Men and Women

by Robert Browning

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omitted after Roman numerals in the titles of popes and nobles. In keeping with contemporary practice, commas have been deleted when they precede dashes and spaces deleted in such contractions as "there's" where the printed text has "there 's." In references to Bible verses, Roman numerals have been changed to Arabic numerals (e. g., "John iii.16" is changed to "John 3:16").

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INTRODUCTION

Thirteen years after the publication, in 1855, of the Poems, in two volumes, entitled "Men and Women," Browning reviewed his work and made an interesting reclassification of it. He separated the simpler pieces of a lyric or epic cast—such rhymed presentations of an emotional moment, for example, as "Mesmerism" and "A Woman's Last Word," or the picturesque rhymed verse telling a story of an experience, such as "Childe Roland" and "The Statue and the Bust"—from their more complex companions, which were almost altogether in blank verse, and, in general, markedly personified a typical man in his environment, a Cleon or Fra Lippo, a Rudel or a Blougram. These boldly sculptured figures he set apart from the others as the fit components of the more closely related group which ever since has constituted the division now known as "Men and Women."

Possibly the poet took some pleasure in thus bringing to confusion those critics who, beginning first to take any notice of his work after the issue of these volumes of 1855, discovered therein poems they praised chiefly by means of contrasting them with foregoing work they found unnoticeable and later work they declared inscrutable. Their bland discrimination, at any rate, in favor of "Men and Women" became henceforth inapplicable, since the poet not only cast out from the division they elected to honor the little lyrical pieces that caught their eye, but also brought to the front, from his earlier neglected work of the same kind as the monologues retained, his Johannes Agricola of 1836, Pictor Ignotus of 1845, and Rudel of 1842. Later criticism, moreover, that even yet assumes to ring the old changes of discrimination against everything but "Men and Women," is made not merely inapplicable by this re-arrangement, but uninformed, a meaningless echo of a borrowed opinion which has had the very ground from under it shifted.

The self-criticism of which this re-arrangement gives a hint is more valuable.

All the shorter poems accumulated up to this period, various as they are in theme and metrical form, are uniform in the fashioning of their contour and color. As soon as this underlying uniformity of make is recognized it may be seen to be the coloring and relief belonging to any sort of poetic material, whether ordinarily accounted dramatic material or not, which is imaginatively externalized and made concrete. This peculiarity of make Browning early acknowledged in his estimate of his shorter poems as characteristic of his touch, when he called his lyrics and romances dramatic. He became consciously sensitive later to slight variations effected by his manipulation in shape and shade which it yet takes a little thought to discern, even after his own redivision of his work has given the clew to his self-judgments.

Not only events, deeds, and characters—the usual subject-matter moulded and irradiated by dramatic power—but thoughts, impressions, experiences, impulses, no matter how spiritualized or complex or mobile, are transfused with the enlivening light of his creative energy in his shorter poems. Perhaps the very path struck out through them by the poet in his re-division may be traced between the leaves silently closing together again behind him if it be noticed that among these poems there are some with footholds firmly rooted in the earth and others whose proper realm is air. These have wings for alighting, for flitting thither and hither, or for pursuing some sudden rapt whirl of flight in Heaven's face at fancy's bidding. They are certainly not less original than those other solider, earth-fast poems, but they are less unique. Being motived in transient fancy, they are more akin to poems by other hands, and could be classed more readily with them by any observer, despite all differences, as little poetic romances or as a species of lyric.

They were probably first found praiseworthy, not only because they were simpler, but because, being more like work already understood and approved, adventurous criticism was needed to taste their quality. The other longer poems in blank verse,

graver and more dignified, yet even more vivid, and far more life-encompassing, which bore the rounded impress of the living human being, instead of the shadowy motion of the lively human fancy—these are the birth of a process of imaginative brooding upon the development of man by means of individuality throughout the slow, unceasing flow of human history. Browning evidently grew aware that whatever these poems of personality might prove to be worth to the world, these were the ones deserving of a place apart, under the early title of "Men and Women," which he thought especially suited to the more roundly modelled and distinctively colored exemplars of his peculiar faculty.

