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Robert Browning**

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## **DRAMATIC ROMANCES**

**FROM THE POETIC WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING**

**By Robert Browning**

**Introduction and Notes: Charlotte Porter and Helen A.  
Clarke**

**From the edition of Browning's poems published by  
Thomas Y. Crowell and Company, New York, in 1898.**

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Transcriber's Note:

Stanza and section numbers have been moved to the left margin, and periods that follow them have been removed.

Periods have been omitted after Roman numerals in the titles of popes and nobles.

Quotation marks have been left only at the beginning and end of a multi-line quotation, and at the beginning of each stanza within the quotation, instead of at the beginning of every line, as in the printed text.

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## INTRODUCTION

[The Dramatic Romances,...] enriched by some of the poems originally printed in Men and Women, and a few from Dramatic Lyrics as first printed, include some of Browning's finest and most characteristic work. In several of them the poet displays his familiarity with the life and spirit of the Renaissance—a period portrayed by him with a fidelity more real than history—for he enters into the feelings that give rise to action, while the historian is busied only with the results growing out of the moving force of feeling.

The egotism of the Ferrara husband outraged at the gentle wife because she is as gracious toward those who rendered her small courtesies, and seemed as thankful to them as she was to him for his gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name, opens up for inspection the heart of a husband at a time when men exercised complete control over their wives, and could satisfy their jealous, selfish instincts by any cruel methods they chose to adopt, with no one to say them "nay." The highly developed artistic sense shown by this husband is not incompatible with his consummate selfishness and cruelty, as many tales of that time might be brought forward to illustrate. The husband in "The Statue and the Bust" belongs to the same type, and the situation there is the inevitable outcome of a civilization in which women were not consulted as to whom they would marry, and naturally often fell a prey to love if it should come to them afterwards. Weakness of will in the case of the lovers in this poem wrecked their lives; for they were not strong enough to follow either duty or love. Another glimpse is caught of this period when husbands and brothers and fathers meted out what they considered justice to the women in "In a Gondola." "The Grammarian's Funeral" gives also an aspect of Renaissance life—the fervor for learning characteristic of the earlier days of the Renaissance when devoted pedants, as Arthur Symonds says in referring to this poem, broke ground in the restoration to the modern world of the civilization and learning of ancient Greece and Rome. Again, "The Heretic's Tragedy" and "Holy-Cross Day" picture most vividly the methods resorted to by the dying church in its attempts to keep control of the souls of a humanity seething toward religious tolerance.

With only a small space at command, it is difficult to decide on the poems to be touched upon, especially where there is not one but would repay prolonged attention, due no less to the romantic interest of the stories, the marvellous penetration into human motives, the grasp of historical atmospheres, than to the originality and perfection of their artistry.

A word must be said of "The Flight of the Duchess" and "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," both poems which have been productive of many commentaries, and both holding their own amid the bray [sic] of critics as unique and beautiful specimens of poetic art. Certainly no two poems could be chosen to show wider diversity in the poet's genius than these.

The story told by the huntsman in "The Flight of the Duchess" is interesting enough simply as a story, but the telling of it is inimitable. One can see before him the devoted, kindly man, somewhat clumsy of speech, as indicated by the rough rhymes, and characteristically drawing his illustrations from the calling he follows. Keen in his critical observation of the Duke and other members of the household, he, nevertheless, has a tender appreciation of the difficulties of the young Duchess in this unloving artificial environment.

When the Gypsy Queen sings her song through his memory of it, the rhymes and rhythm take on a befitting harmoniousness and smoothness contrasting finely with the remainder of the poem.

By means of this song, moreover, the horizon is enlarged beyond the immediate ken of the huntsman. The race-instinct, which has so strong a hold upon the Gypsies, is exalted into a wondrous sort of love which carries everything before it. This loving reality is also set over against the unloving artificiality of the first part of the poem. The temptation is too strong for the love-starved little Duchess, and even the huntsman and Jacinth come under her hypnotic spell.

Very different in effect is "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." The one, rich in this lay of human emotion, couched in the simple language of reality; the other, a symbolic picture of the struggle and aspiration of the soul. Interpreters have tried to pin this latter poem down to the limits of an allegory, and find a specific meaning for every phrase and picture, but it has too much the quality of the modern symbolistic writing to admit of any treatment so prosaic. In this respect it resembles music. Each mind will draw from it an interpretation suited to its own attitude and experiences. Reduced to the simplest possible lines of interpretation, it symbolizes the inevitable fate which drives a truth-seeking soul to see the falsity of ideals once thought absolute, yet in the face of the ruin of those ideals courage toward the continuance of aspiration is never for a moment lost.

As a bit of art, it is strikingly imaginative, and suggests the picture-quality of the tapestried horse, which Browning himself says was the chief inspiration of the poem. It is a fine example of the way in which the "strange and winged" fancy of the poet may take its flight from so simple an object as this tapestried horse, evidently a sorry beast too, in its needled presentment, or the poetic impulse would not have expressed itself in the vindictive, "I never saw a horse [sic] I hated so."

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## INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

### I

*You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:  
A mile or so away,  
On a little mound, Napoleon  
Stood on our storming-day;  
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,  
Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
As if to balance the prone brow  
Oppressive with its mind.*

### II

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

### III

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

### IV

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

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

40

NOTES:

"Incident of the French Camp." A story of modest heroism. The incident related is said by Mrs. Orr to be a true one of the siege of Ratisbon by Napoleon in 1809—except that the real hero was a man.

I. Ratisbon: (German Regensburg), an ancient city of Bavaria on the right bank of the Danube, has endured seventeen sieges since the tenth century, the last one being that of Napoleon, 1809.

II. Lannes: Duke of Montebello, one of Napoleon's generals.

## THE PATRIOT

AN OLD STORY

I

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

II

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

10

III

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

IV

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

20

V

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

VI

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

30

NOTES:

"The Patriot" is a hero's story of the reward and punishment dealt him for his services within one year. To act regardless of praise or blame, save God's, seems safer.

## MY LAST DUCHESS

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
 Looking as if she were alive. I call  
 That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands  
 Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
 Will't please you sit and look at her? I said  
 "Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read  
 Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
 The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
 But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
 the curtain I have drawn for you, but I) 10  
 And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
 How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
 Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
 Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
 Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps  
 Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint  
 Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
 Half-flush that dies along her throat"; such stuff 20  
 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
 For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
 A heart-how shall I say-too soon made glad,  
 Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
 Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,  
 The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
 The bough of cherries some officious fool  
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
 She rode with round the terrace-all and each 30  
 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men-good! but thanked  
 Somehow-I know not how-as if she ranked  
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
 In speech (which I have not) to make your will  
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this  
 Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
 Or there exceed the mark"-and if she let  
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set 40  
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
 E'en that would be some stooping; and I choose  
 Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
 The company below, then. I repeat,  
 The Count your master's known munificence  
 Is ample warrant that no just pretence 50  
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

## NOTES:

"My Last Duchess" puts in the mouth of a Duke of Ferrara,  
 a typical husband and art patron of the Renaissance, a  
 description of his last wife, whose happy nature and universal  
 kindness were a perpetual affront to his exacting  
 self-predominance, and whose suppression, by his command,  
 has made the vacancy he is now, in his interview  
 with the envoy for a new match, taking precaution to fill  
 more acceptably.

3. Fra Pandolf, and 56. Claus of Innsbruck, are imaginary.

## COUNT GISMOND

## AIX EN PROVENCE

## I

Christ God who savest man, save most  
 Of men Count Gismond who saved me!  
 Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,  
 Chose time and place and company  
 To suit it; when he struck at length  
 My honour, 'twas with all his strength.

## II

And doubtlessly ere he could draw  
 All points to one, he must have schemed!

*That miserable morning saw  
Few half so happy as I seemed,  
While being dressed in queen's array  
To give our tourney prize away.* 10

III

*I thought they loved me, did me grace  
To please themselves; 'twas all their deed;  
God makes, or fair or foul, our face;  
If showing mine so caused to bleed  
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped  
A word, and straight the play had stopped.*

IV

*They, too, so beauteous! Each a queen  
By virtue of her brow and breast;  
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,  
As I do. E'en when I was dressed,  
Had either of them spoke, instead  
Of glancing sideways with still head!* 20

V

*But no: they let me laugh, and sing  
My birthday song quite through, adjust  
The last rose in my garland, fling  
A last look on the mirror, trust  
My arms to each an arm of theirs,  
And so descend the castle-stairs—* 30

VI

*And come out on the morning-troop  
Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,  
And called me queen, and made me stoop  
Under the canopy—a streak  
That pierced it, of the outside sun,  
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun—*

VII

*And they could let me take my state  
And foolish throne amid applause  
Of all come there to celebrate  
My queen's-day—Oh I think the cause  
Of much was, they forgot no crowd  
Makes up for parents in their shroud!* 40

VIII

*However that be, all eyes were bent  
Upon me, when my cousins cast  
Theirs down; 'twas time I should present  
The victor's crown, but... there, 'twill last  
No long time... the old mist again  
Blinds me as then it did. How vain!*

IX

*See! Gismond's at the gate, in talk  
With his two boys: I can proceed.  
Well, at that moment, who should stalk  
Forth boldly—to my face, indeed—  
But Gauthier, and he thundered "Stay!"  
And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!"* 50

X

*"Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet  
About her! Let her shun the chaste,  
Or lay herself before their feet!  
Shall she whose body I embraced  
A night long, queen it in the day?  
For honour's sake no crowns, I say!"* 60

XI

*I? What I answered? As I live,  
I never fancied such a thing  
As answer possible to give.  
What says the body when they spring  
Some monstrous torture-engine's whole  
Strength on it? No more says the soul.*

XII

*Till out strode Gismond; then I knew  
That I was saved. I never met  
His face before, but, at first view,  
I felt quite sure that God had set  
Himself to Satan; who would spend  
A minute's mistrust on the end?* 70

XIII

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat  
Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth  
With one back-handed blow that wrote  
In blood men's verdict there. North, South,  
East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,  
And damned, and truth stood up instead.

XIV

This glads me most, that I enjoyed  
The heart of the joy, with my content 80  
In watching Gismond unalloyed  
By any doubt of the event:  
God took that on him—I was bid  
Watch Gismond for my part: I did.

XV

Did I not watch him while he let  
His armourer just brace his greaves,  
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret  
The while! His foot... my memory leaves  
No least stamp out, nor how anon  
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on. 90

XVI

And e'en before the trumpet's sound  
Was finished, prone lay the false knight,  
Prone as his lie, upon the ground:  
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight  
O' the sword, but open-breasted drove,  
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

XVII

Which done, he dragged him to my feet  
And said "Here die, but end thy breath  
In full confession, lest thou fleet  
From my first, to God's second death! 100  
Say, hast thou lied?" And, "I have lied  
To God and her," he said, and died.

XVIII

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked  
What safe my heart holds, though no word  
Could I repeat now, if I tasked  
My powers for ever, to a third  
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest  
Until I sank upon his breast.

XIX

Over my head his arm he flung  
Against the world; and scarce I felt 110  
His sword (that dripped by me and swung)  
A little shifted in its belt:  
For he began to say the while  
How South our home lay many a mile.

XX

So 'mid the shouting multitude  
We two walked forth to never more  
Return. My cousins have pursued  
Their life, untroubled as before  
I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place  
God lighten! May his soul find grace! 120

XXI

Our elder boy has got the clear  
Great brow; tho' when his brother's black  
Full eye shows scorn, it... Gismond here?  
And have you brought my tercel back?  
I just was telling Adela  
How many birds it struck since May.

NOTES:

"Count Gismond: Aix in Provence" illustrates, in the person of the woman who relates to a friend an episode of her own life, the power of innate purity to raise up for her a defender when caught in the toils woven by the unsuspected envy and hypocrisy of her cousins and Count Gauthier, who attempt to bring dishonor upon her, on her birthday, with the seeming intention of honoring her. Her faith that the trial by combat between Gauthier and Gismond must end in Gismond's victory and her vindication reflects most truly, as Arthur Symons has pointed out, the medieval atmosphere of chivalrous France.

## THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

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

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

*Hard he laboured, long and well;  
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*And all his past career  
Came back upon him clear,*

*Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,  
Till on his life the sickness weighed;*



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

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

60

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

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

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

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

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

70

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

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

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

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

**NOTES:**

*"The Boy and the Angel." An imaginary legend illustrating the worth of humble, human love to God, who missed in the praise of the Pope, Theocrite, and of the Angel Gabriel, the precious human quality in the song of the poor boy, Theocrite.*

## INSTANS TYRANNUS

**I**

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

**II**

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

10

**III**

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

20

**IV**

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

30

V

Then a humour more great took its place  
At the thought of his face,  
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,  
The trouble uncouth  
'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain  
To put out of its pain. 40  
And, "no!" I admonished myself,  
"Is one mocked by an elf,  
Is one baffled by toad or by rat?  
The gravamen's in that!  
How the lion, who crouches to suit  
His back to my foot,  
Would admire that I stand in debate!  
But the small turns the great  
If it vexes you, that is the thing!  
Toad or rat vex the king? 50  
Though I waste half my realm to unearth  
Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!"

VI

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

VII

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

NOTES:

"Instans Tyrannus" is a despot's confession of one of his own experiences which showed him the inviolability of the weakest man who is in the right and who can call the spiritual force of good to his aid against the utmost violence or cunning.—"Instans Tyrannus," or the threatening tyrant, suggested by Horace, third Ode in Book III:

"Justum et tenacem propositi vlrum,  
Non civium ardor prava jubentium,  
Non vultus instantis tyranni," etc.

[The just man tenacious of purpose is not to be turned aside by the heat of the populace nor the brow of the threatening tyrant.]

## MESMERISM

I

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

II

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

III

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

## IV

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

## V

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

## VI

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

## VII

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

## VIII

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

## IX

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

## X

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

## XI

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

## XII

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

## XIII

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

## XIV

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

## XV

And must follow as I require,  
 As befits a thrall,  
 Bringing flesh and all,  
 Essence and earth-attire

To the source of the tractile fire:

XVI

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

XVII

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

XVIII

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

XIX

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

XX

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

XXI

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

XXII

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

XXIII

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

XXIV

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

XXV

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

XXVI

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

XXVII

I admonish me while I may,  
    Not to squander guilt,  
    Since require Thou wilt

At my hand its price one day!  
What the price is, who can say?

NOTES:

"Mesmerism." With a continuous tension of will, whose unbroken concentration impregnates the very structure of the poem, a mesmerist describes the processes of the act by which he summons shape and soul of the woman he desires; and then reverent perception of the sacredness of the soul awes him from trespassing upon another's individuality.

## THE GLOVE

(Peter Ronsard, loquitur)

"Heigho!" yawned one day King Francis,  
"Distance all value enhances.  
When a man's busy, why, leisure  
Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:  
Faith, and at leisure once is he?  
Straightway he wants to be busy.  
Here we've got peace; and aghast I'm  
Caught thinking war the true pastime.  
Is there a reason in metre?  
Give us your speech, master Peter!" 10  
I who, if mortal dare say so,  
Ne'er am at loss with my Naso  
"Sire," I replied, "joys prove cloudlets:  
"Men are the merest Ixions"—  
Here the King whistled aloud, "Let's  
—Heigho—go look at our lions."  
Such are the sorrowful chances  
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,  
Our company, Francis was leading, 20  
Increased by new followers tenfold  
Before he arrived at the penfold;  
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen  
At sunset the western horizon.  
And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost  
With the dame he professed to adore most.  
Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed  
Her, and the horrible pitside;  
For the penfold surrounded a hollow  
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow 30  
And shelved to the chamber secluded  
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.

