam, my throat swelled,  
 And yet I could not turn away. In truth,  
 They told me how, when first brought here, he seemed  
 Resolved to live, to lose no faculty ;  
 Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,  
 Until they bore him to this stifling cell :  
 When straight his features fell, an hour made white  
 The flushed face, and relaxed the quivering limb,  
 Only the eye remained intense awhile  
 As though it recognized the tomb-like place,  
 And then he lay as here he lies.

Ay, here !

Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded —  
 Her bravest champion with his well-won prize —  
 Her best achievement, her sublime amends  
 For countless generations fleeting fast  
 And followed by no trace ; — the creature-god  
 She instances when angels would dispute  
 The title of her brood to rank with them.  
 Angels, this is our angel ! Those bright forms  
 We clothe with purple, crown and call to thrones,  
 Are human, but not his ; those are but men  
 Whom other men press round and kneel before ;  
 Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind ;  
 Higher provision is for him you seek  
 Amid our pomps and glories : see it here !

Behold earth's paragon! Now, raise thee, clay!  
God! Thou art love! I build my faith on that!  
Even as I watch beside thy tortured child  
Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,  
So doth thy right hand guide us through the world  
Wherein we stumble. God! what shall we say?  
How has he sinned? How else should he have done?  
Surely he sought thy praise — thy praise, for all  
He might be busied by the task so much  
As half forget awhile its proper end.  
Dost thou well, Lord? Thou canst not but prefer  
That I should range myself upon his side —  
How could he stop at every step to set  
Thy glory forth? Hadst thou but granted him  
Success, thy honor would have crowned success,  
A halo round a star. Or, say he erred, —  
Save him, dear God; it will be like thee: bathe him  
In light and life! Thou art not made like us;  
We should be wroth in such a case; but thou  
Forgivest — so, forgive these passionate thoughts  
Which come unsought and will not pass away!  
I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made  
Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow  
So that it reached me like a solemn joy;  
It were too strange that I should doubt thy love.  
But what am I? Thou madest him and knowest  
How he was fashioned. I could never err  
That way: the quiet place beside thy feet,  
Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts:  
But he — thou shouldst have favored him as well!  
Ah! he wakens! Aureole, I am here! 'tis Festus!  
I cast away all wishes save one wish —  
Let him but know me, only speak to me!  
He mutters; louder and louder; any other  
Than I, with brain less laden, could collect  
What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but look!  
Is it talking or singing, this he utters fast?  
Misery that he should fix me with his eye,  
Quick talking to some other all the while!  
If he would husband this wild vehemence  
Which frustrates its intent! — I heard, I know  
I heard my name amid those rapid words.  
Oh, he will know me yet! Could I divert  
This current, lead it somehow gently back  
Into the channels of the past! — His eye  
Brighter than ever! It must recognize me!

I am Erasmus : I am here to pray  
 That Paracelsus use his skill for me.  
 The schools of Paris and of Padua send  
 These questions for your learning to resolve.  
 We are your students, noble master : leave  
 This wretched cell ; what business have you here ?  
 Our class awaits you ; come to us once more !  
 (O agony ! the utmost I can do  
 Touches him not ; how else arrest his ear ?)  
 I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like him.  
 Better be mute and see what God shall send.

*Par.* Stay, stay with me !

*Fest.* I will ; I am come here  
 To stay with you — Festus, you loved of old ;  
 Festus, you know, you must know !

*Par.* Festus ! Where 's  
 Aprile, then ? Has he not chanted softly  
 The melodies I heard all night ? I could not  
 Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,  
 But I made out his music well enough,  
 O well enough ! If they have filled him full  
 With magical music, as they freight a star  
 With light, and have remitted all his sin,  
 They will forgive me too, I too shall know !

*Fest.* Festus, your Festus !

*Par.* Ask him if Aprile  
 Knows as he Loves — if I shall Love and Know ?  
 I try ; but that cold hand, like lead — so cold !

*Fest.* My hand, see !

*Par.* Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile !  
 We get so near — so very, very near !  
 'Tis an old tale : Jove strikes the Titans down  
 Not when they set about their mountain-piling,  
 But when another rock would crown the work.  
 And Phaeton — doubtless his first radiant plunge  
 Astonished mortals, though the gods were calm,  
 And Jove prepared his thunder : all old tales !

*Fest.* And what are these to you ?

*Par.* Ay, fiends must laugh  
 So cruelly, so well ; most like I never  
 Could tread a single pleasure underfoot,  
 But they were grinning by my side, were chuckling  
 To see me toil and drop away by flakes !  
 Hell-spawn ! I am glad, most glad, that thus I fail !  
 Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One year,  
 One month, perhaps, and I had served your turn !

You should have curbed your spite awhile. But now,  
 Who will believe 't was you that held me back ?  
 Listen : there 's shame and hissing and contempt,  
 And none but laughs who names me, none but spits  
 Measureless scorn upon me, me alone,  
 The quack, the cheat, the liar, — all on me !  
 And thus your famous plan to sink mankind  
 In silence and despair, by teaching them  
 One of their race had probed the inmost truth,  
 Had done all man could do, yet failed no less —  
 Your wise plan proves abortive. Men despair ?  
 Ha, ha ! why, they are hooting the empiric,  
 The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed  
 Madly upon a work beyond his wits ;  
 Nor doubt they but the simplest of themselves  
 Could bring the matter to triumphant issue.  
 So, pick and choose among them all, accursed !  
 Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,  
 To ruin body and soul to work your ends !  
 No, no ; I am the first and last, I think.

*Fest.* Dear friend, who are accursed ? who has done . . .

*Par.* What have I done ? Fiends dare ask that ? or you,  
 Brave men ? Oh, you can chime in boldly, backed  
 By the others ! What had you to do, sage peers ?  
 Here stand my rivals ; Latin, Arab, Jew,  
 Greek, join dead hands against me : all I ask  
 Is, that the world enroll my name with theirs,  
 And even this poor privilege, it seems,  
 They range themselves, prepared to disallow.  
 Only observe : why, fiends may learn from them !  
 How they talk calmly of my throes, my fierce  
 Aspirings, terrible watchings, each one claiming  
 Its price of blood and brain ; how they dissect  
 And sneeringly disparage the few truths  
 Got at a life's cost ; they too hanging the while  
 About my neck, their lies misleading me  
 And their dead names browbeating me ! Gray crew,  
 Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,  
 Is there a reason for your hate ? My truths  
 Have shaken a little the palm about each prince ?  
 Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards  
 Were bent on nothing less than to be crowned  
 As we ! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in chief  
 To whom the rest cringe low with feigned respect,  
 Galen of Pergamos and hell — nay speak  
 The tale, old man ! We met there face to face :

I said the crown should fall from thee. Once more  
 We meet as in that ghastly vestibule :  
 Look to my brow ! Have I redeemed my pledge ?

*Fest.* Peace, peace ; ah, see !

*Par.* Oh, emptiness of fame !

O Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars !  
 — Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,  
 Could make me overlook the living world  
 To gaze through gloom at where they stood, indeed,  
 But stand no longer ? What a warm light life  
 After the shade ! In truth, my delicate witch,  
 My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide  
 The juggles I had else detected. Fire  
 May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours !  
 The cave was not so darkened by the smoke  
 But that your white limbs dazzled me : oh, white,  
 And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing !  
 I cared not for your passionate gestures then,  
 But now I have forgotten the charm of charms,  
 The foolish knowledge which I came to seek,  
 While I remember that quaint dance ; and thus  
 I am come back, not for those mummeries,  
 But to love you, and to kiss your little feet  
 Soft as an ermine's winter coat !

*Fest.* A light

Will struggle through these thronging words at last,  
 As in the angry and tumultuous West  
 A soft star trembles through the drifting clouds.  
 These are the strivings of a spirit which hates  
 So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up  
 The past to stand between it and its fate.  
 Were he at Einsiedeln — or Michal here !

*Par.* Cruel ! I seek her now — I kneel — I shriek —  
 I clasp her vesture — but she fades, still fades ;  
 And she is gone ; sweet human love is gone !  
 'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels  
 Reveal themselves to you ; they sit all day  
 Beside you, and lie down at night by you  
 Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep,  
 And all at once they leave you and you know them !  
 We are so fooled, so cheated ! Why, even now  
 I am not too secure against foul play ;  
 The shadows deepen and the walls contract :  
 No doubt some treachery is going on.  
 'Tis very dusk. Where are we put, Aprille ?  
 Have they left us in the lurch ? This murky loathsome

Death-trap, this slaughter-house, is not the hall  
 In the golden city! Keep by me, Aprile!  
 There is a hand groping amid the blackness  
 To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got you,  
 Poet? Hold on me for your life! If once  
 They pull you! — Hold!

'T is but a dream — no more!

I have you still; the sun comes out again;  
 Let us be happy: all will yet go well!  
 Let us confer: is it not like, Aprile,  
 That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,  
 The value of my labors ascertained,  
 Just as some stream foams long among the rocks  
 But after glideth glassy to the sea,  
 So, full content shall henceforth be my lot?  
 What think you, poet? Louder! Your clear voice  
 Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you ask  
 How could I still remain on earth, should God  
 Grant me the great approval which I seek?  
 I, you, and God can comprehend each other,  
 But men would murmur, and with cause enough;  
 For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,  
 Preserved and sanctified by inward light,  
 They would complain that comfort, shut from them,  
 I drank thus unespied; that they live on,  
 Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,  
 For ache and care and doubt and weariness,  
 While I am calm; help being vouchsafed to me,  
 And hid from them. — 'T were best consider that!  
 You reason well, Aprile; but at least  
 Let me know this, and die! Is this too much?  
 I will learn this, if God so please, and die!  
 If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt please!  
 We are so weak, we know our motives least  
 In their confused beginning. If at first  
 I sought . . . but wherefore bare my heart to thee?  
 I know thy mercy; and already thoughts  
 Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,  
 And intimate I cannot wholly fail,  
 For love and praise would clasp me willingly  
 Could I resolve to seek them. Thou art good,  
 And I should be content. Yet — yet first show  
 I have done wrong in daring! Rather give  
 The supernatural consciousness of strength  
 Which fed my youth! Only one hour of that,  
 With thee to help — O what should bar me then!

Lost, lost ! Thus things are ordered here ! God's crea-  
tures,

And yet he takes no pride in us ! — none, none !  
Truly there needs another life to come !  
If this be all — (I must tell Festus that)  
And other life await us not — for one,  
I say 't is a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,  
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest  
Against it, and I hurl it back with scorn.

Well, onward though alone ! Small time remains,  
And much to do : I must have fruit, must reap  
Some profit from my toils. I doubt my body  
Will hardly serve me through ; while I have labored  
It has decayed ; and now that I demand  
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast :  
A sad thought, a sad fate ! How very full  
Of wormwood 't is, that just at altar-service,  
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,  
When glory dawns and all is at the best,  
The sacred fire may flicker and grow faint  
And die for want of a wood-piler's help !  
Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul  
Is pulled down in the overthrow. Well, well —  
Let men catch every word, let them lose nought  
Of what I say ; something may yet be done.

They are ruins ! Trust me who am one of you !  
All ruins, glorious once, but lonely now.  
It makes my heart sick to behold you crouch  
Beside your desolate fane : the arches dim,  
The crumbling columns grand against the moon,  
Could I but rear them up once more — but that  
May never be, so leave them ! Trust me, friends,  
Why should you linger here when I have built  
A far resplendent temple, all your own ?  
Trust me, they are but ruins ! Sec, Aprile,  
Men will not heed ! Yet were I not prepared  
With better refuge for them, tongue of mine  
Should ne'er reveal how blank their dwelling is :  
I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what ? you spit at me, you grin and shriek  
Contempt into my ear — my ear which drank  
God's accents once ? you curse me ? Why men, men,  
I am not forned for it ! Those hideous eyes



Will be before me sleeping, waking, praying,  
 They will not let me even die. Spare, spare me,  
 Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me  
 The horrible scorn! You thought I could support it,  
 But now you see what silly fragile creature  
 Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad enough,  
 Not Christ nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved  
 From hate like this. Let me but totter back!  
 Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which creep  
 Into my very brain, and shut these scorched  
 Eyelids and keep those mocking faces out.  
 Listen, Aprile! I am very calm:  
 Be not deceived, there is no passion here  
 Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned thing:  
 I am calm: I will exterminate the race!  
 Enough of that: 't is said and it shall be.  
 And now be merry: safe and sound am I  
 Who broke through their best ranks to get at you.  
 And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile!

*Fest.* Have you no thought, no memory for me,  
 Aureole? I am so wretched — my pure Michal  
 Is gone, and you alone are left me now,  
 And even you forget me. Take my hand —  
 Lean on me thus. Do you not know me, Aureole?

*Par.* Festus, my own friend, you are come at last?  
 As you say, 't is an awful enterprise;  
 But you believe I shall go through with it:  
 'T is like you, and I thank you. Thank him for me,  
 Dear Michal! See how bright St. Saviour's spire  
 Flames in the sunset; all its figures quaint  
 Gay in the glancing light: you might conceive them  
 A troop of yellow-vested white-haired Jews  
 Bound for their own land where redemption dawns.

*Fest.* Not that blest time — not our youth's time, dear  
 God!

*Par.* Ha — stay! true, I forget — all is done since,  
 And he is come to judge me. How he speaks,  
 How calm, how well! yes, it is true, all true;  
 All quackery; all deceit; myself can laugh  
 The first at it, if you desire: but still  
 You know the obstacles which taught me tricks  
 So foreign to my nature — envy and hate,  
 Blind opposition, brutal prejudice,  
 Bald ignorance — what wonder if I sunk  
 To humor men the way they most approved?  
 My cheats were never palmed on such as you,

Dear Festus! I will kneel if you require me,  
 Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,  
 Explain its bounded nature, and avow  
 My insufficiency — whate'er you will:  
 I give the fight up: let there be an end,  
 A privacy, an obscure nook for me.  
 I want to be forgotten even by God.  
 But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,  
 When I shall die, within some narrow grave,  
 Not by itself — for that would be too proud —  
 But where such graves are thickest; let it look  
 Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,  
 So that the peasant at his brother's bed  
 May tread upon my own and know it not;  
 And we shall all be equal at the last,  
 Or classed according to life's natural ranks,  
 Fathers, sons, brothers, friends — not rich, nor wise,  
 Nor gifted: lay me thus, then say, "He lived  
 Too much advanced before his brother men;  
 They kept him still in front: 't was for their good  
 But yet a dangerous station. It were strange  
 That he should tell God he had never ranked  
 With men: so, here at least he is a man."

*Fest.* That God shall take thee to his breast, dear spirit,  
 Unto his breast, be sure! and here on earth  
 Shall splendor sit upon thy name forever.  
 Sun! all the heaven is glad for thee: what care  
 If lower mountains light their snowy phares  
 At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not  
 The source of day? Their theft shall be their bale:  
 For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,  
 And put aside the crowd of busy ones  
 And worship thee alone — the master-mind,  
 The thinker, the explorer, the creator!  
 Then, who should sneer at the convulsive throes  
 With which thy deeds were born, would scorn as well  
 The sheet of winding subterraneous fire  
 Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last  
 Huge islands up amid the simmering sea.  
 Behold thy might in me! thou hast infused  
 Thy soul in mine; and I am grand as thou,  
 Seeing I comprehend thee — I so simple,  
 Thou so august. I recognize thee first;  
 I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and late,  
 And though no glance reveal thou dost accept  
 My homage — thus no less I proffer it,  
 And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest,

*Par.* Festus!

*Fest.* I am for noble Aureole, God!

I am upon his side, come weal or woe.  
His portion shall be mine. He has done well.  
I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,  
As he has sinned. Reward him or I waive  
Reward! If thou canst find no place for him,  
He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be  
His slave forever. There are two of us.

*Par.* Dear Festus!

*Fest.* Here, dear Aureole! ever by you!

*Par.* Nay, speak on, or I dream again. Speak on!  
Some story, anything — only your voice.  
I shall dream else. Speak on! ay, leaning so!

*Fest.* Thus the Main glideth

Where my Love abideth.  
Sleep's no softer: it proceeds  
On through lawns, on through meads,  
On and on, whate'er befall,  
Meandering and musical,  
Though the niggard pasturage  
Bears not on its shaven ledge  
Aught but weeds and waving grasses  
To view the river as it passes,  
Save here and there a scanty patch  
Of primroses too faint to catch  
A weary bee.

*Par.* More, more; say on!

*Fest.* And scarce it pushes

Its gentle way through strangling rushes  
Where the glossy kingfisher  
Flutters when noon-heats are near,  
Glad the shelving banks to shun,  
Red and steaming in the sun.  
Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat  
Burrows, and the speckled stoat;  
Where the quick sandpipers flit  
In and out the marl and grit  
That seems to breed them, brown as they:  
Nought disturbs its quiet way,  
Save some lazy stork that springs,  
Trailing it with legs and wings,  
Whom the shy fox from the hill  
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

*Par.* My heart! they loose my heart, those simple words;  
Its darkness passes, which nought else could touch:

Like some dark snake that force may not expel,  
Which glideth out to music sweet and low.  
What were you doing when your voice broke through  
A chaos of ugly images? You, indeed!  
Are you alone here?

*Fest.* All alone: you know me?  
This cell?

*Par.* An unexceptionable vault:  
Good brick and stone: the bats kept out, the rats  
Kept in: a snug nook: how should I mistake it?

*Fest.* But wherefore am I here?

*Par.* Ah, well remembered!  
Why, for a purpose — for a purpose, Festus!  
'T is like me: here I trifle while time fleets,  
And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return.  
You are here to be instructed. I will tell  
God's message; but I have so much to say,  
I fear to leave half out. All is confused  
No doubt; but doubtless you will learn in time.  
He would not else have brought you here: no doubt  
I shall see clearer soon.

*Fest.* Tell me but this —  
You are not in despair?

*Par.* I? and for what?

*Fest.* Alas, alas! he knows not, as I feared!

*Par.* What is it you would ask me with that earnest  
Dear searching face?

*Fest.* How feel you, Aureole?

*Par.* Well:

Well. 'T is a strange thing: I am dying, Festus,  
And now that fast the storm of life subsides,  
I first perceive how great the whirl has been.  
I was calm then, who am so dizzy now —  
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less  
A partner of its motion and mixed up  
With its career. The hurricane is spent,  
And the good boat speeds through the brightening weather;  
But is it earth or sea that heaves below?  
The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'erstrewn  
With ravaged boughs and remnants of the shore;  
And now some islet, loosened from the land,  
Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean;  
And now the air is full of upturn canes,  
Light strippings from the fan-trees, tamarisks  
Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to them,  
All high in the wind. Even so my varied life

Drifts by me ; I am young, old, happy, sad,  
 Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,  
 And all at once : that is, those past conditions  
 Float back at once on me. If I select  
 Some special epoch from the crowd, 't is but  
 To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,  
 And only that particular state is present  
 With all its long-forgotten circumstance  
 Distinct and vivid as at first — myself  
 A careless looker-on and nothing more,  
 Indifferent and amused, but nothing more.  
 All this is death : I understand it all.  
 New being waits me ; new perceptions must  
 Be born in me before I plunge therein ;  
 Which last is Death's affair ; and while I speak,  
 Minute by minute he is filling me  
 With power ; and while my foot is on the threshold  
 Of boundless life — the doors unopened yet,  
 All preparations not complete within —  
 I turn new knowledge upon old events,  
 And the effect is . . . but I must not tell ;  
 It is not lawful. Your own turn will come  
 One day. Wait, Festus ! You will die like me.

*Fest.* 'T is of that past life that I burn to hear.

*Par.* You wonder it engages me just now ?

In truth, I wonder too. What's life to me ?  
 Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen  
 Music, and where I tend bliss evermore.  
 Yet how can I refrain ? 'T is a refined  
 Delight to view those chances, — one last view.  
 I am so near the perils I escape,  
 That I must play with them and turn them over,  
 To feel how fully they are past and gone.  
 Still, it is like, some further cause exists  
 For this peculiar mood — some hidden purpose ;  
 Did I not tell you something of it, Festus ?  
 I had it fast, but it has somehow slipped  
 Away from me ; it will return anon.

*Fest.* (Indeed his cheek seems young again, his voice  
 Complete with its old tones : that little laugh  
 Concluding every phrase, with upturned eye,  
 As though one stooped above his head to whom  
 He looked for confirmation and approval,  
 Where was it gone so long, so well preserved ?  
 Then, the forefinger pointing as he speaks,  
 Like one who traces in an open book

The matter he declares; 't is many a year  
 Since I remarked it last: and this in him,  
 But now a ghastly wreck!)

And can it be,  
 Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last  
 That worldly things are utter vanity?  
 That man is made for weakness, and should wait  
 In patient ignorance, till God appoint . . .

*Par.* Ha, the purpose: the true purpose: that is it!  
 How could I fail to apprehend! You here,  
 I thus! But no more trifling: I see all,  
 I know all: my last mission shall be done  
 If strength suffice. No trifling! Stay; this posture  
 Hardly befits one thus about to speak:  
 I will arise.

*Fest.* Nay, Aureole, are you wild?  
 You cannot leave your couch.

*Par.* No help; no help;  
 Not even your hand. So! there, I stand once more!  
 Speak from a couch? I never lectured thus.  
 My gown — the scarlet lined with fur; now put  
 The chain about my neck; my signet-ring  
 Is still upon my hand, I think — even so;  
 Last my good sword; ah, trusty Azoth, leapest  
 Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time?  
 This couch shall be my throne: I bid these walls  
 Be consecrate, this wretched cell become  
 A shrine, for here God speaks to men through me.  
 Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.

*Fest.* I am dumb with wonder.

*Par.* Listen, therefore, Festus!  
 There will be time enough, but none to spare.  
 I must content myself with telling only  
 The most important points. You doubtless feel  
 That I am happy, Festus; very happy.

*Fest.* 'T is no delusion which uplifts him thus!  
 Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin?

*Par.* Ay, pardoned: yet why pardoned?

*Fest.* 'T is God's praise  
 That man is bound to seek, and you . . .

*Par.* Have lived!  
 We have to live alone to set forth well  
 God's praise. 'T is true, I sinned much, as I thought,  
 And in effect need mercy, for I strove  
 To do that very thing; but, do your best  
 Or worst, praise rises, and will rise forever.

Pardon from him, because of praise denied —  
 Who calls me to himself to exalt himself?  
 He might laugh as I laugh!

*Fest.* But all comes  
 To the same thing. 'Tis fruitless for mankind  
 To fret themselves with what concerns them not;  
 They are no use that way: they should lie down  
 Content as God has made them, nor go mad  
 In thriveless cares to better what is ill.

*Par.* No, no; mistake me not; let me not work  
 More harm than I have worked! This is my case:  
 If I go joyous back to God, yet bring  
 No offering, if I render up my soul  
 Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,  
 If I appear the better to love God  
 For sin, as one who has no claim on him, —  
 Be not deceived! It may be surely thus  
 With me, while higher prizes still await  
 The mortal persevering to the end.  
 Beside I am not all so valueless:  
 I have been something, though too soon I left  
 Following the instincts of that happy time.

*Fest.* What happy time? For God's sake, for man's  
 sake,

What time was happy? All I hope to know  
 That answer will decide. What happy time?

*Par.* When but the time I vowed myself to man?

*Fest.* Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable!

*Par.* Yes, it was in me; I was born for it —  
 I, Paracelsus: it was mine by right.  
 Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul  
 Might learn from its own motions that some task  
 Like this awaited it about the world;  
 Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours  
 For fit delights to stay its longings vast;  
 And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her  
 To fill the creature full she dared thus frame  
 Hungry for joy; and, bravely tyrannous,  
 Grow in demand, still craving more and more,  
 And make each joy conceded prove a pledge  
 Of other joy to follow — bating nought  
 Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence  
 To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung  
 As an extreme, last boon, from destiny,  
 Into occasion for new covetings,  
 New strifes, new triumphs: — doubtless a strong soul,

Alone, unaided might attain to this,  
So glorious is our nature, so august  
Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,  
His naked spirit so majestic!  
But this was born in me; I was made so;  
Thus much time saved: the feverish appetites,  
The tumult of unproved desire, the unaimed  
Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,  
Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears  
Were saved me; thus I entered on my course.  
You may be sure I was not all exempt  
From human trouble; just so much of doubt  
As bade me plant a surer foot upon  
The sun-road, kept my eye unruined 'mid  
The fierce and flashing splendor, set my heart  
Trembling so much as warned me I stood there  
On sufferance — not to idly gaze, but cast  
Light on a darkling race; save for that doubt,  
I stood at first where all aspire at last  
To stand: the secret of the world was mine.  
I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,  
Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,  
But somehow felt and known in every shift  
And change in the spirit, — nay, in every pore  
Of the body, even,) — what God is, what we are,  
What life is — how God tastes an infinite joy  
In infinite ways — one everlasting bliss,  
From whom all being emanates, all power  
Proceeds; in whom is life forevermore,  
Yet whom existence in its lowest form  
Includes; where dwells enjoyment there is he:  
With still a flying point of bliss remote,  
A happiness in store afar, a sphere  
Of distant glory in full view; thus climbs  
Pleasure its heights forever and forever.  
The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,  
And the earth changes like a human face;  
The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,  
Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright  
In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,  
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask —  
God joys therein. The wroth sea's waves are edged  
With foam, white as the bitten lip of hate,  
When, in the solitary waste, strange groups  
Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,  
Staring together with their eyes on flame —



God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride.  
Then all is still ; earth is a wintry clod :  
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes  
Over its breast to waken it ; rare verdure  
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between  
The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,  
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ;  
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with blooms  
Like chrysalids impatient for the air,  
The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run  
Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;  
Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark  
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;  
Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls  
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe  
Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek  
Their loves in wood and plain — and God renews  
His ancient rapture. Thus he dwells in all,  
From life's minute beginnings, up at last  
To man — the consummation of this scheme  
Of being, the completion of this sphere  
Of life : whose attributes had here and there  
Been scattered o'er the visible world before,  
Asking to be combined, dim fragments meant  
To be united in some wondrous whole,  
Imperfect qualities throughout creation,  
Suggesting some one creature yet to make,  
Some point where all those scattered rays should meet  
Convergent in the faculties of man.  
Power — neither put forth blindly, nor controlled  
Calmly by perfect knowledge ; to be used  
At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear :  
Knowledge — not intuition, but the slow  
Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,  
Strengthened by love : love — not serenely pure,  
But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant  
Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds  
And softer stains, unknown in happier climes ;  
Love which endures and doubts and is oppressed  
And cherished, suffering much and much sustained,  
And blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,  
A half-enlightened, often-checked trust : —  
Hints and previsions of which faculties  
Are strewn confusedly everywhere about  
The inferior natures, and all lead up higher,  
All shape out dimly the superior race,

The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,  
And man appears at last. So far the seal  
Is put on life; one stage of being complete,  
One scheme wound up: and from the grand result  
A supplementary reflux of light,  
Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains  
Each back step in the circle. Not alone  
For their possessor dawn those qualities,  
But the new glory mixes with the heaven  
And earth; man, once desried, imprints forever  
His presence on all lifeless things: the winds  
Are henceforth voices, wailing or a shout,  
A querulous mutter or a quick gay laugh,  
Never a senseless gust now man is born.  
The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts,  
A secret they assemble to discuss  
When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare  
Like grates of hell: the peerless cup afloat  
Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph  
Swims bearing high above her head: no bird  
Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above  
That let light in upon the gloomy woods,  
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,  
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye.  
The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops  
With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,  
Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn  
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face:  
— And this to fill us with regard for man.  
With apprehension of his passing worth,  
Desire to work his proper nature out,  
And ascertain his rank and final place,  
For these things tend still upward, progress is  
The law of life, man is not Man as yet.  
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end  
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,  
While only here and there a star dispels  
The darkness, here and there a towering mind  
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows: when the host  
Is out at once to the despair of night,  
When all mankind alike is perfected,  
Equal in full-blown powers — then, not till then,  
I say, begins man's general infancy.  
For wherefore make account of feverish starts  
Of restless members of a dormant whole,  
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body

Slumbers as in a grave? Oh long ago  
 The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,  
 The peaceful mouth disturbed; half uttered speech  
 Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,  
 The breath drawn sharp, the strong right hand clenched  
 stronger,

As it would pluck a lion by the jaw;  
 The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep!  
 But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,  
 Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,  
 He shall start up and stand on his own earth,  
 Then shall his long triumphant march begin,  
 Thence shall his being date, — thus wholly roused,  
 What he achieves shall be set down to him.

When all the race is perfected alike  
 As man, that is; all tended to mankind,  
 And, man produced, all has its end thus far:

But in completed man begins anew  
 A tendency to God. Prognostics told  
 Man's near approach; so in man's self arise  
 August anticipations, symbols, types  
 Of a dim splendor ever on before  
 In that eternal circle life pursues.

For men begin to pass their nature's bound,  
 And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant  
 Their proper joys and griefs: they grow too great  
 For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade  
 Before the unmeasured thirst for good: while peace  
 Rises within them ever more and more.

Such men are even now upon the earth,  
 Serene amid the half-formed creatures round  
 Who should be saved by them and joined with them.

Such was my task, and I was born to it —  
 Free, as I said but now, from much that chains  
 Spirits, high-dowered but limited and vexed  
 By a divided and delusive aim,

A shadow mocking a reality  
 Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse  
 The flitting mimic called up by itself,  
 And so remains perplexed and nigh put out  
 By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.

I, from the first, was never cheated thus;  
 I never fashioned out a fancied good  
 Distinct from man's; a service to be done,  
 A glory to be ministered unto  
 With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn

From laboring in his behalf ; a strength  
Denied that might avail him. I cared not  
Lest his success ran counter to success  
Elsewhere : for God is glorified in man,  
And to man's glory vowed I soul and limb.  
Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,  
I failed : I gazed on power till I grew blind.  
Power ; I could not take my eyes from that :  
That only, I thought, should be preserved, increased  
At any risk, displayed, struck out at once —  
The sign and note and character of man.  
I saw no use in the past : only a scene  
Of degradation, ugliness and tears,  
The record of disgraces best forgotten,  
A sullen page in human chronicles  
Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man  
Should not stand all-sufficient even now,  
Or why his annals should be forced to tell  
That once the tide of light, about to break  
Upon the world, was sealed within its spring :  
I would have had one day, one moment's space,  
Change man's condition, push each slumbering claim  
Of mastery o'er the elemental world  
At once to full maturity, then roll  
Oblivion o'er the work, and hide from man  
What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear child  
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the past  
Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure  
By which thou hast the earth : for thee the present  
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen  
Beside that past's own shade when, in relief,  
Its brightness shall stand out : nor yet on thee  
Shall burst the future, as successive zones  
Of several wonder open on some spirit  
Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven :  
But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,  
While hope and fear and love shall keep thee man !  
All this was hid from me : as one by one  
My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circumscribed,  
As actual good within my reach decreased,  
While obstacles sprung up this way and that  
To keep me from effecting half the sum,  
Small as it proved ; as objects, mean within  
The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,  
Itself a match for my concentrated strength —  
What wonder if I saw no way to shun

Despair? The power I sought for man, seemed God's.  
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,  
A strange adventure made me know, one sin  
Had spotted my career from its uprise ;  
I saw Aprile — my Aprile there !  
And as the poor melodious wretch disburdened  
His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,  
I learned my own deep error ; love's undoing  
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,  
And what proportion love should hold with power  
In his right constitution ; love preceding  
Power, and with much power, always much more love ;  
Love still too straitened in his present means,  
And earnest for new power to set love free.  
I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned :  
And thus, when men received with stupid wonder  
My first revealings, would have worshipped me,  
And I despised and loathed their proffered praise —  
When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge  
For past credulity in casting shame  
On my real knowledge, and I hated them —  
It was not strange I saw no good in man,  
To overbalance all the wear and waste  
Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born  
To prosper in some better sphere : and why ?  
In my own heart love had not been made wise  
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,  
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,  
To see a good in evil, and a hope  
In ill-success ; to sympathize, be proud  
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim  
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,  
Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts ;  
All with a touch of nobleness, despite  
Their error, upward tending all though weak,  
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,  
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,  
And do their best to climb and get to him.  
All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men  
Regard me, and the poet dead long ago  
Who loved too rashly : and shape forth a third  
And better-tempered spirit, warned by both :  
As from the over-radiant star too mad  
To drink the life-springs, beamless thence itself —  
And the dark orb which borders the abyss,  
Ingulfed in icy night, — might have its course,

A temperate and equidistant world.  
Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well ;  
As yet men cannot do without contempt ;  
'Tis for their good, and therefore fit awhile  
That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,  
Rather than praise the strong and true, in me :  
But after, they will know me. If I stoop  
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,  
It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp  
Close to my breast ; its splendor, soon or late,  
Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day.  
You understand me ? I have said enough !

*Fest.* Now die, dear Aureole !

*Par.* Festus, let my hand —  
This hand, lie in your own, my own true friend !  
Aprile ! Hand in hand with you, Aprile !

*Fest.* And this was Paracelsus !

## NOTE

THE liberties I have taken with my subject are very trifling; and the reader may slip the foregoing scenes between the leaves of any memoir of Paracelsus he pleases, by way of commentary. To prove this, I subjoin a popular account, translated from the *Biographie Universelle*, Paris, 1822, which I select, not as the best, certainly, but as being at hand, and sufficiently concise for my purpose. I also append a few notes, in order to correct those parts which do not bear out my own view of the character of Paracelsus; and have incorporated with them a notice or two, illustrative of the poem itself.

“PARACELUS (Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus ab Hohenheim) was born in 1493 at Einsiedeln,<sup>1</sup> a little town in the canton of Schwytz, some leagues distant from Zurich. His father, who exercised the profession of medicine at Villach in Carinthia, was nearly related to George Bombast de Hohenheim, who became afterward Grand Prior of the Order of Malta. consequently Paracelsus could not spring from the dregs of the people, as Thomas Erastus, his sworn enemy, pretends.\* It appears that his elementary education was much neglected, and that he spent part of his youth in pursuing the life common to the travelling *literati* of the age; that is to say, in wandering from country to country, predicting the future by astrology and cheiromancy, evoking apparitions, and practising the different operations of magic and alchemy, in which he had been initiated either by his father or by various ecclesiastics, among the number of whom he particularizes the Abbot Trithem,<sup>2</sup> and many German bishops.

“As Paracelsus displays everywhere an ignorance of the rudiments of the most ordinary knowledge, it is not probable that he ever studied seriously in the schools: he contented himself with visiting the universities of Germany, France, and Italy; and in spite of his boasting himself to have been the ornament of those institutions, there is no proof of his having legally acquired the title of Doctor, which he assumes. It is only known that he applied himself long, under the direction of the wealthy Sigismund Fugger of Schwatz, to the discovery of the *Magnum Opus*.

“Paracelsus travelled among the mountains of Bohemia, in the East, and in Sweden, in order to inspect the labors of the miners, to be initiated in the mysteries of the oriental adepts, and to observe the secrets of nature and the famous mountain of loadstone.<sup>3</sup> He professes also to have visited Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Poland, and Transylvania; everywhere communicating freely, not merely with the physicians, but the old women, charlatans, and conjurers of these several lands. It is even believed that he extended his journeyings as far as Egypt and Tartary, and that he accompanied the son of the Khan of the Tartars to Constantinople, for the

\* I shall disguise M. Renauldin's next sentence a little. “Hic (Erastus sc.) Paracelsum trimum a milite quodam, alii a sue exectum ferunt. constat imberbem illum, nulliunquam osorem fuisse.” A stinging High-Dutch joke in those days at the expense of a number of learned men, as may be seen by referring to such rubbish as Melander's *Jocoseria*, etc. In the prints from his portrait by Tintoretto, painted a year before his death, Paracelsus is *barbatus*, at all events. But Erastus was never without a good reason for his faith—*c. g.*, “*Helvetium fuisse (Paracelsum) vix credo vix enim ea regio tale monstrum ediderit.*” (*De Medicina Nova*)

purpose of obtaining the secret of the tincture of Trismegistus from a Greek who inhabited that capital.

"The period of his return to Germany is unknown: it is only certain that, at about the age of thirty-three, many astonishing cures which he wrought on eminent personages procured him such a celebrity, that he was called in 1526, on the recommendation of Œcolampadius,<sup>4</sup> to fill a chair of physic and surgery at the university of Basel. There Paracelsus began by burning publicly in the amphitheatre the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring his auditors that the latches of his shoes were more instructed than those two physicians; that all universities, all writers put together, were less gifted than the hairs of his beard and of the crown of his head; and that, in a word, he was to be regarded as the legitimate monarch of medicine. 'You shall follow me,' cried he, 'you, Avicenna, Galen, Rhasis, Montagnana, Mesues; you, gentlemen of Paris, Montpellier, Germany, Cologne, Vienna,\* and whomsoever the Rhine and Danube nourish; you who inhabit the isles of the sea; you, likewise, Dalmatians, Athenians; thou, Arab; thou, Greek; thou, Jew; all shall follow me, and the monarchy shall be mine.' †

"But at Basel it was speedily perceived that the new Professor was no better than an egregious quack. Scarcely a year elapsed before his lectures had fairly driven away an audience incapable of comprehending their emphatic jargon. That which above all contributed to sully his reputation was the debauched life he led. According to the testimony of Oporinus, who lived two years in his intimacy, Paracelsus scarcely ever ascended the lecture-desk unless half drunk, and only dictated to his secretaries when in a state of intoxication: if summoned to attend the sick, he rarely proceeded thither without previously drenching himself with wine. He was accustomed to retire to bed without changing his clothes; sometimes he spent the night in pot-houses with peasants, and in the morning knew no longer what he was about; and, nevertheless, up to the age of twenty-five his only drink had been water.<sup>5</sup>

"At length, fearful of being punished for a serious outrage on a magistrate,<sup>6</sup> he fled from Basel towards the end of the year 1527, and took refuge in Alsatia, whither he caused Oporinus to follow with his chemical apparatus.

"He then entered once more upon the career of ambulatory theosophist. † Accordingly we find him at Colmar in 1528; at Nuremberg in 1529; at St. Gall in 1531; at Pfeffers in 1535; and at Augsburg in 1536. He next made some stay in Moravia, where he still further compromised his reputation by the loss of many distinguished patients, which compelled him to betake himself to Vienna; from thence he passed into Hungary; and in 1538 was at Villach, where he dedicated his *Chronicle* to the States of Carinthia, in gratitude for the many kindnesses with which they had honored his

\* Erastus, who relates this, here oddly remarks, "mirum quod non et Garamantos, Indos et Anglos adjunxit." Not so wonderful neither, if we believe what another adversary "had heard somewhere," — that all Paracelsus' system came of his pillaging "Anglum quendam, Rogerium Bacchonem."

† See his works, *passim*. I must give one specimen: — Somebody had been styling him "Luther alter." "And why not?" (he asks, as he well might) "Luther is abundantly learned, therefore you hate him and me; but we are at least a match for you. — Nam et contra vos et vestros universos principes Avicennam, Galenum, Aristotelem, etc. me satis superque munitum esse novi. Et vertex iste meus calvus ac depilis multo plura et sublimiora novit quam vester vel Avicenna vel universæ academiæ. Prodite, et signum date, qui viri sitis, quid roboris habeatis? quid autem sitis? Doctores et magistri, peduculos percentes et fricantes podicem." (*Fræg. Med.*)

‡ "So migratory a life could afford Paracelsus but little leisure for application to books, and accordingly he informs us that for the space of ten years he never opened a single volume, and that his whole medical library was not composed of six sheets in effect, the inventory drawn up after his death states that the only books which he left were the Bible, the New Testament, the Commentaries of St. Jerome on the Gospels, a printed volume on Medicine, and seven manuscripts."



father. Finally, from Mindelheim, which he visited in 1540, Paracelsus proceeded to Salzburg, where he died in the Hospital of St. Stephen (*Sebastian* is meant), Sept. 24, 1541."—(Here follows a criticism on his writings, which I omit.)

<sup>1</sup> *Paracelsus* would seem to be a fantastic version of *Von Hohenheim*. Einsiedeln is the Latinized *Eremus*, whence *Paracelsus* is sometimes called, as in the correspondence of *Erasmus*, *Eremita*. *Bombast*, his proper name, probably acquired, from the characteristic phraseology of his lectures, that unlucky signification which it has ever since retained.

<sup>2</sup> Then *Bishop of Spanheim*, and residing at *Würzburg* in *Franconia*; a town situated in a grassy fertile country, whence its name, *Herbipolis*. He was much visited there by learned men, as may be seen by his *Epistolæ Familiæres*, Hag. 1536: among others, by his staunch friend *Cornelius Agrippa*, to whom he dates thence, in 1510, a letter in answer to the dedicatory epistle prefixed to the treatise *De Occult. Philosoph.*, which last contains the following ominous allusion to *Agrippa's* sojourn: "Quum nuper tecum, R. P. in cœnobio tuo apud *Herbipolim* aliquamdiu conversatus, multa de chymicis, multa de magicis, multa de cabalisticis, cæterisque quæ adhuc in occulto delitescunt, arcanis scientiis atque artibus una contulissemus," etc.

<sup>3</sup> "Inexplebilis illa aviditas naturæ perscrutandi secreta et reconditarum supellectile scientiarum animum locupletandi, uno eodemque loco diu persistere non patiebatur, sed *Mercurii* instar, omnes terras, nationes et urbes perlustrandi igniculos supponebat, ut cum viris naturæ scrutatoribus, chymicis præsertim, ore tenuis conferret, et quæ diurnis laboribus nocturnisque vigiliis invenerant una vel altera communicatione obtineret" (*Bitiskius* in *Præfat.*) "Patris auxilio primum, deinde propria industria doctissimos viros in *Germania*, *Italia*, *Gallia*, *Hispania*, aliisque *Europæ* regionibus, nactus est præceptores; quorum liberali doctrina, et potissimum propria inquisitione ut qui esset ingenio acutissimo ac fere divino, tantum profecit, ut multi testati sint, in universa philosophia, tam ardua, tam arcana et abdita eruisse mortalium neminem." (*Melch. Adam*, in *Vit. Germ. Medic.*) "*Paracelsus* qui in intima naturæ viscera sic penitus introierit, metallorum stirpiumque vires et facultates tam incredibili ingenii acumine exploraverit ac perviderit, ad morbos omnes vel desperatos et opinione hominum insanabiles pereurandum; ut cum *Theophrasto* nata primum medicina perfecta que videtur." (*Petri Rami Orat. de Basilea.*) His passion for wandering is best described in his own words: "Ecce amatorem adolescentem difficillimi itineris haud piget, ut venustam saltem puellam vel fœminam aspiciat: quanto minus nobilissimarum artium amore laboris ac cujuslibet tœdii pigebit." etc. (*Defensiones Septem adversus æmulos suos*. 157). Def. 4ta "De peregrinationibus et exilio."

<sup>4</sup> The reader may remember that it was in conjunction with *Æcolampadius*, then *Divinity Professor* at *Basel*, that *Zuinglius* published in 1528 an answer to *Luther's Confession of Faith*; and that both proceeded in company to the subsequent conference with *Luther* and *Melancthon* at *Marburg*. Their letters fill a large volume. — "*D. D. Johannes Æcolampadii et Huldrici Zuinglii Epistolarum lib. quatuor.*" Bas. 1536. It must be also observed that *Zuinglius* began to preach in 1516, and at *Zurich* in 1519, and that in 1525 the *Mass* was abolished in the cantons. The tenets of *Æcolampadius* were supposed to be more evangelical than those up to that period maintained by the glorious German, and our brave *Bishop Fisher* attacked them as the fouler heresy: — "About this time arose out of *Luther's school* one *Æcolampadius*, like a mighty and fierce

giant; who, as his master had gone beyond the Church, went beyond his master (or else it had been impossible he could have been reputed the better scholar), who denied the real presence; him, this worthy champion (the Bishop) sets upon, and with five books (like so many smooth stones taken out of the river that doth always run with living water) slays the Philistine; which five books were written in the year of our Lord 1526, at which time he had governed the See of Rochester twenty years." (Life of Bishop Fisher, 1655.) Now, there is no doubt of the Protestantism of Paracelsus, Erasmus, Agrippa, etc., but the nonconformity of Paracelsus was always scandalous. L. Crasso (*Elogj d' Huomini Letterati*. Ven. 1666) informs us that his books were excommunicated by the Church Quensledt (*de Patr. Doct.*) affirms "nec tantum novæ medicinæ, verum etiam novæ theologiæ autor est" Delrio, in his *Disquisit. Magicar.*, classes him among those "partim atheos, partim hæreticos" (lib. 1. cap. 3). "Omnino tamen multa theologica in ejusdem scriptis plane atheismum olent, ac duriuscule sonant in auribus vere Christiani." (D. Gabrielis Clauderi Schediasma *de Trinct. Univ. Norimb.* 1736.) I shall only add one more authority: — "Oporinus dicit se (Paracelsum) aliquando Lutherum et Papam, non minus quam nunc Galenum et Hippocratem redacturum in ordinem minabatur, neque enim eorum qui hactenus in scripturam sacram scripsissent, sive veteres, sive recentiores, quenquam scripturæ nucleum recte eruisse, sed circa corticem et quasi membranam tantum hæreret." (Th. Erastus, *Disputat. de Med. Nova.*) These and similar notions had their due effect on Oporinus, who, says Zuingerus, in his *Theatrum*, "longum vale dixit ei (Paracelso), ne ob præceptoris, alioqui amicissimi, horrendas blasphemias ipse quoque aliquando pœnas Deo Opt. Max. lueret."

<sup>6</sup> His defenders allow the drunkenness. Take a sample of their excuses: "Gentis hoc, non viri vitium est, a Taciti sæculo ad nostrum usque non interrupto filo devolutum, sinceritati forte Germanæ cœvum, et nescio an aliquo consanguinitatis vinculo junctum." (Bitiskius.) The other charges were chiefly trumped up by Oporinus: "Domi, quod Oporinus amanuensis ejus sæpe narravit, nunquam nisi potus ad explicanda sua accessit, atque in medio conclavi ad columnam *τετυφωμένος* adsistens, apprehenso manibus capulo ensis, cujus *κόλωμα* hospitium præbuit, ut aiunt, spiritui familiari, imaginationes aut concepta sua protulit: — alii illud quod in capulo habuit, ab ipso Azoth appellatum, medicinam fuisse præstantissimam aut lapidem Philosophicum putant." (Melch. Adam.) This famous sword was no laughing-matter in those days, and it is now a material feature in the popular idea of Paracelsus. I recollect a couple of allusions to it in our own literature, at the moment

He had been known the Danish Gonswart,  
Or Paracelsus with his long sword.

*Volpone*, Act ii Scene 2.

Bumbastus kept a devil's bird  
Shut in the pummel of his sword,  
That taught him all the cunning pranks  
Of past and future mountebanks

*Hudibras*, Part i. Cant. 3.

This Azoth was simply "*laudanum suum*." But in his time he was commonly believed to possess the double tincture — the power of curing diseases and transmuting metals. Oporinus often witnessed, as he declares, both these effects, as did also Franciscus, the servant of Paracelsus, who describes, in a letter to Neander, a successful projection at which he was present, and the results of which, good golden ingots, were confided to his keeping. For the other quality, let the following notice vouch

among many others: — “Degebat Theophrastus Norimbergæ procius a medentibus illius urbis, et vaniloquus deceptorque proclamatus, qui, ut laboranti famæ subveniat, viros quosdam autoritatis summæ in Republica illa adit, et infamiæ amoliendæ, arti que suæ asserendæ, specimen ejus pollicetur editurum, nullo stipendio vel accepto pretio, horum faciles præbentium aures jussu elephantiacos aliquot, a communione hominum cæterorum segregatos, et in valetudinarium detrusos, alieno arbitrio eliguntur, quos virtute singulari remediorum suorum Theophrastus a fœda Græcorum lepra mundat, pristinaque sanitati restituit; conservat illustre harum curatio-num urbs in archivis suis testimonium.” (Bitiskius.)\* It is to be remarked that Oporinus afterwards repented of his treachery: “Sed respicit tandem, et quem vivum convitiis insectatus fuerat defunctum veneratione prosequutus, infames famæ præceptoris morsus in remorsus conscientiæ conversi penitentia, heu nimis tarda, vulnera clansere exanimi quæ spiranti infixeraut.” For these “bites” of Oporinus, see Disputat. Erasti, and Andreae Jocisci *Oratio de vit. ob. Opori*; for the “remorse,” *Mic. Toxita in pref. Testamenti*, and Couringius (otherwise an enemy of Paracelsus), who says it was contained in a letter from Oporinus to Doctor Vegeus.†

Whatever the moderns may think of these marvellous attributes, the title of Paracelsus to be considered the father of modern chemistry is indisputable. Gerardus Vossius, *De Philos<sup>a</sup> et Philos<sup>im</sup> sectis*, thus prefaces the ninth section of cap. 9, *De Chymia*. “Nobilem hanc medicinæ partem, diu sepultam avorum ætate, quasi ab ore revocavit Th. Paracelsus.” I suppose many hints lie scattered in his neglected books, which clever appropriators have since developed with applause. Thus, it appears from his treatise *De Phlebotomia*, and elsewhere, that he had discovered the circulation of the blood and the sanguification of the heart; as did after him Realdo Colombo, and still more perfectly Andrea Cesalpino of Arezzo, as Bayle and Bartoli observe. Even Lavater quotes a passage from his work *De Natura Rerum*, on practical Physiognomy, in which the definitions and axioms are precise enough, he adds. “though an astrological enthusiast, a man of prodigious genius.” See Holeroff’s Translation, vol. iii. p. 179 — “The Eyes.” While on the subject of the writings of Paracelsus, I may explain a passage in the third part of the Poem. He was, as I have said, unwilling to publish his works, but in effect did publish a vast number. Valentius (*in Prefat. in Paracels.*) declares “quod ad librorum Paracelsi copiam attinet, audio a Germanis prope trecentos recenseri.” “O fecunditas ingenii!” adds he, appositely. Many of these were, however, spurious; and Fred Bitiskius gives his good edition (3 vols. fol. Gen 1658) “rejectis suppositis solo ipsius nomine superbientibus quorum ingens circumfertur numerus.” The rest were “charissimum et pretiosissimum authoris pignus, extorsum potius ab illo quam obtentum.” “Jam minime eo volente atque jubente hæc ipsius scripta in lucem prodire videntur; quippe quæ muro inclusa ipso absente, servi cuiusdam indicio, furto surrepta atque sublata sunt,” says Valentius. These have been the study of a host of commentators, among whose labors are most notable, Petri Severini, *Idea Medicinæ Philosophicæ*. Bas. 1571; Mic. Toxetis, *Onomastica*. Arg. 1574; Dornei, *Dict. Parac.* Franc.

\* The premature death of Paracelsus casts no manner of doubt on the fact of his having possessed the Elixir Vite — the alchemists have abundant reasons to adduce, from which I select the following, as explanatory of a property of the Tincture not calculated on by its votaries — “Objectionem illam, quod Paracelsus non fuerit longævus, nonnulli quoque solvunt per rationes physicas vite nimium abbreviationem fortasse tibi accedere posse, ob Tincturam frequentiore ac longiore dosi sumtam, dum a summe efficaci et penetrabili hujus virtute calor innatus quasi suffocatur” (*Gabrielis Claudii Schedæ sma.*)

† For a good defence of Paracelsus I refer the reader to Olaus Borrichius’ treatise — *Hermæta etc. Saperientia vindicata*, 1674. Or, if he is no more learned than myself in such matters, I mention simply that Paracelsus introduced the use of Mercury and Laudanum.

1584;” and *Pi Philos<sup>æ</sup> Compendium cum scholiis auctore Leone Suavio*. Paris. (This last, a good book.)

<sup>6</sup> A disgraceful affair. One Liechtenfels, a canon, having been rescued *in extremis* by the “*laudanum*” of Paracelsus, refused the stipulated fee, and was supported in his meanness by the authorities, whose interference Paracelsus would not brook. His own liberality was allowed by his bitterest foes, who found a ready solution of his indifference to profit in the aforesaid sword-handle and its guest. His freedom from the besetting sin of a profession he abhorred — (as he curiously says somewhere, “*Quis quæso deinceps honorem deferat professione tali, quæ a tam facinorosis nebulonibus obitur et administratur?*”) — is recorded in his epitaph, which affirms — “*Bona sua in pauperes distribuenda collocandaque erogavit,*” *honoravit, or ordinavit* — for accounts differ.

# STRAFFORD

## A TRAGEDY

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DEDICATED, IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION,

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY.

LONDON, April 23, 1837.

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### PERSONS.

CHARLES I.	DENZIL HOLLIS.
Earl of HOLLAND.	BENJAMIN RUDYARD.
LORD SAVILE.	NATHANIEL FIENNES.
SIR HENRY VANE.	Earl of LOUDON.
WENTWORTH, Viscount WENT-	MAXWELL, <i>Usher of the Black Rod.</i>
WORTH, Earl of STRAFFORD.	BALFOUR, <i>Constable of the Tower.</i>
JOHN PYM.	A Puritan.
JOHN HAMPDEN.	Queen HENRIETTA.
The younger VANE.	LUCY PERCY, <i>Countess of Carlisle.</i>
Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents of Strafford, Secretaries, Officers of the Court, etc.	Two of Strafford's children.

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### ACT I.

SCENE I. *A House near Whitehall.* HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, the younger VANE, RUDYARD, FIENNES and many of the Presbyterian Party : LOUDON and other Scots Commissioners.

*Vane.* I say, if he be here —

*Rud.* (And he is here!) —

*Hol.* For England's sake let every man be still  
Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,  
Till Pym rejoin us! Rudyard! Henry Vane!  
One rash conclusion may decide our course  
And with it England's fate — think — England's fate!  
Hampden, for England's sake they should be still!

*Vane.* You say so, Hollis? Well, I must be still.  
It is indeed too bitter that one man,

Any one man's mere presence should suspend  
 England's combined endeavor : little need  
 To name him !

*Rud.* For you are his brother, Hollis !

*Hamp.* Shame on you, Rudyard ! time to tell him that  
 When he forgets the Mother of us all.

*Rud.* Do I forget her ?

*Hamp.* You talk idle hate  
 Against her foe : is that so strange a thing ?  
 Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs ?

*A Puritan.* The Philistine strode, cursing as he went :  
 But David — five smooth pebbles from the brook  
 Within his scrip . . .

*Rud.* Be you as still as David !

*Fien.* Here 's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue  
 Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments ;  
 Why, when the last sat, Wentworth sat with us !

*Rud.* Let 's hope for news of them now he returns —  
 He that was safe in Ireland, as we thought !  
 — But I 'll abide Pym's coming.

*Vane.* Now, by Heaven,  
 They may be cool who can, silent who will —  
 Some have a gift that way ! Wentworth is here,  
 Here, and the King 's safe closeted with him  
 Ere this. And when I think on all that 's past  
 Since that man left us, how his single arm  
 Rolled the advancing good of England back  
 And set the woful past up in its place,  
 Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be, —  
 How that man has made firm the fickle King  
 (Hampden, I will speak out !) — in aught he feared  
 To venture on before ; taught tyranny  
 Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,  
 To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close  
 That strangled agony bleeds mute to death —  
 How he turns Ireland to a private stage  
 For training infant villanies, new ways  
 Of wringing treasure out of tears and blood,  
 Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark  
 To try how much man's nature can endure  
 — If he dies under it, what harm ? if not,  
 Why, one more trick is added to the rest  
 Worth a king's knowing, and what Ireland bears  
 England may learn to bear : — how all this while  
 That man has set himself to one dear task,  
 The bringing Charles to relish more and more

Power, power without law, power and blood too,  
— Can I be still ?

*Hamp.* For that you should be still.

*Vane.* O Hampden, then and now ! The year he left us,  
The People in full Parliament could wrest  
The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King ;  
And now, he 'll find in an obscure small room  
A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men  
That take up England's cause : England is here !

*Hamp.* And who despairs of England ?

*Rud.*

That do I,

If Wentworth comes to rule her. I am sick  
To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,  
The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,  
May yet be longed-for back again. I say,  
I do despair.

*Vane.* And, Rudyard, I 'll say this —

Which all true men say after me, not loud  
But solemnly and as you 'd say a prayer !  
This King, who treads our England underfoot,  
Has just so much . . . it may be fear or craft,  
As bids him pause at each fresh outrage ; friends,  
He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,  
Some voice to ask, " Why shrink ? Am I not by ? "  
Now, one whom England loved for serving her,  
Found in his heart to say, " I know where best  
The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans  
Upon me when you trample." Witness, you !  
So Wentworth heartened Charles, so England fell.  
But inasmuch as life is hard to take  
From England . . .

*Many Voices.* Go on, Vane ! 'T is well said, Vane !

*Vane.* — Who has not so forgotten Runnymede ! —

*Voices.* 'T is well and bravely spoken, Vane ! Go on !

*Vane.* — There are some little signs of late she knows  
The ground no place for her. She glances round,  
Wentworth has dropped the hand, is gone his way  
On other service : what if she arise ?  
No ! the King beckons, and beside him stands  
The same bad man once more, with the same smile  
And the same gesture. Now shall England crouch.  
Or catch at us and rise ?

*Voices.* The Renegade !

Haman ! Ahithophel !

*Hamp.*

Gentlemen of the North,  
It was not thus the night your claims were urged,

And we pronounced the League and Covenant,  
The cause of Scotland, England's cause as well :  
Vane there, sat motionless the whole night through.

*Vane.* Hampden !

*Fien.* Stay, Vane !

*Lou.* Be just and patient, Vane !

*Vane.* Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon ! you  
Have still a Parliament, and this your League  
To back it ; you are free in Scotland still :  
While we are brothers, hope 's for England yet.  
But know you wherefore Wentworth comes ? to quench  
This last of hopes ? that he brings war with him ?  
Know you the man's self ? what he dares ?

*Lou.* We know,

All know — 't is nothing new.

*Vane.* And what 's new, then,

In calling for his life ? Why, Pym himself —  
You must have heard — ere Wentworth dropped our cause  
He would see Pym first ; there were many more  
Strong on the people's side and friends of his,  
Eliot that 's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,  
But for these Wentworth cared not ; only, Pym  
He would see — Pym and he were sworn, 't is said,  
To live and die together ; so, they met  
At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are sure, was long,  
Specious enough, the devil's argument  
Lost nothing on his lips ; he 'd have Pym own  
A patriot could not play a purer part  
Than follow in his track ; they two combined  
Might put down England. Well, Pym heard him out ;  
One glance — you know Pym's eye — one word was all :  
“ You leave us, Wentworth ! while your head is on,  
I 'll not leave you.”

*Hamp.* Has he left Wentworth, then ?

Has England lost him ? Will you let him speak,  
Or put your crude surmises in his mouth ?  
Away with this ! Will you have Pym or Vane ?

*Voices.* Wait Pym's arrival ! Pym shall speak.

*Hamp.*

Meanwhile

Let Loudon read the Parliament's report  
From Edinburgh : our last hope, as Vane says,  
Is in the stand it makes. Loudon !

*Vane.* No, no !

Silent I can be : not indifferent !

*Hamp.* Then each keep silence, praying God to spare  
His anger, cast not England quite away  
In this her visitation !



*A Puritan.* Seven years long  
The Midianite drove Israel into dens  
And caves. Till God sent forth a mighty man,  
(*Pym enters.*)

Even Gideon!

*Pym.* Wentworth's come: nor sickness, care,  
The ravaged body nor the ruined soul,  
More than the winds and waves that beat his ship,  
Could keep him from the King. He has not reached  
Whitehall: they've hurried up a Council there  
To lose no time and find him work enough.  
Where's Loudon? your Scots' Parliament . . .

*Lou.*

Hold firm:

We were about to read reports.

*Pym.*

The King

Has just dissolved your Parliament.

*Lou. and other Scots.*

Great God!

An oath-breaker! Stand by us, England, then!

*Pym.* The King's too sanguine; doubtless Wentworth's  
here;

But still some little form might be kept up.

*Hamp.* Now speak, Vane! Ruyard, you had much to say!

*Hol.* The rumor's false, then . . .

*Pym.*

Ay, the Court gives out

His own concerns have brought him back: I know

'Tis the King calls him: Wentworth supersedes

The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons

Whose part is played; there's talk enough, by this, —

Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is now

To turn the record's last and bloody leaf

That, chronicling a nation's great despair,

Tells they were long rebellious, and their lord

Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,

He drew the sword on them and reigned in peace.

Laud's laying his religion on the Scots

Was the last gentle entry: the new page

Shall run, the King thinks, "Wentworth thrust it down

At the sword's point."

*A Puritan.* I'll do your bidding, Pym,

England's and God's — one blow!

*Pym.*

A goodly thing —

We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing

To right that England. Heaven grows dark above:

Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall,

To say how well the English spirit comes out

Beneath it! All have done their best, indeed,

From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,  
 To the least here : and who, the least one here,  
 When she is saved (for her redemption dawns  
 Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns — it dawns)  
 Who'd give at any price his hope away  
 Of being named along with the Great Men?  
 We would not — no, we would not give that up!

*Hamp.* And one name shall be dearer than all names,  
 When children, yet unborn, are taught that name  
 After their fathers', — taught what matchless man . . .

*Pym.* . . . Saved England? What if Wentworth's should  
 be still  
 That name?

*Rud. and others.* We have just said it, Pym! His death  
 Saves her! We said it — there's no way beside!  
 I'll do God's bidding, Pym! They struck down Joab  
 And purged the land.

*Vane.* No villanous striking-down!

*Rud.* No, a calm vengeance: let the whole land rise  
 And shout for it. No Feltons!

*Pym.* Rudyard, no!  
 England rejects all Feltons; most of all  
 Since Wentworth . . . Hampden, say the trust again  
 Of England in her servants — but I'll think  
 You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,  
 Spite of the past, Wentworth rejoins you, friends!

*Vane and others.* Wentworth? Apostate! Judas! Double-  
 dyed!

A traitor! Is it Pym, indeed . . .

*Pym.* . . . Who says  
 Vane never knew that Wentworth loved that man,  
 Was used to stroll with him, arm locked in arm,  
 Along the streets to see the people pass  
 And read in every island-countenance  
 Fresh argument for God against the King, —  
 Never sat down, say, in the very house  
 Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble thoughts,  
 (You've joined us, Hampden — Hollis, you as well,  
 And then left talking over Gracchus' death . . .

*Vane.* To frame, we know it well, the choicest clause  
 In the Petition of Rights: he framed such clause  
 One month before he took at the King's hand  
 His Northern Presidency, which that Bill  
 Denounced.

*Pym.* Too true! Never more, never more  
 Walked we together! Most alone I went.

I have had friends — all here are fast my friends —  
 But I shall never quite forget that friend.  
 And yet it could not but be real in him!  
 You, Vane, — you, Rudyard, have no right to trust  
 To Wentworth: but can no one hope with me?  
 Hampden, will Wentworth dare shed English blood  
 Like water?

*Hamp.* Ireland is Aceldama.

*Pym.* Will he turn Scotland to a hunting-ground  
 To please the King, now that he knows the King?  
 The People or the King? and that King, Charles!

*Hamp.* Pym, all here know you: you'll not set your heart  
 On any baseless dream. But say one deed  
 Of Wentworth's, since he left us . . . [Shouting without.

*Vane.* There! he comes,  
 And they shout for him! Wentworth's at Whitehall,  
 The King embracing him, now, as we speak,  
 And he, to be his match in courtesies,  
 Taking the whole war's risk upon himself,  
 Now, while you tell us here how changed he is!  
 Hear you?

*Pym.* And yet if 't is a dream, no more,  
 That Wentworth chose their side, and brought the King  
 To love it as though Laud had loved it first,  
 And the Queen after; — that he led their cause  
 Calm to success, and kept it spotless through,  
 So that our very eyes could look upon  
 The travail of our souls and close content  
 That violence, which something mars even rights  
 Which sanction it, had taken off no grace  
 From its serene regard. Only a dream!

*Hamp.* We meet here to accomplish certain good  
 By obvious means, and keep tradition up  
 Of free assemblages, else obsolete,  
 In this poor chamber: nor without effect  
 Has friend met friend to counsel and confirm,  
 As, listening to the beats of England's heart,  
 We spoke its wants to Scotland's prompt reply  
 By these her delegates. Remains alone  
 That word grow deed, as with God's help it shall —  
 But with the devil's hindrance, who doubts too?  
 Looked we or no that tyranny should turn  
 Her engines of oppression to their use?  
 Whereof, suppose the worst be Wentworth here —  
 Shall we break off the tactics which succeed  
 In drawing out our formidablest foe,

Let bickering and disunion take their place ?  
 Or count his presence as our conquest's proof,  
 And keep the old arms at their steady play ?  
 Proceed to England's work ! Fiennes, read the list !

*Fiennes.* Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid

In every county, save the northern parts

Where Wentworth's influence . . . [Shouting.

*Vane.*

I, in England's name,

Declare her work, this way, at end ! Till now,

Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best.

We English had free leave to think ; till now,

We had a shadow of a Parliament

In Scotland. But all's changed : they change the first,

They try brute-force for law, they, first of all . . .

*Voices.* Good ! Talk enough ! The old true hearts with Vane !

*Vane.* Till we crush Wentworth for her, there's no act

Serves England !

*Voices.* Vane for England !

