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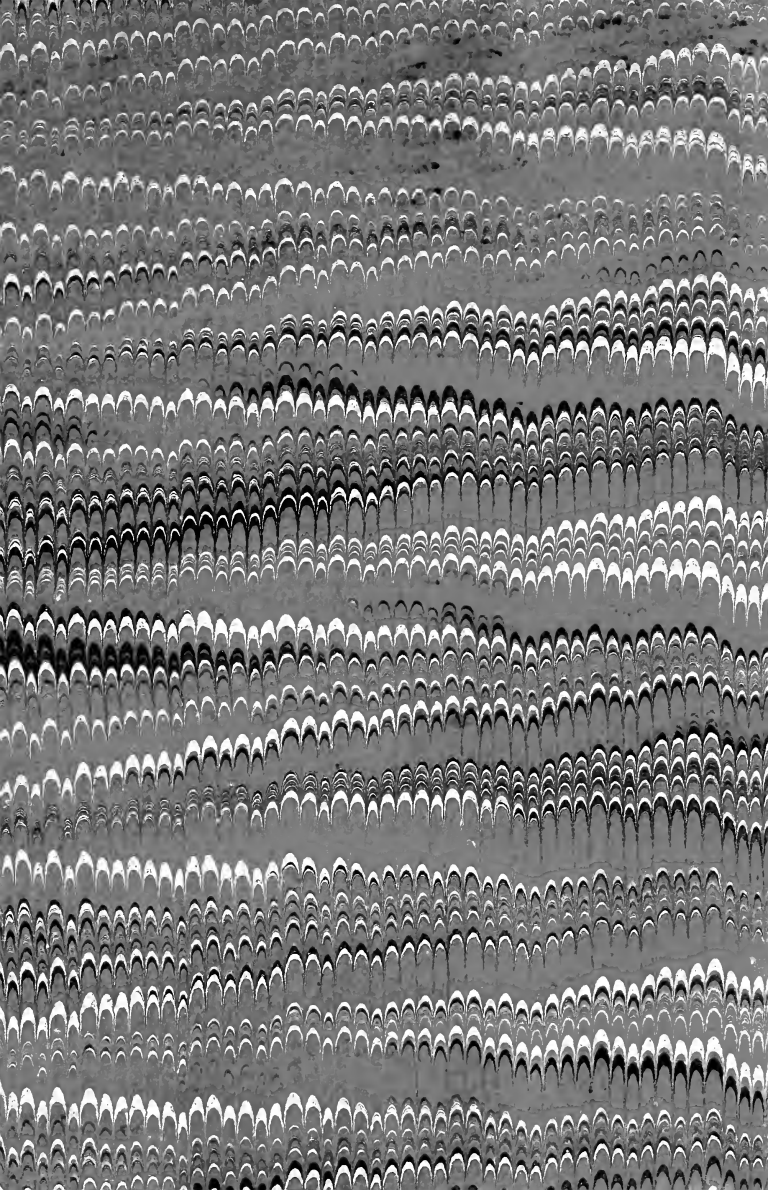
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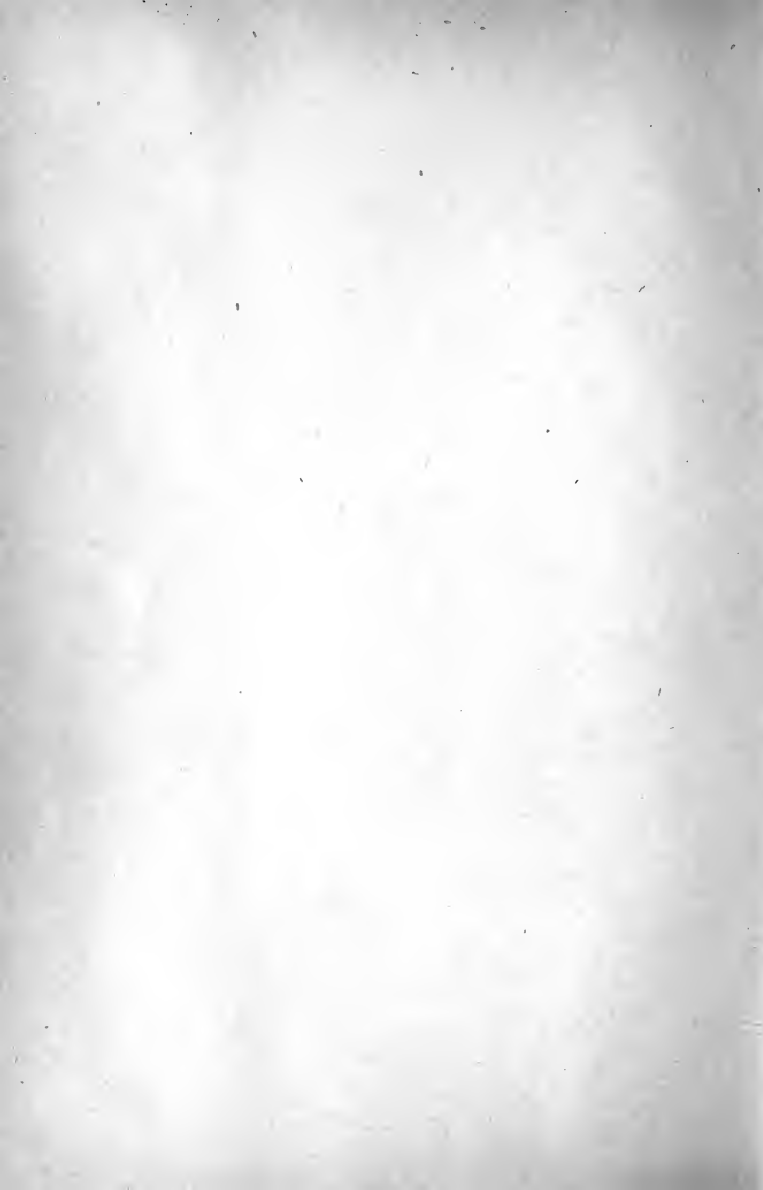
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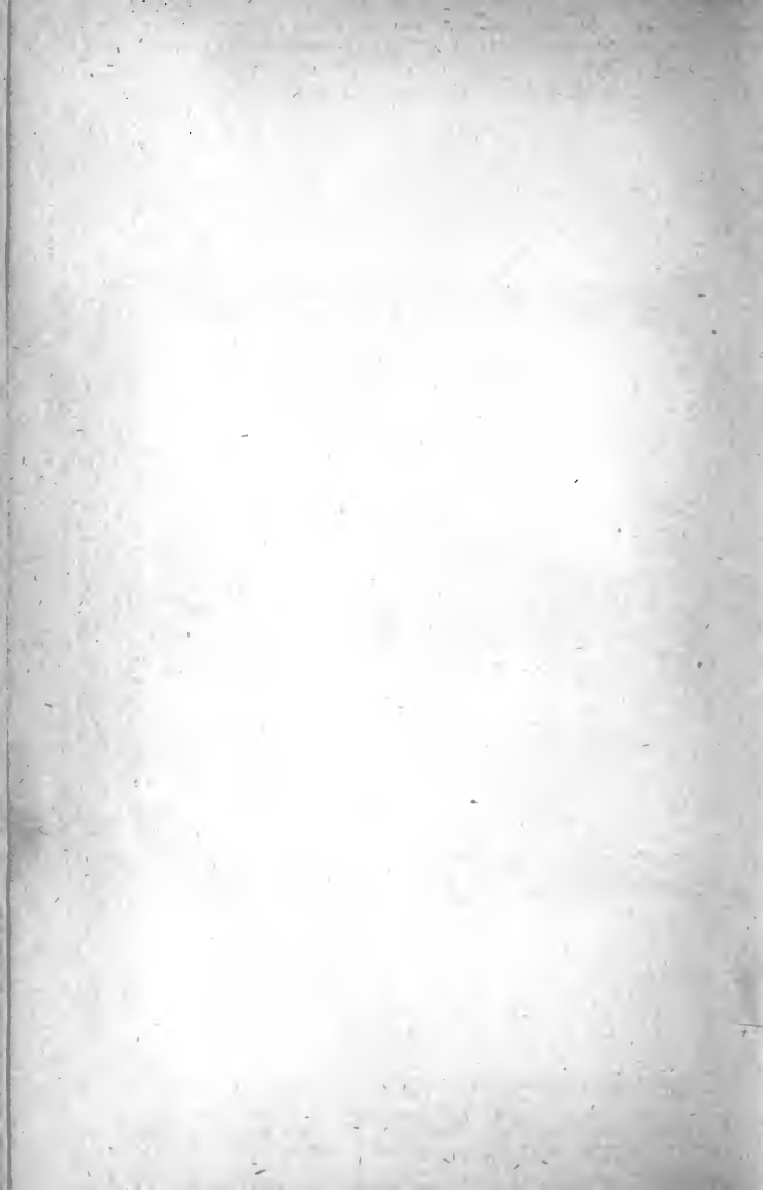












ENGLISH · CLASSIC · SERIES

WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES

SELECTED POEMS

BY
ROBERT BROWNING.

