Here, we've got callous to the Virgin's winks
That used to puzzle people wholesomely—
Men have outgrown the shame of being fools.
What are the laws of Nature, not to bend
If the Church bid them, brother Newman asks.
Up with the Immaculate Conception, then—
On to the rack with faith—is my advice!
Will not that hurry us upon our knees
Knocking our breasts, "It can't be—yet it shall!
Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope?
Low things confound the high things!" and so forth.
That's better than acquitting God with grace
As some folks do. He's tried—no case is proved,
Philosophy is lenient—He may go!

You'll say—the old system's not so obsolete
But men believe still: ay, but who and where?
King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes;
But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint
Believes God watches him continually,
As he believes in fire that it will burn,
Or rain that it will drench him? Break fire's law,
Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just singe or soaking? No, he smiles;
Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves.

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is great,
My faith's the greater—then my faith's enough.
I have read much, thought much, experienced much,
Yet would die rather than avow my fear
The Naples' liquefaction may be false,
When set to happen by the palace-clock
According to the clouds or dinner-time.
I hear you recommend, I might at least
Eliminate, decrassify my faith
Since I adopt it; keeping what I must
And leaving what I can—such points as this!
I won't—that is, I can't throw one away.
Supposing there's no truth in what I said
About the need of trials to man's faith,
Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end,
Clearing off one excrescence to see two;

There's ever a next in size, now grown as big,
That meets the knife—I cut and cut again!
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fichte's clever cut at God himself?
Experimentalize on sacred things?
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain
To stop betimes: they all get drunk alike.
The first step, I am master not to take.

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

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

Do you know, I have often had a dream
(Work it up in your next month's article)

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

You meet me at this issue—you declare,
All special pleading done with, truth is truth,
And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
You don't fear but it's better, if we doubt,
To say so, acting up to our truth perceived
However feebly. Do then,—act away!
'Tis there I'm on the watch for you! How one acts
Is, both of us agree, our chief concern:
And how you'll act is what I fain would see
If, like the candid person you appear,
You dare to make the most of your life's scheme
As I of mine, live up to its full law
Since there's no higher law that counterchecks.
Put natural religion to the test
You've just demolished the revealed with—quick,
Down to the root of all that checks your will,
All prohibition to lie, kill, and thieve
Or even to be an atheistic priest!

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

Not as I state it, who (you please subjoin)
Disfigure such a life and call it names,
While, in your mind, remains another way
For simple men: knowledge and power have rights,
But ignorance and weakness have rights too.
There needs no crucial effort to find truth
If here or there or anywhere about—
We ought to turn each side, try hard and see,
And if we can't, be glad we've earned at least
The right, by one laborious proof the more,
To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage.
Men are not gods, but, properly, are brutes.
Something we may see, all we cannot see—

What need of lying? I say, I see all,
And swear to each detail the most minute,
In what I think a man's face—you, mere cloud:
I swear I hear him speak and see him wink,
For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,
Mankind may doubt if there's a cloud at all.
You take the simpler life—ready to see,
Willing to see—for no cloud's worth a face—
And leaving quiet what no strength can move,
And which, who bids you move? who has the right?
I bid you; but you are God's sheep, not mine—
"*Pastor est tui Dominus.*" You find
In these the pleasant pastures of this life
Much you may eat without the least offence,
Much you don't eat because your maw objects,
Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock
Open great eyes at you and even butt,
And thereupon you like your friends so much
You cannot please yourself, offending them—
Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,
You weigh your pleasure with their butts and kicks
And strike the balance. Sometimes certain fears
Restrain you—real checks since you find them so—
Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks;
And thus you graze through life with not one lie,
And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name?
If so, you beat—which means—you are not I—
Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill
Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with,
But motioned to the velvet of the sward
By those obsequious wethers' very selves.
Look at me, sir; my age is double yours.
At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed,
What now I should be—as, permit the word,
I pretty well imagine your whole range
And stretch of tether twenty years to come.
We both have minds and bodies much alike.
In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric,
My daily bread, my influence and my state?
You're young, I'm old, you must be old one day;
Will you find then, as I do hour by hour,

Women their lovers kneel to, that cut curls
From your fat lap-dog's ears to grace a brooch—
Dukes, that petition just to kiss your ring—
With much beside you know or may conceive?
Suppose we die to-night: well, here am I,
Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me,
While writing all the same my articles
On music, poetry, the fictile vase
Found at Albano, or Anacreon's Greek.
But you—the highest honour in your life,
The thing you'll crown yourself with, all your days,
Is—dining here and drinking this last glass
I pour you out in sign of amity
Before we part for ever. Of your power
And social influence, worldly worth in short,
Judge what's my estimation by the fact—
I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,
Hint secresy on one of all these words!
You're shrewd and know that should you publish it
The world would brand the lie—my enemies first,
"Who'd sneer—the bishop's an arch-hypocrite,
And knave perhaps, but not so frank a fool,"
Whereas I should not dare for both my ears
Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile,
Before my chaplain who reflects myself—
My shade's so much more potent than your flesh.
What's your reward, self-abnegating friend?
Stood you confessed of those exceptional
And privileged great natures that dwarf mine—
A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,
A poet just about to print his ode,
A statesman with a scheme to stop this war,
An artist whose religion is his art,
I should have nothing to object! such men
Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,
Their drugget's worth my purple, they beat me.
But you,—you're just as little those as I—
You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,
Write statedly for Blackwood's Magazine,
Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul
Unseized by the Germans yet—which view you'll print—
Meantime the best you have to show being still
That lively lightsome article we took

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

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

For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke.
The other portion, as he shaped it thus
For argumentatory purposes,
He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.
Some arbitrary accidental thoughts
That crossed his mind, amusing because new,
He chose to represent as fixtures there,
Invariable convictions (such they seemed
Beside his interlocutor's loose cards
Flung daily down, and not the same way twice)
While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue
Is never bold to utter in their truth
Because styled hell-deep ('tis an old mistake

To place hell at the bottom of the earth)
He ignored these,—not having in readiness
Their nomenclature and philosophy:
He said true things, but called them by wrong names.
" On the whole," he thought, " I justify myself
On every point where cavillers like this
Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of fence—
I close—he's worsted, that's enough for him;
He's on the ground! if the ground should break away
I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet
Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.
His ground was over mine and broke the first.
So let him sit with me this many a year! "

He did not sit five minutes. Just a week
Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.
(Something had struck him in the " Outward-bound "
Another way than Blougram's purpose was)
And having bought, not cabin-furniture
But settler's-implements (enough for three)
And started for Australia—there, I hope,
By this time he has tested his first plough,
And studied his last chapter of St. John.