*Pym.*

Pym should be

Something to England. I seek Wentworth, friends.

## SCENE II. *Whitehall.*

Lady CARLISLE and WENTWORTH.

*Went.* And the King ?

*Lady Car.*

Wentworth, lean on me ! Sit then !

I'll tell you all ; this horrible fatigue

Will kill you.

*Went.*

No ; — or, Lucy, just your arm ;

I'll not sit till I've cleared this up with him :

After that, rest. The King ?

*Lady Car.*

Confides in you.

*Went.* Why ? or, why now ? — They have kind throats, the  
 knaves !

Shout for me — they !

*Lady Car.*

You come so strangely soon :

Yet we took measures to keep off the crowd —

Did they shout for you ?

*Went.*

Wherefore should they not ?

Does the King take such measures for himself ?

Beside, there's such a dearth of malcontents,

You say !

*Lady Car.* I said but few dared carp at you.

*Went.* At me ? at us, I hope ! The King and I !

He's surely not disposed to let me bear  
The fame away from him of these late deeds  
In Ireland? I am yet his instrument  
Be it for well or ill? He trusts me, too!

*Lady Car.* The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I said,  
To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . . .

*Went.* All the Court! Evermore the Court about us!  
Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane  
About us, — then the King will grant me — what?  
That he for once put these aside and say —  
“Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!”

*Lady Car.* You professed  
You would be calm.

*Went.* Lucy, and I am calm!  
How else shall I do all I come to do,  
Broken, as you may see, body and mind,  
How shall I serve the King? Time wastes meanwhile,  
You have not told me half. His footstep! No.  
Quick, then, before I meet him, — I am calm —  
Why does the King distrust me?

*Lady Car.* He does not  
Distrust you.

*Went.* Lucy, you can help me; you  
Have even seemed to care for me: one word!  
Is it the Queen?

*Lady Car.* No, not the Queen: the party  
That poisons the Queen's ear, Savile and Holland.

*Went.* I know, I know: old Vane, too, he's one too?  
Go on — and he's made Secretary. Well?  
Or leave them out and go straight to the charge;  
The charge!

*Lady Car.* Oh, there's no charge, no precise charge;  
Only they sneer, make light of — one may say,  
Nibble at what you do.

*Went.* I know! but, Lucy,  
I reckoned on you from the first! — Go on!  
— Was sure could I once see this gentle friend  
When I arrived, she'd throw an hour away  
To help her . . . what am I?

*Lady Car.* You thought of me,  
Dear Wentworth?

*Went.* But go on! The party here!

*Lady Car.* They do not think your Irish Government  
Of that surpassing value . . .

*Went.* The one thing  
Of value! The one service that the crown

May count on! All that keeps these very Vanes  
In power, to vex me — not that they do vex,  
Only it might vex some to hear that service  
Decried, the sole support that's left the King!

*Lady Car.* So the Archbishop says.

*Went.*

Ah? well, perhaps

The only hand held up in my defence  
May be old Laud's! These Hollands then, these Saviles  
Nibble? They nibble? — that's the very word!

*Lady Car.* Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says,  
Exceeds the due proportion: while the tax . . .

*Went.* Enough! 't is too unworthy, — I am not  
So patient as I thought! What's Pym about?

*Lady Car.* Pym!

*Went.*

Pym and the People.

*Lady Car.*

Oh, the Faction!

Extinct — of no account: there'll never be  
Another Parliament.

*Went.*

Tell Savile that!

You may know — (ay, you do — the creatures here  
Never forget!) that in my earliest life  
I was not . . . much that I am now! The King  
May take my word on points concerning Pym  
Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,  
I bid them ruin their wise selves, not me,  
These Vanes and Hollands! I'll not be their tool  
Who might be Pym's friend yet.

But there's the King!

Where is he?

*Lady Car.* Just apprised that you arrive.

*Went.* And why not here to meet me? I was told  
He sent for me, nay, longed for me.

*Lady Car.*

Because, —

He is now . . . I think a Council's sitting now  
About this Scots affair.

*Went.*

A Council sits?

They have not taken a decided course  
Without me in the matter?

*Lady Car.*

I should say . . .

*Went.* The war? They cannot have agreed to that?  
Not the Scots' war? — without consulting me —  
Me, that am here to show how rash it is,  
How easy to dispense with? — Ah, you too  
Against me! well, — the King may take his time.  
— Forget it, Lucy! Cares make peevish: mine  
Weigh me (but 't is a secret) to my grave.

*Lady Car.* For life or death I am your own, dear friend!

[*Goes out.*]

*Went.* Heartless! but all are heartless here. Go now,  
Forsake the People! — I did not forsake  
The People: they shall know it — when the King  
Will trust me! — who trusts all beside at once,  
While I have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,  
And am not trusted: have but saved the throne:  
Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,  
And am not trusted. But he'll see me now.  
Weston is dead: the Queen's half English now —  
More English: one decisive word will brush  
These insects from . . . the step I know so well!  
The King! But now, to tell him . . . no — to ask  
What's in me he distrusts: — or, best begin  
By proving that this frightful Scots affair  
Is just what I foretold. So much to say,  
And the flesh fails, now, and the time is come,  
And one false step no way to be repaired!  
You were avenged, Pym, could you look on me.

(*PYM enters.*)

*Went.* I little thought of you just then.

*Pym.*

No? I

Think always of you, Wentworth.

*Went.*

The old voice!

I wait the King, sir.

*Pym.*

True — you look so pale!

A Council sits within; when that breaks up

He'll see you.

*Went.*

Sir, I thank you.

*Pym.*

Oh, thank Laud!

You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs

The case is desperate: he'll not be long

To-day: he only means to prove, to-day,

We English all are mad to have a hand

In butchering the Scots for serving God

After their fathers' fashion: only that!

*Went.* Sir, keep your jests for those who relish them!

(Does he enjoy their confidence?) 'T is kind

To tell me what the Council does.

*Pym.*

You grudge

That I should know it had resolved on war

Before you came? no need: you shall have all

The credit, trust me!

*Went.*

Have the Council dared —

They have not dared . . . that is — I know you not.  
Farewell, sir : times are changed.

*Pym.* — Since we two met  
At Greenwich? Yes : poor patriots though we be,  
You cut a figure, makes some slight return  
For your exploits in Ireland! Changed indeed,  
Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!  
Ah, Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance' sake,  
Just to decide a question ; have you, now,  
Felt your old self since you forsook us ?

*Went.* Sir !

*Pym.* Spare me the gesture ! you misapprehend !  
Think not I mean the advantage is with me.  
I was about to say that, for my part,  
I never quite held up my head since then —  
Was quite myself since then : for first, you see,  
I lost all credit after that event  
With those who recollect how sure I was  
Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side.  
Forgive me : Savile, old Vane, Holland here,  
Eschew plain-speaking : 't is a trick I keep.

*Went.* How, when, where, Savile, Vane, and Holland speak,  
Plainly or otherwise, would have my scorn,  
All of my scorn, sir . . .

*Pym.* . . . Did not my poor thoughts  
Claim somewhat ?

*Went.* Keep your thoughts ! believe the King  
Mistrusts me for their prattle, all these Vanes  
And Saviles ! make your mind up, o' God's love,  
That I am discontented with the King !

*Pym.* Why, you may be : I should be, that I know,  
Were I like you.

*Went.* Like me ?

*Pym.* I care not much  
For titles : our friend Eliot died no lord,  
Hamptden's no lord, and Savile is a lord ;  
But you care, since you sold your soul for one.  
I can't think, therefore, your soul's purchaser  
Did well to laugh you to such utter scorn  
When you twice prayed so humbly for its price,  
The thirty silver pieces . . . I should say,  
The Earldom you expected, still expect,  
And may. Your letters were the movingest !  
Console yourself : I've borne him prayers just now  
From Scotland not to be oppressed by Laud,



Words moving in their way : he 'll pay, be sure,  
As much attention as to those you sent.

*Went.* False, sir! Who showed them you? Suppose it so,  
The King did very well . . . nay, I was glad  
When it was shown me : I refused, the first!

John Pym, you were my friend — forbear me once!

*Pym.* Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,  
That all should come to this!

*Went.* Leave me!

*Pym.* My friend,  
Why should I leave you?

*Went.* To tell Rudyard this,  
And Hampden this!

*Pym.* Whose faces once were bright  
At my approach, now sad with doubt and fear,  
Because I hope in you — yes, Wentworth, you  
Who never mean to ruin England — you  
Who shake off, with God's help, an obscene dream  
In this Ezekiel chamber, where it crept  
Upon you first, and wake, yourself, your true  
And proper self, our Leader, England's Chief,  
And Hampden's friend!

This is the proudest day!

Come, Wentworth! Do not even see the King!  
The rough old room will seem itself again!  
We 'll both go in together : you 've not seen  
Hampden so long; come: and there 's Fiennes: you 'll have  
To know young Vane. This is the proudest day!

[*The KING enters. WENTWORTH lets fall PYM's hand.*]

*Cha.* Arrived, my lord? — This gentleman, we know  
Was your old friend.

The Scots shall be informed  
What we determine for their happiness.

[*PYM goes out.*]

You have made haste, my lord.

*Went.* Sir, I am come . . .

*Cha.* To see an old familiar — nay, 't is well;  
Aid us with his experience: this Scots' League  
And Coverant spreads too far, and we have proofs  
That they intrigue with France: the Faction too,  
Whereof your friend there is the head and front,  
Abets them, — as he boasted, very like.

*Went.* Sir, trust me! but for this once, trust me, sir!

*Cha.* What can you mean?

*Went.* That you should trust me, sir!  
Oh — not for my sake! but 't is sad, so sad

That for distrusting me, you suffer — you  
Whom I would die to serve : sir, do you think  
That I would die to serve you ?

*Cha.* But rise, Wentworth !

*Went.* What shall convince you ? What does Savile do  
To prove him . . . Ah, one can't tear out one's heart  
And show it, how sincere a thing it is !

*Cha.* Have I not trusted you ?

*Went.* Say aught but that !

There is my comfort, mark you : all will be  
So different when you trust me — as you shall !  
It has not been your fault, — I was away,  
Mistook, maligned, how was the King to know ?  
I am here, now — he means to trust me, now —  
All will go on so well !

*Cha.* Be sure I do —

I've heard that I should trust you : as you came,  
Your friend, the Countess, told me . . .

*Went.* No, — hear nothing —

Be told nothing about me ! — you're not told  
Your right hand serves you, or your children love you !

*Cha.* You love me, Wentworth : rise !

*Went.* I can speak now.

I have no right to hide the truth. 'Tis I  
Can save you : only I. Sir, what must be ?

*Cha.* Since Laud's assured (the minutes are within)  
— Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .

*Went.* That is, he'll have a war : what's done is done !

*Cha.* They have intrigued with France ; that's clear to Laud.

*Went.* Has Laud suggested any way to meet  
The war's expense ?

*Cha.* He'd not decide so far

Until you joined us.

*Went.* Most considerate !

He's certain they intrigue with France, these Scots ?  
The People would be with us.

*Cha.* Pym should know.

*Went.* The People for us — were the People for us !  
Sir, a great thought comes to reward your trust :

Summon a Parliament ! in Ireland first,  
Then, here.

*Cha.* In truth ?

*Went.* That saves us ! that puts off

The war, gives time to right their grievances —  
To talk with Pym. I know the Faction, as  
Laud styles it, tutors Scotland : all their plans

Suppose no Parliament : in calling one  
 You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs  
 Of Scotland's treason ; then bid England help :  
 Even Pym will not refuse.

*Cha.* You would begin

With Ireland ?

*Went.* Take no care for that : that's sure

To prosper.

*Cha.* You shall rule me. You were best

Return at once : but take this ere you go !

Now, do I trust you ? You're an Earl : my Friend  
 Of Friends : yes, while . . . You hear me not !

*Went.* Say it all o'er again — but once again :

The first was for the music — once again !

*Cha.* Strafford, my friend, there may have been reports,  
 Vain rumors. Henceforth touching Strafford is  
 To touch the apple of my sight : why gaze  
 So earnestly ?

*Went.* I am grown young again,  
 And foolish. What was it we spoke of ?

*Cha.* Ireland —

The Parliament, —

*Went.* I may go when I will ?

— Now ?

*Cha.* Are you tired so soon of us ?

*Went.* My King !

But you will not so utterly abhor

A Parliament ? I'd serve you any way.

*Cha.* You said just now this was the only way.

*Went.* Sir, I will serve you !

*Cha.* Strafford, spare yourself —

You are so sick, they tell me.

*Went.* 'Tis my soul

That's well and prospers now.

This Parliament —

We'll summon it, the English one — I'll care

For everything. You shall not need them much.

*Cha.* If they prove restive . . .

*Went.* I shall be with you.

*Cha.* Ere they assemble ?

*Went.* I will come, or else

Deposit this infirm humanity

I' the dust. My whole heart stays with you, my King !

[As WENTWORTH goes out, the QUEEN enters.]

*Cha.* That man must love me.

*Queen.* Is it over then ?

Why, he looks yellower than ever! Well,  
At least we shall not hear eternally  
Of service — services: he's paid at least.

*Cha.* Not done with: he engages to surpass  
All yet performed in Ireland.

*Queen.* I had thought  
Nothing beyond was ever to be done.

The war, Charles — will he raise supplies enough?

*Cha.* We've hit on an expedient; he . . . that is,  
I have advised . . . we have decided on  
The calling — in Ireland — of a Parliament.

*Queen.* O truly! You agree to that? Is that  
The first-fruit of his counsel? But I guessed  
As much.

*Cha.* This is too idle, Henriette!  
I should know best. He will strain every nerve,  
And once a precedent established . . .

*Queen.* Notice  
How sure he is of a long term of favor!  
He'll see the next, and the next after that;  
No end to Parliaments!

*Cha.* Well, it is done.  
He talks it smoothly, doubtless. If, indeed,  
The Commons here . . .

*Queen.* Here! you will summon them  
Here? Would I were in France again to see  
A King!

*Cha.* But, Henriette . . .

*Queen.* Oh, the Scots see clear!  
Why should they bear your rule?

*Cha.* But listen, sweet!

*Queen.* Let Wentworth listen — you confide in him!

*Cha.* I do not, love, — I do not so confide!  
The Parliament shall never trouble us!  
. . . Nay, hear me! I have schemes, such schemes: we'll buy  
The leaders off: without that, Wentworth's counsel  
Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it  
To have excuse for breaking it forever,  
And whose will then the blame be? See you not?  
Come, dearest, — look! the little fairy, now,  
That cannot reach my shoulder! Dearest, come!

## ACT II.

## SCENE I. (As in Act I. Scene I.)

*The same Party enters.*

*Rud.* Twelve subsidies!

*Vane.* O Rudyard, do not laugh  
At least!

*Rud.* True: Strafford called the Parliament—  
'Tis he should laugh!

*A Puritan.* Out of the serpent's root  
Comes forth a cockatrice.

*Fien.* — A stinging one,  
If that's the Parliament: twelve subsidies!  
A stinging one! but, brother, where's your word  
For Strafford's other nest-egg, the Scots' war?

*The Puritan.* His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.

*Fien.* Shall be? It chips the shell, man; peeps abroad.  
Twelve subsidies! — Why! how now, Vane?

*Rud.* Peace, Fiennes!

*Fien.* Ah? — But he was not more a dupe than I,  
Or you, or any here, the day that Pym  
Returned with the good news. Look up, friend Vane!  
We all believed that Strafford meant us well  
In summoning the Parliament.

(HAMPDEN enters.)

*Vane.* Now, Hampden,  
Clear me! I would have leave to sleep again:  
I'd look the People in the face again:  
Clear me from having, from the first, hoped, dreamed  
Better of Strafford!

*Hamp.* You may grow one day  
A steadfast light to England, Henry Vane!

*Rud.* Meantime, by flashes I make shift to see  
Strafford revived our Parliaments; before,  
War was but talked of; there's an army, now:  
Still, we've a Parliament! Poor Ireland bears  
Another wrench (she dies the hardest death!) —  
Why, speak of it in Parliament! and lo,  
'Tis spoken, so console yourselves!

*Fien.* The jest!  
We clamored, I suppose, thus long, to win  
The privilege of laying on our backs  
A sorer burden than the King dares lay!

*Rud.* Mark now : we meet at length, complaints pour in  
 From every county, all the land cries out  
 On loans and levies, curses ship-money,  
 Calls vengeance on the Star-chamber ; we lend  
 An ear. “ Ay, lend them all the ears you have ! ”  
 Puts in the King ; “ my subjects, as you find,  
 Are fretful, and conceive great things of you.  
 Just listen to them, friends ; you ’ll sanction me  
 The measures they most wince at, make them yours,  
 Instead of mine, I know : and, to begin,  
 They say my levies pinch them, — raise me straight  
 Twelve subsidies ! ”

*Fien.* All England cannot furnish  
 Twelve subsidies !

*Hol.* But Strafford, just returned  
 From Ireland — what has he to do with that ?  
 How could he speak his mind ? He left before  
 The Parliament assembled. Pym, who knows  
 Strafford . . .

*Rud.* Would I were sure we know ourselves !  
 What is for good, what, bad — who friend, who foe !

*Hol.* Do you count Parliaments no gain ?

*Rud.* A gain ?

While the King’s creatures overbalance us ?  
 — There ’s going on, beside, among ourselves  
 A quiet, slow, but most effectual course  
 Of buying over, sapping, leavening  
 The lump till all is leaven. Glanville’s gone.  
 I ’ll put a case ; had not the Court declared  
 That no sum short of just twelve subsidies  
 Will be accepted by the King — our House,  
 I say, would have consented to that offer  
 To let us buy off ship-money !

*Hol.* Most like,  
 If, say, six subsidies will buy it off,  
 The House . . .

*Rud.* Will grant them ! Hampden, do you hear ?  
 Congratulate with me ! the King’s the king,  
 And gains his point at last — our own assent  
 To that detested tax ! All’s over, then !  
 There’s no more taking refuge in this room,  
 Protesting, “ Let the King do what he will,  
 We, England, are no party to our shame :  
 Our day will come ! ” Congratulate with me !

(Pym enters.)

*Vane.* Pym, Strafford called this Parliament, you say,  
But we'll not have our Parliaments like those  
In Ireland, Pym!

*Rud.* Let him stand forth, your friend!  
One doubtful act hides far too many sins;  
It can be stretched no more, and, to my mind,  
Begins to drop from those it covered.

*Other Voices.* Good!  
Let him avow himself! No fitter time!  
We wait thus long for you.

*Rud.* Perhaps, too long!  
Since nothing but the madness of the Court,  
In thus unmasking its designs at once,  
Has saved us from betraying England. Stay —  
This Parliament is Strafford's: let us vote  
Our list of grievances too black by far  
To suffer talk of subsidies: or best,  
That ship-money's disposed of long ago  
By England: any vote that's broad enough:  
And then let Strafford, for the love of it,  
Support his Parliament!

*Vane.* And vote as well  
No war to be with Scotland! Hear you, Pym?  
We'll vote, no war! No part nor lot in it  
For England!

*Many Voices.* Vote, no war! Stop the new levies!  
No Bishops' war! At once! When next we meet!

*Pym.* Much more when next we meet! Friends, which of  
you  
Since first the course of Strafford was in doubt,  
Has fallen the most away in soul from me?

*Vane.* I sat apart, even now, under God's eye,  
Pondering the words that should denounce you, Pym,  
In presence of us all, as one at league  
With England's enemy.

*Pym.* You are a good  
And gallant spirit, Henry. Take my hand  
And say you pardon me for all the pain  
Till now! Strafford is wholly ours.

*Many Voices.* Sure? sure?

*Pym.* Most sure: for Charles dissolves the Parliament  
While I speak here.

— And I must speak, friends, now!  
Strafford is ours. The King detects the change,





At slaughter — one blow, only one, then, peace,  
 Save for the dreams. I said, to please you both  
 I'd lead an Irish army to the West,  
 While in the South an English . . . but you look  
 As though you had not told me fifty times  
 'T was a brave plan! My army is all raised,  
 I am prepared to join it . . .

*Cha.* Hear me, Strafford!

*Straf.* . . . When, for some little thing, my whole design  
 Is set aside — (where is the wretched paper?)  
 I am to lead — (ay, here it is) — to lead  
 The English army: why? Northumberland  
 That I appointed, chooses to be sick —  
 Is frightened: and, meanwhile, who answers for  
 The Irish Parliament? or army, either?  
 Is this my plan?

*Cha.* So disrespectful, sir?

*Straf.* My liege, do not believe it! I am yours,  
 Yours ever: 't is too late to think about:  
 To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this untoward step  
 Shall pass for mine; the world shall think it mine.  
 But, here! But, here! I am so seldom here,  
 Seldom with you, my King! I, soon to rush  
 Alone upon a giant in the dark!

*Cha.* My Strafford!

*Straf.* [*examines papers awhile.*] "Seize the passes of the  
 Tyne!"

But, sir, you see — see all I say is true?  
 My plan was sure to prosper, so, no cause  
 To ask the Parliament for help; whereas  
 We need them frightfully.

*Cha.* Need the Parliament?

*Straf.* Now, for God's sake, sir, not one error more!  
 We can afford no error; we draw, now,  
 Upon our last resource: the Parliament  
 Must help us!

*Cha.* I've undone you, Strafford!

*Straf.* Nay —

Nay — why despond, sir; 't is not come to that!  
 I have not hurt you? Sir, what have I said  
 To hurt you? I unsay it! Don't despond!  
 Sir, do you turn from me?

*Cha.* My friend of friends!

*Straf.* We'll make a shift. Leave me the Parliament!  
 Help they us ne'er so little and I'll make  
 Sufficient out of it. We'll speak them fair.

They're sitting, that's one great thing; that half gives  
 Their sanction to us; that's much: don't despond!  
 Why, let them keep their money, at the worst!  
 The reputation of the People's help  
 Is all we want: we'll make shift yet!

*Cha.*

Good Strafford!

*Straf.* But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small  
 They offer, we'll accept it: any sum —  
 For the look of it: the least grant tells the Scots  
 The Parliament is ours — their stanch ally  
 Turned ours: that told, there's half the blow to strike!  
 What will the grant be? What does Glanville think?

*Cha.* Alas!

*Straf.* My liege?

*Cha.*

Strafford!

*Straf.*

But answer me!

Have they . . . O surely not refused us half?  
 Half the twelve subsidies? We never looked  
 For all of them. How many do they give?

*Cha.* You have not heard . . .

*Straf.*

(What has he done?) — Heard what?

But speak at once, sir, this grows terrible!

[*The King continuing silent.*]

You have dissolved them! — I'll not leave this man.

*Cha.* 'T was old Vane's ill-judged vehemence.

*Straf.*

Old Vane?

*Cha.* He told them, just about to vote the half,  
 That nothing short of all twelve subsidies  
 Would serve our turn, or be accepted.

*Straf.*

Vane!

Vane! Who, sir, promised me that very Vane . . .

O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me,  
 The one last hope — I that despair, my hope —  
 That I should reach his heart one day, and cure  
 All bitterness one day, be proud again  
 And young again, care for the sunshine too,  
 And never think of Eliot any more, —  
 God, and to toil for this, go far for this,  
 Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart  
 And find Vane there!

[*Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing with a forced calmness*

Northumberland is sick:

Well, then, I take the army: Wilmot leads  
 The horse, and he, with Conway, must secure  
 The passes of the Tyne: Ormond supplies  
 My place in Ireland. Here, we'll try the City:

If they refuse a loan — debase the coin  
 And seize the bullion! we 've no other choice.  
 Herbert . . .

And this while I am here! with you!  
 And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane! I go,  
 And, I once gone, they 'll close around you, sir,  
 When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure  
 To ruin me — and you along with me!  
 Do you see that? And you along with me!  
 — Sir, you 'll not ever listen to these men,  
 And I away, fighting your battle? Sir,  
 If they — if She — charge me, no matter how —  
 Say you, “At any time when he returns  
 His head is mine!” Don't stop me there! You know  
 My head is yours, but never stop me there!

*Cha.* Too shameful, Strafford! You advised the war,  
 And . . .

*Straf.* I! I! that was never spoken with  
 Till it was entered on! That loathe the war!  
 That say it is the maddest, wickedest . . .  
 Do you know, sir, I think within my heart,  
 That you would say I did advise the war;  
 And if, through your own weakness, or, what 's worse,  
 These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back,  
 You will not step between the raging People  
 And me, to say . . .

I knew it! from the first  
 I knew it! Never was so cold a heart!  
 Remember that I said it — that I never  
 Believed you for a moment!

— And, you loved me?  
 You thought your perfidy profoundly hid  
 Because I could not share the whisperings  
 With Vane, with Savile? What, the face was masked?  
 I had the heart to see, sir! Face of flesh,  
 But heart of stone — of smooth cold frightful stone!  
 Ay, call them! Shall I call for you? The Scots  
 Goaded to madness? Or the English — Pym —  
 Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh, you think  
 I 'll leave them in the dark about it all?  
 They shall not know you? Hampden, Pym shall not?

(PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.*, *enter.*)

[*Dropping on his knee.*] Thus favored with your gracious  
 countenance  
 What shall a rebel League avail against

Your servant, utterly and ever yours ?  
 So, gentlemen, the King's not even left  
 The privilege of bidding me farewell  
 Who haste to save the People — that you style  
 Your People — from the mercies of the Scots  
 And France their friend ?

[*To CHARLES.*] Pym's grave gray eyes are fixed  
 Upon you, sir !

Your pleasure, gentlemen.

*Hamp.* The King dissolved us — 't is the King we seek  
 And not Lord Strafford.

*Straf.* — Strafford, guilty too  
 Of counselling the measure. [*To CHARLES.*] (Hush . . . you  
 know —

You have forgotten — sir, I counselled it)  
 A heinous matter, truly ! But the King  
 Will yet see cause to thank me for a course  
 Which now, perchance . . . (Sir, tell them so !) — he blames.  
 Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge :  
 I shall be with the Scots, you understand ?  
 Then yelp at me !

Meanwhile, your Majesty  
 Binds me, by this fresh token of your trust . . .

[*Under the pretence of an earnest farewell, STRAFFORD conducts CHARLES to the door, in such a manner as to hide his agitation from the rest: as the King disappears, they turn as by one impulse to PYM, who has not changed his original posture of surprise.*

*Hamp.* Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man !

*Vane and others.* Hence, Pym ! Come out of this unworthy  
 place

To our old room again ! He's gone.

[*STRAFFORD, just about to follow the King, looks back.*

*Pym.*

Not gone !

[*To STRAFFORD.*] Keep tryst ! the old appointment's made  
 anew :

Forget not we shall meet again !

*Straf.*

So be it !

And if an army follows me ?

*Vane.*

His friends

Will entertain your army !

*Pym.*

I'll not say

You have misreckoned, Strafford : time shows.

Perish

Body and spirit ! Fool to feign a doubt,  
 Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve

Of one whose prowess shall achieve the feat!  
 What share have I in it? Do I affect  
 To see no dismal sign above your head  
 When God suspends his ruinous thunder there?  
 Strafford is doomed. Touch him no one of you!

[PYM, HAMPDEN, etc., go out.]

*Straf.* Pym, we shall meet again!

(Lady CARLISLE enters.)

You here, child?

Hush —

*Lady Car.*

I know it all: hush, Strafford!

*Straf.*

Ah! you know?

Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy!  
 All knights begin their enterprise, we read,  
 Under the best of auspices; 't is morn,  
 The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth  
 (He's always very young) — the trumpets sound,  
 Cups pledge him, and, why, the King blesses him —  
 You need not turn a page of the romance  
 To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate. Indeed,  
 We've the fair Lady here; but she apart, —  
 A poor man, rarely having handled lance,  
 And rather old, weary, and far from sure  
 His Squires are not the Giant's friends. All's one:  
 Let us go forth!

*Lady Car.*

Go forth?

*Straf.*

What matters it?

We shall die gloriously — as the book says.

*Lady Car.* To Scotland? not to Scotland?

*Straf.*

Am I sick

Like your good brother, brave Northumberland?

Beside, these walls seem falling on me.

*Lady Car.*

Strafford,

The wind that saps these walls can undermine  
 Your camp in Scotland, too. Whence creeps the wind?  
 Have you no eyes except for Pym? Look here!  
 A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive  
 In your contempt. You'll vanquish Pym? Old Vane  
 Can vanquish you. And Vane you think to fly?  
 Rush on the Scots! Do nobly! Vane's slight sneer  
 Shall test success, adjust the praise, suggest  
 The faint result: Vane's sneer shall reach you there.  
 — You do not listen!

*Straf.*

Oh, — I give that up!

There's fate in it: I give all here quite up.

Care not what old Vane does or Holland does  
Against me! 'T is so idle to withstand!  
In no case tell me what they do!

*Lady Car.* But, Strafford . . .

*Straf.* I want a little strife, beside; real strife;  
This petty, palace-warfare does me harm:  
I shall feel better, fairly out of it.

*Lady Car.* Why do you smile?

*Straf.* I got to fear them, child!  
I could have torn his throat at first, old Vane's,  
As he leered at me on his stealthy way  
To the Queen's closet. Lord, one loses heart!  
I often found it in my heart to say,  
"Do not traduce me to her!"

*Lady Car.* But the King . . .

*Straf.* The King stood there, 'tis not so long ago,  
— There; and the whisper, Lucy, "Be my friend  
Of friends!" — My King! I would have . . .

*Lady Car.* . . . Died for him?

*Straf.* Sworn him true, Lucy: I can die for him.

*Lady Car.* But go not, Strafford! But you must renounce  
This project on the Scots! Die, wherefore die?  
Charles never loved you.

*Straf.* And he never will.  
He's not of those who care the more for men  
That they're unfortunate.

*Lady Car.* Then wherefore die  
For such a master?

*Straf.* You that told me first  
How good he was — when I must leave true friends  
To find a truer friend! — that drew me here  
From Ireland, — "I had but to show myself,  
And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile, and the rest" —  
You, child, to ask me this?

*Lady Car.* (If he have set  
His heart abidingly on Charles!)

Then, friend,  
I shall not see you any more.

*Straf.* Yes, Lucy.  
There's one man here I have to meet.

*Lady Car.* (The King!  
What way to save him from the King?)

My soul —  
That lent from its own store the charmed disguise  
That clothes the King — he shall behold my soul!)  
Strafford, — I shall speak best if you'll not gaze

Upon me : I had never thought, indeed,  
 To speak, but you would perish too, so sure !  
 Could you but know what 't is to bear, my friend,  
 One image stamped within you, turning blank  
 The else imperial brilliance of your mind, —  
 A weakness, but most precious, — like a flaw  
 I' the diamond, which should shape forth some sweet face  
 Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there  
 Lest nature lose her gracious thought forever !

*Straf.* When could it be ? no ! Yet . . . was it the day  
 We waited in the anteroom, till Holland  
 Should leave the presence-chamber ?

*Lady Car.*

What ?

*Straf.*

— That I

Described to you my love for Charles ?

*Lady Car.*

(Ah, no —

One must not lure him from a love like that !

Oh, let him love the King and die ! 'T is past.

I shall not serve him worse for that one brief

And passionate hope, silent forever now !)

And you are really bound for Scotland then ?

I wish you well : you must be very sure

Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew

Will not be idle — setting Vane aside !

*Straf.* If Pym is busy, — you may write of Pym.

*Lady Car.* What need, since there 's your King to take your  
 part ?

He may endure Vane's counsel ; but for Pym —

Think you he 'll suffer Pym to . . .

*Straf.*

Child, your hair

Is glossier than the Queen's !

*Lady Car.*

Is that to ask

A curl of me ?

*Straf.*

Scotland — the weary way !

*Lady Car.* Stay, let me fasten it.

— A rival's, Strafford ?

*Straf.* [*showing the George.*] He hung it there : twine yours  
 around it, child !

*Lady Car.* No — no — another time — I trifle so !

And there 's a masque on foot. Farewell. The Court

Is dull ; do something to enliven us

In Scotland : we expect it at your hands.

*Straf.* I shall not fail in Scotland.

*Lady Car.*

Prosper — if

You 'll think of me sometimes !

*Straf.*

How think of him

And not of you? of you, the lingering streak  
(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.

*Lady Car.* Strafford . . . Well, when the eve has its last  
streak

The night has its first star.

[*She goes out.*]

*Straf.* That voice of hers —  
You'd think she had a heart sometimes! His voice  
Is soft too.

Only God can save him now.  
Be Thou about his bed, about his path!  
His path! Where's England's path? Diverging wide,  
And not to join again the track my foot  
Must follow — whither? All that forlorn way  
Among the tombs! Far — far — till . . . What, they do  
Then join again, these paths? For, huge in the dusk,  
There's — Pym to face!

Why then, I have a foe  
To close with, and a fight to fight at last  
Worthy my soul! What, do they beard the King,  
And shall the King want Strafford at his need?  
Am I not here?

Not in the market-place,  
Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud  
To catch a glance from Wentworth! They lie down  
Hungry yet smile, "Why, it must end some day:  
Is he not watching for our sake?" Not there!  
But in Whitehall, the whited sepulchre,  
The . . .

Curse nothing to-night! Only one name  
They'll curse in all those streets to-night. Whose fault?  
Did I make kings? set up, the first, a man  
To represent the multitude, receive  
All love in right of them — supplant them so,  
Until you love the man and not the king —  
The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes  
Which send me forth.

— To breast the bloody sea  
That sweeps before me: with one star for guide.  
Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.



## ACT III.

SCENE I. *Opposite Westminster Hall.*

Sir HENRY VANE, LORD SAVILE, LORD HOLLAND *and others of the Court.*

*Sir H. Vane.* The Commons thrust you out?

*Savile.* And what kept you  
From sharing their civility?

*Sir H. Vane.* Kept me?

Fresh news from Scotland, sir! worse than the last,  
If that may be. All's up with Strafford there:  
Nothing to bar the mad Scots marching hither  
Next Lord's-day morning. That detained me, sir!  
Well now, before they thrust you out, — go on, —  
Their Speaker — did the fellow Lenthal say  
All we set down for him?

*Hol.* Not a word missed.

Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I  
And Bristol and some more, with hope to breed  
A wholesome awe in the new Parliament.  
But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane,  
As glared at us!

*Vane.* So many?

*Savile.* Not a bench

Without its complement of burly knaves;  
Your hopeful son among them: Hampden leant  
Upon his shoulder — think of that!

*Vane.* I'd think

On Lenthal's speech, if I could get at it.  
Urged he, I ask, how grateful they should prove  
For this unlooked-for summons from the King?

*Hol.* Just as we drilled him.

*Vane.* That the Scots will march

On London?

*Hol.* All, and made so much of it,

A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure  
To follow, when . . .

*Vane.* Well?

*Hol.* 'Tis a strange thing now!

I've a vague memory of a sort of sound,  
A voice, a kind of vast unnatural voice —  
Pym, sir, was speaking! Savile, help me out:  
What was it all?

*Sav.* Something about "a matter" —

No, — "work for England."

*Hol.* "England's great revenge"  
He talked of.

*Sav.* How should I get used to Pym  
More than yourselves?

*Hol.* However that be,  
'T was something with which we had nought to do,  
For we were "strangers," and 't was "England's work" —  
(All this while looking us straight in the face)  
In other words, our presence might be spared.  
So, in the twinkling of an eye, before  
I settled to my mind what ugly brute  
Was likest Pym just then, they yelled us out,  
Locked the doors after us; and here are we.

*Vane.* Eliot's old method . . .

*Sav.* Prithee, Vane, a truce  
To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke,  
And how to manage Parliaments! 'T was you  
Advised the Queen to summon this: why, Strafford  
(To do him justice) would not hear of it.

*Vane.* Say rather, you have done the best of turns  
To Strafford: he's at York, we all know why.  
I would you had not set the Scots on Strafford  
Till Strafford put down Pym for us, my lord!

*Sav.* Was it I altered Strafford's plans? did I . . .

(A Messenger enters.)

*Mes.* The Queen, my lords — she sends me: follow me  
At once; 't is very urgent! she requires  
Your counsel: something perilous and strange  
Occasions her command.

*Sav.* We follow, friend!  
Now, Vane; — your Parliament will plague us all!

*Vane.* No Strafford here beside!

*Sav.* If you dare hint  
I had a hand in his betrayal, sir . . .

*Hol.* Nay, find a fitter time for quarrels — Pym  
Will overmatch the best of you; and, think,  
The Queen!

*Vane.* Come on, then: understand, I loathe  
Strafford as much as any — but his use!  
To keep off Pym, to screen a friend or two,  
I would we had reserved him yet awhile.

SCENE II. *Whitehall.**The QUEEN and Lady CARLISLE.**Queen.* It cannot be.*Lady Car.* It is so.*Queen.* Why, the House

Have hardly met.

*Lady Car.* They met for that.*Queen.* No, no!

Meet to impeach Lord Strafford? 'T is a jest.

*Lady Car.* A bitter one.*Queen.* Consider! 'T is the House

We summoned so reluctantly, which nothing

But the disastrous issue of the war

Persuaded us to summon. They 'll wreak all

Their spite on us, no doubt; but the old way

Is to begin by talk of grievances:

They have their grievances to busy them.

*Lady Car.* Pym has begun his speech.*Queen.* Where's Vane? — That is,

Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves

His Presidency; he's at York, we know,

Since the Scots beat him: why should he leave York?

*Lady Car.* Because the King sent for him.*Queen.* Ah — but if

The King did send for him, he let him know

We had been forced to call a Parliament —

A step which Strafford, now I come to think,

Was vehement against.

*Lady Car.* The policy

Escaped him, of first striking Parliaments

To earth, then setting them upon their feet

And giving them a sword: but this is idle.

Did the King send for Strafford? He will come.

*Queen.* And what am I to do?*Lady Car.* What do? Fail, madam!

Be ruined for his sake! what matters how,

So it but stand on record that you made

An effort, only one?

*Queen.* The King away

At Theobald's!

*Lady Car.* Send for him at once: he must

Dissolve the House.

*Queen.* Wait till Vane finds the truth

Of the report: then . . .

*Lady Car.* — It will matter little  
What the King does. Strafford that lends his arm  
And breaks his heart for you !

(Sir H. VANE enters.)

*Vane.* The Commons, madam,  
Are sitting with closed doors. A huge debate,  
No lack of noise ; but nothing, I should guess,  
Concerning Strafford : Pym has certainly  
Not spoken yet.

*Queen.* [To Lady CARLISLE.] You hear ?

*Lady Car.* I do not hear  
That the King's sent for !

*Sir H. Vane.* Savile will be able  
To tell you more.

(HOLLAND enters.)

*Queen.* The last news, Holland ?

*Hol.* Pym  
Is raging like a fire. The whole House means  
To follow him together to Whitehall  
And force the King to give up Strafford.

*Queen.* Strafford ?

*Hol.* If they content themselves with Strafford ! Laud  
Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank too.  
Pym has not left out one of them — I would  
You heard Pym raging !

*Queen.* Vane, go find the King !  
Tell the King, Vane, the People follow Pym  
To brave us at Whitehall !

(SAVILE enters.)

*Savile.* Not to Whitehall —  
'T is to the Lords they go : they seek redress  
On Strafford from his peers — the legal way,  
They call it.

*Queen.* (Wait, Vane !)

*Sav.* But the adage gives  
Long life to threatened men. Strafford can save  
Himself so readily : at York, remember,  
In his own county : what has he to fear ?  
The Commons only mean to frighten him  
From leaving York. Surely, he will not come.

*Queen.* Lucy, he will not come !

*Lady Car.* Once more, the King  
Has sent for Strafford. He will come.

*Vane.*

Oh, doubtless!

And bring destruction with him : that 's his way.  
 What but his coming spoilt all Conway's plan ?  
 The King must take his counsel, choose his friends,  
 Be wholly ruled by him ! What 's the result ?  
 The North that was to rise, Ireland to help, —  
 What came of it ? In my poor mind, a fright  
 Is no prodigious punishment.

*Lady Car.*

A fright ?

Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks  
 To frighten him. [*To the QUEEN.*] You will not save him  
 then ?

*Sav.* When something like a charge is made, the King  
 Will best know how to save him : and 't is clear,  
 While Strafford suffers nothing by the matter,  
 The King may reap advantage : this in question,  
 No dinning you with ship-money complaints !

*Queen.* [*To Lady CARLISLE.*] If we dissolve them, who will  
 pay the army,  
 Protect us from the insolent Scots ?

*Lady Car.*

In truth,

I know not, madam. Strafford's fate concerns  
 Me little : you desired to learn what course  
 Would save him : I obey you.

*Vane.*

Notice, too,

There can't be fairer ground for taking full  
 Revenge — (Strafford's revengeful) — than he'll have  
 Against his old friend Pym.

*Queen.*

Why, he shall claim

Vengeance on Pym !

*Vane.*

And Strafford, who is he

To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents  
 That harass all beside ? I, for my part,  
 Should look for something of discomfiture  
 Had the King trusted me so thoroughly  
 And been so paid for it.

*Hol.*

He 'll keep at York :

All will blow over : he 'll return no worse,  
 Humbled a little, thankful for a place  
 Under as good a man. Oh, we 'll dispense  
 With seeing Strafford for a month or two !

(STRAFFORD enters.)

*Queen.* You here !

*Straf.*

The King sends for me, madam.

*Queen.*

Sir,

The King . . .

*Straf.* An urgent matter that imports the King!  
 [To Lady CARLISLE.] Why, Lucy, what's in agitation now,  
 That all this muttering and shrugging, see,  
 Begins at me? They do not speak!

*Lady Car.* 'Tis welcome!  
 For we are proud of you — happy and proud  
 To have you with us, Strafford! You were stanch  
 At Durham: you did well there! Had you not  
 Been stayed, you might have . . . we said, even now,  
 Our hope's in you!

*Sir H. Vane.* [To Lady CARLISLE.] The Queen would speak  
 with you.

*Straf.* Will one of you, his servants here, vouchsafe  
 To signify my presence to the King?

*Sav.* An urgent matter?

*Straf.* None that touches you,  
 Lord Savile! Say, it were some treacherous  
 Sly pitiful intriguing with the Scots —  
 You would go free, at least! (They half divine  
 My purpose!) Madam, shall I see the King?  
 The service I would render, much concerns  
 His welfare.

*Queen.* But his Majesty, my lord,  
 May not be here, may . . .

*Straf.* Its importance, then,  
 Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, madam,  
 And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.

*Queen.* [Who has been conversing with VANE and HOL-  
 LAND.] The King will see you, sir!

[To Lady CARLISLE.] Mark me: Pym's worst  
 Is done by now: he has impeached the Earl,  
 Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now.  
 Let us not seem instructed! We should work  
 No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves  
 With shame in the world's eye. [To STRAFFORD.] His Ma-  
 jesty  
 Has much to say with you.

*Straf.* Time fleeting, too!  
 [To Lady CARLISLE.] No means of getting them away? An!  
 She —

What does she whisper? Does she know my purpose?  
 What does she think of it? Get them away!

*Queen.* [To Lady CARLISLE.] He comes to baffle Pym —  
 he thinks the danger  
 Far off: tell him no word of it! a time  
 For help will come; we'll not be wanting then.

Keep him in play, Lucy — you, self-possessed  
 And calm! [*To STRAFFORD.*] To spare your lordship some  
 delay  
 I will myself acquaint the King. [*To Lady CARLISLE.*] Be-  
 ware!

[*The QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND, and SAVILE go out.*]

*Straf.* She knows it?

*Lady Car.* Tell me, Strafford!

*Straf.* Afterward!

This moment's the great moment of all time.  
 She knows my purpose?

*Lady Car.* Thoroughly: just now

She bade me hide it from you.

*Straf.* Quick, dear child,

The whole o' the scheme?

*Lady Car.* (Ah, he would learn if they

Connive at Pym's procedure! Could they but  
 Have once apprised the King! But there's no time  
 For falsehood now.) Strafford, the whole is known.

*Straf.* Known and approved?

*Lady Car.* Hardly discountenanced.

*Straf.* And the King — say, the King consents as well?

*Lady Car.* The King's not yet informed, but will not dare  
 To interpose.

*Straf.* What need to wait him, then?

He'll sanction it! I stayed, child, tell him, long!

It vexed me to the soul — this waiting here.

You know him, there's no counting on the King.

Tell him I waited long!

*Lady Car.* (What can he mean?

Rejoice at the King's hollowness?)

*Straf.* I knew

They would be glad of it, — all over once,

I knew they would be glad: but he'd contrive,

The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,

An angel's making.

*Lady Car.* (Is he mad?) Dear Strafford,

You were not wont to look so happy.

*Straf.* Sweet,

I tried obedience thoroughly. I took

The King's wild plan: of course, ere I could reach

My army, Conway ruined it. I drew

The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,

And would have fought the Scots: the King at once

Made truce with them. Then, Lucy, then, dear child,

God put it in my mind to love, serve, die





You, friend, make haste to York : bear this, at once . . .  
 Or, — better stay for form's sake, see yourself  
 The news you carry. You remain with me  
 To execute the Parliament's command,  
 Mainwaring! Help to seize these lesser knaves,  
 Take care there 's no escaping at backdoors :  
 I 'll not have one escape, mind me — not one !  
 I seem revengeful, Lucy ? Did you know  
 What these men dare !

*Lady Car.* It is so much they dare !

*Straf.* I proved that long ago ; my turn is now.  
 Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens !  
 Observe who harbors any of the brood  
 That scramble off : be sure they smart for it !  
 Our coffers are but lean.

And you, child, too,  
 Shall have your task ; deliver this to Laud.  
 Laud will not be the slowest in my praise :  
 "Thorough," he 'll cry ! — Foolish, to be so glad !  
 This life is gay and glowing, after all :  
 'T is worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine  
 Just for the bliss of crushing them. To-day  
 Is worth the living for.

*Lady Car.* That reddening brow !  
 You seem . . .

*Straf.* Well — do I not ? I would be well —  
 I could not but be well on such a day !  
 And, this day ended, 't is of slight import  
 How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul  
 In Strafford.

*Lady Car.* Noble Strafford !

*Straf.* No farewell !  
 I 'll see you anon, to-morrow — the first thing.  
 — If She should come to stay me !

*Lady Car.* Go — 't is nothing —  
 Only my heart that swells : it has been thus  
 Ere now : go, Strafford !

*Straf.* To-night, then, let it be.  
 I must see Him : you, the next after Him.  
 I 'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends !  
 You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour  
 To talk of all your lives. Close after me !  
 "My friend of friends !"

[STRAFFORD and the rest go out.]

*Lady Car.* The King — ever the King !  
 No thought of one beside, whose little word

Unveils the King to him — one word from me,  
Which yet I do not breathe!

Ah, have I spared  
Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward  
Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way  
He is the better for my love. No, no —  
He would not look so joyous — I'll believe  
His very eye would never sparkle thus,  
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.

SCENE III. *The Antechamber of the House of Lords.*

*Many of the Presbyterian Party. The Adherents of STRAFFORD, etc.*

*A Group of Presbyterians.* — 1. I tell you he struck Maxwell: Maxwell sought  
To stay the Earl: he struck him and passed on.

2. Fear as you may, keep a good countenance  
Before these rufflers.

3. Strafford here the first,  
With the great army at his back!

4. No doubt.  
I would Pym had made haste: that's Bryan, hush —  
The gallant pointing.

*Strafford's Followers.* — 1. Mark these worthies, now!

2. A goodly gathering! "Where the carcass is  
There shall the eagles" — What's the rest?

3. For eagles  
Say crows.

*A Presbyterian.* Stand back, sirs!

*One of Strafford's Followers.* Are we in Geneva?

*A Presbyterian.* No, nor in Ireland; we have leave to  
breathe.

*One of Strafford's Followers.* Truly? Behold how privileged we be  
That serve "King Pym!" There's Some-one at Whitehall  
Who skulks obscure; but Pym struts . . .

*The Presbyterian.* Nearer.

*A Follower of Strafford.* Higher,  
We look to see him. [*To his Companions.*] I'm to have St.  
John

In charge; was he among the knaves just now  
That followed Pym within there?

*Another.* The gaunt man  
Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect  
Pym at his heels so fast? I like it not.

(MAXWELL enters.)

*Another.* Why, man, they rush into the net! Here's Maxwell --

Ha, Maxwell! How the brethren flock around  
The fellow! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet  
Upon your shoulder, Maxwell?

*Max.* Gentlemen,  
Stand back! a great thing passes here.

*A Follower of Strafford.* [To another.] The Earl  
Is at his work! [To M.] Say, Maxwell, what great thing!  
Speak out! [To a Presbyterian.] Friend, I've a kindness for  
you! Friend,

I've seen you with St. John: O stockishness!  
Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind  
St. John's head in a charger? How, the plague,  
Not laugh?

*Another.* Say, Maxwell, what great thing!

*Another.* Nay, wait:

The jest will be to wait.

*First.* And who's to bear  
These demure hypocrites? You'd swear they came . . .  
Came . . . just as we come!

[A Puritan enters hastily and without observing STRAFFORD'S  
Followers.]

*The Puritan.* How goes on the work?  
Has Pym . . .

*A Follower of Strafford.* The secret's out at last. Aha,  
The carrion's scented! Welcome, crow the first!  
Gorge merrily, you with the blinking eye!  
"King Pym has fallen!"

*The Puritan.* Pym?

*A Strafford.* Pym!

*A Presbyterian.* Only Pym?

*Many of Strafford's Followers.* No, brother, not Pym only;  
Vane as well,

Rudyard as well, Hampden, St. John as well!

*A Presbyterian.* My mind misgives: can it be true?

*Another.* Lost! lost!

*A Strafford.* Say we true, Maxwell?

*The Puritan.* Pride before destruction,  
A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.

*Many of Strafford's Followers.* Ah now! The very thing!

A word in season!

A golden apple in a silver picture,  
To greet Pym as he passes!

[*The doors at the back begin to open, noise and light issuing.*

*Max.* Stand back, all!

*Many of the Presbyterians.* I hold with Pym! And I!

*Strafford's Followers.* Now for the text!

He comes! Quick!

*The Puritan.* How hath the oppressor ceased!

The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked!

The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote

The people in wrath with a continual stroke,

That ruled the nations in his anger — he

Is persecuted and none hindereth!

[*The doors open, and STRAFFORD issues in the greatest disorder, and amid cries from within of "Void the House."*

*Straf.* Impeach me! Pym! I never struck, I think,  
The felon on that calm insulting mouth  
When it proclaimed — Pym's mouth proclaimed me . . . God!  
Was it a word, only a word that held  
The outrageous blood back on my heart — which beats!  
Which beats! Some one word — "Traitor," did he say,  
Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,  
Upon me?

*Max.* In the Commons' name, their servant  
Demands Lord Strafford's sword.

*Straf.* What did you say?

*Max.* The Commons bid me ask your lordship's sword.

*Straf.* Let us go forth: follow me, gentlemen!

Draw your swords too: cut any down that bar us.

On the King's service! Maxwell, clear the way!

[*The Presbyterians prepare to dispute his passage.*

*Straf.* I stay: the King himself shall see me here.  
Your tablets, fellow!

[*To MAINWARING.*] Give that to the King!

Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, let be!

Nay, you shall take my sword!

[*MAXWELL advances to take it.*

Or, no — not that!

Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far,  
All up to that — not that! Why, friend, you see  
When the King lays your head beneath my foot  
it will not pay for that. Go, all of you!

*Max.* I dare, my lord, to disobey: none stir!

*Straf.* This gentle Maxwell! — Do not touch him, Bryan!

[*To the Presbyterians.*] Whichever cur of you will carry this  
Escapes his fellow's fate. None saves his life?  
None?

[*Cries from within of "STRAFFORD."*

Slingsby, I've loved you at least : make haste !  
 Stab me ! I have not time to tell you why.  
 You then, my Bryan ! Mainwaring, you then !  
 Is it because I spoke so hastily  
 At Allerton ? The King had vexed me.

[*To the Presbyterians.*] You !

— Not even you ? If I live over this,  
 The King is sure to have your heads, you know !  
 But what if I can't live this minute through ?  
 Pym, who is there with his pursuing smile !

[*Louder cries of "STRAFFORD."*]

The King ! I troubled him, stood in the way  
 Of his negotiations, was the one  
 Great obstacle to peace, the Enemy  
 Of Scotland : and he sent for me, from York,  
 My safety guaranteed — having prepared  
 A Parliament — I see ! And at Whitehall  
 The Queen was whispering with Vane — I see  
 The trap !

[*Tearing off the George.*]

I tread a gewgaw underfoot,  
 And cast a memory from me. One stroke, now !

[*His own Adherents disarm him. Renewed cries of "STRAFFORD."*]

England ! I see thy arm in this, and yield.  
 Pray you now — Pym awaits me — pray you now !

[*STRAFFORD reaches the doors : they open wide. HAMPDEN and a crowd discovered, and, at the bar, PYM standing apart. As STRAFFORD kneels, the scene shuts.*]

## ACT IV.

### SCENE I. *Whitehall.*

*The KING, the QUEEN, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE. (VANE, HOLLAND, SAVILE, in the background.)*

*Lady Car.* Answer them, Hollis, for his sake ! One word !

*Cha.* [*To HOLLIS.*] You stand, silent and cold, as though I  
 were

Deceiving you — my friend, my playfellow  
 Of other times. What wonder after all ?  
 Just so, I dreamed my People loved me.

*Hol.*

Sir,

It is yourself that you deceive, not me.  
 You'll quit me comforted, your mind made up

That, since you 've talked thus much and grieved thus much,  
All you can do for Strafford has been done.

*Queen.* If you kill Strafford — (come, we grant you leave.  
Suppose) —

*Hol.* I may withdraw, sir ?

*Lady Car.* Hear them out !  
'T is the last chance for Strafford ! Hear them out !

*Hol.* " If we kill Strafford " — on the eighteenth day  
Of Strafford's trial — " We ! "

*Cha.* Pym, my good Hollis —  
Pym, I should say !

*Hol.* Ah, true — sir, pardon me !  
You witness our proceedings every day ;  
But the screened gallery, I might have guessed,  
Admits of such a partial glimpse at us,  
Pym takes up all the room, shuts out the view.  
Still, on my honor, sir, the rest of the place  
Is not unoccupied. The Commons sit  
— That 's England ; Ireland sends, and Scotland too,  
Their representatives ; the Peers that judge  
Are easily distinguished ; one remarks  
The People here and there : but the close curtain  
Must hide so much !

*Queen.* Acquaint your insolent crew,  
This day the curtain shall be dashed aside !  
It served a purpose.

*Hol.* Think ! This very day ?  
Ere Strafford rises to defend himself ?

*Cha.* I will defend him, sir ! — sanction the past  
This day : it ever was my purpose. Rage  
At me, not Strafford !

*Lady Car.* Nobly ! — will he not  
Do nobly ?

*Hol.* Sir, you will do honestly ;  
And, for that deed, I too would be a king.

*Cha.* Only, to do this now ! — " deaf " (in your style)  
" To subjects' prayers," — I must oppose them now.  
It seems their will the trial should proceed, —  
So palpably their will !

*Hol.* You peril much,  
But it were no bright moment save for that.  
Strafford, your prime support, the sole roof-tree  
That props this quaking House of Privilege,  
(Floods come, winds beat, and see — the treacherous sand !)  
Doubtless, if the mere putting forth an arm  
Could save him, you 'd save Strafford.

*Cha.* And they mean  
 Consummate calmly this great wrong! No hope?  
 This inefaceable wrong! No pity then?

*Hol.* No plague in store for perfidy? — Farewell!  
 You called me, sir — [*To Lady CARLISLE.*] You, lady, bade  
 me come

To save the Earl: I came, thank God for it,  
 To learn how far such perfidy can go!  
 You, sir, concert with me on saving him  
 Who have just ruined Strafford!

*Cha.* I? — and how?

*Hol.* Eighteen days long he throws, one after one,  
 Pym's charges back: a blind moth-eaten law!  
 — He'll break from it at last: and whom to thank?  
 The mouse that gnawed the lion's net for him  
 Got a good friend, — but he, the other mouse,  
 That looked on while the lion freed himself —  
 Fared he so well. does any fable say?

*Cha.* What can you mean?

*Hol.* Pym never could have proved  
 Strafford's design of bringing up the troops  
 To force this kingdom to obedience: Vane —  
 Your servant, not our friend, has proved it.

*Cha.* Vane?

*Hol.* This day. Did Vane deliver up or no  
 Those notes which, furnished by his son to Pym,  
 Seal Strafford's fate?

*Cha.* Sir, as I live, I know  
 Nothing that Vane has done! What treason next?  
 I wash my hands of it. Vane, speak the truth!  
 Ask Vane himself!

*Hol.* I will not speak to Vane,  
 Who speak to Pym and Hampden every day.

*Queen.* Speak to Vane's master then! What gain to him  
 Were Strafford's death?

*Hol.* Ha? Strafford cannot turn  
 As you, sir, sit there — bid you forth, demand  
 If every hateful act were not set down  
 In his commission? — whether you contrived  
 Or no, that all the violence should seem  
 His work, the gentle ways — your own, — his part,  
 To counteract the King's kind impulses —  
 While . . . but you know what he could say! And then  
 He might produce, — mark, sir! — a certain charge  
 To set the King's express command aside,  
 If need were, and be blameless. He might add . . .

*Cha.* Enough!

*Hol.* — Who bade him break the Parliament,  
Find some pretext for setting up sword-law!

*Queen.* Retire!

*Cha.* Once more, whatever Vane dared do,  
I know not: he is rash, a fool — I know  
Nothing of Vane!

*Hol.* Well — I believe you. Sir,  
Believe me, in return, that . . .

[*Turning to Lady CARLISLE.*] Gentle lady,  
The few words I would say, the stones might hear  
Sooner than these, — I rather speak to you,  
You, with the heart! The question, trust me, takes  
Another shape, to-day: not, if the King  
Or England shall succumb, — but, who shall pay  
The forfeit, Strafford or his master. Sir,  
You loved me once: think on my warning now! [*Goes out.*]

*Cha.* On you and on your warning both! — Carlisle!  
That paper!

*Queen.* But consider!

*Cha.* Give it me!  
There, signed — will that content you? Do not speak!  
You have betrayed me, Vane! See! any day,  
According to the tenor of that paper,  
He bids your brother bring the army up,  
Strafford shall head it and take full revenge.  
Seek Strafford! Let him have the same, before  
He rises to defend himself!

*Queen.* In truth?  
That your shrewd Hollis should have worked a change  
Like this! You, late reluctant . . .

*Cha.* Say, Carlisle,  
Your brother Percy brings the army up,  
Falls on the Parliament — (I'll think of you,  
My Hollis!) say, we plotted long — 't is mine,  
The scheme is mine, remember! Say, I cursed  
Vane's folly in your hearing! If the Earl  
Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie  
With you. Carlisle!

*Lady Car.* Nay, fear not me! but still  
That's a bright moment, sir, you throw away.  
Tear down the veil and save him!

*Queen.* Go, Carlisle!

*Lady Car.* (I shall see Strafford — speak to him: my heart  
Must never beat so, then! And if I tell  
The truth? What's gained by falsehood? There they stand



Whose trade it is, whose life it is ! How vain  
To gild such rottenness ! Strafford shall know,  
Thoroughly know them !)

*Queen.* Trust to me ! [*To CARLISLE.*] Carlisle,  
You seem inclined, alone of all the Court,  
To serve poor Strafford : this bold plan of yours  
Merits much praise, and yet . . .

*Lady Car.* Time presses, madam.

*Queen.* Yet — may it not be something premature ?  
Strafford defends himself to-day — reserves  
Some wondrous effort, one may well suppose !

*Lady Car.* Ay, Hollis hints as much.

*Cha.* Why linger then ?

Haste with the scheme — my scheme : I shall be there  
To watch his look. Tell him I watch his look !

*Queen.* Stay, we 'll precede you !

*Lady Car.* At your pleasure.

*Cha.*

Say —

Say, Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall !  
I shall be there, remember !

*Lady Car.* Doubt me not.

*Cha.* On our return, Carlisle, we wait you here !

*Lady Car.* I 'll bring his answer. Sir, I follow you.  
(Prove the King faithless, and I take away  
All Strafford cares to live for : let it be —  
'T is the King's scheme !

My Strafford, I can save,  
Nay, I have saved you, yet am scarce content,  
Because my poor name will not cross your mind.  
Strafford, how much I am unworthy you !)

SCENE II. *A passage adjoining Westminster Hall.*

*Many groups of Spectators of the Trial. Officers of the Court, etc.*

*1st Spec.* More crowd than ever ! Not know Hampden, man ?  
That 's he, by Pym, Pym that is speaking now.  
No, truly, if you look so high you 'll see  
Little enough of either !

*2d Spec.* Stay : Pym's arm  
Points like a prophet's rod.

*3d Spec.* Ay, ay, we 've heard  
Some pretty speaking : yet the Earl escapes.

*4th Spec.* I fear it : just a foolish word or two  
About his children — and we see, forsooth,  
Not England's foe in Strafford, but the man  
Who, sick, half-blind . . .

*2d Spec.* What's that Pym's saying now  
Which makes the curtains flutter? look! A hand  
Clutches them. Ah! The King's hand!

*5th Spec.* I had thought  
Pym was not near so tall. What said he, friend?

*2d Spec.* "Nor is this way a novel way of blood,"  
And the Earl turns as if to . . . Look! look!

*Many Spectators.* There!  
What ails him? No — he rallies; see — goes on,  
And Strafford smiles. Strange!

*An Officer.* Haselrig!

*Many Spectators.* Friend? Friend?

*The Officer.* Lost, utterly lost: just when we looked for  
Pym

To make a stand against the ill effects  
Of the Earl's speech! Is Haselrig without?  
Pym's message is to him.

*3d Spec.* Now, said I true?  
Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no?

*1st Spec.* Never believe it, man! These notes of Vane's  
Ruin the Earl.

*5th Spec.* A brave end: not a whit  
Less firm, less Pym all over. Then, the trial  
Is closed. No — Strafford means to speak again!

*An Officer.* Stand back, there!

*5th Spec.* Why, the Earl is coming hither!  
Before the court breaks up! His brother, look, —  
You'd say he'd deprecated some fierce act  
In Strafford's mind just now.

*An Officer.* Stand back, I say!

*2d Spec.* Who's the veiled woman that he talks with?

*Many Spectators.* Hush —  
The Earl! the Earl!

[*Enter STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY, and other Secretaries, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, etc. STRAFFORD converses with Lady CARLISLE.*

*Hol.* So near the end! Be patient —  
Return!

*Straf.* [*To his Secretaries.*] Here — anywhere — or, 't is  
freshest here!

To spend one's April here, the blossom-month:  
Set it down here!

[*They arrange a table, papers, etc.*

So, Pym can quail, can cower  
Because I glance at him; yet more's to do.  
What's to be answered, Slingsby? Let us end!

[*To Lady CARLISLE.*] Child, I refuse his offer ; whatsoe'er  
 It be ! Too late ! Tell me no word of him !  
 'Tis something, Hollis, I assure you that —  
 To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen days  
 Fighting for life and fame against a pack  
 Of very curs, that lie through thick and thin,  
 Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't say  
 "Strafford" if it would take my life !

*Lady Car.*

Be moved !

Glance at the paper !

*Straf.*

Already at my heels !

Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the track again.

Peace, child ! Now, Slingsby !

[*Messengers from LANE and other of STRAFFORD'S Counsel within the Hall are coming and going during the Scene.*

*Straf.* [*setting himself to write and dictate.*] I shall beat  
 you, Hollis !

Do you know that ? In spite of St. John's tricks,  
 In spite of Pym — your Pym who shrank from me !  
 Eliot would have contrived it otherwise.

[*To a Messenger.*] In truth ? This slip, tell Lane, contains as  
 much

As I can call to mind about the matter.

Eliot would have disdained . . .

[*Calling after the Messenger.*] And Radcliffe, say,

The only person who could answer Pym,

Is safe in prison, just for that.

Well, well !

It had not been recorded in that case,

I baffled you.

[*To Lady CARLISLE.*] Nay, child, why look so grieved ?

All's gained without the King ! You saw Pym quail ?

What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,

But tranquilly resume my task as though

Nothing had intervened since I proposed

To call that traitor to account ! Such tricks,

Trust me, shall not be played a second time,

Not even against Laud, with his gray hair —

Your good work, Hollis ! Peace ! To make amends,

You, Lucy, shall be here when I impeach

Pym and his fellows.

*Hol.*

Wherefore not protest

Against our whole proceeding, long ago ?

Why feel indignant now ? Why stand this while

Enduring patiently ?

*Straf.*

Child, I'll tell you —

You, and not Pym — you, the slight graceful girl  
 Tall for a flowering lily, and not Hollis —  
 Why I stood patient! I was fool enough  
 To see the will of England in Pym's will;  
 To fear, myself had wronged her, and to wait  
 Her judgment: when, behold, in place of it . . .  
 [*To a Messenger who whispers.*] Tell Lane to answer no such  
 question! Law, —

I grapple with their law! I'm here to try  
 My actions by their standard, not my own!  
 Their law allowed that levy: what's the rest  
 To Pym, or Lane, any but God and me?

*Lady Car.* The King's so weak! Secure this chance!  
 'T was Vane,

Never forget, who furnished Pym the notes . . .