NEW YORK:
CLARK & MAYNARD, PUBLISHERS,
771 BROADWAY.
1887.

A TEXT-BOOK ON RHETORIC;

SUPPLEMENTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCIENCE WITH
EXHAUSTIVE PRACTICE IN COMPOSITION.

A Course of Practical Lessons Adapted for use in High Schools and
Academies, and in the Lower Classes of Colleges.

BY

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*Professor of the English Language and Literature in the Brooklyn
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276 pages, 12mo, attractively bound in cloth.

CLARK & MAYNARD, Publishers, New York.

SELECTED POEMS

OF

ROBERT BROWNING.

MY STAR.
INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH
CAMP.
HOME THOUGHTS FROM
ABROAD.
RABBI BEN EZRA.
MEMORABILIA.

ABT VOGLER.
THE LOST LEADER.
THE BOY AND THE ANGEL.
ANDREA DEL SARTO.
"GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT."
BY THE FIRESIDE.
MY LAST DUCHESS.



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INTRODUCTION.

ROBERT BROWNING was born at Camberwell, a suburb of London, May 7, 1812. From his earliest years he was fond of writing verses, and when twelve years of age had produced poems enough to form a volume. His first published poem, "Pauline," appeared in 1833, but his real introduction to the public was through "Paracelsus," a drama, published in 1835. In 1837 the tragedy of "Strafford" was unsuccessfully presented at Drury Lane Theater. In 1840 the epic "Sordello" was published, one of his most characteristic and most difficult works. In 1841-1846 appeared the series of "Bells and Pomegranates," in eight shilling parts, containing much of his finest poetry, including the tragedy "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon" and the graceful dramatic poem "Pippa Passes." In 1846 he was married to the distinguished poetess, Elizabeth Barrett, and soon after established his home in Italy. "Christmas Eve and Easter Day" appeared in 1850, followed by two volumes of short poems, "Men and Women," 1855, and "Dramatis Personæ," 1864. His greatest work, "The Ring and the Book," appeared in 1868-9, closely followed by many other important poems, chief of which are "Fifine at the Fair," 1872; "Red Cotton Night-cap Country," 1873; "Aristophanes' Apology" and "The Inn Album," 1875. Most important of his latest works are "Dramatic Idyls," 1879-80; "Jocoseria," 1883; "Fetters and Fancies," 1885; and "Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day," 1887.

The first and perhaps the final impression we receive from the works of Robert Browning is that of a great nature, an immense personality. The poet in him is made up of many men. He is dramatist, humorist, lyricist, painter, musician, philosopher,

and scholar, each in full measure, and he includes and dominates them all. In richness of nature, in scope and penetration of mind and vision, in all the potentialities of poetry, he is probably second among English poets to Shakespeare alone. In art, in the power or the patience of working his native ore, he is surpassed by many; but few have ever held so rich a mine in fee. He has written more than any other English poet with the exception of Shakespeare, and he comes very near the gigantic total of Shakespeare. He has been publishing for more than half a century, and his career, happily for us, is not yet closed. His works are not a mere collection of poems, they are a literature. And his literature is the richest of modern times. If "the best poetry is that which reproduces the most of life," his place is among the great poets of the world. In the vast extent of his work he has dealt with or touched on nearly every phase and feature of humanity, and his scope is bounded only by the soul's limits and the last reaches of life. There are for him but two realities and but two subjects, Life and Thought. On these are expended all his imagination and all his intellect, more consistently and in a higher degree than can be said of any English poet since the age of Elizabeth. Life and thought, the dramatic and the metaphysical, are not considered apart, but woven into one seamless tissue; and in regard to both he has one point of view and one manner of treatment. It is this that causes the unity which subsists throughout his works; and it is this, too, which distinguishes him among poets, and makes that originality by virtue of which he has been described as the most striking figure in our poetic literature.

Most poets endeavor to sink the individual in the universal; it is the special distinction of Mr. Browning that when he is most universal he is most individual. As a thinker he conceives of humanity not as an aggregate, but as a collection of units. Most thinkers write and speak of man; Mr. Browning of men. With man as a species, with man as a society, he does not concern himself, but with individual man and man. Every man is for him an epitome of the universe, a center of creation. Life exists for each as completely and separately as if he were the only inhabitant of our planet.

Here is it that Mr. Browning parts company most decisively with all other poets who concern themselves exclusively with life—dramatic poets, as we call them; so that it seems almost necessary to invent some new term to define precisely his special attitude. And hence it is that in his drama thought plays comparatively so large, and action comparatively so small, a part; hence, that action is valued only in so far as it reveals thought or motive, not for its own sake, as the crown and flower of these. For his endeavor is not to set men in action for the pleasure of seeing them move; but to see and show, in their action and inaction alike, the real impulses of their being; to see how each soul conceives of itself.

The dramatic poet, in the ordinary sense, in the sense in which we apply it to Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, aims at showing, by means of action, the development of character as it manifests itself to the world in deeds. His study is character, but it is character in action, considered only in connection with a particular grouping of events, and only so far as it produces or operates upon these. The processes are concealed from us, we see the result. We are told nothing, we care to know nothing, of what is going on in the thought; of the infinitely subtle meshes of motive or emotion which will perhaps find no direct outcome in speech, no direct manifestation in action, but by which the soul's life in reality subsists.

But is there no other sense in which a poet may be dramatic, besides this sense of the acting drama? no new form possible, which

“peradventure may outgrow
The simulation of the painted scene,
Boards, actors, prompters, gaslight, and costume,
And take for a noble stage the soul itself,
Its shifting fancies and celestial lights,
With all its grand orchestral silences,
To keep the pauses of the rhythmic sounds?”*

This new form of drama is the drama as we see it in Mr. Browning, a drama of the interior, a tragedy or comedy of the soul.

* *Aurora Leigh*, Book Fifth.

Instead of a grouping of characters which shall act on one another to produce a certain result in action, we have a grouping of events useful or important only as they influence the character or the mind. In this way, by making the soul the center of action, he is enabled (thinking himself into it, as all dramatists must do) to bring out its characteristics, to reveal its very nature.

This, then, is Mr. Browning's consistent mental attitude, and his special method. But he has also a special instrument—the monologue. The drama of action demands a concurrence of several distinct personalities, influencing one another rapidly by word or deed, so as to bring about the catastrophe; hence the propriety of the dialogue. But the introspective drama, in which the design is to represent and reveal the individual, requires a concentration of interest, a focusing of light on one point, to the exclusion or subordination of surroundings; hence the propriety of the monologue, in which a single speaker or thinker can consciously or unconsciously exhibit his own soul. Nearly all the lyrics, romances, idyls—nearly all the miscellaneous poems, long and short, are monologues.

The characteristic of which I have been speaking—the persistent care for the individual and personal, as distinguished from the universal and general—while it is the secret of his finest achievements, and rightly his special charm, is of all things the most alien to the ordinary conceptions of poetry, and the usual preferences for it. Compare, altogether apart from the worth and workmanship, one of Lord Tennyson's with one of Mr. Browning's best lyrics. The perfection of the former consists in the exquisite way in which it expresses feelings common to all. The perfection of the latter consists in the intensity of its expression of a single moment of passion or emotion, one peculiar to a single personality, and to that personality only at such a single moment. To appreciate it we must enter keenly and instantaneously into the imaginary character at its imagined crisis; and, even when this is easiest to do, it is evident that there must be more difficulty in doing it—for it requires a certain exertion—than in merely letting the mind lie at rest, accepting and absorbing.