MEMORABILIA.

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

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

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

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

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED THE "FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, either; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require—
It saves a model. So! keep looking so—
My serpentining 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,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less!
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made.
There's what we painters call our harmony!
A common greyness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point;

My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead!
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are:
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us! you don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak;
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such things should be—
Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say perfectly
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate, 'tis easy, all of it,
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past—
I do what many dream of all their lives
—Dream? strive to do, and agonise to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,
Yet do much less, so much less, some one says,
(I know his name, no matter) so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia! I am judged.
There burns a truer light in them,
In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt

This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken—what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered—what of that?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a Heaven for? all is silver-grey
Placid and perfect with my art—the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain—
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak! its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it.
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me! out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—

Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
"God and the glory! never care for gain.
The present by the future, what is that?
Live for fame, side by side with Angelo—
Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three!"
I might have done it for you. So it seems—
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo?
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,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with her eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the back-ground, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
And had you not grown restless—but I know—
'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey—

And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was to 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,
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
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 Angelo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
"Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
Who, were he set to plan and execute
As you are pricked on by your popes and kings,
Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare—yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michael Angelo?
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights shew the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, Love,—come in, at last,

Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans!
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michael Angelo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis! it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:

And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

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

BEFORE.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

Which of them's the culprit, how must he conceive
God's the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve!
'Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath her.
Still, one must not be too much in earnest either.

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of all,
Dare to say "I did wrong," rising in his fall?
No?—Let go, then—both the fighters to their places—
While I count three, step you back as many paces.

AFTER.

Take the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst.
How he lies in his rights of a man!
Death has done all death can.

And absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance—both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.
Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold—
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne.

I stand here now, he lies in his place—
Cover the face.

IN THREE DAYS.

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

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

III. O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent as once before
The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Out-breaking into fairy sparks
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside
Thro' lights and darks how manifold—
The dark inspired, the light controlled!
As early Art embrowned the gold.

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

IN A YEAR.

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

II. Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
Love begun.
I as little understand
Love's decay.

III. When I sewed or drew,
I recall
How he looked as if I sang,
—Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
First of all
Up his cheek the colour sprang,
Then he heard.

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

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

VI. Was it wrong to own,
Being truth?
Why should all the giving prove
His alone?
I had wealth and ease,
Beauty, youth—
Since my lover gave me love,
I gave these.

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

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

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

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

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE.

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

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

III. Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
Could you play me false who loved you so?
Some slights if a certain heart endures
It feels, I would have your fellows know!

Faith—I perceive not why I should care
To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

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

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

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

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

VIII. Much they reck of your praise and you!
But the wronged great souls—can they be quit
Of a world where all their work is to do,
Where you style them, you of the little wit,

Old Master this and Early the other,
Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows,
That a younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

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

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

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

XII. So you saw yourself as you wished you were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be;
And bringing your own shortcomings there.
You grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
And your little date, by their forms that stay.

XIII. You would fain be kinglier, say than I am?
Even so, you would not sit like Theseus.
You'd fain be a model? the Son of Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.

You're wroth—can you slay your snake like Apollo?
You're grieved—still Niobe's the grander!
You live—there's the Racer's frieze to follow—
You die—there's the dying Alexander.

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

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

XVI. To-day's brief passion limits their range,
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect—how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us—we are rough-hewn, no-wise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

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

XVIII. Is it true, we are now, and shall be hereafter,
And what—is depending on life's one minute?
Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?

And Man, this step within his endeavour,
His face, have no more play and action
Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
Or grief, an eternal petrifaction!

XIX. On which I conclude, that the early painters,
To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"—
Replied, "Become now self-acquainters,
And paint man, man,—whatever the issue!
Make the hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters.
So bring the invisible full into play,
Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?"

XX. Give these, I say, full honour and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old, 'tis no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution
Which if on the earth we intend to acknowledge
Honour them now—(ends my allocution)
Nor confer our degree when the folks leave college.

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

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

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

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

xxv. When they go at length, with such a shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusions, sadly
Each master his way through the black streets taking,
Where many a lost work breathes though badly—
Why don't they bethink them of who has merited?
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
Such doom, that a captive's to be out-ferreted?
Why do they never remember me?

xxvi. Not that I expect the great Bigordi
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose;
Nor wronged Lippino—and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's.
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco—
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?
No churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

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

xxviii. Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret.
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald, saturnine, poll-clawed parrot?)
No poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
If such remain, as in my conviction,
The hoarding does you but little honour.

xxix. They pass: for them the panels may thrill,
The tempera grow alive and tinglish—
Rot or are left to the mercies still
Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English!
Seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
Who sell it to some one calm as Zeno
At naked Art, and in ecstacies
Before some clay-cold, vile Carlino!

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

xxxi. I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
Stood on the altar-steps, patient and weary too!
Nay, I shall have it yet, *detur amanti!*
My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a platitude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye!
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

xxxii. When the hour is ripe, and a certain dotard
Pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
To the worse side of the Mont St. Gothard,
Have, to begin by way of rejoicing,
None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
No civic guards, all plumes and lacquer,
Hunting Radetsky's soul like a partridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

xxxiii. We'll shoot this time better game and bag 'em hot—
No display at the stone of Dante,
But a kind of [sober] Witan-agemot
(" Casa Guidi," quod videas ante)
To ponder Freedom restored to Florence,
How Art may return that departed with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the Lorraine's!
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither.

xxxiv. How we shall prologuise, how we shall perorate,
Say fit things upon art and history—
Set truth at blood-heat and the false at a zero rate,
Make of the want of the age no mystery!
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show, monarchy its uncouth cub licks
Out of the bear's shape to the chimæra's—
Pure Art's birth being still the republic's!

xxxv. Then one shall propose (in a speech, curt Tuscan,
Sober, expurgate, spare of an " *issimo*,")
Ending our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
Turning the Bell-tower's alt altissimo.
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Soars up in gold its full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

xxxvi. Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire
Like the golden hope of the world unbaffled
Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire—
As, " God and the People " plain for its motto,
Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky?
Foreseeing the day that vindicates Giotto
And Florence together, the first am I!