*Straf.* Fit, — very fit, those precious notes of Vane,  
 To close the Trial worthily! I feared  
 Some spice of nobleness might linger yet  
 And spoil the character of all the past.  
 Vane eased me . . . and I will go back and say  
 As much — to Pym, to England! Follow me!  
 I have a word to say! There, my defence  
 Is done!

Stay! why be proud? Why care to own  
 My gladness, my surprise? — Nay, not surprise!  
 Wherefore insist upon the little pride  
 Of doing all myself, and sparing him  
 The pain? Child, say the triumph is my King's!  
 When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down,  
 One image was before me: could I fail?  
 Child, care not for the past, so indistinct,  
 Obscure — there's nothing to forgive in it,  
 'T is so forgotten! From this day begins  
 A new life, founded on a new belief  
 In Charles.

*Hol.* In Charles? Rather believe in Pym!  
 And here he comes in proof! Appeal to Pym!  
 Say how unfair . . .

*Straf.* To Pym? I would say nothing!  
 I would not look upon Pym's face again.

*Lady Car.* Stay, let me have to think I pressed your hand!  
 [*STRAFFORD and his Friends go out.*]

(*Enter HAMPDEN and VANE.*)

*Vane.* O Hampden, save the great misguided man!  
 Plead Strafford's cause with Pym! I have remarked  
 He moved no muscle when we all declaimed

Against him : you had but to breathe — he turned  
Those kind calm eyes upon you.

[Enter PYM, the Solicitor-General ST. JOHN, the Managers of  
the Trial, FIENNES, RUDYARD, etc.]

*Rud.* Horrible !

Till now all hearts were with you : I withdraw  
For one. Too horrible ! But we mistake  
Your purpose, Pym : you cannot snatch away  
The last spar from the drowning man.

*Fien.* He talks

With St. John of it — see, how quietly !  
[To other Presbyterians.] You 'll join us ? Strafford may de-  
serve the worst :

But this new course is monstrous. Vane, take heart !  
This Bill of his Attainder shall not have  
One true man's hand to it.

*Vane.* Consider, Pym !

Confront your Bill, your own Bill : what is it ?  
You cannot catch the Earl on any charge, —  
No man will say the law has hold of him  
On any charge ; and therefore you resolve  
To take the general sense on his desert,  
As though no law existed, and we met  
To found one. You refer to Parliament  
To speak its thought upon the abortive mass  
Of half borne-out assertions, dubious hints  
Hereafter to be cleared, distortions — ay,  
And wild inventions. Every man is saved  
The task of fixing any single charge  
On Strafford : he has but to see in him  
The enemy of England.

*Pym.* A right scruple !

I have heard some called England's enemy  
With less consideration.

*Vane.* Pity me !

Indeed you made me think I was your friend !  
I who have murdered Strafford, how remove  
That memory from me ?

*Pym.* I absolve you, Vane.

Take you no care for aught that you have done !

*Vane.* John Hampden, not this Bill ! Reject this Bill !

He staggers through the ordeal : let him go,  
Strew no fresh fire before him ! Plead for us !  
When Strafford spoke, your eyes were thick with tears !

*Hamp.* England speaks louder : who are we, to play  
The generous pardoner at her expense,

Magnanimously waive advantages,  
And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill?

*Vane.* He was your friend.

*Pym.* I have heard that before.

*Fien.* And England trusts you.

*Hamp.* Shame be his, who turns

The opportunity of serving her  
She trusts him with, to his own mean account —  
Who would look nobly frank at her expense!

*Fien.* I never thought it could have come to this.

*Pym.* But I have made myself familiar, Fiennes,  
With this one thought — have walked, and sat, and slept,  
This thought before me. I have done such things,  
Being the chosen man that should destroy  
The traitor. You have taken up this thought  
To play with, for a gentle stimulant,  
To give a dignity to idler life  
By the dim prospect of emprise to come,  
But ever with the softening, sure belief,  
That all would end some strange way right at last.

*Fien.* Had we made out some weightier charge!

*Pym.*

You say

That these are petty charges: can we come  
To the real charge at all? There he is safe  
In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy  
Is not a crime, treachery not a crime:  
The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when you speak  
The words, but where's the power to take revenge  
Upon them? We must make occasion serve, —  
The oversight shall pay for the main sin  
That mocks us.

*Rud.* But this unexampled course,  
This Bill!

*Pym.* By this, we roll the clouds away  
Of precedent and custom, and at once  
Bid the great beacon-light God sets in all,  
The conscience of each bosom, shine upon  
The guilt of Strafford: each man lay his hand  
Upon his breast, and judge!

*Vane.* I only see  
Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all beyond!

*Rud. and others.* Forgive him! He would join us, now he  
finds

What the King counts reward! The pardon, too,  
Should be your own. Yourself should bear to Strafford  
The pardon of the Commons.

*Pym.* Meet him? Strafford?  
 Have we to meet once more, then? Be it so!  
 And yet — the prophecy seemed half fulfilled  
 When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my youth,  
 Our friendship, divers thoughts came back at once  
 And left me, for a time . . . 'T is very sad!  
 To-morrow we discuss the points of law  
 With Lane — to-morrow?

*Vane.* Not before to-morrow —  
 So, time enough! I knew you would relent!

*Pym.* The next day, Haselrig, you introduce  
 The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me!

SCENE III. *Whitehall.**The KING.*

*Cha.* My loyal servant! To defend himself  
 Thus irresistibly, — withholding aught  
 That seemed to implicate us!

We have done  
 Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, the future  
 Must recompense the past.

She tarries long.  
 I understand you, Strafford, now!

The scheme —  
 Carlisle's mad scheme — he'll sanction it, I fear,  
 For love of me. 'T was too precipitate:  
 Before the army's fairly on its march,  
 He'll be at large: no matter.

Well, Carlisle?

*(Enter Pym.)*

*Pym.* Fear me not, sir: — my mission is to save,  
 This time.

*Cha.* To break thus on me, unannounced!

*Pym.* It is of Strafford I would speak.

*Cha.* No more  
 Of Strafford! I have heard too much from you.

*Pym.* I spoke, sir, for the People; will you hear  
 A word upon my own account?

*Cha.* Of Strafford?  
 (So turns the tide already? Have we tamed  
 The insolent brawler? — Strafford's eloquence  
 Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford, sir,  
 Has spoken for himself.





Wentworth — he 's gone now ! — has talked on, whole nights,  
 And I beside him ; Hampden loves me : sir,  
 How can I breathe and not wish England well,  
 And her King well ?

*Cha.* I thank you, sir, who leave  
 That King his servant. Thanks, sir !

*Pym.* Let me speak !  
 — Who may not speak again ; whose spirit yearns  
 For a cool night after this weary day :  
 — Who would not have my soul turn sicker yet  
 In a new task, more fatal, more august,  
 More full of England's utter weal or woe.  
 I thought, sir, could I find myself with you,  
 After this trial, alone, as man to man —  
 I might say something, warn you, pray you, save —  
 Mark me, King Charles, save — you !  
 But God must do it. Yet I warn you, sir —  
 (With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)  
 As you would have no deeper question moved  
 — "How long the Many must endure the One."  
 Assure me, sir, if England give assent  
 To Strafford's death, you will not interfere !  
 Or —

*Cha.* God forsakes me. I am in a net  
 And cannot move. Let all be as you say !

(Enter Lady CARLISLE.)

*Lady Car.* He loves you — looking beautiful with joy  
 Because you sent me ! he would spare you all  
 The pain ! he never dreamed you would forsake  
 Your servant in the evil day — nay, see  
 Your scheme returned ! That generous heart of his !  
 He needs it not — or, needing it, disdains  
 A course that might endanger you — you, sir,  
 Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .

[*Seeing Pym.*] Well met !  
 No fear for Strafford ! All that 's true and brave  
 On your own side shall help us : we are now  
 Stronger than ever.

Ha — what, sir, is this ?  
 All is not well ! What parchment have you there ?

*Pym.* Sir, much is saved us both.

*Lady Car.* This Bill ! Your lip  
 Whitens — you could not read one line to me,  
 Your voice would falter so !

*Pym.* No recreant yet!  
The great word went from England to my soul,  
And I arose. The end is very near.

*Lady Car.* I am to save him! All have shrunk beside;  
'T is only I am left. Heaven will make strong  
The hand now as the heart. Then let both die!

## ACT V.

SCENE I. *Whitehall.*

HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE.

*Hol.* Tell the King then! Come in with me!

*Lady Car.*

Not so!

He must not hear till it succeeds.

*Hol.*

Succeed?

No dream was half so vain — you'd rescue Strafford  
And outwit Pym! I cannot tell you . . . lady,  
The block pursues me, and the hideous show.  
To-day . . . is it to-day? And all the while  
He's sure of the King's pardon. Think, I have  
To tell this man he is to die. The King  
May rend his hair, for me! I'll not see Strafford!

*Lady Car.* Only, if I succeed, remember — Charles  
Has saved him. He would hardly value life  
Unless his gift. My stanch friends wait. Go in —  
You must go in to Charles!

*Hol.*

And all beside

Left Strafford long ago. The King has signed  
The warrant for his death! the Queen was sick  
Of the eternal subject. For the Court, —  
The Trial was amusing in its way,  
Only too much of it: the Earl withdrew  
In time. But you, fragile, alone, so young,  
Amid rude mercenaries — you devise  
A plan to save him! Even though it fails,  
What shall reward you?

*Lady Car.*

I may go, you think,

To France with him? And you reward me, friend,  
Who lived with Strafford even from his youth  
Before he set his heart on state-affairs  
And they bent down that noble brow of his.  
I have learned somewhat of his latter life,  
And all the future I shall know: but, Hollis,

I ought to make his youth my own as well,  
Tell me, — when he is saved!

*Hol.* My gentle friend,

He should know all and love you, but 't is vain!

*Lady Car.* Love? no — too late now! Let him love the  
King!

'T is the King's scheme! I have your word, remember!

We'll keep the old delusion up. But, quick!

Quick! Each of us has work to do, beside!

Go to the King! I hope — Hollis — I hope!

Say nothing of my scheme! Hush, while we speak

Think where he is! Now for my gallant friends!

*Hol.* Where he is? Calling wildly upon Charles,  
Guessing his fate, pacing the prison-floor.

Let the King tell him! I'll not look on Strafford.

SCENE II. *The Tower.*

STRAFFORD sitting with his Children. *They sing.*

O bell' andare  
Per barca in mare,  
Verso la sera  
Di Primavera!

*William.* The boat's in the broad moonlight all this while —

Verso la sera  
Di Primavera!

And the boat shoots from underneath the moon  
Into the shadowy distance; only still  
You hear the dipping oar —

Verso la sera,

And faint, and fainter, and then all's quite gone,  
Music and light and all, like a lost star.

*Anne.* But you should sleep, father: you were to sleep.

*Straf.* I do sleep, Anne; or if not — you must know  
There's such a thing as . . .

*Wil.* You're too tired to sleep.

*Straf.* It will come by-and-by and all day long,  
In that old quiet house I told you of:

We sleep safe there.

*Anne.* Why not in Ireland?

*Straf.* No!

Too many dreams! — That song's for Venice, *William.*  
You know how Venice looks upon the map —  
Isles that the mainland hardly can let go?

*Wil.* You 've been to Venice, father ?

*Straf.* I was young, then.

*Wil.* A city with no King ; that 's why I like  
Even a song that comes from Venice.

*Straf.* William !

*Wil.* Oh, I know why ! Anne, do you love the King ?  
But I 'll see Venice for myself one day.

*Straf.* See many lands, boy — England last of all, —  
That way you 'll love her best.

*Wil.* Why do men say  
You sought to ruin her, then ?

*Straf.* Ah, — they say that.

*Wil.* Why ?

*Straf.* I suppose they must have words to say,  
As you to sing.

*Anne.* But they make songs beside :  
Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,  
That called you . . . Oh, the names !

*Wil.* Don't mind her, father !  
They soon left off when I cried out to them.

*Straf.* We shall so soon be out of it, my boy !  
'T is not worth while : who heeds a foolish song ?

*Wil.* Why, not the King.

*Straf.* Well : it has been the fate  
Of better ; and yet, — wherefore not feel sure  
That time, who in the twilight comes to mend  
All the fantastic day's caprice, consign  
To the low ground once more the ignoble Term,  
And raise the Genius on his orb again, —  
That time will do me right ?

*Anne.* (Shall we sing, William ?  
He does not look thus when we sing.)

*Straf.* For Ireland,  
Something is done : too little, but enough  
To show what might have been.

*Wil.* (I have no heart  
To sing now ! Anne, how very sad he looks !  
Oh, I so hate the King for all he says !)

*Straf.* Forsook them ! What, the common songs will run  
That I forsook the People ? Nothing more ?  
Ay, fame, the busy scribe, will pause, no doubt,  
Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves  
Noisy to be enrolled, — will register  
The curious glosses, subtle notices,  
Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see

Beside that plain inscription of The Name —  
The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford !

[*The Children resume their song timidly, but break off.*

(*Enter HOLLIS and an Attendant.*)

*Straf.* No, — Hollis? in good time! — Who is he?

*Hol.*

One

That must be present.

*Straf.* Ah — I understand.

They will not let me see poor Laud alone.

How politic! They'd use me by degrees

To solitude: and just as you came in

I was solicitous what life to lead

When Strafford's "not so much as Constable

In the King's service." Is there any means

To keep one's self awake? What would you do

After this bustle, Hollis, in my place?

*Hol.* Strafford!

*Straf.* Observe, not but that Pym and you

Will find me news enough — news I shall hear

Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side

At Wentworth. Garrard must be re-engaged

My newsman. Or, a better project now —

What if when all's consummated, and the Saints

Reign, and the Senate's work goes swimmingly, —

What if I venture up, some day, unseen,

To saunter through the Town, notice how Pym,

Your Tribune, likes Whitehall, drop quietly

Into a tavern, hear a point discussed,

As, whether Strafford's name were John or James —

And be myself appealed to — I, who shall

Myself have near forgotten!

*Hol.*

I would speak . . .

*Straf.* Then you shall speak, — not now. I want just now

To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place

Is full of ghosts.

*Hol.*

Nay, you must hear me, Strafford!

*Straf.* Oh, readily! Only one rare thing more, —

The minister! Who will advise the King,

Turn his Sejanus, Richelieu, and what not,

And yet have health — children, for aught I know —

My patient pair of traitors! Ah, — but, William —

Does not his cheek grow thin?

*Wil.*

'T is you look thin,

Father!

*Straf.* A scamper o'er the breezy wolds

Sets all to-rights.

*Hol.* You cannot sure forget  
A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford ?

*Straf.* No ;  
Why, no. I would not touch on that, the first.  
I left you that. Well, Hollis ? Say at once,  
The King can find no time to set me free !  
A mask at Theobald's ?

*Hol.* Hold : no such affair  
Detains him.

*Straf.* True : what needs so great a matter ?  
The Queen's lip may be sore. Well : when he pleases, —  
Only, I want the air : it vexes flesh  
To be pent up so long.

*Hol.* The King — I bear  
His message. Strafford : pray you, let me speak !

*Straf.* Go, William ! Anne, try o'er your song again !

[*The Children retire.*]

They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.  
I know your message : you have nothing new  
To tell me : from the first I guessed as much.  
I know, instead of coming here himself,  
Leading me forth in public by the hand,  
The King prefers to leave the door ajar  
As though I were escaping — bids me trudge  
While the mob gapes upon some show prepared  
On the other side of the river ! Give at once  
His order of release ! I've heard, as well  
Of certain poor manœuvres to avoid  
The granting pardon at his proper risk ;  
First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords,  
Must talk a trifle with the Commons first,  
Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,  
And far from blaming them, and . . . Where's the order ?

*Hol.* Spare me !

*Straf.* Why, he 'd not have me steal away ?  
With an old doublet and a steeple hat  
Like Prynne's ? Be smuggled into France, perhaps ?  
Hollis, 't is for my children ! 'T was for them  
I first consented to stand day by day  
And give your Puritans the best of words,  
Be patient, speak when called upon, observe  
Their rules, and not return them prompt their lie !  
What's in that boy of mine that he should prove  
Son to a prison-breaker ? I shall stay  
And he 'll stay with me. Charles should know as much,  
He too has children !

[Turning to HOLLIS's companion.] Sir, you feel for me !  
 No need to hide that face ! Though it have looked  
 Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know,  
 Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on me . . .  
 Your coming has my pardon, nay, my thanks :  
 For there is one who comes not.

*Hol.* Whom forgive,  
 As one to die !

*Straf.* True, all die, and all need  
 Forgiveness : I forgive him from my soul.

*Hol.* 'T is a world's wonder : Strafford, you must die !

*Straf.* Sir, if your errand is to set me free,  
 This heartless jest mars much. Ha ! Tears in truth ?  
 We 'll end this ! See this paper, warm — feel — warm  
 With lying next my heart ! Whose hand is there ?  
 Whose promise ? Read, and loud for God to hear !  
 " Strafford shall take no hurt " — read it, I say !  
 " In person, honor, nor estate " —

*Hol.* The King . . .

*Straf.* I could unking him by a breath ! You sit  
 Where Loudon sat, who came to prophesy  
 The certain end, and offer me Pym's grace  
 If I 'd renounce the King : and I stood firm  
 On the King's faith. The King who lives . . .

*Hol.* To sign

The warrant for your death.

*Straf.* " Put not your trust  
 In princes, neither in the sons of men,  
 In whom is no salvation ! "

*Hol.* Trust in God !  
 The scaffold is prepared : they wait for you :  
 He has consented. Cast the earth behind !

*Cha.* You would not see me, Strafford, at your foot !  
 It was wrung from me ! Only curse me not !

*Hol.* [To STRAFFORD.] As you hope grace and pardon in  
 your need,

Be merciful to this most wretched man !

[Voices from within.]

*Verso la sera*  
*Di Primavera.*

*Straf.* You 'll be good to those children, sir ? I know  
 You 'll not believe her, even should the Queen  
 Think they take after one they rarely saw.  
 I had intended that my son should live  
 A stranger to these matters : but you are

So utterly deprived of friends! He too  
 Must serve you — will you not be good to him?  
 Or, stay, sir, do not promise — do not swear!  
 You, Hollis — do the best you can for me!  
 I've not a soul to trust to: Wandesford's dead,  
 And you've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn comes next:  
 I've found small time of late for my affairs,  
 But I trust any of you, Pym himself —  
 No one could hurt them: there's an infant, too —  
 These tedious cares! Your Majesty could spare them!  
 Nay — pardon me, my King! I had forgotten  
 Your education, trials, much temptation,  
 Some weakness: there escaped a peevish word —  
 'Tis gone: I bless you at the last. You know  
 All 's between you and me: what has the world  
 To do with it? Farewell!

*Cha.* [*at the door.*]            Balfour! Balfour!

(*Enter BALFOUR.*)

The Parliament! — go to them: I grant all  
 Demands. Their sittings shall be permanent:  
 Tell them to keep their money if they will:  
 I'll come to them for every coat I wear  
 And every crust I eat: only I choose  
 To pardon Strafford. As the Queen shall choose!  
 — You never heard the People howl for blood,  
 Beside!

*Bal.* Your Majesty may hear them now:  
 The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out:  
 Please you retire:

*Cha.*                            Take all the troops, Balfour!

*Bal.* There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.

*Cha.* Come with me, Strafford? You'll not fear, at least!

*Straf.* Balfour, say nothing to the world of this!

I charge you, as a dying man, forget  
 You gazed upon this agony of one . . .  
 Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say, Balfour,  
 The King was sorry: 't is no shame in him:  
 Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,  
 And that I walked the lighter to the block  
 Because of it. I shall walk lightly, sir!  
 Earth fades, heaven breaks on me: I shall stand next  
 Before God's throne: the moment's close at hand  
 When man the first, last time, has leave to lay  
 His whole heart bare before its maker, leave  
 To clear up the long error of a life



And choose one happiness for evermore.  
 With all mortality about me, Charles,  
 The sudden wreck, the dregs of violent death —  
 What if, despite the opening angel-song,  
 There penetrate one prayer for you? Be saved  
 Through me! Bear witness, no one could prevent  
 My death! Lead on! ere he awake — best, now!  
 All must be ready: did you say, Balfour,  
 The crowd began to murmur? They 'll be kept  
 Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's!  
 Now! But tread softly — children are at play  
 In the next room. Precede, I follow —

(Enter Lady CARLISLE, with many Attendants.)

*Lady Car.* Me!

Follow me, Strafford, and be saved! The King?

[To the KING.] Well — as you ordered, they are ranged with-  
 out,

The convoy . . . [seeing the KING's state.]

[To STRAFFORD.] You know all, then! Why, I thought  
 It looked best, that the King should save you, Charles  
 Alone; 't is a shame that you should owe me aught.  
 Or no, not shame! Strafford, you 'll not feel shame  
 At being saved by me?

*Hol.* All true! Oh Strafford,

She saves you! all her deed! this lady's deed!  
 And is the boat in readiness? You, friend,  
 Are Billingsley, no doubt! Speak to her, Strafford!  
 See how she trembles, waiting for your voice!  
 The world 's to learn its bravest story yet!

*Lady Car.* Talk afterward! Long nights in France enough,  
 To sit beneath the vines and talk of home.

*Straf.* You love me, child? Ah, Strafford can be loved  
 As well as Vane! I could escape, then?

*Lady Car.* Haste!

Advance the torches, Bryan!

*Straf.* I will die.

They call me proud: but England had no right,  
 When she encountered me — her strength to mine —  
 To find the chosen foe a craven. Girl,  
 I fought her to the utterance, I fell,  
 I am hers now, and I will die. Beside,  
 The lookers on! Eliot is all about  
 This place, with his most uncomplaining brow.

*Lady Car.* Strafford!

*Straf.* I think if you could know how much  
 I love you, you would be repaid, my friend!

*Lady Car.* Then, for my sake!

*Straf.* Even for your sweet sake,  
I stay.

*Hol.* For *their* sake!

*Straf.* To bequeath a stain?  
Leave me! Girl, humor me and let me die!

*Lady Car.* Bid him escape — wake, King! Bid him escape!

*Straf.* True, I will go! Die, and forsake the King?  
I'll not draw back from the last service.

*Lady Car.* Strafford!

*Straf.* And, after all, what is disgrace to me?  
Let us come, child! That it should end this way,  
Lead then! but I feel strangely: it was not  
To end this way.

*Lady Car.* Lean — lean on me!

*Straf.* My King!  
Oh, had he trusted me — his friend of friends!

*Lady Car.* I can support him, Hollis!

*Straf.* Not this way!  
This gate — I dreamed of it, this very gate.

*Lady Car.* It opens on the river: our good boat  
Is moored below; our friends are there.

*Straf.* The same:  
Only with something ominous and dark,  
Fatal, inevitable.

*Lady Car.* Strafford! Strafford!

*Straf.* Not by this gate! I feel what will be there!  
I dreamed of it, I tell you: touch it not!

*Lady Car.* To save the King, — Strafford, to save the King!  
[As STRAFFORD opens the door, PYM is discovered with HAMPDEN,  
VANE, etc. STRAFFORD falls back; PYM follows slowly and con-  
fronts him.]

*Pym.* Have I done well? Speak, England! Whose sole  
sake  
I still have labored for, with disregard  
To my own heart, — for whom my youth was made  
Barren, my manhood waste, to offer up  
Her sacrifice — this friend, this Wentworth here —  
Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,  
And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,  
I hunted by all means (trusting that she  
Would sanctify all means) even to the block  
Which waits for him. And saying this, I feel  
No bitterer pang than first I felt, the hour  
I swore that Wentworth might leave us, but I  
Would never leave him: I do leave him now.

I render up my charge (be witness, God !)  
 To England who imposed it. I have done  
 Her bidding — poorly, wrongly, — it may be,  
 With ill effects — for I am weak, a man :  
 Still, I have done my best, my human best,  
 Not faltering for a moment. It is done.  
 And t'is said, if I say . . . yes, I will say  
 I never loved but one man — David not  
 More Jonathan ! Even thus, I love him now :  
 And look for my chief portion in that world  
 Where great hearts led astray are turned again,  
 (Soon it may be, and, certes, will be soon :  
 My mission over, I shall not live long.) —  
 Ay, here I know I talk — I dare and must,  
 Of England, and her great reward, as all  
 I look for there ; but in my inmost heart,  
 Believe, I think of stealing quite away  
 To walk once more with Wentworth — my youth's friend  
 Purged from all error, gloriously renewed,  
 And Eliot shall not blame us. Then indeed . . .  
 This is no meeting, Wentworth ! Tears increase  
 Too hot. A thin mist — is it blood ? — enwraps  
 The face I loved once. Then, the meeting be !

*Straf.* I have loved England too ; we'll meet then, Pym ;  
 As well die now ! Youth is the only time  
 To think and to decide on a great course :  
 Manhood with action follows ; but 't is dreary  
 To have to alter our whole life in age —  
 The time past, the strength gone ! As well die now.  
 When we meet, Pym, I'd be set right — not now !  
 Best die. Then if there's any fault, it too  
 Dies, smothered up. Poor gray old little Laud  
 May dream his dream out, of a perfect Church,  
 In some blind corner. And there's no one left.  
 I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym !  
 And yet, I know not : I shall not be there :  
 Friends fail — if he have any. And he's weak,  
 And loves the Queen, and . . . Oh, my fate is nothing —  
 Nothing ! But not that awful head — not that !

*Pym.* If England shall declare such will to me . . .

*Straf.* Pym, you help England ! I, that am to die,  
 What I must see ! 't is here — all here ! My God,  
 Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,  
 How thou wilt plague him, satiating hell !  
 What ? England that you help, become through you  
 A green and putrefying charnel, left

Our children . . . some of us have children, Pym —  
 Some who, without that, still must ever wear  
 A darkened brow, an over-serious look,  
 And never properly be young! No word?  
 What if I curse you? Send a strong curse forth  
 Clothed from my heart, lapped round with horror till  
 She's fit with her white face to walk the world  
 Scaring kind natures from your cause and you —  
 Then to sit down with you at the board-head,  
 The gathering for prayer . . . O speak, but speak!  
 . . . Creep up, and quietly follow each one home,  
 You, you, you, be a nestling care for each  
 To sleep with, — hardly moaning in his dreams,  
 She gnaws so quietly, — till, lo he starts,  
 Gets off with half a heart eaten away!  
 Oh shall you 'scape with less if she's my child?  
 You will not say a word — to me — to Him?

*Pym.* If England shall declare such will to me . . .

*Straf.* No, not for England now, not for Heaven now, —  
 See, Pym, for my sake, mine who kneel to you!  
 There, I will thank you for the death, my friend!  
 This is the meeting: let me love you well!

*Pym.* England, — I am thine own! Dost thou exact  
 That service? I obey thee to the end.

*Straf.* O God, I shall die first — I shall die first!

# SORDELLO

1840

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TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON.

DEAR FRIEND: Let the next poem be introduced by your name, therefore remembered along with one of the deepest of my affections, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me. I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might — instead of what the few must — like; but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so; you, with many known and unknown to me, think so; others may one day think so; and whether my attempt remain for them or not, I trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours,

R. B.

LONDON, June 9, 1833

## BOOK THE FIRST.

WHO will, may hear Sordello's story told:  
His story? Who believes me shall behold  
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end,  
Like me: for as the friendless-people's friend  
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din  
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin  
Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out  
Sordello, compassed murkily about  
With ravage of six long sad hundred years.  
Only believe me. Ye believe?

Appears

Verona . . . Never, I should warn you first,  
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst  
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell

A story I could body forth so well  
 By making speak, myself kept out of view,  
 The very man as he was wont to do,  
 And leaving you to say the rest for him.  
 Since, though I might be proud to see the dim  
 Abysmal past divide its hateful surge,  
 Letting of all men this one man emerge  
 Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,  
 I should delight in watching first to last  
 His progress as you watch it, not a whit  
 More in the secret than yourselves who sit  
 Fresh-chapleted to listen. But it seems  
 Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,  
 Makers of quite new men, producing them,  
 Would best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem  
 The wearer's quality ; or take their stand,  
 Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand,  
 Beside him. So, for once I face ye, friends,  
 Summoned together from the world's four ends,  
 Dropped down from heaven or cast up from hell,  
 To hear the story I propose to tell.  
 Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick,  
 Catching the dead, if fate denies the quick,  
 And shaming her ; 't is not for fate to choose  
 Silence or song because she can refuse  
 Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache  
 Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake :  
 I have experienced something of her spite ;  
 But there 's a realm wherein she has no right  
 And I have many lovers. Say, but few  
 Friends fate accords me ? Here they are : now view  
 The host I muster ! Many a lighted face  
 Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace ;  
 What else should tempt them back to taste our air  
 Except to see how their successors fare ?  
 My audience ! and they sit, each ghostly man  
 Striving to look as living as he can,  
 Brother by breathing brother ; thou art set,  
 Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I'll not fret  
 A wondrous soul of them, nor move death's spleen  
 Who loves not to unlock them. Friends ! I mean \*  
 The living in good earnest — ye elect  
 Chiefly for love — suppose not I reject  
 Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep,  
 Some fit occasion, forth, for fear ye sleep,  
 To glean your bland approvals. Then, appear,

Verona! stay — thou, spirit, come not near  
 Now — not this time desert thy cloudy place  
 To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face!  
 I need not fear this audience, I make free  
 With them, but then this is no place for thee!  
 The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown  
 Up out of memories of Marathon,  
 Would echo like his own sword's griding screech  
 Braying a Persian shield, — the silver speech  
 Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,  
 Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in  
 The knights to tilt, — wert thou to hear!    What heart  
 Have I to play my puppets, bear my part  
 Before these worthies?

Lo, the past is hurled  
 In twain: up-thrust, out-staggering on the world,  
 Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears  
 Its outline, kindles at the core, appears  
 Verona. 'Tis six hundred years and more  
 Since an event. The Second Friedrich wore  
 The purple, and the Third Honorius filled  
 The holy chair. That autumn eve was stilled:  
 A last remains of sunset dimly burned  
 O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame turned  
 By the wind back upon its bearer's hand  
 In one long flare of crimson; as a brand,  
 The woods beneath lay black. A single eye  
 From all Verona cared for the soft sky.  
 But, gathering in its ancient market-place,  
 Talked group with restless group; and not a face  
 But wrath made livid, for among them were  
 Death's stanch purveyors, such as have in care  
 To feast him. Fear had long since taken root  
 In every breast, and now these crushed its fruit,  
 The ripe hate, like a wine: to note the way  
 It worked while each grew drunk! Men grave and gray  
 Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro,  
 Letting the silent luxury trickle slow  
 About the hollows where a heart should be;  
 But the young gulped with a delirious glee  
 Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood  
 At the fierce news: for, be it understood,  
 Envoys apprised Verona that her prince  
 Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since  
 A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust  
 Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust

With Ecelin Romano, from his seat  
 Ferrara, — over-zealous in the feat  
 And stumbling on a peril unaware,  
 Was captive, trammelled in his proper snare,  
 They phrase it, taken by his own intrigue.  
 Immediate succor from the Lombard League  
 Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,  
 For Azzo, therefore, and his fellow-hope  
 Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast!  
 Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast.  
 "Prone is the purple pavis; Este makes  
 Mirth for the devil when he undertakes  
 To play the Ecelin; as if it cost  
 Merely your pushing-by to gain a post  
 Like his! The patron tells ye, once for all,  
 There be sound reasons that preferment fall  
 On our beloved" . . .

"Duke o' the Rood, why not?"

Shouted an Estian, "grudge ye such a lot?  
 The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own,  
 Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown,  
 That quick with prey enough her hunger blunts,  
 And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts."

"Taurello," quoth an envoy, "as in wane  
 Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain  
 To fly but forced the earth his couch to make  
 Far inland, till his friend the tempest wake,  
 Waits he the Kaiser's coming; and as yet  
 That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps: but let  
 Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs  
 The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs  
 The sea it means to cross because of him.  
 Sinketh the breeze? His hope-sick eye grows dim;  
 Creep closer on the creature! Every day  
 Strengthens the Pontiff; Ecelin, they say,  
 Dozes now at Oliero, with dry lips  
 Telling upon his perished finger-tips  
 How many ancestors are to depose  
 Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze  
 Deposits him in hell. So, Guelfs rebuilt  
 Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt  
 When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet  
 Buccio Virtù — God's wafer, and the street  
 Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm  
 With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm!  
 This could not last. Off Salinguerra went



To Padua, Podestà, 'with pure intent,'  
 Said he, 'my presence, judged the single bar  
 To permanent tranquillity, may jar  
 No longer' — so! his back is fairly turned?  
 The pair of goodly palaces are burned,  
 The gardens ravaged, and our Guelfs laugh, drunk  
 A week with joy. The next, their laughter sunk  
 In sobs of blood, for they found, some strange way,  
 Old Salinguerra back again — I say,  
 Old Salinguerra in the town once more  
 Uprooting, overturning, flame before,  
 Blood fetlock-high beneath him. Azzo fled;  
 Who 'scaped the carnage followed; then the dead  
 Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,  
 He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone.  
 Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce  
 Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,  
 On the gorged bird. The burghers ground their teeth  
 To see troop after troop encamp beneath  
 I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch  
 It took so many patient months to snatch  
 Out of the marsh; while just within their walls  
 Men fed on men. At length Taurello calls  
 A parley: 'let the Count wind up the war!'  
 Richard, light-hearted as a plunging star,  
 Agrees to enter for the kindest ends  
 Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,  
 No horse-boy more, for fear your timid sort  
 Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.  
 Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog;  
 'Ten, twenty, thirty, — curse the catalogue  
 Of burnt Guelf houses! Strange, Taurello shows  
 Not the least sign of life' — whereat arose  
 A general growl: 'How? With his victors by?  
 I and my Veronese? My troops and I?  
 Receive us, was your word?' So jogged they on,  
 Nor laughed their host too openly: once gone  
 Into the trap!" —

Six hundred years ago!

Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe  
 (Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,  
 Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills  
 His sprawling path through letters anciently  
 Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye)  
 When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask,  
 Flung John of Brienne's favor from his casque,

Forswore crusading, had no mind to leave  
 Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve  
 Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,  
 Or make the Alps less easy to recross ;  
 And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,  
 Was excommunicate that very year.

"The triple-bearded Teuton come to life !"  
 Groaned the Great League ; and, arming for the strife,  
 Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,  
 Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,  
 Its cry ; what cry ?

"The Emperor to come !"

His crowd of feudatories, all and some,  
 That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears, shields,  
 One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,  
 Scattered anon, took station here and there,  
 And carried it, till now, with little care —  
 Cannot but cry for him ; how else rebut  
 Us longer ? Cliffs, an earthquake suffered jut  
 In the mid-sea, each domineering crest,  
 Nothing save such another throe can wrest  
 From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown  
 Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown  
 Too thick, too fast accumulating round,  
 Too sure to over-riot and confound  
 Ere long each brilliant islet with itself  
 Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf,  
 Whirling the sea-drift wide : alas, the bruised  
 And sullen wreck ! Sunlight to be diffused  
 For that ! Sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at first,  
 The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst  
 Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled main,  
 And, shattered by those rocks, took hold again,  
 So kindly blazed it — that same blaze to brood  
 O'er every cluster of the multitude  
 Still hazardling new clasps, ties, filaments,  
 An emulous exchange of pulses, vents  
 Of nature into nature ; till some growth  
 Unfancied yet, exuberantly clothe  
 A surface solid now, continuous, one :

"The Pope, for us the People, who begun  
 The People, carries on the People thus,  
 To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us !"  
 See you ?

Or say, Two Principles that live  
 Each fitly by its Representative.

"Hill-cat" — who called him so? — the gracefulest  
 Adventurer, the ambiguous stranger-guest  
 Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,  
 Those talons to their sheath!) whose velvet purr  
 Soothes jealous neighbors when a Saxon scout  
 — Arpo or Yoland, is it? — one without  
 A country or a name, presumes to couch  
 Beside their noblest; until men avouch  
 That, of all Houses in the Trevisan,  
 Conrad descries no fitter, rear or van,  
 Than Ecelo! They laughed as they enrolled  
 That name at Milan on the page of gold,  
 Godego's lord, — Ramon, Marostica,  
 Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria,  
 And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief!  
 No laughter when his son, "the Lombard Chief"  
 Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent  
 To Italy along the Vale of Trent,  
 Welcomed him at Roncaglia! Sadness now —  
 The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,  
 The Asolan and Euganean hills,  
 The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills  
 Them all, for Ecelin vouchsafes to stay  
 Among and care about them; day by day  
 Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,  
 A castle building to defend a cot,  
 A cot built for a castle to defend,  
 Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end  
 To boasts how mountain ridge may join with ridge  
 By sunken gallery and soaring bridge.  
 He takes, in brief, a figure that beseems  
 The grisliest nightmare of the Church's dreams,  
 — A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged  
 From its old interests, and nowise changed  
 By its new neighborhood: perchance the vaunt  
 Of Otho, "my own Este shall supplant  
 Your Este," come to pass. The sire led in  
 A son as cruel; and this Ecelin  
 Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall  
 And curling and compliant; but for all  
 Romano (so they stiled him) throve, that neck  
 Of his so pinched and white, that hungry cheek  
 Proved 't was some fiend, not him, the man's-flesh went  
 To feed: whereas Romano's instrument,  
 Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole  
 I' the world, a tree whose boughs were slipt the bole

Successively, why should not he shed blood  
 To further a design? Men understood  
 Living was pleasant to him as he wore  
 His careless surcoat, glanced some missive o'er,  
 Propped on his truncheon in the public way,  
 While his lord lifted writhen hands to pray,  
 Lost at Oliero's convent.

Hill-cats, face  
 Our Azzo, our Guelf-Lion! Why disgrace  
 A worthiness conspicuous near and far  
 (Atii at Rome while free and consular,  
 Este at Padua who repulsed the Hun)  
 By trumpeting the Church's princely son?  
 — Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,  
 Ancona's march, Ferrara's . . . ask, in fine,  
 Our chronicles, commenced when some old monk  
 Found it intolerable to be sunk  
 (Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)  
 Quite out of summer while alive and well:  
 Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,  
 'Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,  
 Striving to coax from his decrepit brains  
 The reason Father Porphyry took pains  
 To blot those ten lines out which used to stand  
 First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.

The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore  
 Was vested in a certain Twenty-four;  
 And while within his palace these debate  
 Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,  
 Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare  
 Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care  
 For aught that's seen or heard until we shut  
 The smother in, the lights, all noises but  
 The carroch's booming: safe at last! Why strange  
 Such a recess should lurk behind a range  
 Of banquet-rooms? Your finger — thus — you push  
 A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush  
 Upon the banqueters, select your prey,  
 Waiting (the slaughter-weapons in the way  
 Strewing this very bench) with sharpened ear  
 A preconcerted signal to appear;  
 Or if you simply crouch with beating heart,  
 Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part  
 To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now;  
 Nor any . . . does that one man sleep whose brow  
 The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er?

What woman stood beside him? not the more  
 Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes  
 Because that arras fell between! Her wise  
 And lulling words are yet about the room,  
 Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom  
 Down even to her vesture's creeping stir.  
 And so reclines he, saturate with her,  
 Until an outcry from the square beneath  
 Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to breathe,  
 Above the cunning element, and shakes  
 The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks  
 On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,  
 The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit  
 Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away  
 Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying day,  
 In his wool wedding-robe.

For he — for he,  
 Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy,  
 (If I should falter now) — for he is thine!  
 Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!  
 A herald-star I know thou didst absorb  
 Relentless into the consummate orb  
 That scared it from its right to roll along  
 A sempiternal path with dance and song  
 Fulfilling its allotted period,  
 Serenest of the progeny of God —  
 Who yet resigns it not! His darling stoops  
 With no quenched lights, desponds with no blank troops  
 Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent  
 Utterly with thee, its shy element  
 Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear,  
 Still, what if I approach the august sphere  
 Named now with only one name, disentwine  
 That under-current soft and argentine  
 From its fierce mate in the majestic mass  
 Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass  
 In John's transcendent vision, — launch once more  
 That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore  
 Where glutted hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,  
 Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume —  
 Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope  
 Into a darkness quieted by hope;  
 Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye  
 In gracious twilights where his chosen lie,  
 I would do this! If I should falter now!  
 In Mantua territory half is slough,

Half pine-tree forest ; maples, scarlet-oaks  
Breed o'er the river-beds ; even Mincio chokes  
With sand the summer through : but 't is morass  
In winter up to Mantua walls. There was,  
Some thirty years before this evening's coil,  
One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil,  
Goito ; just a castle built amid  
A few low mountains ; firs and larches hid  
Their main defiles, and rings of vineyard bound  
The rest. Some captured creature in a pound,  
Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress,  
Secure beside in its own loveliness,  
So peered with airy head, below, above,  
The castle at its toils, the lapwings love  
To glean among at grape-time. Pass within.  
A maze of corridors contrived for sin,  
Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past,  
You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last  
A maple-panelled room : that haze which seems  
Floating about the panel, if there gleams  
A sunbeam over it, will turn to gold  
And in light-graven characters unfold  
The Arab's wisdom everywhere ; what shade  
Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made,  
Cut like a company of palms to prop  
The roof, each kissing top entwined with top,  
Leaning together ; in the carver's mind  
Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek combined  
With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair  
Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear  
A vintage : graceful sister-palms ! But quick  
To the main wonder, now. A vault, see ; thick  
Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits  
Across the buttress suffer light by fits  
Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay, stoop —  
A dullish gray-streaked cumbrous font, a group  
Round it, — each side of it, where'er one sees, —  
Upholds it ; shrinking Caryatides  
Of just-tinged marble like Eve's liliated flesh  
Beneath her maker's finger when the fresh  
First pulse of life shot brightening the snow.  
The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so  
They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed ;  
Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,  
Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil  
Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,

Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length  
 Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength  
 Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.  
 So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,  
 Like priestesses because of sin impure  
 Penanced forever, who resigned endure,  
 Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs.  
 And every eve, Sordello's visit begs  
 Pardon for them : constant as eve he came  
 To sit beside each in her turn, the same  
 As one of them, a certain space : and awe  
 Made a great indistinctness till he saw  
 Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress-chinks,  
 Gold seven times globed ; surely our maiden shrinks  
 And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain  
 Her load were lightened, one shade less the stain  
 Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead slipt  
 From off the rosary whereby the crypt  
 Keeps count of the contritions of its charge ?  
 Then with a step more light, a heart more large,  
 He may depart, leave her and every one  
 To linger out the penance in mute stone.  
 Ah, but Sordello ? 'T is the tale I mean  
 To tell you.

In this castle may be seen,  
 On the hill-tops, or underneath the vines,  
 Or eastward by the mound of firs and pines  
 That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,  
 A slender boy in a loose page's dress,  
 Sordello : do but look on him awhile  
 Watching ('t is autumn) with an earnest smile  
 The noisy flock of thievish birds at work  
 Among the yellowing vineyards ; see him lurk  
 ('T is winter with its sullenest of storms)  
 Beside that arras-length of broidered forms,  
 On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light  
 Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter bright  
 — Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,  
 And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed,  
 Auria, and their Child, with all his wives  
 From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives,  
 Lady of the castle, Adelaide. His face  
 — Look, now he turns away ! Yourselves shall trace  
 (The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,  
 A sharp and restless lip, so well combine  
 With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive

Delight at every sense ; you can believe  
 Sordello foremost in the regal class  
 Nature has broadly severed from her mass  
 Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames  
 Some happy lands, that have luxurious names,  
 For loose fertility ; a footfall there  
 Suffices to upturn to the warm air  
 Half-germinating spices ; mere decay  
 Produces richer life ; and day by day  
 New pollen on the lily-petal grows,  
 And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.  
 You recognize at once the finer dress  
 Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness  
 At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled  
 (As though she would not trust them with her world)  
 A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,  
 And lets but half the sun look fervid through.  
 How can such love ? — like souls on each full-fraught  
 Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught  
 Beyond its beauty, till exceeding love  
 Becomes an aching weight ; and, to remove  
 A curse that haunts such natures — to preclude  
 Their finding out themselves can work no good  
 To what they love nor make it very blest  
 By their endeavor, — they are fain invest  
 The lifeless thing with life from their own soul,  
 Availing it to purpose, to control,  
 To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy  
 And separate interests that may employ  
 That beauty fitly, for its proper sake.  
 Nor rest they here ; fresh births of beauty wake  
 Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,  
 With every mode of loveliness : then cast  
 Inferior idols off their borrowed crown  
 Before a coming glory. Up and down  
 Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine  
 To throb the secret forth ; a touch divine —  
 And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod ;  
 Visibly through his garden walketh God.  
 So fare they. Now revert. One character  
 Denotes them through the progress and the stir, —  
 A need to blend with each external charm,  
 Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm, —  
 In something not themselves ; they would belong  
 To what they worship — stronger and more strong  
 Thus prodigally fed — which gathers shape



And feature, soon imprisons past escape  
 The votary framed to love and to submit  
 Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it,  
 Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs  
 A legend; light had birth ere moons and suns,  
 Flowing through space a river and alone,  
 Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were strown  
 Hither and thither, foundering and blind:  
 When into each of them rushed light — to find  
 Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance.  
 Let such forego their just inheritance!  
 For there's a class that eagerly looks, too,  
 On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,  
 Proclaims each new revelation born a twin  
 With a distinctest consciousness within  
 Referring still the quality, now first  
 Revealed, to their own soul — its instinct nursed  
 In silence, now remembered better, shown  
 More thoroughly, but not the less their own;  
 A dream come true; the special exercise  
 Of any special function that implies  
 The being fair, or good, or wise, or strong,  
 Dormant within their nature all along —  
 Whose fault? So homage, other souls direct  
 Without, turns inward. "How should this deject  
 Thee, soul?" they murmur; "wherefore strength be quelled  
 Because, its trivial accidents withheld,  
 Organs are missed that clog the world, inert,  
 Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,  
 Like thine — existence cannot satiate,  
 Cannot surprise? Laugh thou at envious fate,  
 Who, from earth's simplest combination stamp  
 With individuality — uncramp  
 By living its faint elemental life,  
 Dost soar to heaven's complexest essence, rife  
 With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,  
 Equal to being all!"

In truth? Thou hast  
 Life, then — wilt challenge life for us: our race  
 Is vindicated so, obtains its place  
 In thy ascent, the first of us; whom we  
 May follow, to the meanest, finally,  
 With our more bounded wills?

Ah, but to find  
 A certain mood enervate such a mind,  
 Counsel it slumber in the solitude

Thus reached, nor, stooping, task for mankind's good  
 Its nature just as life and time accord  
 "— Too narrow an arena to reward  
 Emprise — the world's occasion worthless since  
 Not absolutely fitted to evince  
 Its mastery!" Or if yet worse befall,  
 And a desire possess it to put all  
 That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere  
 Contain it, — to display completely here  
 The mastery another life should learn,  
 Thrusting in time eternity's concern, —  
 So that Sordello . . .

Fool, who spied the mark  
 Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark  
 Already as he loiters? Born just now,  
 With the new century, beside the glow  
 And efflorescence out of barbarism;  
 Witness a Greek or two from the abysm  
 That stray through Florence-town with studious air,  
 Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair:  
 If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet!  
 While at Siena is Guidone set,  
 Forehead on hand; a painful birth must be  
 Matured ere Saint Eufemia's sacristy  
 Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze  
 At the moon: look you! The same orange haze, —  
 The same blue stripe round that — and, in the midst,  
 Thy spectral whiteness. Mother-maid, who didst  
 Pursue the dizzy painter!

Woe, then, worth  
 Any officious babble letting forth  
 The leprosy confirmed and ruinous  
 To spirit lodged in a contracted house!  
 Go back to the beginning, rather; blend  
 It gently with Sordello's life; the end  
 Is piteous, you may see, but much between  
 Pleasant enough. Meantime, some pyx to screen  
 The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon  
 The goblin! So they found at Babylon,  
 (Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage Antonine)  
 Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine,  
 In rummaging among the rarities,  
 A certain coffer; he who made the prize  
 Opened it greedily; and out there curled  
 Just such another plague, for half the world  
 Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and couch asquat,

Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot  
 Until your time is ripe ! The coffer-lid  
 Is fastened, and the coffer safely hid  
 Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of gold.

Who will may hear Sordello's story told,  
 And how he never could remember when  
 He dwelt not at Goito. Calmly, then,  
 About this secret lodge of Adelaide's  
 Glided his youth away ; beyond the glades  
 On the fir-forest border, and the rim  
 Of the low range of mountain, was for him  
 No other world : but this appeared his own  
 To wander through at pleasure and alone.  
 The castle too seemed empty ; far and wide  
 Might he disport ; only the northern side  
 Lay under a mysterious interdict —  
 Slight, just enough remembered to restrict  
 His roaming to the corridors, the vault  
 Where those font-bearers expiate their fault,  
 The maple-chamber, and the little nooks  
 And nests, and breezy parapet that looks  
 Over the woods to Mantua : there he strolled.  
 Some foreign women-servants, very old,  
 Tended and crept about him — all his clue  
 To the world's business and embroiled ado  
 Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most.

And first a simple sense of life engrossed  
 Sordello in his drowsy Paradise ;  
 The day's adventures for the day suffice —  
 Its constant tribute of perceptions strange,  
 With sleep and stir in healthy interchange,  
 Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease  
 Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees,  
 Eats the life out of every luscious plant.  
 And, when September finds them sere or scant,  
 Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite,  
 And hies him after unforeseen delight.  
 So fed Sordello, not a shard disheathed ;  
 As ever, round each new discovery, wreathed  
 Luxuriantly the fancies infantine  
 His admiration, bent on making fine  
 Its novel friend at any risk, would fling  
 In gay profusion forth : a ficklest king.  
 Confessed those minions ! — eager to dispense  
 So much from his own stock of thought and sense  
 As might enable each to stand alone

And serve him for a fellow ; with his own,  
 Joining the qualities that just before  
 Had graced some older favorite. ' Thus they wore  
 A fluctuating halo, yesterday  
 Set flicker and to-morrow filched away, —  
 Those upland objects each of separate name,  
 Each with an aspect never twice the same,  
 Waxing and waning as the new-born host  
 Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,  
 Gave to familiar things a face grotesque ;  
 Only, preserving through the mad burlesque  
 A grave regard. Conceive ! the orpine patch  
 Blossoming earliest on the log-house-thatch  
 The day those archers wound along the vines —  
 Related to the Chief that left their lines  
 To climb with clinking step the northern stair  
 Up to the solitary chambers where  
 Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall ;  
 He o'er-festooning every interval,  
 As the adventurous spider, making light  
 Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,  
 From barbican to battlement : so flung  
 Fantasies forth and in their centre swung  
 Our architect, — the breezy morning fresh  
 Above, and merry, — all his waving mesh  
 Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged.

This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged  
 To laying such a spangled fabric low,  
 Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow.  
 But its abundant will was balked here : doubt  
 Rose tardily in one so fenced about  
 From most that nurtures judgment, care and pain :  
 Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,  
 Less favored, to adopt betimes and force  
 Stead us, diverted from our natural course  
 Of joys — contrive some yet amid the dearth,  
 Vary and render them, it may be, worth  
 Most we forego. Suppose Sordello hence  
 Selfish enough, without a moral sense  
 However feeble ; what informed the boy  
 Others desired a portion in his joy ?  
 Or say a ruthless chance broke woof and warp —  
 A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp,  
 A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,  
 A bird with unsoiled breast and unfiled eyes  
 Warm in the brake — could these undo the trance

Lapping Sordello? Not a circumstance  
 That makes for you, friend Naddo! Eat fern-seed  
 And peer beside us and report indeed  
 If (your word) "genius" dawned with throes and stings  
 And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs,  
 Summers and winters quietly came and went.

Time put at length that period to content,  
 By right the world should have imposed: bereft  
 Of its good offices, Sordello, left  
 To study his companions, managed rip  
 Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,  
 Core with its crust, their nature with his own:  
 Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone.  
 As if the poppy felt with him! Though he  
 Partook the poppy's red effrontery  
 Till Autumn spoiled their fleeing quite with rain,  
 And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling crane  
 Lay bare. That's gone: yet why renounce, for that,  
 His disenchanting tributaries — flat  
 Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn,  
 Their simple presence might not well be borne  
 Whose parley was a transport once: recall  
 The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all,  
 A poppy: — why distrust the evidence  
 Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense?  
 The new-born judgment answered, "little boots  
 Beholding other creatures' attributes  
 And having none!" or, say that it sufficed,  
 "Yet, could one but possess, oneself," (enticed  
 Judgment) "some special office!" Nought beside  
 Serves you? "Well then, be somehow justified  
 For this ignoble wish to circumscribe  
 And concentrate, rather than swell. the tribe  
 Of actual pleasures: what, now, from without  
 Effects it? — proves, despite a lurking doubt,  
 Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared?  
 That, tasting joys by proxy thus, you fared  
 The better for them?" Thus much craved his soul.  
 Alas, from the beginning love is whole  
 And true; if sure of nought beside, most sure  
 Of its own truth at least; nor may endure  
 A crowd to see its face, that cannot know  
 How hot the pulses throb its heart below.  
 While its own helplessness and utter want  
 Of means to worthily be ministrant  
 To what it worships, do but fan the more

Its flame, exalt the idol far before  
 Itself as it would have it ever be.  
 Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,  
 Coerced and put to shame, retaining will,  
 Care little, take mysterious comfort still,  
 But look forth tremblingly to ascertain  
 If others judge their claims not urged in vain,  
 And say for them their stifled thoughts aloud.  
 So, they must ever live before a crowd :  
 — “Vanity,” Naddo tells you.

Whence contrive

A crowd, now? From these women just alive,  
 That archer-troop? Forth glided — not alone  
 Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,  
 Nor Adelaide (bent double o'er a scroll,  
 One maiden at her knees, that eve, his soul  
 Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd glooms  
 On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird perfumes,  
 Started the meagre Tuscan up, — her eyes,  
 The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise)  
 — But the entire out-world : whatever, scraps  
 And snatches, song and story, dreams perhaps,  
 Conceited the world's offices, and he  
 Had hitherto transferred to flower or tree,  
 Not counted a befitting heritage  
 Each, of its own right, singly to engage  
 Some man, no other, — such now dared to stand  
 Alone. Strength, wisdom, grace on every hand  
 Soon disengaged themselves, and he discerned  
 A sort of human life : at least, was turned  
 A stream of lifelike figures through his brain.  
 Lord, liegeman, valvassor and suzerain,  
 Ere he could choose, surrounded him ; a stuff  
 To work his pleasure on ; there, sure enough :  
 But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze ?  
 Are they to simply testify the ways  
 He who convoked them sends his soul along  
 With the cloud's thunder or a dove's brood-song ?  
 — While they live each his life, boast each his own  
 Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone  
 In some one point where something dearest loved  
 Is easiest gained — far worthier to be proved  
 Than aught he envies in the forest-wights !  
 No simple and self-evident delights,  
 But mixed desires of unimagined range,  
 Contrasts or combinations, new and strange,

Irsome perhaps, yet plainly recognized  
 By this, the sudden company — loves prized  
 By those who are to prize his own amount  
 Of loves. Once care because such make account,  
 Allow a foreign recognition stamp  
 The current value, and his crowd shall vamp  
 Him counterfeits enough; and so their print  
 Be on the piece, 't is gold, attests the mint,  
 And "good," pronounce they whom his new appeal  
 Is made to: if their casual print conceal —  
 'This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss  
 What he have lived without, nor felt the loss —  
 Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,  
 —What matter? So must speech expand the dumb  
 Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sordello, late  
 No foolish woodland-sights could satiate,  
 Betakes himself to study hungrily  
 Just what the puppets his crude fantasy  
 Supposes notablest, popes, kings, priests, knights,  
 May please to promulgate for appetites;  
 Accepting all their artificial joys  
 Not as he views them, but as he employs  
 Each shape to estimate the other's stock  
 Of attributes, that on a marshalled flock  
 Of authorized enjoyments he may spend  
 Himself, be men, now, as he used to blend  
 With tree and flower — nay more entirely, else  
 'T were mockery: for instance, "how excels  
 My life that chieftain's?" (who apprised the youth  
 Ecelin, here, becomes this month, in truth,  
 Imperial Vicar?) "Turns he in his tent  
 Remissly? Be it so — my head is bent  
 Deliciously amid my girls to sleep.  
 What if he stalks the Trentine-pass? Yon steep  
 I climbed an hour ago with little toil:  
 We are alike there. But can I, too, foil  
 The Guelf's paid stabber, carelessly afford  
 Saint Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o' the sword  
 Baffling the treason in a moment?" Here  
 No rescue! Poppy he is none, but peer  
 To Ecelin, assuredly: his hand,  
 Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand  
 With Ecelin's uccess — try, now! He soon  
 Was satisfied, returned as to the moon  
 From earth; left each abortive boy's-attempt  
 For feats, from failure happily exempt,

In fancy at his beck. "One day I will  
 Accomplish it! Are they not older still  
 — Not grown up men and women? 'T is beside  
 Only a dream; and though I must abide  
 With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent  
 For all myself, acquire an instrument  
 For acting what these people act; my soul  
 Hunting a body out may gain its whole  
 Desire some day!" How else express chagrin  
 And resignation, show the hope steal in  
 With which he let sink from an aching wrist  
 The rough-hewn ash-bow? Straight, a gold shaft hissed  
 Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down  
 Superbly! "Crosses to the breach! God's Town  
 Is gained him back!" Why bend rough ash-bows more?

Thus lives he: if not careless as before,  
 Comforted: for one may anticipate,  
 Rehearse the future, be prepared when fate  
 Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names  
 Startle, real places of enormous fames,  
 Este abroad and Ecelin at home  
 To worship him, — Mantua, Verona, Rome  
 To witness it. Who grudges time so spent?  
 Rather test qualities to heart's content —  
 Summon them, thrice selected, near and far —  
 Compress the starriest into one star,  
 And grasp the whole at once!

The pageant thinned  
 Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind  
 His spirit passed to winnow and divide;  
 Back fell the simpler phantasms; every side  
 The strong clave to the wise; with either classed  
 The beauteous; so, till two or three amassed  
 Mankind's beseemingnesses, and reduced  
 Themselves eventually, graces loosed,  
 And lavished strengths, to heighten up One Shape  
 Whose potency no creature should escape.  
 Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk?  
 Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk,  
 Is some gray scorching Saracenic wine  
 The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline —  
 Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed and chapped,  
 Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped,  
 Are dates plucked from the bough John Brienne sent,  
 To keep in mind his sluggish armament  
 Of Canaan: — Friedrich's, all the pomp and fierce



Demeanor! But harsh sounds and sights transpierce  
 So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells,  
 Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells  
 On the obdurate! That right arm indeed  
 Has thunder for its slave; but where's the need  
 Of thunder if the stricken multitude  
 Harkens, arrested in its angriest mood,  
 While songs go up exulting, then dispread,  
 Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead  
 Like an escape of angels? 'Tis the tune,  
 Nor much unlike the words the women croon  
 Smilingly, colorless and faint-designed  
 Each, as a worn-out queen's face some remind  
 Of her extreme youth's love-tales. "Eglamor  
 Made that!" Half minstrel and half emperor,  
 What but ill objects vexed him? Such he slew.  
 The kinder sort were easy to subdue  
 By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones;  
 And these a gracious hand advanced to thrones  
 Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture this,  
 Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,  
 Instead of saying, neither less nor more,  
 He had discovered, as our world before,  
 Apollo? That shall be the name; nor bid  
 Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid  
 The youth — what thefts of every clime and day  
 Contributed to purple the array  
 He climbed with (June at deep) some close ravine  
 'Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,  
 Over which, singing soft, the runnel slipped  
 Elate with rains: into whose streamlet dipped  
 He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet sock —  
 Though really on the stubs of living rock  
 Ages ago it crenelled; vines for roof,  
 Lindens for wall; before him, aye aloof,  
 Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,  
 Born of the simmering quiet, there to die.  
 Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied  
 Mighty descents of forest; multiplied  
 Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees,  
 There gendered the grave maple stocks at ease,  
 And, proud of its observer, straight the wood  
 Tried old surprises on him; black it stood  
 A sudden barrier ('t was a cloud passed o'er)  
 So dead and dense, the tiniest brute no more  
 Must pass; yet presently (the cloud dispatched)

Each clump, behold, was glistening detached  
 A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems !  
 Yet could not he denounce the stratagems  
 He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would hang  
 White summer-lightnings ; as it sank and sprang  
 To measure, that whole palpitating breast  
 Of heaven, 't was Apollo, nature prest  
 At eve to worship.

Time stole : by degrees  
 The Pythons perish off ; his votaries  
 Sink to respectful distance ; songs redeem  
 Their pains, but briefer ; their dismissals seem  
 Emphatic ; only girls are very slow  
 To disappear — his Delians ! Some that glow  
 O' the instant, more with earlier loves to wrench  
 Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench ;  
 Alike in one material circumstance —  
 All soon or late adore Apollo ! Glance  
 The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,  
 His Daphne ! “ We secure Count Richard's voice  
 In Este's counsels, good for Este's ends  
 As our Taurello,” say his faded friends,  
 “ By granting him our Palma ! ” — the sole child,  
 They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled  
 Ecelin, years before this Adelaide  
 Wedded and turned him wicked : “ but the maid  
 Rejects his suit,” those sleepy women boast.  
 She, scorning all beside, deserves the most  
 Sordello : so, conspicuous in his world  
 Of dreams sat Palma. How the tresses curled  
 Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound  
 About her like a glory ! even the ground  
 Was bright as with spilt sunbeams ; breathe not, breathe  
 Not ! — poised, see, one leg doubled underneath,  
 Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,  
 Rests. but the other, listlessly below,  
 O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air,  
 The vein-streaks swollen a richer violet where  
 The languid blood lies heavily ; yet calm  
 On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm,  
 As but suspended in the act to rise  
 By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes  
 Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets  
 Apollo's gaze in the pine glooms.

Time fleets :  
 That's worst ! Because the pre-appointed age

Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage  
And crowd she promised. Lean he grows and pale,  
Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail  
Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet alone  
He tarries here ! The earnest smile is gone.  
How long this might continue matters not ;  
— Forever, possibly ; since to the spot  
None come : our lingering Taurello quits  
Mantua at last, and light our lady flits  
Back to her place disburdened of a care.  
Strange — to be constant here if he is there !  
Is it distrust ? Oh, never ! for they both  
Goad Ecelin alike, Romano's growth  
Is daily manifest, and Azzo's dumb  
And Richard wavers : let but Friedrich come,  
Find matter for the minstrelsy's report !  
— Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's court  
To sing us a Messina morning up,  
And, double rillet of a drinking cup,  
Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,  
Northward to Provence that, and thus far south  
The other. What a method to apprise  
Neighbors of births, espousals, obsequies !  
Which in their very tongue the Troubadour  
Records ; and his performance makes a tour,  
For Trouveres bear the miracle about.  
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,  
Until the Formidable House is famed  
Over the country — as Taurello aimed,  
Who introduced, although the rest adopt,  
The novelty. Such games, her absence stopped,  
Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse  
No longer, in the light of day pursues  
Her plans at Mantua : whence an accident  
Which, breaking on Sordello's mixed content,  
Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,  
The veritable business of mankind.

## BOOK THE SECOND.

THE woods were long austere with snow : at last  
 Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast  
 Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,  
 Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' the woods  
 Our buried year, a witch, grew young again  
 To placid incantations, and that stain  
 About were from her caldron, green smoke blent  
 With those black pines" — so Eglamor gave vent  
 To a chance fancy. Whence a just rebuke  
 From his companion ; brother Naddo shook  
 The solemnest of brows ; "Beware," he said,  
 "Of setting up conceits in nature's stead !"  
 Forth wandered our Sordello. Nought so sure  
 As that to-day's adventure will secure  
 Palma, the visioned lady — only pass  
 O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted grass,  
 Under that brake where sundawn feeds the stalks  
 Of withered fern with gold, into those walks  
 Of pine and take her ! Buoyantly he went.  
 Again his stooping forehead was besprent  
 With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Then wide  
 Opened the great morass, shot every side  
 With flashing water through and through : a shine,  
 Thick-steaming, all alive. Whose shape divine,  
 Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapor, glanced  
 Athwart the flying herons ? He advanced,  
 But warily ; though Mincio leaped no more,  
 Each footfall burst up in the marish-floor  
 A diamond jet : and if he stopped to pick  
 Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick,  
 And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or loach,  
 A sudden pond would silently enroach  
 This way and that. On Palma passed. The verge  
 Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge  
 Flushed, now, and panting, — crowds to see, — will own  
 She loves him — Boniface to hear, to groan,  
 To leave his suit ! One screen of pine-trees still  
 Opposes : but — the startling spectacle —  
 Mantua, this time ! Under the walls — a crowd  
 Indeed, real men and women, gay and loud

Round a pavilion. How he stood !

In truth

No prophecy had come to pass : his youth  
 In its prime now — and where was homage poured  
 Upon Sordello ? — born to be adored,  
 And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made  
 To cope with any, cast into the shade  
 By this and this. Yet something seemed to prick  
 And tingle in his blood ; a sleight — a trick —  
 And much would be explained. It went for nought —  
 The best of their endowments were ill bought  
 With his identity : nay, the conceit,  
 That this day's roving led to Palma's feet  
 Was not so vain — list ! The word, " Palma ! " Steal  
 Aside, and die, Sordello ; this is real,  
 And this — abjure !