Allied to Mr. Browning's originality in temper, topic, manner

of treatment, and special form, is his originality in style. His style is vital, his verse moves to the throbbing of an inner organism, not to the pulsations of a machine. He prefers, as indeed all true poets do, but more exclusively than any other poet, sense to sound, thought to expression. In his desire of condensation he employs as few words as are consistent with the right expression of his thought; he rejects superfluous adjectives and all stop-gap words. He refuses to use words for words' sake: he declines to interrupt conversation with a display of fireworks: and as a result it will be found that his finest effects of versification correspond with his highest achievements in imagination and passion. As a dramatic poet he is obliged to modulate and moderate, sometimes even to vulgarize, his style and diction for the proper expression of some particular character, in whose mouth exquisite turns of phrase and delicate felicities of rhythm would be inappropriate. He will not *let himself go* in the way of easy floridity, as writers may whose themes are more "ideal." And where many writers would attempt merely to simplify and sweeten verse, he endeavors to give it fuller expressiveness, to give it strength and newness. It follows that Mr. Browning's verse is not so uniformly melodious as that of many other poets. But he is far indeed from paying no attention, or little, to meter and versification. In one very important matter, that of rhyme, he is perhaps the greatest master in our language; in single and double, in simple and grotesque alike, he succeeds in fitting rhyme to rhyme with a perfection which I have never found in any other poet of any age. His lyrical poems contain more structural varieties of form than those of any preceding English poet, not excepting Shelley. His blank verse at its best is of higher quality—taking it for what it is, dramatic blank verse—than that of any modern poet. And both in rhymed and in blank verse he has written passages which for almost every quality of verse are hardly to be surpassed in the language.

That there is some excuse for the charge of "obscurity" so often brought against Mr. Browning, no one would or could deny. But it is only the excuse of a misconception. Mr. Browning is a thinker of extraordinary depth and subtlety; his themes are sel-

dom superficial, often very remote, and his thought is, moreover, as swift as it is subtle. To a dull reader there is little difference between cloudy and fiery thought; the one is as much too bright for him as the other is too dense. Of all thinkers in poetry, Mr. Browning is the most swift and fiery. Moreover, while a writer who deals with easy themes has no excuse if he is not pellucid to a glance, one who employs his intellect and imagination on high and hard questions has a right to demand a corresponding closeness of attention.

When Mr. Browning was a mere boy, it is recorded that he debated within himself whether he should not become a painter or a musician as well as a poet. Finally, though not, I believe, for a good many years, he decided in the negative. But the latent qualities of painter and musician have developed themselves in his poetry, and much of his finest and very much of his most original verse is that which speaks the language of painter and musician as it had never before been spoken. No English poet before him has ever excelled his utterances on music, none has so much as rivaled his utterances on art. In his poems on the sister arts of painting and sculpture—not in themselves more perfect in sympathy, though far greater in number, than those on music—he is simply the first to write of these arts as an artist might, if he could express his soul in words or rhythm.

It is only natural that a poet with the instincts of a painter should be capable of superb landscape-painting in verse; and we find in Mr. Browning this power. It is further evident that such a poet—a man who has chosen poetry instead of painting—must consider the latter art subordinate to the former, and it is only natural that we should find Mr. Browning subordinating the pictorial to the poetic capacity, and this more carefully than most other poets. His best landscapes are as brief as they are brilliant. They are as saber-strokes, swift, sudden, flashing the light from their sweep, and striking straight to the heart. And they are never pushed into prominence for an effect of idyl beauty, nor strewn about in the way of thoughtful or passionate utterance, like roses in a runner's path. They are subordinated always to

the human interest; blended, *fused* with it, so that a landscape in a poem of Mr. Browning's is literally a part of the emotion.

Of all poets Mr. Browning is the healthiest and manliest. His genius is robust with vigorous blood, and his tone has the cheeriness of intellectual health. The most subtle of minds, his is the least sickly. The wind that blows in his pages is no hot and languorous breeze, laden with scents and sweets, but a fresh salt wind blowing in from the sea. The keynote of his philosophy is:

"God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world!"

He has such a hopefulness of belief in human nature that he shrinks from no *man*, however clothed and cloaked in evil, however miry with stumblings and fallings. This vivid hope and trust in man is bound up with a strong and strenuous faith in God. Mr. Browning's Christianity is wider than our creeds, and is all the more vitally Christian in that it never sinks into pietism. He is never didactic, but his faith is the root of his art, and transforms and transfigures it. Yet as a dramatic poet he is so impartial, and can express all creeds with so easy an interpretative accent, that it is possible to prove him (as Shakespeare has been proved) a believer in everything and a disbeliever in anything.

Condensed from "Introduction to Study of Browning" by Arthur Symons.



BROWNING'S POEMS.

My Star.

ALL that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
 (Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red, 5
 Now a dart of blue ;
Till my friends have said
 They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue !
Then it stops like a bird ; like a flower, hangs furled : 10
 They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world ?
 Mine has opened its soul to me ; therefore I love it.

Incident of the French Camp.

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon :
 A mile or so away
On a little mound, Napoleon
 Stood on our storming-day ;

2. **A certain star.**—The metaphor of this suggestive little poem is thus interpreted by Mrs. Orr, in her "Handbook to Browning's Works": "My Star" may be taken as a tribute to the personal element in love ; the bright peculiar light in which the sympathetic soul reveals itself to the object of its sympathy."

1. **Ratisbon.** Or **Regensburg**, a town on the Danube, 65 miles north of Munich, not far from the river Isar. The "incident" here described was an actual occurrence.

With neck out-thrust, you fancy how, 5
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,
 As if to balance the prone brow
 Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
 That soar, to earth may fall, 10
 Let once my army-leader Lannes
 Waver at yonder wall,"—
 Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
 A rider, bound on bound
 Full-galloping; nor bridle drew 15
 Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
 And held himself erect
 By just his horse's mane, a boy :
 You hardly could suspect— 20
 (So tight he kept his lips compressed,
 Scarce any blood came through)
 You looked twice ere you saw his breast
 Was all but shot in two.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace 25
 We've got you Ratisbon !
 The Marshal's in the market-place,
 And you'll be there anon
 To see your flag-bird flap his vans
 Where I, to heart's desire, 30
 Perched him !" The chief's eye flashed ; his plans
 Soared up again like fire.

11 **My army-leader Lannes.**—One of Napoleon's most distinguished marshals. He commanded in the battles of Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland, and others. For winning the battle of Montebello he was made Duke of Montebello.

29. **Vans.**—From the French *van*, a wing. The wings of the imperial eagle upon the banner flap in the wind.

The chief's eye flashed ; but presently
 Softened itself, as sheathes
 A film the mother-eagle's eye 35
 When her bruised eaglet breathes ;
 "You're wounded !" "Nay," the soldier's pride
 Touched to the quick, he said :
 "I'm killed, Sire !" And his chief beside,
 Smiling the boy fell dead. 40

Home Thoughts, from Abroad.

OH, to be in England now that April's there,
 And whoever wakes in England sees, some morning, unaware,
 That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf 5
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
 In England—now !
 And after April, when May follows,
 And the white-throat builds, and all the swallows !
 Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover 10
 Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
 That's the wise thrush: he sings each song twice over
 Lest you should think he never could recapture
 The first fine careless rapture !
 And though the fields look rough with hoary dew, 15
 And will be gay when noontide wakes anew
 The buttercups, the little children's dower
 —Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

Rabbi ben Ezra.

In *Rabbi ben Ezra* Mr. Browning has crystallized his religious philosophy into a shape of abiding beauty. It has been called, not rashly, the noblest of modern religious poems. Alike in substance and in form it belongs to the highest order of meditative poetry; and it has an almost unique quality of grave beauty, of severe restraint, of earnest and measured enthusiasm. This is one of those poems which can never be profitably analyzed or commented on: it must be read. What the *Psalm of Life* is to the people who do not think, *Rabbi ben Ezra* might and should be to those who do: a light through the darkness—a lantern of guidance and a beacon of hope—to the wanderers lost and weary in the *selva selvaggia*. It is one of those poems that mold character.

GROW old along with me !
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was made :
 Our times are in His hand
 Who saith, " A whole I planned, 5
 Youth shows but half ; trust God : see all, nor be afraid !"