IN A BALCONY.

FIRST PART.

CONSTANCE *and* NORBERT.

NORBERT.

Now.

CONSTANCE.

Not now.

NORBERT.

Give me them again, those hands—
Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!
Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through.
You cruellest, you dearest in the world,
Let me! the Queen must grant whate'er I ask—
How can I gain you and not ask the Queen?
There she stays waiting for me, here stand you.
Some time or other this was to be asked,
Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain—
Let me ask now, Love!

CONSTANCE.

Do, and ruin us.

NORBERT.

Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth.
How I do love you! give my love its way!
A man can have but one life and one death,
One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate—
Grant me my heaven now. Let me know you mine,
Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,
Hold you and have you, and then die away
If God please, with completion in my soul.

CONSTANCE.

I am not yours then? how content this man?
I am not his, who change into himself,
Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,
Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,

Give all that was of me away to him
So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,
Takes part with him against the woman here,
Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw
As caring that the world be cognisant
How he loves her and how she worships him.
You have this woman, not as yet that world.
Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me
By saving what I cease to care about,
The courtly name and pride of circumstance—
The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with
Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more;
Just that the world may slip from under you—
Just that the world may cry "So much for him
The man predestined to the heap of crowns!
There goes his chance of winning one, at least."

NORBERT.

The world!

CONSTANCE.

You love it. Love me quite as well,
And see if I shall pray for this in vain!
Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?

NORBERT.

You pray for—what, in vain?

CONSTANCE.

Oh my heart's heart,
How I do love you, Norbert!—that is right!
But listen, or I take my hands away.
You say, "let it be now"—you would go now
And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,
You love me—so you do, thank God!

NORBERT.

Thank God!

CONSTANCE.

Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your love,
And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her
My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,
Listening to me. You are the minister,

The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.
To-night completes your wonderful year's-work
(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)
Made memorable by her life's success,
That junction of two crowns on her sole head
Her house had only dreamed of anciently.
That this mere dream is grown a stable truth
To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?
Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved
What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?
You are the fate—your minute's in the heaven.
Next comes the Queen's turn. Name your own reward!
With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come,
Put out an arm and touch and take the sun
And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,
Possess yourself supremely of her life,
You choose the single thing she will not grant—
The very declaration of which choice
Will turn the scale and neutralise your work.
At best she will forgive you, if she can.
You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand?

NORBERT.

Wait. First, do you retain your old belief
The Queen is generous,—nay is just?

CONSTANCE.

There, there!
So men make women love them, while they know
No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,
You that are just and generous beside,
Make it your own case. For example now,
I'll say—I let you kiss me and hold my hands—
Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then—
The kiss, because you have a name at court,
This hand and this, that you may shut in each
A jewel, if you please to pick up such.
That's horrible! Apply it to the Queen—
Suppose, I am the Queen to whom you speak.
"I was a nameless man: you needed me:
Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood
A certain pretty Cousin by your side.
Why did I make such common cause with you?

Access to her had not been easy else.
You give my labours here abundant praise:
'Faith, labour, while she overlooked, grew play.
How shall your gratitude discharge itself?
Give me her hand!"

NORBERT.

And still I urge the same.
Is the Queen just? just—generous or no!

CONSTANCE.

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

Lovers, no lack—a husband in due time,
And everyone of them alike a lie!
Things painted by a Rubens out of nought
Into what kindness, friendship, love should be;
All better, all more grandiose than life,
Only no life; mere cloth and surface-paint
You feel while you admire. How should she feel?
And now that she has stood thus fifty years
The sole spectator in that gallery,
You think to bring this warm real struggling love
In to her of a sudden, and suppose
She'll peep her state untroubled? Here's the truth—
She'll apprehend its value at a glance,
Prefer it to the pictured loyalty!
You only have to say "so men are made,
For this they act, the thing has many names
But this the right one—and now, Queen, be just!"
And life slips back—you lose her at the word—
You do not even for amends gain me.
He will not understand! oh, Norbert, Norbert,
Do you not understand?

NORBERT.

The Queen's the Queen,
I am myself—no picture, but alive
In every nerve and every muscle, here
At the palace-window or in the people's street,
As she in the gallery where the pictures glow.
The good of life is precious to us both.
She cannot love—what do I want with rule?
When first I saw your face a year ago
I knew my life's good—my soul heard one voice
"The woman yonder, there's no use of life
But just to obtain her! heap earth's woes in one
And bear them—make a pile of all earth's joys
And spurn them, as they help or help not here;
Only, obtain her!"—How was it to be?
I found she was the cousin of the Queen;
I must then serve the Queen to get to her—
No other way. Suppose there had been one,
And I by saying prayers to some white star
With promise of my body and my soul
Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no?

Instead, there was the Queen to serve! I served,
And did what other servants failed to do.
Neither she sought nor I declared my end.
Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,
And let me name you as that recompense.
She dreamed that such a thing could never be?
Let her wake now. She thinks there was some cause—
The love of power, of fame, pure loyalty?
—Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives
Chasing such shades. Then I've a fancy too.
I worked because I want you with my soul—
I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now.

CONSTANCE.

Had I not loved you from the very first,
Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus
So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,
You might be thus impatient. What's conceived
Of us without here, by the folks within?
Where are you now? immersed in cares of state—
Where am I now?—intent on festal robes—
We two, embracing under death's spread hand!
What was this thought for, what this scruple of yours
Which broke the council up, to bring about
One minute's meeting in the corridor?
And then the sudden sleights, long secresies
The plots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,
Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look,
"Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?"
A year of this compression's ecstasy
All goes for nothing? you would give this up
For the old way, the open way, the world's,
His way who beats, and his who sells his wife?
What tempts you? their notorious happiness,
That you're ashamed of ours? The best you'll get
Will be, the Queen grants all that you require,
Concedes the cousin, and gets rid of you
And her at once, and gives us ample leave
To live as our five hundred happy friends.
The world will show us with officious hand
Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,
When we so oft have stolen across her traps!
Get the world's warrant, ring the falcon's foot,

And make it duty to be bold and swift,
When long ago 'twas nature. Have it so!
He never hawked by rights till flung from fist?
Oh, the man's thought!—no woman's such a fool.

NORBERT.

Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which is more—
One made to love you, let the world take note.
Have I done worthy work? be love's the praise,
Though hampered by restrictions, barred against
By set forms, blinded by forced secresies.
Set free my love, and see what love will do
Shown in my life—what work will spring from that!
The world is used to have its business done
On other grounds, find great effects produced
For power's sake, fame's sake, motives you have named.
So good. But let my low ground shame their high.
Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true!
And love's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest!
I choose to have you stamped all over me,
Your name upon my forehead and my breast,
You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge,
That men may see, all over, you in me—
That pale loves may die out of their pretence
In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off—
Permit this, Constance! Love has been so long
Subdued in me, eating me through and through,
That now it's all of me and must have way.
Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,
Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,
That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow,
Trembling at last to its assured result—
Then think of this revulsion. I resume
Life, after death, (it is no less than life
After such long unlovely labouring days)
And liberate to beauty life's great need
Of the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,
Suppressed itself erewhile. This eve's the time—
This eve intense with yon first trembling star
We seem to pant and reach; scarce ought between
The earth that rises and the heaven that bends—
All nature self-abandoned—every tree
Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts

And fixed so, every flower and every weed,
No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat:
All under God, each measured by itself!
These statues round us, each abrupt, distinct,
The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,
The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre,
The Nymph to her fawn, the Silence to her rose,
And God's approval on his universe!
Let us do so—aspire to live as these
In harmony with truth, ourselves being true.
Take the first way, and let the second come,
My first is to possess myself of you;
The music sets the march-step—forward then!
And there's the Queen, I go to claim you of,
The world to witness, wonder and applaud.
Our flower of life breaks open. No delay!

CONSTANCE.

And so shall we be ruined, both of us.
Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone—
You do not know her, were not born to it,
To feel what she can see or cannot see.
Love, she is generous,—ay, despite your Smile,
Generous as you are. For, in that thin frame
Pain-twisted, punctured through and through with cares,
There lived a lavish soul until it starved
Debarred all healthy food. Look to the soul—
Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin
(The true man's way) on justice and your rights,
Exactions and acquittance of the past.
Begin so—see what justice she will deal!
We women hate a debt as men a gift.
Suppose her some poor keeper of a school
Whose business is to sit thro' summer-months
And dole out children's leave to go and play,
Herself superior to such lightness—she
In the arm-chair's state and pædagogic pomp,
To the life, the laughter, sun and youth outside—
We wonder such an one looks black on us?
I do not bid you wake her tenderness,
—That were vain truly—none is left to wake—
But, let her think her justice is engaged
To take the shape of tenderness, and mark

If she'll not coldly do its warmest deed!
Does she love me, I ask you? not a whit.
Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged
To help a kinswoman, she took me up—
Did more on that bare ground than other loves
Would do on greater argument. For me,
I have no equivalent of that cold kind
To pay her with; my love alone to give
If I give anything. I give her love.
I feel I ought to help her, and I will.
So for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice
That women hate a debt as men a gift.
If I were you, I could obtain this grace—
Would lay the whole I did to love's account,
Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—
Declare that my success was recompense;
It would be so, in fact: what were it else?
And then, once loosed her generosity
As you will mark it—then,—were I but you
To turn it, let it seem to move itself,
And make it give the thing I really take,
Accepting so, in the poor cousin's hand,
All value as the next thing to the queen—
Since none loves her directly, none dares that!
A shadow of a thing, a name's mere echo
Suffices those who miss the name and thing;
You pick up just a ribbon she has worn
To keep in proof how near her breath you came.
Say I'm so near I seem a piece of her—
Ask for me that way—(oh, you understand)
And find the same gift yielded with a grace,
Which if you make the least show to extort
—You'll see! and when you have ruined both of us,
Dis[s]ertate on the Queen's ingratitude!

NORBERT.

Then, if I turn it that way, you consent?
'Tis not my way; I have more hope in truth.
Still if you won't have truth—why, this indeed,
Is scarcely false, I'll so express the sense.
Will you remain here?

CONSTANCE.

O best heart of mine,
How I have loved you! then, you take my way?
Are mine as you have been her minister,
Work out my thought, give it effect for me,
Paint plain my poor conceit and make it serve?
I owe that withered woman everything—
Life, fortune, you, remember! Take my part—
Help me to pay her! Stand upon your rights?
You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on you?
Your rights are mine—you have no rights but mine.

NORBERT.

Remain here. How you know me!

CONSTANCE.

Ah, but still——

[*He breaks from her; she remains. Dance-music from within.*

SECOND PART.

Enter the QUEEN.

QUEEN.

Constance!—She is here as he said. Speak! quick!
Is it so? is it true—or false? One word!

CONSTANCE.

True.

QUEEN.

Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee!

CONSTANCE.

Madam!

QUEEN.

I love you, Constance, from my soul.
Now say once more, with any words you will,
'Tis true—all true—as true as that I speak.

CONSTANCE.

Why should you doubt it?

QUEEN.

Ah, why doubt? why doubt?
Dear, make me see it. Do you see it so?
None see themselves—another sees them best.
You say "why doubt it?"—you see him and me.
It is because the Mother has such grace
That if we had but faith—wherein we fail—
Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us;
Howbeit we let our whims prescribe despair,
Our very fancies thwart and cramp our will,
And so accepting life, abjure ourselves!
Constance, I had abjured the hope of love
And of being loved, as truly as yon palm
The hope of seeing Egypt from that turf.

CONSTANCE.

Heaven!

QUEEN.

But it was so, Constance, it was so.
Men say—or do men say it? fancies say—
"Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.
Too late—no love for you, too late for love—
Leave love to girls. Be queen—let Constance love!"
One takes the hint—half meets it like a child,
Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.
"Oh, love, true, never think of love again!
I am a queen—I rule, not love, indeed."
So it goes on; so a face grows like this,
Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,
Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank God!

CONSTANCE.

I cannot understand——

QUEEN.

The happier you!
Constance, I know not how it is with men.
For women, (I am a woman now like you)
There is no good of life but love—but love!
What else looks good, is some shade flung from love—
Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,
Never you cheat yourself one instant. Love,
Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!
O Constance, how I love you!

CONSTANCE.

I love you.

QUEEN.

I do believe that all is come through you.
I took you to my heart to keep it warm
When the last chance of love seemed dead in me;
I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered heart.
Oh, I am very old now, am I not?
Not so! it is true and it shall be true!

CONSTANCE.

Tell it me! let me judge if true or false.

QUEEN.