What next ? The curtains see  
 Dividing ! She is there ; and presently  
 He will be there — the proper You, at length —  
 In your own cherished dress of grace and strength :  
 Most like, the very Boniface !

Not so.

It was a showy man advanced ; but though  
 A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound  
 Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around,  
 — " This is not he," Sordello felt ; while, " Place  
 For the best Troubadour of Boniface ! "  
 Hollaed the Jongleurs, — " Eglamor, whose lay  
 Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-day ! "  
 Obsequious Naddo strung the master's lute  
 With the new lute-string, " Elys," named to suit  
 The song : he stealthily at watch, the while,  
 Biting his lip to keep down a great smile  
 Of pride : then up he struck. Sordello's brain  
 Swam ; for he knew a sometime deed again ;  
 So, could supply each foolish gap and chasm  
 The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,  
 Mistaking its true version — was the tale  
 Not of Apollo ? Only, what avail  
 Luring her down, that Elys an he pleased,  
 If the man dared no further ? Has he ceased ?  
 And, lo, the people's frank applause half done,  
 Sordello was beside him, had begun  
 (Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend  
 The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end,  
 Taking the other's names and time and place

For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,  
 After the flying story ; word made leap  
 Out word, rhyme — rhyme ; the ly could barely keep  
 Pace with the action visibly rushing past :  
 Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast  
 Than some Egyptian from the harassed bull  
 That wheeled abrupt and, bellowing, fronted full  
 His plague, who spied a scarab 'neath the tongue,  
 And found 't was Apis' flank his hasty prong  
 Insulted. But the people — but the cries,  
 The crowding round, and proffering the prize !  
 — For he had gained some prize. He seemed to shrink  
 Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink  
 One sight withheld him. There sat Adelaide,  
 Silent ; but at her knees the very maid  
 Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich.  
 The same pure fleecy hair ; one weft of which,  
 Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er  
 She leant, speaking some six words and no more.  
 He answered something, anything : and she  
 Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily  
 Upon him, her neck's warmth and all. Again  
 Moved the arrested magic ; in his brain  
 Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,  
 And greater glare, until the intense flare  
 Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense.  
 And when he woke 't was many a furlong thence,  
 At home ; the sun shining his ruddy wont ;  
 The customary birds'-chirp ; but his front  
 Was crowned — was crowned ! Her scented scarf around  
 His neck ! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps the ground ?  
 A prize ? He turned, and peeringly on him  
 Brooded the women-faces, kind and dim,  
 Ready to talk — “ The Jongleurs in a troop  
 Had brought him back, Naddo and Squarcialupe  
 And Tagliafer ; how strange ! a childhood spent  
 In taking, well for him, so brave a bent !  
 Since Eglamor,” they heard, “ was dead with spite,  
 And Palma chose him for her minstrel.”

Light

Sordello rose — to think, now ; hitherto  
 He had perceived. Sure, a discovery grew  
 Out of it all ! Best live from first to last  
 The transport o'er again. A week he passed,  
 Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,  
 From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance

Bounding his own achievement. Strange! A man  
 Recounted an adventure, but began  
 Imperfectly; his own task was to fill  
 The frame-work up, sing well what he sung ill,  
 Supply the necessary points, set loose  
 As many incidents of little use  
 — More imbecile the other, not to see  
 Their relative importance clear as he!  
 But, for a special pleasure in the act  
 Of singing — had he ever turned, in fact,  
 From Elys, to sing Elys? — from each fit  
 Of rapture to contrive a song of it?  
 True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind  
 Into a treasure, helped himself to find  
 A beauty in himself; for, see, he soared  
 By means of that mere snatch, to many a hoard  
 Of fancies; as some falling cone bears soft  
 The eye along the fir-tree-spire, aloft  
 To a dove's nest. Then, how divine the cause  
 Such a performance might exact applause  
 From men, if they had fancies too? Could fate  
 Decree they found a beauty separate  
 In the poor snatch itself? — "Take Elys, there,  
 — 'Her head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear,  
 So close and smooth are laid the few fine locks  
 Colored like honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sun-blanch'd the livelong summer' — if they heard  
 Just those two rhymes, assented at my word,  
 And loved them as I love them who have run  
 These fingers through those pale locks, let the sun  
 Into the white cool skin — who first could clutch,  
 Then praise — I needs must be a god to such.  
 Or if some few, above themselves, and yet  
 Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set  
 An impress on our gift? So, men believe  
 And worship what they know not, nor receive  
 Delight from. Have they fancies — slow, perchance,  
 Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance  
 Until, by song, each floating part be linked  
 To each, and all grow palpable, distinct?"  
 He pondered this.

Meanwhile, sounds low and drear  
 Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near  
 And nearer, and the underwood was pushed  
 Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed  
 At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid;

Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade  
 Came o'er the sky although 't was mid-day yet :  
 You saw each half-shut downcast floweret  
 Flutter — “ a Roman bride, when they 'd dispart  
 Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,  
 Holding that famous rape in memory still,  
 Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,  
 And looked thus,” Eglamor would say — indeed  
 'T is Eglamor, no other, these precede  
 Home hither in the woods. “ 'T were surely sweet  
 Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat  
 To sleep ! ” judged Naddo, who in person led  
 Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,  
 A scanty company ; for, sooth to say,  
 Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day.  
 Old worshippers were something shamed, old friends  
 Nigh weary ; still the death proposed amends.  
 “ Let us but get them safely through my song  
 And home again ! ” quoth Naddo.

All along,

This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)  
 — This calm corpse with the loose flowers in his hand,  
 Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite.  
 For him indeed was Naddo's notion right,  
 And verse a temple-worship vague and vast,  
 A ceremony that withdrew the last  
 Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil  
 Which hid the holy place : should one so frail  
 Stand there without such effort ? or repine  
 That much was blank, uncertain at the shrine  
 He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,  
 The power responded, and some sound or sight  
 Grew up, his own forever, to be fixed,  
 In rhyme, the beautiful, forever ! — mixed  
 With his own life, unloosed when he should please,  
 Having it safe at hand, ready to ease  
 All pain, remove all trouble ; every time  
 He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,  
 (Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love)  
 Faltering ; so distinct and far above  
 Himself, these fancies ! He, no genius rare,  
 Transfiguring in fire or wave or air  
 At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up  
 In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,  
 His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few  
 And their arrangement finds enough to do



For his best art. Then, how he loved that art!  
 The calling marking him a man apart  
 From men — one not to care, take counsel for  
 Cold hearts, comfortless faces — (Eglamor  
 Was neediest of his tribe) — since verse, the gift,  
 Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift  
 Without it, e'en content themselves with wealth  
 And pomp and power, snatching a life by stealth.  
 So, Eglamor was not without his pride!  
 The sorriest bat which cowers through noontide  
 While other birds are jocund, has one time  
 When moon and stars are blinded, and the prime  
 Of earth is his to claim, nor find a peer;  
 And Eglamor was noblest poet here —  
 He knew that, 'mid the April woods, he cast  
 Conceits upon in plenty as he passed,  
 That Naddo might suppose him not to think  
 Entirely on the coming triumph: wink  
 At the one weakness! "I was a fervid child,  
 That song of his; no brother of the guild  
 Had e'er conceived its like. The rest you know,  
 The exaltation and the overthrow:  
 Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,  
 His life — to that it came. Yet envy sank  
 Within him, as he heard Sordello out,  
 And, for the first time, shouted — tried to shout  
 Like others, not from any zeal to show  
 Pleasure that way: the common sort did so.  
 And what was Eglamor? who, bending down  
 The same, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,  
 Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,  
 Left one great tear on it, then joined his band  
 — In time; for some were watching at the door:  
 Who knows what envy may effect? "Give o'er,  
 Nor charm his lips, nor craze him!" (here one spied  
 And disengaged the withered crown) — "Beside  
 His crown? How prompt and clear those verses rung  
 To answer yours! nay, sing them!" And he sung  
 Them calmly. Home he went; friends used to wait  
 His coming, zealous to congratulate;  
 But, to a man, so quickly runs report,  
 Could do no less than leave him, and escort  
 His rival. That eve, then, bred many a thought:  
 What must his future life be? was he brought  
 So low, who was so lofty this Spring morn?  
 At length he said, "Best sleep now with my scorn,

And by to-morrow I devise some plain  
 Expedient!" So, he slept, nor woke again.  
 They found as much, those friends, when they returned  
 O'erflowing with the marvels they had learned  
 About Sordello's paradise, his roves  
 Among the hills and valleys, plains and groves,  
 Wherein, no doubt, this lay was roughly cast,  
 Polished by slow degrees, completed last  
 To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.

Such form the chanters now, and, out of breath,  
 They lay the beaten man in his abode,  
 Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,  
 Doleful to hear. Sordello could explore  
 By means of it, however, one step more  
 In joy; and, mastering the round at length,  
 Learnt how to live in weakness as in strength,  
 When from his covert forth he stood, addressed  
 Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,  
 Primæval pines o'er canopy his couch,  
 And, most of all, his fame — (shall I avouch  
 Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look,  
 And laughed as from his brow Sordello took  
 The crown, and laid on the bard's breast, and said  
 It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head?)  
 — Continue. Nor the prayer quite fruitless fell.  
 A plant they have, yielding a three-leaved bell  
 Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails  
 Till evening; evening gives it to her gales  
 To clear away with such forgotten things  
 As are an eyesore to the morn: this brings  
 Him to their mind, and bears his very name.

So much for Eglamor. My own month came;  
 'T was a sunrise of blossoming and May.  
 Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay  
 Sordello; each new sprinkle of white stars  
 That smell fainter of wine than Massic jars  
 Dug up at Baiæ, when the south wind shed  
 The ripest, made him happier; filleted  
 And robed the same, only a lute beside  
 Lay on the turf. Before him far and wide  
 The country stretched: Goito slept behind  
 — The castle and its covert, which confined  
 Him with his hopes and fears; so fain of old  
 To leave the story of his birth untold.  
 At intervals, 'spite the fantastic glow  
 Of his Apollo-life, a certain low

And wretched whisper, winding through the bliss,  
 Admonished, no such fortune could be his,  
 All was quite false and sure to fade one day :  
 The closelier drew he round him his array  
 Of brilliance to expel the truth. But when  
 A reason for his difference from men  
 Surprised him at the grave, he took no rest  
 While aught of that old life, superbly dressed  
 Down to its meanest incident, remained  
 A mystery : alas, they soon explained  
 Away Apollo ! and the tale amounts  
 To this : when at Vicenza both her counts  
 Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,  
 Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,  
 Reviled him as he followed ; he for spite  
 Must fire their quarter, though that self-same night  
 Among the flames young Ecelin was born  
 Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn  
 From the roused populace hard on the rear,  
 By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear  
 Grew high ; into the thick Elcorte leapt,  
 Saved her, and died ; no creature left except  
 His child to thank. And when the full escape  
 Was known — how men impaled from chine to nape  
 Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned  
 Bishop Pistoro's concubines, and burned  
 Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,  
 Missing the sweeter prey — such courage well  
 Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,  
 Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince  
 Within a blind retreat where Adelaide —  
 (For, once this notable discovery made,  
 The past at every point was understood)  
 — Might harbor easily when times were rude,  
 When Azzo schemed for Palma, to retrieve  
 That pledge of Agnes Este — loth to leave  
 Mantua unguarded with a vigilant eye,  
 Taurello biding there ambiguously —  
 He who could have no motive now to moil  
 For his own fortunes since their utter spoil —  
 As it were worth while yet (went the report)  
 To disengage himself from her. In short,  
 Apollo vanished ; a mean youth, just named  
 His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed  
 — How shall I phrase it ? — Monarch of the World !  
 For, on the morning that array was furled

Forever, and in place of one a slave  
To longings, wild indeed, but longings save  
In dreams as wild, suppressed — one daring not  
Assume the mastery such dreams allot,  
Until a magical equipment, strength,  
Grace, wisdom, decked him too, — he chose at length,  
Content with unproved wits and failing frame,  
In virtue of his simple will, to claim  
That mastery, no less — to do his best  
With means so limited, and let the rest  
Go by, — the seal was set : never again  
Sordello could in his own sight remain  
One of the many, one with hopes and cares  
And interests nowise distinct from theirs,  
Only peculiar in a thriveless store  
Of fancies, which were fancies and no more ;  
Never again for him and for the crowd  
A common law was challenged and allowed  
If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied  
By a mad impulse nothing justified  
Short of Apollo's presence. The divorce  
Is clear : why needs Sordello square his course  
By any known example ? Men no more  
Compete with him than tree and flower before.  
Himself, inactive, yet is greater far  
Than such as act, each stooping to his star,  
Acquiring thence his function ; he has gained  
The same result with meaner mortals trained  
To strength or beauty, moulded to express  
Each the idea that rules him ; since no less  
He comprehends that function, but can still  
Embrace the others, take of might his fill  
With Richard as of grace with Palma, mix  
Their qualities, or for a moment fix  
On one ; abiding free meantime, uncramped  
By any partial organ, never stamped  
Strong, and to strength turning all energies —  
Wise, and restricted to becoming wise —  
That is, he loves not, nor possesses One  
Idea that, star-like over, lures him on  
To its exclusive purpose. “ Fortunate !  
This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate  
A soul so various — took no casual mould  
Of the first fancy and, contracted, cold,  
Lay clogged forever thence, averse to change  
As that : whereas it left her free to range,

Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,  
 Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.  
 So, range, my soul! — who, by self-consciousness,  
 The last drop of all beauty dost express —  
 The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence  
 For thee: but for the world, that can dispense  
 Wonder on men who, themselves, wonder — make  
 A shift to love at second-hand, and take  
 Those for its idols who but idolize,  
 Themselves, — world that loves souls as strong or wise,  
 Who, themselves, love strength, wisdom, — it shall bow  
 Surely in unexampled worship now,  
 Discerning me!” —

(Dear monarch, I beseech,  
 Notice how lamentably wide a breach  
 Is here: discovering this, discover too  
 What our poor world has possibly to do  
 With it! As pigmy natures as you please —  
 So much the better for you; take your ease,  
 Look on, and laugh: style yourself God alone;  
 Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone:  
 All that is right enough: but why want us  
 To know that you yourself know thus and thus?)  
 “The world shall bow to me conceiving all  
 Man’s life, who see its blisses, great and small,  
 Afar — not tasting any; no machine  
 To exercise my utmost will is mine:  
 Be mine mere consciousness! Let them perceive  
 What I could do, a mastery believe,  
 Asserted and established to the throng  
 By their selected evidence of song  
 Which now shall prove, whate’er they are, or seek  
 To be. I am — who take no pains to speak,  
 Change no old standards of perfection, vex  
 With no strange forms created to perplex,  
 But will perform their bidding and no more,  
 At their own satiating-point give o’er,  
 While each shall love in me the love that leads  
 His soul to its perfection.” Song, not deeds,  
 (For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would brook  
 Mankind no other organ; he would look  
 For not another channel to dispense  
 His own volition, and receive their sense  
 Of its existing; but would be content,  
 Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent.  
 Nor should, for instance, strength an outlet seek

And, striving, be admired ; nor grace bespeak  
 Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes ;  
 Nor wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly moods :  
 But he would give and take on song's one point.  
 Like some huge throbbing stone that, poised a-joint,  
 Sounds, to affect on its basaltic bed,  
 Must sue in just one accent ; tempests shed  
 Thunder, and raves the windstorm : only let  
 That key by any little noise be set —  
 The far benighted hunter's halloo pitch  
 On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch  
 Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,  
 However loud, however low — all lift  
 The groaning monster, stricken to the heart.  
 Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its part,  
 And this, for his, will hardly interfere !  
 Its businesses in blood and blaze this year  
 But while the hour away — a pastime slight  
 Till he shall step upon the platform : right !  
 And, now thus much is settled, cast in rough,  
 Proved feasible, be counselled ! thought enough, —  
 Slumber, Sordello ! any day will serve :  
 Were it a less digested plan ! how swerve  
 To-morrow ? Meanwhile eat these sun-dried grapes,  
 And watch the soaring hawk there ! Life escapes  
 Merrily thus.

He thoroughly read o'er  
 His truchman Naddo's missive six times more,  
 Praying him visit Mantua and supply  
 A famished world.

The evening star was high  
 When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived  
 Before him : friends applauded, foes connived,  
 And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest  
 Angels, and all these angels would be blest  
 Supremely by a song — the thrice-renowned  
 Goito manufacture. Then he found  
 (Casting about to satisfy the crowd)  
 That happy vehicle, so late allowed,  
 A sore annoyance ; 't was the song's effect  
 He cared for, scarce the song itself : reflect !  
 In the past life, what might be singing's use ?  
 Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse  
 Praise, not the toilsome process which procured  
 That praise, enticed Apollo : dreams abjured,  
 No overleaping means for ends — take both

For granted or take neither ! I am loth  
 To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's ;  
 But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors  
 Go pine ; " the master certes meant to waste  
 No effort, cautiously had probed the taste  
 He 'd please anon : true bard, in short, disturb  
 His title if they could ; nor spur nor curb,  
 Fancy nor reason, wanting in him ; whence  
 The staple of his verses, common sense :  
 He built on man's broad nature — gift of gifts,  
 That power to build ! The world contented shifts  
 With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort  
 Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort  
 Its poet-soul — that 's, after all, a freak  
 (The having eyes to see and tongue to speak)  
 With our herd's stupid sterling happiness  
 So plainly incompatible that — yes —  
 Yes — should a son of his improve the breed  
 And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed ! "

" Well, there 's Goito and its woods anon,  
 If the worst happen ; best go stoutly on  
 Now ! " thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet !

You pother with your glossaries to get  
 A notion of the Troubadour's intent  
 In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent —  
 Much as you study arras how to twirl  
 His angelot, plaything of page and girl  
 Once ; but you surely reach, at last, — or, no !  
 Never quite reach what struck the people so,  
 As from the welter of their time he drew  
 Its elements successively to view,  
 Followed all actions backward on their course,  
 And catching up, unmingled at the source,  
 Such a strength, such a weakness, added then  
 A touch or two, and turned them into men.  
 Virtue took form, nor vice refused a shape ;  
 Here heaven opened, there was hell agape,  
 As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,  
 Sinner the other flared portentous by  
 A greedy people. Then why stop, surprised  
 At his success ? The scheme was realized  
 Too suddenly in one respect : a crowd  
 Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud  
 To speak, delicious homage to receive,  
 The woman's breath to feel upon his sleeve,

Who said, "But Anafest — why asks he less  
 Than Lucio, in your verses? how confess,  
 It seemed too much but yestereve!" — the youth,  
 Who bade him earnestly, "Avow the truth!  
 You love Bianca, surely, from your song;  
 I knew I was unworthy!" — soft or strong,  
 In poured such tributes ere he had arranged  
 Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed,  
 Digested. Courted thus at unawares,  
 In spite of his pretensions and his cares,  
 He caught himself shamefully hankering  
 After the obvious petty joys that spring  
 From true life, fain relinquish pedestal  
 And condescend with pleasures — one and all  
 To be renounced, no doubt; for, thus to chain  
 Himself to single joys and so refrain  
 From tasting their quintessence, frustrates, sure,  
 His prime design; each joy must he abjure  
 Even for love of it.

He laughed: what sage  
 But perishes if from his magic page  
 He look because, at the first line, a proof  
 'T was heard salutes him from the cavern roof?  
 "On! Give yourself, excluding aught beside,  
 To the day's task; compel your slave provide  
 Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf  
 Thoroughly conned. These lays of yours, in brief —  
 Cannot men bear, now, something better? — fly  
 A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry  
 Of essences? the period sure has ceased  
 For such: present us with ourselves, at least,  
 Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and hates  
 Made flesh: wait not!"

Awhile the poet waits  
 However. The first trial was enough:  
 He left imagining, to try the stuff  
 That held the imaged thing, and, let it writhe  
 Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe  
 To reach the light — his Language. How he sought  
 The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-wrought  
 That Language, — welding words into the crude  
 Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude  
 Armor was hammered out, in time to be  
 Approved beyond the Roman panoply  
 Melted to make it, — boots not. This obtained  
 With some ado, no obstacle remained



To using it ; accordingly he took  
 An action with its actors, quite forsook  
 Himself to live in each, returned anon  
 With the result — a creature, and, by one  
 And one, proceeded leisurely to equip  
 Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.  
 Accomplished ! Listen, Mantuans ! ” Fond essay !  
 Piece after piece that armor broke away,  
 Because perceptions whole, like that he sought  
 To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought  
 As language : thought may take perception’s place  
 But hardly co-exist in any case,  
 Being its mere presentiment — of the whole  
 By parts, the simultaneous and the sole  
 By the successive and the many. Lacks  
 The crowd perception ? painfully it tacks  
 Thought to thought, which Sordello, needing such,  
 Has rent perception into : it’s to clutch  
 And reconstruct — his office to diffuse,  
 Destroy : as hard, then, to obtain a Muse  
 As to become Apollo. “ For the rest,  
 E’en if some wondrous vehicle expressed  
 The whole dream, what impertinence in me  
 So to express it, who myself can be  
 The dream ! nor, on the other hand, are those  
 I sing to, over-likely to suppose  
 A higher than the highest I present  
 Now, which they praise already : be content  
 Both parties, rather — they with the old verse,  
 And I with the old praise — far go, fare worse ! ”  
 A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings  
 The angel, sparkles off his mail, and rings  
 Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps,  
 As might Apollo from the sudden corpse  
 Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits.  
 He set to celebrating the exploits  
 Of Montfort o’er the Mountaineers.

Then came  
 The world’s revenge : their pleasure, now his aim  
 Merely, — what was it ? “ Not to play the fool  
 So much as learn our lesson in your school ! ”  
 Replied the world. He found that, every time  
 He gained applause by any ballad-rhyme,  
 His auditory recognized no jot  
 As he intended, and, mistaking not  
 Him for his meanest hero, ne’er was dunce

Sufficient to believe him — all, at once.  
 His will . . . conceive it caring for his will!  
 — Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still  
 How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,  
 Had Montfort at completely (so to speak)  
 His fingers' ends ; while past the praise-tide swept  
 To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept :  
 The true meed for true merit ! — his abates  
 Into a sort he most repudiates,  
 And on them angrily he turns. Who were  
 The Mantuans, after all, that he should care  
 About their recognition, ay or no ?  
 In spite of the convention months ago,  
 (Why blink the truth ?) was not he forced to help  
 This same ungrateful audience, every whelp  
 Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers  
 With the bright band of old Goito years,  
 As erst he toiled for flower or tree ? Why, there  
 Sat Palma ! Adelaide's funereal hair  
 Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed  
 A fairy dust upon that multitude,  
 Although he feigned to take them by themselves ;  
 His giants dignified those puny elves,  
 Sublimed their faint applause. In short, he found  
 Himself still footing a delusive round,  
 Remote as ever from the self-display  
 He meant to compass, hampered every way  
 By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then  
 Continue, make believe to find in men  
 A use he found not ?

Weeks, months, years went by,  
 And lo, Sordello vanished utterly,  
 Sundered in twain ; each spectral part at strife  
 With each ; one jarred against another life ;  
 The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man  
 Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran  
 Here, there ; let slip no opportunities  
 As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize  
 To drop on him some no-time and acquit  
 His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit —  
 That waiving any compromise between  
 No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen  
 Beyond most methods) — of incurring scoff  
 From the Man-portion — not to be put off  
 With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme,  
 Though ne'er so bright ; — that sauntered forth in dream,

Dressed anyhow, nor waited mystic frames,  
 Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,  
 But just his sorry self — who yet might be  
 Sorrier for aught he in reality  
 Achieved, so pinioned that the Poet-part,  
 Fondling, in turn of fancy, verse; the Art  
 Developing his soul a thousand ways —  
 Potent, by its assistance, to amaze  
 The multitude with majesties, convince  
 Each sort of nature, that same nature's prince  
 Accosted it. Language, the makeshift, grew  
 Into a bravest of expedients, too;  
 Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown  
 Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone  
 Sufficed. While, out of dream, his day's work went  
 To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent —  
 So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge  
 Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge  
 A minute's toil that missed its due reward!  
 But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard,  
 John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,  
 That on the sea, with, open in his hand,  
 A bitter-sweetling of a book — was gone.

Then, if internal struggles to be one  
 That frittered him incessantly piecemeal,  
 Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real  
 Mantuans! intruding ever with some call  
 To action while he pondered, once for all,  
 Which looked the easier effort — to pursue  
 This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn through  
 The present ill-appreciated stage  
 Of self-revelment, and compel the age  
 Know him; or else, forswearing bard-craft, wake  
 From out his lethargy and nobly shake  
 Off timid habits of denial, mix  
 With men, enjoy like men. Ere he could fix  
 On aught, in rushed the Mantuans; much they cared  
 For his perplexity! Thus unprepared,  
 The obvious if not only shelter lay  
 In deeds, the dull conventions of his day  
 Prescribed the like of him: why not be glad  
 'T is settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad,  
 Submits to this and that established rule?  
 Let Vidal change, or any other fool,  
 His murrey-colored robe for filamot,  
 And crop his hair; too skin-deep, is it not,

Such vigor? Then, a sorrow to the heart,  
 His talk! Whatever topics they might start  
 Had to be groped for in his consciousness  
 Straight, and as straight delivered them by guess.  
 Only obliged to ask himself, "What was,"  
 A speedy answer followed; but, alas,  
 One of God's large ones, tardy to condense  
 Itself into a period; answers whence  
 A tangle of conclusions must be stripped  
 At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipped,  
 They matched rare specimens the Mantuan flock  
 Regaled him with, each talker from his stock  
 Of sorted-o'er opinions, every stage,  
 Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,  
 Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe, rotten-rich,  
 Sweet-sour, all tastes to take: a practice which  
 He too had not impossibly attained,  
 Once either of those fancy-flights restrained;  
 (For, at conjecture how might words appear  
 To others, playing there what happened here,  
 And occupied abroad by what he spurned  
 At home, 't was slipped, the occasion he returned  
 To seize :) he'd strike that lyre adroitly — speech,  
 Would but a twenty-cubit plectre reach;  
 A clever hand, consummate instrument,  
 Were both brought close; each excellency went  
 For nothing, else. The question Naddo asked,  
 Had just a lifetime moderately tasked  
 To answer, Naddo's fashion. More disgust  
 And more: why move his soul, since move it must  
 At minute's notice or as good it failed  
 To move at all? The end was, he retailed  
 Some ready-made opinion, put to use  
 This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce  
 Gestures and tones — at any folly caught  
 Serving to finish with, nor too much sought  
 If false or true 't was spoken; praise and blame  
 Of what he said grew pretty well the same  
 — Meantime awards to meantime acts: his soul,  
 Unequal to the compassing a whole,  
 Saw, in a tenth part, less and less to strive  
 About. And as for men in turn . . . contrive  
 Who could to take eternal interest  
 In them, so hate the worst, so love the best!  
 Though, in pursuance of his passive plan,  
 He hailed, decried, the proper way.

## As Man

So figured he ; and how as Poet? Verse  
 Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,  
 That his poor piece of daily work to do  
 Was, not sink under any rivals ; who  
 Loudly and long enough, without these qualms,  
 Tuned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked psalms,  
 To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,  
 " As knops that stud some almug to the pith  
 Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and crinklèd worse  
 Than pursèd eyelids of a river-horse  
 Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the breeze " —  
*Gad-fly*, that is. He might compete with these !  
 But — but —

“ Observe a pompion-twine afloat ;  
 Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat !  
 Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root,  
 The entire surface of the pool to boot.  
 So could I pluck a cup, put in one song  
 A single sight, did not my hand, too strong,  
 Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.  
 How should externals satisfy my soul ? ”  
 “ Why that 's precise the error Squarcialupe ”  
 (Hazarded Naddo) “ finds ; ‘ the man can't stoop  
 To sing us out, ' quoth he, ‘ a mere romance ;  
 He 'd fain do better than the best, enhance  
 The subjects' rarity, work problems out  
 Therewith : ' now, you 're a bard, a bard past doubt,  
 And no philosopher ; why introduce  
 Crotchets like these ? fine, surely, but no use  
 In poetry — which still must be, to strike,  
 Based upon common sense ; there 's nothing like  
 Appealing to our nature ! what beside  
 Was your first poetry ? No tricks were tried  
 In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes !  
 ‘ The man, ' said we, ‘ tells his own joys and woes :  
 We 'll trust him. ' Would you have your songs endure ?  
 Build on the human heart ! — why, to be sure  
 Yours is one sort of heart — but I mean theirs,  
 Ours, every one's, the healthy heart one cares  
 To build on ! Central peace, mother of strength,  
 That 's father of . . . nay, go yourself that length,  
 Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do  
 When they have got their calm ! And is it true,  
 Fire rankles at the heart of every globe ?  
 Perhaps. But these are matters one may probe

Too deeply for poetic purposes :  
 Rather select a theory that . . . yes,  
 Laugh ! what does that prove ? — stations you midway  
 And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay,  
 That's rank injustice done me ! I restrict  
 The poet ? Don't I hold the poet picked  
 Out of a host of warriors, statesmen . . . did  
 I tell you ? Very like ! As well you hid  
 That sense of power, you have ! True bards believe  
 All able to achieve what they achieve —  
 That is, just nothing — in one point abide  
 Profounder simpletons than all beside.  
 Oh, ay ! The knowledge that you are a bard  
 Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward ! ”  
 So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe  
 Of genius-haunters — how shall I describe  
 What grubs or nips or rubs or rips — your louse  
 For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,  
 Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer,  
 Picking a sustenance from wear and tear  
 By implements it sedulous employs  
 To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-toise .  
 Sordello ? Fifty creepers to elude  
 At once ! They settled stanchly ; shame ensued :  
 Behold the monarch of mankind succumb  
 To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,  
 As Naddo styled it ! ’Twas not worth oppose  
 The matter of a moment, gainsay those  
 He aimed at getting rid of ; better think  
 Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to slink  
 Back expeditiously to his safe place,  
 And chew the cud — what he and what his race  
 Were really, each of them. Yet even this  
 Conformity was partial. He would miss  
 Some point, brought into contact with them ere  
 Assured in what small segment of the sphere  
 Of his existence they attended him ;  
 Whence blunders, falsehoods rectify — a grim  
 List — slur it over ! How ? If dreams were tried,  
 His will swayed sicklily from side to side,  
 Nor merely neutralized his waking act  
 But tended e'en in fancy to distract  
 The intermediate will, the choice of means.  
 He lost the art of dreaming : Mantuan scenes  
 Supplied a baron, say, he sang before,  
 Handsomely reckless, full to running o'er

Of gallantries ; “ abjure the soul, content  
 With body, therefore ! ” Scarcely had he bent  
 Himself in dream thus low, when matter fast  
 Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast  
 And task it duly ; by advances slight,  
 The simple stuff becoming composite,  
 Count Lori grew Apollo — best recall  
 His fancy ! Then would some rough peasant-Paul,  
 Like those old Ecelin confers with, glance  
 His gay apparel o’er ; that countenance  
 Gathered his shattered fancy into one,  
 And, body clean abolished, soul alone  
 Sufficed the gray Paulician : by and by,  
 To balance the ethereality,  
 Passions were needed ; foiled he sunk again.

Meanwhile the world rejoiced (’t is time explain)  
 Because a sudden sickness set it free  
 From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee,  
 Her mountain-hive Romano swarmed ; at once  
 A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons  
 Blackened the valley. “ I am sick too, old,  
 Half crazed I think ; what good ’s the Kaiser’s gold  
 To such an one ? God help me ! for I catch  
 My children’s greedy sparkling eyes at watch —  
 ‘ He bears that double breastplate on,’ they say,  
 ‘ So many minutes less than yesterday ! ’  
 Beside, Monk Hilary is on his knees  
 Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please  
 Exact a punishment for many things  
 You know, and some you never knew ; which brings  
 To memory, Azzo’s sister Beatrix  
 And Richard’s Giglia are my Alberic’s  
 And Ecelin’s betrothed ; the Count himself  
 Must get my Palma : Ghibellin and Guelf  
 Mean to embrace each other.” So began  
 Romano’s missive to his fighting man  
 Taurello — on the Tuscan’s death, away  
 With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples’ bay  
 Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap  
 Out of Vesuvius’ throat, like this mishap  
 Startled him. “ That accursed Vicenza ! I  
 Absent, and she selects this time to die !  
 Ho, fellows, for Vicenza ! ” Half a score  
 Of horses ridden dead, he stood before  
 Romano in his reeking spurs : too late —  
 ‘ Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,’

The chieftain stammered ; “let me die in peace — Forget me! Was it I e'er craved increase Of rule? Do you and Friedrich plot your worst Against the Father: as you found me first So leave me now. Forgive me! Palma, sure, Is at Goito still. Retain that lure — Only be pacified!”

The country rung  
 With such a piece of news: on every tongue,  
 How Ecelin's great servant, congeed off,  
 Had done a long day's service, so, might doff  
 The green and yellow, and recover breath  
 At Mantua, whither, — since Retrude's death,  
 (The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride  
 From Otho's house, he carried to reside  
 At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile  
 A structure worthy her imperial style,  
 The gardens raise, the statues there enshrine,  
 She never lived to see) — although his line  
 Was ancient in her archives and she took  
 A pride in him, that city, nor forsook  
 Her child when he forsook himself and spent  
 A prowess on Romano surely meant  
 For his own growth — whither he ne'er resorts  
 If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)  
 With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice  
 Were shows to greet him. “Take a friend's advice,  
 Quoth Naddo to Sordello, “nor be rash  
 Because your rivals (nothing can abash  
 Some folks) demur that we pronounced you best  
 To sound the great man's welcome; 't is a test,  
 Remember! Strojavacca looks asquint,  
 The rough fat sloven; and there's plenty hint  
 Your pinions have received of late a shock —  
 Outsoar them, cobswan of the silver flock!  
 Sing well!” A signal wonder, song's no whit  
 Facilitated.

Fast the minutes flit;  
 Another day, Sordello finds, will bring  
 The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing;  
 So, a last shift, quits Mantua — slow, alone:  
 Out of that aching brain, a very stone,  
 Song must be struck. What occupies that front?  
 Just how he was more awkward than his wont  
 The night before, when Naddo, who had seen  
 Taurello on his progress, praised the mien



For dignity no crosses could affect —  
 Such was a joy, and might not he detect  
 A satisfaction if established joys  
 Were proved imposture? Poetry annoys  
 Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses may come  
 Or keep away! And thus he wandered, dumb  
 Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent,  
 On a blind hill-top: down the gorge he went,  
 Yielding himself up as to an embrace.  
 The moon came out; like features of a face,  
 A querulous fraternity of pines,  
 Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling vines  
 Also came out, made gradually up  
 The picture; 't was Goito's mountain-cup  
 And castle. He had dropped through one defile  
 He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile  
 Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, enwrapped  
 Him wholly. 'T was Apollo now they lapped,  
 Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant  
 To wear his soul away in discontent,  
 Brooding on fortune's malice. Heart and brain  
 Swelled; he expanded to himself again,  
 As some thin seedling spice-tree starved and frail,  
 Pushing between cat's head and ibis' tail  
 Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth,  
 — Suffered remain just as it sprung, to soothe  
 The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet  
 Well in her chilly green-glazed minaret, —  
 When rooted up, the sunny day she died,  
 And flung into the common court beside  
 Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello! Soon  
 Was he low muttering, beneath the moon,  
 Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore, —  
 Since from the purpose, he maintained before,  
 Only resulted wailing and hot tears.  
 Ah, the slim castle! dwindled of late years,  
 But more mysterious; gone to ruin — trails  
 Of vine through every loop-hole. Nought avails  
 The night as, torch in hand, he must explore  
 The maple chamber: did I say, its floor  
 Was made of intersecting cedar beams?  
 Worn now with gaps so large, there blew cold streams  
 Of air quite from the dungeon; lay your ear  
 Close and 't is like, one after one, you hear  
 In the blind darkness water drop. The nests  
 And nooks retain their long ranged vesture-chests

Empty and smelling of the iris root  
 The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit  
 Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day,  
 Said the remaining women. Last, he lay  
 Beside the Carian group reserved and still.

The Body, the Machine for Acting Will,  
 Had been at the commencement proved unfit ;  
 That for Demonstrating, Reflecting it,  
 Mankind — no fitter : was the Will Itself  
 In fault ?

His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf  
 Beside the youngest marble maid awhile ;  
 Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile,  
 "I shall be king again!" as he withdrew  
 The envied scarf ; into the font he threw  
 His crown.

Next day, no poet ! "Wherefore?" asked  
 Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs, masked  
 As devils, ended ; "don't a song come next?"  
 The master of the pageant looked perplexed  
 Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief.  
 "His Highness knew what poets were : in brief,  
 Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right  
 To peevishness, caprice? or, call it spite,  
 One must receive their nature in its length  
 And breadth, expect the weakness with the strength!"  
 — So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,  
 The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,  
 Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin,  
 And nodded that the bull-bait might begin.

### BOOK THE THIRD.

AND the font took them : let our laurels lie !  
 Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly  
 Because once more Goito gets, once more,  
 Sordello to itself ! A dream is o'er,  
 And the suspended life begins anew ;  
 Quiet those throbbing temples, then, subdue  
 That cheek's distortion ! Nature's strict embrace,  
 Putting aside the past, shall soon efface  
 Its print as well — factitious humors grown

Over the true — loves, hatreds not his own —  
 And turn him pure as some forgotten vest  
 Woven of painted byssus, silkiest  
 Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip,  
 Left welter where a trireme let it slip  
 I' the sea, and vexed a satrap ; so the stain  
 O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its pain,  
 Its pleasure : how the tinct loosening escapes,  
 Cloud after cloud ! Mantua's familiar shapes  
 Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit,  
 Men, women, and the pathos and the wit,  
 Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh  
 For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die.  
 The last face glances through the eglantines,  
 The last voice murmurs 'twixt the blossomed vines  
 Of Men, of that machine supplied by thought  
 To compass self-perception with, he sought  
 By forcing half himself — an insane pulse  
 Of a god's blood, on clay it could convulse,  
 Never transmute — on human sights and sounds,  
 To watch the other half with ; irksome bounds  
 It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed  
 Forever. Better sure be unrevealed  
 Than part revealed : Sordello well or ill  
 Is finished : then what further use of Will,  
 Point in the prime idea not realized,  
 An oversight ? inordinately prized,  
 No less, and pampered with enough of each  
 Delight to prove the whole above its reach.  
 “To need become all natures, yet retain  
 The law of my own nature — to remain  
 Myself, yet yearn . . . as if that chestnut, think,  
 Should yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp and pink,  
 Or those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs stanch  
 March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch !  
 Will and the means to show will, great and small,  
 Material, spiritual, — abjure them all  
 Save any so distinct, they may be left  
 To amuse, not tempt become ! and, thus bereft,  
 Just as I first was fashioned would I be !  
 Nor, moon, is it Apollo now, but me  
 Thou visitest to comfort and befriend !  
 Swim thou into my heart, and there an end,  
 Since I possess thee ! — nay, thus shut mine eyes  
 And know, quite know, by this heart's fall and rise,  
 When thou dost bury thee in clouds, and when

Out-standest : wherefore practise upon men  
To make that plainer to myself ? ”

Slide here

Over a sweet and solitary year  
Wasted ; or simply notice change in him —  
How eyes, bright with exploring once, grew dim  
And satiate with receiving. Some distress  
Was caused, too, by a sort of consciousness  
Under the imbecility, — nought kept  
That down ; he slept, but was aware he slept,  
So, frustrated : as who brainsick made pact  
Erst with the overhanging cataract  
To deafen him, yet still distinguished slow  
His own blood's measured clicking at his brow.

To finish. One declining Autumn day —  
Few birds about the heaven chill and gray,  
No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods —  
He sauntered home complacently, their moods  
According, his and nature's. Every spark  
Of Mantua life was trodden out ; so dark  
The embers, that the Troubadour, who sung  
Hundreds of songs, forgot, its trick his tongue,  
Its craft his brain, how either brought to pass  
Singing at all ; that faculty might class  
With any of Apollo's now. The year  
Began to find its early promise sere  
As well. Thus beauty vanishes ; thus stone  
Outlingers flesh : nature's and his youth gone,  
They left the world to you, and wished you joy,  
When, stopping his benevolent employ,  
A presage shuddered through the welkin ; harsh  
The earth's remonstrance followed. 'T was the marsh  
Gone of a sudden. Mincio, in its place,  
Laughed, a broad water, in next morning's face,  
And, where the mists broke up immense and white  
I' the steady wind, burned like a spilth of light  
Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.  
And here was nature, bound by the same bars  
Of fate with him !

“ No ! youth once gone is gone :

Deeds let escape are never to be done.  
Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year ; for us —  
Oh forfeit I unalterably thus  
My chance ? nor two lives wait me, this to spend  
Learning save that ? Nature has time, may mend  
Mistake, she knows occasion will recur ;

Landslip or seabreach, how affects it her  
 With her magnificent resources? — I  
 Must perish once and perish utterly.  
 Not any strollings now at even-close  
 Down the field-path, Sordello! by thorn-rows  
 Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire  
 And dew, outlining the black cypress' spire  
 She waits you at, Elys, who heard you first  
 Woo her, the snow-month through, but ere she durst  
 Answer 't was April. Linden-flower-time-long  
 Her eyes were on the ground; 't is July, strong  
 Now; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm  
 The woodside, here or by the village elm  
 That holds the moon, she meets you, somewhat pale,  
 But letting you lift up her coarse flax veil  
 And whisper (the damp little hand in yours)  
 Of love, heart's love, your heart's love that endures  
 Till death. Tush! No mad mixing with the rout  
 Of haggard ribalds wandering about  
 The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house  
 Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse,  
 Parading, — to the gay Palermitans,  
 Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans  
 Nuocera holds, — those tall grave dazzling Norse,  
 High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the morse,  
 Queen of the caves of jet stalactites,  
 He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,  
 The blind night seas without a saving star,  
 And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,  
 Sordello! — here, mollitious alcoves gilt  
 Superb as Byzant domes that devils built!  
 — Ah, Byzant, there again! no chance to go  
 Ever like august pleasant Dandolo,  
 Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,  
 Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all,  
 Through vanquished Byzant where friends note for him  
 What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim,  
 'T were fittest he transport to Venice' Square —  
 Flattered and promised life to touch them there  
 Soon, by those fervid sons of senators!  
 No more lives, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces, wars!  
 Ah, fragments of a whole ordained to be,  
 Points in the life I waited! what are ye  
 But roundels of a ladder which appeared  
 Awhile the very platform it was reared  
 To lift me on? — that happiness I find

Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind  
Instinct which bade forego you all unless  
Ye led me past yourselves. Ay, happiness  
Awaited me ; the way life should be used  
Was to acquire, and deeds like you conduced  
To teach it by a self-revelment, deemed  
The very use, so long ! Whatever seemed  
Progress to that, was pleasure ; aught that stayed  
My reaching it — no pleasure. I have laid  
The ladder down ; I climb not ; still, aloft  
The platform stretches ! Bliss strong and soft,  
I dared not entertain, elude me ; yet  
Never of what they promised could I get  
A glimpse till now ! The common sort, the crowd,  
Exist, perceive ; with Being are endowed,  
However slight, distinct from what they See,  
However bounded ; Happiness must be,  
To feed the first by gleanings from the last,  
Attain its qualities, and slow or fast  
Become what they behold ; such peace-in strife  
By transmutation, is the Use of Life,  
The Alien turning Native to the soul  
Or body — which instructs me ; I am whole  
There and demand a Palma : had the world  
Been from my soul to a like distance hurled,  
'T were Happiness to make it one with me :  
Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,  
Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend  
In spirit now ; and this done, what 's to blend  
With ? Nought is Alien in the world — my Will  
Owns all already ; yet can turn it still  
Less Native, since my Means to correspond  
With Will are so unworthy, 't was my bond  
To tread the very joys that tantalize  
Most now, into a grave, never to rise.  
I die then ! Will the rest agree to die ?  
Next Age or no ? Shall its Sordello try  
Clue after clue, and catch at last the clue  
I miss ? — that 's underneath my finger too,  
Twice, thrice a day, perhaps, — some yearning traced  
Deeper, some petty consequence embraced  
Closer ! Why fled I Mantua, then ? — complained  
So much my Will was fettered, yet remained  
Content within a tether half the range  
I could assign it ? — able to exchange  
My ignorance (I felt) for knowledge, and

Idle because I could thus understand —  
 Could e'en have penetrated to its core  
 Our mortal mystery, and yet forbore,  
 Preferred elaborating in the dark  
 My casual stuff, by any wretched spark  
 Born of my predecessors, though one stroke  
 Of mine had brought the flame forth! Mantua's yoke,  
 My minstrel's-trade, was to behold mankind, —  
 My own concernment — just to bring my mind  
 Behold, just extricate, for my acquist,  
 Each object suffered stifle in the mist  
 Which hazard, use and blindness could impose  
 In their relation to myself."

He rose.

The level wind carried above the firs  
 Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,  
 Onward.

"Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,  
 Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops  
 Under a humid finger; while there fleets,  
 Outside the screen, a pageant time repeats  
 Never again! To be deposed, immured  
 Clandestinely — still petted, still assured  
 To govern were fatiguing work — the Sight  
 Fleeting meanwhile! 'Tis noontide: wreak ere night  
 Somehow my will upon it, rather! Slake  
 This thirst somehow, the poorest impress take  
 That serves! A blasted bud displays you, torn,  
 Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn;  
 But who divines what glory coats o'erelasp  
 Of the bulb dormant in the mummy's grasp  
 Taurello sent?" . . .

"Taurello? Palma sent  
 Your Trouvere," (Naddo interposing leant  
 Over the lost bard's shoulder) — "and, believe,  
 You cannot more reluctantly receive  
 Than I pronounce her message: we depart  
 Together. What avail a poet's heart  
 Verona's pomps and gauds? five blades of grass  
 Suffice him. News? Why, where your marish was,  
 On its mud-banks smoke rises after smoke  
 I' the valley, like a spout of hell new-broke.  
 Oh, the world's tidings! small your thanks, I guess,  
 For them. The father of our Patroness  
 Has played Taurello an astounding trick,  
 Parts between Ecelin and Alberic

His wealth and goes into a convent : both  
 Wed Guelfs : the Count and Palma plighted troth  
 A week since at Verona : and they want  
 You doubtless to contrive the marriage-chant  
 Ere Richard storms Ferrara." Then was told  
 The tale from the beginning — how, made bold  
 By Salinguerra's absence, Guelfs had burned  
 And pillaged till he unawares returned  
 To take revenge : how Azzo and his friend  
 Were doing their endeavor, how the end  
 O' the siege was nigh, and how the Count, released  
 From further care, would with his marriage-feast  
 Inaugurate a new and better rule,  
 Absorbing thus Romano.

" Shall I school  
 My master," added Naddo, " and suggest  
 How you may clothe in a poetic vest  
 These doings, at Verona ? Your response  
 To Palma ! Wherefore jest ? ' Depart at once ? '  
 A good resolve ! In truth, I hardly hoped  
 So prompt an acquiescence. Have you groped  
 Out wisdom in the wilds here ? — Thoughts may be  
 Over-poetical for poetry.  
 Pearl-white, you poets liken Palma's neck ;  
 And yet what spoils an orient like some speck  
 Of genuine white, turning its own white gray ?  
 You take me ? Curse the cicala ! "

One more day,

One eve — appears Verona ! Many a group,  
 (You mind) instructed of the osprey's swoop  
 On Inyx and ounce, was gathering — Christendom  
 Sure to receive, whate'er the end was, from  
 The evening's purpose cheer or detriment,  
 Since Friedrich only waited some event  
 Like this, of Ghibellins establishing  
 Themselves within Ferrara. ere, as King  
 Of Lombardy, he'd glad descend there, wage  
 Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage  
 His barons from the burghers, and restore  
 The rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore  
 By Hildebrand.

I' the palace, each by each,  
 Sordello sat and Palma : little speech  
 At first in that dim closet, face with face  
 (Despite the tumult in the market-place)  
 Exchanging quick low laughters : now would rush



Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,  
 A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise —  
 But for the most part their two histories  
 Ran best through the locked fingers and linked arms.  
 And so the night flew on with its alarms  
 Till in burst one of Palma's retinue ;

“ Now, Lady ! ” gasped he. Then arose the two  
 And leaned into Verona's air, dead-still.  
 A balcony lay black beneath until  
 Out, 'mid a gush of torchfire, gray-haired men  
 Came on it and harangued the people : then  
 Sea-like that people surging to and fro  
 Shouted, “ Hale forth the carroch — trumpets, ho,  
 A flourish ! Run it in the ancient grooves !  
 Back from the bell ! Hammer — that whom behooves  
 May hear the League is up ! Peal — learn who list,  
 Verona means not be the first break tryst  
 To-morrow with the League ! ”

Enough. Now turn —  
 Over the eastern cypresses : discern !  
 Is any beacon set a-glimmer ?

Rang

The air with shouts that overpowered the clang  
 Of the incessant carroch, even : “ Haste —  
 The candle 's at the gateway ! ere it waste,  
 Each soldier stand beside it, armed to march  
 With Tiso Sampier through the eastern arch ! ”  
 Ferrara 's succored, Palma !

Once again

They sat together ; some strange thing in train  
 To say, so difficult was Palma's place  
 In taking, with a coy fastidious grace  
 Like the bird's flutter ere it fix and feed.  
 But when she felt she held her friend indeed  
 Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant  
 Her lessons ; telling of another want  
 Goito's quiet nourished than his own ;  
 Palma — to serve, as him — be served, alone  
 Importing ; Agnes' milk so neutralized  
 The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised  
 If, while Sordello fain had captive led  
 Nature, in dream was Palma subjected  
 To some out-soul, which dawned not though she pined  
 Delaying till its advent, heart and mind,  
 Their life. “ How dared I let expand the force  
 Within me, till some out-soul, whose resource

It grew for, should direct it? Every law  
 Of life, its every fitness, every flaw,  
 Must One determine whose corporeal shape  
 Would be no other than the prime escape  
 And revelation to me of a Will  
 Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable  
 Above, save at the point which, I should know,  
 Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow  
 So far, so much; as now it signified  
 Which earthly shape it henceforth chose my guide,  
 Whose mortal lip selected to declare  
 Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear  
 — The first of intimations, whom to love;  
 The next, how love him. Seemed that orb, above  
 The castle-covert and the mountain-close,  
 Slow in appearing, — if beneath it rose  
 Cravings, aversions, — did our green precinct  
 Take pride in me, at unawares distinct  
 With this or that endowment, — how, repressed  
 At once, such jetting power shrunk to the rest!  
 Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave  
 My spirit thence unfitted to receive  
 The consummating spell? — that spell so near  
 Moreover! ' Waits he not the waking year?  
 His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe  
 By this; to welcome him, fresh runnels stripe  
 The thawed ravines; because of him, the wind  
 Walks like a herald. I shall surely find  
 Him now! '

" And chief, that earnest April morn  
 Of Richard's Love-court, was it time, so worn  
 And white my cheek, so idly my blood beat,  
 Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet  
 And saying as she prompted; till outburst  
 One face from all the faces — not then first  
 I knew it; where in maple chamber glooms,  
 Crowned with what sanguine-heart pomegranate blooms  
 Advanced it ever? Men's acknowledgment  
 Sanctioned my own: 't was taken, Palma's bent, —  
 Sordello, accepted.

" And the Tuscan dumb  
 Sat scheming, scheming. Ecelin would come  
 Gaunt, scared, ' Cesano baffles me,' he 'd say:  
 ' Better I fought it out, my father's way!  
 Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats,  
 And you and your Taurello yonder — what's

Romano's business there?' An hour's concern  
 To cure the froward Chief! — induced return  
 Much heartened from those overmeaning eyes,  
 Wound up to persevere, — his enterprise  
 Marked out anew, its exigent of wit  
 Apportioned, — she at liberty to sit  
 And scheme against the next emergence, I —  
 To covet her Taurello-sprite, made fly  
 Or fold the wing — to con your horscope  
 For leave command those steely shafts shoot ope,  
 Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness  
 To blank smooth snow. What semblance of success  
 To any of my plans for making you  
 Mine and Romano's? Break the first wall through,  
 Tread o'er the ruins of the Chief, supplant  
 His sons beside, still, vainest were the vaunt:  
 There, Salinguerra would obstruct me sheer,  
 And the insuperable Tuscan, here,  
 Stay me! But one wild eve that Lady died  
 In her lone chamber: only I beside:  
 Taurello far at Naples, and my sire  
 At Padua, Ecelin away in ire  
 With Alberic. She held me thus — a clutch  
 To make our spirits as our bodies touch —  
 And so began flinging the past up, heaps  
 Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps  
 Within her soul; deeds rose along with dreams,  
 Fragments of many miserable schemes,  
 Secrets, more secrets, then — no, not the last —  
 'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the past,  
 How . . . ay, she told me, gathering up her face,  
 All left of it, into one arch-grimace  
 To die with . . .

“Friend, 't is gone! but not the fear  
 Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear.  
 Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart grow weak  
 When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to speak  
 — Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark! — for in  
 Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin  
 (How summoned, who divines?) — looking as if  
 He understood why Adelaide lay stiff  
 Already in my arms; for, 'Girl, how must  
 I manage Este in the matter thrust  
 Upon me, how unravel your bad coil? —  
 Since' (he declared) 't is on your brow — a soil  
 Like hers, there!' then in the same breath, 'he lacked

No counsel after all, had signed no pact  
 With devils, nor was treason here or there,  
 Goito or Vicenza, his affair :  
 He buried it in Adelaide's deep grave,  
 Would begin life afresh, now, — would not slave  
 For any Friedrich's nor Taurello's sake !  
 What bootied him to meddle or to make  
 In Lombardy ?' And afterward I knew  
 The meaning of his promise to undo  
 All she had done — why marriages were made,  
 New friendships entered on, old followers paid  
 With curses for their pains, — new friends' amaze  
 At height, when, passing out by Gate St. Blaise,  
 He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head  
 Over a friar's neck, — 'had vowed,' he said,  
 'Long since, nigh thirty years, because his wife  
 And child were saved there, to bestow his life  
 On God, his gettings on the Church.'

“ Exiled

Within Goito, still one dream beguiled  
 My days and nights ; 't was found, the orb I sought  
 To serve, those glimpses came of Fomalhaut,  
 No other : but how serve it ? — authorize  
 You and Romano mingle destinies ?  
 And straight Romano's angel stood beside  
 Me who had else been Boniface's bride,  
 For Salinguerra 't was, with neck low bent,  
 And voice lightened to music, (as he meant  
 To learn not teach me,) who withdrew the pall  
 From the dead past and straight revived it all,  
 Making me see how first Romano waxed,  
 Wherefore he waned now, why, if I relaxed  
 My grasp (even I !) would drop a thing effete,  
 Frayed by itself, unequal to complete  
 Its course, and counting every step astray  
 A gain so much. Romano, every way  
 Stable, a Lombard House now — why start back  
 Into the very outset of its track ?  
 This patching principle which late allied  
 Our House with other Houses — what beside  
 Concerned the apparition, the first Knight  
 Who followed Conrad hither in such plight  
 His utmost wealth was summed in his one steed ?  
 For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed  
 A task, in the beginning hazardous  
 To him as ever task can be to us ;

But did the weather-beaten thief despair  
 When first our crystal cincture of warm air, —  
 That binds the Trevisan, — as its spice-belt  
 (Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus dwelt, —  
 Furtive he pierced, and Este was to face —  
 Despaired Saponian strength of Lombard grace?  
 Tried he at making surer aught made sure,  
 Maturing what already was mature?  
 No; his heart prompted Ecelo, 'Confront  
 Este, inspect yourself. What's nature? Wont.  
 Discard three-parts your nature, and adopt  
 The rest as an advantage!' Old strength propped  
 The man who first grew Podestà among  
 The Vicentines, no less than, while there sprung  
 His palace up in Padua like a threat,  
 Their noblest spied a grace, unnoticed yet  
 In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object gained,  
 Romano was established — has remained —  
 For are you not Italian, truly peers  
 With Este? 'Azzo' better soothes our ears  
 Than 'Alberic'? or is this lion's-erine  
 From over-mounts (this yellow hair of mine)  
 'So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock?'  
 (Thus went he on with something of a mock)  
 'Wherefore recoil, then, from the very fate  
 Conceded you, refuse to imitate  
 Your model farther? Este long since left  
 Being mere Este: as a blade its left,  
 Este required the Pope to further him:  
 And you, the Kaiser — whom your father's whim  
 Foregoes or, better, never shall forego  
 If Palma dare pursue what Ecelo  
 Commenced, but Ecelin desists from: just  
 As Adelaide of Susa could intrust  
 Her donative, — her Piedmont given the Pope,  
 Her Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope  
 'Twixt France and Italy, — to the superb  
 Matilda's perfecting, — so, lest aught curb  
 Our Adelaide's great counter-project for  
 Giving her Trentine to the Emperor  
 With passage here from Germany, — shall you  
 Take it, — my slender plodding talent, too!'  
 — Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.

“ He

As Patron of the scattered family  
 Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit

Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit  
 Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,  
 'Nothing remains,' Taurello said, 'but wait  
 Some rash procedure: Palma was the link,  
 As Agnes' child, between us, and they shrink  
 From losing Palma: judge if we advance,  
 Your father's method, your inheritance!' —  
 That day I was betrothed to Boniface  
 At Padua by Taurello's self, took place  
 The outrage of the Ferrarese: again,  
 That day I sought Verona with the train  
 Agreed for, — by Taurello's policy  
 Convicting Richard of the fault, since we  
 Were present to annul or to confirm, —  
 Richard, whose patience had outstayed its term,  
 Quitted Verona for the siege.

“ And now  
 What glory may engird Sordello's brow  
 Through this? A month since at Oliero slunk  
 All that was Ecelin into a monk;  
 But how could Salinguerra so forget  
 His liege of thirty years as grudge even yet  
 One effort to recover him? He sent  
 Forthwith the tidings of this last event  
 To Ecelin — declared that he, despite  
 The recent folly, recognized his right  
 To order Salinguerra: 'Should he wring  
 Its uttermost advantage out, or fling  
 This chance away? Or were his sons now Head  
 O' the House?' Through me Taurello's missive sped;  
 My father's answer will by me return.  
 Behold! 'For him,' he writes, 'no more concern  
 With strife than, for his children, with fresh plots  
 Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he blots  
 For aye: Taurello shall no more subserve,  
 Nor Ecelin impose.' Lest this unnerve  
 Taurello at this juncture, slack his grip  
 Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip, —  
 I, in his sons' default (who, mating with  
 Este, forsake Romano as the frith  
 Its mainsea for the firmland, sea makes head  
 Against) I stand, Romano, — in their stead  
 Assume the station they desert, and give  
 Still, as the Kaiser's representative,  
 Taurello license he demands. Midnight —  
 Morning — by noon to-morrow, making light

Of the League's issue, we, in some gay weed  
 Like yours, disguised together, may precede  
 The arbitrators to Ferrara: reach  
 Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach  
 The rest! Then say if I have misconceived  
 Your destiny, too readily believed  
 The Kaiser's cause your own!"

And Palma's fled.

Though no affirmative disturbs the head,  
 A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er,  
 Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,  
 Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be  
 Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy,  
 Soul of this body — to wield this aggregate  
 Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate  
 Though he should live — a centre of disgust  
 Even — apart, core of the outward crust  
 He vivifies, assimilates. For thus  
 I bring Sordello to the rapturous  
 Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one round  
 Of life was quite accomplished; and he found  
 Not only that a soul, whate'er its might,  
 Is insufficient to its own delight,  
 Both in corporeal organs and in skill  
 By means of such to body forth its Will —  
 And, after, insufficient to apprise  
 Men of that Will, oblige them recognize  
 The Hid by the Revealed — but that, the last  
 Nor lightest of the struggles overpast,  
 His Will, bade abdicate, which would not void  
 The throne, might sit there, suffer be enjoyed  
 Mankind, a varied and divine array  
 Incapable of homage, the first way,  
 Nor fit to render incidentally  
 Tribute connived at, taken by the by,  
 In joys. If thus with warrant to rescind  
 The ignominious exile of mankind —  
 Whose proper service, ascertained intact  
 As yet, (to be by him themselves made act,  
 Not watch Sordello acting each of them)  
 Was to secure — if the true diadem  
 Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank  
 The wisdom of that golden Palma, — thank  
 Verona's Lady in her citadel  
 Founded by Gaulish Brennus, legends tell:  
 And truly when she left him, the sun reared

A head like the first clamberer's that peered  
 A-top the Capitol, his face on flame  
 With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came.  
 Nor slight too much my rhymes — that spring, dispread,  
 Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead  
 Like an escape of angels! Rather say,  
 My transcendental platan! mounting gay  
 (An archimage so courts a novice-queen)  
 With tremulous silvered trunk, whence branches sheen  
 Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver soon  
 With colored buds, then glowing like the moon  
 One mild flame, — last a pause, a burst, and all  
 Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,  
 Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-dust,  
 Ending the weird work prosecuted just  
 For her amusement; he decrepit, stark,  
 Dozes; her uncontrolled delight may mark  
 Apart —

Yet not so, surely never so!  
 Only, as good my soul were suffered go  
 O'er the lagune: forth fare thee, put aside —  
 Entrance thy synod, as a god may glide  
 Out of the world he fills, and leave it mute  
 For myriad ages as we men compute,  
 Returning into it without a break  
 O' the consciousness! They sleep, and I awake  
 O'er the lagune, being at Venice.

Note,

In just such songs as Eglamor (say) wrote  
 With heart and soul and strength, for he believed  
 Himself achieving all to be achieved  
 By singer — in such songs you find alone  
 Completeness, judge the song and singer one,  
 And either purpose answered, his in it  
 Or its in him: while from true works (to wit  
 Sordello's dream-performances that will  
 Be never more than dreamed) escapes there still  
 Some proof, the singer's proper life was 'neath  
 The life his song exhibits, this a sheath  
 To that; a passion and a knowledge far  
 Transcending these, majestic as they are,  
 Smouldered; his lay was but an episode  
 In the bard's life: which evidence you owed  
 To some slight weariness, some looking-off  
 Or start-away. The childish skit or scoff  
 In "Charlemagne," (his poem, dreamed divine



In every point except one silly line  
 About the restiff daughters) — what may lurk  
 In that? “My life commenced before this work,”  
 (So I interpret the significance  
 Of the bard’s start aside and look askance) —  
 “My life continues after: on I fare  
 With no more stopping, possibly, no care  
 To note the undercurrent, the why and how,  
 Where, when, o’ the deeper life, as thus just now.  
 But, silent, shall I cease to live? Alas  
 For you! who sigh, ‘When shall it come to pass  
 We read that story? How will he compress  
 The future gains, his life’s true business,  
 Into the better lay which — that one flout,  
 Howe’er inopportune it be, lets out —  
 Engrosses him already, though professed  
 To meditate with us eternal rest,  
 And partnership in all his life has found?’ ”  
 ’T is but a sailor’s promise, weather-bound:  
 “Strike sail, slip cable, here the bark be moored  
 For once, the awning stretched, the poles assured!  
 Noontide above; except the wave’s crisp dash,  
 Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise’ splash,  
 The margin’s silent: out with every spoil  
 Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,  
 This serpent of a river to his head  
 I’ the midst! Admire each treasure, as we spread  
 The bank, to help us tell our history  
 Aright: give ear, endeavor to descry  
 The groves of giant rushes, how they grew  
 Like demons’ endlong tresses we sailed through,  
 What mountains yawned, forests to give us vent  
 Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went  
 Till . . . may that beetle (shake your cap) attest  
 The springing of a land-wind from the West!”  
 — Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day!  
 To-morrow, and, the pageant moved away  
 Down to the poorest tent-pole, we and you  
 Part company: no other may pursue  
 Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate  
 Intends, if triumph or decline await  
 The tempter of the everlasting steppe.  
 I muse this on a ruined palace-step  
 At Venice: why should I break off, nor sit  
 Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit  
 England gave birth to? Who’s adorable

Enough reclaim a — no Sordello's Will  
 Alack! — be queen to me? That Bassanese  
 Busied among her smoking fruit-boats? These  
 Perhaps from our delicious Asolo  
 Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico  
 Not prettier, bind June lilies into sheaves  
 To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves  
 Soiled by their own loose gold-meal? Ah, beneath  
 The cool arch stoops she, brownest cheek! Her wreath  
 Endures a month — a half month — if I make  
 A queen of her, continue for her sake  
 Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan girl  
 Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl  
 In the dead black Giudecca proves sea-weed  
 Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed  
 Save one pale-red stripe, pale-blue turbaned post  
 For gondolas.