Not that, amassing flowers,
 Youth sighed, " Which rose make ours,
 Which lily leave and then as best recall ?"
 Not that, admiring stars, 10
 It yearned, " Nor Jove, nor Mars ;
 Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

Not for such hopes and fears
 Annulling youth's brief years,
 Do I remonstrate : folly wide the mark ! 15
 Rather I prize the doubt
 Low kinds exist without,
 Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

2. **The best is yet to be.**—The poet expresses the thought in "Saul" thus:

"By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still shalt enjoy
 More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life of a boy."

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
 Were man but formed to feed 20
 On joy, to solely seek and find and feast ;
 Such feasting ended, then
 As sure an end to men ;
 Irks care the crop-full bird ? Frets doubt the maw-crammed
 beast ?

Rejoice we are allied 25
 To That which doth provide
 And not partake, effect and not receive !
 A spark disturbs our clod ;
 Nearer we hold of God
 Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe. 30

Then, welcome each rebuff
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go !
 Be our joys three-parts pain !
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain ; 35
 Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge the throe !

For thence,—a paradox
 Which comforts while it mocks,—
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail :
 What I aspired to be, 40
 And was not, comforts me :
 A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

What is he but a brute
 Whose flesh hath soul to suit,

24. *Irks care, etc.*—Care does not annoy, nor doubt fret, the well-fed bird or beast.

29. *Nearer we hold of God.*—We possess the right or title to a nearer relationship with God

40, 41.—In "Saul" the poet says: "'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do."

Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play? 45
 To man, propose this test—
 Thy body at its best,
 How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use:
 I own the Past profuse 50
 Of power each side, perfection every turn:
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,
 Brain treasured up the whole;
 Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn"?

Not once beat "Praise be Thine!" 55
 I see the whole design,
 I, who saw Power, see now Love perfect too:
 Perfect I call Thy plan:
 Thanks that I was a man!
 Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do!" 60

For pleasant is this flesh;
 Our soul, in its rose-mesh
 Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest:
 Would we some prize might hold
 To match those manifold 65
 Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

Let us not always say
 "Spite of this flesh to-day
 I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
 As the bird wings and sings, 70
 Let us cry "All good things
 Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

Therefore I summon age
 To grant youth's heritage,

Life's struggle having so far reached its term: 75
 Thence shall I pass, approved
 A man, for aye removed
 From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.

And I shall thereupon
 Take rest, ere I be gone 80
 Once more on my adventure brave and new:
 Fearless and unperplexed,
 When I wage battle next,
 What weapons to select, what armor to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try 85
 My gain or loss thereby;
 Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
 And I shall weigh the same,
 Give life its praise or blame:
 Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old. 90

For, note when evening shuts,
 A certain moment cuts
 The deed off, calls the glory from the gray:
 A whisper from the west
 Shoots—"Add this to the rest, 95
 Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

So, still within this life,
 Though lifted o'er its strife,
 Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
 "This rage was right i' the main, 100
 That acquiescence vain:
 The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

For more is not reserved
 To man, with soul just nerved

To act to-morrow what he learns to-day : 105
 Here, work enough to watch
 The Master work, and catch
 Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth
 Should strive, through acts uncouth, 110
 Toward making, than repose on aught found made :
 So, better, age, exempt
 From strife, should know, than tempt
 Further. Thou waitedst age : wait death, nor be afraid !

Enough now, if the Right 115
 And Good and Infinite
 Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
 With knowledge absolute,
 Subject to no dispute
 From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone. 120

Be there, for once and all,
 Severed great minds from small,
 Announced to each his station in the Past !
 Was I, the world arraigned,
 Were they, my soul disdained, 125
 Right ? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last !

Now, who shall arbitrate ?
 Ten men love what I hate,
 Shun what I follow, slight what I receive ;
 Ten, who in ears and eyes 130
 Match me: we all surmise,
 They, this thing, and I, that: whom shall my soul believe ?

124, 125.—Was I whom the world arraigned, or were they whom my soul disdained, right ?

Not on the vulgar mass
 Called "work," must sentence pass,
 Things done, that took the eye and had the price; 135
 O'er which, from level stand,
 The low world laid its hand,
 Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb
 And finger failed to plumb, 140
 So passed in making up the main account:
 All instincts immature,
 All purposes unsure,
 That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed 145
 Into a narrow act,
 Fancies that broke through language and escaped:
 All I could never be,
 All men ignored in me,
 This I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped. 150

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
 That metaphor! and feel
 Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
 Thou, to whom fools propound,
 When the wine makes its round, 155
 "Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

Fool! All that is, at all,
 Lasts ever, past recall;
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
 What entered into thee, 160
That was, is, and shall be:
 Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

152. **That metaphor.**—Compare the same metaphor, Is. lxiv. 8 and xxix. 16; Jer. xviii. 2-6; Rom. ix. 21.

He fixed thee mid this dance
 Of plastic circumstance,
 This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest : 165
 Machinery just meant
 To give thy soul its bent,
 Try thee, and turn thee forth sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves
 Which ran the laughing loves 170
 Around thy base, no longer pause and press ?
 What though, about thy rim,
 Skull-things in order grim
 Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress ?

Look not thou down but up ! 175
 To uses of a cup,
 The festal board, lamp's flash, and trumpet's peal,
 The new wine's foaming flow,
 The Master's lips aglow !
 Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with
 earth's wheel ? 180

But I need, now as then,
 Thee, God, who moldest men !
 And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
 Did I,—to the wheel of life
 With shapes and colors rife, 185
 Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

So, take and use Thy work,
 Amend what flaws may lurk,
 What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim !
 My times be in Thy hand ! 190
 Perfect the cup as planned !
 Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same !

Memorabilia.

This poem, says Mrs. Orr, "is a picturesque comment on the power of personal association to give importance to any incident, however trifling; and tends to show that, from this point of view, no incident is more trifling than another." The enthusiastic lover of Shelley has so idealized the poet that he can hardly believe him to be a man that can be spoken to like other men. For him a falling eagle-feather, with its sudden suggestion of the ethereal poet, is enough to drive away all other memories of the moor.

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

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

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

For there I picked up on the heather
 And there I put inside my breast
 A moulted feather, an eagle-feather! 15
 Well, I forget the rest.

Abt Vogler.

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

*Abt Vogler** is an utterance on music which exceeds every attempt that has ever been made in verse to set forth the secret of the most sacred and illusive of the arts. Only the wonderful lines in the *Merchant of Venice* come anywhere near it. It is the richest, deepest, fullest poem on music in the language. The wonder and beauty of it grow on one, as the wonder and beauty of a sky, of the sea, of a landscape, beautiful indeed and wonderful from the first, become momentarily more evident, intense and absorbing. Life, religion, and music—the *Ganzen, Guten, Schönen* of existence—are combined in threefold unity, apprehended and interpreted in their essential spirit.

WOULD that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,
 Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
 Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon willed

Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
 Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim, 5
 Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep removed,—

Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name,
 And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved!

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
 This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise! 10

Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now combine,
 Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise!

* The Abt or Abbé George Joseph Vogler (born at Würzburg, Bavaria, in 1749, died at Darmstadt, 1824) was a composer, professor, kapellmeister, and writer on music. Among his pupils were Weber and Meyerbeer. The "musical instrument of his invention" was called an orchestrion. "It was," says Sir G. Grove. "a very compact organ, in which four keyboards of five octaves each, and a pedal board of thirty-six keys, with swell complete, were packed into a cube of nine feet."

3. **As when Solomon willed.**—The reference is to legends of the Koran, which attribute to Solomon the possession of magical powers.

And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,
 Burrow a while and build, broad on the roots of things,
 Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well,
 Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs. 16

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion
 he was,
 Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a
 crest,
 Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,
 Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest : 20
 For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
 When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
 Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)
 Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul
 was in sight.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match
 man's birth, 25
 Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I ;
 And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach
 the earth,
 As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the
 sky :
 Novel splendors burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with mine,
 Not a point nor peak but found, but fixed its wandering
 star ; 30
 Meteor-moons, balls of blaze : and they did not pale nor pine,
 For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near
 nor far.

25-40. "Verses four and five are a bold attempt to describe the indescribable, to shadow forth that strange state of clairvoyance when the soul shakes itself free from all external impressions, which Vogel tells us was the case with Schubert, and which is true of all great composers—'whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot say.'"—*Mrs. Turnbull: Browning Soc. Papers, Pt. IV.*

Nay more ; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and
glow, 33

Presences plain in the place ; or, fresh from the Protoplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should blow,
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at last ;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the
body and gone,

But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth
their new :

What never had been, was now ; what was, as it shall be anon ;
And what is,—shall I say, matched both ? for I was made
perfect too. 40

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my
soul,

All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly
forth,

All through music and me ! For think, had I painted the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-
worth.

Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect proceeds
from cause, 45

Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is
told ;

It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
Painter and poet are proud, in the artist-list enrolled :—

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can, 49
Existent behind all laws : that made them, and, lo, they are !

34. **Protoplast.**—"The original ; the thing first formed as a copy to be imitated."

49. **But here is the finger of God.**—The other arts are "triumphant," but are only "art in obedience to laws ;" the effects of music are allied to the miraculous.

"There is no sound in nature," says Schopenhauer, "fit to serve the musician as a model, or to supply him with more than an occasional suggestion for his sublime purpose. He approaches the original sources of existence more closely than all other artists, nay, even than Nature herself."

And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a
star.

Consider it well : each tone of our scale in itself is naught ;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said :
Give it to me to use ! I mix it with two in my thought, 55
And, there ! Ye have heard and seen : consider and bow
the head !

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared ;
Gone ! and the good tears start, the praises that come too
slow ;

For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go.
Never to be again ! But many more of the kind 61
As good, nay, better perchance: is this your comfort to me ?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God : ay, what was,
shall be.

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

There shall never be one lost good ! What was, shall live as
before ;

The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound ; 70
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good
more ;

On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist ;
Not its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist,
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour. 76

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
 The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
 Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;
 Enough that he heard it once : we shall hear it by-and-by.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence 81
 For the fullness of the days ? Have we withered or agonized ?
 Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue
 thence ?

Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be
 prized ?

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear, 85
 Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe :
 But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear ;
 The rest may reason and welcome ; 'tis we musicians know.

Well, it is earth with me ; silence resumes her reign :
 I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce. 90

Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
 Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,
 And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
 Surveying a while the heights I rolled from into the deep ;
 Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is
 found, 95
 The C Major of this life : so, now I will try to sleep.

The Lost Leader.

The Lost Leader was originally written in reference to Wordsworth's abandonment of the Liberal cause, with perhaps a thought of Southey, but it is applicable to any popular apostasy. This is one of those songs that do the work of swords. It shows how easily Mr. Browning, had he so chosen, could have stirred the national feeling with his lyrics.

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
 Lost all the others, she lets us devote ;

They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver, 5
 So much was theirs who so little allowed :
 How all our copper had gone for his service !
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud !
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye, 10
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
 Made him our pattern to live and to die !
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their
 graves !
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen, 15
 He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

We shall march prospering,—not through his presence ;
 Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre ;
 Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire : 20
 Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
 One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !
 Life's night begins : let him never come back to us ! 25
 There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
 Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
 Never glad confident morning again !
 Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
 Menace our heart ere we master his own ; 30
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
 Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne !

Andrea Del Sarto.

[CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER."]

Andrea del Sarto is a "translation into song" of the picture called "Andrea del Sarto and his Wife," now in the Pitti Palace, Florence. It is a perfect re-creation of the Andrea described by Vasari, whose story is one of the saddest in the records of art. The story is well known: how the painter, who at one time seemed as if he might have competed with Raphael, was ruined, as artist and as man, by his beautiful soulless wife, the fatal Lucrezia del Fede; and how, led and lured by her, he outraged his conscience, lowered his ideal, and, losing all heart and hope, sank into the cold correctness, the unerring fluency, the uniform, melancholy repetition of a single type—his wife's—which distinguish his later works. Mr. Browning has taken his facts from Vasari, and he has taken them quite literally. But what a change, what a transformation and transfiguration! No more absolutely creative work has been done in our days; few more beautiful and pathetic poems written. The mood of sad, wistful, hopeless mournfulness of resignation which the poem expresses is a somewhat rare one with Mr. Browning's vivid and vivacious genius. It is an autumn twilight piece. The very movement of the lines, their very tone and touch, contribute to the effect. A single clear impression is made to result from an infinity of the minutest and scarcely appreciable touches; how fine these touches are, how clear the impression, can only be hinted at in words, can be realized only by a loving and scrupulous study.

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
 No, my Lucrezia! bear with me for once:
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
 You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear, 5
 Treat his own subject after his own way,
 Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
 And shut the money into this small hand
 When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
 Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love! 10
 I often am much wearier than you think,
 This evening more than usual: and it seems
 As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
 Here by the window, with your hand in mine,
 And look a half hour forth on Fiesole, 15

15. **Fiesole** [fes'o-le].—The ancient *Fœsulæ*, a town 3 miles N. E. of Florence, on a steep hill, commanding a magnificent view of the Arno valley.

Both of one mind, as married people use,
 Quietly, quietly the evening through,
 I might get up to-morrow to my work
 Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
 To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this ! 20
 Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
 And mine, the man's bared breast she curls inside.
 Don't count the time lost, neither ; you must serve
 For each of the five pictures we require :
 It saves a model. So ! keep looking so— 25
 My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds !
 —How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
 Even to put the pearl there ! oh, so sweet—
 My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
 Which everybody looks on and calls his, 30
 And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
 While she looks—no one's : very dear, no less.
 You smile ? why, there's my picture ready made,
 There's what we painters call our harmony !
 A common grayness silvers every thing,— 35
 All in a twilight, you and I alike
 —You, at the point of your first pride in me
 (That's gone, you know)—but I, at every point ;
 My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
 To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole. 40
 There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top ;
 That length of convent-wall across the way
 Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;
 The last monk leaves the garden ; days decrease,
 And autumn grows, autumn in every thing. 45
 Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a shape,
 As if I saw alike my work and self
 And all that I was born to be and do,
 A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.

How strange now looks the life he makes us lead ; 50
 So free we seem, so fettered fast we are !
 I feel he laid the fetter : let it lie !
 This chamber, for example—turn your head—
 All that's behind us ! You don't understand
 Nor care to understand about my art, 55
 But you can hear at least when people speak :
 And that cartoon, the second from the door
 —It is the thing, Love ! so such things should be :
 Behold Madonna !—I am bold to say.
 I can do with my pencil what I know, 60
 What I see, what at bottom of my heart
 I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
 Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly.
 I do not boast, perhaps : yourself are judge,
 Who listened to the Legate's talk last week ; 65
 And just as much they used to say in France.
 At any rate 'tis easy, all of it !
 No sketches first, no studies, that's long past :
 I do what many dream of, all their lives,
 —Dream ? strive to do, and agonize to do, 70
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
 On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
 Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared
 Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,— 75
 Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
 (I know his name, no matter)—so much less !
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia : I am judged.
 There burns a truer light of God in them,

66.—Andrea del Sarto was summoned to the court of Francis I. of France, where his painting was highly honored and handsomely remunerated. Urged by the letters from his wife, he obtained permission of the king to revisit Florence, on condition of a speedy return to his work ; but he broke his pledges, and with a sum of money with which his royal patron had intrusted him for the purchase of works of art, built the "melancholy little house" (l. 212), to please the soulless Lucrezia.

In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain, 80
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
 Enter and take their place there sure enough, 85
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
 The sudden blood of these men ! at a word—
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
 I, painting from myself and to myself, 90
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
 His hue mistaken ; what of that ? or else,
 Rightly traced and well ordered ; what of that ? 95
 Speak as they please, what does the mountain care ?
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,

82. **Low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand.**—"Andrea del Sarto's was, after all, but the 'low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand,' and therefore his perfect art does not touch our hearts like that of Fra Bartolommeo, who occupies about the same position with regard to the great masters of the century as Andrea del Sarto. Fra Bartolommeo spoke from his heart. He was moved by the spirit, so to speak, to express his pure and holy thoughts in beautiful language, and the ideal that presented itself to his mind, and from which he, equally with Raphael, worked, approached almost as closely as Raphael's to that abstract beauty after which they both longed. Andrea del Sarto had no such longing ; he was content with the loveliness of earth. This he could understand and imitate in its fullest perfection, and therefore he troubled himself but little about the 'wondrous paterne' laid up in heaven. Many of his Madonnas have greater beauty, strictly speaking, than those of Bartolommeo, or even of Raphael ; but we miss in them that mysterious spiritual loveliness that gives the latter their chief charm."—*Heaton's History of Painting.*

93. **Morello.**—The highest spur of the Apennines to the north of Florence.