Ah, but I fear you—you will look at me
And say " she's old, she's grown unlovely quite
Who ne'er was beauteous! men want beauty still."
Well, so I feared—the curse! so I felt sure.

CONSTANCE.

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

QUEEN.

Constance, he came, the coming was not strange—
Do not I stand and see men come and go?
I turned a half look from my pedestal
Where I grow marble—" one young man the more!
He will love some one,—that is nought to me—
What would he with my marble stateliness? "
Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;
The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,
And I still older, with less flesh to change—
We two those dear extremes that long to touch.
It seemed still harder when he first began
Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs
The old way for the old end, interest.
Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts
Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,
Professing they've no care but for your cause,
Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,

And you the marble statue all the time
They praise and point at as preferred to life,
Yet leave for the first breathing woman's cheek,
First dancer's, gypsy's, or street baladine's!
Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech
Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,
Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,
Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,
Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,
While not a man of these broke rank and spoke,
Or wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,
Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand.
There have been moments, if the sentinel
Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,
Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,
I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

CONSTANCE.

Who could have comprehended!

QUEEN.

Ay, who—who?
Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.
Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps
It comes too late—would you but tell the truth.

CONSTANCE.

I wait to tell it.

QUEEN.

Well, you see, he came,
Outfaced the others, did a work this year
Exceeds in value all was ever done
You know—it is not I who say it—all
Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)
I grew aware not only of what he did,
But why so wondrously. Oh, never work
Like his was done for work's ignoble sake—
It must have finer aims to spur it on!
I felt, I saw he loved—loved somebody.
And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,
I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.

CONSTANCE.

Me, madam?

QUEEN.

It did seem to me your face
Met him where'er he looked: and whom but you
Was such a man to love? it seemed to me
You saw he loved you, and approved the love,
And that you both were in intelligence.
You could not loiter in the garden, step
Into this balcony, but I straight was stung
And forced to understand. It seemed so true,
So right, so beautiful, so like you both
That all this work should have been done by him
Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,
But that at last—suppose some night like this—
Borne on to claim his due reward of me
He might say, "Give her hand and pay me so."
And I (O Constance, you shall love me now)
I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,
—"And he shall have it. I will make her blest,
My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,
My happiest woman's self that might have been!
These two shall have their joy and leave me here."
Yes—yes—

CONSTANCE.

Thanks!

QUEEN.

And the word was on my lips
When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear
A mere calm statement of his just desire
In payment of his labour. When, O Heaven,
How can I tell you? cloud was on my eyes
And thunder in my ears at that first word
Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all—
He loved me—from the first step to the last,
Loved me!

CONSTANCE.

You did not hear . . . you thought he spoke
Of love? what if you should mistake?

QUEEN.

No, no—
No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake!
He had not dared to hint the love he felt—
You were my reflex—how I understood!
He said you were the ribbon I had worn,
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,
And love, love was the end of every phrase.
Love is begun—this much is come to pass,
The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours—
I will learn, I will place my life on you,
But teach me how to keep what I have won.
Am I so old? this hair was early grey;
But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,
And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel.
I could sing once too; that was in my youth.
Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,
Beautiful—for the last French Painter did!
I know they flatter somewhat; you are frank—
I trust you. How I loved you from the first!
Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out
And set her by their side to take the eye:
I must have felt that good would come from you.
I am not generous—like him—like you!
But he is not your lover after all—
It was not you he looked at. Saw you him?
You have not been mistaking words or looks?
He said you were the reflex of myself—
And yet he is not such a paragon
To you, to younger women who may choose
Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth!
You know you never named his name to me—
You know, I cannot give him up—ah God,
Not up now, even to you!

CONSTANCE.

Then calm yourself.

QUEEN.

See, I am old—look here, you happy girl,
I will not play the fool, deceive myself;
'Tis all gone—put your cheek beside my cheek—
Ah, what a contrast does the moon behold!

But then I set my life upon one chance,
The last chance and the best—am *I* not left,
My soul, myself? All women love great men
If young or old—it is in all the tales—
Young beauties love old poets who can love—
Why should not he the poems in my soul,
The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice,
The constancy? I throw them at his feet.
Who cares to see the fountain's very shape
And whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's
That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around?
You could not praise indeed the empty conch;
But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself.
How I will love him! cannot men love love?
Who was a queen and loved a poet once
Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can do that!
Well, but men too! at least, they tell you so.
They love so many women in their youth,
And even in age they all love whom they please;
And yet the best of them confide to friends
That 'tis not beauty makes the lasting love—
They spend a day with such and tire the next;
They like soul,—well then, they like phantasy,
Novelty even. Let us confess the truth
Horrible though it be—that prejudice,
Prescription . . . Curses! they will love a queen.
They will—they do. And will not, does not—he?

CONSTANCE.

How can he? You are wedded—'tis a name
We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,
His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled
As you believe and I incline to think,
Aspire to be your favourite, shame and all?

QUEEN.

Hear her! there, there now—could she love like me?
What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and grace?
See all it does or could do! so, youth loves!
Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do
What I will—you, it was not born in! I
Will drive these difficulties far and fast
As yonder mists curdling before the moon.

I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve
My youth from its enforced calamity,
Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,
His own in the eyes alike of God and man.

CONSTANCE.

You will do—dare do—Pause on what you say!

QUEEN.

Hear her! I thank you, Sweet, for that surprise.
You have the fair face: for the soul, see mine!
I have the strong soul: let me teach you, here.
I think I have borne enough and long enough,
And patiently enough, the world remarks,
To have my own way now, unblamed by all.
It does so happen, I rejoice for it,
This most unhoped-for issue cuts the knot.
There's not a better way of settling claims
Than this; God sends the accident express;
And were it for my subjects' good, no more,
'Twere best thus ordered. I am thankful now,
Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
And bless God simply, or should almost fear
To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.
Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate!
How strong I am! could Norbert see me now!

CONSTANCE.

Let me consider. It is all too strange.

QUEEN.

You, Constance, learn of me; do you, like me.
You are young, beautiful: my own, best girl,
You will have many lovers, and love one—
Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours,
And taller than he is, for you are tall.
Love him like me! give all away to him;
Think never of yourself; throw by your pride,
Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw it once,
And love him simply for his very self.
Remember, I (and what am I to you?)
Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,
Do all but just unlove him! he loves me.

CONSTANCE.

He shall.

QUEEN.