You sad dishevelled ghost  
 That pluck at me and point, are you advised  
 I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised  
 — Jewels i' the locks that love no crownet like  
 Their native field-buds and the green wheat spike,  
 So fair! — who left this end of June's turmoil,  
 Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,  
 Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free  
 In dream, came join the peasants o'er the sea.)  
 Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess  
 There is such niggard stock of happiness  
 To share, that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch,  
 One labors ineffectually to stretch  
 It o'er you so that mother and children, both  
 May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth!  
 Divide the robe yet farther: be content  
 With seeing just a score pre-eminent  
 Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights,  
 Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights!  
 For, these in evidence, you clearer claim  
 A like garb for the rest, — grace all, the same  
 As these my peasants. I ask youth and strength  
 And health for each of you, not more — at length  
 Grown wise, who asked at home that the whole race  
 Might add the spirit's to the body's grace,  
 And all be dizen'd out as chiefs and bards.  
 But in this magic weather one discards  
 Much old requirement. Venice seems a type  
 Of Life — 'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,

As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt nought and nought :  
 'Tis Venice, and 't is Life — as good you sought  
 To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone  
 Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,  
 As hinder Life the evil with the good  
 Which make up Living, rightly understood.  
 Only, do finish something ! Peasants, queens,  
 Take them, made happy by whatever means,  
 Parade them for the common credit, vouch  
 That a luckless residue, we send to crouch  
 In corners out of sight, was just as framed  
 For happiness, its portion might have claimed  
 As well, and so, obtaining joy, had stalked  
 Fastuous as any ! — such my project, balked  
 Already ; I hardly venture to adjust  
 The first rags, when you find me. To mistrust  
 Me ! — nor unreasonably. You, no doubt,  
 Have the true knack of tiring suitors out  
 With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes  
 Inveterately tear-shot — there, be wise,  
 Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant  
 You insult ! — shall your friend (not slave) be shent  
 For speaking home ? Beside, care-bit erased  
 Broken-up beauties ever took my taste  
 Supremely ; and I love you more, far more  
 Than her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor.  
 Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where  
 A whisper came, " Let others seek ! — thy care  
 Is found, thy life's provision ; if thy race  
 Should be thy mistress, and into one face  
 The many faces crowd ? " Ah, had I, judge,  
 Or no, your secret ? Rough apparel — grudge  
 All ornaments save tag or tassel worn  
 To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn —  
 Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go  
 Alone (that 's saddest, but it must be so)  
 Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside,  
 Aught desultory or undignified, —  
 Then, ravishingest lady, will you pass  
 Or not each formidable group, the mass  
 Before the Basilic (that feast gone by,  
 God's great day of the Corpus Domini)  
 And, wistfully foregoing proper men,  
 Come timid up to me for alms ? And then  
 The luxury to hesitate, feign do  
 Some unexampled grace ! — when, whom but you

Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear  
 Further before you say, it is to sneer  
 I call you ravishing; for I regret  
 Little that she, whose early foot was set  
 Forth as she 'd plant it on a pedestal,  
 Now, i' the silent city, seems to fall  
 Toward me — no wreath, only a lip's unrest  
 To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed  
 Dry of their tears upon my bosom. Strange  
 Such sad chance should produce in thee such change,  
 My love! Warped souls and bodies! yet God spoke  
 Of right-hand, foot and eye — selects our yoke,  
 Sordello, as your poetship may find!  
 So, sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind  
 Their foolish talk; we'll manage reinstate  
 Your old worth; ask moreover, when they prate  
 Of evil men past hope, "Don't each contrive,  
 Despite the evil you abuse, to live? —  
 Keeping, each losel, through a maze of lies,  
 His own conceit of truth? to which he hies  
 By obscure windings, tortuous, if you will,  
 But to himself not inaccessible;  
 He sees truth, and his lies are for the crowd  
 Who cannot see; some fancied right allowed  
 His vilest wrong, empowered the fellow clutch  
 One pleasure from a multitude of such  
 Denied him." Then assert, "All men appear  
 To think all better than themselves, by here  
 Trusting a crowd they wrong; but really," say,  
 "All men think all men stupider than they.  
 Since, save themselves, no other comprehends  
 The complicated scheme to make amends  
 — Evil, the scheme by which, through Ignorance,  
 Good labors to exist." A slight advance, —  
 Merely to find the sickness you die through,  
 And nought beside! but if one can't eschew  
 One's portion in the common lot, at least  
 One can avoid an ignorance increased  
 Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint  
 How nought were like dispensing without stint  
 The water of life — so easy to dispense  
 Beside, when one has probed the centre whence  
 Commotion's born — could tell you of it all!  
 "— Meantime, just meditate my madrigal  
 O' the mugwort that conceals a dewdrop safe!"  
 What, dullard? we and you in smothery chafe,

Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin  
 The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,  
 A hungry sun above us, sands that bung  
 Our throats, — each dromedary lolls a tongue,  
 Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,  
 And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap,  
 And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,  
 — Remark, you wonder any one needs choke  
 With founts about! Potsherd him, Gibeonites!  
 While awkwardly enough your Moses smites  
 The rock, though he forego his Promised Land  
 Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and  
 Figure as Metaphysic Poet . . . ah,  
 Mark ye the dim first oozings? Meribah!  
 Then, quaffing at the fount my courage gained,  
 Recall — not that I prompt ye — who explained . . .  
 “Presumptuous!” interrupts one. You, not I  
 'T is, brother, marvel at and magnify  
 Such office: “office,” quotha? can we get  
 To the beginning of the office yet?  
 What do we here? simply experiment  
 Each on the other's power and its intent  
 When elsewhere tasked, — if this of mine were trucked  
 For yours to either's good, — we watch construct,  
 In short, an engine: with a finished one,  
 What it can do, is all, — nought, how 't is done.  
 But this of ours yet in probation, dusk  
 A kernel of strange wheelwork through its husk  
 Grows into shape by quarters and by halves;  
 Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's  
 Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,  
 Make out each other more or less precise —  
 The scope of the whole engine's to be proved;  
 We die: which means to say, the whole's removed,  
 Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex gin, —  
 To be set up anew elsewhere, begin  
 A task indeed, but with a clearer clime  
 Than the murk lodgment of our building-time.  
 And then, I grant you, it behoves forget  
 How 't is done — all that must amuse us yet  
 So long: and, while you turn upon your heel,  
 Pray that I be not busy slitting steel  
 Or shredding brass, camped on some virgin shore  
 Under a cluster of fresh stars, before  
 I name a tithe o' the wheels I trust to do!  
 So occupied, then, are we: hitherto,

At present, and a weary while to come,  
 The office of ourselves, — nor blind nor dumb,  
 And seeing somewhat of man's state, — has been,  
 For the worst of us, to say they so have seen ;  
 For the better, what it was they saw ; the best  
 Impart the gift of seeing to the rest :

“So that I glance,” says such an one, “around,  
 And there's no face but I can read profound  
 Disclosures in ; this stands for hope, that — fear,  
 And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here !  
 ‘Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts  
 O'erarch, will blind thee ! Said I not ? She shuts  
 Both eyes <sup>at</sup> this time, so close the hazels meet !  
 Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat  
 Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,  
 Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore  
 Thy sweet shape, Zanze ! Therefore stoop !’  
 ‘That's truth !’

(Adjudge you) ‘the incarcerated youth  
 Would say that !’

Youth ? Plara the bard ? Set down  
 That Plara spent his youth in a grim town  
 Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about  
 The minster for protection, never out  
 Of its black belfry's shade and its bells' roar.  
 The brighter shone the suburb, — all the more  
 Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof  
 Of any chance escape of joy, — some roof,  
 Taller than they, allowed the rest detect, —  
 Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect  
 Who could, 't was meant for laughter, that ploughed cheek's  
 Repulsive gleam !) when the sun stopped both peaks  
 Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,  
 Then sunk, a huge flame on its socket edge,  
 With leavings on the gray glass oriel-pane  
 Ghastly some minutes more. No fear of rain —  
 The minster minded that ! in heaps the dust  
 Lay everywhere. This town, the minster's trust,  
 Held Plara ; who, its denizen, bade hail  
 In twice twelve sonnets, Tempe's dewy vale.”

“Exact the town, the minster and the street !”

“As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat :  
 Lust triumphs and is gay, Love's triumphed o'er  
 And sad : but Lucio's sad. I said before,  
 Love's sad, not Lucio ; one who loves may be  
 As gay his love has leave to hope, as he

Downcast that lusts' desire escapes the springe :  
 'T is of the mood itself I speak, what tinge  
 Determines it, else colorless, — or mirth,  
 Or melancholy, as from heaven or earth."  
 "Ay, that's the variation's gist ! ' Indeed ?  
 Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed !  
 And having seen too what I saw, be bold  
 And next encounter what I do behold  
 (That's sure) but bid you take on trust ! "

## Attack

The use and purpose of such sights ? Alack,  
 Not so unwisely does the crowd dispense  
 On Salinguerras praise in preference  
 To the Sordellos : men of action, these !  
 Who, seeing just as little as you please,  
 Yet turn that little to account, — engage  
 With, do not gaze at, — carry on, a stage,  
 The work o' the world, not merely make report  
 The work existed ere their day ! In short,  
 When at some future no-time a brave band  
 Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand  
 In heaven, my brother ! Meanwhile where's the hurt  
 Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert,  
 At whose defection mortals stare aghast  
 As though heaven's bounteous windows were slammed fast  
 Incontinent ? Whereas all you, beneath,  
 Should scowl at, curse them, bruise lips, break their teeth  
 Who ply the pullies, for neglecting you :  
 And therefore have I moulded, made anew  
 A Man, and give him to be turned and tried,  
 Be angry with or pleased at. On your side,  
 Have ye times, places, actors of your own ?  
 Try them upon Sordello when full-grown,  
 And then — ah then ! If Hercules first parched  
 His foot in Egypt only to be marched  
 A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,  
 What chance have I ? The demigod was mute  
 Till, at the altar, where time out of mind  
 Such guests became oblations, chaplets twined  
 His forehead long enough, and he began  
 Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man.  
 Take not affront, my gentle audience ! whom  
 No Hercules shall make his hecatomb,  
 Believe, nor from his brows your chaplet rend —  
 That's your kind suffrage, yours, my patron-friend,  
 Whose great verse blares unintermittent on

Like your own trumpeter at Marathon, —  
 You who, Platæa and Salamis being scant,  
 Put up with Ætna for a stimulant —  
 And did we'll, I acknowledged, as he loomed  
 Over the midland sea last month, presumed  
 Long, lay demolished in the blazing West  
 At eve, while towards him tilting cloudlets pressed  
 Like Persian ships at Salamis. Friend, wear  
 A crest proud as desert while I declare  
 Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring  
 Tears of its color from that painted king  
 Who lost it, I would, for that smile which went  
 To my heart, fling it in the sea, content,  
 Wearing your verse in place, an amulet  
 Sovereign against all passion, wear and fret!  
 My English Eyebright, if you are not glad  
 That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad  
 Dishevelled form, wherein I put mankind  
 To come at times and keep my pact in mind,  
 Renewed me, — hear no crickets in the hedge,  
 Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge  
 At home, and may the summer showers gush  
 Without a warning from the missel thrush!  
 So, to our business, now — the fate of such  
 As find our common nature — overmuch  
 Despised because restricted and unfit  
 To bear the burden they impose on it —  
 Cling when they would discard it; craving strength  
 To leap from the allotted world, at length  
 They do leap, — flounder on without a term,  
 Each a god's germ, doomed to remain a germ  
 In unexpanded infancy, unless . . .  
 But that's the story — dull enough, confess!  
 There might be fitter subjects to allure;  
 Still, neither misconceive my portraiture  
 Nor undervalue its adornments quaint:  
 What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint.  
 Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,  
 Then say if you condemn me or acquit.  
 John the Beloved, banished Antioch  
 For Patmos, bade collectively his flock  
 Farewell, but set apart the closing eve  
 To comfort those his exile most would grieve,  
 He knew: a touching spectacle, that house  
 In motion to receive him! Xanthus' spouse



You missed, made panther's meat a month since ; but  
 Xanthus himself (his nephew 't was, they shut  
 'Twixt boards and sawed asunder), Polycarp,  
 Soft Charicle, next year no wheel could warp  
 To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the rest  
 Were ranged ; through whom the gray disciple pressed,  
 Busily blessing right and left, just stopped  
 To pat one infant's curls, the hangman cropped  
 Soon after, reached the portal. On its hinge  
 The door turns and he enters : what quick twinge  
 Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix  
 Whereon, why like some spectral candlestick's  
 Branch the disciple's arms ? Dead swooned he, woke  
 Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp, heart-broke,  
 " Get thee behind me, Satan ! Have I toiled  
 To no more purpose ? Is the gospel foiled  
 Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus' hearth,  
 Portrayed with sooty garb and features swarth —  
 Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled  
 To see the — the — the Devil domiciled ? "  
 Whereto sobbed Xanthus, " Father, 't is yourself  
 Installed, a limning which our utmost pelf  
 Went to procure against to-morrow's loss ;  
 And that 's no twy-prong, but a pastoral cross,  
 You 're painted with ! "

His puckered brows unfold —  
 And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

#### BOOK THE FOURTH.

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case ;  
 The lady-city, for whose sole embrace  
 Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms  
 A brawny mischief to the fragile charms  
 They tugged for — one discovering that to twist  
 Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist  
 Secured a point of vantage — one, how best  
 He 'd parry that by planting in her breast  
 His elbow spike — each party too intent  
 For noticing, howe'er the battle went,  
 The conqueror would but have a corpse to kiss.  
 " May Boniface be duly damned for this ! "  
 — Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned,

From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned  
 His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth :  
 " A boon, sweet Christ — let Salinguerra seethe  
 In hell forever, Christ, and let myself  
 Be there to laugh at him ! " — moaned some young Guelf  
 Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast  
 To the charred lintel of the doorway, last  
 His father stood within to bid him speed.  
 The thoroughfares were overrun with weed  
 — Docks, quitchgrass, loathy mallows no man plants.  
 The stranger, none of its inhabitants  
 Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again,  
 And ask the purpose of a splendid train  
 Admitted on a morning ; every town  
 Of the East League was come by envoy down  
 To treat for Richard's ransom : here you saw  
 The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw  
 The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross  
 On its white field. A-tiptoe o'er the fosse  
 Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully  
 After the flock of steeples he might spy  
 In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago  
 To mend the ramparts : sure the laggards know  
 The Pope 's as good as here ! They paced the streets  
 More soberly. At last, " Taurello greets  
 The League," announced a pursuivant, — " will match  
 Its courtesy, and labors to dispatch  
 At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent  
 On pressing matters from his post at Trent,  
 With Mainard Count of Tyrol, — simply waits  
 Their going to receive the delegates."  
 " Tito ! " Our delegates exchanged a glance,  
 And, keeping the main way, admired askance  
 The lazy engines of outlandish birth,  
 Couched like a king each on its bank of earth —  
 Arbalist, manganel and catapult ;  
 While stationed by, as waiting a result,  
 Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased  
 Working to watch the strangers. " This, at least,  
 Were better spared ; he scarce presumes gainsay  
 The League's decision ! Get our friend away  
 And profit for the future : how else teach  
 Fools 't is not safe to stray within claw's reach  
 Ere Salinguerra's final gasp be blown ?  
 Those mere convulsive scratches find the bone.  
 Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's nare ? "

The carrochs halted in the public square.  
 Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,  
 Men prattled, freelier that the crested gaunt  
 White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak  
 Was missing, and whoever chose might speak  
 "Ecelin" boldly out: so, — "Ecelin  
 Needed his wife to swallow half the sin  
 And sickens by himself: the devil's whelp,  
 He styles his son, dwindles away, no help  
 From conserves, your fine triple-curdled froth  
 Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-broth —  
 Eh? Jubilate!" — "Peace! no little word  
 You utter here that 's not distinctly heard  
 Up at Oliero: he was absent sick  
 When we besieged Bassano — who, i' the thick  
 O' the work, perceived the progress Azzo made,  
 Like Ecelin, through his witch Adelaide?  
 She managed it so well that, night by night,  
 At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite,  
 First fresh, pale by-and-by without a wound,  
 And, when it came with eyes filmed as in swound,  
 They knew the place was taken." — "Ominous  
 That Ghibellins should get what cautious  
 Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench  
 Vainly; Saint George contrived his town a trench  
 O' the marshes, an impermeable bar."  
 " — Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar  
 Of Padua, rather; veins embrace upon  
 His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion."  
 What now? — "The founts! God's bread, touch not a plank!  
 A crawling hell of carrion — every tank  
 Choke full! — found out just now to Cino's cost —  
 The same who gave Taurello up for lost,  
 And, making no account of fortune's freaks,  
 Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks  
 Back now with Concorezzi — 'faith! they drag  
 Their carroch to San Vitale, plant the flag  
 On his own palace, so adroitly razed  
 He knew it not; a sort of Guelf folk gazed  
 And laughed apart; Cino disliked their air —  
 Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care —  
 Seats himself on the tank's edge — will begin  
 To hum, *za, za, Cavalier Ecelin* —  
 A silence; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,  
 Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each time,  
 At last, *za, zu*, and up with a fierce kick

Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick  
Gray hair about his spur ! ”

Which means, they lift

The covering, Salinguerra made a shift  
To stretch upon the truth ; as well avoid  
Further disclosures ; leave them thus employed.  
Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,  
And poor Ferrara puts a softened face  
On her misfortunes. Let us scale this tall  
Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall  
Bastioned within by trees of every sort  
On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short ;  
Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,  
The fig-tree reared itself, — but stark and cramped,  
Made fools of, like tamed lions : whence, on the edge,  
Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge  
Of shade, were shrubs inserted, warp and woof,  
Which smothered up that variance. Scale the roof  
Of solid tops, and o'er the slope you slide  
Down to a grassy space level and wide,  
Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees  
Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,  
Set by itself : and in the centre spreads,  
Borne upon three uneasy leopards' heads,  
A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt  
Of water bubbles in. The walls begirt  
With trees leave off on either hand ; pursue  
Your path along a wondrous avenue  
Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone,  
With aloes leering everywhere, gray-grown  
From many a Moorish summer : how they wind  
Out of the fissures ! likelier to bind  
The building than those rusted cramps which drop  
Already in the eating sunshine. Stop,  
You fleeting shapes above there ! Ah, the pride  
Or else despair of the whole country-side !  
A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps,  
God, goddess, woman, man, the Greek rough-rasps  
In crumbling Naples marble — meant to look  
Like those Messina marbles Constance took  
Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed  
To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide,  
A certain font with caryatides  
Since cloistered at Goito ; only, these  
Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop  
Able to right themselves — who see you, stoop

O' the instant after you their arms! Unplucked  
 By this or that, you pass; for they conduct  
 To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,  
 Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien  
 Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle  
 No doubt. Here, left a sullen breathing-while,  
 Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood  
 For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood  
 Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath  
 Those shading fingers in their iron sheath,  
 Steadied his strengths amid the buzz and stir  
 Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre  
 At the announcement of his over-match  
 To wind the day's diversion up, dispatch  
 The pertinacious Gaul: while, limbs one heap,  
 The Slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched leap  
 Dart after dart forth, as her hero's car  
 Clove dizzily the solid of the war  
 — Let coil about his knees for pride in him.  
 We reach the farthest terrace, and the grim  
 San Pietro Palace stops us.

Such the state

Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate  
 Sicilian marvels, that his girlish wife  
 Retrude still might lead her ancient life  
 In her new home: whereat enlarged so much  
 Neighbors upon the novel princely touch  
 He took, — who here imprisons Boniface.  
 Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace;  
 And here, emerging from the labyrinth  
 Below, Sordello paused beside the plinth  
 Of the door-pillar.

He had really left

Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft  
 From the morass) where Este's camp was made.  
 The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade —  
 All had been seen by him, but scarce as when, —  
 Eager for cause to stand aloof from men  
 At every point save the fantastic tie  
 Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry, —  
 He made account of such. A crowd, — he meant  
 To task the whole of it; each part's intent  
 Concerned him therefore: and, the more he pried,  
 The less became Sordello satisfied  
 With his own figure at the moment. Sought  
 He respite from his task? Descried he aught

Novel in the anticipated sight  
 Of all these livers upon all delight ?  
 This phalanx, as of myriad points combined,  
 Whereby he still had imaged the mankind  
 His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,  
 His age — in plans to prove at least such thing  
 Had been so dreamed, — which now he must impress  
 With his own will, effect a happiness  
 By theirs, — supply a body to his soul  
 Thence, and become eventually whole  
 With them as he had hoped to be without —  
 Made these the mankind he once raved about ?  
 Because a few of them were notable,  
 Should all be figured worthy note ? As well  
 Expect to find Taurello's triple line  
 Of trees a single and prodigious pine.  
 Real pines rose here and there ; but, close among,  
 Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a throng  
 Of shrubs, he saw, — a nameless common sort  
 O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report  
 And hurried into corners, or at best  
 Admitted to be fancied like the rest.  
 Reckon that morning's proper chiefs — how few !  
 And yet the people grew, the people grew,  
 Grew ever, as if the many there indeed,  
 More left behind and most who should succeed, —  
 Simply in virtue of their mouths and eyes,  
 Petty enjoyments and huge miseries, —  
 Mingled with, and made veritably great  
 Those chiefs : he overlooked not Mainard's state  
 Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead  
 Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head  
 Of infinite and absent Tyrolese  
 Or Paduans ; startling all the more, that these  
 Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for,  
 Yet doubtless on the whole (like Eglamor)  
 Smiling ; for if a wealthy man decays  
 And out of store of robes must wear, all days,  
 One tattered suit, alike in sun and shade,  
 'T is commonly some tarnished gay brocade  
 Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more :  
 Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store  
 Of looks is fain upgather, keep unfurled  
 For common wear as she goes through the world,  
 The faint remainder of some worn-out smile  
 Meant for a feast-night's service merely. While

Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus, —  
 (Crowds no way interfering to discuss,  
 Much less dispute, life's joys with one employed  
 In envying them, — or, if they aught enjoyed,  
 Where lingered something indefinable  
 In every look and tone, the mirth as well  
 As woe, that fixed at once his estimate  
 Of the result, their good or bad estate) —  
 Old memories returned with new effect :  
 And the new body, ere he could suspect,  
 Cohered, mankind and he were really fused,  
 The new self seemed impatient to be used  
 By him, but utterly another way  
 Than that anticipated : strange to say,  
 They were too much below him, more in thrall  
 Than he, the adjunct than the principal.  
 What bootied scattered units ? — here a mind  
 And there, which might repay his own to find,  
 And stamp, and use ? — a few, how'er august,  
 If all the rest were grovelling in the dust ?  
 No : first a mighty equilibrium, sure,  
 Should he establish, privilege procure  
 For all, the few had long possessed ! He felt  
 An error, an exceeding error melt —  
 While he was occupied with Mantuan chants,  
 Behoved him think of men, and take their wants,  
 Such as he now distinguished every side,  
 As his own want which might be satisfied, —  
 And, after that, think of rare qualities  
 Of his own soul demanding exercise.  
 It followed naturally, through no claim  
 On their part, which made virtue of the aim  
 At serving them, on his, — that, past retrieve,  
 He felt now in their toils, theirs, — nor could leave  
 Wonder how, in the eagerness to rule,  
 Impress his will on mankind, he (the fool !)  
 Had never even entertained the thought  
 That this his last arrangement might be fraught  
 With incidental good to them as well,  
 And that mankind's delight would help to swell  
 His own. So, if he sighed, as formerly  
 Because the merry time of life must fleet,  
 'T was deeper now, — for could the crowds repeat  
 Their poor experiences ? His hand that shook  
 Was twice to be deplored. “The Legate, look !  
 With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs on a thread,

Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head,  
 Large tongue, moist open mouth ; and this long while  
 That owner of the idiotic smile  
 Serves them ! ”

He fortunately saw in time  
 His fault however, and since the office prime  
 Includes the secondary — best accept  
 Both offices : Taurello, its adept,  
 Could teach him the preparatory one,  
 And how to do what he had fancied done  
 Long previously, ere take the greater task.  
 How render first these people happy ? Ask  
 The people's friends : for there must be one good,  
 One way to it — the Cause ! — he understood  
 The meaning now of Palma ; why the jar  
 Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far  
 Of Guefs and Ghibellins, the Lombard's hope  
 And Rome's despair ? — 'twixt Emperor and Pope  
 The confused shifting sort of Eden tale —  
 Still hardihood recurring, still to fail —  
 That foreign interloping fiend, this free  
 And native overbrooding deity —  
 Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms  
 The Kaiser ruined, troubling even the calms  
 Of paradise — or, on the other hand,  
 The Pontiff, as the Kaisers understand,  
 One snake-like cursed of God to love the ground,  
 Whose heavy length breaks in the noon profound  
 Some saving tree — which needs the Kaiser, dressed  
 As the dislodging angel of that pest,  
 Then — yet that pest bedropped, flat head, full fold,  
 With coruscating dower of dyes. “ Behold  
 The secret, so to speak, and master-spring  
 O' the contest ! — which of the two Powers shall bring  
 Men good — perchance the most good — ay, it may  
 Be that ! — the question, which best knows the way.”

And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past  
 Out of San Pietro ; never seemed the last  
 Of archers, slingers : and our friend began  
 To recollect strange modes of serving man,  
 Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,  
 And more. “ This way of theirs may, — who can tell ?  
 Need perfecting,” said he : “ let all be solved  
 At once ! Taurello 't is, the task devolved  
 On late — confront Taurello ! ”

And at last



He did confront him. Scarcely an hour past  
 When forth Sordello came, older by years  
 Than at his entry. Unexampled fears  
 Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute  
 And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,  
 Into Ferrara — not the empty town  
 That morning witnessed : he went up and down  
 Streets whence the veil had been stripped shred by shred,  
 So that, in place of huddling with their dead  
 Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,  
 Its folk made shift to crawl forth, sit like friends  
 With any one. A woman gave him choice  
 Of her two daughters, the infantile voice  
 Or the dimpled knee, for half a chain, his throat  
 Was clasped with ; but an archer knew the coat —  
 Its blue cross and eight lilies, — bade beware  
 One dogging him in concert with the pair  
 Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his knife.  
 Night set in early, autumn dews were rife,  
 They kindled great fires while the Leaguers' mass  
 Began at every carroch — he must pass  
 Between the kneeling people. Presently  
 The carroch of Verona caught his eye  
 With purple trappings ; silently he bent  
 Over its fire, when voices violent  
 Began, " Affirm not whom the youth was like  
 That, striking from the porch, I did not strike  
 Again : I too have chestnut hair ; my kin  
 Hate Azzo and stand up for Eeclin.  
 Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away ! Sing ! Take  
 My glove for guerdon ! " And for that man's sake  
 He turned : " A song of Eglamor's ! " — scarce named,  
 When, " Our Sordello's rather ! " — all exclaimed ;  
 " Is not Sordello famousest for rhyme ? "  
 He had been happy to deny, this time, —  
 Profess as heretofore the aching head  
 And failing heart, — suspect that in his stead  
 Some true Apollo had the charge of them,  
 Was champion to reward or to condemn,  
 So his intolerable risk might shift  
 Or share itself ; but Naddo's precious gift  
 Of gifts, he owned, be certain ! At the close —  
 " I made that," said he to a youth who rose  
 As if to hear : 't was Palma through the band  
 Conducted him in silence by her hand.  
 Back now for Salinguerra. 'Tito of Trent

Gave place to Palma and her friend ; who went  
 In turn at Montelungo's visit — one  
 After the other were they come and gone, —  
 These spokesmen for the Kaiser and the Pope,  
 This incarnation of the People's hope,  
 Sordello, — all the say of each was said  
 And Salinguerra sat, himself instead  
 Of these to talk with, lingered musing yet.  
 'T was a drear vast presence-chamber roughly set  
 In order for the morning's use ; full face,  
 The Kaiser's ominous sign-mark had first place,  
 The crowned grim twy-necked eagle, coarsely-blacked  
 With ochre on the naked wall ; nor lacked  
 Romano's green and yellow either side ;  
 But the new token Tito brought had tried  
 The Legate's patience — nay, if Palma knew  
 What Salinguerra almost meant to do  
 Until the sight of her restored his lip  
 A certain half-smile, three months' chieftainship  
 Had banished ! Afterward, the Legate found  
 No change in him, nor asked what badge he wound  
 And unwound carelessly. Now sat the Chief  
 Silent as when our couple left, whose brief  
 Encounter wrought so opportune effect  
 In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject.  
 Though time 't was now if ever, to pause — fix  
 On any sort of ending : wiles and tricks  
 Exhausted, judge ! his charge, the crazy town,  
 Just managed to be hindered crashing down —  
 His last sound troops ranged — care observed to post  
 His best of the maimed soldiers innermost —  
 So much was plain enough, but somehow struck  
 Him not before. And now with this strange luck  
 Of Tito's news, rewarding his address  
 So well, what thought he of ? — how the success  
 With Friedrich's rescript there, would either hush  
 Old Ecelin's scruples, bring the manly flush  
 To his young son's white cheek, or, last, exempt  
 Himself from telling what there was to tempt ?  
 No : that this minstrel was Romano's last  
 Servant — himself the first ! Could he contrast  
 The whole ! — that minstrel's thirty years just spent  
 In doing nought, their notablest event  
 This morning's journey hither, as I told —  
 Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,  
 A stammering awkward man that scarce dared raise

His eye before the magisterial gaze —  
 And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes  
 Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,  
 Cares and contrivances, yet, you would say,  
 'T was a youth nonchalantly looked away  
 Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick  
 Expostulating trees — so agile, quick  
 And graceful turned the head on the broad chest  
 Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest,  
 Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire  
 Across the room ; and, loosened of its tire  
 Of steel, that head let breathe the comely brown  
 Large massive locks discolored as if a crown  
 Encircled them, so frayed the basnet where  
 A sharp white line divided clean the hair ;  
 Glossy above, glossy below, it swept  
 Curling and fine about a brow thus kept  
 Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound :  
 This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,  
 Mused of, turned over books about. Square-faced,  
 No lion more ; two vivid eyes, enchased  
 In hollows filled with many a shade and streak  
 Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek.  
 Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed  
 A lip supremely perfect else — unwarmed,  
 Unwidened, less or more ; indifferent  
 Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent,  
 Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train  
 As now a period was fulfilled again :  
 Of such, a series made his life, compressed  
 In each, one story serving for the rest —  
 How his life-streams rolling arrived at last  
 At the barrier, whence, were it once overpast,  
 They would emerge, a river to the end, —  
 Gathered themselves up, paused, bade fate befriend,  
 Took the leap, hung a minute at the height,  
 Then fell back to oblivion infinite :  
 Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched garden-grounds  
 Where late the adversary, breaking bounds,  
 Had gained him an occasion, That above,  
 That eagle, testified he could improve  
 Effectually. The Kaiser's symbol lay  
 Beside his rescript, a new badge by way  
 Of baldric ; while, — another thing that marred  
 Alike emprise, achievement and reward, —  
 Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.

What past life did those flying thoughts pursue?  
 As his, few names in Mantua half so old;  
 But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled  
 It latterly, the Adelardi spared  
 No pains to rival them: both factions shared  
 Ferrara, so that, counted out, 't would yield  
 A product very like the city's shield,  
 Half black and white, or Ghibellin and Guelf  
 As after Salinguerra styled himself,  
 And Este who, till Marchesalla died,  
 (Last of the Adelardi) — never tried  
 His fortune there: with Marchesalla's child  
 Would pass, — could Blacks and Whites be reconciled,  
 And young Taurello wed Linguetta, — wealth  
 And sway to a sole grasp. Each treats by stealth  
 Already: when the Guelfs, the Ravennese  
 Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize  
 Linguetta, and are gone! Men's first dismay  
 Abated somewhat, hurries down, to lay  
 The after indignation, Boniface,  
 This Richard's father. "Learn the full disgrace  
 Averted, ere you blame us Guelfs, who rate  
 Your Salinguerra, your sole potentate  
 That might have been, 'mongst Este's valvassors —  
 Ay, Azzo's — who, not privy to, abhors  
 Our step; but we were zealous." Azzo's then  
 To do with! Straight a meeting of old men:  
 "Old Salinguerra dead, his heir a boy,  
 What if we change our ruler and decoy  
 The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere  
 With Italy to build in, fix him here,  
 Settle the city's troubles in a trice?  
 For private wrong, let public good suffice!"  
 In fine, young Salinguerra's stanchest friends  
 Talked of the townsmen making him amends,  
 Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was  
 Rare sport, one morning, over the green grass  
 A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain,  
 Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again  
 In time for Azzo's entry with the bride;  
 Count Boniface rode smirking at their side;  
 "She brings him half Ferrara," whispers flew,  
 "And all Ancona! If the stripling knew!"  
 Anon the stripling was in Sicily  
 Where Heinrich ruled in right of Constance; he  
 Was gracious nor his guest incapable;

Each understood the other. So it fell,  
One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at ease,  
Had near forgotten by what precise degrees  
He crept at first to such a downy seat,  
That Count trudged over in a special heat  
To bid him of God's love dislodge from each  
Of Salinguerra's palaces, — a breach  
Might yawn else, not so readily to shut,  
For who was just arrived at Mantua but  
The youngster, sword on thigh and tuft on chin,  
With tokens for Celano, Ecelin,  
Pistore, and the like! Next news, — no whit  
Do any of Ferrara's domes besit  
His wife of Heinrich's very blood : a band  
Of foreigners assemble, understand  
Garden-constructing, level and surround,  
Build up and bury in. A last news crowned  
The consternation : since his infant's birth,  
He only waits they end his wondrous girth  
Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà,  
To visit Mantua. When the Podestà  
Ecelin, at Vicenza, called his friend  
Taurello thither, what could be their end  
But to restore the Ghibellins' late Head,  
The Kaiser helping? He with most to dread  
From vengeance and reprisal, Azzo, there  
With Boniface beforehand, as aware  
Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled  
Both plotters : but the Guelfs in triumph yelled  
Too hastily. The burning and the flight,  
And how Taurello, occupied that night  
With Ecelin, lost wife and son, I told :  
— Not how he bore the blow, retained his hold,  
Got friends safe through, left enemies the worst  
O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at first —  
But afterward men heard not constantly  
Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be !  
Though Azzo simply gained by the event  
A shifting of his plagues — the first, content  
To fall behind the second and estrange  
So far his nature, suffer such a change  
That in Romano sought he wife and child  
And for Romano's sake seemed reconciled  
To losing individual life, which shrunk  
As the other prospered — mortised in his trunk ;  
Like a dwarf palm which wanton Arabs foil

Of bearing its own proper wine and oil,  
 By grafting into it the stranger-vine,  
 Which sucks its heart out, sly and serpentine,  
 Till forth one vine-palm feathers to the root,  
 And red drops moisten the insipid fruit.  
 Once Adelaide set on, — the subtle mate  
 Of the weak soldier, urged to emulate  
 The Church's valiant women deed for deed,  
 And paragon her namesake, win the meed  
 O' the great Matilda, — soon they overbore  
 The rest of Lombardy, — not as before  
 By an instinctive truculence, but patched  
 The Kaiser's strategy until it matched  
 The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel means.  
 "Only, why is it Salinguerra screens  
 Himself behind Romano? — him we bade  
 Enjoy our shine i' the front, not seek the shade!"  
 — Asked Heinrich, somewhat of the tardiest  
 To comprehend. Nor Philip acquiesced  
 At once in the arrangement; reasoned, plied  
 His friend with offers of another bride,  
 A statelier function — fruitlessly: 't was plain  
 Taurello through some weakness must remain  
 Obscure. And Otho, free to judge of both,  
 — Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth,  
 And this more plausible and facile wight  
 With every point a-sparkle — chose the right,  
 Admiring how his predecessors harped  
 On the wrong man: "thus," quoth he, "wits are warped  
 By outsides!" Carelessly, meanwhile, his life  
 Suffered its many turns of peace and strife  
 In many lands — you hardly could surprise  
 The man; who shamed Sordello (recognize!)  
 In this as much beside, that, unconcerned  
 What qualities were natural or earned,  
 With no ideal of graces, as they came  
 He took them, singularly well the same —  
 Speaking the Greek's own language, just because  
 Your Greek eludes you, leave the least of flaws  
 In contracts with him; while, since Arab lore  
 Holds the stars' secret — take one trouble more  
 And master it! 'T is done, and now deter  
 Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined for her,  
 From Friedrich's path! — Friedrich, whose pilgrimage  
 The same man puts aside, whom he'll engage  
 To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch,

Come to Bassano, see Saint Francis' church  
 And judge of Guido the Bolognian's piece  
 Which, lend Taurello credit, rivals Greece —  
 Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits  
 Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's exploits.  
 For elegance, he strung the angelot,  
 Made rhymes thereto; for prowess, clove he not  
 Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper? Why  
 Detail you thus a varied mastery  
 But to show how Taurello, on the watch  
 For men, to read their hearts and thereby catch  
 Their capabilities and purposes,  
 Displayed himself so far as displayed these :  
 While our Sordello only cared to know  
 About men as a means whereby he 'd show  
 Himself, and men had much or little worth  
 According as they kept in or drew forth  
 That self; the other's choicest instruments  
 Surmised him shallow.

Meantime, malcontents

Dropped off, town after town grew wiser. "How  
 Change the world's face?" asked people; "as 't is now  
 It has been, will be ever: very fine  
 Subjecting things profane to things divine,  
 In talk! This contumacy will fatigue  
 The vigilance of Este and the League!  
 The Ghibellins gain on us!" — as it happened.  
 Old Azzo and old Boniface, entrapped  
 By Ponte Alto, both in one month's space  
 Slept at Verona: either left a brace  
 Of sons — but, three years after, either's pair  
 Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir:  
 Azzo remained and Richard — all the stay  
 Of Este and Saint Boniface, at bay  
 As 't were. Then, either Ecelin grew old  
 Or his brain altered — not o' the proper mould  
 For new appliances — his old palm-stock  
 Endured no influx of strange strengths. He 'd rock  
 As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low  
 As proud of the completeness of his woe,  
 Then weep real tears; — now make some mad onslaught  
 On Este, heedless of the lesson taught  
 So painfully, — now cringe for peace, sue peace  
 At price of past gain, bar of fresh increase  
 To the fortunes of Romano. Up at last  
 Rose Este, down Romano sank as fast.

And men remarked these freaks of peace and war  
 Happened while Salinguerra was afar :  
 Whence every friend besought him, all in vain,  
 To use his old adherent's wits again.  
 Not he ! — “ who had advisers in his sons,  
 Could plot himself, nor needed any one's  
 Advice.” ’T was Adelaide's remaining stanch  
 Prevented his destruction root and branch  
 Forthwith ; but when she died, doom fell, for gay  
 He made alliances, gave lands away  
 To whom it pleased accept them, and withdrew  
 Forever from the world. Taurello, who  
 Was summoned to the convent, then refused  
 A word at the wicket, patience thus abused,  
 Promptly threw off alike his imbecile  
 Ally's yoke, and his own frank, foolish smile.  
 Soon a few movements of the happier sort  
 Changed matters, put himself in men's report  
 As heretofore ; he had to fight, beside,  
 And that became him ever. So, in pride  
 And flushing of this kind of second youth,  
 He dealt a good-will blow. Este in truth  
 Lay prone — and men remembered, somewhat late,  
 A laughing old outrageous stifled hate  
 He bore to Este — how it would outbreak  
 At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake  
 In sunny weather — as that noted day  
 When with his hundred friends he tried to slay  
 Azzo before the Kaiser's face : and how,  
 On Azzo's calm refusal to allow  
 A liegeman's challenge, straight he too was calmed :  
 As if his hate could bear to lie embalmed,  
 Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, and survive  
 All intermediate crumbings, to arrive  
 At earth's catastrophe — 't was Este's crash  
 Not Azzo's he demanded, so, no rash  
 Procedure ! Este's true antagonist  
 Rose out of Ecelin : all voices whist,  
 All eyes were sharpened, wits predicted. He  
 'T was, leaned in the embrasure absently,  
 Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace  
 With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face  
 I' the dust : but as the trees waved sere, his smile  
 Deepened, and words expressed its thought erewhile.  
 “ Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer ?  
 That we should stick together, all the year



I kept Vicenza! — How old Boniface,  
 Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,  
 He by that pillar, I at this, — caught each  
 In mid swing, more than fury of his speech,  
 Egging the rabble on to disavow  
 Allegiance to their Marquis — Bacchus, how  
 They boasted! Ecelin must turn their drudge,  
 Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge  
 Paying arrears of tribute due long since —  
 Bacchus! My man could promise then, nor wince,  
 The bones-and-muscles! Sound of wind and limb,  
 Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him:  
 And now he sits me, slavering and mute,  
 Intent on chafing each starved purple foot  
 Benumbed past aching with the altar slab —  
 Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab  
 Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps,  
 ‘Friedrich’s affirmed to be our side the Alps’  
 — Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet?  
 Sworn to abjure the world, its fume and fret,  
 God’s own now? Drop the dormitory bar,  
 Enfold the scanty gray serge scapular  
 Twice o’er the cowl to muffle memories out!  
 So! But the midnight whisper turns a shout,  
 Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate  
 In the stone walls: the past, the world you hate  
 Is with you, ambush, open field — or see  
 The surging flame — we fire Vicenza — glee!  
 Follow, let Pilio and Bernardo chafe!  
 Bring up the Mantuans — through San Biagio — safe!  
 Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they writhe  
 And reach us? If they block the gate? No tithe  
 Can pass — keep back, you Bassanese! The edge,  
 Use the edge — shear, thrust, hew, melt down the wedge,  
 Let out the black of those black upturned eyes!  
 Hell — are they sprinkling fire too? The blood fries  
 And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear  
 Those upturned faces choking with despair.  
 Brave! Slidder through the reeking gate! ‘How now?  
 You six had charge of her?’ And then the vow  
 Comes, and the foam spirts, hair’s plucked, till one shriek  
 (I hear it) and you fling — you cannot speak —  
 Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who haled  
 The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled  
 This morn, naked across the fire: how crown  
 The archer that exhausted lays you down

Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies?  
While one, while mine . . .

Bacchus! I think there lies  
More than one corpse there" (and he paced the room)  
"— Another cinder somewhere: 'twas my doom  
Beside, my doom! If Adelaide is dead,  
I live the same, this Azzo lives instead  
Of that to me, and we pull, any how,  
Este into a heap: the matter's now  
At the true juncture slipping us so oft.  
Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed  
His crown at such a juncture! Still, if hold  
Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain enfold  
The neck of . . . who but this same Ecelin  
That must recoil when the best days begin!  
Recoil? that's nought; if the recoiler leaves  
His name for me to fight with, no one grieves:  
But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock  
His cloister to become my stumbling-block  
Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 't is again —  
The land's inevitable Head — explain  
The reverences that subject us! Count  
These Ecelins now! Not to say as fount,  
Originating power of thought, — from twelve  
That drop i' the trenches they joined hands to delve,  
Six shall surpass him, but . . . why, men must twine  
Somehow with something! Ecelin's a fine  
Clear name! 'T were simpler, doubtless, twine with me  
At once: our cloistered friend's capacity  
Was of a sort! I had to share myself  
In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf  
That's forced illume in fifty points the vast  
Rare vapor he's environed by. At last  
My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en converge  
And crown . . . no, Bacchus, they have yet to urge  
The man be crowned!

That aloe, an he durst,  
Would climb! Just such a bloated sprawler first  
I noted in Messina's castle-court  
The day I came, when Heinrich asked in sport  
If I would pledge my faith to win him back  
His right in Lombardy: 'for, once bid pack  
Marauders,' he continued, 'in my stead  
You rule, Taurello!' and upon this head  
Laid the silk glove of Constance — I see her

Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,  
Retrude following!

I am absolved  
From further toil : the empery devolved  
On me, 't was 'Tito's word : I have to lay  
For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,  
Prompt nobody, and render an account  
Taurello to 'Taurello! Nay, I mount  
To Friedrich : he conceives the post I kept,  
— Who did true service, able or inept,  
Who 's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I.  
Me guerdoned, counsel follows : would he vie  
With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface  
Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race  
Must break ere govern Lombardy. I point  
How easy 't were to twist, once out of joint,  
The socket from the bone : my Azzo's stare  
Meanwhile! for I, this idle strap to wear,  
Shall — fret myself abundantly, what end  
To serve? There 's left me twenty years to spend  
— How better than my old way? Had I one  
Who labored overthrow my work — a son  
Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,  
To root my pines up and then poison me,  
Suppose — 't were worth while frustrate that! Beside,  
Another life 's ordained me : the world's tide  
Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press  
Of waves, a single wave through weariness  
Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore?  
My life must be lived out in foam and roar,  
No question. Fifty years the province held  
Taurello ; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,  
He in the midst — who leaves this quaint stone place,  
These trees a year or two, then not a trace  
Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues  
Like this poor minstrel with the foolish songs —  
To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?  
— Flowers one may tease, that never grow extinct.  
Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where  
I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair,  
To overawe the aloes ; and we trod  
Those flowers, how call you such? — into the sod ;  
A stately foreigner — a world of pain  
To make it thrive, arrest rough winds — all vain!  
It would decline ; these would not be destroyed :

And now, where is it? where can you avoid  
 The flowers? I frighten children twenty years  
 Longer! — which way, too, Ecelin appears  
 To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth  
 Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth:  
 They feel it at Vicenza! Fate, fate, fate,  
 My fine Taurello! Go you, promulgate  
 Friedrich's decree, and here's shall aggrandize  
 Young Ecelin — your Prefect's badge! a prize  
 Too precious, certainly.

How now? Compete  
 With my old comrade? shuffle from their seat  
 His children? Paltry dealing! Don't I know  
 Ecelin? now, I think, and years ago!  
 What's changed — the weakness? did not I compound  
 For that, and undertake to keep him sound  
 Despite it? Here's Taurello hankering  
 After a boy's preferment — this plaything  
 To carry, Bacchus!" And he laughed.

Remark

Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark  
 Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort  
 Fail: while these last are ever stopping short —  
 (So much they should — so little they can do!)  
 The careless tribe see nothing to pursue  
 If they desist; meantime their scheme succeeds.

Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds  
 Methodic with Taurello; so, he turned,  
 Enough amused by fancies fairly earned  
 Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,  
 And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck,  
 To his own petty but immediate doubt  
 If he could pacify the League without  
 Conceding Richard; just to this was brought  
 That interval of vain discursive thought!  
 As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit  
 Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot  
 Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black  
 Enormous watercourse which guides him back  
 To his own tribe again, where he is king;  
 And laughs because he guesses, numbering  
 The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch  
 Of the first lizard wrested from its couch  
 Under the slime (whose skin, the while he strips  
 To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,  
 And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert-blast)

That he has reached its boundary, at last  
 May breathe ; — thinks o'er enchantments of the South  
 Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth,  
 Eyes, nails, and hair ; but, these enchantments tried  
 In fancy, puts them soberly aside  
 For truth, projects a cool return with friends,  
 The likelihood of winning mere amends  
 Ere long ; thinks that, takes comfort silently,  
 Then, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he,  
 Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon  
 Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon.

Midnight : the watcher nodded on his spear,  
 Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear  
 For any meagre and discolored moon  
 To venture forth ; and such was peering soon  
 Above the harassed city — her close lanes  
 Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,  
 As though she shrunk into herself to keep  
 What little life was saved, more safely. Heap  
 By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside  
 The blackest spoke Sordello and replied  
 Palma with none to listen. “ T is your cause :  
 What makes a Ghibellin ? There should be laws —  
 (Remember how my youth escaped ! I trust  
 To you for manhood, Palma ? tell me just  
 As any child) — there must be laws at work  
 Explaining this. Assure me, good may lurk  
 Under the bad, — my multitude has part  
 In your designs, their welfare is at heart  
 With Salinguerra, to their interest  
 Refer the deeds he dwelt on, — so divest  
 Our conference of much that scared me. Why  
 Affect that heartless tone to Tito ? I  
 Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind  
 This morn, a recreant to my race — mankind  
 O'erlooked till now : why boasts my spirit's force,  
 — Such force denied its object ? why divorce  
 These, then admire my spirit's flight the same  
 As though it bore up, helped some half-orbed flame  
 Else quenched in the dead void, to living space ?  
 That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace,  
 Why vaunt so much my unencumbered dance,  
 Making a feat's facilities enhance  
 Its marvel ? But I front Taurello, one  
 Of happier fate, and all I should have done,  
 He does ; the people's good being paramount

With him, their progress may perhaps account  
 For his abiding still; whereas you heard  
 The talk with Tito — the excuse preferred  
 For burning those five hostages, — and broached  
 By way of blind, as you and I approached,  
 I do believe.”

She spoke: then he, “ My thought  
 Plainlier expressed ! All to your profit — nought  
 Meantime of these, of conquests to achieve  
 For them, of wretchedness he might relieve  
 While profiting your party. Azzo, too,  
 Supports a cause: what cause? Do Guelfs pursue  
 Their ends by means like yours, or better ? ”

When  
 The Guelfs were proved alike, men weighed with men,  
 And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with blood and blaze,  
 Morn broke: “ Once more, Sordello, meet its gaze  
 Proudly — the people’s charge against thee fails  
 In every point, while either party quails !  
 These are the busy ones: be silent thou !  
 Two parties take the world up, and allow  
 No third, yet have one principle, subsist  
 By the same injustice; whoso shall enlist  
 With either, ranks with man’s inveterate foes.  
 So there is one less quarrel to compose:  
 The Guelf, the Ghibellin may be to curse —  
 I have done nothing, but both sides do worse  
 Than nothing. Nay, to me, forgotten, reft  
 Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left  
 The notion of a service — ha? What lured  
 Me here, what mighty aim was I assured  
 Must move Taurello? What if there remained  
 A cause, intact, distinct from these, ordained  
 For me, its true discoverer ? ”

Some one pressed  
 Before them here, a watcher, to suggest  
 The subject for a ballad: “ They must know  
 The tale of the dead worthy, long ago  
 Consul of Rome — that’s long ago for us,  
 Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus  
 In the world’s corner — but too late no doubt,  
 For the brave time he sought to bring about.  
 — Not know Crescentius Nomentanus ? ” Then  
 He cast about for terms to tell him, when  
 Sordello disavowed it, how they used  
 Whenever their Superior introduced

A novice to the Brotherhood — (“for I  
 Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily  
 Appointed too,” quoth he, “till Innocent  
 Bade me relinquish, to my small content,  
 My wife or my brown sleeves”) — some brother spoke  
 Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke  
 The edict issued, after his demise,  
 Which blotted fame alike and effigies,  
 All out except a floating power, a name  
 Including, tending to produce the same  
 Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least  
 Within that brain, though to a vulgar priest  
 And a vile stranger, — two not worth a slave  
 Of Rome’s, Pope John, King Otho, — fortune gave  
 The rule there: so, Crescentius, haply dressed  
 In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,  
 Taking the people at their word, forth stepped  
 As upon Brutus’ heel, nor ever kept  
 Rome waiting, — stood erect, and from his brain  
 Gave Rome out on its ancient place again,  
 Ay, bade proceed with Brutus’ Rome, Kings styled  
 Themselves mere citizens of, and, beguiled  
 Into great thoughts thereby, would choose the gem  
 Out of a lapfull, spoil their diadem  
 — The Senate’s cypher was so hard to scratch!  
 He flashes like a phanal, all men catch  
 The flame, Rome’s just accomplished! when returned  
 Otho, with John, the Consul’s step had spurned,  
 And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress  
 The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress  
 Of adverse fortune bent. “They crucified  
 Their Consul in the Forum; and abide  
 E’er since such slaves at Rome, that I — (for I  
 Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily  
 Appointed) — I had option to keep wife  
 Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife  
 Lose both. A song of Rome!”

And Rome, indeed,

Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,  
 The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,  
 Looked an established point of light whence rays  
 Traversed the world; for, all the clustered homes  
 Beside of men, seemed bent on being Romes  
 In their degree; the question was, how each  
 Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach.  
 Nor, of the great Two, either principle,

Struggled to change — but to possess — Rome, still,  
 Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.

Let Rome advance !

Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignorance —  
 How could he doubt one moment? Rome's the Cause !  
 Rome of the Pandects, all the world's new laws —  
 Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo ;  
 New structures, that inordinately glow,  
 Subdued, brought back to harmony, made ripe  
 By many a relic of the archetype  
 Extant for wonder ; every upstart church  
 That hoped to leave old temples in the lurch,  
 Corrected by the Theatre forlorn  
 That, — as a mundane shell, its world late born, —  
 Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints combined,  
 Rome typifies the scheme to put mankind  
 Once more in full possession of their rights.  
 " Let us have Rome again ! On me it lights  
 To build up Rome — on me, the first and last :  
 For such a future was endured the past ! "  
 And thus, in the gray twilight, forth he sprung  
 To give his thought consistency among  
 The very People — let their facts avail  
 Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.

### BOOK THE FIFTH.

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk  
 As at the dawn ? — merely a perished husk  
 Now, that arose a power fit to build  
 Up Rome again ? The proud conception chilled  
 So soon ? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine  
 — A Rome indebted to no Palatine —  
 Drop arch by arch, Sordello ! Art possessed  
 Of thy wish now, rewarded for thy quest  
 To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons ?  
 Are this and this and this the shining ones  
 Meet for the Shining City ? Sooth to say,  
 Your favored tenantry pursue their way  
 After a fashion ! This companion slips  
 On the smooth causey, t' other blinkard trips  
 At his mooned sandal. " Leave to lead the brawls  
 Here i' the atria ? " No, friend ! He that sprawls  
 On aught but a stibadium . . . what his dues



Who puts the lustral vase to such an use?  
 Oh, huddle up the day's disasters! March,  
 Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch,  
 Rome!

Yet before they quite disband — a whim —  
 Study mere shelter, now, for him, and him,  
 Nay, even the worst, — just house them! Any cave  
 Suffices: throw out earth! A loophole? Brave!  
 They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass  
 Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas,  
 And I am dead! But here's our son excels  
 At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells  
 Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes  
 His dream into a door-post, just escapes  
 The mystery of hinges. Lie we both  
 Perdue another age. The goodly growth  
 Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt was rough,  
 But that descendant's garb suits well enough  
 A portico-contriver. Speed the years —  
 What's time to us? At last, a city rears  
 Itself! nay, enter — what's the grave to us?  
 Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus  
 The head! Successively sewer, forum, cirque —  
 Last age, an aqueduct was counted work,  
 But now they tire the artificer upon  
 Blank alabaster, black obsidion,  
 — Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgurant,  
 And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples pant  
 Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed  
 Above the baths. What difference betwixt  
 This Rome and ours — resemblance what, between  
 That scurvy dumb-show and this pageant sheen —  
 These Romans and our rabble? Use thy wit!  
 The work marched: step by step, — a workman fit  
 Took each, nor too fit, — to one task, one time, —  
 No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,  
 When just the substituting osier lithe  
 For brittle bulrush, sound wood for soft withe,  
 To further loam-and-roughcast-work a stage, —  
 Exacts an architect, exacts an age:  
 No tables of the Mauritanian tree  
 For men whose maple log's their luxury!  
 That way was Rome built. "Better" (say you) "merge  
 At once all workmen in the demiurge,  
 All epochs in a lifetime, every task  
 In one!" So should the sudden city bask

I' the day — while those we 'd feast there, want the knack  
 Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck and brack,  
 Distinguish not rare peacock from vile swan,  
 Nor Mareotic juice from Cœcuban.

“Enough of Rome! ’T was happy to conceive  
 Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave  
 Me of that credit: for the rest, her spite  
 Is an old story — serves my folly right  
 By adding yet another to the dull  
 List of abortions — things proved beautiful  
 Could they be done, Sordello cannot do.”

He sat upon the terrace, plucked and threw  
 The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift  
 Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch, and drift  
 Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,  
 Mounds of all majesty. “Thou archetype,  
 Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!”

And then a low voice wound into his heart:  
 “Sordello!” (low as some old Pythoness  
 Conceding to a Lydian King's distress  
 The cause of his long error — one mistake  
 Of her past oracle) “Sordello, wake!  
 God has conceded two sights to a man —  
 One, of men's whole work, time's completed plan,  
 The other, of the minute's work, man's first  
 Step to the plan's completeness: what's dispersed  
 Save hope of that supreme step which, descried  
 Earliest, was meant still to remain untried  
 Only to give you heart to take your own  
 Step, and there stay — leaving the rest alone?  
 Where is the vanity? Why count as one  
 The first step, with the last step? What is gone  
 Except Rome's aëry magnificence,  
 That last step you 'd take first? — an evidence  
 You were God: be man now! Let those glances fall!  
 The basis, the beginning step of all,  
 Which proves you just a man — is that gone too?  
 Pity to disconcert one versed as you  
 In fate's ill-nature! but its full extent  
 Eludes Sordello, even: the veil rent,  
 Read the black writing — that collective man  
 Outstrips the individual! Who began  
 The acknowledged greatnesses? Ay, your own art  
 Shall serve us: put the poet's mimes apart —  
 Close with the poet's self, and lo, a dim  
 Yet too plain form divides itself from him!

Alcamo's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,  
 Woven into the echoes left erewhile  
 By Nina, one soft web of song : no more  
 Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er and o'er !  
 An elder poet in the younger's place ;  
 Nina's the strength, but Alcamo's the grace :  
 Each neutralizes each then ! Search your fill ;  
 You get no whole and perfect Poet — still  
 New Ninas, Alcamos, till time's mid-night  
 Shrouds all — or better say, the shutting light  
 Of a forgotten yesterday. Dissect  
 Every ideal workman — (to reject  
 In favor of your fearful ignorance  
 The thousand phantasms eager to advance,  
 And point you but to those within your reach) —  
 Were you the first who brought — (in modern speech)  
 The Multitude to be materialized ?  
 That loose eternal unrest — who devised  
 An apparition i' the midst ? The rout  
 Was checked, a breathless ring was formed about  
 That sudden flower : get round at any risk  
 The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk  
 O' the lily ! Swords across it ! Reign thy reign  
 And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne !  
 — The very child of over-joyousness,  
 Unfeeling thence, strong therefore : Strength by stress  
 Of Strength comes of that forehead confident,  
 Those widened eyes expecting heart's content,  
 A calm as out of just-quelled noise ; nor swerves  
 For doubt, the ample cheek in gracious curves  
 Abutting on the upthrust nether lip :  
 He wills, how should he doubt then ? Ages slip :  
 Was it Sordello pried into the work  
 So far accomplished, and discovered lurk  
 A company amid the other clans,  
 Only distinct in priests for castellans  
 And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed  
 Its rule, their interest its interest,  
 Living for sake of living — there an end, —  
 Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend  
 In making adversaries or allies), —  
 Dived you into its capabilities  
 And dared create, out of that sect, a soul  
 Should turn a multitude, already whole,  
 Into its body ? Speak plainer ! Is 't no sure  
 God's church lives by a King's investiture ?

Look to last step! A staggering — a shock —  
 What's mere sand is demolished, while the rock  
 Endures: a column of black fiery dust  
 Blots heaven — that help was prematurely thrust  
 Aside, perchance! — but the air clears, nought's erased  
 Of the true outline! Thus much being firm based,  
 The other was a scaffold. See him stand  
 Buttressed upon his mattock, Hildebrand  
 Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er ply  
 As in a forge; it buries either eye  
 White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth clenched,  
 The neck tight-corded, too, the chin deep-trenched,  
 As if a cloud enveloped him while fought  
 Under its shade, grim prizers, thought with thought  
 At dead-lock, agonizing he, until  
 The victor thought leap radiant up, and Will,  
 The slave with folded arms and drooping lids  
 They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids.  
 Call him no flower — a mandrake of the earth,  
 Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth,  
 Rather, — a fruit of suffering's excess,  
 Thence feeling, therefore stronger: still by stress  
 Of Strength, work Knowledge! Full three hundred years  
 Have men to wear away in smiles and tears  
 Between the two that nearly seemed to touch,  
 Observe you! quit one workman and you clutch  
 Another, letting both their trains go by —  
 The actors-out of either's policy,  
 Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,  
 Carry the three Imperial crowns across,  
 Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold —  
 While Alexander, Innocent uphold  
 On that, each Papal key — but, link on link,  
 Why is it neither chain betrays a chink?  
 How coalesce the small and great? Alack,  
 For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back!  
 Do the popes coupled there help Gregory  
 Alone? Hark — from the hermit Peter's cry  
 At Claremont, down to the first serf that says  
 Friedrich's no liege of his while he delays  
 Getting the Pope's curse off him! The Crusade —  
 Or trick of breeding Strength by other aid  
 Than Strength, is safe. Hark — from the wild harangue  
 Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang  
 Yonder! The League — or trick of turning Strength  
 Against Pernicious Strength, is safe at length.

Yet hark — from Mantuan Albert making cease  
 The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace  
 Yonder! God's Truce — or trick to supersede  
 The very Use of Strength, is safe. Indeed  
 We trench upon the future. Who is found  
 To take next step, next age — trail o'er the ground —  
 Shall I say, gourd-like? — not the flower's display  
 Nor the root's prowess, but the plenteous way  
 O' the plant — produced by joy and sorrow, whence  
 Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence?  
 Knowledge by stress of merely Knowledge? No —  
 E'en were Sordello ready to forego  
 His life for this, 't were overleaping work  
 Some one has first to do, howe'er it irk,  
 Nor stray a foot's breadth from the beaten road.  
 Who means to help must still support the load  
 Hildebrand lifted — ' why hast 'Thou,' he groaned,  
 ' Imposed on me a burden, Paul had moaned,  
 And Moses dropped beneath? ' Much done — and yet  
 Doubtless that grandest task God ever set  
 On man, left much to do : at his arm's wrench,  
 Charlemagne's scaffold fell ; but pillars blench  
 Merely, start back again — perchance have been  
 Taken for buttresses : crash every screen,  
 Hammer the tenons better, and engage  
 A gang about your work, for the next age  
 Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part  
 By Knowledge! Then, indeed, perchance may start  
 Sordello on his race — would time divulge  
 Such secrets! If one step's awry, one bulge  
 Calls for correction by a step we thought  
 Got over long since, why, till that is wrought,  
 No progress! And the scaffold in its turn  
 Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn.  
 Meanwh'ile, if your half-dozen years of life  
 In store, dispose you to forego the strife,  
 Who takes exception? Only bear in mind,  
 Ferrara's reached, Goito's left behind :  
 As you then were, as half yourself, desist!  
 — The warrior-part of you may, an it list,  
 Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,  
 Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys  
 By wielding such in fancy, — what is bard  
 Of you may spurn the vehicle that marred  
 Elys so much, and in free fancy glut  
 His sense, yet write no verses — you have but

To please yourself for law, and once could please  
 What once appeared yourself, by dreaming these  
 Rather than doing these, in days gone by.  
 But all is changed the moment you descry  
 Mankind as half yourself, — then, fancy's trade  
 Ends once and always : how may half evade  
 The other half ? men are found half of you.  
 Out of a thousand helps, just one or two  
 Can be accomplished presently : but flinch  
 From these (as from the faulchion, raised an inch,  
 Elys, described a couplet) and make proof  
 Of fancy, — then, while one half lolls aloof  
 I' the vines, completing Rome to the tip-top —  
 See if, for that, your other half will stop  
 A tear, begin a smile ! 'The rabble's woes,  
 Ludicrous in their patience as they chose  
 To sit about their town and quietly  
 Be slaughtered, — the poor reckless soldiery,  
 With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how  
 ' Polt-foot,' sang they, ' was in a pitfall now,'  
 Cheering each other from the engine-mounts, —  
 That crippled sprawling idiot who recounts  
 How, lopped of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,  
 Till the pains crept from out him one by one,  
 And wriggles round the archers on his head  
 To earn a morsel of their chestnut bread, —  
 And Cino, always in the self-same place  
 Weeping ; beside that other wretch's case,  
 Eyepits to ear, one gangrene since he plied  
 The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide  
 A double watch in the noon sun ; and see  
 Lucchino, beauty, with the favors free,  
 Trim hacqueton, spruce beard and scented hair,  
 Campaigning it for the first time — cut there  
 In two already, boy enough to crawl  
 For latter orpine round the southern wall,  
 Tomà, where Richard 's kept, because that whore  
 Marfisa, the fool never saw before,  
 Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege :  
 And Tiso's wife — men liked their pretty liege,  
 Cared for her least of whims once, — Berta, wed  
 A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso 's dead,  
 Delivering herself of his first child  
 On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled  
 To fifty gazers ! ” — (Here a wind below  
 Made moody music augural of woe

From the pine barrier) — “ What if, now the scene  
Draws to a close, yourself have really been  
— You, plucking purples in Goito’s moss  
Like edges of a trabea (not to cross  
Your consul-humor) or dry aloe-shafts  
For fasces, at Ferrara — he, fate wafts,  
This very age, her whole inheritance  
Of opportunities? Yet you advance  
Upon the last! Since talking is your trade,  
There’s Salinguerra left you to persuade:  
Fail! then ” —

“ No — no — which latest chance secure! ”

Leaped up and cried Sordello: “ this made sure,  
The past were yet redeemable; its work  
Was — help the Guelfs, whom I, howe’er it irk,  
Thus help! ” He shook the foolish aloe-haulm  
Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm  
To the appointed presence. The large head  
Turned on its socket; “ And your spokesman, ” said  
The large voice, “ is Elcorte’s happy sprout?  
Few such ” — (so finishing a speech no doubt  
Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)  
“ — My sober councils have diversified.  
Elcorte’s son! good: forward as you may,  
Our lady’s minstrel with so much to say! ”  
The hesitating sunset floated back,  
Rosily traversed in the wonted track  
The chamber, from the lattice o’er the girth  
Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in earth  
Opposite, — outlined sudden, spur to crest,  
That solid Salinguerra, and caressed  
Palma’s contour; ’t was day looped back night’s pall;  
Sordello had a chance left spite of all.