96. **What does the mountain care?**—It is beyond their criticism.

97. **A man's reach should exceed his grasp.**—"The true glory of art is, that in its creation there arise desires and aspirations never to be satisfied on earth, but generating new desires and new aspirations, by which the spirit of man mounts to God himself. The artist (Mr. Browning loves to insist on this point) who can realize in marble, or in color, or in music, his ideal, has thereby missed the highest gain of art. In 'Pippa Passes' the regeneration of the young sculptor's work turns on his finding that in the very perfection which he had attained lies ultimate failure. And one entire poem 'Andrea del Sarto,' has been devoted to the exposition of this thought. An-

Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray,
 Placid and perfect with my art : the worse !
 I know both what I want and what might gain ; 100
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
 " Had I been two, another and myself,
 Our head would have o'erlooked the world ! " No doubt.
 Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
 The Urbinate who died five years ago. 105
 ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
 Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
 Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
 Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
 Above and through his art—for it gives way ; 110
 That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
 Its body, so to speak : its soul is right,
 He means right—that, a child may understand.
 Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it : 115
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
 Out of me, out of me ! And wherefore out ?
 Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
 We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.
 Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think— 120
 More than I merit, yes, by many times.
 But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
 And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
 And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
 The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare— 125

drea is 'the faultless painter;' no line of his drawing ever goes astray; his hand expresses adequately and accurately all that his mind conceives; but for this very reason, precisely because he is 'the faultless painter,' his work lacks the highest qualities of art."—*Professor Dowden.*

105-117. **The Urbinate.**—Raphael Santi, born in Urbino, 1483. Though Andrea knows that Raphael is inferior to himself in technique, yet he acknowledges him to be his superior, because he reaches "above and through his art" toward heaven and things divine.

106. **George Vasari.**—Friend and pupil of Michael Angelo and Andrea del Sarto, and author of "Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects."

Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind !
 Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
 " God and the glory ! never care for gain.
 The present by the future, what is that ?
 Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo ! 130
 Rafael is waiting : up to God, all three !"
 I might have done it for you. So it seems :
 Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
 Beside, incentives come from the soul's self ;
 The rest avail not. Why do I need you ? 135
 What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo ?
 In this world, who can do a thing, will not ;
 And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :
 Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
 And thus we half-men struggle. At the end, 140
 God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
 'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
 That I am something underrated here,
 Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
 I dared not, do you know, leave home all day, 145
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
 The best is when they pass and look aside ;
 But they speak sometimes ; I must bear it all.
 Well may they speak ! That Francis, that first time,
 And that long festal year at Fontainebleau ! 150
 I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
 Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
 In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl
 Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile, 155
 One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
 The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,

129. **By the future**, i.e., in comparison with the future.

130. **Agnolo**.—Michael Angelo (or Michel Agnolo) Buonarotti.

146. **For fear, etc.**—See note on l. 66.

I painting proudly with his breath on me,
 All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
 Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls 160
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
 This in the background, waiting on my work,
 To crown the issue with a last reward !
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days ? 165
 And had you not grown restless. . . but I know—
 'Tis done and past ; 'twas right, my instinct said ;
 Too live the life grew, golden and not gray :
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
 Out of the grange whose four walls make this world. 170
 How could it end in any other way ?
 You called me, and I came home to your heart.
 The triumph was, to have ended there ; then, if
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost ?
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold, 175
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine !
 "Rafael did this, Andrea painted that ;
 The Roman's is the better when you pray,
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife"—
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge 180
 Both pictures in your presence ; clearer grows
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
 Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
 To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . . 185
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)
 "Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub

173, 174. **The triumph was, etc.**—The real triumph was, to have ended in your heart; that reached, the lesser triumph in France is no loss.

177-179. **Raphael did this, etc.**—The supposed remark of some critic.

Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how, 190
 Who, were he set to plan and execute
 As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours !"
 To Rafael's !—And indeed the arm is wrong.
 I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see, 195
 Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go !
 Ay, but the soul ! he's Rafael ! rub it out !
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
 (What he ? why, who but Michel Agnolo ?
 Do you forget already words like those ?) 200
 If really there was such a chance so lost,—
 Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
 Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed !
 This hour has been an hour ! Another smile ?
 If you would sit thus by me every night 205
 I should work better, do you comprehend ?
 I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
 See, it is settled dusk now ; there's a star ;
 Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
 The cue-owls speak the name we call them by. 210
 Come from the window, Love,—come in, at last,
 Inside the melancholy little house
 We built to be so gay with. God is just.
 King Francis may forgive me : oft at nights
 When I look up from painting, eyes tired out, 215
 The walls become illumined, brick from brick
 Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
 That gold of his I did cement them with !
 Let us but love each other. Must you go ?
 That cousin here again ? he waits outside ? 220
 Must see you—you, and not with me ? Those loans ?
 More gaming debts to pay ? you smiled for that ?
 Well, let smiles buy me ! have you more to spend ?
 While hand and eye and something of a heart

Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth? 225
 I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
 The gray remainder of the evening out,
 Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
 How I could paint, were I but back in France,
 One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face, 230
 Not yours this time! I want you at my side
 To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
 Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
 I take the subjects for his corridor, 235
 Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
 And throw him in another thing or two
 If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
 To pay for this same cousin's freak. Beside,
 What's better and what's all I care about, 240
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
 Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
 The cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
 I regret little, I would change still less. 245
 Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
 The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
 I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
 And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
 My father and my mother died of want. 250
 Well, had I riches of my own? you see
 How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
 They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
 And I have labored somewhat in my time
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son 255
 Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
 No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
 You love me quite enough, it seems to-night.

This must suffice me here. What would one have?
 In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance— 260
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
 For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo, and me
 To cover—the three first without a wife,
 While I have mine! So—still they overcome 265
 Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

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

“How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix.”

[16—.]

The “good news” of this stirring ballad is intended for that of the Pacification of Ghent, a treaty of union entered into by Holland, Zealand, and the southern Netherlands against the tyrannical Philip II., in 1576. The incident of the poem is not historical. “I wrote it,” says Mr. Browning, “under the bulwark of a vessel off the African coast, after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate even the fancy of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse ‘York’ then in my stable at home.”

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
 I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
 “Good speed!” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
 “Speed!” echoed the wall to us galloping through;
 Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest, 5
 And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
 Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
 I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
 Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right, 10
 Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
 Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

263. **Leonard.**—Leonardo da Vinci.

10. **Pique.**—The pommel of the saddle.

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while we drew near
 Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;
 At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ; 15
 At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be ;
 And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half chime,
 So Joris broke silence with, " Yet there is time !"

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
 And against him the cattle stood black every one, 20
 To stare through the mist at us galloping past,
 And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
 With resolute shoulders, each butting away
 The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back 25
 For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;
 And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
 O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
 And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
 His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on. 30

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, " Stay spur !"
 Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
 We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze
 Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
 And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank, 35
 As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,
 Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;
 The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
 'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff ; 40

14. **Lokeren**.—This town and the others mentioned in the poem will be found upon any good map, in a general line from Ghent to Aix-la-Chapelle. The whole distance is about ninety miles.

17. **Mecheln**.—The Flemish form of the more common French *Malines*.

Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight 45
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buff-coat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all, 50
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round 55
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from
Ghent. 60

The Boy and the Angel.

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
"Praise God!" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

41. **Dalhem.**—Probably *Dalheim*, a town about midway between Tongres and Aix.

46. **Save Aix from her fate.**—The reader is to imagine that Aix has resolved upon self-destruction, rather than yield to the Spaniards.

Hard he labored, long and well; 5
O'er his work the boy's curls fell:

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, "Praise God!"

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew. 10

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well done;
I doubt not thou art heard, my son:

"As well as if thy voice to-day
Were praising God the Pope's great way.

"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome 15
Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I
Might praise him, that great way, and die!"

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone. 20

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, "Nor day nor night
Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth, 25
Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well;

And morning, evening, noon and night, 30
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy to youth he grew:
The man put off the stripling's hue:

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent, 35
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will ; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, " A praise is in mine ear;
There is no doubt in it, no fear: 40

" So sing old worlds, and so
New worlds that from my footstool go.

" Clearer loves sound other ways :
I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell 45
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day: he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by 50
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

49. **Tiring-room.**—The room where the "holy vestments" are kept, with which the priests and pope are dight," i.e., decked or attired. Shakespeare used the noun *tire* for *attire*.