You, step inside my inmost heart.
Give me your own heart—let us have one heart—
I'll come to you for counsel; "This he says,
This he does, what should this amount to, pray?
Beseech you, change it into current coin.
Is that worth kisses? shall I please him there?"
And then we'll speak in turn of you—what else?
Your love (according to your beauty's worth)
For you shall have some noble love, all gold—
Whom choose you? we will get him at your choice.
—Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since
I felt as I must die or be alone
Breathing my soul into an ear like yours.
Now, I would face the world with my new life,
With my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms,
And then come back and tell you how it feels.
How soon a smile of God can change the world!
How we are all made for happiness—how work
Grows play, adversity a winning fight!
True, I have lost so many years. What then?
Many remain—God has been very good.
You, stay here. 'Tis as different from dreams,—
From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,
As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.
The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon!

[*She goes out. Dance-music from within.*

PART THIRD.

NORBERT *enters.*

NORBERT.

Well! we have but one minute and one word—

CONSTANCE.

I am yours, Norbert!

NORBERT.

Yes, mine.

CONSTANCE.

Not till now!
You were mine. Now I give myself to you.

NORBERT.

Constance!

CONSTANCE.

Your own! I know the thriftier way
Of giving—haply, 'tis the wiser way.
Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole
Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,
With a new largess still at each despair)
And force you keep in sight the deed, reserve
Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,
My giving and your taking, both our joys
Dying together. Is it the wiser way?
I choose the simpler; I give all at once.
Know what you have to trust to, trade upon.
Use it, abuse it,—anything but say
Hereafter, "Had I known she loved me so,
And what my means, I might have thriven with it."
This is your means. I give you all myself.

NORBERT.

I take you and thank God.

CONSTANCE.

Look on through years!
We cannot kiss a second day like this,
Else were this earth, no earth.

NORBERT.

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

CONSTANCE.

So best.
I try to see those years—I think I see.
You walk quick and new warmth comes; you look back
And lay all to the first glow—not sit down
For ever brooding on a day like this
While seeing the embers whiten and love die.

Yes, love lives best in its effect; and mine,
Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

NORBERT.

Just so. I take and know you all at once.
Your soul is disengaged so easily,
Your face is there, I know you; give me time,
Let me be proud and think you shall know me.
My soul is slower; in a life I roll
The minute out in which you condense yours—
The whole slow circle round you I must move,
To be just you. I look to a long life
To decompose this minute, prove its worth.
'Tis the sparks' long succession one by one
Shall show you in the end what fire was crammed
In that mere stone you struck: you could not know,
If it lay ever unproved in your sight,
As now my heart lies? your own warmth would hide
Its coldness, were it cold.

CONSTANCE.

But how prove, how?

NORBERT.

Prove in my life, you ask?

CONSTANCE.

Quick, Norbert—how?

NORBERT.

That's easy told. I count life just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.
Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.
As with the body—he who hurls a lance
Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength alike,
So I will seize and use all means to prove
And show this soul of mine you crown as yours,
And justify us both.

CONSTANCE.

Could you write books,
Paint pictures! one sits down in poverty
And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.

NORBERT.

And loves one's painting and one's writing too,
And not one's mistress! All is best, believe,
And we best as no other than we are.
We live, and they experiment on life
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof
To overlook the farther. Let us be
The thing they look at! I might take that face
And write of it and paint it—to what end?
For whom? what pale dictatress in the air
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form
With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life
She makes despised for ever? You are mine,
Made for me, not for others in the world,
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,
That cold calm power to see how fair you look.
I come to you—I leave you not, to write
Or paint. You are, I am. Let Rubens there
Paint us.

CONSTANCE.

So best!

NORBERT.

I understand your soul.
You live, and rightly sympathise with life,
With action, power, success: this way is straight.
And days were short beside, to let me change
The craft my childhood learnt; my craft shall serve.
Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
Manure their barren lives and force the fruit
First for themselves, and afterward for me
In the due tithe; the task of some one man,
By ways of work appointed by themselves.
I am not bid create, they see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—
But bind in one and carry out their wills.
So I began: to-night sees how I end.
What if it see, too, my first outbreak here
Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,
The instincts of the heart that teach the head?
What if the people have discerned in me
The dawn of the next nature, the new man
Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,

And whom they trust to find them out new ways
To the new heights which yet he only sees?
I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen,
This people—in our phrase, this mass of men—
See how the mass lies passive to my hand
And how my hand is plastic, and you by
To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end
Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first.
My will be on this people! then, the strain,
The grappling of the potter with his clay,
The long uncertain struggle,—the success
In that uprising of the spirit-work,
The vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,
While rounded fair for lower men to see
The Graces in a dance they recognise
With turbulent applause and laughs of heart!
So triumph ever shall renew itself;
Ever to end in efforts higher yet,
Ever begun——

CONSTANCE.

I ever helping?

NORBERT.

Thus!

[*As he embraces her, enter the* QUEEN.

CONSTANCE.

Hist, madam,—so I have performed my part.
You see your gratitude's true decency,
Norbert? a little slow in seeing it!
Begun to end the sooner. What's a kiss?

NORBERT.

Constance!

CONSTANCE.

Why, must I teach it you again?
You want a witness to your dullness, sir?
What was I saying these ten minutes long?
Then I repeat—when some young handsome man
Like you has acted out a part like yours,
Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,
So very far beyond him, as he says—
So hopelessly in love, that but to speak

Would prove him mad, he thinks judiciously,
And makes some insignificant good soul
Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant
And very stalking-horse to cover him
In following after what he dares not face—
When his end's gained—(sir, do you understand?)
When she, he dares not face, has loved him first,
—May I not say so, madam?—tops his hope,
And overpasses so his wildest dream,
With glad consent of all, and most of her
The confidant who brought the same about—
Why, in the moment when such joy explodes,
I do say that the merest gentleman
Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse,
Dismiss it with a "There, enough of you!"
Forget it, show his back unmannerly;
But like a liberal heart will rather turn
And say, "A tingling time of hope was ours—
Betwixt the fears and falterings—we two lived
A chanceful time in waiting for the prize.
The confidant, the Constance, served not ill;
And though I shall forget her in due time,
Her use being answered now, as reason bids,
Nay as herself bids from her heart of hearts,
Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to her,
The first good praise goes to the prosperous tool,
And the first—which is the last—thankful kiss."

NORBERT.

—Constance? it is a dream—ah see you smile!

CONSTANCE.