And much he made of the convincing speech  
Meant to compensate for the past and reach  
Through his youth’s daybreak of unprofit, quite  
To his noon’s labor, so proceed till night  
Leisurely! The great argument to bind  
Taurello with the Guelf Cause, body and mind,  
— Came the consummate rhetoric to that?  
Yet most Sordello’s argument dropped flat  
Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke,  
Disjoining him who felt from him who spoke.  
Was ’t not a touching incident — so prompt  
A rendering the world its just accopt,  
Once proved its debtor? Who ’d suppose, before

This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore,  
 At duty's instance could demean himself  
 So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf?  
 Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,  
 His inmost self at the out-portion peeped,  
 Thus occupied; then stole a glance at those  
 Appealed to, curious if her color rose  
 Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged  
 The need of Lombardy becoming purged  
 At soonest of her barons; the poor part  
 Abandoned thus, missing the blood at heart  
 And spirit in brain, unseasonably off  
 Elsewhere! But, though his speech was worthy scoff,  
 Good humored Salinguerra, famed for tact  
 And tongue, who, careless of his phrase, ne'er lacked  
 The right phrase, and harangued Honorius dumb  
 At his accession, — looked as all fell plumb  
 To purpose and himself found interest  
 In every point his new instructor pressed  
 — Left playing with the rescript's white wax seal  
 To scrutinize Sordello head and heel.  
 He means to yield assent sure? No, alas!  
 All he replied was, "What, it comes to pass  
 That poesy, sooner than politics,  
 Makes fade young hair?" To think such speech could fix  
 Taurello!

Then a flash of bitter truth:  
 So fantasies could break and fritter youth  
 That he had long ago lost earnestness,  
 Lost will to work, lost power to even express  
 The need of working! Earth was turned a grave:  
 No more occasions now, though he should crave  
 Just one, in right of superhuman toil,  
 To do what was undone, repair such spoil,  
 Alter the past — nothing would give the chance!  
 Not that he was to die; he saw askance  
 Protract the ignominious years beyond  
 To dream in — time to hope and time despond,  
 Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice  
 As saved a trouble; he might, at his choice,  
 One way or other, idle life out, drop  
 No few smooth verses by the way — for prop,  
 A thyrsus, these sad people, all the same,  
 Should pick up, and set store by, — far from blame,  
 Plant o'er his hearse, convinced his better part  
 Survived him. "Rather tear men out the heart



O' the truth!" — Sordello muttered, and renewed  
His propositions for the Multitude.

But Salinguerra, who at this attack  
Had thrown great breast and ruffling corslet back  
To hear the better, smilingly resumed  
His task; beneath, the carroch's warning boomed;  
He must decide with Tito; courteously  
He turned then, even seeming to agree  
With his admonisher — " Assist the Pope,  
Extend Guelf domination, fill the scope  
O' the Church, thus based on All, by All, for All —  
Change Secular to Evangelical " —  
Echoing his very sentence: all seemed lost,  
When suddenly he looked up, laughingly almost,  
To Palma: " This opinion of your friend's —  
For instance, would it answer Palma's ends?  
Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our Strength " —  
(Here he drew out his baldric to its length)  
— " To the Pope's Knowledge — let our captive slip,  
Wide to the walls throw ope our gates, equip  
Azzo with . . . what I hold here! Who 'll subscribe  
To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe  
Henceforward? or pronounce, as Heinrich used,  
' Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for the joust! '  
— When Constance, for his complets, would promote  
Alcamo, from a parti-colored coat,  
To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.  
Not that I see where couplet-making jars  
With common sense: at Mantua I had borne  
This chanted, better than their most forlorn  
Of bull-baits, — that's indisputable!"

Brave!

Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save!  
All's at an end: a Troubadour suppose  
Mankind will class him with their friends or foes?  
A puny uncouth ailing vassal think  
The world and him bound in some special link?  
Abrupt the visionary tether burst.  
What were rewarded here, or what amerced  
If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream  
Deservingly, got tangled by his theme  
So far as to conceit the knack or gift  
Or whatsoever it be, of verse, might lift  
The globe, a lever like the hand and head  
Of — " Men of Action," as the Jongleurs said,  
— " The Great Men," in the people's dialect?

And not a moment did this scorn affect  
 Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,  
 Asking "what was," obtained a full response.  
 Bid Naddo think at Mantua, he had but  
 To look into his promptuary, put  
 Finger on a set thought in a set speech:  
 But was Sordello fitted thus for each  
 Conjecture? Nowise; since within his soul,  
 Perception brooded unexpressed and whole.  
 A healthy spirit like a healthy frame  
 Craves aliment in plenty — all the same,  
 Changes, assimilates its aliment.  
 Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent?  
 Next day no formularies more you saw  
 Than figs or olives in a sated maw.  
 'T is Knowledge, whither such perceptions tend;  
 They lose themselves in that, means to an end,  
 The many old producing some one new,  
 A last unlike the first. If lies are true,  
 The Caliph's wheel-work man of brass receives  
 A meal, munched millet grains and lettuce leaves  
 Together in his stomach rattle loose;  
 You find them perfect next day to produce  
 But ne'er expect the man, on strength of that,  
 Can roll an iron camel-collar flat  
 Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what was stored  
 Bit by bit through Sordello's life, outpoured  
 That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing:  
 And round those three the People formed a ring,  
 Of visionary judges whose award  
 He recognized in full — faces that barred  
 Henceforth return to the old careless life,  
 In whose great presence, therefore, his first strife  
 For their sake must not be ignobly fought;  
 All these, for once, approved of him, he thought,  
 Suspended their own vengeance, chose await  
 The issue of this strife to reinstate  
 Them in the right of taking it — in fact  
 He must be proved king ere they could exact  
 Vengeance for such king's defalcation. Last,  
 A reason why the phrases flowed so fast  
 Was in his quite forgetting for a time  
 Himself in his amazement that the rhyme  
 Disguised the royalty so much: he there —  
 And Salinguerra yet all unaware  
 Who was the lord, who liegeman!

“ Thus I lay

On thine my spirit and compel obey  
 His lord, — my liegeman, — impotent to build  
 Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled  
 In what such builder should have been, as brook  
 One shame beyond the charge that I forsook  
 His function! Free me from that shame, I bend  
 A brow before, suppose new years to spend, —  
 Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly, recur —  
 Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, demur  
 At any crowd he claims! That I must cede  
 Shamed now, my right to my especial meed —  
 Confess thee fitter help the world than I  
 Ordained its champion from eternity,  
 Is much: but to behold thee scorn the post  
 I quit in thy behalf — to hear thee boast  
 What makes my own despair!” And while he rung  
 The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung,  
 The sad walls of the presence-chamber died  
 Into the distance, or embowering vied  
 With far-away Goito's vine-frontier;  
 And crowds of faces — (only keeping clear  
 The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground  
 To fight their battle from) — deep clustered round  
 Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,  
 Kind prayers for him no vapor, since, come death,  
 Come life, he was fresh sinewed every joint,  
 Each bone new-marrowed as whom gods anoint  
 Though mortal to their rescue. Now let sprawl  
 The snaky volumes hither! Is Typhon all  
 For Hercules to trample — good report  
 From Salinguerra only to extort?

“ So was I” (closed he his inculcating,  
 A poet must be earth's essential king)  
 “ So was I, royal so, and if I fail,  
 'Tis not the royalty, ye witness quail,  
 But one deposed who, caring not exert  
 Its proper essence, trifled malapert  
 With accidents instead — good things assigned  
 As heralds of a better thing behind —  
 And, worthy through display of these, put forth  
 Never the inmost all-surpassing worth  
 That constitutes him king precisely since  
 As yet no other spirit may evince  
 Its like: the power he took most pride to test,  
 Whereby all forms of life had been professed

At pleasure, forms already on the earth,  
 Was but a means to power beyond, whose birth  
 Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof.  
 Now, whether he came near or kept aloof  
 The several forms he longed to imitate,  
 Not there the kingship lay, he sees too late.  
 Those forms, unalterable first as last,  
 Proved him her copier, not the protoplast  
 Of nature: what would come of being free,  
 By action to exhibit tree for tree,  
 Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or prove earth bore  
 One veritable man or woman more?  
 Means to an end, such proofs are: what the end?  
 Let essence, whatsoever it be, extend —  
 Never contract. Already you include  
 The multitude; then let the multitude  
 Include yourself; and the result were new:  
 Themselves before, the multitude turn you.  
 This were to live and move and have, in them,  
 Your being, and secure a diadem  
 You should transmit (because no cycle yearns  
 Beyond itself, but on itself returns)  
 When, the full sphere in wane, the world o'erlaid  
 Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed  
 Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still  
 More potent than the last, of human will,  
 And some new king depose the old. Of such  
 Am I — whom pride of this elates too much?  
 Safe, rather say, 'mid troops of peers again;  
 I, with my words, hailed brother of the train  
 Deeds once sufficed: for, let the world roll back,  
 Who fails, through deeds howe'er diverse, re-track  
 My purpose still, my task? A teeming crust —  
 Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict! Then, needs must  
 Emerge some Calm embodied, these refer  
 The brawl to; — yellow-bearded Jupiter?  
 No! Saturn; some existence like a pact  
 And protest against Chaos, some first fact  
 I' the faint of time. My deep of life, I know,  
 Is unavailing e'en to poorly show" . . .  
 (For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)  
 . . . "Deeds in their due gradation till Song dawned -  
 The fullest effluence of the finest mind,  
 All in degree, no way diverse in kind  
 From minds about it, minds which, more or less,  
 Lofty or low, move seeking to impress

Themselves on somewhat ; but one mind has climbed  
 Step after step, by just ascent sublimed.  
 Thought is the soul of act, and, stage by stage,  
 Soul is from body still to disengage  
 As tending to a freedom which rejects  
 Such help and incorporeally affects  
 The world, producing deeds but not by deeds,  
 Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,  
 Assigning them the simpler tasks it used  
 To patiently perform till Song produced  
 Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind : divest  
 Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's unexpressed  
 Will draws above us ! All then is to win  
 Save that. How much for me, then ? where begins  
 My work ? About me, faces ! and they flock,  
 The earnest faces. What shall I unlock  
 By song ? behold me prompt, whate'er it be,  
 To minister : how much can mortals see  
 Of Life ? No more than so ? I take the task  
 And marshal you Life's elemental masque,  
 Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress,  
 This light, this shade make prominent, suppress  
 All ordinary hues that softening blend  
 Such natures with the level. Apprehend  
 Which sinner is, which saint, if I allot  
 Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, a blaze or blot,  
 To those you doubt concerning ! I enwomb  
 Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot tomb ;  
 Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph  
 With the black chastening river I engulf !  
 Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine  
 With languors of the planet of decline —  
 These, fail to recognize, to arbitrate  
 Between henceforth, to rightly estimate  
 Thus marshalled in the masque ! Myself, the while,  
 As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile  
 At my own showing ! Next age — what's to do ?  
 The men and women stationed hitherto  
 Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct  
 Each nature to its farthest, or obstruct  
 At soonest, in the world : light, thwarted, breaks  
 A lipid purity to rainbow flakes,  
 Or shadow, massed, freezes to gloom : behold  
 How such, with fit assistance to unfold,  
 Or obstacles to crush them, disengage  
 Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make, war wage,

In presence of you all! Myself, implied  
 Superior now, as, by the platform's side,  
 I bade them do and suffer, — would last content  
 The world . . . no — that's too far! I circumvent  
 A few, my masque contented, and to these  
 Offer unveil the last of mysteries —  
 Man's inmost life shall have yet freer play :  
 Once more I cast external things away,  
 And natures composite, so decompose  
 That" . . . Why, he writes *Sordello!*

“ How I rose,

And how have you advanced! since evermore  
 Yourselves effect what I was fain before  
 Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,  
 What I leave bare yourselves can now invest.  
 How we attain to talk as brothers talk,  
 In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk  
 From discontinuing old aids. To-day  
 Takes in account the work of Yesterday  
 Has not the world a Past now, its adept  
 Consults ere he dispense with or accept  
 New aids? a single touch more may enhance,  
 A touch less turn to insignificance  
 Those structures' symmetry the past has strewed  
 The world with, once so bare. Leave the mere rude  
 Explicit details! 't is but brother's speech  
 We need, speech where an accent's change gives each  
 The other's soul — no speech to understand  
 By former audience: need was then to expand,  
 Expatiate — hardly were we brothers! true —  
 Nor I lament my small remove from you,  
 Nor reconstruct what stands already. Ends  
 Accomplished turn to means: my art intends  
 New structure from the ancient: as they changed  
 The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged  
 The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright  
 As in his desert, by some simple bright  
 Clay cinerary pitcher — Thebes as Rome,  
 Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome  
 From earth's reputed consummations razed  
 A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed  
 Above. Ah, whose that fortune? Ne'ertheless  
 E'en he must stoop contented to express  
 No tithe of what's to say — the vehicle  
 Never sufficient: but his work is still  
 For faces like the faces that select

The single service I am bound effect, —  
 That bid me cast aside such fancies, bow  
 Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow  
 The Kaiser's coming — which with heart, soul, strength,  
 I labor for, this eve, who feel at length  
 My past career's outrageous vanity,  
 And would, as its amends, die, even die  
 Now I first estimate the boon of life,  
 If death might win compliance — sure, this strife  
 Is right for once — the People my support.”

My poor Sordello! what may we extort  
 By this, I wonder? Palma's lighted eyes  
 Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise,  
 Began, “ You love him — what you'd say at large  
 Let me say briefly. First, your father's charge  
 To me, his friend, peruse: I guessed indeed  
 You were no stranger to the course decreed.  
 He bids me leave his children to the saints:  
 As for a certain project, he acquaints  
 The Pope with that, and offers him the best  
 Of your possessions to permit the rest  
 Go peaceably — to Ecelin, a stripe  
 Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,  
 — To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan  
 Clutches already; extricate, who can,  
 Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,  
 Cartiglione, Loria! — all go,  
 And with them go my hopes. 'Tis lost, then! Lost  
 This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost  
 Procuring; thirty years — as good I'd spent  
 Like our admonisher! But each his bent  
 Pursues: no question, one might live absurd  
 Oneself this while, by deed as he by word  
 Persisting to obtrude an influence where  
 'Tis made account of, much as . . . nay, you fare  
 With twice the fortune, youngster! — I submit,  
 Happy to parallel my waste of wit  
 With the renowned Sordello's: you decide  
 A course for me. Romano may abide  
 Romano, — Bacchus! After all, what dearth  
 Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth?  
 Say there's a prize in prospect, must disgrace  
 Betide competitors, unless they style  
 Themselves Romano? Were it worth my while  
 To try my own luck! But an obscure place  
 Suits me — there wants a youth to bustle, stalk

And attitudinize — some fight, more talk,  
 Most flaunting badges — how, I might make clear  
 Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here  
 — Here, pity they are like to lie! For me,  
 With station fixed unceremoniously  
 Long since, small use contesting; I am but  
 The liegeman — you are horn the lieges — shut  
 That gentle mouth now! or resume your kin  
 In your sweet self; were Palma Ecelin  
 For me to work with! Could that neck endure  
 This bauble for a cumbrous garniture,  
 She should . . . or might one bear it for her? Stay —  
 I have not been so flattered many a day  
 As by your pale friend — Bacchus! The least help  
 Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's whelp —  
 His neck is broad enough — a ready tongue  
 Beside — too writhled — but, the main thing, young —  
 I could . . . why, look ye!"

And the badge was thrown  
 Across Sordello's neck: "This badge alone  
 Makes you Romano's Head — becomes superb  
 On your bare neck, which would, on mine, disturb  
 The pauldron," said Taurello. A mad act,  
 Nor even dreamed about before — in fact,  
 Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce —  
 But he had dallied overmuch, this once,  
 With power: the thing was done, and he, aware  
 The thing was done, proceeded to declare —  
 (So like a nature made to serve, excel  
 In serving, only feel by service well!)  
 — That he would make Sordello that and more.  
 "As good a scheme as any. What's to pore  
 At in my face?" he asked — "ponder instead  
 This piece of news; you are Romano's Head!  
 One cannot slacken pace so near the goal,  
 Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole  
 This time! For you there's Palma to espouse —  
 For me, one crowning trouble ere I house  
 Like my compeer."

On which ensued a strange  
 And solemn visitation; there came change  
 O'er every one of them; each looked on each:  
 Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech.  
 And when the giddiness sank and the haze  
 Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,  
 Sordello with the baldrick on, his sire



Silent, though his proportions seemed aspire  
 Momently ; and, interpreting the thrill  
 Right at its ebb, Palma was found there still  
 Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed  
 A year ago, while dying on her breast, —  
 Of a contrivance that Vicenza night,  
 When Ecelin had birth. “ Their convoy’s flight,  
 Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame  
 That wallowed like a dragon at his game  
 The toppling city through — San Biagio rocks !  
 And wounded lies in her delicious locks  
 Retrude, the frail mother, on her face,  
 None of her wasted, just in one embrace  
 Covering her child : when, as they lifted her,  
 Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier  
 And mightiest Taurello’s cry outbroke,  
 Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke,  
 Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward — drown  
 His colleague Ecelin’s clamor, up and down  
 The disarray : failed Adelaide see then  
 Who was the natural chief, the man of men ?  
 Outstripping time, her infant there burst swathe,  
 Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the scathe  
 From wandering after his heritage  
 Lost once and lost for aye — and why that rage,  
 That deprecating glance ? A new shape leant  
 On a familiar shape — gloatingly bent  
 O’er his discomfiture ; ’mid wreaths it wore,  
 Still one outflamed the rest — her child’s before  
 ’T was Salinguerra’s for his child : scorn, hate,  
 Rage startled her from Ecelin — too late !  
 Then was the moment ! — rival’s foot had spurned  
 Never that brow to earth ! Ere sense returned —  
 The act conceived, adventured and complete,  
 They bore away to an obscure retreat  
 Mother and child — Retrude’s self not slain ”  
 (Nor even here Taurello moved) “ though pain  
 Was fled ; and what assured them most ’t was fled,  
 All pain, was, if they raised the pale hushed head  
 ’T would turn this way and that, waver awhile,  
 And only settle into its old smile —  
 (Graceful as the disquieted water-flag  
 Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag  
 On either side their path) — when suffered look  
 Down on her child. They marched : no sign once shook  
 The company’s close litter of crossed spears

Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears  
 Slipped in the sunset from her long black lash,  
 And she was gone. So far the action rash ;  
 No crime. They laid Retrude in the font,  
 Taurello's very gift, her child was wont  
 To sit beneath — constant as eve he came  
 To sit by its attendant girls the same  
 As one of them. For Palma, she would blend  
 With this magnific spirit to the end,  
 That ruled her first ; but scarcely had she dared  
 To disobey the Adelaide who scared  
 Her into vowing never to disclose  
 A secret to her husband, which so froze  
 His blood at half-recital, she contrived  
 To hide from him Taurello's infant lived,  
 Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar  
 Romano's fortunes. And, a crime so far,  
 Palma received that action : she was told  
 Of Salinguerra's nature, of his cold  
 Calm acquiescence in his lot ! But free  
 To impart the secret to Romano, she  
 Engaged to repossess Sordello of  
 His heritage, and hers, and that way doff  
 The mask, but after years, long years : while now,  
 Was not Romano's sign-mark on that brow ?”

Across Taurello's heart his arms were locked :  
 And when he did speak 't was as if he mocked  
 The minstrel, “ who had not to move,” he said,  
 “ Nor stir — should fate defraud him of a shred  
 Of his son's infancy ? much less his youth !”  
 (Laughingly all this) — “ which to aid, in truth,  
 Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown  
 Old, not too old — 't was best they kept alone  
 Till now, and never idly met till now ;”  
 — Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how  
 All intimations of this eve's event  
 Were lies, for Friedrich must advance to Trent,  
 Thence to Verona, then to Rome, there stop,  
 Tumble the Church down, institute a-top  
 The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy :  
 — “ That 's now ! — no prophesying what may be  
 Anon, with a new monarch of the clime,  
 Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime  
 At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide  
 On whom ” . . .

“ Embrace him, madman !” Palma cried,

Who through the laugh saw sweat-drops burst apace,  
 And his lips blanching : he did not embrace  
 Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand  
 On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.

Understand,

This while Sordello was becoming flushed  
 Out of his whiteness ; thoughts rushed, fancies rushed ;  
 He pressed his hand upon his head and signed  
 Both should forbear him. " Nay, the best 's behind ! "  
 Taurello laughed — not quite with the same laugh :  
 " The truth is, thus we scatter, ay, like chaff  
 These Guelfs, a despicable monk recoils  
 From : nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils  
 Our triumph ! — Friedrich ? Think you, I intend  
 Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I spend  
 And brain I waste ? Think you, the people clap  
 Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap  
 For any Friedrich to fill up ? 'T is mine  
 That 's yours : I tell you, towards some such design  
 Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,  
 And for another, yes — but worked no less  
 With instinct at my heart ; I else had swerved,  
 While now — look round ! My cunning has preserved  
 Samminiato — that 's a central place  
 Secures us Florence, boy, — in Pisa's case,  
 By land as she by sea ; with Pisa ours,  
 And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours  
 The land at leisure ! Gloriously dispersed —  
 Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first  
 That flanked us (ah, you know not !) in the March ;  
 On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,  
 Romagna and Bologna, whose first span  
 Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan ;  
 Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure ! " . .  
 So he proceeded : half of all this, pure  
 Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,  
 But what was undone he felt sure to do,  
 As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away  
 The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm play —  
 Need of the sword now ! That would soon adjust  
 Aught wrong at present ; to the sword intrust  
 Sordello's whiteness, undersize : 't was plain  
 He hardly rendered right to his own brain —  
 Like a brave hound, men educate to pride  
 Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,  
 As though he could not, gift by gift, match men !

Palma had listened patiently : but when  
 'T was time expostulate, attempt withdraw  
 Taurello from his child, she, without awe  
 Took off his iron arms from, one by one,  
 Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done,  
 Made him avert his visage and relieve  
 Sordello (you might see his corslet heave  
 The while) who, loose, rose -- tried to speak, then sank :  
 They left him in the chamber. All was blank.

And even reeling down the narrow stair  
 Taurello kept up, as though unaware  
 Palma was by to guide him, the old device  
 — Something of Milan — “ how we muster thrice  
 The Torriani's strength there ; all along  
 Our own Visconti cowed them ” — thus the song  
 Continued even while she bade him stoop,  
 Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop,  
 The turnings to the gallery below,  
 Where he stopped short as Palma let him go.  
 When he had sat in silence long enough  
 Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff  
 She stopped the truncheon ; only to commence  
 One of Sordello's poems, a pretence  
 For speaking, some poor rhyme of “ Elys' hair  
 And head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear,  
 So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks  
 Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sun-blanced the livelong summer ” — from his worst  
 Performance, the Goito, as his first :  
 And that at end, conceiving from the brow  
 And open mouth no silence would serve now,  
 Went on to say the whole world loved that man  
 And, for that matter, thought his face, though wan,  
 Eclipsed the Count's — he sucking in each phrase  
 As if an angel spoke. The foolish praise  
 Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made  
 Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,  
 A crown, an aureole : there must she remain  
 (Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain  
 As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)  
 To get the best look at, in fittest niche  
 Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed her brow,  
 — “ Landed her father for his treason now,”  
 He told her, “ only, how could one suspect  
 The wit in him ? — whose clansman, recollect,  
 Was ever Salinguerra — she, the same,

Romano and his lady — so, might claim  
 To know all, as she should ” — and thus begun  
 Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes, “ not one  
 Fit to be told that foolish boy,” he said,  
 “ But only let Sordello Palma wed,  
 — Then ! ”

’T was a dim long narrow place at best :  
 Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West,  
 As shows its corpse the world’s end some split tomb —  
 A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom,  
 Faced Palma — but at length Taurello set  
 Her free ; the grating held one ragged jet  
 Of fierce gold fire : he lifted her within  
 The hollow underneath — how else begin  
 Fate’s second marvellous cycle, else renew  
 The ages than with Palma plain in view ?  
 Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head erect,  
 Pursuing his discourse ; a grand unchecked  
 Monotony made out from his quick talk  
 And the recurring noises of his walk ;  
 — Somewhat too much like the o’ercharged assent  
 Of two resolved friends in one danger blent,  
 Who hearten each the other against heart ;  
 Boasting there ’s nought to care for, when, apart  
 The boaster, all ’s to care for. He, beside  
 Some shape not visible, in power and pride  
 Approached, out of the dark, gingly near,  
 Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear  
 Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-fraught,  
 Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,  
 And on he strode into the opposite dark,  
 Till presently the harsh heel’s turn, a spark  
 I’ the stone, and whirl of some loose embossed throng  
 That crashed against the angle aye so long  
 After the last, punctual to an amount  
 Of mailed great paces you could not but count. —  
 Prepared you for the pacing back again.  
 And by the snatches you might ascertain  
 That, Friedrich’s Prefecture surmounted, left  
 By this alone in Italy, they cleft  
 Asunder, crushed together, at command  
 Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,  
 Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne —  
 But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, “ if we deign  
 Accept that compromise and stoop to give  
 Rome law, the Cæsar’s Representative.”

Enough, that the illimitable flood  
 Of triumphs after triumphs, understood  
 In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed  
 Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed  
 Him on till, these long quiet in their graves,  
 He found 't was looked for that a whole life's braves  
 Should somehow be made good ; so, weak and worn,  
 Must stagger up at Milan, one gray morn  
 Of the to-come, and fight his latest fight.  
 But, Salinguerra's prophecy at height —  
 He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,  
 A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if  
 He had our very Italy to keep  
 Or cast away, or gather in a heap  
 To garrison the better — ay, his word  
 Was, "run the cucumber into a gourd,  
 Drive Trent upon Apulia" — at their pitch  
 Who spied the continents and islands which  
 Grew mulberry-leaves and sickles, in the map —  
 (Strange that three such confessions so should hap  
 To Palma, Dante spoke with in the clear  
 Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere, —  
*Cunizza*, as he called her ! Never ask  
 Of Palma more ! She sat, knowing her task  
 Was done, the labor of it, — for, success,  
 Concerned not Palma, passion's votaress)  
 Triumph at height, and thus Sordello crowned —  
 Above the passage suddenly a sound  
 Stops speech, stops walk : back shrinks Taurello, bids  
 With large involuntary asking lids,  
 Palma interpret. " 'T is his own foot stamp —  
 Your hand ! His summons ! Nay, this idle damp  
 Befits not ! " Out they two reeled dizzily.  
 Visconti's strong at Milan," resumed he,  
 In the old, somewhat insignificant way —  
 (Was Palma wont, years afterward, to say)  
 As though the spirit's flight, sustained thus far,  
 Dropped at that very instant. Gone they are —  
 Palma, Taurello ; Eglamor anon,  
 Ecelin, — only Naddo's never gone !  
 — Labors, this moonrise, what the Master meant —  
 " Is Squarcialupo speckled ? — purulent,  
 I'd say, but when was Providence put out ?  
 He carries somehow handily about  
 His spite nor fouls himself ! " Goito's vines  
 Stand like a cheat detected — stark rough lines,

The moon breaks through, a gray mean scale against  
 The vault where, this eve's Maiden, thou remain'st  
 Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed — who can tell?  
 As Heaven, now all 's at end, did not so well,  
 Spite of the faith and victory, to leave  
 Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve.  
 While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha! wait  
 No longer : these in compass, forward fate !

BOOK THE SIXTH.

THE thought of Eglamor 's least like a thought,  
 And yet a false one, was, " Man shrinks to nought  
 If matched with symbols of immensity ;  
 Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky  
 Or sea, too little for their quietude : "  
 And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood  
 Confirmed its spaciousness, while eve slow sank  
 Down the near terrace to the farther bank,  
 And only one spot left out of the night  
 Glimmered upon the river opposite —  
 A breath of watery heaven like a bay,  
 A sky-like space of water, ray for ray,  
 And star for star, one richness where they mixed  
 As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,  
 Tumultuary splendors folded in  
 To die. Nor turned he till Ferrara's din  
 (Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip  
 Who lets some first and eager purpose slip  
 In a new fancy's birth ; the speech keeps on  
 Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone)  
 — Aroused him, surely offered succor. Fate  
 Paused with this eve ; ere she precipitate  
 Herself, — put off strange after-thoughts awhile,  
 That voice, those large hands, that portentous smile,  
 What help to pierce the future as the past,  
 Lay in the plaining city ?

And at last  
 The main discovery and prime concern,  
 All that just now imported him to learn,  
 His truth, like yonder slow moon to complete  
 Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his feet,  
 Lighted his old life's every shift and change,

Effort with counter-effort ; nor the range  
 Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked  
 Some other — which of these could he suspect,  
 Prying into them by the sudden blaze ?  
 The real way seemed made up of all the ways —  
 Mood after mood of the one mind in him ;  
 Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,  
 Of a transcendent all-embracing sense  
 Demanding only outward influence,  
 A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,  
 Power to uplift his power, — this moon's control  
 Over the sea-depths, — and their mass had swept  
 Onward from the beginning and still kept  
 Its course : but years and years the sky above  
 Held none, and so, untasked of any love,  
 His sensitiveness idled, now amorn,  
 Alive now, and, to sullenness or sport  
 Given wholly up, disposed itself anew  
 At every passing instigation, grew  
 And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers spilt,  
 Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt  
 Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race  
 Of whitest ripples o'er the reef — found place  
 For much display ; not gathered up and, hurled  
 Right from its heart, encompassing the world.  
 So had Sordello been, by consequence,  
 Without a function : others made pretence  
 To strength not half his own, yet had some core  
 Within, submitted to some moon, before  
 Them still, superior still whate'er their force, —  
 Were able therefore to fulfil a course,  
 Nor missed life's crown, authentic attribute.  
 To each who lives must be a certain fruit  
 Of having lived in his degree, — a stage,  
 Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,  
 To stop at ; and to this the spirits tend  
 Who, still discovering beauty without end,  
 Amass the scintillations, make one star  
 — Something unlike them, self-sustained, afar, —  
 And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest  
 By winning it to notice and invest  
 Their souls with alien glory, some one day  
 Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape always,  
 Round to the perfect circle — soon or late,  
 According as themselves are formed to wait ;



Whether mere human beauty will suffice  
 — The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,  
 Or human intellect seem best, or each  
 Combine in some ideal form past reach  
 On earth, or else some shade of these, some aim,  
 Some love, hate even, take their place, the same,  
 And may be served — all this they do not lose,  
 Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose  
 What must be Hell — a progress thus pursued  
 Through all existence, still above the food  
 That's offered them, still towering beyond  
 The widened range, in virtue of their bond  
 Of sovereignty. Not that a Palma's Love,  
 A Salinguerra's Hate, would equal prove  
 To swaying all Sordello : wherefore doubt  
 That love meet for such strength, some moon without  
 Would match his sea ? — or fear, Good manifest,  
 Only the Best breaks faith ? — Ah but the Best  
 Somehow eludes us ever, still might be  
 And is not ! Crave we gems ? No penury  
 Of their material round us ! Pliant earth  
 And plastic flame — what balks the mage his birth  
 — Jacinth in balls or lodestone by the block ?  
 Flinders enrich the strand, veins swell the rock ;  
 Nought more ! Ask creatures ? Life's i' the tempest thought,  
 Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods are fraught  
 With fervors : human forms are well enough !  
 But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff  
 Profuse at nature's pleasure, men beyond  
 These men ! — and thus, perchance, are over-fond  
 In arguing, from Good the Best, from force  
 Divided — force combined, an ocean's course  
 From this our sea whose mere intestine pants  
 Might seem at times sufficient to our wants.  
 — External power ? If none be adequate  
 And he stand forth ordained (a prouder fate)  
 A law to his own sphere ? — need to remove  
 All incompleteness, for that law, that love ?  
 Nay, if all other laws be such, though veiled  
 In mercy to each vision that had failed  
 If unassisted by its want, — for lure,  
 Embodied ? Stronger vision could endure  
 The unbodyed want : no bauble for a truth !  
 The People were himself ; and, by the ruth  
 At their condition, was he less impelled

To alter the discrepancy beheld,  
 Than if, from the sound Whole, a sickly Part  
 Subtracted were transformed, decked out with art,  
 Then palmed on him as alien woe — the Guelf  
 To succor, proud that he forsook himself?  
 No! All 's himself; all service, therefore, rates  
 Alike, nor serving one part, immolates  
 The rest: but all in time! "That lance of yours  
 Makes havoc soon with Malek and his Moors,  
 That buckler's lined with many a giant's beard,  
 Ere long, our champion, be the lance upreared,  
 The buckler wielded handsomely as now!  
 But view your escort, bear in mind your vow,  
 Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere that,  
 And, if you hope we struggle through the flat,  
 Put lance and buckler by! Next half-month lacks  
 Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe  
 To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-pear  
 Which bristling holds Cydippe by the hair,  
 Lames barefoot Agathon: this felled, we'll try  
 The picturesque achievements by and by —  
 Next life!"

Ay, rally, mock, O People, urge  
 Your claims! — for thus he ventured, to the verge,  
 Push a vain mummerly which perchance distrust  
 Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust  
 Likewise: accordingly the Crowd — (as yet  
 He had unconsciously contrived forget,  
 I' the whole, to dwell o' the points . . . one might assuage  
 The signal horrors easier than engage  
 With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief  
 Not to be fancied off, nor gained relief  
 In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,  
 But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work  
 To correspond . . .) — this Crowd then, forth they stood.  
 'And now content thy stronger vision, brood  
 On thy bare want; uncovered, turf by turf,  
 Study the corpse-face through the taint-worms' scurf!"  
 Down sank the People's Then; uprose their Now  
 These sad ones render service to! And how  
 Piteously little must that service prove  
 — Had surely proved in any case! for, move  
 Each other obstacle away, let youth  
 Become aware it had surprised a truth  
 'T were service to impart — can truth be seized,  
 Settled forthwith, and, of the captive eased,

Its captor find fresh prey, since this alit  
 So happily, no gesture luring it,  
 The earnest of a flock to follow? Vain,  
 Most vain! a life to spend ere this he chain  
 To the poor crowd's complacence: ere the crowd  
 Pronounce it captured, he descries a cloud  
 Its kin of twice the plume; which he, in turn,  
 If he shall live as many lives, may learn  
 How to secure: not else. Then Mantua called  
 Back to his mind how certain bards were thrall'd  
 — Buds blasted, but of breath more like perfume  
 Than Naldo's staring nosegay's carrion bloom;  
 Some insane rose that burnt heart out in sweets,  
 A spendthrift in the spring, no summer greets;  
 Some Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,  
 Grown bestial, dreaming how become divine.  
 Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence  
 With the commencement, merits crowning! Hence  
 Must truth be casual truth, elicited  
 In sparks so mean, at intervals dispread  
 So rarely, that 't is like at no one time  
 Of the world's story has not truth, the prime  
 Of truth, the very truth which, loosed, had hurled  
 The world's course right, been really in the world  
 — Content the while with some mean spark by dint  
 Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint  
 Of buried fire, which, rip its breast, would stream  
 Sky-ward!

Sordello's miserable gleam  
 Was looked for at the moment: he would dash  
 This badge, and all it brought, to earth, — abash  
 Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest  
 The Kaiser from his purpose, — would attest  
 His own belief, in any case. Before  
 He dashes it however, think once more!  
 For, were that little, truly service? “Ay,  
 I' the end, no doubt; but meantime? Plain you spy  
 Its ultimate effect, but many flaws  
 Of vision blur each intervening cause.  
 Were the day's fraction clear as the life's sum  
 Of service, Now as filled as the To-come  
 With evidence of good — nor too minute  
 A share to vie with evil! No dispute,  
 'T were fittest maintain the Guelfs in rule:  
 That makes your life's work: but you have to school  
 Your day's work on these natures circumstanced

Thus variously, which yet, as each advanced  
 Or might impede the Guelf rule, must be moved  
 Now, for the 'Then's sake, — hating what you loved,  
 Loving old hatreds! Nor if one man bore  
 Brand upon temples while his fellow wore  
 The aureole, would it task you to decide:  
 But, portioned duly out, the future vied  
 Never with the unparcelled present! Smite  
 Or spare so much on warrant all so slight?  
 The present's complete sympathies to break,  
 Aversions bear with, for a future's sake  
 So feeble? Tito ruined through one speck,  
 The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck?  
 This were work, true, but work performed at cost  
 Of other work; aught gained here, elsewhere lost.  
 For a new segment spoil an orb half-done?  
 Rise with the People one step, and sink — one?  
 Were it but one step, less than the whole face  
 Of things, your novel duty bids erase!  
 Harms to abolish! What, the prophet saith,  
 The minstrel singeth vainly then? Old faith,  
 Old courage, only borne because of harms,  
 Were not, from highest to the lowest, charms?  
 Flame may persist; but is not glare as stanch?  
 Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals branch;  
 Blood dries to crimson; Evil's beautified  
 In every shape. Thrust Beauty then aside  
 And banish Evil! Wherefore? After all,  
 Is Evil a result less natural  
 Than Good? For overlook the seasons' strife  
 With tree and flower, — the hideous animal life,  
 (Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt  
 For his solution, and endure the vault  
 Of nature's angel, as a child that knows  
 Himself befooled, unable to propose  
 Aught better than the fooling) — and but care  
 For men, for the mere People then and there, —  
 In these, could you but see that Good and Ill  
 Claimed you alike! Whence rose their claim but still  
 From Ill, as fruit of Ill? What else could knit  
 You theirs but Sorrow? Any free from it  
 Were also free from you! Whose happiness  
 Could be distinguished in this morning's press  
 Of miseries? — the fool's who passed a gibe  
 'On thee,' jeered he, 'so wedded to thy tribe,  
 Thou carriest green and yellow tokens in

Thy very face that thou art Ghibellin !'  
 Much hold on you that fool obtained ! Nay mount  
 Yet higher — and upon men's own account  
 Must Evil stay : for, what is joy ? — to heave  
 Up one obstruction more, and common leave  
 What was peculiar, by such act destroy  
 Itself ; a partial death is every joy ;  
 The sensible escape, enfranchisement  
 Of a sphere's essence : once the vexed — content,  
 The cramped — at large, the growing circle — round,  
 All 's to begin again — some novel bound  
 'To break, some new enlargement to entreat ;  
 The sphere though larger is not more complete.  
 Now for Mankind's experience : who alone  
 Might style the unobstructed world his own ?  
 Whom palled Goito with its perfect things ?  
 Sordello's self : whereas for Mankind springs  
 Salvation by each hindrance interposed.  
 They climb ; life's view is not at once disclosed  
 To creatures caught up, on the summit left,  
 Heaven plain above them, yet of wings bereft :  
 But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot.  
 So, range on range, the girdling forests shoot  
 'Twixt your plain prospect and the throngs who scale  
 Height after height, and pierce mists, veil by veil,  
 Heartened with each discovery ; in their soul,  
 The Whole they seek by Parts — but, found that Whole,  
 Could they revert, enjoy past gains ? The space  
 Of time you judge so meagre to embrace  
 The Parts were more than plenty, once attained  
 The Whole, to quite exhaust it : nought were gained  
 But leave to look — not leave to do : Beneath  
 Soon sates the looker — look Above, and Death  
 Tempts ere a tithe of Life be tasted. Live  
 First, and die soon enough, Sordello ! Give  
 Body and spirit the first right they claim,  
 And pasture thee on a voluptuous shame  
 That thou, a pageant-city's denizen,  
 Art neither vilely lodged 'midst Lombard men —  
 Canst force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck  
 Thine attributes away for sordid muck,  
 Yet manage from that very muck educe  
 Gold ; then subject nor scruple, to thy cruce  
 The world's discardings ! Though re il ingots pay  
 Thy pains, the clods that yielded them are clay  
 To all save thee, — would clay remain, though quenched

Thy purging-fire ; who 's robbed then ? Had you wrenched  
 An ampler treasure forth ! — As 't is, they crave  
 A share that ruins you and will not save  
 Them. Why should sympathy command you quit  
 The course that makes your joy, nor will remit  
 Their woe ? Would all arrive at joy ? Reverse  
 The order (time instructs you) nor coerce  
 Each unit till, some predetermined mode,  
 The total be emancipated ; men's road  
 Is one, men's times of travel many ; thwart  
 No enterprising soul's precocious start  
 Before the general march ! If slow or fast  
 All straggle up to the same point at last,  
 Why grudge your having gained, a month ago,  
 The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in blow,  
 While they were landlocked ? Speed their 'Then, but how  
 This badge would suffer you improve your Now ! ”

His time of action for, against, or with  
 Our world (I labor to extract the pith  
 Of this his problem) grew, that even-tide,  
 Gigantic with its power of joy, beside  
 The world's eternity of impotence  
 To profit though at his whole joy's expense.  
 “ Make nothing of my day because so brief ?  
 Rather make more : instead of joy, use grief  
 Before its novelty have time subside !  
 Wait not for the late savor, leave untried  
 Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick squeeze  
 Vice like a biting spirit from the lees  
 Of life ! Together let wrath, hatred, lust,  
 All tyrannies in every shape, be thrust  
 Upon this Now, which time may reason out  
 As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt ;  
 But long ere then Sordello will have slipped  
 Away ; you teach him at Goito's crypt,  
 There 's a blank issue to that fiery thrill.  
 Stirring, the few cope with the many, still :  
 So much of sand as, quiet, makes a mass  
 Unable to produce three tufts of grass,  
 Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void  
 The whole calm glebe's endeavor : be employed !  
 And e'en though somewhat smart the Crowd for this,  
 Contribute each his pang to make your bliss,  
 'T is but one pang — one blood-drop to the bowl  
 Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl  
 At last, stains ruddily the dull red cape,

And, kindling orbs gray as the unripe grape  
 Before, avails forthwith to disentrance  
 The portent, soon to lead a mystic dance  
 Among you ! For, who sits alone in Rome ?  
 Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home,  
 And set me there to live ? Oh life, life-breath,  
 Life-blood, — ere sleep, come travail, life ere death !  
 This life stream on my soul, direct, oblique,  
 But always streaming ! Hindrances ? They pique :  
 Helps ? such . . . but why repeat, my soul o'ertops  
 Each height, then every depth profoundier drops ?  
 Enough that I can live, and would live ! Wait  
 For some transcendent life reserved by Fate  
 To follow this ? Oh, never ! Fate, I trust  
 The same, my soul to ; for, as who flings dust,  
 Perchance (so facile was the deed) she checked  
 The void with these materials to affect  
 My soul diversely : these consigned anew  
 To nought by death, what marvel if she threw  
 A second and superber spectacle  
 Before me ? What may serve for sun, what still  
 Wander a moon above me ? What else wind  
 About me like the pleasures left behind,  
 And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh  
 Cling to me ? What's new laughter ? Soothes the fresh  
 Sleep like sleep ? Fate's exhaustless for my sake  
 In brave resource : but whether bids she slake  
 My thirst at this first rivulet, or count  
 No draught worth lip save from the rocky fount  
 Above i' the clouds, while here she's provident  
 Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft tree-tent  
 Guards, with its face of reate and sedge, nor fail  
 The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail  
 At bottom ? Oh, 't were too absurd to slight  
 For the hereafter the to-day's delight !  
 Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-spring : wear  
 Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair !  
 Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart  
 Offer to serve, contented for my part  
 To give life up in service, — only grant  
 That I do serve ; if otherwise, why want  
 Aught further of me ? If men cannot choose  
 But set aside life, why should I refuse  
 The gift ? I take it — I, for one, engage  
 Never to falter through my pilgrimage —  
 Nor end it howling that the stock or stone

Were enviable, truly : I, for one,  
 Will praise the world, you style mere anteroom  
 To the palace — be it so ! shall I assume  
 — My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the trope,  
 My mouth the smirk, before the doors fly ope  
 One moment ? What ? with guarders row on row  
 Gay swarms of varletry that come and go,  
 Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace  
 The plackets of, pert claimants help displace,  
 Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for, — laugh  
 At yon sleek parasite, break his own staff  
 'Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder, — why,  
 Admitted to the presence by and by,  
 Should thought of having lost these make me grieve  
 Among new joys I reach, for joys I leave ?  
 Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone,  
 Are floor-work there ! But do I let alone  
 That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule  
 Once and forever ? — Floor-work ? No such fool !  
 Rather, were heaven to forestall earth, I 'd say  
 I, is it, must be blessed ? Then, my own way  
 Bless me ! Give firmer arm and fleeter foot,  
 I 'll thank you : but to no mad wings transmute  
 These limbs of mine — our greensward was so soft !  
 Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft :  
 We feel the bliss distinctlier, having thus  
 Engines subservient, not mixed up with us.  
 Better move palpably through heaven : nor, freed  
 Of flesh, forsooth, from space to space proceed  
 'Mid flying synods of worlds ! No : in heaven's margo  
 Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe  
 Solid with stars — the Centaur at his game,  
 Made tremulously out in hoary flame !  
 Life ! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull  
 Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full,  
 Aside so oft ; the dea'h I fly, revealed  
 So oft a better life this life concealed,  
 And which sage, champion, martyr, through each path  
 Have hunted fearlessly — the horrid bath,  
 The crippling-irons and the fiery chair.  
 'T was well for them ; let me become aware  
 As they, and I relinquish life, too ! Let  
 What masters life disclose itself ! Forget  
 Vain ordinances, I have one appeal —  
 I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel ;  
 So much is truth to me. What Is, then ? Since



One object, viewed diversely, may evince  
 Beauty and ugliness — this way attract,  
 That way repel, — why gloze upon the fact ?  
 Why must a single of the sides be right ?  
 What bids choose this and leave the opposite ?  
 Where 's abstract Right for me ? — in youth endued  
 With Right still present, still to be pursued,  
 Through all the interchange of circles, rife  
 Each with its proper law and mode of life,  
 Each to be dwelt at ease in : where, to sway  
 Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey  
 Implicit with his serf of fluttering heart,  
 Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start  
 Up, Brutus in the presence, then go shout  
 That some should pick the unstrung jewels out —  
 Each, well ! ”

And, as in moments when the past  
 Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast  
 Himself quite through mere secondary states  
 Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,  
 Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid  
 By these ; as who should pierce hill, plain, grove, glade,  
 And on into the very nucleus probe  
 That first determined there exist a globe.  
 As that were easiest, half the globe dissolved,  
 So scemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved  
 By his flesh-half's break up ; the sudden swell  
 Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,  
 Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,  
 Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,  
 All qualities, in fine, recorded here,  
 Might be but modes of Time and this one sphere,  
 Urgent on these, but not of force to bind  
 Eternity, as Time — as Matter — Mind,  
 If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert  
 Their attributes within a Life : thus girt  
 With circumstance, next change beholds them cinct  
 Quite otherwise — with Good and Ill distinct,  
 Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result —  
 Contrived to render easy, difficult,  
 This or the other course of . . . what new bond  
 In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond  
 Its new sphere, as that course does harm or good  
 To its arrangements. Once this understood,  
 As suddenly he felt himself alone,  
 Quite out of Time and this world : all was known.

What made the secret of his past despair ?  
 — Most imminent when he seemed most aware  
 Of his own self-sufficiency ; made mad  
 By craving to expand the power he had,  
 And not new power to be expanded ? — just  
 This made it ; Soul on Matter being thrust,  
 Joy comes when so much Soul is wreaked in Time  
 On Matter, — let the Soul's attempt sublime  
 Matter beyond the scheme and so prevent  
 By more or less that deed's accomplishment,  
 And Sorrow follows : Sorrow how avoid ?  
 Let the employer match the thing employed,  
 Fit to the finite his infinity,  
 And thus proceed forever, in degree  
 Changed but in kind the same, still limited  
 To the appointed circumstance and dead  
 To all beyond. A sphere is but a sphere ;  
 Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here ;  
 Since to the spirit's absoluteness all  
 Are like. Now, of the present sphere we call  
 Life, are conditions ; take but this among  
 Many ; the body was to be so long  
 Youthful, no longer : but, since no control  
 Tied to that body's purposes his soul,  
 She chose to understand the body's trade  
 More than the body's self — had fain conveyed  
 Her boundless, to the body's bounded lot.  
 Hence, the soul permanent, the body not, —  
 Scarce the one minute for enjoying here, —  
 The soul must needs instruct her weak compeer,  
 Run o'er its capabilities and wring  
 A joy thence, she held worth experiencing :  
 Which, far from half discovered even, — lo,  
 The minute gone, the body's power let go  
 Apportioned to that joy's acquirement ! Broke  
 Morning o'er earth, he yearned for all it woke —  
 From the volcano's vapor-flag, winds hoist  
 Black o'er the spread of sea, — down to the moist  
 Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,  
 Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again —  
 The Small, a sphere as perfect as the Great  
 To the soul's absoluteness. Meditate  
 Too long on such a morning's cluster-chord  
 And the whole music it was framed afford, —  
 The chord's might half discovered, what should pluck  
 One string, his finger, was found palsy-struck.

And then no marvel if the spirit, shown  
A saddest sight — the body lost alone  
Through her officious proffered help, deprived  
Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived, —  
Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip hence, —  
Vaingloriously were fain, for recompense,  
To stem the ruin even yet, protract  
The body's term, supply the power it lacked  
From her infinity, compel it learn  
These qualities were only Time's concern,  
And body may, with spirit helping, barred —  
Advance the same, vanquished — obtain reward,  
Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,  
Of Wrong make Right, and turn Ill Good below.  
And the result is, the poor body soon  
Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon,  
Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.

So much was plain then, proper in the past ;  
To be complete for, satisfy the whole  
Series of spheres — Eternity, his soul  
Exceeded, so was incomplete for, each  
Single sphere — Time. But does our knowledge reach  
No farther ? Is the cloud of hindrance broke  
But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,  
Its loves and hates, as now when death lets soar  
Sordello, self-sufficient as before  
Though during the mere space that shall elapse  
'Twixt his enthrallment in new bonds, perhaps ?  
Must life be ever just escaped, which should  
Have been enjoyed ? — nay, might have been and would,  
Each purpose ordered right — the soul's no whit  
Beyond the body's purpose under it —  
Like yonder breadth of watery heaven, a bay,  
And that sky-space of water, ray for ray  
And star for star, one richness where they mixed  
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,  
Tumultuary splendors folded in  
To die — would soul, proportioned thus, begin  
Exciting discontent, or surelier quell  
The body if, aspiring, it rebel ?  
But how so order life ? Still brutalize  
The soul, the sad world's way, with muffled eyes  
To all that was before, all that shall be  
After this sphere — and every quality  
Save some sole and immutable Great and Good  
And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood

To follow? Never may some soul see All  
 — The Great Before and After, and the Small  
 Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,  
 And take the single course prescribed before,  
 As the king-bird with ages on his plumes  
 Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?  
 But where descry the Love that shall select  
 That course? Here is a soul whom, to affect,  
 Nature has plied with all her means, from trees  
 And flowers e'en to the Multitude! — and these,  
 Decides he save or no? One word to end!

Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend  
 And speak for you. Of a Power above you still  
 Which, utterly incomprehensible,  
 Is out of rivalry, which thus you can  
 Love, though unloving all conceived by man —  
 What need! And of — none the minutest duct  
 To that out-nature, nought that would instruct  
 And so let rivalry begin to live —  
 But of a power its representative  
 Who, being for authority the same,  
 Communication different, should claim  
 A course, the first chose and this last revealed —  
 This Human clear, as that Divine concealed —  
 What utter need!

What has Sordello found?

Or can his spirit go the mighty round,  
 End where poor Eglamor begun? — So, says  
 Old fable, the two eagles went two ways  
 About the world: where, in the midst, they met,  
 Though on a shifting waste of sand, men set  
 Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sordello found?  
 For they approach — approach — that foot's rebound  
 Palma? No, Salinguerra though in mail;  
 They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the veil  
 Aside — and you divine who sat there dead,  
 Under his foot the badge: still, Palma said,  
 A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,  
 Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies  
 Help from above in his extreme despair,  
 And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there  
 With short quick passionate cry: as Palma pressed  
 In one great kiss, her lips upon his breast,  
 It beat.

By this, the hermit-bee has stopped  
 His day's toil at Guito: the new-cropped

Dead vine-leaf answers, now 't is eve, he bit,  
 Twirled so, and filed all day : the mansion's fit,  
 God counselled for. As easy guess the word  
 That passed betwixt them, and become the third  
 To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax  
 Him with one fault — so, no remembrance racks  
 Of the stone maidens and the font of stone  
 He, creeping through the crevice, leaves alone.  
 Alas, my friend, alas Sordello, whom  
 Anon they laid within that old font-tomb,  
 And, yet again, alas !

And now is 't worth  
 Our while bring back to mind, much less set forth  
 How Salinguerra extricates himself  
 Without Sordello ? Ghibellin and Guelf  
 May fight their fiercest out ? If Richard sulked  
 In durance or the Marquis paid his mulct,  
 Who cares, Sordello gone ? The upshot, sure,  
 Was peace ; our chief made some frank overture  
 That prospered ; compliment fell thick and fast  
 On its disposer, and Taurello passed  
 With foe and friend for an outstripping soul,  
 Nine days at least. Then, — fairly reached the goal, —  
 He, by one effort, blotted the great hope  
 Out of his mind, nor further tried to cope  
 With Este, that mad evening's style, but sent  
 Away the Legate, and the League, content  
 No blame at least the brothers had incurred,  
 — Dispatched a message to the Monk, he heard  
 Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,  
 Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat  
 And ne'er spoke more, — informed the Ferrarese  
 He but retained their rule so long as these  
 Lingered in pupilage, — and last, no mode  
 Apparent else of keeping safe the road  
 From Germany direct to Lombardy  
 For Friedrich, — none, that is, to guarantee  
 The faith and promptitude of who should need  
 Obtain Sofia's dowry, — sore perplexed —  
 (Sofia being youngest of the tribe  
 Of daughters, Ecelin was wont to bribe  
 The envious magnates with — nor, since he sent  
 Henry of Egna this fair child, had Trent  
 Once failed the Kaiser's purposes — “ we lost  
 Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post —  
 Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich knock ? ”)

Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock  
 In pure necessity, and, so destroyed  
 His slender last of chances, quite made void  
 Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes  
 Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's dreams,  
 Was sucked into Romano. And so hushed  
 He up this evening's work, that, when 't was brushed  
 Somehow against by a blind chronicle  
 Which, chronicling whatever woe befell  
 Ferrara, noted this the obscure woe  
 Of "Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo  
 Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his sire,"  
 The townfolk rubbed their eyes, could but admire  
 Which of Sofia's five was meant.

The chaps  
 Of earth's dead hope were tardy to collapse,  
 Obliterated not the beautiful  
 Distinctive features at a crash: but dull  
 And duller these, next year, as Guelfs withdrew  
 Each to his stronghold. Then (securely too  
 Ecelin at Campese slept; close by,  
 Who likes may see him in Solagna lie,  
 With cushioned head and gloved hand to denote  
 The cavalier he was) — then his heart smote  
 Young Ecelin at last; long since adult.  
 And, save Vicenza's business, what result  
 In blood and blaze? (So hard to intercept  
 Sordello till his plain withdrawal!) Stepped  
 Then its new lord on Lombardy. 'T the nick  
 Of time when Ecelin and Alberic  
 Closed with Taurello, come precisely news  
 That in Verona half the souls refuse  
 Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count —  
 Have cast them from a throne they bid him mount,  
 Their Podestà, through his ancestral worth.  
 Ecelin flew there, and the town henceforth  
 Was wholly his — Taurello sinking back  
 From temporary station to a track  
 That suited. News received of this acquist,  
 Friedrich did come to Lombardy: who missed  
 Taurello then? Another year: they took  
 Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook  
 For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three  
 Of Guelfs conspired to call themselves "The Free,"  
 Opposing Alberic, — vile Bassanese, —  
 (Without Sordello!) — Ecelin at ease

Slaughtered them so observably, that oft  
 A little Salinguerra looked with soft  
 Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age  
 To get appointed his proud uncle's page.  
 More years passed, and that sire had dwindled down  
 To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown  
 Better through age, his parts still in repute,  
 Subtle — how else? — but hardly so astute  
 As his contemporaneous friends professed,  
 Undoubtedly a brawler: for the rest,  
 Known by each neighbor, and allowed for, let  
 Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret  
 Men who had missed their boyhood's bugbear: "trap  
 The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap  
 A battered pinion!" — was the word. In fine,  
 One flap too much and Venice's marine  
 Was meddled with; no overlooking that!  
 She captured him in his Ferrara, fat  
 And florid at a banquet, more by fraud  
 Than force, to speak the truth; there's slender laud  
 Ascribed you for assisting eighty years  
 To pull his death on such a man; fate shears  
 The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine threads  
 You fritter: so, presiding his board-head,  
 The old smile, your assurance all went well  
 With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell!)  
 In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,  
 Made some pretence at fighting, some amends  
 For the shame done his eighty years — (apart  
 The principle, none found it in his heart  
 To be much angry with Taurello) — gained  
 Their galleys with the prize, and what remained  
 But carry him to Venice for a show?  
 — Set him, as 't were, down gently — free to go  
 His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe  
 The swallows soaring their eternal curve  
 "Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens  
 Gathered importunately, fives and tens,  
 To point their children the Magnifico,  
 All but a monarch once in firm-land, go  
 His gait among them now — "it took, indeed,  
 Fully this Ecelin to supersede  
 That man," remarked the seniors. Singular!  
 Sordello's inability to bar  
 Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought  
 About by his strange disbelief that aught

Was ever to be done, — this thrust the Twain  
 Under Taurello's tutelage, — whom, brain  
 And heart and hand, he forthwith in one rod  
 Indissolubly bound to baffle God  
 Who loves the world — and thus allowed the thin  
 Gray wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,  
 And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic  
 (Mere man, alas!) to put his problem quick  
 To demonstration — prove wherever 's will  
 To do, there 's plenty to be done, or ill  
 Or good. Anointed, then, to rend and rip —  
 Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip,  
 They plagued the world : a touch of Hildebrand  
 (So far from obsolete!) made Lombards band  
 Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,  
 And saving Milan win the world's applause.  
 Ecelin perished : and I think grass grew  
 Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù  
 By San Zenon where Alberic in turn  
 Saw his exasperated captors burn  
 Seven children and their mother ; then, regaled  
 So far, tied on to a wild horse, was trailed  
 To death through rounce and bramble-bush. I take  
 God's part and testify that 'mid the brake  
 Wild o'er his castle on the pleasant knoll,  
 You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll —  
 The earthquake spared it last year, laying flat  
 The modern church beneath, — no harm in that!  
 Chirrup the contumacious grasshopper,  
 Rustles the lizard and the cushats chirre  
 Above the ravage : there, at deep of day  
 A week since, heard I the old Canon say  
 He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst  
 And Alberic's huge skeleton unheard  
 Only five years ago. He added, " June 's  
 The month for carding off our first cocoons  
 The silkworms fabricate " — a double news,  
 Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. Choose!  
 And Naddo gone, all 's gone ; not Eglamor!  
 Believe, I knew the face I waited for,  
 A guest my spirit of the golden courts!  
 Oh strange to see how, despite ill-reports,  
 Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained  
 Its joyous look of love! Suns waxed and waned,  
 And still my spirit held an upward flight,  
 Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light



More and more gorgeous — ever that face there  
 The last admitted ! crossed, too, with some care  
 As perfect triumph were not sure for all,  
 But, on a few, enduring damp must fall,  
 — A transient struggle, haply a painful sense  
 Of the inferior nature's clinging — whence  
 Slight starting tears easily wiped away,  
 Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play  
 Of irrepressible admiration — not  
 Aspiring, all considered, to their lot  
 Who ever, just as they prepare ascend  
 Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend  
 Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,  
 That upturned fervid face and hair put back !

Is there no more to say ? He of the rhymes —  
 Many a tale, of this retreat betimes,  
 Was born : Sordello die at once for men ?  
 The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen  
 Telling how *Sordello Prince Visconti* saved  
 Mantua, and elsewhere notably behaved —  
 Who thus, by fortune ordering events,  
 Passed with posterity, to all intents,  
 For just the god he never could become.  
 As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never dumb  
 In praise of him : while what he should have been,  
 Could be, and was not — the one step too mean  
 For him to take, — we suffer at this day  
 Because of : Ecelin had pushed away  
 Its chance ere Dante could arrive and take  
 That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake :  
 He did much — but Sordello's chance was gone.  
 Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,  
 Apollo had been compassed — 't was a fit  
 He wished should go to him, not he to it  
 — As one content to merely be supposed  
 Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed  
 Really at home — one who was chiefly glad  
 To have achieved the few real deeds he had,  
 Because that way assured they were not worth  
 Doing, so spared from doing them henceforth —  
 A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes  
 Never itself, itself. Had he embraced  
 Their cause then, men had plucked Hesperian fruit  
 And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot  
 All he was anxious to appear, but scarce  
 Solicitous to be. A sorry farce

Such life is, after all ! Cannot I say  
 He lived for some one better thing ? this way. —  
 Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill  
 By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,  
 Morning just up, higher and higher runs  
 A child barefoot and rosy. See ! the sun 's  
 On the square castle's inner-court's low wall  
 Like the chine of some extinct animal  
 Half turned to earth and flowers ; and through the haze  
 (Save where some slender patches of gray maize  
 Are to be overleaped) that boy has crossed  
 The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost  
 Matting the balm and mountain camomile.  
 Up and up goes he, singing all the while  
 Some unintelligible words to beat  
 The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet,  
 So worsted is he at " the few fine locks  
 Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sunblanched the livelong summer," — all that's left  
 Of the Goito lay ! And thus bereft,  
 Sleep and forget, Sordello ! In effect  
 He sleeps, the feverish poet — I suspect  
 Not utterly companionless ; but, friends,  
 Wake up ! The ghost's gone, and the story ends  
 I'd fain hope, sweetly ; seeing, peri or ghoul,  
 That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,  
 Evil or good, judicious authors think,  
 According as they vanish in a stink  
 Or in a perfume. Friends, be frank ! ye snuff  
 Civet, I warrant. Really ? Like enough !  
 Merely the savor's rareness ; any nose  
 May ravage with impunity a rose :  
 Rifle a musk-pod and 't will ache like yours !  
 I'd tell you that same pungency ensures  
 An after-gust, but that were overbold.  
 Who would has heard Sordello's story told.

# PIPPA PASSES

## A DRAMA

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I DEDICATE MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS POEM,  
ADMIRINGLY TO THE AUTHOR OF "ION,"  
AFFECTIONATELY TO MR. SERGEANT TALFOURD.

R.

LONDON, 1841.

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NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE TREVISAN. *A large mean  
airy chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the silk-mills, sprung out  
of bed.*

DAY !

Faster and more fast,  
O'er night's brim, day boils at last ;  
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim  
Where spurting and suppressed it lay ;  
For not a froth-flake touched the rim  
Of yonder gap in the solid gray  
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away ;  
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,  
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,  
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast  
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,  
A mite of my twelve-hours' treasure,  
The least of thy gazes or glances,  
(Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts above measure)  
One of thy choices or one of thy chances,  
(Be they tasks God imposed thee or freaks at thy pleasure)  
— My Day, if I squander such labor or leisure,  
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me !

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,  
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good —  
Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,  
As if earth turned from work in gamesome mood —  
All shall be mine ! But thou must treat me not  
As the prosperous are treated, those who live

At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,  
 In readiness to take what thou wilt give,  
 And free to let alone what thou refuseth;  
 For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest  
 Me, who am only Pippa, — old-year's sorrow,  
 Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow:  
 Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow  
 Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.  
 All other men and women that this earth  
 Belongs to, who all days alike possess,  
 Make general plenty cure particular dearth,  
 Get more joy one way, if another, less:  
 Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven  
 What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven, —  
 Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's!  
 Try now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones —  
 And let thy morning rain on that superb  
 Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb  
 Her Sebald's homage? All the while thy rain  
 Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,  
 He will but press the closer, breathe more warm  
 Against her cheek; how should she mind the storm?  
 And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom  
 O'er Jules and Phene, — what care bride and groom  
 Save for their dear selves? 'T is their marriage-day;  
 And while they leave church and go home their way,  
 Hand clasping hand, within each breast would be  
 Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee.  
 Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve  
 With mist, — will Luigi and his mother grieve —  
 The lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,  
 She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,  
 For true content? The cheerful town, warm close  
 And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,  
 Receives them. And yet once again, outbreak  
 In storm at night on Monsignor, they make  
 Such stir about, — whom they expect from Rome  
 To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,  
 And say here masses proper to release  
 A soul from pain, — what storm dares hurt his peace?  
 Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward  
 Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard.  
 But Pippa — just one such mischance would spoil  
 Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil  
 At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!  
 And here I let time slip for nought!

Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught  
 With a single splash from my ewer!  
 You that would mock the best pursuer,  
 Was my basin over-deep?  
 One splash of water ruins you asleep,  
 And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits  
 Wheeling and counterwheeling,  
 Reeling, broken beyond healing:  
 Now grow together on the ceiling!  
 That will task your wits.  
 Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped to see  
 Morsel after morsel flee  
 As merrily, as giddily . . .  
 Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,  
 Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?  
 Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?  
 New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,  
 Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll!  
 Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple  
 Of ocean, bud there, — fairies watch unroll  
 Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse  
 Thick red flame through that dusk green universe!  
 I am queen of thee, floweret!  
 And each fleshy blossom  
 Preserve I not — (safer  
 Than leaves that embower it,  
 Or shells that embosom)  
 — From weevil and chafer?  
 Laugh through my pane then; solicit the bee;  
 Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee,  
 Love thy queen, worship me!