The King hailed his keeper, an Arab  
As glossy and black as a scarab,  
And bade him make sport and at once stir  
Up and out of his den the old monster.  
They opened a hole in the wire-work  
Across it, and dropped there a firework,  
And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled;  
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled, 40  
The blackness and silence so utter,  
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter;  
Then earth in a sudden contortion  
Gave out to our gaze her abortion.  
Such a brute! Were I friend Clement Marot  
(Whose experience of nature's but narrow  
And whose faculties move in no small mist  
When he versifies David the Psalmist)  
I should study that brute to describe you  
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu. 50

One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy  
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,  
The tail in the air stiff and straining  
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,  
As over the barrier which bounded  
His platform, and us who surrounded  
The barrier, they reached and they rested  
On space that might stand him in best stead:  
For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,  
The eruption of clatter and blaze meant, 60  
And if, in this minute of wonder,  
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,  
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,  
The lion at last was delivered?  
Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead!  
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,  
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,  
He was leagues in the desert already  
Driving the flocks up the mountain  
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain 70

To waylay the date-gathering negress:  
So guarded he entrance or egress.  
"How he stands!" quoth the King: "we may well swear,  
(No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere  
And so can afford the confession)  
We exercise wholesome discretion  
In keeping aloof from his threshold;  
Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,  
Their first would too pleasantly purloin  
The visitor's brisket or surloin: 80  
But who's he would prove so fool-hardy?  
Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,  
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,  
Fell close to the lion, and rested:  
The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested  
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing  
For months past; he sat there pursuing  
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance  
Fine speeches like gold from a balance. 90

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier!  
De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,  
Walked straight to the glove—while the lion  
Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on  
The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,  
And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir—  
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,  
Leaped back where the lady was seated,  
And full in the face of its owner  
Flung the glove.

"Your heart's queen, you dethrone her? 100  
So should I!"—cried the King—" 'twas mere vanity  
Not love set that task to humanity!"  
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing  
From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I; for I caught an expression  
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession  
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,  
As if from no pleasing experiment  
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful  
So long as the process was needful,— 110  
As if she had tried in a crucible,  
To what "speeches like gold" were reducible,  
And, finding the finest prove copper,  
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;  
To know what she had not to trust to,  
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.  
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;  
Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,  
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?  
If she wished not the rash deed's recalment? 120  
For I"—so I spoke—"am a poet:  
Human nature,—behoves that I know it!"

She told me, "Too long had I heard  
Of the deed proved alone by the word:  
For my love—what De Lorge would not dare!  
With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare!  
And the endless descriptions of death  
He would brave when my lip formed a breath,  
I must reckon as braved, or, of course,  
Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce, 130  
For such gifts as no lady could spurn,  
Must offer my love in return.  
When I looked on your lion, it brought  
All the dangers at once to my thought,  
Encountered by all sorts of men,  
Before he was lodged in his den—  
From the poor slave whose club or bare hands  
Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,  
With no King and no Court to applaud,  
By no shame, should he shrink, overawed, 140  
Yet to capture the creature made shift,  
That his rude boys might laugh at the gift  
—To the page who last leaped o'er the fence  
Of the pit, on no greater pretence  
Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,  
Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.  
So, wiser I judged it to make  
One trial what 'death for my sake'  
Really meant, while the power was yet mine,

Than to wait until time should define 150  
Such a phrase not so simply as I,  
Who took it to mean just 'to die.'  
The blow a glove gives is but weak:  
Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?  
But when the heart suffers a blow,  
Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping.

And saw a youth eagerly keeping  
 As close as he dared to the doorway.  
 No doubt that a noble should more weigh 160  
 His life than befits a plebeian;  
 And yet, had our brute been Nemean—  
 (I judge by a certain calm fervour  
 The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)  
 —He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn  
 If you whispered "Friend, what you'd get, first earn!"  
 And when, shortly after, she carried  
 Her shame from the Court, and they married,  
 To that marriage some happiness, maugre  
 The voice of the Court, I dared augur. 170

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,  
 Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;  
 And in short stood so plain a head taller.  
 That he wooed and won... how do you call her?  
 The beauty, that rose in the sequel  
 To the King's love, who loved her a week well.  
 And 'twas noticed he never would honour  
 De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)  
 With the easy commission of stretching  
 His legs in the service, and fetching 180  
 His wife, from her chamber, those straying  
 Sad gloves she was always mistaying,  
 While the King took the closet to chat in,—  
 But of course this adventure came pat in.  
 And never the King told the story,  
 How bringing a glove brought such glory,  
 But the wife smiled—"His nerves are grown firmer:  
 Mine he brings now and utters no murmur."

Venienti occurrite morbo!  
 With which moral I drop my theorbo. 190

NOTES:

"The Glove" gives a transcript from Court life, in Paris, under Francis I. In making Ronsard the mouthpiece for a deeper observation of the meaning of the incident he is supposed to witness and describe than Marot and the rest saw, characteristic differences between these two poets of the time are brought out, the genuineness of courtly love and chivalry is tested, and to the original story of the glove is added a new view of the lady's character; a sketch of her humbler and truer lover, and their happiness; and a pendent scene showing the courtier De Lorges, having won a beauty for his wife, in the ignominious position of assisting the king to enjoy her favors and of submitting to pleasantries upon his discomfiture. The original story as told by Poullain de St. Croix in his *Essais Historiques sur Paris* ran thus: "One day whilst Francis I amused himself with looking at a combat between his lions, a lady, having let her glove drop, said to De Lorges, 'If you would have me believe that you love me as much as you swear you do, go and bring back my glove.' De Lorges went down, picked up the glove from amidst the ferocious beasts, returned, and threw it in the lady's face; and in spite of all her advances and cajoleries would never look at her again." Schiller running across this anecdote of St. Croix, in 1797, as he writes Goethe, wrote a poem on it which adds nothing to the story. Leigh Hunt's 'The Glove and the Lions' adds some traits. It characterizes the lady as shallow and vain, with smiles and eyes which always seem'd the same.' She calculates since "king, ladies, lovers, all look on," that "the occasion is divine" to drop her glove and "prove his love, then look at him and smile"; and after De Lorges has returned and thrown the glove, "but not with love, right in the lady's face," Hunt makes the king rise and swear "rightly done! No love, quoth he, but vanity, sets love a task like that!" This is the material Browning worked on; he makes use of this speech of the king's, but remodels the lady's character wholly, and gives her an appreciative lover, and also a keen-eyed young poet to tell her story afresh and to reveal through his criticism the narrowness of the Court and the Court poets.

12. *Naso*: Ovid. Love of the classics and curiosity as to human nature were both characteristic of Peter Ronsard (1524-1585), at one time page to Francis I, the most erudite and original of French medieval poets.

45. *Clement Marot*: (1496-1544), Court poet to Francis I. His nature and verse were simpler than Ronsard's, and he belonged more peculiarly to his own day.

48. *Versifies David*: Marot was suspected of Protestant leanings which occasioned his imprisonment twice, and put him in need of the protection Francis and his sister gave him. Among his works were sixty-five epistles addressed to grandees, attesting his courtiership, and the paraphrase of forty-nine of the Psalms to which Ronsard alludes.

50. *Illum Juda, etc.*: that lion of the tribe of Judah.

89. *Venienti, etc.*: Meet the coming disease; that is, if evil be anticipated, don't wait till it seizes you, but dare to assure yourself and then forestall it as the lady did.

190. *Theorbo*: an old Italian stringed instrument such as pages used.

## TIME'S REVENGES

*I've a Friend, over the sea;  
I like him, but he loves me.  
It all grew out of the books I write;  
They find such favour in his sight  
That he slaughters you with savage looks  
Because you don't admire my books.  
He does himself though,—and if some vein  
Were to snap tonight in this heavy brain,  
To-morrow month, if I lived to try,  
Round should I just turn quietly, 10  
Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand  
Till I found him, come from his foreign land  
To be my nurse in this poor place,  
And make my broth and wash my face  
And light my fire and, all the while,  
Bear with his old good-humoured smile  
That I told him "Better have kept away  
Than come and kill me, night and day,  
With, worse than fever throbs and shoots,  
The creaking of his clumsy boots." 20  
I am as sure that this he would do,  
As that Saint Paul's is striking two.  
And I think I rather... woe is me!  
—Yes, rather would see him than not see,  
If lifting a hand could seat him there  
Before me in the empty chair  
To-night, when my head aches indeed,  
And I can neither think nor read  
Nor make these purple fingers hold  
The pen; this garret's freezing cold! 30*

*And I've a Lady—there he wakes,  
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes  
Within me, at her name, to pray  
Fate send some creature in the way  
Of my love for her, to be down-torn,  
Upthrust and outward-borne,  
So I might prove myself that sea  
Of passion which I needs must be!  
Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint  
And my style infirm and its figures faint, 40  
All the critics say, and more blame yet,  
And not one angry word you get.  
But, please you, wonder I would put  
My cheek beneath that lady's foot  
Rather than trample under mine  
That laurels of the Florentine,  
And you shall see how the devil spends  
A fire God gave for other ends!  
I tell you, I stride up and down  
This garret, crowned with love's best crown, 50  
And feasted with love's perfect feast,  
To think I kill for her, at least,  
Body and soul and peace and fame,  
Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,  
—So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,  
Filled full, eaten out and in  
With the face of her, the eyes of her,  
The lips, the little chin, the stir  
Of shadow round her mouth; and she  
—I'll tell you,—calmly would decree 60  
That I should roast at a slow fire,*

*If that would compass her desire  
And make her one whom they invite  
To the famous ball to-morrow night.*

*There may be heaven; there must be hell;  
Meantime, there is our earth here—well!*

### NOTES:

"Time's Revenges." An author soliloquizes in his garret over the fact that he possesses a friend who loves him and would do anything in his power to serve him, but for whom he cares almost nothing. At the same time he himself loves a woman to such distraction that he counts himself crowned with love's best crown while sacrificing his soul, his body, his peace, and his fame in brooding on



his love, while she could calmly decree that he should roast at a slow fire if it would compass her frivolously ambitious designs. Thus his indifference to his friend is avenged by the indifference the lady shows toward him.

46. *The Florentine: Dante.* Used here, seemingly, as a symbol of the highest attainments in poesy, his (the speaker's) reverence for which is so great that he would rather put his cheek under his lady's foot than that poetry should suffer any indignity at his hands; yet in spite of all the possibilities open to him through his enthusiasm for poetry, he prefers wasting his entire energies upon one unworthy of him.

## THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

*That second time they hunted me  
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,  
And Austria, hounding far and wide  
Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,  
Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—  
I made six days a hiding-place  
Of that dry green old aqueduct  
Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked  
The fire-flies from the roof above,  
Bright creeping thro' the moss they love: 10  
—How long it seems since Charles was lost!  
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed  
The country in my very sight;  
And when that peril ceased at night,  
The sky broke out in red dismay  
With signal fires; well, there I lay  
Close covered o'er in my recess,  
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,  
Thinking on Metternich our friend,  
And Charles's miserable end, 20  
And much beside, two days; the third,  
Hunger overcame me when I heard  
The peasants from the village go  
To work among the maize; you know,  
With us in Lombardy, they bring  
Provisions packed on mules, a string  
With little bells that cheer their task,  
And casks, and boughs on every cask  
To keep the sun's heat from the wine;  
These I let pass in jingling line, 30  
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,  
The peasants from the village, too;  
For at the very rear would troop  
Their wives and sisters in a group  
To help, I knew. When these had passed,  
I threw my glove to strike the last,  
Taking the chance: she did not start,  
Much less cry out, but stooped apart,  
One instant rapidly glanced round,  
And saw me beckon from the ground. 40  
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;  
She picked my glove up while she stripped  
A branch off, then rejoined the rest  
With that; my glove lay in her breast.  
Then I drew breath; they disappeared:  
It was for Italy I feared.*

*An hour, and she returned alone  
Exactly where my glove was thrown.  
Meanwhile came many thoughts: on me  
Rested the hopes of Italy. 50  
I had devised a certain tale  
Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail  
Persuade a peasant of its truth;  
I meant to call a freak of youth  
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,  
And no temptation to betray.  
But when I saw that woman's face,  
Its calm simplicity of grace,  
Our Italy's own attitude  
In which she walked thus far, and stood, 60  
Planting each naked foot so firm,  
To crush the snake and spare the worm—  
At first sight of her eyes, I said,  
"I am that man upon whose head  
They fix the price, because I hate  
The Austrians over us: the State  
Will give you gold—oh, gold so much!  
If you betray me to their clutch,  
And be your death, for aught I know,  
If once they find you saved their foe. 70  
Now, you must bring me food and drink,  
And also paper, pen and ink,  
And carry safe what I shall write  
To Padua, which you'll reach at night  
Before the duomo shuts; go in,  
And wait till Tenebrae begin;  
Walk to the third confessional,  
Between the pillar and the wall,*

And kneeling whisper, Whence comes peace?  
Say it a second time, then cease; 80  
And if the voice inside returns,  
From Christ and Freedom; what concerns  
The cause of Peace?—for answer, slip  
My letter where you placed your lip;  
Then come back happy we have done  
Our mother service—I, the son,  
As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand  
In the same place, with the same eyes:  
I was no surer of sun-rise 90  
Than of her coming. We conferred  
Of her own prospects, and I heard  
She had a lover—stout and tall,  
She said—then let her eyelids fall,  
"He could do much"—as if some doubt  
Entered her heart,—then, passing out

"She could not speak for others, who  
Had other thoughts; herself she knew,"  
And so she brought me drink and food.  
After four days, the scouts pursued 100  
Another path; at last arrived  
The help my Paduan friends contrived  
To furnish me: she brought the news.  
For the first time I could not choose  
But kiss her hand, and lay my own  
Upon her head—"This faith was shown  
To Italy, our mother; she  
Uses my hand and blesses thee."  
She followed down to the sea-shore;  
I left and never saw her more. 110

How very long since I have thought  
Concerning—much less wished for—ought  
Beside the good of Italy,  
For which I live and mean to die!  
I never was in love; and since  
Charles proved false, what shall now convince  
My inmost heart I have a friend?  
However, if I pleased to spend  
Real wishes on myself—say, three—  
I know at least what one should be. 120

I would grasp Metternich until  
I felt his red wet throat distil  
In blood thro' these two hands. And next,  
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—  
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,  
Should die slow of a broken heart  
Under his new employers. Last  
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast  
Do I grow old and out of strength.

If I resolved to seek at length 130  
My father's house again, how scared  
They all would look, and unprepared!  
My brothers live in Austria's pay  
—Disowned me long ago, men say;  
And all my early mates who used  
To praise me so—perhaps induced  
More than one early step of mine—  
Are turning wise: while some opine  
"Freedom grows license," some suspect  
"Haste breeds delay," and recollect 140

They always said, such premature  
Beginnings never could endure!  
So, with a sullen "All's for best,"  
The land seems settling to its rest.  
I think then, I should wish to stand  
This evening in that dear, lost land,  
Over the sea the thousand miles,  
And know if yet that woman smiles  
With the calm smile; some little farm  
She lives in there, no doubt: what harm 150

If I sat on the door-side bench,  
And, while her spindle made a trench  
Fantastically in the dust,  
Inquired of all her fortunes—just  
Her children's ages and their names,  
And what may be the husband's aims  
For each of them. I'd talk this out,  
And sit there, for an hour about,  
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay  
Mine on her head, and go my way. 160

So much for idle wishing—how  
It steals the time! To business now.