So, now his part being properly performed,
Madam, I turn to you and finish mine
As duly—I do justice in my turn.
Yes, madam, he has loved you—long and well—
He could not hope to tell you so—'twas I
Who served to prove your soul accessible.
I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place,
When oft they had wandered out into despair,
And kept love constant toward its natural aim.
Enough—my part is played; you stoop half-way
And meet us royally and spare our fears—

'Tis like yourself—he thanks you, so do I.
Take him—with my full heart! my work is praised
By what comes of it. Be you happy, both!
Yourself—the only one on earth who can—
Do all for him, much more than a mere heart
Which though warm is not useful in its warmth
As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that
Around him gently, tenderly. For him—
For him,—he knows his own part.

NORBERT.

Have you done?
I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?
Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child,
Or did you but accept it? Well—at least,
You lose by it.

CONSTANCE.

Now madam, 'tis your turn.
Restrain him still from speech a little more
And make him happier and more confident!
Pity him, madam, he is timid yet.
Mark, Norbert! do not shrink now! Here I yield
My whole right in you to the Queen, observe!
With her go put in practice the great schemes
You teem with, follow the career else closed—
Be all you cannot be except by her!
Behold her.—Madam, say for pity's sake
Anything—frankly say you love him. Else
He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in
His fear than you conceive—I know the man.

NORBERT.

I know the woman somewhat, and confess
I thought she had jested better—she begins
To overcharge her part. I gravely wait
Your pleasure, madam: where is my reward?

QUEEN.

Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognise
Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,
Eccentric speech and variable mirth,
Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold

Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)
—May still be right: I may do well to speak
And make authentic what appears a dream
To even myself. For, what she says, is true—
Yes, Norbert—what you spoke but now of love,
Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,
But justified a warmth felt long before.
Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall say,—
Strange! but I do grow stronger, now 'tis said,
Your courage helps mine: you did well to speak
To-night, the night that crowns your twelvemonths' toil—
But still I had not waited to discern
Your heart so long, believe me! From the first
The source of so much zeal was almost plain,
In absence even of your own words just now
Which opened out the truth. 'Tis very strange,
But takes a happy ending—in your love
Which mine meets: be it so—as you choose me,
So I choose you.

NORBERT.

And worthily you choose!
I will not be unworthy your esteem,
No, madam. I do love you; I will meet
Your nature, now I know it; this was well,
I see,—you dare and you are justified:
But none had ventured such experiment,
Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,
Less confident of finding it in me.
I like that thus you test me ere you grant
The dearest, richest, beauteousest and best
Of women to my arms! 'tis like yourself!
So—back again into my part's set words—
Devotion to the uttermost is yours,
But no, you cannot, madam, even you,
Create in me the love our Constance does.
Or—something truer to the tragic phrase—
Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent
Invites a certain insect—that's myself—
But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground:
I take this lady!

CONSTANCE.

Stay—not hers, the trap—
Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst of all.

(He is too cunning, madam!) it was I,
I, Norbert, who . . .

NORBERT.

You, was it, Constance? Then,
But for the grace of this divinest hour
Which gives me you, I should not pardon here.
I am the Queen's: she only knows my brain—
She may experiment therefore on my heart
And I instruct her too by the result;
But you, sweet, you who know me, who so long
Have told my heart-beats over, held my life
In those white hands of yours,—it is not well!

CONSTANCE.

Tush! I have said it, did I not say it all?
The life, for her—the heart-beats, for her sake!

NORBERT.

Enough! my cheek grows red, I think. Your test!
There's not the meanest woman in the world,
Not she I least could love in all the world,
Whom, did she love me, did love prove itself,
I dared insult as you insult me now.
Constance, I could say, if it must be said,
"Take back the soul you offer—I keep mine"
But—"Take the soul still quivering on your hand,
The soul so offered, which I cannot use,
And, please you, give it to some friend of mine,
For—what's the trifle he requites me with?"
I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,
That two may mock her heart if it succumb?
No! fearing God and standing 'neath his heaven,
I would not dare insult a woman so,
Were she the meanest woman in the world,
And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

CONSTANCE.

Norbert!

NORBERT.

I love once as I live but once.
What case is this to think or talk about?
I love you. Would it mend the case at all

Should such a step as this kill love in me?
Your part were done: account to God for it.
But mine—could murdered love get up again,
And kneel to whom you pleased to designate
And make you mirth? It is too horrible.
You did not know this, Constance? now you know
That body and soul have each one life, but one:
And here's my love, here, living, at your feet.

CONSTANCE.

See the Queen! Norbert—this one more last word—
If thus you have taken jest for earnest—thus
Loved me in earnest . . .

NORBERT.

Ah, no jest holds here!
Where is the laughter in which jests break up?
And what this horror that grows palpable?
Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony?
Have I done ill? Have I not spoken the truth?
How could I other? Was it not your test,
To try me, and what my love for Constance meant?
Madam, your royal soul itself approves,
The first, that I should choose thus! so one takes
A beggar—asks him what would buy his child,
And then approves the expected laugh of scorn
Returned as something noble from the rags.
Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha, what's this?
You two glare each at each like panthers now.
Constance—the world fades; only you stand there!
You did not in to-night's wild whirl of things
Sell me—your soul of souls for any price?
No—no—'tis easy to believe in you.
Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop
Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still—
Though I should curse, I love you. I am love
And cannot change! love's self is at your feet.

[QUEEN *goes out.*

CONSTANCE.

Feel my heart; let it die against your own.

NORBERT.

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

CONSTANCE.

Yours! Yours! Yours!

NORBERT.

You and I—
Why care by what meanders we are here
In the centre of the labyrinth? men have died
Trying to find this place out, which we have found.

CONSTANCE.

Found, found!

NORBERT.

Sweet, never fear what she can do—
We are past harm now.

CONSTANCE.

On the breast of God.
I thought of men—as if you were a man.
Tempting him with a crown!

NORBERT.

This must end here—
It is too perfect!

CONSTANCE.

There's the music stopped.
What measured heavy tread? it is one blaze
About me and within me.

NORBERT.

Oh, some death
Will run its sudden finger round this spark,
And sever us from the rest—

CONSTANCE.

And so do well.
Now the doors open—

NORBERT.

'Tis the guard comes.

CONSTANCE.

Kiss!

SAUL.

I.

Said Abner, "At last thou are come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent
Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer or of praise
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

II.

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

III.

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid,
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice replied.

At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon I
descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast the
upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all;—
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,—showed
Saul.