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade, 55
Till on his life the sickness weighed:

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear,
He grew a priest, and now stood here. 60

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,
And set thee here; I did not well.

"Vainly I left my angel-sphere, 65
Vain was thy dream of many a year.

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it dropped—
Creation's chorus stopped!

"Go back and praise again
The early way, while I remain. 70

"With that weak voice of our disdain,
Take up creation's pausing strain.

"Back to the cell and poor employ:
Resume the craftsman and the boy!"

Theocrite grew old at home; 75
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died:
They sought God side by side.

By the Fireside.

- How well I know what I mean to do
 When the long dark autumn evenings come ;
 And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
 With the music of all thy voices, dumb
 In life's November too! 5
- I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
 O'er a great wise book, as beseemeth age;
 While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
 And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
 Not verse now, only prose! 10
- Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
 "There he is at it, deep in Greek:
 Now then, or never, out we slip
 To cut from the hazels by the creek
 A mainmast for our ship!" 15
- I shall be at it indeed, my friends!
 Greek puts already on either side
 Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
 To a vista opening far and wide,
 And I pass out where it ends. 20
- The outside frame, like your hazel-trees—
 But the inside-archway widens fast,
 And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
 And we slope to Italy at last
 And youth, by green degrees. 25

3. Is.—The present with future meaning: "Where will be thy pleasant hue?"

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

Look at the ruined chapel again
 Half-way up in the Alpine gorge!
 Is that a tower, I point you plain,
 Or is it a mill, or an iron forge
 Breaks solitude in vain? 35

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

Does it feed the little lake below?
 That speck of white just on its marge
 Is Pella; see, in the evening-glow,
 How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
 When Alp meets heaven in snow! 45

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

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
 And thorny balls, each three in one,
 The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!
 For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
 These early November hours, 55

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

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
 Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
 Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
 Where a freaked fawn-colored flaky crew
 Of toad-stools peep indulged. 65

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

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
 Blackish-gray and mostly wet ;
 Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dike.
 See here again, how the lichens fret
 And the roots of the ivy strike! 75

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

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
 Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,

73. **Hemp-stalks steep.**—Hemp that is soaking in preparation for dressing.

74. **Fret.**—The lichens ornament, as with raised work.

Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
 Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
 Their gear on the rock's bare juts. 85

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

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
 For a pent-house properly projects
 Where three carved beams make a certain show,
 Dating—good thought of our architect's—
 'Five, six, nine, he lets you know. 95

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

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
 Oh heart, my own, Oh eyes, mine too,
 Whom else could I dare look backward for,
 With whom beside should I dare pursue
 The path gray heads abhor ? 105

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

98. **Aware.**—Self-conscious.

101. **My Leonor.**—The "perfect wife," with the "great brow" and the "spirit-small hand," can be no other than Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The poem, though in its circumstances purely dramatic and imaginary, is autobiographic in soul. Other beautiful allusions to Mrs. Browning may be found in *One Word More*, *Prospice*, and *My Star*,

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

115

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

120

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

125

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

130

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

135

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

140

But who could have expected this
 When we two drew together first
 Just for the obvious human bliss,
 To satisfy life's daily thirst
 With a thing men seldom miss ? 145

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

What did I say ?—that a small bird sings
 All day long, save when a brown pair
 Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
 Strained to a bell : 'gainst noonday glare
 You count the streaks and rings. 155

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

Hither we walked then, side by side,
 Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
 And still I questioned or replied,
 While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
 Lay choking in its pride. 165

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

151. **What did I say?**—The description is here resumed, which was broken off at l. 100.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
 Look through the window's grated square :
 Nothing to see! For fear of plunder,
 The cross is down and the altar bare,
 As if thieves don't fear thunder. 175

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

Oh moment one and infinite!
 The water slips o'er stock and stone ;
 The West is tender, hardly bright :
 How gray at once is the evening grown—
 One star, its chrysolite! 185

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

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
 And the little less, and what worlds away!
 How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
 Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
 And life be a proof of this! 195

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

185. **Chrysolite.**—Greek χρυσός and λίθος, gold-stone. Technically, a mineral substance of a pale-green color.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland time,
 Wanting to sleep now over its best.
 Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
 But bring to the last leaf no such test!
 "Hold the last fast!" runs the rhyme. 205

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

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
 Eddying down till it find your face
 At some slight wind—best chance of all!
 Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
 You trembled to forestall! 215

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

You might have turned and tried a man,
 Set him a space to weary and wear,
 And prove which suited more your plan,
 His best of hope or his worst despair,
 Yet end as he began. 225

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

A moment after, and hands unseen
 Were hanging the night around us fast;
 But we knew that a bar was broken between
 Life and life: we were mixed at last
 In spite of the mortal screen. 235

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

How the world is made for each of us!
 How all we perceive and know in it
 Tends to some moment's product thus,
 When a soul declares itself—to wit,
 By its fruit, the thing it does! 245

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

I am named and known by that moment's feat;
 There took my station and degree;
 So grew my own small life complete,
 As Nature obtained her best of me—
 One born to love you, sweet! 255

241-245. "With Mr. Browning," says Prof. Dowden, "those moments are most glorious in which the obscure tendency of many years has been revealed by the lightning of sudden passion, or in which a resolution that changes the current of life has been taken in reliance upon that insight which vivid emotion bestows; and those periods of our history are charged most fully with moral purpose, which take their direction from moments such as these." Here it is the remembrance of one of those supreme moments which determined the issue of his life, that leads the speaker of the poem to exclaim: "How the world is made for each of us!" etc.

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

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
 And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too;
 And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
 When autumn comes: which I mean to do
 One day, as I said before. 265

My Last Duchess.

FERRARA.

This poem—published in *Bells and Pomegranates*—is the first *direct* progenitor of *Andrea del Sarto* and the other great blank-verse monologues; in it we see the form, save for the scarcely appreciable presence of rhyme, already developed. The poem is a subtle study in the jealousy of egoism—not a study so much as a creation; and it places before us, as if bitten out by the etcher's acid, a typical autocrat of the Renaissance, with his serene self-composure of selfishness, quiet uncompromising cruelty, and genuine devotion to art. The scene and the actors in this little Italian drama stand out before us with the most natural clearness; there is some telling touch in every line, an infinitude of cunningly careless details, instinct with suggestion, and an appearance through it all of simple artless ease, such as only the very finest art can give.

THAT'S my last Duchess painted on the wall,
 Looking as if she were alive. I call
 That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
 Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
 Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said 5
 "Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
 Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
 The depth and passion of its earnest glance,

3. **Frà Pandolf.**—An imaginary artist, as also **Claus of Innsbruck** in the last verse.

But to myself they turned (since none puts by
 The curtain I have drawn for you, but I) 10
 And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
 How such a glance came there; so, not the first
 Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not
 Her husband's presence only, called that spot
 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps 15
 Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
 Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
 Must never hope to reproduce the faint
 Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough 20
 For calling up that spot of joy. She had
 A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
 Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
 Sir, 't was all one! My favor at her breast, 25
 The dropping of the daylight in the West,
 The bough of cherries some officious fool
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
 She rode with round the terrace—all and each
 Would draw from her alike the approving speech, 30
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
 Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill 35
 In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
 Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
 Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set 40
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
 —E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
 Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,

Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without 44
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
 As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet
 The company below, then. I repeat
 The Count your master's known munificence
 Is ample warrant that no just pretense 50
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity, 55
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!"

45. **I gave commands.**—It is not necessary to suppose that the "commands" were for her death. Prolonged cruelty would have served his purpose.

54. **Notice Neptune.**—As they are about to descend the stairs, the soulless old virtuoso calls the envoy's attention to a work of art in the courtyard below, of which he is especially proud.