NOTES:

"The Italian in England." An Italian patriot who has taken part in an unsuccessful revolt against Austrian dominance, reflects upon the incidents of his escape and flight from Italy to the end that if he ever should have a thought beyond the welfare of Italy, he would wish first for the

discomfiture of his enemies and then to go and see once more the noble woman who at the risk of her own life helped him to escape. Though there is no exact historical incident upon which this poem is founded, it has a historical background. The Charles referred to (lines 8, 11, 20, 116, 125) is Charles Albert, Prince of Carignano, of the younger branch of the house of Savoy. His having played with the patriot in his youth, as the poem says, is quite possible, for Charles was brought up as a simple citizen in a public school, and one of his chief friends was Alberta Nota, a writer of liberal principles, whom he made his secretary. As indicated in the poem, Charles at first declared himself in sympathy, though in a somewhat lukewarm manner, with the rising led by Santa Rosa against Austrian domination in 1823, and upon the abdication of Victor Emanuel he became regent of Turin. But when the king Charles Felix issued a denunciation against the new government, Charles Albert succumbed to the king's threats and left his friends in the lurch. Later the Austrians marched into the country, Santa Rosa was forced to retreat from Turin, and, with his friends, he who might well have been the very patriot of the poem was obliged to fly from Italy.

19. Metternich: the distinguished Austrian diplomatist and determined enemy of Italian independence.

76. Tenebrae: darkness. "The office of matins and lauds, for the three last days in Holy Week. Fifteen lighted candles are placed on a triangular stand, and at the conclusion of each psalm one is put out till a single candle is left at the top of the triangle. The extinction of the other candles is said to figure the growing darkness of the world at the time of the Crucifixion. The last candle (which is not extinguished, but hidden behind the altar for a few moments) represents Christ, over whom Death could not prevail.'" (Dr. Berdoe)

## THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

Piano di Sorrento

Fortù, Fortù, my beloved one,  
 Sit here by my side,  
 On my knees put up both little feet!  
 I was sure, if I tried,  
 I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco.  
 Now, open your eyes,  
 Let me keep you amused till he vanish  
 In black from the skies,  
 With telling my memories over  
 As you tell your beads; 10  
 All the Plain saw me gather, I garland  
 —The flowers or the weeds.

Time for rain! for your long hot dry Autumn  
 Had net-worked with brown  
 The white skin of each grape on the bunches,  
 Marked like a quail's crown,  
 Those creatures you make such account of,  
 Whose heads—speckled white  
 Over brown like a great spider's back,  
 As I told you last night— 20  
 Your mother bites off for her supper.  
 Red-ripe as could be,  
 Pomegranates were chapping and splitting  
 In halves on the tree:  
 And betwixt the loose walls of great flintstone,  
 Or in the thick dust  
 On the path, or straight out of the rockside,  
 Wherever could thrust  
 Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower  
 Its yellow face up, 30  
 For the prize were great butterflies fighting,  
 Some five for one cup.

So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,  
 What change was in store,  
 By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets  
 Which woke me before  
 I could open my shutter, made fast  
 With a bough and a stone,  
 And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs,  
 Sole lattice that's known. 40  
 Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles,  
 While, busy beneath,  
 Your priest and his brother tugged at them,  
 The rain in their teeth.  
 And out upon all the flat house-roofs

Where split figs lay drying,  
 The girls took the frails under cover:  
 Nor use seemed in trying  
 To get out the boats and go fishing,  
 For, under the cliff, 50  
 Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock.  
 No seeing our skiff  
 Arrive about noon from Amalfi,  
 -Our fisher arrive,  
 And pitch down his basket before us,  
 All trembling alive  
 With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit;  
 You touch the strange lumps,  
 And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner  
 Of horns and of humps, 60  
 Which only the fisher looks grave at,  
 While round him like imps  
 Cling screaming the children as naked  
 And brown as his shrimps;  
 Himself too as bare to the middle  
 -You see round his neck  
 The string and its brass coin suspended,  
 That saves him from wreck.  
 But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,  
 So back, to a man, 70  
 Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards  
 Grape-harvest began.  
 In the vat, halfway up in our houseside,  
 Like blood the juice spins,  
 While your brother all bare-legged is dancing  
 Till breathless he grins  
 Dead-beaten in effort on effort  
 To keep the grapes under,  
 Since still when he seems all but master,  
 In pours the fresh plunder 80  
 From girls who keep coming and going  
 With basket on shoulder,  
 And eyes shut against the rain's driving;  
 Your girls that are older,-  
 For under the hedges of aloe,  
 And where, on its bed  
 Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple  
 Lies pulpy and red,  
 All the young ones are kneeling and filling  
 Their laps with the snails 90  
 Tempted out by this first rainy weather,-  
 Your best of regales,  
 As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,  
 When, supping in state,  
 We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen,  
 Three over one plate)  
 With lasagne so tempting to swallow,  
 In slippery ropes,  
 And gourds fried in great purple slices,  
 That colour of popes. 100  
 Meantime, see the grape bunch they've brought you:  
 The rain-water slips  
 O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe  
 Which the wasp to your lips  
 Still follows with fretful persistence:  
 Nay, taste, while awake,  
 This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball  
 That peels, flake by flake,  
 Like an onion, each smoother and whiter;  
 Next, sip this weak wine 110  
 From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,  
 A leaf of the vine;  
 And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh  
 That leaves thro' its juice  
 The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth.  
 Scirocco is loose!  
 Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives  
 Which, thick in one's track,  
 Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,  
 Tho' not yet half black! 120  
 How the old twisted olive trunks shudder,  
 The medlars let fall  
 Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees  
 Snap off, figs and all,  
 For here comes the whole of the tempest!  
 No refuge, but creep  
 Back again to my side and my shoulder,  
 And listen or sleep.  
 O how will your country show next week,  
 When all the vine-boughs 130  
 Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture  
 The mules and the cows?  
 Last eve, I rode over the mountains,  
 Your brother, my guide,  
 Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles  
 That offered, each side,  
 Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious,-  
 Or strip from the sorbs  
 A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous,  
 Those hairy gold orbs! 140

But my mule picked his sure sober path out,  
     Just stopping to neigh  
 When he recognized down in the valley  
     His mates on their way  
 With the faggots and barrels of water;  
     And soon we emerged  
 From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow;  
     And still as we urged  
 Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,  
     As up still we trudged 150  
 Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,  
     And place was e'en grudged  
 'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones  
     Like the loose broken teeth  
 Of some monster which climbed there to die  
     From the ocean beneath—  
 Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-weed  
     That clung to the path,  
 And dark rosemary ever a-dying  
     That, 'spite the wind's wrath, 160  
 So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,  
     And lentisks as staunch  
 To the stone where they root and bear berries,  
     And... what shows a branch  
 Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets  
     Of pale seagreen leaves;  
 Over all trod my mule with the caution  
     Of gleaners o'er sheaves,  
 Still, foot after foot like a lad  
     Till, round after round, 170  
 He climbed to the top of Calvano,  
     And God's own profound  
 Was above me, and round me the mountains,  
     And under, the sea,  
 And within me my heart to bear witness  
     What was and shall be.

Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal!  
     No rampart excludes  
 Your eye from the life to be lived  
     In the blue solitudes. 180  
 Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement!  
     Still moving with you;  
 For, ever some new head and breast of them  
     Thrusts into view  
 To observe the intruder; you see it  
     If quickly you turn  
 And, before they escape you surprise them.  
     They grudge you should learn  
 How the soft plains they look on, lean over  
     And love (they pretend) 190  
 —Cower beneath them, the flat sea-pine crouches,  
     The wild fruit-trees bend,  
 E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut:  
     All is silent and grave:  
 'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty,  
     How fair! but a slave.  
 So, I turned to the sea; and there slumbered  
     As greenly as ever  
 Those isles of the siren, your Galli;  
     No ages can sever 200  
 The Three, nor enable their sister  
     To join them,—halfway  
 On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—  
     No farther to-day,  
 Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave,  
     Watches breast-high and steady  
 From under the rock, her bold sister  
     Swum halfway already.  
 Fortù, shall we sail there together  
     And see from the sides 210  
 Quite new rocks show their faces, new haunts  
     Where the siren abides?  
 Shall we sail round and round them, close over  
     The rocks, tho' unseen,  
 That ruffle the grey glassy water  
     To glorious green?  
 Then scramble from splinter to splinter,  
     Reach land and explore,  
 On the largest, the strange square black turret  
     With never a door, 220  
 Just a loop to admit the quick lizards;  
     Then, stand there and hear  
 The birds' quiet singing, that tells us  
     What life is, so clear?  
 —The secret they sang to Ulysses  
     When, ages ago,  
 He heard and he knew this life's secret  
     I hear and I know.

Ah, see! The sun breaks o'er Calvano;  
     He strikes the great gloom 230  
 And flutters it o'er the mount's summit  
     In airy gold fume.  
 All is over. Look out, see the gipsy,

Our tinker and smith,  
 Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,  
 And down-squatted forthwith  
 To his hammering, under the wall there;  
 One eye keeps aloof  
 The urchins that itch to be putting  
 His jews'-harps to proof, 240  
 While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,  
 Is watching how sleek  
 Shines the hog, come to share in the windfall  
 -Chew, abbot's own cheek!  
 All is over. Wake up and come out now,  
 And down let us go,  
 And see the fine things got in order  
 At church for the show  
 Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening.  
 To-morrow's the Feast 250  
 Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means  
 Of Virgins the least,  
 As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse  
 Which (all nature, no art)  
 The Dominican brother, these three weeks,  
 Was getting by heart.  
 Not a pillar nor post but is dizened  
 With red and blue papers;  
 All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar  
 A-blaze with long tapers; 260  
 But the great masterpiece is the scaffold  
 Rigged glorious to hold  
 All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers  
 And trumpeters bold,  
 Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,  
 Who, when the priest's hoarse,  
 Will strike us up something that's brisk  
 For the feast's second course.  
 And then will the flaxen-wigged Image  
 Be carried in pomp 270  
 Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession  
 The priests mean to stomp.  
 All round the glad church lie old bottles  
 With gunpowder stopped,  
 Which will be, when the Image re-enters,  
 Religiously popped;  
 And at night from the crest of Calvano  
 Great bonfires will hang,  
 On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,  
 And more poppers bang. 280  
 At all events, come-to the garden  
 As far as the wall;  
 See me tap with a hoe on the plaster  
 Till out there shall fall  
 A scorpion with wide angry nippers!  
 -"Such trifles!" you say?  
 Fortù, in my England at home,  
 Men meet gravely to-day  
 And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws  
 Be righteous and wise 290  
 -If 'twere proper, Scirocco should vanish  
 In black from the skies!

NOTES:

"The Italian in England." An Italian patriot who has taken part in an unsuccessful revolt against Austrian dominance, reflects upon the incidents of his escape and flight from Italy to the end that if he ever should have a thought beyond the welfare of Italy, he would wish first for the discomfiture of his enemies and then to go and see once more the noble woman who at the risk of her own life helped him to escape. Though there is no exact historical incident upon which this poem is founded, it has a historical background. The Charles referred to (lines 8, 11, 20, 116, 125) is Charles Albert, Prince of Carignano, of the younger branch of the house of Savoy. His having played with the patriot in his youth, as the poem says, is quite possible, for Charles was brought up as a simple citizen in a public school, and one of his chief friends was Alberta Nota, a writer of liberal principles, whom he made his secretary. As indicated in the poem, Charles at first declared himself in sympathy, though in a somewhat lukewarm manner, with the rising led by Santa Rosa against Austrian domination in 1823, and upon the abdication of Victor Emanuel he became regent of Turin. But when the king Charles Felix issued a denunciation against the new government, Charles Albert succumbed to the king's threats and left his friends in the lurch. Later the Austrians marched into the country, Santa Rosa was forced to retreat from Turin, and, with his friends, he who might well have been the very patriot of the poem was obliged to fly from Italy.

19. Metternich: the distinguished Austrian diplomatist and determined enemy of Italian independence.

76. Tenebrae: darkness. "The office of matins and

lauds, for the three last days in Holy Week. Fifteen lighted candles are placed on a triangular stand, and at the conclusion of each psalm one is put out till a single candle is left at the top of the triangle. The extinction of the other candles is said to figure the growing darkness of the world at the time of the Crucifixion. The last candle (which is not extinguished, but hidden behind the altar for a few moments) represents Christ, over whom Death could not prevail.' (Dr. Berdoe)

## IN A GONDOLA

He sings.

I send my heart up to thee, all my heart  
In this my singing.  
For the stars help me, and the sea bears part;  
The very night is clinging  
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space  
Above me, whence thy face  
May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling-place.

She speaks.

Say after me, and try to say  
My very words, as if each word  
Came from you of your own accord, 10  
In your own voice, in your own way:  
"This woman's heart and soul and brain  
Are mine as much as this gold chain  
She bids me wear, which (say again)  
I choose to make by cherishing  
A precious thing, or choose to fling  
Over the boat-side, ring by ring."  
And yet once more say... no word more!  
Since words are only words. Give o'er!

Unless you call me, all the same, 20  
Familiarly by my pet name,  
Which if the Three should hear you call,  
And me reply to, would proclaim  
At once our secret to them all.  
Ask of me, too, command me, blame—  
Do, break down the partition-wall  
'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds  
Curtained in dusk and splendid folds!  
What's left but—all of me to take?  
I am the Three's: prevent them, slake 30  
Your thirst! 'Tis said, the Arab sage,  
In practising with gems, can loose  
Their subtle spirit in his cruce  
And leave but ashes: so, sweet mage,  
Leave them my ashes when thy use  
Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

He sings.

I

Past we glide, and past, and past!  
What's that poor Agnese doing  
Where they make the shutters fast?  
Grey Zanobi's just a-wooing 40  
To his couch the purchased bride:  
Past we glide!

II

Past we glide, and past, and past!  
Why's the Pucci Palace flaring  
Like a beacon to the blast?  
Guests by hundreds, not one caring  
If the dear host's neck were wried:  
Past we glide!

She sings.

I

The moth's kiss, first!  
Kiss me as if you made believe 50  
You were not sure, this eve,  
How my face, your flower, had pursed  
Its petals up; so, here and there  
You brush it, till I grow aware  
Who wants me, and wide ope I burst..