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each
leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate,
Till for boldness they fight one another; and then, what has
weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house—

There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half
mouse!—
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our
fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song,
when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great
hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the
last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—"Bear, bear
him along
With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! are balm-
seeds not here
To console us? The land has none left, such as he on the
bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!"—And then,
the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she
whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the
great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
Nought can break; who shall harm them, our friends?—
Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned . . .
But I stopped here—for here in the darkness, Saul groaned.

VIII.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened
apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered,—and
sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start—
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head—but the body still moved not, still hung there
erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang,—

IX.

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigour! no spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree,—the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed over with gold dust divine,
And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher; the full draught of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses, for ever in joy!
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward?
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung
The low song of the nearly-departed, and heard her faint tongue
Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more attest,
I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was for best . . .'
Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not much —but the rest.
And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence grew
Such result as from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained true!
And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and hope,
Present promise, and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope,—
Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;
And all gifts which the world offers singly, on one head combine!

On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage, like the throe
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour, and lets the gold go:
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning it,—all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul!"

X.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, heart, hand, harp and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I say,
The Lord's army in rapture of service, strains through its array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried I, and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung propt
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held, (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black but alive yet, your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail, there they are!
Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on its crest
For their food in the ardours of summer! One long shudder thrilled

All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was
stilled,
At the King's self left standing before me, released and
aware.
What was gone, what remained? all to traverse 'twixt hope
and despair—
Death was past, life not come—so he waited. Awhile his
right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith to
remand
To their place what new object should enter: 'twas Saul as
before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any
more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the
shore
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and en-
twine
Base with base to knit strength more intense: so, arm folded
in arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI.

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next should
I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song filled
to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty! Beyond, on
what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they
put by?
He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not—he lets me praise
life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII.

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pastures, when round me
the sheep

Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep,
And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the world that might
lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and
the sky:
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be passed
with my flocks,
Let me people at least with my fancies, the plains and the
rocks,
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!
Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage
that gains,
And the prudence that keeps what men strive for." And
now these old trains
Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so once more
the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

XIII.

"Yea, my king,"
I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that
spring
From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by
brute:
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears
fruit.
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem
trembled first
Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely
outburst
The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when these
too, in turn
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect; yet more
was to learn,
Ev'n the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our
dates shall we slight,
When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the
plight
Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them? Not
so! stem and branch
Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-
wine shall staunch

Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such
wine.
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for: the spirit be
thine!
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still shalt
enjoy
More indeed, than at first when inconscious, the life of a boy.
Crush that life, and behold its wine running! each deed thou
hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as
the sun
Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though
tempests efface,
Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must every
where trace
The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of thy
will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill
Thy whole people the countless, with ardour, till they too
give forth
A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the south and the
north
With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the
past.
But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last.
As the lion when age dims his eye-ball, the rose at her
height,
So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever take
flight.
No! again a long draught of my soul-wine! look forth o'er
the years—
Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the
seer's!
Is Saul dead? in the depth of the vale make his tomb—bid
arise
A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till built to
the skies.
Let it mark where the great First King slumbers—whose
fame would ye know?
Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul, so he
did,
With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid,—

For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault
to amend,
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they
shall spend
(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and record
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's
great word
Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's
a-wave
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet
winds rave:
So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part
In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that
thou art."

XIV.

And behold while I sang . . . But O Thou who didst grant
me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted, thy help to essay
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my Shield and my
Sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my
word,—
Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavour
And scaling the highest man's thought could, gazed hopeless
as ever
On the new stretch of Heaven above me—till, Mighty to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne
from man's grave!
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart,
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels that night I
took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep!
For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron
retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV.

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more
strong

Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop, till, stayed by the pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there awhile,
And so sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all times, to the man patient there,
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak-roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinised mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?

I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
I would add to that life of the past, both the future and this,
I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense!"

XVI.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more! out-broke—

XVII.

"I have gone the whole round of Creation: I saw and I spoke!
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him again
His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw.
I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's law!
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was asked.
Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at wisdom laid bare.
Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite care!
Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to God's All-Complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet!
Yet with all this abounding experience, this Deity known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.
There's one faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
E'en the Giver in one gift. Behold! I could love if I durst!
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain, for love's sake!

—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when door great and small,
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appal?
In the least things, have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? here, the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the end, what Began?—
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute of night?
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake,
Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him awake
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet
To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?—or endure!
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure.
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggle in this.

XVIII.

"I believe it! 'tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer

As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread Sabaoth:
I will?—the mere atoms despise me! and why am I loth
To look that, even that in the face too? why is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance? what stops my despair?
This:—'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!
See the king—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,
I know that my service is perfect.—Oh, speak through me now!
Would I suffer for him that I love? So wilt Thou—so wilt Thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost Crown—
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that Salvation joins issue with death!
As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of Being beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee: a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever! a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

XIX.

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive—the aware—
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,

As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed
with her crews;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and
shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted
not.
For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported—
suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth;
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills;
In the shuddering forests' new awe; in the sudden wind-
thrills;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye
sidling still
Tho' averted, in wonder and dread; and the birds stiff and
chill
That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with
awe!
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new Law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the
flowers;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar, and moved the
vine-bowers.
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and
low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—E'en so! it is so.

"DE GUSTIBUS—"

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

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

II. What I love best in all the world,
Is, a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—
In a sea-side house to the farther south,
Where the baked cicalas die of drouth,
And one sharp tree ('tis a cypress) stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Without the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea, and not a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day—the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling.
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
(When fortune's malice
Lost her, Calais.)
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she;
So it always was, so it still shall be!

WOMEN AND ROSES.

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

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

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

IV. Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time!
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?
Oh! to possess, and be possessed!
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!
But once of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink once and die!—In vain, the same fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

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

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

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

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

PROTUS

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

Now read here. "Protus ends a period
Of empery beginning with a god:
Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant;
Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant.
And if he quickened breath there, 'twould like fire
Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.
A fame that he was missing, spread afar—
The world, from its four corners, rose in war,
Till he was borne out on a balcony
To pacify the world when it should see.
The captains ranged before him, one, his hand
Made baby points at, gained the chief command.
And day by day more beautiful he grew
In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,
While young Greek sculptors gazing on the child
Were, so, with old Greek sculpture, reconciled.
Already sages laboured to condense