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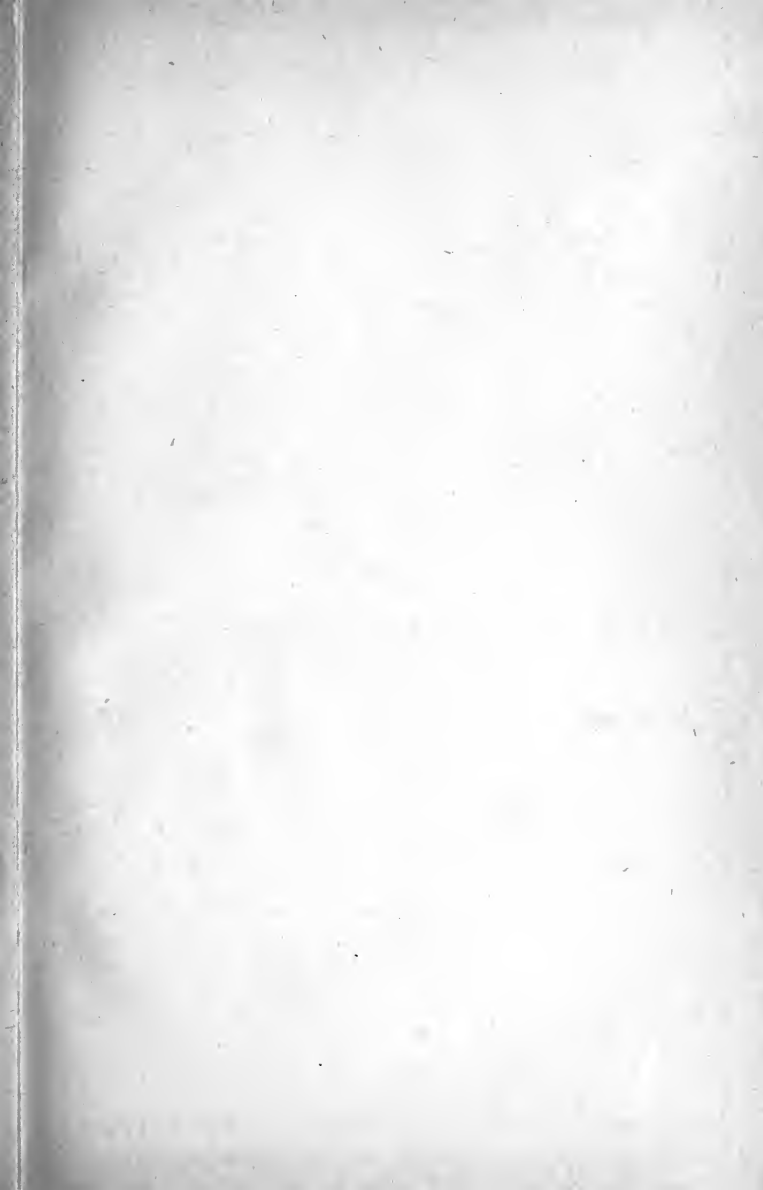
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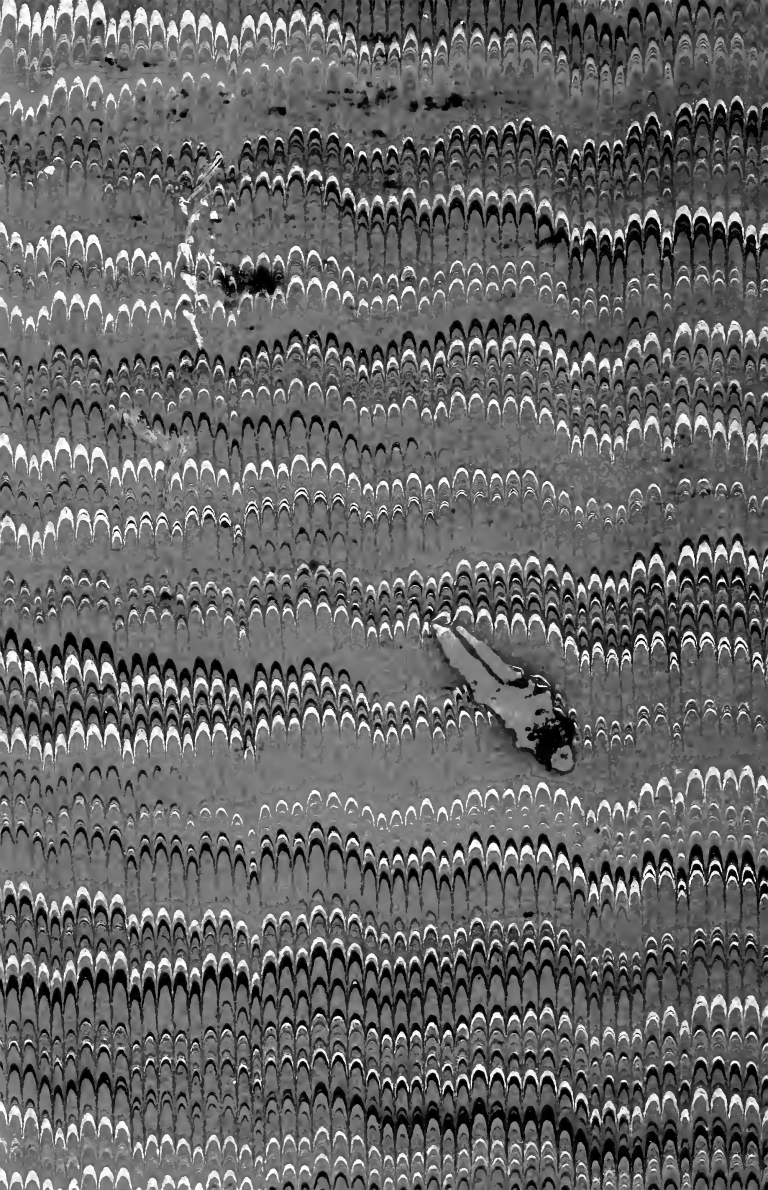


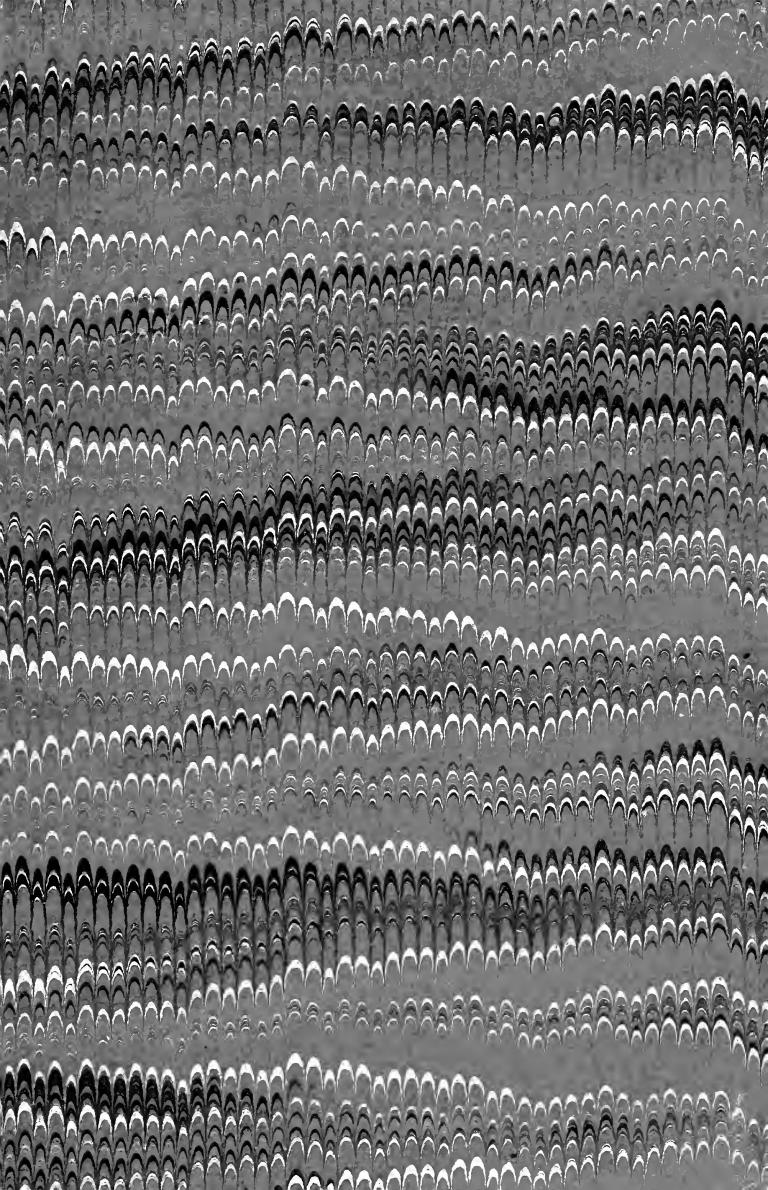












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