II

*The bee's kiss, now!  
Kiss me as if you entered gay  
My heart at some noontide,  
A bud that dares not disallow  
The claim, so all is rendered up,  
And passively its shattered cup  
Over your head to sleep I bow.*

*He sings.*

*I*

*What are we two?  
I am a Jew,  
And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,  
To a feast of our tribe;  
Where they need thee to bribe  
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe.  
Thy... Scatter the vision for ever! And now  
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!*

*II*

*Say again, what we are?  
The sprite of a star,  
I lure thee above where the destinies bar  
My plumes their full play  
Till a ruddier ray  
Than my pale one announce there is withering away  
Some... Scatter the vision forever! And now,  
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!*

*He muses.*

*Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?  
The land's lap or the water's breast?  
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,  
Or swim in lucid shallows just  
Eluding water-lily leaves,  
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust  
To lock you, whom release he must;  
Which life were best on Summer eves?*

*He speaks, musing.*

*Lie back; could thought of mine improve you?  
From this shoulder let there spring  
A wing; from this, another wing;  
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you!  
Snow-white must they spring, to blend  
With your flesh, but I intend  
They shall deepen to the end,  
Broader, into burning gold,  
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold  
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet  
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet  
As if a million sword-blades hurled  
Defiance from you to the world!*

*Rescue me thou, the only real!  
And scare away this mad ideal  
That came, nor motions to depart!  
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!*

*Still he muses.*

*I*

*What if the Three should catch at last  
Thy serenader? While there's cast  
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast  
Gian pinions me, Himself has past  
His stilet thro' my back; I reel;  
And... is it thou I feel?*

*II*

*They trail me, these three godless knaves,  
Past every church that saints and saves,  
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves  
By Lido's wet accursed graves,  
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,  
And... on thy breast I sink!*

*She replies, musing.*

*Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,  
As I do: thus: were death so unlike sleep,  
Caught this way? Death's to fear from flame or steel,  
Or poison doubtless; but from water-feel!  
Go find the bottom! Would you stay me? There!  
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass  
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,  
I flung away: since you have praised my hair,*



'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks.

Row home? must we row home? Too surely  
Know I where its front's demurely  
Over the Giudecca piled;  
Window just with window mating,  
Door on door exactly waiting,  
All's the set face of a child: 130  
But behind it, where's a trace  
Of the staidness and reserve,  
And formal lines without a curve,  
In the same child's playing-face?  
No two windows look one way  
O'er the small sea-water thread  
Below them. Ah, the autumn day  
I, passing, saw you overhead!  
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,  
Then a sweet cry, and last came you— 140  
To catch your lory that must needs  
Escape just then, of all times then,  
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,  
And make me happiest of men.  
I scarce could breathe to see you reach  
So far back o'er the balcony  
To catch him ere he climbed too high  
Above you in the Smyrna peach  
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,  
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled, 150  
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake  
The Roman girls were wont, of old,  
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake  
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.  
Dear lory, may his beak retain  
Ever its delicate rose stain  
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms  
Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for others' sake  
Than mine! What should your chamber do? 160  
—With all its rarities that ache  
In silence while day lasts, but wake  
At night-time and their life renew,  
Suspended just to pleasure you  
Who brought against their will together  
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave  
Around them such a magic tether  
That dumb they look: your harp, believe,  
With all the sensitive tight strings  
Which dare not speak, now to itself 170  
Breathes slumberously, as if some elf  
Went in and out the chords, his wings  
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,  
As an angel may, between the maze  
Of midnight palace-pillars, on  
And on, to sow God's plagues, have gone  
Through guilty glorious Babylon.  
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph  
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell  
As the dry limpet for the nymph 180  
Come with a tune he knows so well.  
And how your statues' hearts must swell!  
And how your pictures must descend  
To see each other, friend with friend!  
Oh, could you take them by surprise,  
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke  
Doing the quaintest courtesies  
To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke!  
And, deeper into her rock den,  
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen 190  
You'd find retreated from the ken  
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—  
As if the Tizian thinks of her,  
And is not, rather, gravely bent  
On seeing for himself what toys  
Are these, his progeny invent,  
What litter now the board employs  
Whereon he signed a document  
That got him murdered! Each enjoys  
Its night so well, you cannot break 200  
The sport up, so, indeed must make  
More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks.

I

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,  
Is used to tie the jasmine back  
That overflows my room with sweets,  
Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets  
My Zanze! If the ribbon's black,  
The Three are watching: keep away!



On the night he thus took ship  
Or started landward?—little caring 10  
For us, it seems, who supped together  
(Friends of his too, I remember)  
And walked home thro' the merry weather,  
The snowiest in all December.  
I left his arm that night myself  
For what's-his-name's, the new prose-poet  
Who wrote the book there, on the shelf—  
How, forsooth, was I to know it  
If Waring meant to glide away 20  
Like a ghost at break of day?  
Never looked he half so gay!

### III

He was prouder than the devil:  
How he must have cursed our revel!  
Ay and many other meetings,  
Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,  
As up and down he paced this London,  
With no work done, but great works undone,  
Where scarce twenty knew his name.  
Why not, then, have earlier spoken, 30  
Written, bustled? Who's to blame  
If your silence kept unbroken?  
"True, but there were sundry jottings,  
Stray-leaves, fragments, blurs and blottings,  
Certain first steps were achieved  
Already which (is that your meaning?)  
Had well borne out whoe'er believed  
In more to come!" But who goes gleaning  
Hedgeside chance-glades, while full-sheaved  
Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening 40  
Pride alone, puts forth such claims  
O'er the day's distinguished names.

### IV

Meantime, how much I loved him,  
I find out now I've lost him.  
I who cared not if I moved him,  
Who could so carelessly accost him,  
Henceforth never shall get free  
Of his ghostly company,  
His eyes that just a little wink  
As deep I go into the merit 50  
Of this and that distinguished spirit—  
His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink,  
As long I dwell on some stupendous  
And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)  
Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous  
Demoniaco-seraphic  
Penman's latest piece of graphic.  
Nay, my very wrist grows warm  
With his dragging weight of arm.  
E'en so, swimmingly appears, 60  
Through one's after-supper musings,  
Some lost lady of old years  
With her beauteous vain endeavour  
And goodness unrepaid as ever;  
The face, accustomed to refusings,  
We, puppies that we were... Oh never  
Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled  
Being aught like false, forsooth, to?  
Telling aught but honest truth to?  
What a sin, had we centupled 70  
Its possessor's grace and sweetness!  
No! she heard in its completeness  
Truth, for truth's a weighty matter,  
And truth, at issue, we can't flatter!  
Well, 'tis done with; she's exempt  
From damning us thro' such a sally;  
And so she glides, as down a valley,  
Taking up with her contempt,  
Past our reach; and in, the flowers  
Shut her unregarded hours.

### V

Oh, could I have him back once more, 80  
This Waring, but one half-day more!  
Back, with the quiet face of yore,  
So hungry for acknowledgment  
Like mine! I'd fool him to his bent.  
Feed, should not he, to heart's content?  
I'd say, "to only have conceived,  
Planned your great works, apart from progress,  
Surpasses little works achieved!"  
I'd lie so, I should be believed.  
I'd make such havoc of the claims 90  
Of the day's distinguished names  
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress  
Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned child!  
Or as one feasts a creature rarely

*Captured here, unreconciled  
To capture; and completely gives  
Its pettish humours license, barely  
Requiring that it lives.*

VI

*Ichabod, Ichabod,  
The glory is departed! 100  
Travels Waring East away?  
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,  
Reports a man upstarted  
Somewhere as a god,  
Hordes grown European-hearted,  
Millions of the wild made tame  
On a sudden at his fame?  
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?  
Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,  
With the demurest of footfalls 110  
Over the Kremlin's pavement bright  
With serpentine and syenite,  
Steps, with five other Generals  
That simultaneously take snuff,  
For each to have pretext enough  
And kerchiefwise unfold his sash  
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff  
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,  
And leave the grand white neck no gash?  
Waring in Moscow, to those rough 120  
Cold northern natures born perhaps,  
Like the lamb-white maiden dear  
From the circle of mute kings  
Unable to repress the tear,  
Each as his sceptre down he flings,  
To Dian's fane at Taurica,  
Where now a captive priestess, she alway  
Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech  
With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach  
As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands 130  
Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands  
Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry  
Amid their barbarous twitter!  
In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!  
Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain  
That we and Waring meet again  
Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane  
Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid  
All fire and shine, abrupt as when there's slid  
Its stiff gold blazing pall 140  
From some black coffin-lid.  
Or, best of all,  
I love to think  
The leaving us was just a feint;  
Back here to London did he slink,  
And now works on without a wink  
Of sleep, and we are on the brink  
Of something great in fresco-paint:  
Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,  
Up and down and o'er and o'er 150  
He splashes, as none splashed before  
Since great Caldara Polidore.  
Or Music means this land of ours  
Some favour yet, to pity won  
By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers—  
"Give me my so-long promised son,  
Let Waring end what I begun!"  
Then down he creeps and out he steals  
Only when the night conceals  
His face; in Kent 'tis cherry-time, 160  
Or hops are picking: or at prime  
Of March he wanders as, too happy,  
Years ago when he was young,  
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy  
And the early moths had sprung  
To life from many a trembling sheath  
Woven the warm boughs beneath;  
While small birds said to themselves  
What should soon be actual song,  
And young gnats, by tens and twelves, 170  
Made as if they were the throng  
That crowd around and carry aloft  
The sound they have nursed, so sweet and pure,  
Out of a myriad noises soft,  
Into a tone that can endure  
Amid the noise of a July noon  
When all God's creatures crave their boon,  
All at once and all in tune,  
And get it, happy as Waring then,  
Having first within his ken 180  
What a man might do with men:  
And far too glad, in the even-glow,  
To mix with the world he meant to take  
Into his hand, he told you, so—  
And out of it his world to make,  
To contract and to expand*

As he shut or oped his hand.  
 Oh Waring, what's to really be?  
 A clear stage and a crowd to see!  
 Some Garrick, say, out shall not he 190  
 The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck?  
 Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,  
 Some Junius—am I right?—shall tuck  
 His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife!  
 Some Chatterton shall have the luck  
 Of calling Rowley into life!  
 Some one shall somehow run a muck  
 With this old world for want of strife  
 Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive  
 To rouse us, Waring! Who's alive? 200  
 Our men scarce seem in earnest now.  
 Distinguished names!—but 'tis, somehow,  
 As if they played at being names  
 Still more distinguished, like the games  
 Of children. Turn our sport to earnest  
 With a visage of the sternest!  
 Bring the real times back, confessed  
 Still better than our very best!

II

I

"When I last saw Waring..."  
 (How all turned to him who spoke! 210  
 You saw Waring? Truth or joke?  
 In land-travel or sea-faring?)

II

"We were sailing by Triest  
 Where a day or two we harboured:  
 A sunset was in the West,  
 When, looking over the vessel's side,  
 One of our company espied  
 A sudden speck to larboard.  
 And as a sea-duck flies and swims  
 At once, so came the light craft up, 220  
 With its sole lateen sail that trims  
 And turns (the water round its rims  
 Dancing, as round a sinking cup)  
 And by us like a fish it curled,  
 And drew itself up close beside,  
 Its great sail on the instant furled,  
 And o'er its thwarts a shrill voice cried,  
 (A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)  
 'Buy wine of us, you English Brig?  
 Or fruit, tobacco and cigars? 230  
 A pilot for you to Triest?  
 Without one, look you ne'er so big,  
 They'll never let you up the bay!  
 We natives should know best.'  
 I turned, and 'just those fellows' way,'  
 Our captain said, 'The 'long-shore thieves  
 Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

III

"In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;  
 And one, half-hidden by his side  
 Under the furled sail, soon I spied, 240  
 With great grass hat and kerchief black,  
 Who looked up with his kingly throat,  
 Said somewhat, while the other shook  
 His hair back from his eyes to look  
 Their longest at us; then the boat,  
 I know not how, turned sharply round,  
 Laying her whole side on the sea  
 As a leaping fish does; from the lee  
 Into the weather, cut somehow  
 Her sparkling path beneath our bow 250  
 And so went off, as with a bound,  
 Into the rosy and golden half  
 O' the sky, to overtake the sun  
 And reach the shore, like the sea-calf  
 Its singing cave; yet I caught one  
 Glance ere away the boat quite passed,  
 And neither time nor toil could mar  
 Those features: so I saw the last  
 Of Waring!—"You? Oh, never star  
 Was lost here but it rose afar! 260  
 Look East, where whole new thousands are!  
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

NOTES:

"Waring." In recounting the sudden disappearance from  
 among his friends of a man proud and sensitive, who with  
 fine powers of intellect yet incurred somewhat of disdain  
 because of his failure to accomplish anything permanent,  
 expression is given to the deep regret experienced by his  
 friends now that he has left them, his absence having

brought them to a truer realization of his worth. If only Waring would come back, the speaker, at least, would give him the sympathy and encouragement he craved instead of playing with his sensibilities as he had done. Conjectures are indulged in as to Waring's whereabouts. The speaker prefers to think of him as back in London preparing to astonish the world with some great masterpiece in art, music, or literature. Another speaker surprises all by telling how he had seen the "last of Waring" in a momentary meeting at Trieste, but the first speaker is certain that the star of Waring is destined to rise again above their horizon.

1. Waring: Alfred Domett (born at Camberwell Grove, Surrey, May 20, 1811), a friend of Browning's, distinguished as a poet and as a Colonial statesman and ruler. His first volume of poems was published in 1832. Some verses of his in *Blackwood's*, 1837, attracted much attention to him as a rising young poet. In 1841 he was called to the bar, and in 1841 went out to New Zealand among the earliest settlers. There he lived for thirty years, filling several important official positions. His unceremonious departure for New Zealand with no leave-takings was the occasion of Browning's poem, which is said by Mrs. Orr to give a lifelike sketch of Domett's character. His "star" did, however, rise again for his English friends, for he returned to London in 1871. The year following saw the publication of his "Ranolf and Amohia," a New Zealand poem, in the course of which he characterizes Browning as "Subtlest Asserter of the Soul in Song." He met Browning again in London, and was one of the vice-presidents of the London Browning Society. Died Nov. 12, 1877.

15. I left his arm that night myself: George W. Cooke points out that in his *Living Authors of England* Thomas Powell describes this incident, the "young author" mentioned being himself: "We have a vivid recollection of the last time we saw him. It was at an evening party, a few days before he sailed from England; his intimate friend, Mr. Browning, was also present. It happened that the latter was introduced that evening for the first time to a young author who had just then appeared in the literary world. This, consequently, prevented the two friends from conversation, and they parted from each other without the slightest idea on Mr. Browning's part that he was seeing his old friend Domett for the last time. Some days after, when he found that Domett had sailed, he expressed in strong terms to the writer of this sketch the self-reproach he felt at having preferred the conversation of a stranger to that of his old associate."

54. Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous: a slight transposition of part of a line in Virgil describing Polyphemus, "Monstrum horrendum informe ingens," a monster horrid, misshapen, huge.

55. Demoniaco-seraphic: these two lines form a compound of adjectives humorously used by Browning to express the inferiority of the writers he praised to Waring.

99. Ichabod: "Ichabod, the glory is departed." I Samuel IV. 21.

112. syenite: Egyptian granite

122. Lamb-white maiden: Iphigenia, who was borne away to Taurus by Diana, when her father, Agamemnon, was about to sacrifice her to obtain favorable winds for his expedition to Troy.

152. Caldara Polidore: Surnamed da Caravaggio. He was born in Milan in 1492, went to Rome and was employed by Raphael to paint the friezes in the Vatican. He was murdered by a servant in Messina, 1543.

155. Purcell: an eminent English musician, composer of church music, operas, songs, and instrumental music. (1658-1695).—Rosy Bowers: One of Purcell's most celebrated songs. "'From Rosie Bowers' is said to have been set in his last sickness, at which time he seems to have realized the poetical fable of the Swan and to have sung more sweetly as he approached nearer his dissolution, for it seems to us as if no one of his productions was so elevated, so pleasing, so expressive, and throughout so perfect as this" (Rees's *Cyclopaedia*, 1819).