— Worship whom else? For am I not, this day,  
 Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?  
 My morn, noon, eve and night — how spend my day?  
 To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,  
 The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:  
 But, this one day, I have leave to go.  
 And play out my fancy's fullest games;  
 I may fancy all day — and it shall be so —  
 That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names  
 Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the hillside yonder, through the morning,  
 Some one shall love me, as the world calls love:  
 I am no less than *Ottima*, take warning!

The gardens, and the great stone house above,  
 And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,  
 Are mine ; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,  
 To court me, while old Luca yet reposes :  
 And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses,  
 I . . . what now ? — give abundant cause for prate  
 About me — Ottima, I mean — of late,  
 Too bold, too confident she 'll still face down  
 The spitefullest of talkers in our town.  
 How we talk in the little town below !

But love, love, love — there 's better love, I know !  
 This foolish love was only day's first offer ;  
 I choose my next love to defy the scoffer :  
 For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally  
 Out of Possagno church at noon ?  
 Their house looks over Orcana valley :  
 Why should not I be the bride as soon  
 As Ottima ? For I saw, beside,  
 Arrive last night that little bride —  
 Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash  
 Of the pale snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,  
 Blacker than all except the black eyelash ;  
 I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses !  
 — So strict was she, the veil  
 Should cover close her pale  
 Pure cheeks — a bride to look at and scarce touch,  
 Scarce touch, remember, Jules ! For are not such  
 Used to be tended, flower-like, every-feature,  
 As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature ?  
 A soft and easy life these ladies lead :  
 Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.  
 Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,  
 Keep that foot its lady prinness,  
 Let those ankles never swerve  
 From their exquisite reserve,  
 Yet have to trip along the streets like me,  
 All but naked to the knee !  
 How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss  
 So startling as her real first infant kiss ?  
 Oh, no — not envy, this !

— Not envy, sure ! — for if you gave me  
 Leave to take or to refuse,  
 In earnest, do you think I 'd choose  
 That sort of new love to enslave me ?  
 Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning ;

As little fear of losing it as winning :  
 Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,  
 And only parents' love can last our lives.  
 At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,  
 Commune inside our turret: what prevents  
 My being Luigi? While that mossy lair  
 Of lizards through the winter-time is stirred  
 With each to each imparting sweet intents  
 For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird —  
 (For I observe of late, the evening walk  
 Of Luigi and his mother, always ends  
 Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,  
 Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)  
 — Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,  
 And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;  
 Let me be Luigi! If I only knew  
 What was my mother's face — my father, too!  
 Nay, if you come to that, best love of all  
 Is God's; then why not have God's love befall  
 Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,  
 Monsignor? — who to-night will bless the home  
 Of his dead brother; and God bless in turn  
 That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn  
 With love for all men! I, to-night at least,  
 Would be that holy and beloved priest.

Now wait! — even I already seem to share  
 In God's love: what does New-year's hymn declare?  
 What other meaning do these verses bear?

*All service ranks the same with God :  
 If now, as formerly he trod  
 Paradise, his presence fills  
 Our earth, each only as God wills  
 Can work — God's puppets, best and worst,  
 Are we ; there is no last nor first.*

*Say not " a small event ! " Why " small " ?  
 Costs it more pain than this, ye call  
 A " great event," should come to pass,  
 Than that ? Untwine me from the mass  
 Of deeds which make up life, one deed  
 Power shall full short in or exceed !*

And more of it, and more of it! — oh yes —  
 I will pass each, and see their happiness,

And envy none — being just as great, no doubt,  
 Useful to men, and dear to God, as they !  
 A pretty thing to care about  
 So mightily, this single holiday !  
 But let the sun shine ! Wherefore repine ?  
 — With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,  
 Down the grass path gray with dew,  
 Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,  
 Where the swallow never flew  
 Nor yet cicala dared carouse —  
 No, dared carouse !

[*She enters the street.*]

I. MORNING. *Up the Hillside, inside the Shrub-house.* LUCA'S  
 Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour, the German SEBALD.

*Seb.* [*sings.*] *Let the watching lids wink !  
 Day's ablaze with eyes, think !  
 Deep into the night, drink !*

*Otti.* Night ? Such may be your Rhine-land nights, perhaps ;  
 But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink  
 — We call such light, the morning : let us see !  
 Mind how you grope your way, though ! How these tall  
 Naked geraniums straggle ! Push the lattice  
 Behind that frame ! — Nay, do I bid you ? — Sebald,  
 It shakes the dust down on me ! Why, of course  
 The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,  
 Or must I find you something else to spoil ?  
 Kiss and be friends, my Sebald ! Is 't full morning ?  
 Oh, don't speak then !

*Seb.* Ay, thus it used to be !  
 Ever your house was, I remember, shut  
 Till mid-day ; I observed that, as I strolled  
 On mornings through the vale here ; country girls  
 Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,  
 Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills :  
 But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye !  
 And wisely : you were plotting one thing there,  
 Nature, another outside. I looked up —  
 Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,  
 Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.  
 Oh, I remember ! — and the peasants laughed  
 And said, "The old man sleeps with the young wife."  
 This house was his, this chair, this window — his !

*Otti.* Ah, the clear morning ! I can see St. Mark's ;  
 That black streak is the belfry. Stop : Vicenza



Should lie . . . there 's Padua, plain enough, that blue!  
Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger!

*Seb.*

Morning?

It seems to me a night with a sun added.  
Where 's dew, where 's freshness? That bruised plant, I bruised  
In getting through the lattice yestereve,  
Droops as it did. See, here 's my elbow's mark  
I' the dust o' the sill.

*Otti.*

Oh, shut the lattice, pray!

*Seb.* Let me lean out! I cannot scent blood here,  
Foul as the morn may be.

There, shut the world out!

How do you feel now, Ottima? There, curse  
The world and all outside! Let us throw off  
This mask: how do you bear yourself? Let's out  
With all of it!

*Otti.*

Best never speak of it.

*Seb.* Best speak again and yet again of it,  
Till words cease to be more than words. "His blood,"  
For instance — let those two words mean, "His blood"  
And nothing more. Notice, I'll say them now,  
"His blood."

*Otti.*

Assuredly if I repented

The deed —

*Seb.*

Repent? Who should repent, or why?

What puts that in your head? Did I once say  
That I repented?

*Otti.*

No; I said the deed . . .

*Seb.* "The deed" and "the event" — just now it was  
"Our passion's fruit" — the devil take such cant!  
Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,  
I am his cut-throat, you are . . .

*Otti.*

Here 's the wine;

I brought it when we left the house above,  
And glasses too — wine of both sorts. Black? White then?

*Seb.* But am not I his cut-throat? What are you?

*Otti.*

There trudges on his business from the Duomo

Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood  
And bare feet; always in one place at church,  
Close under the stone wall by the south entry.  
I used to take him for a brown cold piece  
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose  
To let me pass — at first, I say, I used:  
Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,  
I rather should account the plastered wall  
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.  
This, Sebald?

*Seb.* No, the white wine — the white wine !  
Well, Ottima, I promised no new year  
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way ;  
Nor does it rise : pour on ! To your black eyes !  
Do you remember last damned New Year's day ?

*Otti.* You brought those foreign prints. We looked at them  
Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme  
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying  
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up  
To hunt them out.

*Seb.* 'Faith, he is not alive  
To fondle you before my face.

*Otti.* Do you  
Fondle me then ! Who means to take your life  
For that, my Sebald ?

*Seb.* Hark you, Ottima !  
One thing to guard against. We 'll not make much  
One of the other — that is, not make more  
Parade of warinth, childish officious coil,  
Than yesterday : as if, sweet, I supposed  
Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,  
To show I love you — yes, still love you — love you  
In spite of Luca and what's come to him  
— Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,  
White sneering old reproachful face and all !  
We 'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if  
We still could lose each other, were not tied  
By this : conceive you ?

*Otti.* Love !

*Seb.* Not tied so sure !  
Because though I was wrought upon, have struck  
His insolence back into him — am I  
So surely yours ? — therefore forever yours ?

*Otti.* Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another,)  
Should we have — months ago, when first we loved,  
For instance that May morning we two stole  
Under the green ascent of sycamores —  
If we had come upon a thing like that  
Suddenly . . .

*Seb.* "A thing" — there again — "a thing !"

*Otti.* Then, Venus' body, had we come upon  
My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse  
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close —  
Would you have pored upon it ? Why persist  
In poring now upon it ? For 't is here  
As much as there in the deserted house :  
You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,

Now he is dead I hate him worse : I hate . . .  
 Dare you stay here? I would go back and hold  
 His two dead hands, and say, "I hate you worse,  
 Luca, than" . . .

*Seb.* Off, off — take your hands off mine,  
 'T is the hot evening — off! oh, morning is it?

*Otti.* There's one thing must be done; you know what thing.  
 Come in and help to carry. We may sleep  
 Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

*Seb.* What would come, think you, if we let him lie  
 Just as he is? Let him lie there until  
 The angels take him! He is turned by this  
 Off from his face beside, as you will see.

*Otti.* This dusty pane might serve for looking-glass.  
 Three, four — four gray hairs! Is it so you said  
 A plait of hair should wave across my neck?  
 No — this way.

*Seb.* Ottima, I would give your neck,  
 Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,  
 That this were undone! Killing! Kill the world,  
 So Luca lives again! — ay, lives to sputter  
 His fulsome dotage on you — yes, and feign  
 Surprise that I return at eve to sup,  
 When all the morning I was loitering here —  
 Bid me dispatch my business and begone.  
 I would . . .

*Otti.* See!

*Seb.* No, I'll finish! Do you think  
 I fear to speak the bare truth once for all?  
 All we have talked of, is, at bottom, fine  
 To suffer; there's a recompense in guilt;  
 One must be venturous and fortunate;  
 What is one young for, else? In age we'll sigh  
 O'er the wild reckless wicked days flown over;  
 Still, we have lived: the vice was in its place.  
 But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn  
 His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse —  
 Do lovers in romances sin that way?  
 Why, I was starving when I used to call  
 And teach you music, starving while you plucked me  
 These flowers to smell!

*Otti.* My poor lost friend!

*Seb.* He gave me  
 Life, nothing less: what if he did reproach  
 My perfidy, and threaten, and do more —  
 Had he no right? What was to wonder at?

He sat by us at table quietly :  
 Why must you lean across till our cheeks touched ?  
 Could he do less than make pretence to strike ?  
 'T is not the crime's sake — I'd commit ten crimes  
 Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone !  
 And you — O how feel you ? Feel you for me ?

*Otti.* Well then, I love you better now than ever,  
 And best (look at me while I speak to you) —  
 Best for the crime ; nor do I grieve, in truth,  
 This mask, this simulated ignorance,  
 This affectation of simplicity,  
 Falls off our crime ; this naked crime of ours  
 May not now be looked over : look it down !  
 Great ? let it be great ; but the joys it brought,  
 Pay they or no its price ? Come : they or it !  
 Speak not ! The past, would you give up the past  
 Such as it is, pleasure and crime together ?  
 Give up that noon I owned my love for you ?  
 The garden's silence ! even the single bee  
 Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped :  
 And where he hid you only could surmise  
 By some campanula chalice set a-swing :  
 Who stammered — “ Yes, I love you ? ”

*Seb.* And I drew  
 Back ; put far back your face with both my hands  
 Lest you should grow too full of me — your face  
 So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body !

*Otti.* And when I ventured to receive you here,  
 Made you steal hither in the mornings —

*Seb.* When  
 I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,  
 Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread  
 To a yellow haze ?

*Otti.* Ah — my sign was, the sun  
 Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree  
 Nipped by the first frost.

*Seb.* You would always laugh  
 At my wet boots : I had to stride through grass  
 Over my ankles.

*Otti.* Then our crowning night !

*Seb.* The July night ?

*Otti.* The day of it too, Sebald !  
 When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with heat,  
 Its black-blue canopy suffered descend  
 Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,  
 And smother up all life except our life.  
 So lay we till the storm came.

*Seb.* How it came :

*Otti.* Buried in woods we lay, you recollect ;  
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead ;  
And ever and anon some bright white shaft  
Burned through the pine-tree roof, here burned and there,  
As if God's messenger through the close wood screen  
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,  
Feeling for guilty thee and me : then broke  
The thunder like a whole sea overhead —

*Seb.* Yes !

*Otti.* — While I stretched myself upon you, hands  
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook  
All my locks loose, and covered you with them —  
You, Sebald, the same you !

*Seb.* Slower, Ottima !

*Otti.* And as we lay —

*Seb.* Less vehemently ! Love me !  
Forgive me ! Take not words, mere words, to heart !  
Your breath is worse than wine. Breathe slow, speak slow !  
Do not lean on me !

*Otti.* Sebald, as we lay,  
Rising and falling only with our pants,  
Who said, " Let death come now ! 'T is right to die !  
Right to be punished ! Nought completes such bliss  
But woe ! " Who said that ?

*Seb.* How did we ever rise ?  
Was 't that we slept ? Why did it end ?

*Otti.* I felt you  
Taper into a point the ruffled ends  
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips.  
My hair is fallen now : knot it again !

*Seb.* I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now and now !  
This way ? Will you forgive me — be once more  
My great queen ?

*Otti.* Bind it thrice about my brow ;  
Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,  
Magnificent in sin. Say that !

*Seb.* I crown you  
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,  
Magnificent . . .

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA singing —

*The year's at the spring  
And day's at the morn ;  
Morning's at seven ;  
The hillside's dew-pearled ;*

*The lark's on the wing ;  
The snail's on the thorn :  
God's in his heaven —  
All's right with the world !*

[PIPPA passes.]

*Seb.* God's in his heaven ! Do you hear that ? Who spoke ?  
You, you spoke !

*Otti.* Oh— that little ragged girl !  
She must have rested on the step : we give them  
But this one holiday the whole year round.  
Did you ever see our silk-mills — their inside ?  
There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.  
She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh !  
She does not hear : call you out louder !

*Seb.* Leave me !  
Go, get your clothes on — dress those shoulders !

*Otti.* Sebald ?

*Seb.* Wipe off that paint ! I hate you !

*Otti.* Miserable !

*Seb.* My God, and she is emptied of it now !  
Outright now ! — how miraculously gone  
All of the grace — had she not strange grace once ?  
Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,  
No purpose holds the features up together,  
Only the cloven brow and puckered chin  
Stay in their places : and the very hair,  
That seemed to have a sort of life in it,  
Drops, a dead web !

*Otti.* Speak to me — not of me !

*Seb.* — That round great full-orbed face, where not an angle  
Broke the delicious indolence — all broken !

*Otti.* To me — not of me ! Ungrateful, perjured cheat !  
A coward too : but ingrate's worse than all !  
Beggard — my slave — a fawning, cringing lie !  
Leave me ! Betray me ! I can see your drift !  
A lie that walks and eats and drinks !

*Seb.* My God !  
Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-blades —  
I should have known there was no blood beneath !

*Otti.* You hate me then ? You hate me then ?

*Seb.* To think  
She would succeed in her absurd attempt,  
And fascinate by sinning, show herself  
Superior — guilt from its excess superior  
To innocence ! That little peasant's voice

Has righted all again. Though I be lost,  
 I know which is the better, never fear,  
 Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,  
 Nature or trick! I see what I have done,  
 Entirely now! Oh I am proud to feel  
 Such torments — let the world take credit thence —  
 I, having done my deed, pay too its price!  
 I hate, hate — curse you! God's in his heaven!

*Otti.*

— Me!

Me! no, no, Sebald, not yourself — kill me!  
 Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me — then  
 Yourself — then — presently — first hear me speak!  
 I always meant to kill myself — wait, you!  
 Lean on my breast — not as a breast; don't love me  
 The more because you lean on me, my own  
 Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths presently!

*Seb.* My brain is drowned now — quite drowned: all I feel  
 Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,  
 A hurry-down within me, as of waters  
 Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:  
 There they go — whirls from a black fiery sea!

*Otti.* Not me — to him, O God, be merciful!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Hillside to Orcana.  
 Foreign Students of Painting and Sculpture, from Venice, assembled  
 opposite the house of JULES, a young French Statuary, at  
 Possagno.*

*1st Student.* Attention! My own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five — who's a defaulter? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest's found out.

*2d Stud.* All here! Only our poet's away — never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it, — when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all: whereto is this prophetic epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me, — “*Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflies.*” His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of write couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly. — *Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs:*

*Hebe's plaister — One strip Cools your lip. Phæbus' emulsion — One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus — One box Cures . . .*

*3d Stud.* Subside, my fine fellow! If the marriage was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

*2d Stud.* Good! — only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris* . . . and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy Giovacchino!

*1st Stud.* To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh, — listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by: I am spokesman — the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche — but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came alone from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again — oh, alone indubitably! — to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalized, heartless bunglers! — so he was heard to call us all. Now, is Schramm brutalized, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

*Gott.* Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off — what do folks style it? — the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters now, you call his — I can't laugh at them.

*4th Stud.* Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

*Gott.* His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

*4th Stud.* That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl — loves a model he might hire by the hour!

*Gott.* See here! "He has been accustomed," he writes, "to have Canova's women about him, in stone, and the world's women beside him, in flesh; these being as much below, as those, above his soul's aspiration: but now he is to have the reality." There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

*1st Stud.* Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody!) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

*Schramm.* Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom — it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the



blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favorite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with — as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women? — there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men? — there's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

*1st Stud.* Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble — oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery — you know: there he marches first resolutely past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla* — cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement — “In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich — I see you!” Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into — I say, into — the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint — and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good-bye therefore, to poor Canova — whose gallery no longer needs detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

*5th Stud.* Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

*1st Stud.* Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now, I happened to hear of a young Greek — real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's “hair like sea-moss” — Schramm knows! — white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest. — a daughter of Natalia, so she swears — that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter — somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere —

would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms — the pale cheeks, the black hair — whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too — Phene, which is, by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and dispatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way — secrecy must be observed — in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St — st — Here they come!

*6th Stud.* Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly, speak within yourselves!

*5th Stud.* Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm and half in calm, — patted down over the left temple, — like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it: and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in.

*2d Stud.* Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy! — rich, that your face may the better set it off.

*6th Stud.* And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

*Gott.* She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

*1st Stud.* Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

*6th Stud.* She does not speak — has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

*Gott.* How he gazes on her! Pity — pity!

*1st Stud.* They go in: now, silence! You three, — not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate: just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated!

II. NOON. *Over Orcana. The house of JULES, who crosses its threshold with PHENE: she is silent, on which JULES begins —*

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you  
 Are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,  
 If you'll not die: so, never die! Sit here —  
 My work-room's single seat. I over-lean  
 This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn

Like an entire flower upward : eyes, lips, last  
 Your chin — no, last your throat turns : 't is their scent  
 Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look ever  
 This one way till I change, grow you — I could  
 Change into you, beloved !

You by me,

And I by you ; this is your hand in mine,  
 And side by side we sit : all 's true. Thank God !  
 I have spoken : speak you !

O my life to come !

My Tydeus must be carved that 's there in clay ;  
 Yet how be carved, with you about the room ?  
 Where must I place you ? When I think that once  
 This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven  
 Without you ! Shall I ever work again,  
 Get fairly into my old ways again,  
 Bid each conception stand, while, trait by trait,  
 My hand transfers its lineaments to stone ?  
 Will my mere fancies live near you, their truth —  
 The live truth, passing and repassing me,  
 Sitting beside me ?

Now speak !

Only first,

See, all your letters ! Was 't not well contrived ?  
 Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe ; she keeps  
 Your letters next her skin : which drops out foremost ?  
 Ah, — this that swam down like a first moonbeam  
 Into my world !

Again those eyes complete

Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,  
 Of all my room holds ; to return and rest  
 On me, with pity, yet some wonder too :  
 As if God bade some spirit plague a world,  
 And this were the one moment of surprise  
 And sorrow while she took her station, pausing  
 O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy !  
 What gaze you at ? Those ? Books, I told you of ;  
 Let your first word to me rejoice them, too :  
 This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red,  
 Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe —  
 Read this line . . . no, shame — Homer's be the Greek  
 First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl !  
 This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type  
 With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,  
 To mark great places with due gratitude ;  
 " *He said, and on Antinous directed*

*A bitter shaft* . . . a flower blots out the rest!  
 Again upon your search? My statues, then!  
 — Ah, do not mind that — better that will look  
 When cast in bronze — an Almaign Kaiser, that,  
 Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based on hip.  
 This, rather, turn to! What, unrecognized?  
 I thought you would have seen that here you sit  
 As I imagined you, — Hippolyta,  
 Naked upon her bright Numidian horse.  
 Recall you this then? “Carve in bold relief” —  
 So you commanded — “carve, against I come,  
 A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,  
 Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,  
 Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch.  
 ‘Praise those who slew Hipparchus!’ cry the guests,  
 ‘While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle waves  
 As erst above our champion: stand up, all!’ ”  
 See, I have labored to express your thought.  
 Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms  
 (Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,  
 Only consenting at the branch's end  
 They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole face,  
 The Praiser's, in the centre: who with eyes  
 Sightless, so bend they back to light inside  
 His brain where visionary forms throng up,  
 Sings, minding not that palpitating arch  
 Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine  
 From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor crowns cast off,  
 Violet and parsley crowns to trample on —  
 Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,  
 Devoutly their unconquerable hymn.  
 But you must say a “well” to that — say “well”!  
 Because you gaze — am I fantastic, sweet?  
 Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble — marbly  
 Even to the silence! Why, before I found  
 The real flesh Phene, I inured myself  
 To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff  
 For better nature's birth by means of art:  
 With me, each substance tended to one form  
 Of beauty — to the human archetype.  
 On every side occurred suggestive germs  
 Of that — the tree, the flower — or take the fruit, —  
 Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,  
 Curved beewise o'er its bough; as rosy limbs,  
 Depending, nestled in the leaves; and just  
 From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad sprang.

But of the stuffs one can be master of,  
 How I divined their capabilities !  
 From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk  
 That yields your outline to the air's embrace,  
 Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom ;  
 Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure  
 To cut its one confided thought clean out  
 Of all the world. But marble ! — 'neath my tools  
 More pliable than jelly — as it were  
 Some clear primordial creature dug from depths  
 In the earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,  
 And whence all baser substance may be worked ;  
 Refine it off to air, you may, — condense it  
 Down to the diamond ; — is not metal there,  
 When o'er the sudden speck my chisel trips ?  
 — Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, approach,  
 Lay bare those bluish veins of blood asleep ?  
 Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised  
 By the swift implement sent home at once,  
 Flushes and glowings radiate and hover  
 About its track ?

Phene ? what — why is this ?  
 That whitening cheek, those still-dilating eyes !  
 Ah, you will die — I knew that you would die !

*PHENE begins, on his having long remained silent.*

Now the end's coming ; to be sure, it must  
 Have ended sometime ! Tush, why need I speak  
 Their foolish speech ? I cannot bring to mind  
 One half of it, beside ; and do not care  
 For old Natalia now, nor any of them.  
 Oh, you — what are you ? — if I do not try  
 To say the words Natalia made me learn,  
 To please your friends, — it is to keep myself  
 Where your voice lifted me, by letting that  
 Proceed : but can it ? Even you, perhaps,  
 Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,  
 The music's life, and me along with that —  
 No, or you would ! We'll stay, then, as we are :  
 Above the world.

You creature with the eyes !  
 If I could look forever up to them,  
 As now you let me, — I believe, all sin,  
 All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,  
 Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth  
 Whence all that's low comes, and there touch and stay

— Never to overtake the rest of me,  
 All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,  
 Drawn by those eyes! What rises is myself,  
 Not me the shame and suffering; but they sink,  
 Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,  
 Above the world!

But you sink, for your eyes  
 Are altering — altered! Stay — “I love you, love”  
 I could prevent it if I understood:  
 More of your words to me: was't in the tone  
 Or the words, your power?

Or stay — I will repeat  
 Their speech, if that contents you! Only change  
 No more, and I shall find it presently  
 Far back here, in the brain yourself filled up.  
 Natalia threatened me that harm should follow  
 Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,  
 But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.  
 Your friends, — Natalia said they were your friends  
 And meant you well, — because, I doubted it,  
 Observing (what was very strange to see)  
 On every face, so different in all else,  
 The same smile girls like me are used to bear,  
 But never men, men cannot stoop so low;  
 Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,  
 That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit  
 Which seems to take possession of the world  
 And make of God a tame confederate,  
 Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know!  
 But still Natalia said they were your friends,  
 And they assented though they smiled the more,  
 And all came round me, — that thin Englishman  
 With light lank hair seemed leader of the rest;  
 He held a paper — “What we want,” said he,  
 Ending some explanation to his friends —  
 “Is something slow, involved and mystical,  
 To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste  
 And lure him on until, at innermost  
 Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may find — this!  
 — As in the apple's core, the noisome fly:  
 For insects on the rind are seen at once,  
 And brushed aside as soon, but this is found  
 Only when on the lips or loathing tongue.”  
 And so he read what I have got by heart:  
 I'll speak it, — “Do not die, love! I am yours” .  
 No — is not that, or like that, part of words

Yourself began by speaking? Strange to lose  
 What cost such pains to learn! Is this more right?

*I am a painter who cannot paint ;  
 In my life, a devil rather than saint,  
 In my brain, as poor a creature too :  
 No end to all I cannot do !  
 Yet do one thing at least I can —  
 Love a man or hate a man  
 Supremely : thus my love began.  
 Through the Valley of Love I went,  
 In the lonigest spot to abide,  
 And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,  
 I found Hate dwelling beside.  
 (Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,  
 Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride !)  
 And further, I traversed Hate's grove,  
 In the hatefullest nook to dwell ;  
 But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love  
 Where the shadow threefold fell.  
 (The meaning — those black bride's eyes above,  
 Not a painter's lip should tell !)*

“ And here,” said he, “ Jules probably will ask,  
 ‘ You have black eyes, Love, — you are, sure enough,  
 My peerless bride, — then do you tell indeed  
 What needs some explanation ! What means this ? ’ ”  
 — And I am to go on, without a word —

*So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,  
 From simple that I was of late.  
 Once, when I loved, I would enlure  
 Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face  
 Of her I loved, in one embrace —  
 As if by mere love I could love immensely !  
 Once, when I hated, I would plunge  
 My sword, and wipe with the first lunge  
 My foe's whole life out like a sponge —  
 As if by mere hate I could hate intensely !  
 But now I am wiser, know better the fashion  
 How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion :  
 And if I see cause to love more, hate more  
 Than ever man loved, ever hated before —  
 And seek in the Valley of Love  
 The nest, or the nook in Hate's Grove,  
 Where my soul may surely reach*

*The essence, nought less, of each,  
 The Hate of all Hates, the Love  
 Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove, —  
 I find them the very warders  
 Each of the other's borders.  
 When I love most, Love is disguised  
 In Hate ; and when Hate is surprised  
 In Love, then I hate most : ask  
 How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,  
 Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask, —  
 And how, having hated thee,  
 I sought long and painfully  
 To reach thy heart, nor prick  
 The skin but pierce to the quick —  
 Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight  
 By thy bride — how the painter Lutwyche can hate !*

JULES interposes.

Lutwyche ! Who else ? But all of them, no doubt,  
 Hated me : they at Venice — presently  
 Their turn, however ! You I shall not meet :  
 If I dreamed, saying this would wake me.

Keep

What's here, the gold — we cannot meet again,  
 Consider ! and the money was but meant  
 For two years' travel, which is over now,  
 All chance or hope or care or need of it.  
 This — and what comes from selling these, my casts  
 And books and medals, except . . . let them go  
 Together, so the produce keeps you safe  
 Out of Natalia's clutches ! — If by chance  
 (For all's chance here) I should survive the gang  
 At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,  
 We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide.

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing —

*Give her but a least excuse to love me !  
 When — where —  
 How — can this arm establish her above me,  
 If fortune fixed her as my lady there,  
 There already, to eternally reprove me ?  
 ("Hist !" — said Kate the Queen ;  
 But "Oh" — cried the maiden, binding her tresses,  
 "'Tis only a page that carols unseen,  
 Crumbling your hounds their messes !")*



*Is she wronged? — To the rescue of her honor,  
My heart!  
Is she poor? — What costs it to be styled a donor?  
Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.  
But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!  
("Nay, list!" — bade Kate the Queen;  
And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,  
" 'Tis only a page that carols unseen,  
Fitting your hawks their jesses! ")* [PIPPA passes.

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang forth?  
Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced  
The crown of Cyprus to be lady here  
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,  
And peasants sing how once a certain page  
Pined for the grace of her so far above  
His power of doing good to "Kate the Queen —  
She never could be wronged, be poor," he sighed,  
"Need him to help her!"

Yes, a bitter thing  
To see our lady above all need of us;  
Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,  
But the world looks so. If whoever loves  
Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,  
The blessing or the blest one, queen or page,  
Why should we always choose the page's part?  
Here is a woman with utter need of me, —  
I find myself queen here, it seems!

How strange!

Look at the woman here with the new soul,  
Like my own Psyche. — fresh upon her lips  
Alit, the visionary butterfly,  
Waiting my word to enter and make bright,  
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.  
This body had no soul before, but slept  
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free  
From taint or foul with stain, as outward things  
Fastened their image on its passiveness:  
Now, it will wake, feel, live — or die again!  
Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff  
Be Art — and further, to evoke a soul  
From form be nothing? This new soul is mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do? — save  
A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death

Without me, from their hooting. Oh, to hear  
 God's voice plain as I heard it first, before  
 They broke in with their laughter! I heard them  
 Henceforth, not God.

To Ancona — Greece — some isle!  
 I wanted silence only; there is clay  
 Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes  
 In Art: the only thing is, to make sure  
 That one does like it — which takes pains to know.  
 Scatter all this, my Phene — this mad dream!  
 Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's friends,  
 What the whole world except our love — my own,  
 Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,  
 Ere night we travel for your land — some isle  
 With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside —  
 I do but break these paltry models up  
 To begin Art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I —  
 And save him from my statue meeting him?  
 Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!  
 Like a god going through his world, there stands  
 One mountain for a moment in the dusk,  
 Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow:  
 And you are ever by me while I gaze  
 — Are in my arms as now — as now — as now!  
 Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!  
 Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from Orcana to the Turret.  
 Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with BLUPHOCKS, an  
 English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks.\** So, that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned: — now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business; we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors: we know that he is a saint and all that a bishop should be, who is a great man beside. *Oh were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas fagot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to was the Arminian: for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded

\* "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and light-some, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity: 't was the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac — (these are vowels, you dogs, — follow my stick's end in the mud — *Celarent, Darii, Ferio!*) and one morning presented myself, spelling book in hand, a, b, c, — I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past, you'll say — "*How Moses hocus-pocussed Egypt's land with fly and locust,*" — or, "*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,*" — or, "*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam.*" In no wise! "*Shuckabrack — Boach — somebody or other — Isaach, Re-cci-er, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of — Stolen Goods!*" So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge! — mean to live so — and die — *As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry, With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, And never an obolus . . .* (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his Intendant — I possess a burning pocket-full of *zwanzigers*) . . . *To pay the Stygian Ferry!*

*1st Pol.* There is the girl, then: go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. [*To the rest.*] I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning!

*2d Pol.* Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

*Blup.* Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—rhyming to *Panurge consults Hertrippa — Believest thou, King Agrippa!* Something might be done with that name.

*2d Pol.* Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe muskmelon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger!* Leave this fooling, and look out: the afternoon's over or nearly so.

*3d Pol.* Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? What's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

*2d Pol.* Flourish all round — "Put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end — "Detain him till further

advices reach you ;” scratch at bottom — “ Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above ;” ink-spirt on right-hand side, (which is the case here) — “ Arrest him at once.” Why and wherefore, I don’t concern myself, but my instructions amount to this : if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna — well and good, the passport deposed with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well ; but let him stay over to-night — there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal, sure enough ! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III. EVENING. *Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo.* LUIGI and his MOTHER entering.

*Mother.* If there blew wind, you ’d hear a long sigh, easing  
The utmost heaviness of music’s heart.

*Luigi.* Here in the archway ?

*Mother.* Oh no, no — in farther,  
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.

*Luigi.* Here surely, then.

How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up !  
Hark — “ Lucius Junius ! ” The very ghost of a voice  
Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those ?  
Mere withered wallflowers, waving overhead ?  
They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair  
That lean out of their topmost fortress — look  
And listen, mountain men, to what we say,  
Hand under chin of each grave earthy face :  
Up and show faces all of you ! — “ All of you ! ”  
That’s the king dwarf with the scarlet comb ; old Franz,  
Come down and meet your fate ? Hark — “ Meet your fate ! ”

*Mother.* Let him not meet it, my Luigi — do not  
Go to his City ! Putting crime aside,  
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned :  
Your Pellicos and writers for effect,  
Write for effect.

*Luigi.* Hush ! Say A writes, and B.

*Mother.* These A’s and B’s write for effect, I say.  
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good  
Is silent ; you hear each petty injury,  
None of his virtues ; he is old beside,  
Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why  
Do A and B not kill him themselves ?

*Luigi.* They teach  
Others to kill him — me — and, if I fail,  
Others to succeed ; now, if A tried and failed,  
I could not teach that : mine 's the lesser task.  
Mother, they visit night by night . . .

*Mother.* — You, Luigi ?  
Ah, will you let me tell you what you are ?

*Luigi.* Why not ? Oh, the one thing you fear to hint,  
You may assure yourself I say and say  
Ever to myself ! At times — nay, even as now  
We sit — I think my mind is touched, suspect  
All is not sound : but is not knowing that,  
What constitutes one sane or otherwise ?  
I know I am thus — so, all is right again.  
I laugh at myself as through the town I walk,  
And see men merry as if no Italy  
Were suffering ; then I ponder — “ I am rich,  
Young, healthy ; why should this fact trouble me,  
More than it troubles these ? ” But it does trouble.  
No, trouble 's a bad word : for as I walk  
There 's springing and melody and giddiness,  
And old quaint turns and passages of my youth,  
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves,  
Return to me — whatever may amuse me,  
And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven  
Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,  
The very cicala laughs “ There goes he, and there !  
Feast him, the time is short ; he is on his way  
For the world's sake : feast him this once, our friend ! ”  
And in return for all this, I can trip  
Chcerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go  
This evening, mother !

*Mother.* But mistrust yourself —  
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him !

*Luigi.* Oh, there I feel — am sure that I am right !

*Mother.* Mistrust your judgment then, of the mere means  
To this wild enterprise : say, you are right, —  
How should one in your state e'er bring to pass  
What would require a cool head, a cold heart  
And a calm hand ? You never will escape.

*Luigi.* Escape ? To even wish that, would spoil all.  
The dying is best part of it. Too much  
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,  
To leave myself excuse for longer life :  
Was not life pressed down, running o'er with joy,  
That I might finish with it ere my fellows

Who, sparelier feasted, make a longer stay ?  
 I was put at the board-head, helped to all  
 At first ; I rise up happy and content.  
 God must be glad one loves his world so much.  
 I can give news of earth to all the dead  
 Who ask me : — last year's sunsets, and great stars  
 That had a right to come first and see ebb  
 The crimson wave that drifts the sun away —  
 Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims  
 That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood  
 Impatient of the azure — and that day  
 In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm —  
 May's warm slow yellow moonlit summer nights —  
 Gone are they, but I have them in my soul !

*Mother.* (He will not go !)

*Luigi.* You smile at me ? 'T is true, —  
 Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,  
 Environ my devotedness as quaintly  
 As round about some antique altar wreath  
 The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.

*Mother.* See now : you reach the city, you must cross  
 His threshold — how ?

*Luigi.* Oh, that's if we conspired !  
 Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess —  
 But guess not how the qualities most fit  
 For such an office, qualities I have,  
 Would little stead me, otherwise employed,  
 Yet prove of rarest merit only here.  
 Every one knows for what his excellence  
 Will serve, but no one ever will consider  
 For what his worst defect might serve : and yet  
 Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder  
 In search of a distorted ash ? — I find  
 The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect bow.  
 Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man  
 Arriving at the palace on my errand !  
 No, no ! I have a handsome dress packed up —  
 White satin here, to set off my black hair ;  
 In I shall march — for you may watch your life out  
 Behind thick walls, make friends there to betray you ;  
 More than one man spoils everything. March straight —  
 Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for,  
 Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter) on  
 Through guards and guards — I have rehearsed it all  
 Inside the turret here a hundred times.  
 Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe !

But where they cluster thickliest is the door  
 Of doors ; they 'll let you pass — they 'll never blab  
 Each to the other, he knows not the favorite,  
 Whence he is bound and what 's his business now.  
 Walk in — straight up to him ; you have no knife :  
 Be prompt, how should he scream ? Then, out with you !  
 Italy, Italy, my Italy !

You 're free, you 're free ! Oh mother, I could dream  
 They got about me — Andrea from his exile,  
 Pier from his dungeon, Gualtier from his grave !

*Mother.* Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism  
 The easiest virtue for a selfish man  
 To acquire : he loves himself — and next, the world —  
 If he must love beyond, — but nought between :  
 As a short-sighted man sees nought midway  
 His body and the sun above. But you  
 Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient  
 To my least wish, and running o'er with love :  
 I could not call you cruel or unkind.

Once more, your ground for killing him ! — then go !

*Luigi.* Now do you try me, or make sport of me ?  
 How first the Austrians got these provinces . . .  
 (If that is all, I 'll satisfy you soon)  
 — Never by conquest but by cunning, for  
 That treaty whereby . . .

*Mother.* Well ?

*Luigi.* (Sure, he 's arrived,  
 The tell-tale cuckoo : spring 's his confidant,  
 And he lets out her April purposes !)  
 Or . . . better go at once to modern time.  
 He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I understand  
 But can't restate the matter ; that 's my boast :  
 Others could reason it out to you, and prove  
 Things they have made me feel.

*Mother.* Why go to-night ?  
 Morn 's for adventure. Jupiter is now  
 A morning-star. I cannot hear you, Luigi !

*Luigi.* "I am the bright and morning-star," saith God —  
 And, "to such an one I give the morning-star."  
 The gift of the morning-star ! Have I God's gift  
 Of the morning-star ?

*Mother.* Chiara will love to see  
 That Jupiter an evening-star next June.

*Luigi.* True, mother. Well for those who live through June !  
 Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring pomps  
 That triumph at the heels of June the god

Leading his revel through our leafy world.

Yes, Chiara will be here.

*Mother.* In June : remember,  
Yourself appointed that month for her coming.

*Luigi.* Was that low noise the echo ?

*Mother.* The night-wind.  
She must be grown — with her blue eyes upturned  
As if life were one long and sweet surprise :  
In June she comes.

*Luigi.* We were to see together  
The Titian at Treviso. There, again !

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing -

*A king lived long ago,  
In the morning of the world,  
When earth was nigher heaven than now  
And the king's locks curled,  
Disparting o'er a forehead full  
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn  
Of some sacrificial bull —  
Only calm as a babe new-born :  
For he was got to a sleepy mood,  
So safe from all decrepitude,  
Age with its bane, so sure gone by,  
(The gods so loved him while he dreamed)  
That, having lived thus long, there seemed  
No need the king should ever die.*

*Luigi.* No need that sort of king should ever die !

*Among the rocks his city was :  
Before his palace, in the sun,  
He sat to see his people pass,  
And judge them every one  
From its threshold of smooth stone.  
They haled him many a valley-thief  
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief  
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,  
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found  
On the sea-sand left aground ;  
And sometimes clung about his feet,  
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,  
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak  
Of one with sullen thickset brows :  
And sometimes from the prison-house  
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,  
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,  
Who through some chink had pushed and pressed*



*Worm-like into the temple, — caught  
He was by the very god,  
Who ever in the darkness strode  
Backward and forward, keeping watch  
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!  
These, all and every one,  
The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

*Luigi.* That king should still judge sitting in the sun!  
*His councillors, on left and right,  
Looked anxious up, — but no surprise  
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes  
Where the very blue had turned to white.  
'T is said, a Python scared one day  
The breathless city, till he came,  
With forked tongue and eyes on flame,  
Where the old king sat to judge alway;  
But when he saw the sweepy hair  
Girt with a crown of berries rare  
Which the god will hardly give to wear  
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare  
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,  
At his wondrous forest rites, —  
Seeing this, he did not dare  
Approach that threshold in the sun,  
Assault the old king smiling there.  
Such grace had kings when the world begun!*

[PIPPA passes.

*Luigi.* And such grace have they, now that the world ends!  
The Python at the city, on the throne,  
And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,  
Lurk in by-corners lest they fall his prey.  
Are crowns yet to be won in this late time,  
Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach?  
'T is God's voice calls: how could I stay? Farewell!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Turret to the Bishop's  
Brother's House, close to the Duomo S. Maria. Poor Girls sitting  
on the steps.*

*1st Girl.* There goes a swallow to Venice — the stout seafarer!  
Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for wings.  
Let us all wish; you, wish first!

*2d Girl.* I? This sunset  
To finish.

*3d Girl.* That old — somebody I know,  
Grayer and older than my grandfather,

To give me the same treat he gave last week —  
 Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,  
 Lampreys and red Breganze-wine, and numbling  
 The while some folly about how well I fare,  
 Let sit and eat my supper quietly :  
 Since had he not himself been late this morning  
 Detained at — never mind where, — had he not . . .  
 “ Eh, baggage, had I not ! ” —

*2d Girl.* How she can lie !

*3d Girl.* Look there — by the nails !

*2d Girl.* What makes your fingers red ?

*3d Girl.* Dipping them into wine to write bad words with  
 On the bright table : how he laughed !

*1st Girl.* My turn.

Spring's come and summer's coming. I would wear  
 A long loose gown, down to the feet and hands,  
 With plaits here, close about the throat, all day ;  
 And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed ;  
 And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,  
 Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . . ah, I should say,  
 'This is away in the fields — miles !

*3d Girl.* Say at once

You'd be at home : she'd always be at home !  
 Now comes the story of the farm among  
 The cherry orchards, and how April snowed  
 White blossoms on her as she ran. Why, fool,  
 They've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how tall you were,  
 Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,  
 Made a dung-hill of your garden !

*1st Girl.* They destroy

My garden since I left them ? well — perhaps  
 I would have done so : so I hope they have !  
 A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall ;  
 They called it mine, I have forgotten why,  
 It must have been there long ere I was born :  
*Cric — cric* — I think I hear the wasps o'erhead  
 Pricking the papers strung to flutter there  
 And keep off birds in fruit-time — coarse long papers,  
 And the wasps eat them, prick them through and through.

*3d Girl.* How her mouth twitches ! Where was I ? — before  
 She broke in with her wishes and long gowns  
 And wasps — would I be such a fool ! — Oh, here !  
 This is my way : I answer every one  
 Who asks me why I make so much of him —  
 (If you say, “ you love him ” — straight “ he'll not be  
 gulled ! ”)

“ He that seduced me when I was a girl  
Thus high — had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,  
Brown, red, white,” — as the case may be : that pleases !  
See how that beetle burnishes in the path !

There sparkles he along the dust : and, there —  
Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled at least !

*1st Girl.* When I was young, they said if you killed one  
Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend  
Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.

*2d Girl.* When you were young ? Nor are you young, that’s  
true.

How your plump arms, that were, have dropped away !

Why, I can span them. Cecco beats you still ?

No matter, so you keep your curious hair.

I wish they’d find a way to dye our hair

Your color — any lighter tint, indeed,

Than black : the men say they are sick of black,

Black eyes, black hair !

*4th Girl.* Sick of yours, like enough.

Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys

And ortolans ? Giovita, of the palace,

Engaged (but there’s no trusting him) to slice me

Polenta with a knife that had cut up

An ortolan.

*2d Girl.* Why, there ! Is not that Pippa

We are to talk to, under the window, — quick ! —

Where the lights are ?

*1st Girl.* That she ? No, or she would sing,  
For the Intendant said . . .

*3d Girl.* Oh, you sing first !

Then, if she listens and comes close . . . I’ll tell you, —

Sing that song the young English noble made,

Who took you for the purest of the pure,

And meant to leave the world for you — what fun !

*2d Girl.* [*sings.*]

*You’ll love me yet ! — and I can tarry*

*Your love’s protracted growing :*

*June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,*

*From seeds of April’s sowing.*

*I plant a heartfull now : some seed*

*At least is sure to strike,*

*And yield — what you’ll not pluck indeed,*

*Not love, but, may be, like.*

*You'll look at least on love's remains,  
A grave's one violet:  
Your look? — that pays a thousand pains.  
What's death? You'll love me yet!*

*3d Girl.* [to PIPPA who approaches.] Oh you may come closer — we shall not eat you! Why, you seem the very person that the great rich handsome Englishman has fallen so violently in love with. I'll tell you all about it.

IV. NIGHT. *Inside the Palace by the Duomo.* MONSIGNOR, dismissing his Attendants.

*Mon.* Thanks, friends, many thanks! I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of you. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur . . .* ugh, ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather: but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here. To be sure, when 't was full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [To the Intendant.] Not you, Ugo! [The others leave the apartment.] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo.

*Inten.* Uguccio —

*Mon.* . . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo and Fos-sombruno; — what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

*Inten.* Do you choose this especial night to question me?

*Mon.* This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother: fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the Third of December, I find him . . .

*Inten.* If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

*Mon.* Ay, ay, ugh, ugh, — nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this Third of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was

going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art. Here's his letter, — "He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics," — strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

*Inten.* Is Correggio a painter?

*Mon.* Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may — probably will, fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a musician, (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel) transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

*Inten.* Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one, — next you thin it gradually, — always retaining me with your smile, — and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now: what is it you want with me?

*Mon.* Ugo!

*Inten.* From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers — why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*, — and your nod at the end meant, — what?

*Mon.* Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo! —

*Inten.* I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him — ask me!

*Mon.* I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli, (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name,) was the interdict ever taken off you for robbing that church at Cesena?

*Inten.* No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

*Mon.* Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp. Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and

century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul! — I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were, — what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth: but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only, — for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brothers' ill-gotten treasure reverts to me. I can stop the consequences of his crime: and not one *sollo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with: what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villanous seize. Because, to pleasure myself apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw, — am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No — if my cough would but allow me to speak!

*Inten.* What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

*Mon.* — Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say . . .

*Inten.* “Forgive us our trespasses”?

*Mon.* My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-purdoning? — I? — who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuousest efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

*Inten.* And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

*Mon.* 1, 2 — N° 3! — ay, can you read the substance of a letter, N° 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late younger brother — that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punish-

ment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

*Inten.* So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face; or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce — as you say — howsoever, wheresoever and whensoever.

*Mon.* Liar!

*Inten.* Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop — you!

*Mon.* I see through the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

*Inten.* And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you — the girl — here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak — know nothing of her nor of me! I see her every day — saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither — have indeed begun operations already. There's a certain lusty blue-eyed florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive — no, that's not it — assent I do not say — but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'Tis but a little black-eyed pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her. 'Tis as well settled once and forever. Some women I have procured will pass Blu-

phocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled! — you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing —

*Overhead the tree-tops meet,  
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;  
There was nought above me, nought below,  
My childhood had not learned to know:  
For, what are the voices of birds  
— Ay, and of beasts, — but words, our words,  
Only so much more sweet?  
The knowledge of that with my life begun.  
But I had so near made out the sun,  
And counted your stars, the seven and one,  
Like the fingers of my hand:  
Nay, I could all but understand  
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;  
And just when out of her soft fifty changes  
No unfamiliar face might overlook me —  
Suddenly God took me.*

[PIPPA passes.

*Mon.* [springing up.] My people — one and all — all — within there! Gag this villain — tie him hand and foot! He dares . . . I know not half he dares — but remove him — quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!* Quick, I say!

PIPPA'S Chamber again. *She enters it.*

The bee with his comb,  
The mouse at her dray,  
The grub in its tomb,  
While winter away;  
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,  
How fare they?  
Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my Zanze!  
“Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Breganze” —  
The summer of life so easy to spend,  
And care for to-morrow so soon put away!  
But winter hastens at summer's end,  
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,  
How fare they?  
No bidding me then to . . . what did Zanze say?  
“Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes  
More like” . . . (what said she?) — “and less like canoes!”  
How pert that girl was! — would I be those pert



Impudent staring women! It had done me,  
 However, surely no such mighty hurt  
 To learn his name who passed that jest upon me:  
 No foreigner, that I can recollect,  
 Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect  
 Our silk-mills — none with blue eyes and thick rings  
 Of raw-silk-colored hair, at all events.  
 Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,  
 We shall do better, see what next year brings!  
 I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear  
 More destitute than you perhaps next year!  
 Bluph . . . something! I had caught the uncouth name  
 But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter  
 Above us — bound to spoil such idle chatter  
 As ours: it were indeed a serious matter  
 If silly talk like ours should put to shame  
 The pious man, the man devoid of blame,  
 The . . . ah but — ah but, all the same,  
 No mere mortal has a right  
 To carry that exalted air;  
 Best people are not angels quite:  
 While — not the worst of people's doings scare  
 The devil; so there's that proud look to spare!  
 Which is mere counsel to myself, mind! for  
 I have just been the holy Monsignor:  
 And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,  
 And you too, Luigi! — how that Luigi started  
 Out of the turret — doubtlessly departed  
 On some good errand or another,  
 For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,  
 And the sullen company that prowled  
 About his path, I noticed, scowled  
 As if they had lost a prey in him.  
 And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,  
 And I was Ottima beside,  
 And now what am I? — tired of fooling.  
 Day for folly, night for schooling!  
 New year's day is over and spent,  
 Ill or well, I must be content.  
 Even my lily's asleep, I vow:  
 Wake up — here's a friend I've plucked you,  
 Call this flower a heart's-case now!  
 Something rare, let me instruct you,  
 Is this, with petals triply swollen,  
 Three times spotted, thrice the pollen;  
 While the leaves and parts that witness

Old proportions and their fitness,  
 Here remain unchanged, unmoved now ;  
 Call this pampered thing improved now !  
 Suppose there 's a king of the flowers  
 And a girl-show held in his bowers —  
 "Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"  
 Says he, "Zanze from the Brenta,  
 I have made her gorge polenta  
 Till both cheeks are near as bouncing  
 As her . . . name there 's no pronouncing !  
 See this heightened color too,  
 For she swilled Breganze wine  
 Till her nose turned deep carmine ;  
 'T was but white when wild she grew.  
 And only by this Zanze's eyes  
 Of which we could not change the size,  
 The magnitude of all achieved  
 Otherwise, may be perceived."

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day !  
 How could that red sun drop in that black cloud ?  
 Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,  
 Dispensed with, never more to be allowed !  
 Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.  
 Oh lark, be day's apostle  
 To mavis, merle and throstle,  
 Bid them their betters jostle  
 From day and its delights !  
 But at night, brother owlet, over the woods,  
 Toll the world to thy chantry ;  
 Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods  
 Full complines with gallantry :  
 Then, owls and bats,  
 Cows and twats,  
 Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,  
 Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry !

[*After she has begun to undress herself.*]

Now, one thing I should like to really know :  
 How near I ever might approach all these  
 I only fancied being, this long day :  
 — Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so  
 As to . . . in some way . . . move them — if you please,  
 Do good or evil to them some slight way.  
 For instance, if I wind  
 Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[*Sitting on the bedside.*]

And border Ottima's cloak's hem.  
Ah me, and my important part with them,  
This morning's hymn half promised when I rose !  
True in some sense or other, I suppose.

[*As she lies down.*]

God bless me ! I can pray no more to-night.  
No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.

*All service ranks the same with God —  
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,  
Are we ; there is no last nor first.*

[*She sleeps.*]



# KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

## A TRAGEDY

So far as I know, this tragedy is the first artistic consequence of what Voltaire termed "a terrible event without consequences;" and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularizing: since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career — nor quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (a tolerable account of which is to be found, for instance, in Abbé Roman's *Récit*, or even the fifth of Lord Orrery's Letters from Italy) — I cannot expect them to be versed, nor desirous of becoming so, in all the detail of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor — the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will of Charles — the noble and right woman's manliness of his wife — and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say, therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily. R. B.

LONDON, 1842.

### PERSONS.

VICTOR AMADEUS, *First King of Sardinia.*  
CHARLES EMMANUEL, *his Son, Prince of Piedmont.*  
POLYXENA, *Wife of Charles.*  
D'ORMEA, *Minister.*

SCENE. — *The Council Chamber of Rivoli Palace, near Turin, communicating with a Hall at the back, an Apartment to the left and another to the right of the stage.*

TIME, 1730–1.

FIRST YEAR, 1730. — KING VICTOR.

PART I.

CHARLES, POLYXENA.

*Cha.* You think so? Well, I do not.

*Pol.* My beloved,

All must clear up; we shall be happy yet:  
This cannot last forever — oh, may change  
To-day or any day!

*Cha.* — May change? Ah yes —  
May change!

*Pol.* Endure it, then.

*Cha.* No doubt, a life  
Like this drags on, now better and now worse.  
My father may . . . may take to loving me ;  
And he may take D'Ormea closer yet  
To counsel him ; — may even cast off her  
— That bad Sebastian ; but he also may  
. . . Or no, Polyxena, my only friend,  
He may not force you from me.

*Pol.* Now, force me  
From you! — me, close by you as if there gloomed  
No Sebastians, no D'Ormeas on our path —  
At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand,  
Arch-counsellor, prime confidant . . . force me!

*Cha.* Because I felt as sure, as I feel sure  
We clasp hands now, of being happy once.  
Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned  
By the world's business that engrossed so much  
My father and my brother : if I peered  
From out my privacy, — amid the crash  
And blaze of nations, domineered those two.  
'T was war, peace — France our foe, now — England, friend —  
In love with Spain — at feud with Austria ! Well —  
I wondered, laughed a moment's laugh for pride  
In the chivalrous couple, then let drop  
My curtain — " I am out of it," I said —  
When . . .

*Pol.* You have told me, Charles !

*Cha.* Polyxena —  
When suddenly, — a warm March day, just that !  
Just so much sunshine as the cottage child  
Basks in delighted, while the cottager  
Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,  
To catch the more of it — and it must fall  
Heavily on my brother ! Had you seen  
Philip — the lion-featured ! not like me !

*Pol.* I know —

*Cha.* And Philip's mouth yet fast to mine,  
His dead cheek on my cheek, his arm still round  
My neck, — they bade me rise, " for I was heir  
To the Duke," they said, " the right hand of the Duke : "  
Till then he was my father, not the Duke !  
So . . . let me finish . . . the whole intricate  
World's-business their dead boy was born to, I

Must conquer, — ay, the brilliant thing he was,  
 I, of a sudden must be : my faults, my follies,  
 — All bitter truths were told me, all at once,  
 To end the sooner. What I simply styled  
 Their overlooking me, had been contempt :  
 How should the Duke employ himself, forsooth,  
 With such an one, while lordly Philip rode  
 By him their Turin through? But he was punished,  
 And must put up with — me ! 'T was sad enough  
 To learn my future portion and submit.  
 And then the wear and worry, blame on blame !  
 For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-smells about,  
 How could I but grow dizzy in their pent  
 Dim palace-rooms at first? My mother's look  
 As they discussed my insignificance,  
 She and my father, and I sitting by, —  
 I bore ; I knew how brave a son they missed ;  
 Philip had gayly run state-papers through,  
 While Charles was spelling at them painfully !  
 But Victor was my father spite of that.  
 " Duke Victor's entire life has been," I said,  
 " Innumerable efforts to one end ;  
 And on the point now of that end's success,  
 Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,  
 Where 's time to be reminded 't is his child  
 " He spurns ? " And so I suffered — scarcely suffered,  
 Since I had you at length !

*Pol.*

To serve in place

Of monarch, minister and mistress, Charles !

*Cha.* But, once that crown obtained, then was 't not like  
 Our lot would alter ? " When he rests, takes breath,  
 Glances around, and sees who 's left to love —  
 Now that my mother 's dead, sees I am left —  
 Is it not like he 'll love me at the last ? "  
 Well, Savoy turns Sardinia ; the Duke 's King :  
 Could I — precisely then — could you expect  
 His harshness to redouble ? These few months  
 Have been . . . have been . . . Polyxena, do you  
 And God conduct me, or I lose myself !  
 What would he have ? What is 't they want with me ?  
 Him with this mistress and this minister,  
 — You see me and you hear him ; judge us both !  
 Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena !

*Pol.* Endure, endure, beloved ! Say you not  
 He is your father ? All 's so incident  
 To novel sway ! Beside, our life must change :

Or you 'll acquire his kingcraft, or he 'll find  
Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.  
I bear this — not that there 's so much to bear.

*Cha.* You bear? Do not I know that you, though bound  
To silence for my sake, are perishing  
Piecemeal beside me? And how otherwise  
When every creephole from the hideous Court  
Is stopped; the Minister to dog me, here —  
The Mistress posted to entrap you, there?  
And thus shall we grow old in such a life;  
Not careless, never estranged, — but old: to alter  
Our life, there is so much to alter!

*Pol.* Come —  
Is it agreed that we forego complaint  
Even at Turin, yet complain we here  
At Rivoli? 'T were wiser you announced  
Our presence to the King. What 's now afoot  
I wonder? — Not that any more 's to dread  
Than every day's embarrassment: but guess  
For me, why train so fast succeeded train  
On the high-road, each gayer still than each!  
I noticed your Archbishop's pursuivant,  
The sable cloak and silver cross; such pomp  
Bodes . . . what now, Charles? Can you conceive?

*Cha.* Not I.

*Pol.* A matter of some moment —

*Cha.* There 's our life!

Which of the group of loiterers that stare  
From the lime-avenue, divines that I —  
About to figure presently, he thinks,  
In face of all assembled — am the one  
Who knows precisely least about it?

*Pol.* Tush!

D'Ormea's contrivance!

*Cha.* Ay, how otherwise  
Should the young Prince serve for the old King's foil?  
— So that the simplest courtier may remark  
'T were idle raising parties for a Prince  
Content to linger D'Ormea's laughing-stock.  
Something, 't is like, about that weary business

[*Pointing to papers he has laid down, and which POLYXENA examines.*

— Not that I comprehend three words, of course,  
After all last night's study.

*Pol.* The faint heart!  
Why, as we rode and you rehearsed just now  
Its substance . . . (that 's the folded speech I mean,



Concerning the Reduction of the Fiefs)

— What would you have? — I fancied while you spoke,  
Some tones were just your father's.

*Cha.*

Flattery!

*Pol.* I fancied so: — and here lurks, sure enough,  
My note upon the Spanish Claims! You've mastered  
The fief-speech thoroughly: this other, mind,  
Is an opinion you deliver, — stay,  
Best read it slowly over once to me;  
Read — there's bare time; you read it firmly — loud  
— Rather loud, looking in his face, — don't sink  
Your eye once — ay, thus! “If Spain claims” . . . begin  
— Just as you look at me!

*Cha.*

At you! Oh truly,

You have I seen, say, marshalling your troops,  
Dismissing councils, or, through doors ajar,  
Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow chagrins  
— Then radiant, for a crown had all at once  
Seemed possible again! I can behold  
Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit fast,  
In this sweet brow, nought could divert me from  
Save objects like Sebastian's shameless lip,  
Or worse, the clipped gray hair and dead white face  
And dwindling eye as if it ached with guile,  
D'Ormea wears . . .

[*As he kisses her, enter from the KING's apartment D'ORMEA.*

I said he would divert

My kisses from your brow!

*D'O.* [*Aside.*]

Here! So, King Victor

Spoke truth for once: and who's ordained, but I

To make that memorable? Both in call,

As he declared! Were't better gnash the teeth,

Or laugh outright now?

*Cha.* [*to POL.*]

What's his visit for?

*D'O.* [*Aside.*] I question if they even speak to me.

*Pol.* [*to CHA.*] Face the man! He'll suppose you fear him,

[*Aloud.*] The Marquis bears the King's command, no doubt?

*D'O.* [*Aside.*] Precisely! — If I threatened him, perhaps?

Well, this at least is punishment enough!

Men used to promise punishment would come.

*Cha.* Deliver the King's message, Marquis —

*D'O.* [*Aside.*]

Ah —

So anxious for his fate? [*Aloud.*] A word, my Prince,

Before you see your father — just one word

Of counsel!



Accept a method of extorting gold  
 From Savoy's nobles, who must wring its worth  
 In silver first from tillers of the soil,  
 Whose hinds again have to contribute brass  
 To make up the amount : there 's counsel, sir,  
 My counsel, one year old ; and the fruit, this —  
 Savoy 's become a mass of misery  
 And wrath, which one man has to meet — the King :  
 You 're not the King ! Another counsel, sir !  
 Spain entertains a project (here it lies)  
 Which, guessed, makes Austria offer that same King  
 Thus much to baffle Spain ; he promises ;  
 Then comes Spain, breathless lest she be forestalled,  
 Her offer follows ; and he promises . . .

*Cha.* — Promises, sir, when he before agreed  
 To Austria's offer ?

*D'O.* That 's a counsel, Prince !  
 But past our foresight, Spain and Austria (choosing  
 To make their quarrel up between themselves  
 Without the intervention of a friend)  
 Produce both treaties, and both promises . . .

*Cha.* How ?

*D'O.* Prince, a counsel ! — And the fruit of that'  
 Both parties covenant afresh, to fall  
 Together on their friend, blot out his name,  
 Abolish him from Europe. So, take note,  
 Here 's Austria and here 's Spain to fight against,  
 And what sustains the King but Savoy here,  
 A miserable people mad with wrongs ?  
 You 're not the King !

*Cha.* Polyxena, you said  
 All would clear up : all does clear up to me !  
*D'O.* Clear up ? 'T is no such thing to envy, then ?  
 You see the King's state in its length and breadth ?  
 You blame me now for keeping you aloof  
 From counsels and the fruit of counsels ? — Wait  
 Till I explain this morning's business !

*Cha.* [*Aside.*] No —  
 Stoop to my father, yes, — D'Ormea, no ;  
 — The King's son, not to the King's counsellor !  
 I will do something, but at least retain  
 The credit of my deed ! [*Aloud.*] Then it is this  
 You now expressly come to tell me ?

*D'O.* This  
 To tell ! You apprehend me ?

*Cha.* Perfectly.

Further, D'Ormea, you have shown yourself,  
For the first time these many weeks and months,  
Disposed to do my bidding?

*D'O.* From the heart!

*Cha.* Acquaint my father, first, I wait his pleasure :  
Next . . . or, I'll tell you at a fitter time.  
Acquaint the King!

*D'O.* [*Aside.*] If I 'scape Victor yet!  
First, to prevent this stroke at me : if not, —  
Then, to avenge it! [*To CHA.*] Gracious sir, I go. [*Goes.*]

*Cha.* God, I forbore! Which more offends, that man  
Or that man's master? Is it come to this?  
Have they supposed (the sharpest insult yet)  
I needed e'en his intervention? No!  
No — dull am I, conceded, — but so dull,  
Scarcely! Their step decides me.

*Pol.* How decides?

*Cha.* You would be freed D'Ormea's eye and hers?  
— Could fly the court with me and live content?  
So, this it is for which the knights assemble!  
The whispers and the closeting of late,  
The savageness and insolence of old,  
— For this!

*Pol.* What mean you?

*Cha.* How? You fail to catch  
Their clever plot? I missed it, but could you?  
These last two months of care to inculcate  
How dull I am, — D'Ormea's present visit  
To prove that, being dull, I might be worse  
Were I a King — as wretched as now dull —  
You recognize in it no winding up  
Of a long plot?

*Pol.* Why should there be a plot?

*Cha.* The crown's secure now; I should shame the crown :  
An old complaint; the point is, how to gain  
My place for one, more fit in Victor's eyes,  
His mistress the Sebastian's child.

*Pol.* In truth?

*Cha.* They dare not quite dethrone Sardinia's Prince :  
But they may descant on my dulness till  
They sting me into even praying them  
Grant leave to hide my head, resign my state,  
And end the coil. Not see now? In a word,  
They'd have me tender them myself my rights  
As one incapable; — some cause for that,  
Since I delayed thus long to see their drift!

I shall apprise the King he may resume  
My rights this moment.

*Pol.* Pause! I dare not think  
So ill of Victor.

*Cha.* Think no ill of him!

*Pol.* — Nor think him, then, so shallow as to suffer  
His purpose be divined thus easily.

And yet — you are the last of a great line;  
There's a great heritage at stake; new days  
Seemed to await this newest of the realms  
Of Europe: — Charles, you must withstand this!

*Cha.* Ah —

You dare not then renounce the splendid court  
For one whom all the world despises? Speak!

*Pol.* My gentle husband, speak I will, and truth.  
Were this as you believe, and I once sure  
Your duty lay in so renouncing rule,  
I could . . . could? Oh what happiness it were —  
To live, my Charles, and die, alone with you!

*Cha.* I grieve I asked you. To the presence, then!  
By this, D'Ormea acquaints the King, no doubt,  
He fears I am too simple for mere hints,  
And that no less will serve than Victor's mouth  
Demonstrating in council what I am.  
I have not breathed, I think, these many years!

*Pol.* Why, it may be! — if he desire to wed  
That woman, call legitimate her child.

*Cha.* You see as much? Oh, let his will have way!  
You'll not repent confiding in me, love?  
There's many a brighter spot in Piedmont, far,  
Than Rivoli. I'll seek him: or, suppose  
You hear first how I mean to speak my mind?  
— Loudly and firmly both, this time, be sure!  
I yet may see your Rhine-land, who can tell?  
Once away, ever then away! I breathe.

*Pol.* And I too breathe.