190. Garrick: David, an English actor, celebrated especially for his Shakespearian parts (1716-1779).

193. Junius: the assumed name of a political writer who in 1769 began to issue in London a series of famous letters which opposed the ministry in power, and denounced several eminent persons with severe invective and pungent

sarcasm.

195. *Some Chatterton shall have the luck of calling Rowley into life: the chief claim to celebrity of Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770) is the real or pretended discovery of poems said to have been written in the fifteenth century by Thomas Rowley, a priest of Bristol, and found in Radcliffe church, of which Chatterton's ancestors had been sextons for many years. They are now generally considered Chatterton's own.*

## THE TWINS

*"Give" and "It-shall-be-given-unto-you"*

I

*Grand rough old Martin Luther  
Bloomed fables-flowers on furze,  
The better the uncouth:  
Do roses stick like burrs?*

II

*A beggar asked an alms  
One day at an abbey-door,  
Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,  
The abbot replied, "We're poor!"*

III

*"Poor, who had plenty once,  
When gifts fell thick as rain: 10  
But they give us nought, for the nonce,  
And now should we give again?"*

IV

*Then the beggar, "See your sins!  
Of old, unless I err,  
Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,  
Date and Dabitur.*

V

*"While Date was in good case  
Dabitur flourished too:  
For Dabitur's lenten face  
No wonder if Date rue. 20*

VI

*"Would ye retrieve the one?  
Try and make plump the other!  
When Date's penance is done,  
Dabitur helps his brother.*

VII

*"Only, beware relapse!"  
The Abbot hung his head.  
This beggar might be perhaps  
An angel, Luther said.*

NOTES:

*"The Twins" versifies a story told by Martin Luther in his "Table Talk," in which the saying, "Give and it shall be given unto you," is quaintly personified by the Latin words equivalent in meaning: Date, "Give," and Dabitur, "It-shall-be-given-unto-you."*

I. *Martin Luther: (1483-1546), the leader of the Reformation.*

## A LIGHT WOMAN

I

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

## II

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

## III

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

## IV

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

## V

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

## VI

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

## VII

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

## VIII

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

## IX

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

## X

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

## XI

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

## XII

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

## XIII

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

## XIV

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

## NOTES:

"A Light Woman" is the story of a dramatic situation brought about by the speaker's intermeddling to save his less





*I hoped she would love me; here we ride.*

VI

*What hand and brain went ever paired?  
What heart alike conceived and dared?  
What act proved all its thought had been?  
What will but felt the fleshly screen? 60  
    We ride and I see her bosom heave.  
There's many a crown for who can reach.  
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!  
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,  
A soldier's doing! what atones?  
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.  
    My riding is better, by their leave.*

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

NOTES:

*"The Last Ride Together." The rapture of a rejected lover in the one more last ride which he asks for and obtains, discovers for him the all-sufficing glory of love in itself. Soldiership, statesmanship, art are disproportionate in their results; love can be its own reward, yes, heaven itself.*

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN:

A CHILD'S STORY.

(Written for, and inscribed to, W. M. the Younger.)

I

*Hamelin Town's in Brunswick,*

By famous Hanover city;  
The river Weser, deep and wide,  
Washes its wall on the southern side;  
A pleasanter spot you never spied;  
But, when begins my ditty,  
Almost five hundred years ago,  
To see the townfolk suffer so  
From vermin, was a pity.

II

Rats! 10  
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,  
And bit the babies in the cradles,  
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,  
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,  
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,  
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,  
And even spoiled the women's chats  
By drowning their speaking  
With shrieking and squeaking  
In fifty different sharps and flats. 20

III

At last the people in a body  
To the Town Hall came flocking  
"Tis clear," cried they, "our Mayor's a noddy,  
And as for our Corporation—shocking  
To think we buy gowns lined with ermine  
For dolts that can't or won't determine  
What's best to rid us of our vermin!  
You hope, because you're old and obese,  
To find in the furry civic robe ease?  
Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking 30  
To find the remedy we're lacking,  
Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!"  
At this the Mayor and Corporation  
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV

An hour they sat in council,  
At length the Mayor broke silence:  
"For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell,  
I wish I were a mile hence!  
It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—  
I'm sure my poor head aches again, 40  
I've scratched it so, and all in vain.  
Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"  
Just as he said this, what should hap  
At the chamber door but a gentle tap?  
"Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?"  
(With the Corporation as he sat,  
Looking little though wondrous fat;  
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister  
Than a too-long-opened oyster,  
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous 50  
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)  
"Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?  
Anything like the sound of a rat  
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

V

"Come in!" the Mayor cried, looking bigger:  
And in did come the strangest figure!  
His queer long coat from heel to head  
Was half of yellow and half of red,  
And he himself was tall and thin,  
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin, 60  
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,  
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,  
But lips where smiles went out and in;  
There was no guessing his kith and kin:  
And nobody could enough admire  
The tall man and his quaint attire.  
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,  
Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,  
Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!"

VI

He advanced to the council-table 70  
And, "Please your honours," said he, "I'm able,  
By means of a secret charm, to draw  
All creatures living beneath the sun,  
That creep or swim or fly or run,  
After me so as you never saw!  
And I chiefly use my charm  
On creatures that do people harm,  
The mole and toad and newt and viper;  
And people call me the Pied Piper."  
(And here they noticed round his neck 80  
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,

To match with his coat of the self-same cheque  
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;  
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying  
As if impatient to be playing  
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled  
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)  
"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,  
In Tartary I freed the Cham,  
Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats; 90  
I eased in Asia the Nizam  
Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats:  
And as for what your brain bewilders,  
If I can rid your town of rats  
Will you give me a thousand guilders?"  
"One? fifty thousand!"-was the exclamation  
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

## VII

Into the street the Piper stept,  
Smiling first a little smile,  
As if he knew what magic slept 100  
In his quiet pipe the while;  
Then, like a musical adept  
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,  
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled  
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;  
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,  
You heard as if an army muttered;  
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;  
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;  
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling. 110  
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,  
Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,  
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,  
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,  
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,  
Families by tens and dozens,  
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives-  
Followed the Piper for their lives.  
From street to street he piped advancing,  
And step for step they followed dancing, 120  
Until they came to the river Weser  
Wherein all plunged and perished!  
-Save one who, stout as Julius Caesar,  
Swam across and lived to carry  
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)  
To Rat-land home his commentary:  
Which was, "At the first shrill notes of the pipe,  
I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,  
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,  
Into a cider-press's gripe: 130  
And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,  
And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,  
And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,  
And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:  
And it seemed as if a voice  
(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery  
Is breathed) called out, 'Oh rats, rejoice!  
The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!  
So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,  
Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!' 140  
And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,  
All ready staved, like a great sun shone  
Glorious scarce an inch before me  
Just as methought it said 'Come, bore me!'  
-I found the Weser roiling o'er me."

## VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people  
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.  
"Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,  
Poke out the nests and block up the holes!  
Consult with carpenters and builders, 150  
And leave in our town not even a trace  
Of the rats!"-when suddenly, up the face  
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,  
With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

## IX

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue;  
So did the Corporation too.  
For council dinners made rare havoc  
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;  
And half the money would replenish  
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish. 160  
This sum to a wandering fellow  
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!  
"Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,  
Our business was done at the river's brink;  
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,  
And what's dead can't come to life, I think.  
So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink

From the duty of giving you something for drink,  
And a matter of money to put in your poke;  
But as for the guilders, what we spoke 170  
Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.  
Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.  
A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

X

The Piper's face fell, and he cried:  
"No trifling! I can't wait, beside!  
I've promised to visit by dinner time  
Bagdat, and accept the prime  
Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,  
For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen, 180  
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:  
With him I proved no bargain-driver,  
With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!  
And folks who put me in a passion  
May find me pipe after another fashion."

XI

"How? cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I brook  
Being worse treated than a Cook?  
Insulted by a lazy ribald  
With idle pipe and vesture piebald?  
You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,  
Blow your pipe there till you burst!" 190

XII

Once more he stept into the street  
And to his lips again  
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;  
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet  
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning  
Never gave the enraptured air)  
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling  
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,  
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering, 200  
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,  
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,  
Out came the children running.  
All the little boys and girls,  
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,  
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,  
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after  
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood  
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,  
Unable to move a step, or cry 210  
To the children merrily skipping by,  
—Could only follow with the eye  
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.  
But how the Mayor was on the rack,  
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,  
As the Piper turned from the High Street  
To where the Weser rolled its waters  
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!  
However he turned from South to West,  
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed, 220  
And after him the children pressed;  
Great was the joy in every breast.  
"He never can cross that mighty top!  
He's forced to let the piping drop,  
And we shall see our children stop!"  
When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,  
A wondrous portal opened wide,  
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;  
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,  
And when all were in to the very last, 230  
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.  
Did I say, all? No! One was lame,  
And could not dance the whole of the way;  
And in after years, if you would blame  
His sadness, he was used to say,—  
"It's dull in our town since my playmates left!  
I can't forget that I'm bereft  
Of all the pleasant sights they see,  
Which the Piper also promised me.  
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land, 240  
Joining the town and just at hand,  
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew  
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,  
And everything was strange and new;  
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,  
And their dogs outran our fallow deer,  
And honeybees had lost their stings,  
And horses were born with eagles' wings:  
And just as I became assured  
My lame foot would be speedily cured, 250

*The music stopped and I stood still,  
And found myself outside the hill,  
Left alone against my will,  
To go now limping as before,  
And never hear of that country more!"*

XIV

*Alas, alas for Hamelin!*

*There came into many a burgher's pate  
A text which says that heaven's gate  
Opes to the rich at as easy rate  
As the needle's eye takes a camel in! 260  
The mayor sent East, West, North and South  
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,  
Wherever it was men's lot to find him  
Silver and gold to his heart's content,  
If he'd only return the way he went,  
And bring the children behind him.  
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,  
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,  
They made a decree that lawyers never  
Should think their records dated duly 270  
If, after the day of the month and year,  
These words did not as well appear,  
"And so long after what happened here  
On the Twenty-second of July  
Thirteen-hundred and seventy-six:"  
And the better in memory to fix  
The place of the children's last retreat,  
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—  
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor  
Was sure for the future to lose his labour. 280  
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern  
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;  
But opposite the place of the cavern  
They wrote the story on a column,  
And on the great church-window painted  
The same, to make the world acquainted  
How their children were stolen away,  
And there it stands to this very day.  
And I must not omit to say  
That in Transylvania there's a tribe 290  
Of alien people who ascribe  
The outlandish ways and dress  
On which their neighbours lay such stress,  
To their fathers and mothers having risen  
Out of some subterraneous prison  
Into which they were trepanned  
Long time ago in a mighty band  
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,  
But how or why, they don't understand.*

XV

*So, Willy, let me and you be wipers 300  
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers!  
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from mice,  
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise!*

NOTES:

*"The Pied Piper of Hamelin." This clever versification of a well-known tale was written for the little son of the actor William Macready. According to Dr. Furnivall, the version used directly by Browning is from "The Wonders of the Little World: or A General History of Man," by Nathaniel Wanley, published in 1578. There are, however, more incidents in common between the poem and the version given by Verstigan in his "Restitution of Decayed Intelligence" (1605). There are many other sources for the story, and it is not improbable that Browning knew more than one version. Tales similar to it occur also in Persia and China. For its kinship to myths of the wind as a musician, and as a psychopomp or leader of souls, see Baring-Gould, "Curious Myths of the Middle Ages"; John Fiske, "Myths and Myth-makers"; Cox, "Myths of the Aryan Races."  
—Hamelin, or Hamelin, is a town in the province of Hanover, Prussia.*

## THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

I

*You're my friend:  
I was the man the Duke spoke to;  
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too;  
So here's the tale from beginning to end,  
My friend!*

## II

Ours is a great wild country:

If you climb to our castle's top,  
 I don't see where your eye can stop;  
 For when you've passed the cornfield country,  
 Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed, 10  
 And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,  
 And cattle-tract to open-chase,  
 And open-chase to the very base  
 Of the mountain where, at a funeral pace,  
 Round about, solemn and slow,  
 One by one, row after row,  
 Up and up the pine-trees go,  
 So, like black priests up, and so  
 Down the other side again  
 To another greater, wilder country, 20  
 That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,  
 Branched through and through with many a vein  
 Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt;  
 Look right, look left, look straight before—  
 Beneath they mine, above they smelt,  
 Copper-ore and iron-ore,  
 And forge and furnace mould and melt,  
 And so on, more and ever more,  
 Till at the last, for a bounding belt,  
 Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea shore 30  
 —And the whole is our Duke's country.

## III

I was born the day this present Duke was—  
 (And O, says the song, ere I was old!)  
 In the castle where the other Duke was—  
 (When I was happy and young, not old!)  
 I in the kennel, he in the bower:  
 We are of like age to an hour.  
 My father was huntsman in that day;  
 Who has not heard my father say  
 That, when a boar was brought to bay, 40  
 Three times, four times out of five,  
 With his huntspear he'd contrive  
 To get the killing-place transfixed,  
 And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?  
 And that's why the old Duke would rather  
 He lost a salt-pit than my father,  
 And loved to have him ever in call;  
 That's why my father stood in the hall  
 When the old Duke brought his infant out  
 To show the people, and while they passed 50  
 The wondrous bantling round about,  
 Was first to start at the outside blast  
 As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn  
 Just a month after the babe was born.  
 "And," quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since  
 The Duke has got an heir, our Prince  
 Needs the Duke's self at his side:"  
 The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,  
 But he thought of wars o'er the world wide, 60  
 Castles a-fire, men on their march,  
 The toppling tower, the crashing arch;  
 And up he looked, and awhile he eyed  
 The row of crests and shields and banners  
 Of all achievements after all manners,  
 And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.  
 The more was his comfort when he died  
 At next year's end, in a velvet suit,  
 With a gilt glove on his hand, his foot  
 In a silken shoe for a leather boot,  
 Petticoated like a herald, 70  
 In a chamber next to an ante-room,  
 Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,  
 What he called stink, and they, perfume:  
 —They should have set him on red Berold  
 Mad with pride, like fire to manage!  
 They should have got his cheek fresh tannage  
 Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine!  
 Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin!  
 (Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game!  
 Oh for a noble falcon-lanner 80  
 To flap each broad wing like a banner,  
 And turn in the wind, and dance like flame!)  
 Had they broached a white-beer cask from Berlin  
 —Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine  
 Put to his lips, when they saw him pine,  
 A cup of our own Moldavia fine,  
 Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel  
 And ropy with sweet—we shall not quarrel.

## IV

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess  
 Was left with the infant in her clutches, 90  
 She being the daughter of God knows who:

And now was the time to revisit her tribe.  
Abroad and afar they went, the two,  
And let our people rail and gibe  
At the empty hall and extinguished fire,  
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,  
Till after long years we had our desire,  
And back came the Duke and his mother again.

V

And he came back the pertest little ape  
That ever affronted human shape; 100  
Full of his travel, struck at himself.  
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways?  
-Not he! For in Paris they told the elf  
Our rough North land was the Land of Lays,  
The one good thing left in evil days;  
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,  
And only in wild nooks like ours  
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,  
And see true castles, with proper towers,  
Young-hearted women, old-minded men, 110  
And manners now as manners were then.  
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,  
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it;  
'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,  
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,  
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,  
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-out:  
And chief in the chase his neck he perilled  
On a lathy horse, all legs and length, 120  
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength;  
-They should have set him on red Berold  
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,  
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey-spire!

VI

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard:  
And out of a convent, at the word,  
Came the lady, in time of spring.  
-Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling!  
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths  
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes  
Fit for the chase of urochs or buffle 130  
In winter-time when you need to muffle.  
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,  
And so we saw the lady arrive:  
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger!  
She was the smallest lady alive,  
Made in a piece of nature's madness,  
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness  
That over-filled her, as some hive  
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees  
Is crowded with its safe merry bees: 140  
In truth, she was not hard to please!  
Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,  
Straight at the castle, that's best indeed  
To look at from outside the walls:  
As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"  
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,  
(With her eyes, do you understand?)  
Because I patted her horse while I led it;  
And Max, who rode on her other hand, 150  
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired  
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired-  
If that was an eagle she saw hover,  
And the green and grey bird on the field was the plover.  
When suddenly appeared the Duke:  
And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed  
On to my hand,-as with a rebuke,  
And as if his backbone were not jointed,  
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward  
And welcomed her with his grandest smile;  
And, mind you, his mother all the while 160  
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward;  
And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies  
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis;  
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,  
The lady's face stopped its play,  
As if her first hair had grown grey;  
For such things must begin some one day.

VII

In a day or two she was well again;  
As who should say, "You labour in vain!  
This is all a jest against God, who meant 170  
I should ever be, as I am, content  
And glad in his sight; therefore, glad I will be."  
So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII

She was active, stirring, all fire-



Could not rest, could not tire—  
 To a stone she might have given life!  
     (I myself loved once, in my day)  
 –For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's wife,  
     (I had a wife, I know what I say)  
 Never in all the world such an one!                               180  
 And here was plenty to be done,  
 And she that could do it, great or small,  
 She was to do nothing at all.  
 There was already this man in his post,  
     This in his station, and that in his office,  
 And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,  
     To meet his eye, with the other trophies,  
 Now outside the hall, now in it,  
     To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,  
 At the proper place in the proper minute,                       190  
     And die away the life between.  
 And it was amusing enough, each infraction  
     Of rule—(but for after-sadness that came)  
 To hear the consummate self-satisfaction  
     With which the young Duke and the old dame  
 Would let her advise, and criticise,  
 And, being a fool, instruct the wise,  
     And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame:  
 They bore it all in complacent guise,  
 As though an artificer, after contriving                       200  
 A wheel-work image as if it were living,  
 Should find with delight it could motion to strike him!  
 So found the Duke, and his mother like him:  
 The lady hardly got a rebuff—  
 That had not been contemptuous enough,  
 With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,  
 And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX

So, the little lady grew silent and thin,  
     Paling and ever paling,  
 As the way is with a hid chagrin;                               210  
     And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,  
 And said in his heart, "'Tis done to spite me,  
 But I shall find in my power to right me!"  
 Don't swear, friend! The old one, many a year,  
 Is in hell, and the Duke's self... you shall hear.

X

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,  
 When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning,  
 A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice  
 That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,  
 Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,                       220  
     And another and another, and faster and faster  
 Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled:  
     Then it so chanced that the Duke our master  
 Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,  
     And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,  
 He should do the Middle Age no treason  
     In resolving on a hunting-party.  
 Always provided, old books showed the way of it!  
     What meant old poets by their strictures?  
 And when old poets had said their say of it,                       230  
     How taught old painters in their pictures?  
 We must revert to the proper channels,  
 Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,  
 And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions:  
 Here was food for our various ambitions,  
 As on each case, exactly stated—  
     To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup  
     Or best prayer to Saint Hubert on mounting your stirrup—  
 We of the household took thought and debated.  
 Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin                       240  
 His sire was wont to do forest-work in;  
 Blessedder he who nobly sunk "ohs"  
 And "ahs" while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-hose;  
 What signified hats if they had no rims on,  
     Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,  
     And able to serve at sea for a shallop,  
 Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?  
 So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,  
     What with our Venerers, Prickers and Verderers,               250  
     Might hope for real hunters at length and not murderers,  
 And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time on't!

XI

Now you must know that when the first dizziness  
     Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,  
     The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part provided,  
 Had not the Duchess some share in the business?"  
 For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses  
 Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:  
 And, after much laying of heads together,  
 Somebody's cap got a notable feather  
 By the announcement with proper unction                       260

That he had discovered the lady's function;  
 Since ancient authors gave this tenet,  
     "When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,  
 Let the dame of the castle prick forth on her jennet,  
     And with water to wash the hands of her liege  
 In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,  
 Let her preside at the disemboweling."  
 Now, my friend, if you had so little religion  
     As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,  
     And thrust her broad wings like a banner                     270  
 Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon;  
 And if day by day and week by week  
     You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,  
 And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,  
     Would it cause you any great surprise  
 If, when you decided to give her an airing,  
 You found she needed a little preparing?  
 -I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,  
 If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon?  
 Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,                     280  
 Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,  
 In what a pleasure she was to participate,-  
     And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,  
     Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,  
 As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,  
 And duly acknowledged the Duke's fore-thought,  
 But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,  
 Of the weight by day and the watch by night,  
 And much wrong now that used to be right,  
 So, thanking him, declined the hunting-                     290  
 Was conduct ever more affronting?  
 With all the ceremony settled-  
     With the towel ready, and the sewer  
     Polishing up his oldest ewer,  
     And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,  
     Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-balled-  
 No wonder if the Duke was nettled!  
 And when she persisted nevertheless,-  
 Well, I suppose here's the time to confess  
 That there ran half round our lady's chamber                     300  
 A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;  
 And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,

Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?  
 And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent  
 Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant;  
 And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,  
     How could I keep at any vast distance?  
     And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,  
 The Duke, dumb-stricken with amazement,  
 Stood for a while in a sultry smother,                     310  
     And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,  
 Turned her over to his yellow mother  
     To learn what was held decorous and lawful;  
 And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,  
 As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct.  
 Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once!  
 What meant she?-Who was she?-Her duty and station,  
 The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,  
     Its decent regard and its fitting relation-  
 In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free                     320  
 And turn them out to carouse in a belfry  
 And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,  
 And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on!  
 Well, somehow or other it ended at last  
 And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;  
 And after her,-making (he hoped) a face  
     Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,  
 Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace  
     Of ancient hero or modern paladin,                     330  
 From door to staircase-oh such a solemn  
 Unbending of the vertebral column!

## XII

However, at sunrise our company mustered;  
     And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,  
 And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,  
     With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel;  
 For the court-yard walls were filled with fog  
 You might have cut as an axe chops a log-  
 Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness;  
 And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,  
 Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily                     340  
     And a sinking at the lower abdomen  
     Begins the day with indifferent omen.  
 And lo, as he looked around uneasily,  
 The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder  
 This way and that from the valley under;  
     And, looking through the court-yard arch,  
 Down in the valley, what should meet him  
     But a troop of Gipsies on their march?  
 No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

## XIII

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you, only 350  
     After reaching all lands beside;  
 North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely  
     And still, as they travel far and wide,  
 Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,  
 That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there.  
 But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,  
 And nowhere else, I take it, are found  
 With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned:  
 Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on  
 The very fruit they are meant to feed on. 360  
 For the earth-not a use to which they don't turn it,  
     The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,  
     Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,  
 They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—  
 Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle  
 With side-bars never a brute can baffle;  
 Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards;  
 Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve inwards,  
 Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a swivel  
 And won't allow the hoof to shrivel. 370  
 Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle  
 That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle;  
 But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters;  
 Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers and potters!  
 Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,  
 Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,  
 As if in pure water you dropped and let die  
 A bruised black-blooded mulberry;  
 And that other sort, their crowning pride,  
 With long white threads distinct inside, 380  
 Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle  
 Loose such a length and never tangle,  
 Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,  
 And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters:  
 Such are the works they put their hand to,  
 The uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.  
 And these made the troop, which our Duke saw sally  
 Toward his castle from out of the valley,  
 Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,  
 Come out with the morning to greet our riders. 390  
 And up they wound till they reached the ditch,  
 Whereat all stopped save one, a witch  
 That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,  
 By her gait directly and her stoop,  
 I, whom Jacynth was used to importune  
 To let that same witch tell us our fortune.  
 The oldest Gipsy then above ground;  
 And, sure as the autumn season came round,  
 She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,  
 And every time, as she swore, for the last time. 400  
  
 And presently she was seen to sidle  
 Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,  
 So that the horse of a sudden reared up  
 As under its nose the old witch peered up  
 With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes  
     Of no use now but to gather brine,  
     And began a kind of level whine  
 Such as they used to sing to their viols  
 When their ditties they go grinding  
 Up and down with nobody minding 410  
 And then, as of old, at the end of the humming  
 Her usual presents were forthcoming  
 —A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,  
 (Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles)  
 Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-end—  
 And so she awaited her annual stipend.  
 But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe  
     A word in reply; and in vain she felt  
     With twitching fingers at her belt  
     For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt, 420  
 Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe—  
 Till, either to quicken his apprehension,  
 Or possibly with an after-intention,  
 She was come, she said, to pay her duty  
 To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.  
 No sooner had she named his lady,  
 Than a shine lit up the face so shady,  
 And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—  
 For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning;  
 If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow, 430  
 She, foolish today, would be wiser tomorrow;  
 And who so fit a teacher of trouble  
 As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double?  
 So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,  
     (If such it was, for they grow so hirsute  
     That their own fleece serves for natural fur-suit)  
 He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his gesture,  
 The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate  
 With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.  
 I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned 440  
     From out of the throng, and while I drew near  
 He told the crone-as I since have reckoned

By the way he bent and spoke into her ear  
With circumspection and mystery—  
The main of the lady's history,  
Her frowardness and ingratitude:  
And for all the crone's submissive attitude  
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,  
And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening  
As though she engaged with hearty goodwill 450  
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,  
And promised the lady a thorough frightening.

And so, just giving her a glimpse  
Of a purse, with the air of a man whoimps  
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,  
He bade me take the Gipsy mother  
And set her telling some story or other  
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,  
To wile away a weary hour  
For the lady left alone in her bower, 460  
Whose mind and body craved exertion  
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curveter,  
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo  
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,  
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.  
And what makes me confident what's to be told you  
Had all along been of this crone's devising,  
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,  
There was a novelty quick as surprising: 470  
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,  
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,  
As if age had foregone its usurpature,  
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,  
And the face looked quite of another nature,  
And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,  
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement:  
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,  
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,  
Like the band-roll strung with tomans 480  
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's:  
And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly  
Come out as after the rain he paces,  
Two unmistakeable eye-points duly  
Live and aware looked out of their places.  
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry  
Of the lady's chamber standing sentry;  
I told the command and produced my companion,  
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,  
For since last night, by the same token, 490  
Not a single word had the lady spoken:  
They went in both to the presence together,  
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

XV

And now, what took place at the very first of all,  
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:  
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall  
On that little head of hers and burn it  
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly  
Asleep of a sudden and there continue  
The whole time sleeping as profoundly 500  
As one of the boars my father would pin you  
'Twixt the eyes where life holds garrison,  
—Jacynth forgive me the comparison!  
But where I begin my own narration  
Is a little after I took my station  
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,  
And, having in those days a falcon eye,  
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,  
From where the bushes thinnier crested  
The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree. 510  
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested  
By—was it singing, or was it saying,  
Or a strange musical instrument playing  
In the chamber?—and to be certain  
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,  
And there lay Jacynth asleep,  
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,  
In a rosy sleep along the floor  
With her head against the door;  
While in the midst, on the seat of state, 520  
Was a queen—the Gipsy woman late,  
With head and face downbent  
On the lady's head and face intent:  
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,  
The lady sat between her knees  
And o'er them the lady's clasped hands met,  
And on those hands her chin was set,  
And her upturned face met the face of the crone  
Wherein the eyes had grown and grown  
As if she could double and quadruple 530

At pleasure the play of either pupil  
     -Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,  
 As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers  
 They moved to measure, or bell-clappers.  
     I said, "Is it blessing, is it banning,  
 Do they applaud you or burlesque you-  
     Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?"  
 But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,  
     At once I was stopped by the lady's expression:  
 For it was life her eyes were drinking 540  
 From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,  
 -Life's pure fire received without shrinking,  
 Into the heart and breast whose heaving  
 Told you no single drop they were leaving,  
 -Life, that filling her, passed redundant  
 Into her very hair, back swerving  
 Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,  
     As her head thrown back showed the white throat curving;  
 And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,  
 Moving to the mystic measure, 550  
 Bounding as the bosom bounded.  
 I stopped short, more and more confounded,  
 As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,  
 As she listened and she listened:  
 When all at once a hand detained me,  
 The selfsame contagion gained me,  
 And I kept time to the wondrous chime,  
 Making out words and prose and rhyme,  
 Till it seemed that the music furled  
     Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped 560  
     From under the words it first had propped,  
 And left them midway in the world:  
 Word took word as hand takes hand  
 I could hear at last, and understand,  
 And when I held the unbroken thread,  
 The Gipsy said:  
 "And so at last we find my tribe.  
     And so I set thee in the midst,  
 And to one and all of them describe  
     What thou saidst and what thou didst, 570  
 Our long and terrible journey through,  
 And all thou art ready to say and do  
 In the trials that remain:  
 I trace them the vein and the other vein  
 That meet on thy brow and part again,  
 Making our rapid mystic mark;  
     And I bid my people prove and probe  
     Each eye's profound and glorious globe  
 Till they detect the kindred spark  
 In those depths so dear and dark, 580  
 Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,  
 Circling over the midnight sea.  
 And on that round young cheek of thine  
     I make them recognize the tinge,  
 As when of the costly scarlet wine  
     They drip so much as will impinge  
 And spread in a thinnest scale afloat  
 One thick gold drop from the olive's coat  
 Over a silver plate whose sheen  
 Still thro' the mixture shall be seen. 590  
 For so I prove thee, to one and all,  
     Fit, when my people ope their breast,  
 To see the sign, and hear the call,  
     And take the vow, and stand the test  
     Which adds one more child to the rest-  
 When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,  
 And the world is left outside.  
  