*Cha.* Come, my Polyxena!

## KING VICTOR.

## PART II.

*Enter KING VICTOR, bearing the regalia on a cushion, from his apartment. He calls loudly —*

D'Ormea! — for patience fails me, treading thus  
Among the obscure trains I have laid, — my knights  
Safe in the hall here — in that anteroom;  
My son, — D'Ormea, where? Of this, one touch —

*[Laying down the crown.]*

This fireball to these mute black cold trains — then  
Outbreak enough!

*[Contemplating it.]* To lose all, after all!  
This, glancing o'er my house for ages — shaped,  
Brave meteor, like the crown of Cyprus now,  
Jerusalem, Spain, England, every change  
The braver, — and when I have clutched a prize  
My ancestry died wan with watching for,  
To lose it! — by a slip, a fault, a trick  
Learnt to advantage once and not unlearned  
When past the use, — “just this once more” (I thought)  
“Use it with Spain and Austria happily,  
And then away with trick!” An oversight  
I'd have repaired thrice over, any time  
These fifty years, must happen now! There's peace  
At length; and I, to make the most of peace,  
Ventured my project on our people here,  
As needing not their help: which Europe knows,  
And means, cold-blooded, to dispose herself  
(Apart from plausibilities of war)  
To crush the new-made King — who ne'er till now  
Feared her. As Duke, I lost each foot of earth  
And laughed at her; my name was left, my sword  
Left, all was left! But she can take, she knows,  
This crown, herself conceded . . .

That's to try,

Kind Europe! My career's not closed as yet!

This boy was ever subject to my will,

Timid and tame — the fitter! D'Ormea, too —

What if the sovereign also rid himself

Of thee, his prime of parasites? — I delay!

D'Ormea! *[As D'ORMEA enters, the King seats himself.]*

My son, the Prince — attends he?

*D'O.* Sir,  
He does attend. The crown prepared! — it seems  
That you persist in your resolve.

*Vic.* Who's come?  
The chancellor and the chamberlain? My knights?

*D'O.* The whole Annunziata. — If, my liege,  
Your fortune had not tottered worse than now . . .

*Vic.* Del Borgo has drawn up the schedules? mine —  
My son's, too? Excellent! Only, beware  
Of the least blunder, or we look but fools.  
First, you read the Annulment of the Oaths;  
Del Borgo follows . . . no, the Prince shall sign;  
Then let Del Borgo read the Instrument:  
On which, I enter.

*D'O.* Sir, this may be truth;  
You, sir, may do as you affect — may break  
Your engine, me, to pieces: try at least  
If not a spring remain worth saving! Take  
My counsel as I've counselled many times!  
What if the Spaniard and the Austrian threat?  
There's England, Holland, Venice — which ally  
Select you?

*Vic.* Aha! Come, D'Ormea, — "truth"  
Was on your lip a minute since. Allies?  
I've broken faith with Venice, Holland, England  
— As who knows if not you?

*D'O.* But why with me  
Break faith — with one ally, your best, break faith?

*Vic.* When first I stumbled on you, Marquis — 't was  
At Mondovi — a little lawyer's clerk . . .

*D'O.* Therefore your soul's ally! — who brought you through  
Your quarrel with the Pope, at pains enough —  
Who simply echoed you in these affairs —  
On whom you cannot therefore visit these  
Affairs' ill fortune — whom you trust to guide  
You safe (yes, on my soul) through these affairs!

*Vic.* I was about to notice, had you not  
Prevented me, that since that great town kept  
With its chicanes D'Ormea's satchel stuffed  
And D'Ormea's self sufficiently recluse,  
He missed a sight, — my naval armament  
When I burned Toulon. How the skiff exults  
Upon the galliot's wave! — rises its height,  
O'ertops it even; but the great wave bursts,  
And hell-deep in the horrible profound  
Buries itself the galliot: shall the skiff  
Think to escape the sea's black trough in turn?

Apply this : you have been my minister  
 — Next me, above me possibly ; — sad post,  
 Huge care, abundant lack of peace of mind ;  
 Who would desiderate the eminence ?  
 You gave your soul to get it ; you 'd yet give  
 Your soul to keep it, as I mean you shall,  
 D'Ormea ! What if the wave ebbed with me ?  
 Whereas it cants you to another crest ;  
 I toss you to my son ; ride out your ride !

*D'O.* Ah, you so much despise me ?

*Vic.*

You, D'Ormea ?

Nowise : and I 'll inform you why. A king  
 Must in his time have many ministers,  
 And I 've been rash enough to part with mine  
 When I thought proper. Of the tribe, not one  
 ( . . . Or wait, did Pianezze ? . . . ah, just the same ! )  
 Not one of them, ere his remonstrance reached  
 The length of yours, but has assured me (commonly  
 Standing much as you stand, — or nearer, say,  
 The door to make his exit on his speech)  
 — I should repent of what I did. D'Ormea,  
 Be candid, you approached it when I bade you  
 Prepare the schedules ! But you stopped in time,  
 You have not so assured me : how should I  
 Despise you then ?

*Enter CHARLES.*

*Vic.* [*changing his tone.*] Are you instructed ? Do  
 My order, point by point ! About it, sir !

*D'O.* You so despise me ! [*Aside.*] One last stay remains —  
 The boy's discretion there.

[*To CHARLES.*] For your sake, Prince,  
 I pleaded, wholly in your interest,  
 To save you from this fate !

*Cha.* [*Aside.*] Must I be told  
 The Prince was supplicated for — by him ?

*Vic.* [*to D'O.*] Apprise Del Borgo, Spava and the rest,  
 Our son attends them ; then return.

*D'O.*

One word !

*Cha.* [*Aside.*] A moment's pause and they would drive me  
 hence,

I do believe !

*D'O.* [*Aside.*] Let but the boy be firm !

*Vic.* You disobey ?

*Cha.* [*to D'O.*] You do not disobey  
 Me, at least ? Did you promise that or no ?

*D'O.* Sir, I am yours : what would you ? Yours am I !



*Cha.* When I have said what I shall say, 't is like  
Your face will ne'er again disgust me. Go!  
Through you, as through a breast of glass, I see.  
And for your conduct, from my youth till now,  
Take my contempt! You might have spared me much,  
Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed yourself:  
That's over now. Go, ne'er to come again!

*D'O.* As son, the father — father, as the son!  
My wits! My wits!

[*Goes.*

*Vic.* [*Seated.*] And you, what meant you, pray,  
Speaking thus to D'Ormea?

*Cha.* Let us not  
Weary ourselves with D'Ormea! Those few words  
Have half unsettled what I came to say.  
His presence vexes to my very soul.

*Vic.* One called to manage a kingdom, Charles, needs heart  
To bear up under worse annoyances  
Than seems D'Ormea — to me, at least.

*Cha.* [*Aside.*] Ah, good!  
He keeps me to the point! Then be it so.

[*Aloud.*] Last night, sir, brought me certain papers — these —  
To be reported on, — your way of late.  
Is it last night's result that you demand?

*Vic.* For God's sake, what has night brought forth? Pronounce  
The . . . what's your word? — result!

*Cha.* Sir, that had proved  
Quite worthy of your sneer, no doubt: — a few  
Lame thoughts, regard for you alone could wring,  
Lame as they are, from brains like mine, believe!  
As 't is, sir. I am spared both toil and sneer.  
These are the papers.

*Vic.* Well, sir? I suppose  
You hardly burned them. Now for your result!

*Cha.* I never should have done great things of course,  
But . . . oh my father, had you loved me more!

*Vic.* Loved? [*Aside.*] Has D'Ormea played me false, I  
wonder?

[*Aloud.*] Why, Charles, a king's love is diffused — yourself  
May overlook, perchance, your part in it.  
Our monarchy is absolutest now  
In Europe, or my trouble's thrown away.  
I love, my mode, that subjects each and all  
May have the power of loving, all and each,  
Their mode: I doubt not, many have their sons  
To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long:  
I have that crown, this chair, D'Ormea, Charles!

*Cha.* 'Tis well I am a subject then, not you.

*Vic.* [*Aside.*] D'Ormea has told him everything.

[*Aloud.*] Aha,

I apprehend you : when all 's said, you take  
Your private station to be prized beyond  
My own, for instance ?

*Cha.* — Do and ever did

So take it : 't is the method you pursue

That grieves . . .

*Vic.* These words ! Let me express, my friend,

Your thoughts. You penetrate what I supposed  
Secret. D'Ormea plies his trade betimes !

I purpose to resign my crown to you.

*Cha.* To me ?

*Vic.* Now in that chamber.

*Cha.*

You resign

The crown to me ?

*Vic.* And time enough, Charles, sure ?

Confess with me, at four-and-sixty years

A crown 's a load. I covet quiet once

Before I die, and summoned you for that.

*Cha.* 'T is I will speak : you ever hated me,

I bore it, — have insulted me, borne too —

Now you insult yourself ; and I remember

What I believed you, what you really are,

And cannot bear it. What ! My life has passed

Under your eye, tormented as you know, —

Your whole sagacities, one after one,

At leisure brought to play on me — to prove me

A fool. I thought and I submitted ; now

You 'd prove . . . what would you prove me ?

*Vic.*

This to me ?

I hardly know you !

*Cha.* Know me ? Oh indeed

You do not ! Wait till I complain next time

Of my simplicity ! — for here 's a sage

Knows the world well, is not to be deceived,

And his experience and his Macchiavels,

D'Ormeas, teach him — what ? — that I this while

Have envied him his crown ! He has not smiled,

I warrant, — has not eaten, drunk nor slept,

For I was plotting with my Princess yonder !

Who knows what we might do or might not do ?

Go now, be politic, astound the world !

That sentry in the antechamber — nay,

The varlet who disposed this precious trap

[*Pointing to the crown.*

That was to take me — ask them if they think  
Their own sons envy them their posts! — Know me!

*Vic.* But you know me, it seems; so, learn, in brief,  
My pleasure. This assembly is convened . . .

*Chu.* Tell me, that woman put it in your head!  
You were not sole contriver of the scheme,  
My father!

*Vic.* Now observe me, sir! I jest  
Seldom — on these points, never. Here, I say,  
The knights assemble to see me concede,  
And you accept, Sardinia's crown.

*Cha.* Farewell!  
'T were vain to hope to change this: I can end it.  
Not that I cease from being yours, when sunk  
Into obscurity: I'll die for you,  
But not annoy you with my presence. Sir,  
Farewell! Farewell!

[Enter D'ORMEA.]

*D'O.* [*Aside.*] Ha, sure he's changed again —  
Means not to fall into the cunning trap!  
'Then Victor, I shall yet escape you, Victor!

*Vic.* [*suddenly placing the crown upon the head of CHARLES.*  
D'Ormea, your King!

[*To CHARLES.*] My son, obey me! Charles,  
Your father, clearer-sighted than yourself,  
Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this looks real!

My reasons after; reason upon reason  
After: but now, obey me! Trust in me!  
By this, you save Sardinia, you save me!  
Why, the boy swoons! [*To D'O.*] Come this side!

*D'O.* [*as CHARLES turns from him to VICTOR.*] You persist?

*Vic.* Yes, I conceive the gesture's meaning. 'Faith,  
He almost seems to hate you: how is that?  
Be reassured, my Charles! Is't over now?

Then, Marquis, tell the new King what remains  
To do! A moment's work. Del Borgo reads  
The Act of Abdication out, you sign it,  
Then I sign; after that, come back to me.

*D'O.* Sir, for the last time, pause!

*Vic.* Five minutes longer

I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate —  
And I'll so turn those minutes to account  
That . . . Ay, you recollect me! [*Aside.*] Could I bring  
My foolish mind to undergo the reading  
That Act of Abdication!

[*As CHARLES motions D'ORMEA to precede him.*

Thanks, dear Charles!

[*CHARLES and D'ORMEA retire.*

*Vic.* A novel feature in the boy, — indeed  
 Just what I feared he wanted most. Quite right,  
 This earnest tone : your truth, now for effect !  
 It answers every purpose : with that look,  
 That voice, — I hear him : “ I began no treaty,”  
 (He speaks to Spain,) “ nor ever dreamed of this  
 You show me ; this I from my soul regret ;  
 But if my father signed it, bid not me  
 Dishonor him — who gave me all, beside :”  
 And, “ true,” says Spain, “ ’t were harsh to visit that  
 Upon the Prince.” Then come the nobles trooping :  
 I grieve at these exactions — I had cut  
 This hand off ere impose them ; but shall I  
 Undo my father’s deed ?” — and they confer :  
 Doubtless he was no party, after all ;  
 Give the Prince time !”

Ay, give us time, but time !

Only, he must not, when the dark day comes,  
 Refer our friends to me and frustrate all.  
 We ’ll have no child’s play, no desponding fits,  
 No Charles at each cross turn entreating Victor  
 To take his crown again. Guard against that !

*Enter D’ORMEA.*

Long live King Charles !

No — Charles’s counsellor !

Well, is it over, Marquis ? Did I jest ?

*D’O.* “ King Charles !” What then may you be ?

*Vic.*

Anything !

A country gentleman that, cured of bustle,  
 Now beats a quick retreat toward Chambery,  
 Would hunt and hawk and leave you noisy folk  
 To drive your trade without him. I ’m Count Remont —  
 Count Tende — any little place’s Count !

*D’O.* Then Victor, Captain against Catinat  
 At Staffarde, where the French beat you ; and Duke  
 At Turin, where you beat the French ; King late  
 Of Savoy, Piedmont, Montferrat, Sardinia,  
 — Now, “ any little place’s Count ” —

*Vic.*

Proceed !

*D’O.* Breaker of vows to God, who crowned you first ;  
 Breaker of vows to man, who kept you since ;  
 Most profligate to me who outraged God  
 And man to serve you, and am made pay crimes  
 I was but privy to, by passing thus  
 To your imbecile son — who, well you know,  
 Must — (when the people here, and nations there,

Clamor for you the main delinquent, slipped  
 From King to — “Count of any little place”) —  
 — Must needs surrender me, all in his reach, —  
 I, sir, forgive you: for I see the end —  
 See you on your return — (you will return) —  
 To him you trust thus for the moment . . .

*Vic.* Trust him? How?

My poor man, merely a prime-minister,  
 Make me know where my trust errs!

*D'O.* In his fear,

His love, his — but discover for yourself  
 What you are weakest, trusting in!

*Vic.* Aha,

D'Ormea, not a shrewder scheme than this  
 In your repertory? You know old Victor —  
 Vain, choleric, inconstant, rash — (I've heard  
 Talkers who little thought the King so close) —  
 Felicitous now, were 't not, to provoke him  
 To clean forget, one minute afterward,  
 His solemn act, and call the nobles back  
 And pray them give again the very power  
 He has abjured? — for the dear sake of what?  
 Vengeance on you, D'Ormea! No: such am I,  
 Count Tende or Count anything you please,  
 — Only, the same that did the things you say,  
 And, among other things you say not, used  
 Your finest fibre, meanest muscle, — you  
 I used, and now, since you will have it so,  
 Leave to your fate — mere lumber in the midst,  
 You and your works. Why, what on earth beside  
 Are you made for, you sort of ministers?

*D'O.* Not left, though, to my fate! Your witless son  
 Has more wit than to load himself with lumber:  
 He foils you that way, and I follow you.

*Vic.* Stay with my son — protect the weaker side!

*D'O.* Ay, to be tossed the people like a rag,  
 And flung by them for Spain and Austria's sport,  
 Abolishing the record of your part  
 In all this perfidy!

*Vic.* Prevent, beside,

My own return!

*D'O.* That's half prevented now!

'T will go hard but you find a wondrous charm  
 In exile, to discredit me. The Alps,  
 Silk-mills to watch, vines asking vigilance —  
 Hounds open for the stag, your hawk's a-wing —

Brave days that wait the Louis of the South,  
Italy's Janus!

*Vic.* So, the lawyer's clerk  
Won't tell me that I shall repent!  
*D'O.* You give me  
Full leave to ask if you repent?

*Vic.* Whene'er  
Sufficient time elapse for that, you judge!  
[*Shouts inside, "KING CHARLES."*]

*D'O.* Do you repent?

*Vic.* [after a slight pause.] . . . I've kept them waiting?  
Yes!

Come in, complete the Abdication, sir! [They go out.]

*Enter POLYXENA.*

*Pol.* A shout! The sycophants are free of Charles!  
Oh is not this like Italy? No fruit  
Of his or my distempered fancy, this,  
But just an ordinary fact! Beside,  
Here they've set forms for such proceedings; Victor  
Imprisoned his own mother: he should know,  
If any, how a son's to be deprived  
Of a son's right. Our duty's palpable.  
Ne'er was my husband for the wily king  
And the unworthy subjects: be it so!  
Come you safe out of them, my Charles! Our life  
Grows not the broad and dazzling life, I dreamed  
Might prove your lot; for strength was shut in you  
None guessed but I — strength which, untrammelled once,  
Had little shamed your vaunted ancestry —  
Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,  
Simplicity and utter truthfulness  
— All which, they shout to lose!

So, now my work  
Begins — to save him from regret. Save Charles  
Regret? — the noble nature! He's not made  
Like these Italians: 't is a German soul.

*CHARLES enters crowned.*

Oh, where's the King's heir? Gone: — the Crown-prince?  
Gone: —

Where's Savoy? Gone: — Sardinia? Gone! But Charles  
Is left! And when my Rhine-land bowers arrive,  
If he looked almost handsome yester-twilight  
As his gray eyes seemed widening into black  
Because I praised him, then how will he look?  
Farewell, you stripped and whited mulberry-trees  
Bound each to each by lazy ropes of vine!

Now I'll teach you my language : I'm not forced  
To speak Italian now, Charles.

[*She sees the crown.*] What is this ?

Answer me — who has done this ? Answer !

*Cha.*

He !

I am King now.

*Pol.* Oh worst, worst, worst of all !

Tell me ! What, Victor ? He has made you King ?

What's he then ? What's to follow this ? You, King ?

*Cha.* Have I done wrong ? Yes, for you were not by !

*Pol.* Tell me from first to last.

*Cha.* Hush — a new world

Brightens before me ; he is moved away

— The dark form that eclipsed it, he subsides

Into a shape supporting me like you,

And I, alone, tend upward, more and more

Tend upward : I am grown Sardinia's King.

*Pol.* Now stop : was not this Victor, Duke of Savoy  
At ten years old ?

*Cha.* He was.

*Pol.* And the Duke spent,

Since then, just four-and-fifty years in toil

To be — what ?

*Cha.* King.

*Pol.* Then why unking himself ?

*Cha.* Those years are cause enough.

*Pol.* The only cause ?

*Cha.* Some new perplexities.

*Pol.* Which you can solve

Although he cannot ?

*Cha.* He assures me so.

*Pol.* And this he means shall last — how long ?

*Cha.* How long ?

Think you I fear the perils I confront ?

He's praising me before the people's face —

My people !

*Pol.* Then he's changed — grown kind, the King.

Where can the trap be ?

*Cha.* Heart and soul I pledge !

My father, could I guard the crown you gained,

Transmit as I received it, — all good else

Would I surrender !

*Pol.* Ah, it opens then

Before you, all you dreaded formerly.

You are rejoiced to be a king, my Charles ?

*Cha.* So much to dare ! The better, — much to dread !

The better. I'll adventure though alone.  
Triumph or die, there's Victor still to witness  
Who dies or triumphs — either way, alone!

*Pol.* Once I had found my share in triumph, Charles,  
Or death.

*Cha.* But you are I! But you I call  
To take, Heaven's proxy, vows I tendered Heaven  
A moment since. I will deserve the crown!

*Pol.* You will. [*Aside.*] No doubt it were a glorious thing  
For any people, if a heart like his  
Ruled over it. I would I saw the trap.

*Enter VICTOR.*

'T is he must show me.

*Vic.* So, the mask falls off  
An old man's foolish love at last. Spare thanks!  
I know you, and Polyxena I know.  
Here's Charles — I am his guest now — does he bid me  
Be seated? And my light-haired blue-eyed child  
Must not forget the old man far away  
At Chambery, who dozes while she reigns.

*Pol.* Most grateful shall we now be, talking least  
Of gratitude — indeed of anything  
That hinders what yourself must need to say  
To Charles.

*Cha.* Pray speak, sir!

*Vic.* Faith, not much to say:  
Only what shows itself, you once i' the point  
Of sight. You're now the King: you'll comprehend  
Much you may oft have wondered at — the shifts,  
Dissimulation, wiliness I showed.  
For what's our post? Here's Savoy and here's Piedmont,  
Here's Montferrat — a breadth here, a space there —  
To o'er-sweep all these, what's one weapon worth?  
I often think of how they fought in Greece  
(Or Rome, which was it? You're the scholar, Charles!)  
You made a front-thrust. But if your shield too  
Were not adroitly planted, some shrewd knave  
Reached you behind; and him foiled, straight if thong  
And handle of that shield were not cast loose,  
And you enabled to outstrip the wind,  
Fresh foes assailed you, either side; 'scape these,  
And reach your place of refuge — e'en then, odds  
If the gate opened unless breath enough  
Were left in you to make its lord a speech.  
Oh, you will see!

*Cha.* No: straight on shall I go,  
Truth helping; win with it or die with it.



*Vic.* 'Faith, Charles, you 're not made Europe's fighting-man!  
 The barrier-guarder, if you please. You clutch  
 Hold and consolidate, with envious France  
 This side, with Austria that, the territory  
 I held — ay, and will hold . . . which *you* shall hold  
 Despite the couple! But I've surely earned  
 Exemption from these weary politics,  
 — The privilege to prattle with my son  
 And daughter here, though Europe wait the while.

*Pol.* Nay, sir, — at Chambery, away forever,  
 As soon you will be, 't is farewell we bid you:  
 Turn these few fleeting moments to account!  
 'T is just as though it were a death.

*Vic.* Indeed!

*Pol.* [*Aside.*] Is the trap there?

*Cha.* Ay, call this parting — death!

The sacredder your memory becomes.  
 If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back  
 My father?

*Vic.* I mean . . .

*Pol.* [*who watches VICTOR narrowly this while.*]  
Your father does not mean

You should be ruling for your father's sake:  
 It is your people must concern you wholly  
 Instead of him. You mean this, sir? (He drops  
 My hand!)

*Cha.* That people is now part of me.

*Vic.* About the people! I took certain measures  
 Some short time since . . . Oh, I know well, you know  
 But little of my measures! These affect  
 The nobles; we've resumed some grants, imposed  
 A tax or two: prepare yourself, in short,  
 For clamor on that score. Mark me: you yield  
 No jot of aught entrusted you!

*Pol.* No jot  
 You yield!

*Cha.* My father, when I took the oath,  
 Although my eye might stray in search of yours,  
 I heard it, understood it, promised God  
 What you require. Till from this eminence  
 He move me, here I keep, nor shall concede  
 The meanest of my rights.

*Vic.* [*Aside.*] The boy's a fool!  
 — Or rather, I'm a fool: for, what's wrong here?  
 To-day the sweets of reigning: let to-morrow  
 Be ready with its bitters.

Enter D'ORMEA.

There's beside

Somewhat to press upon your notice first.

*Cha.* Then why delay it for an instant, sir?  
That Spanish claim perchance? And, now you speak,  
— This morning, my opinion was mature,  
Which, boy-like, I was bashful in producing  
To one I ne'er am like to fear in future!  
My thought is formed upon that Spanish claim.

*Vic.* Betimes indeed. Not now, Charles! You require  
A host of papers on it.

*D'O.* [*coming forward.*] Here they are.  
[*To CHA.*] I was the minister and much beside  
Of the late monarch; to say little, him  
I served: on you I have, to say e'en less,  
No claim. This case contains those papers: with them  
I tender you my office.

*Vic.* [*hastily.*] Keep him, Charles!  
There's reason for it — many reasons: you  
Distrust him, nor are so far wrong there, — but  
He's mixed up in this matter — he'll desire  
To quit you, for occasions known to me:  
Do not accept those reasons: have him stay!

*Pol.* [*Aside.*] His minister thrust on us!

*Cha.* [*to D'ORMEA.*]

Sir, believe,

In justice to myself, you do not need  
E'en this commending: howsoe'er might seem  
My feelings toward you, as a private man,  
They quit me in the vast and untried field  
Of action. Though I shall myself (as late  
In your own hearing I engaged to do)  
Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help  
Is necessary. Think the past forgotten  
And serve me now!

*D'O.* I did not offer you  
My service — would that I could serve you, sir!  
As for the Spanish matter . . .

*Vic.* But dispatch  
At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,  
Before the living! Help to house me safe  
Ere with D'Ormea you set the world agape!  
Here is a paper — will you overlook  
What I propose reserving for my needs?  
*I get as far from you as possible:*  
Here's what I reckon my expenditure.

*Cha.* [*reading.*] A miserable fifty thousand crowns!

*Vic.* Oh quite enough for country gentlemen!  
Beside, the exchequer happens . . . but find out  
All that, yourself!

*Cha.* [*still reading.*] "Count Tende" — what means this?

*Vic.* Me: you were but an infant when I burst  
Through the defile of Tende upon France.  
Had only my allies kept true to me!  
No matter. Tende's, then, a name I take  
Just as . . .

*D'O.* — The Marchioness Sebastian takes  
The name of Spigno.

*Cha.* How, sir?

*Vic.* [*to D'ORMEA.*] Fool! All that  
Was for my own detailing. [*To CHARLES.*] That anon!

*Cha.* [*to D'ORMEA.*] Explain what you have said, sir!

*D'O.* I supposed

The marriage of the King to her I named,  
Profoundly kept a secret these few weeks,  
Was not to be one, now he's Count.

*Pol.* [*Aside.*] With us  
The minister — with him the mistress!

*Cha.* [*to VICTOR.*] No —  
Tell me you have not taken her — that woman —  
To live with, past recall!

*Vic.* And where's the crime . . .

*Pol.* [*to CHARLES.*] True, sir, this is a matter past recall  
And past your cognizance. A day before,  
And you had been compelled to note this — now  
Why note it? The King saved his House from shame:  
What the Count did, is no concern of yours.

*Cha.* [*after a pause.*] The Spanish claim, D'Ormea!

*Vic.* Why, my son,

I took some ill-advised . . . one's age, in fact,  
Spoils everything: though I was over-reached,  
A younger brain, we'll trust, may extricate  
Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Ormea,  
Inform the King!

*D'O.* [*without regarding VICTOR, and leisurely.*]

Thus stands the case with Spain:  
When first the Infant Carlos claimed his proper  
Succession to the throne of Tuscany . . .

*Vic.* I tell you that stands over! Let that rest!  
There is the policy!

*Cha.* [*to D'ORMEA.*] Thus much I know,  
And more — too much. The remedy?

*D'O.* Of course!

No glimpse of one.

*Vic.* No remedy at all!

It makes the remedy itself — time makes it.

*D'O.* [*to CHARLES.*] But if . . .

*Vic.* [*still more hastily.*] In fine, I shall take care of that :  
And, with another project that I have . . .

*D'O.* [*turning on him.*] Oh, since Count Tende means to  
take again

King Victor's crown! —

*Pol.* [*throwing herself at VICTOR's feet.*] E'en now retake  
it, sir!

Oh, speak! We are your subjects both, once more!

Say it — a word effects it! You meant not,

Nor do mean now, to take it: but you must!

'Tis in you — in your nature — and the shame's

Not half the shame 't would grow to afterwards!

*Cha.* Polyxena!

*Pol.* A word recalls the knights —

Say it! — What's promising and what's the past?

Say you are still King Victor!

*D'O.* Better say

The Count repents, in brief! [*VICTOR rises.*]

*Cha.* With such a crime

I have not charged you, sir!

*Pol.* Charles turns from me!

## SECOND YEAR, 1731. — KING CHARLES.

### PART I.

*Enter QUEEN POLYXENA and D'ORMEA. — A pause.*

*Pol.* And now, sir, what have you to say?

*D'O.* Count Tende . . .

*Pol.* Affirm not I betrayed you; you resolve

On uttering this strange intelligence

— Nay, post yourself to find me ere I reach

The capital, because you know King Charles

Tarries a day or two at Evian baths

Behind me: — but take warning, — here and thus

[*Seating herself in the royal seat*]

I listen, if I listen — not your friend.

Explicitly the statement, if you still

Persist to urge it on me, must proceed:

I am not made for aught else.

*D'O.* Good! Count Tende . . .

*Pol.* I, who mistrust you, shall acquaint King Charles,  
Who even more mistrusts you.

*D'O.* Does he so ?

*Pol.* Why should he not ?

*D'O.* Ay, why not ? Motives, seek  
 You virtuous people, motives ! Say, I serve  
 God at the devil's bidding — will that do ?  
 I'm proud : our people have been pacified,  
 Really I know not how —

*Pol.* By truthfulness.

*D'O.* Exactly ; that shows I had nought to do  
 With pacifying them. Our foreign perils  
 Also exceed my means to stay : but here  
 'Tis otherwise, and my pride's piqued. Count Tende  
 Completes a full year's absence : would you, madam,  
 Have the old monarch back, his mistress back,  
 His measures back ? I pray you, act upon  
 My counsel, or they will be.

*Pol.* When ?

*D'O.* Let's think.

Home-matters settled — Victor's coming now ;  
 Let foreign matters settle — Victor's here  
 Unless I stop him ; as I will, this way.

*Pol.* [*reading the papers he presents.*] If this should prove  
 a plot 'twixt you and Victor ?

You seek annoyances to give pretext  
 For what you say you fear !

*D'O.* Oh, possibly !

I go for nothing. Only show King Charles  
 That thus Count Tende purposes return,  
 And style me his inviter, if you please !

*Pol.* Half of your tale is true ; most like, the Count  
 Seeks to return : but why stay you with us ?  
 To aid in such emergencies.

*D'O.* Keep safe

Those papers : or, to serve me, leave no proof  
 I thus have counselled ! when the Count returns,  
 And the King abdicates, 't will stead me little  
 To have thus counselled.

*Pol.* The King abdicate !

*D'O.* He's good, we knew long since — wise, we discover —  
 Firm, let us hope : — but I'd have gone to work  
 With him away. Well !

[*CHARLES without.*] In the Council Chamber ?

*D'O.* All's lost !

*Pol.* Oh, surely not King Charles ! He's changed —  
 That's not this year's care-burdened voice and step :  
 'Tis last year's step, the Prince's voice !

D'O.

I know.

*Enter CHARLES — D'ORMEA retiring a little.*

Cha. Now wish me joy, Polyxena! Wish it me  
The old way!

[*She embraces him.*]

There was too much cause for that!

But I have found myself again. What news  
At Turin? Oh, if you but felt the load  
I'm free of — free! I said this year would end  
Or it, or me — but I am free, thank God!

Pol. How, Charles?

Cha. You do not guess? The day I found  
Sardinia's hideous coil, at home, abroad,  
And how my father was involved in it, —  
Of course, I vowed to rest and smile no more  
Until I cleared his name from obloquy.  
We did the people right — 't was much to gain  
That point, redress our nobles' grievance, too —  
But that took place here, was no crying shame:  
All must be done abroad, — if I abroad  
Appeased the justly-angered Powers, destroyed  
The scandal, took down Victor's name at last  
From a bad eminence, I then might breathe  
And rest! No moment was to lose. Behold  
The proud result — a Treaty, Austria, Spain  
Agree to —

D'O. [*Aside.*] I shall merely stipulate  
For an experienced headsman.

Cha. Not a soul  
Is compromised: the blotted past's a blank:  
Even D'Ormea escapes unquestioned. See!  
It reached me from Vienna; I remained  
At Evian to dispatch the Count his news;  
'T is gone to Chambéry a week ago —  
And here am I: do I deserve to feel  
Your warm white arms around me?

D'O. [*coming forward.*] He knows that?

Cha. What, in Heaven's name, means this?

D'O. He knows that matters

Are settled at Vienna? Not too late!  
Plainly, unless you post this very hour  
Some man you trust (say, me) to Chambéry  
And take precautions I acquaint you with,  
Your father will return here.

Cha. Are you crazed,  
D'Ormea? Here? For what? As well return  
To take his crown!

D'O. He will return for that.

*Cha.* [to POLYXENA.] You have not listened to this man?

*Pol.* He spoke

About your safety — and I listened.

[*He disengages himself from her arms.*]

*Cha.* [to D'ORMEA.] What

Apprised you of the Count's intentions?

*D'O.* Me?

His heart, sir; you may not be used to read

Such evidence however; therefore read

[*Pointing to POLYXENA's papers.*]

My evidence.

*Cha.* [to POLYXENA.] Oh, worthy this of you!

And of your speech I never have forgotten,

Though I professed forgetfulness; which haunts me

As if I did not know how false it was;

Which made me toil unconsciously thus long

That there might be no least occasion left

For aught of its prediction coming true!

And now, when there is left no least occasion

To instigate my father to such crime —

When I might venture to forget (I hoped)

That speech and recognize Polyxena —

Oh worthy, to revive, and tenfold worse,

That plague! D'Ormea at your ear, his slanders

Still in your hand! Silent?

*Pol.* As the wronged are.

*Cha.* And you, D'Ormea, since when have you presumed

To spy upon my father? I conceive

What that wise paper shows, and easily.

Since when?

*D'O.* The when and where and how belong

To me. 'Tis sad work, but I deal in such.

You oftentimes serve yourself; I'd serve you here:

Use makes me not so squeamish. In a word,

Since the first hour he went to Chambery,

Of his seven servants, five have I suborned.

*Cha.* You hate my father?

*D'O.* Oh, just as you will!

[*Looking at POLYXENA.*]

A minute since, I loved him — hate him, now!

What matter? — if you ponder just one thing:

Has he that treaty? — he is setting forward

Already. Are your guards here?

*Cha.* Well for you

They are not! [To POL.] Him I knew of old, but you —

To hear that pickthank, further his designs! [To D'O.]

Guards? — were they here, I'd bid them, for your trouble,  
Arrest you.

*D'O.* Guards you shall not want. I lived  
The servant of your choice, not of your need.  
You never greatly needed me till now  
That you discard me. This is my arrest.  
Again I tender you my charge — its duty  
Would bid me press you read those documents.

Here, sir! [*Offering his badge of office.*]

*Cha.* [*taking it.*] The papers also! Do you think  
I dare not read them?

*Pol.* Read them, sir!

*Cha.* They prove,

My father, still a month within the year  
Since he so solemnly consigned it me,  
Means to resume his crown? They shall prove that,  
Or my best dungeon . . .

*D'O.* Even say, Chambery!  
'T is vacant, I surmise, by this.

*Cha.* You prove  
Your words or pay their forfeit, sir. Go there!  
Polyxena, one chance to rend the veil  
Thickening and blackening 'twixt us two! Do say,  
You'll see the falsehood of the charges proved!  
Do say, at least, you wish to see them proved  
False charges — my heart's love of other times!

*Pol.* Ah, Charles!

*Cha.* [*to D'ORMEA.*] Precede me, sir!

*D'O.* And I'm at length  
A martyr for the truth! No end, they say,  
Of miracles. My conscious innocence!

[*As they go out, enter — by the middle door, at which he pauses —*  
VICTOR.

*Vic.* Sure I heard voices? No. Well, I do best  
To make at once for this, the heart o' the place.  
The old room! Nothing changed! So near my seat,  
D'Ormea? [*Pushing away the stool which is by the KING'S*  
*chair.*]

I want that meeting over first,  
I know not why. Tush, he, D'Ormea, slow  
To hearten me, the supple knave! That burst  
Of spite so eased him! He'll inform me . . .

What?

Why come I hither? All's in rough: let all  
Remain rough. There's full time to draw back — nay,  
There's nought to draw back from, as yet; whereas,  
If reason should be, to arrest a course



Of error — reason good, to interpose  
 And save, as I have saved so many times,  
 Our House, admonish my son's giddy youth,  
 Relieve him of a weight that proves too much —  
 Now is the time, — or now, or never.

'Faith,

This kind of step is pitiful, not due  
 To Charles, this stealing back — hither, because  
 He's from his capital! Oh Victor! Victor!  
 But thus it is. The age of crafty men  
 Is loathsome; youth contrives to carry off  
 Dissimulation; we may intersperse  
 Extenuating passages of strength,  
 Ardor, vivacity and wit — may turn  
 E'en guile into a voluntary grace:  
 But one's old age, when graces drop away  
 And leave guile the pure staple of our lives —  
 Ah, loathsome!

Not so — or why pause I? Turin  
 Is mine to have, were I so minded, for  
 The asking; all the army's mine — I've witnessed  
 Each private fight beneath me; all the Court's  
 Mine too; and, best of all, D'Ormea's still  
 D'Ormea and mine. There's some grace clinging yet.  
 Had I decided on this step, ere midnight  
 I'd take the crown.

No. Just this step to rise  
 Exhausts me. Here am I arrived: the rest  
 Must be done for me. Would I could sit here  
 And let things right themselves, the masque unmasque  
 Of the old King, crownless, gray hair and hot blood, —  
 The young King, crowned, but calm before his time,  
 They say, — the eager mistress with her taunts, —  
 And the sad earnest wife who motions me  
 Away — ay, there she knelt to me! E'en yet  
 I can return and sleep at Chambery  
 A dream out.

Rather shake it off at Turin,  
 King Victor! Say: to Turin — yes, or no?  
 'Tis this relentless noonday-lighted chamber,  
 Lighted like life but silent as the grave,  
 That disconcerts me. That's the change must strike.  
 No silence last year! Some one flung doors wide  
 (Those two great doors which scrutinize me now)  
 And out I went 'mid crowds of men — men talking,  
 Men watching if my lip fell or brow knit,  
 Men saw me safe forth, put me on my road:

That makes the misery of this return.  
 Oh had a battle done it! Had I dropped,  
 Haling some battle, three entire days old,  
 Hither and thither by the forehead — dropped  
 In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in France —  
 Spurned on its horns or underneath its hoofs,  
 Went the spent monster went upon its knees  
 To pad and pash the prostrate wretch — I, Victor,  
 Sole to have stood up against France, beat down  
 By inches, brayed to pieces finally  
 In some vast unimaginable charge,  
 A flying hell of horse and foot and guns  
 Over me, and all's lost, forever lost,  
 There's no more Victor when the world wakes up!  
 Then silence, as of a raw battlefield,  
 Throughout the world. Then after (as whole days  
 After, you catch at intervals faint noise  
 Through the stiff crust of frozen blood) — there creeps  
 A rumor forth, so faint, no noise at all,  
 That a strange old man, with face outworn for wounds,  
 Is stumbling on from frontier town to town,  
 Begging a pittance that may help him find  
 His Turin out; what scorn and laughter follow  
 The coin you fling into his cap! And last,  
 Some bright morn, how men crowd about the midst  
 O' the market-place, where takes the old king breath  
 Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-gate  
 Wide ope!

To Turin, yes or no — or no?

*Re-enter CHARLES with papers.*

*Cha.* Just as I thought! A miserable falsehood  
 Of hirelings discontented with their pay  
 And longing for enfranchisement! A few  
 Testy expressions of old age that thinks  
 To keep alive its dignity o'er slaves  
 By means that suit their natures!

[*Tearing them.*] Thus they shake

My faith in Victor!

[*Turning, he discovers VICTOR.*

*Vic.* [*after a pause.*] Not at Evian, Charles?  
 What's this? Why do you run to close the doors?  
 No welcome for your father?

*Cha.* [*Aside.*] Not his voice!

What would I give for one imperious tone  
 Of the old sort! That's gone forever.

*Vic.*

Must

I ask once more . . .

*Cha.* No — I concede it, sir !  
 You are returned for . . . true, your health declines ;  
 True, Chambery 's a bleak unkindly spot ;  
 You 'd choose one fitter for your final lodge —  
 Veneria, or Moncaglièr — ay, that 's close  
 And I concede it.

*Vic.* I received advices  
 Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter,  
 Dated from Evian Baths . . .

*Cha.* And you forbore  
 To visit me at Evian, satisfied  
 The work I had to do would fully task  
 The little wit I have, and that your presence  
 Would only disconcert me —

*Vic.* Charles ?

*Cha.* — Me, set  
 Forever in a foreign course to yours,  
 And . . .

Sir, this way of wile were good to catch,  
 But I have not the sleight of it. The truth !  
 Though I sink under it ! What brings you here ?

*Vic.* Not hope of this reception, certainly,  
 From one who 'd scarce assume a stranger mode  
 Of speech, did I return to bring about  
 Some awfulest calamity !

*Cha.* — You mean,  
 Did you require your crown again ! Oh yes,  
 I should speak otherwise ! But turn not that  
 To jesting ! Sir, the truth ! Your health declines ?  
 Is aught deficient in your equipage ?  
 Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,  
 And foil the malice of the world which laughs  
 At petty discontents ; but I shall care  
 That not a soul knows of this visit. Speak !

*Vic.* [*Aside.*] Here is the grateful much-professing son  
 Prepared to worship me, for whose sole sake  
 I think to waive my plans of public good !

[*Aloud.*] Nay, Charles, if I did seek to take once more  
 My crown, were so disposed to plague myself,  
 What would be warrant for this bitterness ?  
 I gave it — grant I would resume it — well ?

*Cha.* I should say simply — leaving out the why  
 And how — you made me swear to keep that crown :  
 And as you then intended . . .

*Vic.* Fool ! What way  
 Could I intend or not intend ? As man,

With a man's will, when I say "I intend,"  
 I can intend up to a certain point,  
 No further. I intended to preserve  
 The crown of Savoy and Sardinia whole :  
 And if events arise demonstrating  
 The way, I hoped should guard it, rather like  
 To lose it . . .

*Cha.* Keep within your sphere and mine !  
 It is God's province we usurp on, else.  
 Here, blindfold through the maze of things we walk  
 By a slight clue of false, true, right and wrong ;  
 All else is rambling and presumption. I  
 Have sworn to keep this kingdom : there 's my truth.

*Vic.* Truth, boy, is here, within my breast ; and in  
 Your recognition of it, truth is, too ;  
 And in the effect of all this tortuous dealing  
 With falsehood, used to carry out the truth,  
 — In its success, this falsehood turns, again,  
 Truth for the world ! But you are right : these themes  
 Are over-subtle. I should rather say  
 In such a case, frankly, — it fails, my scheme :  
 I hoped to see you bring about, yourself,  
 What I must bring about. I interpose  
 On your behalf — with my son's good in sight —  
 To hold what he is nearly letting go,  
 Confirm his title, add a grace perhaps.  
 There 's Sicily, for instance, — granted me  
 And taken back, some years since : till I give  
 That island with the rest, my work 's half done.  
 For his sake, therefore, as of those he rules . . .

*Cha.* Our sakes are one ; and that, you could not say,  
 Because my answer would present itself  
 Forthwith : — a year has wrought an age's change.  
 This people 's not the people now, you once  
 Could benefit ; nor is my policy  
 Your policy.

*Vic.* [*with an outburst.*] I know it ! You undo  
 All I have done — my life of toil and care !  
 I left you this the absolutest rule  
 In Europe : do you think I will sit still  
 And see you throw power to the populace —  
 See my Sardinia, that has stood apart,  
 Join in the mad and democratic whirl  
 Whereto I see all Europe haste full tide ?  
 England casts off her kings ; France mimics England :

This realm I hoped was safe! Yet here I talk,  
 When I can save it, not by force alone,  
 But bidding plagues, which follow sons like you,  
 Fasten upon my disobedient . . .

[*Recollecting himself.*] Surely  
 I could say this — if minded so — my son?

*Cha.* You could not. Bitterer curses than your curse  
 Have I long since denounced upon myself  
 If I misused my power. In fear of these  
 I entered on those measures — will abide  
 By them: so, I should say, Count Tende . . .

*Vic.*

No!

But no! But if, my Charles, your — more than old —  
 Half-foolish father urged these arguments,  
 And then confessed them futile, but said plainly  
 That he forgot his promise, found his strength  
 Fail him, had thought at savage Chambery  
 Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli here,  
 And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga —  
 Pined for the pleasant places he had built  
 When he was fortunate and young —

*Cha.*

My father!

*Vic.* Stay yet! — and if he said he could not die  
 Deprived of baubles he had put aside,  
 He deemed, forever — of the Crown that binds  
 Your brain up, whole, sound and impregnable,  
 Creating kingliness — the Sceptre too,  
 Whose mere wind, should you wave it, back would beat  
 Invaders — and the golden Ball which throbs  
 As if you grasped the palpitating heart  
 Indeed o' the realm, to mould as you may choose!  
 — If I must totter up and down the streets  
 My sires built, where myself have introduced  
 And fostered laws and letters, sciences,  
 The civil and the military arts!  
 Stay, Charles! I see you letting me pretend  
 To live my former self once more — King Victor,  
 The venturous yet politic: they style me  
 Again, the Father of the Prince: friends wink  
 Good-humoredly at the delusion you  
 So sedulously guard from all rough truths  
 That else would break upon my dotage! — You —  
 Whom now I see preventing my old shame —  
 I tell not, point by cruel point, my tale —  
 For is 't not in your breast my brow is hid?  
 Is not your hand extended? Say you not . . .

*Enter D'ORMEA, leading in POLYXENA.*

*Pol. [advancing and withdrawing CHARLES — to VICTOR.]*

In this conjuncture even, he would say  
 (Though with a moistened eye and quivering lip)  
 The suppliant is my father. I must save  
 A great man from himself, nor see him fling  
 His well-earned fame away : there must not follow  
 Ruin so utter, a break-down of worth  
 So absolute : no enemy shall learn,  
 He thrust his child 'twixt danger and himself,  
 And, when that child somehow stood danger out,  
 Stole back with serpent wiles to ruin Charles  
 — Body, that's much. — and soul, that's more — and realm,  
 That's most of all ! No enemy shall say . . .

*D'O.* Do you repent, sir ?

*Vic. [resuming himself.]* D'Ormea ? This is well !  
 Worthily done, King Charles, craftily done !  
 Judiciously you post these, to o'erhear  
 The little your importunate father thrusts  
 Himself on you to say ! — Ah, they 'll correct  
 The amiable blind facility  
 You show in answering his peevish suit.  
 What can he need to sue for ? Bravely, D'Ormea,  
 Have you fulfilled your office : but for you,  
 The old Count might have drawn some few more livres  
 To swell his income ! Had you, lady, missed  
 The moment, a permission would be granted  
 To buttress up my ruinous old pile !  
 But you remember properly the list  
 Of wise precautions I took when I gave  
 Nearly as much away — to reap the fruits  
 I might have looked for !

*Cha.* Thanks, sir : degrade me,  
 So you remain yourself ! Adieu !

*Vic.* I 'll not

Forget it for the future, nor presume  
 Next time to slight such mediators ! Nay —  
 Had I first moved them both to intercede,  
 I might secure a chamber in Moncaglier  
 — Who knows ?

*Cha.* Adieu !

*Vic.* You bid me this adieu

With the old spirit ?

*Cha.* Adieu !

*Vic.* Charles — Charles !

*Cha.*

Adieu !

[VICTOR goes.]

*Cha.* You were mistaken, Marquis, as you hear!  
 'T was for another purpose the Count came.  
 The Count desires Moncaglièr. Give the order!  
*D'O.* [*leisurely.*] Your minister has lost your confidence,  
 Asserting late, for his own purposes,  
 Count Tende would . . .

*Cha.* [*flinging his badge back.*] Be still the minister!  
 And give a loose to your insulting joy;  
 It irks me more thus stifled than expressed:  
 Loose it!

*D'O.* There's none to loose, alas! — I see  
 I never am to die a martyr.

*Pol.* Charles!

*Cha.* No praise, at least, Polyxena — no praise!

## KING CHARLES.

### PART II.

*D'ORMEA seated, folding papers he has been examining.*

This at the last effects it: now, King Charles  
 Or else King Victor — that's a balance: but now,  
 D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either turn  
 O' the scale, — that's sure enough. A point to solve,  
 My masters, moralists, whate'er your style!  
 When you discover why I push myself  
 Into a pitfall you'd pass safely by.  
 Impart to me among the rest! No matter.  
 Prompt are the righteous ever with their rede  
 To us the wrongful: lesson them this once!  
 For safe among the wicked are you set,  
 D'Ormea! We lament life's brevity,  
 Yet quarter e'en the threescore years and ten,  
 Nor stick to call the quarter roundly "life."  
 D'Ormea was wicked, say, some twenty years;  
 A tree so long was stunted; afterward,  
 What if it grew, continued growing, till  
 No fellow of the forest equalled it?  
 'T was a stump then; a stump it still must be:  
 While forward saplings, at the outset checked,  
 In virtue of that first sprout keep their style  
 Amid the forest's green fraternity.  
 Thus I shoot up to surely get lopped down  
 And bound up for the burning. Now for it!

*Enter CHARLES and POLYXENA with Attendants.*

*D'O.* [*rises*] Sir, in the due discharge of this my office —  
This enforced summons of yourself from Turin,  
And the disclosure I am bound to make  
To-night, — there must already be, I feel,  
So much that wounds . . .

*Cha.* Well, sir?

*D'O.* — That I, perchance,  
May utter also what, another time,  
Would irk much, — it may prove less irksome now.

*Cha.* What would you utter?

*D'O.* That I from my soul  
Grieve at to-night's event: for you I grieve,  
E'en grieve for . . .

*Cha.* Tush, another time for talk!  
My kingdom is in imminent danger?

*D'O.* Let  
The Count communicate with France — its King,  
His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for this,  
Though for no other war.

*Cha.* First for the levies:  
What forces can I muster presently?

[*D'ORMEA delivers papers which CHARLES inspects.*  
*Cha.* Good — very good. Montorio . . . how is this?  
— Equips me double the old complement  
Of soldiers?

*D'O.* Since his land has been relieved  
From double imposts, this he manages:  
But under the late monarch . . .

*Cha.* Peace! I know.  
Count Spava has omitted mentioning  
What proxy is to head these troops of his.

*D'O.* Count Spava means to head his troops himself.  
Something to fight for now; "Whereas," says he,  
"Under the sovereign's father" . . .

*Cha.* It would seem  
That all my people love me.

*D'O.* Yes.

[*To POLYXENA while CHARLES continues to inspect the paper*  
A temper

Like Victor's may avail to keep a state;  
He terrifies men and they fall not off;  
Good to restrain: best, if restraint were all.  
But, with the silent circle round him, ends  
Such sway: our King's begins precisely there.  
For to suggest, impel and set at work,  
Is quite another function. Men may slight,



In time of peace, the King who brought them peace :  
 In war, — his voice, his eyes, help more than fear.  
 They love you, sir !

*Cha.* [*to Attendants.*] Bring the regalia forth !  
 Quit the room ! And now, Marquis, answer me !  
 Why should the King of France invade my realm ?

*D'O.* Why ? Did I not acquaint your Majesty  
 An hour ago ?

*Cha.* I choose to hear again  
 What then I heard.

*D'O.* Because, sir, as I said,  
 Your father is resolved to have his crown  
 At any risk ; and, as I judge, calls in  
 The foreigner to aid him.

*Cha.* And your reason  
 For saying this ?

*D'O.* [*Aside.*] Ay, just his father's way !  
 [*To CH.*] The Count wrote yesterday to your forces' Chief,  
 Rhebinder — made demand of help —

*Cha.* To try  
 Rhebinder — he 's of alien blood. Aught else ?

*D'O.* Receiving a refusal, — some hours after,  
 The Count called on Del Borgo to deliver  
 The Act of Abdication : he refusing,  
 Or hesitating, rather —

*Cha.* What ensued ?

*D'O.* At midnight, only two hours since, at Turin,  
 He rode in person to the citadel  
 With one attendant, to the Soccorso gate,  
 And bade the governor, San Remi, open —  
 Admit him.

*Cha.* For a purpose I divine.  
 These three were faithful, then ?

*D'O.* They told it me :  
 And I —

*Cha.* Most faithful —

*D'O.* Tell it you — with this  
 Moreover of my own : if, an hour hence,  
 You have not interposed, the Count will be  
 On his road to France for succor.

*Cha.* Very good !  
 You do your duty now to me your monarch  
 Fully, I warrant ? — have, that is, your project  
 For saving both of us disgrace, no doubt ?

*D'O.* I give my counsel, — and the only one.  
 A month since, I besought you to employ

Restraints which had prevented many a pang :  
 But now the harsher course must be pursued.  
 These papers, made for the emergency,  
 Will pain you to subscribe : this is a list  
 Of those suspected merely — men to watch ;  
 This — of the few of the Count's very household  
 You must, however reluctantly, arrest ;  
 While here 's a method of remonstrance — sure  
 Not stronger than the case demands — to take  
 With the Count's self.

*Cha.* Deliver those three papers.

*Pol.* [*while CHARLES inspects them — to D'ORMEA.*]

Your measures are not over-harsh, sir : France  
 Will hardly be deterred from her intents  
 By these.

*D'O.* If who proposes might dispose,  
 I could soon satisfy you. Even these,  
 Hear what he 'll say at my presenting !

*Cha.* [*who has signed them.*] There !  
 About the warrants ! You 've my signature.  
 What turns you pale ? I do my duty by you  
 In acting boldly thus on your advice.

*D'O.* [*reading them separately.*] Arrest the people I sus-  
 pected merely ?

*Cha.* Did you suspect them ?

*D'O.* Doubtless : but — but — sir,  
 This Forquieri 's governor of Turin,  
 And Rivarol and he have influence over  
 Half of the capital ! Rabella, too ?  
 Why, sir —

*Cha.* Oh, leave the fear to me !

*D'O.* [*still reading.*] You bid me  
 Incarcerate the people on this list ?  
 Sir —

*Cha.* But you never bade arrest those men,  
 So close related to my father too,  
 On trifling grounds ?

*D'O.* Oh, as for that, St. George,  
 President of Chambery's senators,  
 Is hatching treason ! still —

[*More troubled.*] Sir, Count Cumiane  
 Is brother to your father's wife ! What 's here ?  
 Arrest the wife herself ?

*Cha.* You seem to think  
 A venial crime this plot against me. Well ?

*D'O.* [*who has read the last paper.*] Wherefore am I thus  
 ruined ? Why not take

My life at once? This poor formality  
 Is, let me say, unworthy you! Prevent it  
 You, madam! I have served you, am prepared  
 For all disgraces: only, let disgrace  
 Be plain, be proper — proper for the world  
 To pass its judgment on 'twixt you and me!  
 Take back your warrant, I will none of it!

*Cha.* Here is a man to talk of fickleness!  
 He stakes his life upon my father's falsehood;  
 I bid him . . .

*D'O.* Not you! Were he trebly false,  
 You do not bid me . . .

*Cha.* Is 't not written there?  
 I thought so: give — I'll set it right.

*D'O.* Is it there?  
 Oh yes, and plain — arrest him now — drag here  
 Your father! And were all six times as plain,  
 Do you suppose I trust it?

*Cha.* Just one word!  
 You bring him, taken in the act of flight,  
 Or else your life is forfeit.

*D'O.* Ay, to Turin  
 I bring him, and to-morrow?

*Cha.* Here and now!  
 The whole thing is a lie, a hateful lie,  
 As I believed and as my father said.  
 I knew it from the first, but was compelled  
 To circumvent you; and the great D'Ormea,  
 That baffled Alberoni and tricked Coscia,  
 The miserable sower of such discord  
 'Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last.  
 Oh I see! you arrive — this plan of yours,  
 Weak as it is, torments sufficiently  
 A sick old peevish man — wrings hasty speech,  
 An ill-considered threat from him; that's noted;  
 Then out you ferret papers, his amusement  
 In lonely hours of lassitude — examine  
 The day-by-day report of your paid spies —  
 And back you come: all was not ripe, you find,  
 And, as you hope, may keep from ripening yet,  
 But you were in bare time! Only, 't were best  
 I never saw my father — these old men  
 Are potent in excuses: and meanwhile,  
 D'Ormea's the man I cannot do without!

*Pol.* Charles —

*Cha.* Ah, no question! You against me too!

You 'd have me eat and drink and sleep, live, die,  
 With this lie coiled about me, choking me!  
 No, no, D'Ormea! You venture life, you say,  
 Upon my father's perfidy: and I  
 Have, on the whole, no right to disregard  
 The chains of testimony you thus wind  
 About me; though I do — do from my soul  
 Discredit them: still I must authorize  
 These measures, and I will! Perugia!

[*Many Officers enter.*] Count —

You and Solar, with all the force you have,  
 Stand at the Marquis' orders: what he bids,  
 Implicitly perform! You are to bring  
 A traitor here; the man that's likest one  
 At present, fronts me; you are at his beck  
 For a full hour! he undertakes to show  
 A fouler than himself, — but, failing that,  
 Return with him, and, as my father lives,  
 He dies this night! The clemency you blame  
 So oft, shall be revoked — rights exercised,  
 Too long abjured.

[*To D'ORMEA.*] Now, sir, about the work!

To save your king and country! Take the warrant!

D'O. You hear the sovereign's mandate, Count Perugia?  
 Obey me! As your diligence, expect  
 Reward! All follow to Montcagliar!

Cha. [*in great anguish.*] D'Ormea! [D'ORMEA goes.  
 He goes, lit up with that appalling smile!

[*To POLYXENA after a pause.*

At least you understand all this?

Pol. These means  
 Of our defence — these measures of precaution?

Cha. It must be the best way: I should have else  
 Withered beneath his scorn.

Pol. What would you say?

Cha. Why, you don't think I mean to keep the crown,  
 Polyxena?

Pol. You then believe the story  
 In spite of all — that Victor's coming?

Cha. Believe it?

I know that he is coming — feel the strength  
 That has upheld me leave me at his coming!  
 'T was mine, and now he takes his own again.  
 Some kinds of strength are well enough to have;  
 But who's to have that strength? Let my crown go!  
 I meant to keep it; but I cannot — cannot!

Only, he shall not taunt me — he, the first . . .  
 See if he would not be the first to taunt me  
 With having left his kingdom at a word,  
 With letting it be conquered without stroke,  
 With . . . no — no — 't is no worse than when he left!  
 I 've just to bid him take it. and, that over,  
 We 'll fly away — fly, for I loathe this Turin,  
 This Rivoli, all titles loathe, all state.  
 We 'd best go to your country — unless God  
 Send I die now!

*Pol.* Charles, hear me!

*Cha.* And again  
 Shall you be my Polyxena — you 'll take me  
 Out of this woe! Yes, do speak, and keep speaking!  
 I would not let you speak just now, for fear  
 You 'd counsel me against him: but talk, now,  
 As we two used to talk in blessed times:  
 Bid me endure all his caprices; take me  
 From this mad post above him!

*Pol.* I believe  
 We are undone, but from a different cause.  
 All your resources, down to the least guard,  
 Are at D'Ormea's beck. What if, the while,  
 He act in concert with your father? We  
 Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli —  
 Where find a better place for them?

*Cha.* [ *pacing the room.* ] And why  
 Does Victor come? To undo all that 's done,  
 Restore the past, prevent the future! Seat  
 His mistress in your seat, and place in mine  
 . . . Oh, my own people, whom will you find there,  
 To ask of, to consult with, to care for,  
 To hold up with your hands? Whom? One that 's false —  
 False — from the head's crown to the foot's sole, false!  
 The best is, that I knew it in my heart  
 From the beginning, and expected this,  
 And hated you, Polyxena, because  
 You saw through him, though I too saw through him,  
 Saw that he meant this while he crowned me, while  
 He prayed for me, — nay, while he kissed my brow,  
 I saw —

*Pol.* But if your measures take effect,  
 D'Ormea true to you?

*Cha.* Then worst of all!  
 I shall have loosed that callous wretch on him!  
 Well may the woman taunt him with his child —

I, eating here his bread, clothed in his clothes,  
 Seated upon his seat, let slip D'Ormea  
 To outrage him! We talk — perchance he tears  
 My father from his bed; the old hands feel  
 For one who is not, but who should be there:  
 He finds D'Ormea! D'Ormea too finds him!  
 The crowded chamber when the lights go out —  
 Closed doors — the horrid scuffle in the dark —  
 The accursed prompting of the minute! My guards!  
 To horse — and after, with me — and prevent!

*Pol.* [*seizing his hand.*] King Charles! Pause here upon  
 this strip of time

Allotted you out of eternity!  
 Crowns are from God: in his name you hold yours.  
 Your life's no least thing, were it fit your life  
 Should be abjured along with rule; but now,  
 Keep both! Your duty is to live and rule —  
 You, who would vulgarly look fine enough  
 In the world's eye, deserting your soul's charge, —  
 Ay, you would have men's praise, this Rivoli  
 Would be illumined! While, as 't is, no doubt,  
 Something of stain will ever rest on you;  
 No one will rightly know why you refused  
 To abdicate; they'll talk of deeds you could  
 Have done, no doubt, — nor do I much expect  
 Future achievement will blot out the past,  
 Envelop it in haze — nor shall we two  
 Live happy any more. 'T will be, I feel,  
 Only in moments that the duty's seen  
 As palpably as now — the months, the years  
 Of painful indistinctness are to come,  
 While daily must we tread these palace-rooms  
 Pregnant with memories of the past: your eye  
 May turn to mine and find no comfort there,  
 Through fancies that beset me, as yourself,  
 Of other courses, with far other issues,  
 We might have taken this great night: such bear,  
 As I will bear! What matters happiness?  
 Duty! There's man's one moment: this is yours!

[*Putting the crown on his head, and the sceptre in his hand, she places  
 him on his seat: a long pause and silence.*]

*Enter D'ORMEA and VICTOR.*

*Vic.* At last I speak; but once — that once, to you!  
 'T is you I ask, not these your varletry,  
 Who's King of us?

*Cha.* [*from his seat.*] Count Tende . . .

*Vic.*

What your spies

Assert I ponder in my soul, I say —  
 Here to your face, amid your guards! I choose  
 To take again the crown whose shadow I gave —  
 For still its potency surrounds the weak  
 White locks their felon hands have discomposed.  
 Or I'll not ask who 's King, but simply, who  
 Withholds the crown I claim? Deliver it!  
 I have no friend in the wide world: nor France  
 Nor England cares for me: you see the sum  
 Of what I can avail. Deliver it!

*Cha.* Take it, my father!

And now say in turn,

Was it done well, my father — sure not well,  
 To try me thus! I might have seen much cause  
 For keeping it — too easily seen cause!  
 But, from that moment, e'en more wofully  
 My life had pined away, than pine it will.  
 Already you have much to answer for.  
 My life to pine is nothing, — her sunk eyes  
 Were happy once! No doubt, my people think  
 I am their King still . . . but I cannot strive!  
 Take it!

*Vic.* [*one hand on the crown CHARLES offers, the other on his neck.*] So few years give it quietly,

My son! It will drop from me. See you not?  
 A crown's unlike a sword to give away —  
 That, let a strong hand to a weak hand give!  
 But crowns should slip from palsied brows to heads  
 Young as this head: yet mine is weak enough,  
 E'en weaker than I knew. I seek for phrases  
 To vindicate my right. 'Tis of a piece!  
 All is alike gone by with me — who beat  
 Once D'Orleans in his lines — his very lines!  
 To have been Eugene's comrade, Louis' rival,  
 And now . . .

*Cha.* [*putting the crown on him, to the rest.*] The King  
 speaks, yet none kneels, I think!

*Vic.* I am then King! As I became a King  
 Despite the nations, kept myself a King,  
 So I die King, with Kingship dying too  
 Around me! I have lasted Europe's time!  
 What wants my story of completion? Where  
 Must needs the damning break show? Who mistrusts  
 My children here — tell they of any break  
 'Twixt my day's sunrise and its fiery fall?

And who were by me when I died but they?  
D'Ormea there!

*Cha.* What means he?

*Vic.* Ever there!

Charles — how to save your story? Mine must go!  
Say — say that you refused the crown to me!  
Charles, yours shall be my story! You immured  
Me, say, at Rivoli. A single year  
I spend without a sight of you, then die —  
That will serve every purpose — tell that tale  
The world!

*Cha.* Mistrust me? Help!

*Vic.* Past help, past reach!

'Tis in the heart — you cannot reach the heart:  
This broke mine, that I did believe, you, Charles,  
Would have denied and so disgraced me.

*Pol.* Charles

Has never ceased to be your subject, sir!  
He reigned at first through setting up yourself  
As pattern: if he e'er seemed harsh to you,  
'T was from a too intense appreciation  
Of your own character: he acted you —  
Ne'er for an instant did I think it real,  
Nor look for any other than this end.  
I hold him worlds the worse on that account;  
But so it was.

*Cha.* [*to POLYX.*] I love you now indeed!  
[*To VICTOR.*] You never knew me!

*Vic.* Hardly till this moment,

When I seem learning many other things  
Because the time for using them is past.  
If 't were to do again! That's idly wished.  
Truthfulness might prove policy as good  
As guile. Is this my daughter's forehead? Yes:  
I've made it fitter now to be a queen's  
Than formerly: I've ploughed the deep lines there  
Which keep too well a crown from slipping off.  
No matter. Guile has made me King again.  
*Louis* — 't was in *King Victor's* time: — long since,  
*When Louis reigned and, also, Victor reigned.*  
How the world talks already of us two!  
God of eclipse and each discolored star,  
Why do I linger then?

Ha! Where lurks he?

D'Ormea! Nearer to your King! Now stand!

[*Collecting his strength as D'ORMEA approaches.*  
You lied, D'Ormea! I do not repent. [*Dies.*]













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