 For there is probation to decree,  
 And many and long must the trials be 600  
 Thou shalt victoriously endure,  
 If that brow is true and those eyes are sure;  
 Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay  
     Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb-  
 Let once the vindicating ray  
     Leap out amid the anxious gloom,  
 And steel and fire have done their part  
 And the prize falls on its finder's heart;  
 So, trial after trial past,  
 Wilt thou fall at the very last  
 Breathless, half in trance 610  
 With the thrill of the great deliverance,  
     Into our arms for evermore;  
 And thou shalt know, those arms once curled  
     About thee, what we knew before,  
 How love is the only good in the world.  
 Henceforth be loved as heart can love,  
 Or brain devise, or hand approve!  
 Stand up, look below,  
 It is our life at thy feet we throw  
 To step with into light and joy; 620  
 Not a power of life but we employ  
 To satisfy thy nature's want;  
 Art thou the tree that props the plant,  
 Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree-

*Canst thou help us, must we help thee?  
 If any two creatures grew into one,  
 They would do more than the world has done:  
 Though each apart were never so weak,  
 Ye vainly through the world should seek  
 For the knowledge and the might* 630  
*Which in such union grew their right:  
 So, to approach at least that end,  
 And blend,—as much as may be, blend  
 Thee with us or us with thee—  
 As climbing plant or propping tree,  
 Shall some one deck thee, over and down,  
     Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?  
 Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown,  
     Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,* 640  
*Die on thy boughs and disappear  
 While not a leaf of thine is sere?  
 Or is the other fate in store,  
 And art thou fitted to adore,  
 To give thy wondrous self away,  
 And take a stronger nature's sway?  
 I foresee and could foretell  
 Thy future portion, sure and well:  
 But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,  
 Let them say what thou shalt do!  
 Only be sure thy daily life,* 650  
*In its peace or in its strife,  
 Never shall be unobserved;  
     We pursue thy whole career,  
     And hope for it, or doubt, or fear—  
 Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,  
 We are beside thee in all thy ways,  
 With our blame, with our praise,  
 Our shame to feel, our pride to show,  
 Glad, angry—but indifferent, no!  
 Whether it be thy lot to go,* 660  
*For the good of us all, where the haters meet  
 In the crowded city's horrible street;  
 Or thou step alone through the morass  
 Where never sound yet was  
 Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,  
 For the air is still, and the water still,  
 When the blue breast of the dipping coot  
 Dives under, and all is mute.  
 So, at the last shall come old age,  
 Decrepit as befits that stage;* 670  
*How else wouldst thou retire apart  
 With the hoarded memories of thy heart,  
 And gather all to the very least  
 Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,  
 Let fall through eagerness to find  
 The crowning dainties yet behind?  
 Ponder on the entire past  
 Laid together thus at last,  
 When the twilight helps to fuse  
 The first fresh with the faded hues,* 680  
*And the outline of the whole,  
 As round eve's shades their framework roll,  
 Grandly fronts for once thy soul.  
 And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam  
     Of yet another morning breaks,  
 And like the hand which ends a dream,  
 Death, with the might of his sunbeam,  
     Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,  
 Then—"  
     Ay, then indeed something would happen!  
     But what? For here her voice changed like a bird's;* 690  
*There grew more of the music and less of the words;  
 Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen  
 To paper and put you down every syllable  
     With those clever clerkly fingers,  
     All I've forgotten as well as what lingers  
 In this old brain of mine that's but ill able  
 To give you even this poor version  
     Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering  
     —More fault of those who had the hammering  
     Of prosody into me and syntax* 700  
*And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!*

*But to return from this excursion—  
 Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,  
 The peace most deep and the charm completest,  
 There came, shall I say, a snap—  
     And the charm vanished!  
     And my sense returned, so strangely banished,  
 And, starting as from a nap,  
 I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,  
 With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring made I* 710  
*Down from the casement, round to the portal,  
     Another minute and I had entered—  
 When the door opened, and more than mortal  
     Stood, with a face where to my mind centred  
 All beauties I ever saw or shall see,  
 The Duchess: I stopped as if struck by palsy.  
 She was so different, happy and beautiful,*

I felt at once that all was best,  
 And that I had nothing to do, for the rest  
 But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful. 720  
 Not that, in fact, there was any commanding;  
 I saw the glory of her eye,  
 And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,  
 And I was hers to live or to die.  
 As for finding what she wanted,  
 You know God Almighty granted  
 Such little signs should serve wild creatures  
 To tell one another all their desires,  
 So that each knows what his friend requires,  
 And does its bidding without teachers. 730  
 I preceded her; the crone  
 Followed silent and alone;  
 I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered  
 In the old style; both her eyes had slunk  
 Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;  
 In short, the soul in its body sunk  
 Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.  
 We descended, I preceding;  
 Crossed the court with nobody heeding;  
 All the world was at the chase, 740  
 The courtyard like a desert-place,  
 The stable emptied of its small fry;  
 I saddled myself the very palfrey  
 I remember patting while it carried her,  
 The day she arrived and the Duke married her.  
 And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving  
 Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing  
 The lady had not forgotten it either,  
 And knew the poor devil so much beneath her  
 Would have been only too glad for her service 750  
 To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,  
 But, unable to pay proper duty where owing  
 Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it:  
 For though the moment I began setting  
 His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,  
 (Not that I meant to be obtrusive)  
 She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,  
 By a single rapid finger's lifting,  
 And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,  
 And a little shake of the head, refused me— 760  
 I say, although she never used me,  
 Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy behind her,  
 And I ventured to remind her  
 I suppose with a voice of less steadiness  
 Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,  
 —Something to the effect that I was in readiness  
 Whenever God should please she needed me—  
 Then, do you know, her face looked down on me  
 With a look that placed a crown on me, 770  
 And she felt in her bosom—mark, her bosom—  
 And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,  
 Dropped me... ah, had it been a purse  
 Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,  
 Why, you see, as soon as I found myself  
 So understood,—that a true heart so may gain  
 Such a reward,—I should have gone home again,  
 Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!  
 It was a little plait of hair  
 Such as friends in a convent make  
 To wear, each for the other's sake— 780  
 This, see, which at my breast I wear,  
 Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudging),  
 And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.  
 And then—and then—to cut short—this is idle,  
 These are feelings it is not good to foster—  
 I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,  
 And the palfrey bounded—and so we lost her.

XVI

When the liquor's out why clink the cannikin?  
 I did think to describe you the panic in  
 The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin, 790  
 And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,  
 How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib  
 Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,  
 When she heard, what she called the flight of the feloness  
 —But it seems such child's play,  
 What they said and did with the lady away!  
 And to dance on, when we've lost the music,  
 Always made me—and no doubt makes you—sick.  
 Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern  
 As that sweet form disappeared through the postern, 800  
 She that kept it in constant good humour,  
 It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do more.  
 But the world thought otherwise and went on,  
 And my head's one that its spite was spent on:  
 Thirty years are fled since that morning,  
 And with them all my head's adorning.  
 Nor did the old Duchess die outright,  
 As you expect, of suppressed spite,  
 The natural end of every adder

Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder: 810  
But she and her son agreed, I take it,  
That no one should touch on the story to wake it,  
For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,  
So, they made no search and small inquiry—  
And when fresh Gipsies have paid us a visit, I've  
Notice the couple were never inquisitive,  
But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,  
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.  
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,  
And the old one was in the young one's stead, 820  
And took, in her place, the household's head,  
And a blessed time the household had of it!  
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious  
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,  
I could favour you with sundry touches  
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess  
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness  
(To get on faster) until at last her  
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster  
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse: 830  
In short, she grew from scalp to udder  
Just the object to make you shudder.

XVII

You're my friend—  
What a thing friendship is, world without end!  
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up  
As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,  
And poured out, all lovelily, sparkingly, sunlit,  
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,  
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—  
Friendship may match with that monarch of fluids; 840  
Each supple a dry brain, fills you its ins-and-outs,  
Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand doubts  
Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees  
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease.  
I have seen my little lady once more,  
Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest of it,  
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before;  
I always wanted to make a clean breast of it:  
And now it is made-why, my heart's blood, that went trickle,  
Trickle, but anon, in such muddy dribbles, 850  
Is pumped up brisk now, through the main ventricle,  
And genially floats me about the giblets.

I'll tell you what I intend to do:  
I must see this fellow his sad life through—  
He is our Duke, after all,  
And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.  
My father was born here, and I inherit  
His fame, a chain he bound his son with;  
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,  
But there's no mine to blow up and get done with: 860  
So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.  
For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,  
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,  
Some day or other, his head in a morion  
And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up,  
Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.  
And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,  
And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a blue crust,  
Then I shall scrape together my earnings;  
For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth reposes, 870  
And our children all went the way of the roses:  
It's a long lane that knows no turnings.  
One needs but little tackle to travel in;  
So, just one stout cloak shall I indue:  
And for a staff, what beats the javelin  
With which his boars my father pinned you?  
And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,  
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful,  
I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly!  
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful. 880  
What's a man's age? He must hurry more, that's all;  
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold:  
When we mind labour, then only, we're too old—  
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul?  
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,  
(Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)  
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil  
And arrive one day at the land of the Gipsies,  
And find my lady, or hear the last news of her  
From some old thief and son of Lucifer, 890  
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,  
Sunburned all over like an Aethiopian.  
And when my Cotnar begins to operate  
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,  
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,  
I shall drop in with—as if by accident—  
"You never knew, then, how it all ended,  
What fortune good or bad attended  
The little lady your Queen befriended?"  
—And when that's told me, what's remaining? 900



This world's too hard for my explaining.  
 The same wise judge of matters equine  
     Who still preferred some slim four-year-old  
     To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold  
 And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak wine,  
 He also must be such a lady's scorner!  
     Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:  
     Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw.  
 -So, I shall find out some snug corner  
 Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,                     910  
 Turn myself round and bid the world good night;  
 And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet blowing  
     Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)  
 To a world where will be no further throwing  
     Pearls before swine that can't value them. Amen!

NOTES:

"The Flight of the Duchess." A story of the triumph of a free and loving life over a cold and conventional one. The duke's huntsman frees his mind to his friend as to his part in the escape of the gladsome, ardent young duchess from the blighting yoke of a husband whose life consisted in imitating defunct mediaeval customs. An old gipsy is the agency that awakens her to the joy and freedom of love. Her mystic chant and charm claim the duchess as the true heir of gipsy blood, thrill her with life, half-hypnotize the huntsman, too, and seem to transform the gipsy crone herself into an Eastern queen. He helps them off, and looks for no better future, when the duke's death releases him, than to travel to the land of the gipsies and hear the last news of his lady.

The poem grew from the fancies aroused in the poet's heart by the snatch of a woman's song he overheard when a boy—"Following the Queen of the Gipsies, O!"

## A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL,

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING IN EUROPE

Let us begin and carry up this corpse,  
     Singing together.  
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes  
     Each in its tether  
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,  
     Cared-for till cock-crow:  
 Look out if yonder be not day again  
     Rimming the rock-row!  
 That's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,  
     Rarer, intenser,                                     10  
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,  
     Chafes in the censer.  
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;  
     Seek we sepulture  
 On a tall mountain, citied to the top,  
     Crowded with culture!  
 All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;  
     Clouds overcome it;  
 No! Yonder sparkle is the citadel's  
     Circling its summit.                                 20  
 Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:  
     Wait ye the warning?  
 Our low life was the level's and the night's;  
     He's for the morning.  
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,  
     'Ware the beholders!  
 This is our master, famous calm and dead,  
     Borne on our shoulders.  
  
 Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,  
     Safe from the weather!                             30  
 He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,  
     Singing together,  
 He was a man born with thy face and throat,  
     Lyric Apollo!  
  
 Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note  
     Winter would follow?  
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!  
     Cramped and diminished,  
 Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!  
     My dance is finished?"                             40  
 No, that's the world's way: (keep the mountain-side,  
     Make for the city!)  
 He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride  
     Over men's pity;  
 Left play for work, and grappled with the world  
     Bent on escaping:

"What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled?  
 Show me their shaping  
 Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage,  
 Give!"—So, he gowned him, 50  
 Straight got by heart that book to its last page:  
 Learned, we found him.  
 Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,  
 Accents uncertain:  
 "Time to taste life," another would have said,  
 "Up with the curtain!"  
 This man said rather, "Actual life comes next?  
 Patience a moment!  
 Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,  
 Still there's the comment. 60  
 Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,  
 Painful or easy!  
 Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,  
 Ay, nor feel queasy."  
 Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,  
 When he had learned it,  
 When he had gathered all books had to give!  
 Sooner, he spurned it.  
 Image the whole, then execute the parts—  
 Fancy the fabric 70  
 Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,  
 Ere mortar dab brick!  
  
 (Here's the town-gate reached: there's the market-place  
 Gaping before us.)  
 Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace  
 (Hearten our chorus!)  
 That before living he'd learn how to live—  
 No end to learning:  
 Earn the means first—God surely will contrive  
 Use for our earning. 80  
 Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes:  
 Live now or never!"  
 He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!  
 Man has Forever."  
 Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:  
 Calculus racked him:  
  
 Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead:  
 Tussis attacked him.  
 "Now, master, take a little rest!"—not he!  
 (Caution redoubled, 90  
 Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly!)  
 Not a whit troubled  
 Back to his studies, fresher than at first,  
 Fierce as a dragon  
 He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)  
 Sucked at the flagon.  
 Oh, if we draw a circle premature,  
 Heedless of far gain,  
 Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure  
 Bad is our bargain! 100  
 Was it not great? did not he throw on God,  
 (He loves the burthen)  
 God's task to make the heavenly period  
 Perfect the earthen?  
 Did not he magnify the mind, show clear  
 Just what it all meant?  
 He would not discount life, as fools do here,  
 Paid by instalment.  
 He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success  
 Found, or earth's failure: 110  
 "Wilt thou trust death or not?" He answered "Yes:  
 Hence with life's pale lure!"  
 That low man seeks a little thing to do,  
 Sees it and does it:  
 This high man, with a great thing to pursue,  
 Dies ere he knows it.  
 That low man goes on adding one to one,  
 His hundred's soon hit:  
 This high man, aiming at a million,  
 Misses an unit. 120  
 That, has the world here-should he need the next,  
 Let the world mind him!  
 This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed  
 Seeking shall find him.  
 So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,  
 Ground he at grammar;  
 Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife:  
 While he could stammer  
 He settled Hoti's business—let it be!—  
 Properly based Oun— 130  
 Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic De,  
 Dead from the waist down.  
 Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place:  
 Hail to your purlieus,  
 All ye highfliers of the feathered race,  
 Swallows and curlews!  
 Here's the top-peak; the multitude below  
 Live, for they can, there:

This man decided not to Live but Know—  
 Bury this man there? 140  
 Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,  
 Lightnings are loosened,  
 Stars come and go! Let joy break with the storm,  
 Peace let the dew send!  
 Lofty designs must close in like effects:  
 Loftily Iying,  
 Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,  
 Living and dying.

NOTES:

"A Grammarian's Funeral" is an elegy of a typical pioneer scholar of the Renaissance period, sung by the leader of the chorus of disciples, and interspersed with parenthetical directions to them, while they all bear the body of their master to its appropriate burial-place on the highest mountain-peak. A humorous sense of disproportion in the labors of devoted scholarship to its results heightens their exaltation of the dead humanist's indomitable trust in the supremacy of the immaterial.

86. Calculus: the stone.

88. Tussis: a cough.

95. Hydroptic: dropsical.

129. Hoti: Greek particle, conjunction, that.

130. Oun: Greek particle, then, now then.

131. Enclitic De: Greek, concerning which Browning wrote to the Editor of *The News*, London, Nov. 21, 1874: "In a clever article you speak of 'the doctrine of the enclitic De—which, with all deference to Mr. Browning, in point of fact, does not exist.' No, not to Mr. Browning, but pray defer to Herr Buttmann, whose fifth list of 'enclitics' ends with the inseparable De, '— or to Curtius, whose fifth list ends also with De (meaning 'towards' and as a demonstrative appendage). That this is not to be confounded with the accentuated 'De, meaning but,' was the 'Doctrine' which the Grammarian bequeathed to those capable of receiving it."

## THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

### A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE

ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS.  
 A CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT,  
 CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT JODOCUS-BY-  
 THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE,  
 Virgilius. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG  
 AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS  
 ERAM, Jessides.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314, as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries.)

[Molay was Grand Master of the Templars when that order was suppressed in 1312.]

I

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

The Lord, we look to once for all,  
 Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:  
 He knows not to vary, saith Saint Paul,  
 Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.  
 See him no other than as he is!  
 Give both the infinitudes their due—  
 Infinite mercy, but, I wis,  
 As infinite a justice too.

[Organ: plagal-cadence.]

As infinite a justice too.

II

[ONE SINGETH]

John, Master of the Temple of God,  
 Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,  
 What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,

He sold it to Sultan Saladin:  
 Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,  
 Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,  
 And clipt of his wings in Paris square,  
 They bring him now to be burned alive.  
 [And wanteth there grace of lute or  
 clavicithern, ye shall say to  
 confirm him who singeth—  
 We bring John now to be burned alive.

III

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;  
 'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck; 20  
 But first they set divers tumbrels a-tilt,  
 Make a trench all round with the city muck;  
 Inside they pile log upon log, good store;  
 Faggots no few, blocks great and small,  
 Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—  
 For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

CHORUS.

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

IV

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith;  
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow; 30  
 Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;  
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow:  
 They up they hoist me John in a chafe,  
 Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,  
 Spit in his face, then leap back safe,  
 Sing "Laudes" and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS.

Laus deo—who bids clap-to the torch.

V

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,  
 Is burning alive in Paris square!  
 How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged?  
 Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there? 40  
 Or heave his chest, which a band goes round?  
 Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced?  
 Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound?  
 —Thinks John, I will call upon Jesus Christ.  
 [Here one crosseth himself.]

VI

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,  
 Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk;  
 To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.  
 (Salva reverentia.)  
 Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,  
 "I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast me! 50  
 "See thy servant, the plight wherein I am!  
 "Art thou a saviour? Save thou me!"

CHORUS.

'Tis John the mocker cries, "Save thou me!"

VII

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?  
 —Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,  
 Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird?  
 For she too prattles of ugly names.  
 —Saith, he knoweth but one thing—what he knows?  
 That God is good and the rest is breath;  
 Why else is the same styled Sharon's rose? 60  
 Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS.

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

VIII

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!  
 Some, honied of taste like your leman's tongue:  
 Some, bitter; for why? (roast gaily on!)  
 Their tree struck root in devil's-dung.  
 When Paul once reasoned of righteousness  
 And of temperance and of judgment to come,  
 Good Felix trembled, he could no less:  
 John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb. 70

CHORUS.

IX

Ha ha, John plucketh now at his rose  
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!  
Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays unclose;  
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;  
And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;  
And a gust of sulphur is all its smell;  
And lo, he is horribly in the toils  
Of a coal-black giant flower of hell!

CHORUS.

What maketh heaven, That maketh hell.

80

X

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,  
On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life—  
To the Person, he bought and sold again—  
For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—  
Feature by feature It took its place:  
And his voice, like a mad dog's choking bark,  
At the steady whole of the Judge's face—  
Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark!

NOTES:

"The Heretic's Tragedy" is an Interlude imagined in the manner of the Middle Ages, and typically representing this period of human development in its quaint piety and prejudice, its childish delight in cruelty, and its cumulative legend-making during the course of two centuries as reflected through the Flemish nature. It is supposed to be sung by an abbot, a choir-singer, and a chorus, in celebration of the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, last Grand Master of the wealthy and powerful secular order of Knights Templar, which came into rivalry with the Church after the Crusades and was finally suppressed by Philip IV of France and Pope Clement V, Molay's burning at Paris in 1314 being a final scene in their discomfiture and the Church's triumph.

8. *Plagal-cadence*: a closing progression of chords in which the sub-dominant or chord on the fourth degree of the scale precedes the tonic or chord on the first degree of the scale. The name arises from the modes used in early church music called Plagal Modes, which were a transposition of the authentic modes beginning on the fourth degree of the authentic modes.

12. *Bought of... Aldabrod, etc.*: Clement's arraignment of Jacques or John being that the riches won piously by the order during the Crusades, he had not scrupled to sell again to Saladin, the Sultan, who is portrayed by Scott in "The Talisman."

14. *Pope Clement*: the fifth Clement (1305-1314).

18. *Clavicithern*: a cithern with keys like a harpsichord.

25. *Sing "Laudes"*: Sing the seven Psalms of praise making up the service of the Church called Lauds.

48. *Salvâ, etc.* the bidding to greet here with a reverence, according to custom, the Host, or Christ's flesh, which had been mentioned.

60. *Sharon's rose*: Solomon's Song 2.1.

## HOLY-CROSS DAY

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME

[ " Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews: as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted blind restif and ready-to-perish Hebrews! now maternally brought-nay (for He saith, 'Compel them to come in') haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts,

to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him: though not to my lord be altogether the glory."-Diary by the Bishop's Secretary, 1600.]

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

I

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

II

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

III

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

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

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

X

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,  
Yelled, pricked us out to his church like hounds:  
It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed

*Which gutted my purse would throttle my creed:  
And it overflows when, to even the odd,  
Men I helped to their sins help me to their God.* 60

XI

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

XII

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

XIII

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

XIV

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

XV

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

XVI

*"Thou! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,  
By the starlight, naming a dubious name!  
And if, too heavy with sleep-too rash  
With fear-0 Thou, if that martyr-gash  
Fell on Thee coming to take thine own,  
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne-*

XVII

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

XVIII

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

XIX

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

XX

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

[Pope Gregory XVI abolished this bad business of the Sermon.

NOTES:

"Holy-Cross Day" reflects the attitude of the corrupt mediaeval Christians and Jews toward each other. The prose preceding the poem gives the point of view of an imaginary Bishop's Secretary, who congratulates himself upon the good work the Church is doing in forcing its doctrine on the Jews in the Holy-Cross Day sermon, and effecting many conversions. The poem shows that the Jews regard this solicitude on the part of the Christians with hatred and scorn, and that their conversions are in derision of their would-be converters. The sarcasm of the speaker reaches a pinnacle of bitterness when he accuses the Christian bishops of being men he had helped to their sins and who now help him to their God. From scorn toward such followers of Christ, he passes, in the contemplation of Rabbi Ben Ezra's death song, to a defence of Christ against these followers who profess but do not act his precepts, and a hope that if the Jews were mistaken in not accepting Christ, the tortures they now suffer will be received as expiation for their sin.

Holy-Cross Day is September 14. The discovery of the true cross by Saint Helen inaugurated the festival, celebrated both by Latins and Greeks as early as the fifth or sixth century, under the title of the Exaltation of the Cross and later in commemoration of the alleged miraculous appearance of the Cross to Constantine in the sky at midday. Though the particular incidents of the poem are not historical, it is a fact (see Milman's "History of the Jews'') that, by a Papal Bull issued by Gregory XIII in 1584, all Jews above the age of twelve years were compelled to listen every week to a sermon from a Christian priest.

52. Corso: a street in Rome

67. Rabbi Ben Ezra: or Ibn Ezra, a mediaeval Jewish writer and thinker, born in Toledo, near the end of the eleventh century.

III. Ghetto: the Jew's quarter. Pope Paul IV first shut the Jews up in the Ghetto, and prohibited them from leaving it after sunset.

## 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, 10  
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 20  
In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,  
While young Greek sculptors, gazing on the child,  
Became with old Greek sculpture reconciled.  
Already sages laboured to condense  
In easy tomes a life's experience:  
And artists took grave counsel to impart  
In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art,  
To make his graces prompt as blossoming  
Of plentifully-watered palms in spring:  
Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne, 30  
For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,  
And mortals love the letters of his name."

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



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

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

NOTES:

"Protus" sets in contrast the representations by artist and  
annalist of the two busts and the two lives of Protus, the  
baby emperor of Byzantium, born in the purple, gently  
nurtured and cherished, yet fated to obscurity, and of John,  
the blacksmith's bastard, predestined to usurp his throne  
and save the empire with his harder hand.

## THE STATUE AND THE BUST

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

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

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

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

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

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,  
Till he threw his head back—"Who is she?"  
"A bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Face to face the lovers stood

*A single minute and no more,  
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued—*

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

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

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

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

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

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

*"Freely I choose too," said the bride—  
"Your window and its world suffice,"  
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied—*

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

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

*"'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,  
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,  
And I save my soul—but not to-morrow"—*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.  
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:  
Be our feast to-night as usual here!"*

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

*"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—  
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France  
Whose heart I unlock with myself my tool.*

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

*"For I ride—what should I do but ride?  
And passing her palace, if I list,  
May glance at its window—well betide!"*

120

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

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

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

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

130

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

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

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

140

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

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

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

150

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

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

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

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

160

*Fronting her silent in the glass—  
"Summon here," she suddenly said,  
"Before the rest of my old self pass,*

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

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

170

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

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

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

180

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

*Burn upward each to his point of bliss—  
Since, the end of life being manifest,  
He had burned his way thro' the world to this.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**NOTES:**

*"The Statue and the Bust" creates the characters and the situation, and dramatically represents a story which is based on a Florentine tradition that Duke Ferdinand I placed his equestrian statue in the Piazza dell' Annunziata so that he might gaze forever towards the old Riccardi Palace, where a lady he loved was imprisoned by her jealous husband.*

The bride and her ducal lover are seen exchanging their first looks, through which they perceive the genuineness of their love; and the temporizing of each is presented, through which, for the sake of petty conveniences, they submit to be thwarted by the wary husband, and to have the end they count supreme delayed until love and youth have gone, and the best left them is the artificial gaze interchanged by a bronze statue in the square and a clay face at the window. The closing stanzas point the moral against the palsy of the will, whose strenuous exercise is life's main gift.

I. *There's a palace in Florence: refers to the old Riccardi Palace, now the Palazzo Antinori, in the square of the Annunziata, where the statue still stands.*

22. *encolure: neck and shoulder of a horse*

33. *The pile which the mighty shadow makes: refers to another palace in the Via Larga where the duke (not the lady) lived, and which is to-day known as the Riccardi Palace. Cooke's "Browning Guide Book" and Berdoe's "Browning Cyclopaedia" both confuse the two, attributing error to Browning in spite of his letter about it. This confusion was cleared up by Harriet Ford (Poet-lore, Dec. 1891, vol. iii. p. 648, "Browning right about the Riccardi Palace").*

36. *Because of a crime, etc.: refers to the destroying of the liberties of the Florentine republic by Cosimo dei Medici and his grandson, Lorenzo, who lived in the then Medici (now Riccardi) Palace, whose darkening of the street with its bulk symbolizes the crime which took the light from Florence.*

57. *catafalk: the stage or scaffolding for a coffin whilst in the church*

94. *Arno bowers: the palace by the Arno, the river flowing through Florence.*

95. *Petraja: a Florentine suburb.*

169. *Robbia's craft: the Robbia family were skilled in shaping the bisque known as Della Robbia ware which was long one of the Florentine manufactures, and traces of which, when Browning wrote, still adorned the outer cornice of the palace.*

202. *John of Douay [Giovanni of Bologna], sculptor (1524-1608). The statue is one of his finest works.*

250. *De te, fabula! Concerning thee, this fable!*

## PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

The rain set early in to-night,  
 The sullen wind was soon awake,  
 It tore the elm-tops down for spite,  
 And did its worst to vex the lake:  
 I listened with heart fit to break.  
 When glided in Porphyria; straight  
 She shut the cold out and the storm,  
 And kneeled and made the cheerless grate  
 Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;  
 Which done, she rose, and from her form  
 Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,  
 And laid her soiled gloves by, untied  
 Her hat and let the damp hair fall,  
 And, last, she sat down by my side  
 And called me. When no voice replied,  
 She put my arm about her waist,  
 And made her smooth white shoulder bare,  
 And all her yellow hair displaced,  
 And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,  
 And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,  
 Murmuring how she loved me—she  
 Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,  
 To set its struggling passion free  
 From pride, and vainer ties dissever,  
 And give herself to me for ever.  
 But passion sometimes would prevail,  
 Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain  
 A sudden thought of one so pale  
 For love of her, and all in vain:  
 So, she was come through wind and rain.

Be sure I looked up at her eyes  
 Happy and proud; at last I knew  
 Porphyria worshipped me; surprise

Made my heart swell, and still it grew  
 While I debated what to do.  
 That moment she was mine, mine, fair,  
 Perfectly pure and good: I found  
 A thing to do, and all her hair  
 In one long yellow string I wound  
 Three times her little throat around, 40  
 And strangled her. No pain felt she;  
 I am quite sure she felt no pain.  
 As a shut bud that holds a bee,  
 I warily oped her lids: again  
 Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.  
 And I untightened next the tress  
 About her neck; her cheek once more  
 Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:  
 I propped her head up as before,  
 Only, this time my shoulder bore 50  
 Her head, which droops upon it still:  
 The smiling rosy little head,  
 So glad it has its utmost will,  
 That all it scorned at once is fled,  
 And I, its love, am gained instead!  
 Porphyria's love: she guessed not how  
 Her darling one wish would be heard.  
 And thus we sit together now,  
 And all night long we have not stirred,  
 And yet God has not said a word! 60

NOTES:

"Porphyria's Lover" relates how, by strangling Porphyria with her own yellow hair, the lover seized and preserved the moment of perfect love when, pure and good, Porphyria left the world she could not forego for his sake, and came to him, for once conquered by her love. A latent misgiving as to his action is intimated in the closing line of the poem.

Remarking upon the fact that Browning removed the original title, "Madhouse Cells," which headed this poem, and "Johannes Agricola in Meditation," Mrs. Orr says: "Such a crime might be committed in a momentary aberration, or even intense excitement of feeling. It is characterized here by a matter-of-fact simplicity, which is its sign of madness. The distinction, however, is subtle; and we can easily guess why this and its companion poem did not retain their title. A madness which is fit for dramatic treatment is not sufficiently removed from sanity."

## "CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME."

(See Edgar's song in "LEAR.")

I

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

II

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

III

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

IV

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,  
 What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope 20  
 Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope  
 With that obstreperous joy success would bring,  
 I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring

*My heart made, finding failure in its scope.*

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

XI

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

XII

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

XIII

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

XIV

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

XV

*I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.*

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

XVI

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

XVII

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

XVIII

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

XIX

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

XX

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

XXI

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

XXII

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

XXIII

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

XXIV

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

XXV

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



## XXVI

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

## XXVII

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

## XXVIII

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

## XXIX

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

## XXX

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

## XXXI

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

## XXXII

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

## XXXIII

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

## XXXIV

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

## NOTES:

"Childe Roland" symbolizes the conquest of despair by fealty to the ideal. Browning emphatically disclaimed any precise allegorical intention in this poem. He acknowledged only an ideal purport in which the significance of the whole, as suggesting a vision of life and the saving power of constancy, had its due place. Certain picturesque materials which had made their impressions on the poet's mind contributed towards the building up of this realistic fantasy: a tower he saw in the Carrara Mountains; a painting which caught his eye later in Paris; the figure of a horse in the tapestry in his own drawing-room—welded together with the remembrance of the line cited from

*King Lear*, iii. 4, 187, which last, it should be remembered, has a background of ballads and legend cycles of which a man like Browning was not unaware. For allegorical schemes of the Poem see Nettleship's "Essays and Thoughts," and *The Critic*, Apr. 24, 1886; for an antidote to these, *The Critic*, May 8, 1886; an orthodox view, *Poet-lore*, Nov. 1890: for interpretations touching on the ballad sources, *London Browning Society Papers*, part iii. p. 21, and *Poet-lore*, Aug.-Sept. 1892.

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