In his next following collection, under the similar descriptive title of "Dramatis Personae," he added to this class of work, shaping in the mould of blank verse mainly used for "Men and Women" his personifications of the Medium Mr. Sludge, the embryo theologian Caliban, the ripened mystical saint of "A Death in the Desert"; while Abt Vogler, the creative musician, Rabbi ben Ezra, the intuitional philosopher, and the chastened adept in loving, James Lee's wife, although held within the embrace of their maker's dramatic conception of them, as persons of his stage, were made to pour out their speech in rhyme as Johannes Agricola in the earlier volume uttered his creed and Rudel his love-message, as if the heat of their emotion-moved personality required such an outlet. Some such general notion as this of the scope of this volume, and of the design of the poet in the construction, classification, and orderly arrangement of so much of his briefer work as is here contained seems to be borne out upon a closer examination. On the threshold of this new poetic world of personality stands the Poet of the poem significantly called "Transcendentalism," who is speaking to another poet about the too easily obvious, metaphor-bare philosophy of his opus in twelve books. That the admonishing poet is stationed there at the very door-sill of the Gallery of Men and Women is surely not accidental, even if Browning's habit of plotting his groups of poems symmetrically by opening with a prologue-poem sounding the right key, and rounding the theme

with an epilogue, did not tend to prove it intentional. It is an open secret that the last poem in "Men and Women," for instance, is an epilogue of autobiographical interest, gathering up the foregoing strains of his lyre, for a few last chords, in so intimate a way that the actual fall of the fingers may be felt, the pausing smile seen, as the performer turns towards the one who inspired "One Word More." The appropriateness of "Transcendentalism" as a prologue need be no more of a secret than that of "One Word More" as an epilogue, although it is left to betray itself. Other poets writing on the poet, Emerson for example, and Tennyson, place the outright plain name of their thought at the head of their verses, without any attempt to make their titles dress their parts and keep as thoroughly true to their roles as the poems themselves. But a complete impersonation of his thought in name and style as well as matter is characteristic of Browning, and his personified poets playing their parts together in "Transcendentalism" combine to exhibit a little masque exemplifying their writer's view of the Poet as veritably as if he had named it specifically "The Poet." One poet shows the other, and brings him visibly forward; but even in such a morsel of dramatic workmanship as this, fifty-one lines all told, there is the complexity and involution of life itself, and, as ever in Browning's monologues, over the shoulder of the poet more obviously portrayed peers as livingly the face of the poet portraying him. And this one—the admonishing poet—is set there with his "sudden rose," as if to indicate with that symbol of poetic magic what kind of spell was sought to be exercised by their maker to conjure up in his house of song the figures that people its niches. Could a poem be imagined more cunningly devised to reveal a typical poetic personality, and a typical theory of poetic method, through its way of revealing another? What poet could have composed it but one who himself employed the dramatic method of causing the abstract to be realizable through the concrete image of it, instead of the contrary mode of seeking to divest the objective of its concrete form in order to lay bare its abstract essence? This opposite theory of the poetic function is precisely the Boehme

mode, against which the veiled dramatic poet, who is speaking in favor of the Halberstadtian magic, admonishes his brother, while he himself in practical substantiation of his theory of poetics brings bodily in sight the boy-face above the winged harp, vivified and beautiful himself, although his poem is but a shapeless mist.

Not directly, then, but indirectly, as the dramatic poet ever reveals himself, does the sophisticated face of the subtle poet of "Men and Women" appear as the source of power behind both of the poets of this poem, prepossessing the reader of the verity and beauty of the theory of poetic art therein exemplified. Such an interpretation of "Transcendentalism," and such a conception of it as a key to the art of the volume it opens, chimes in harmoniously with the note sounded in the next following poem, "How it Strikes a Contemporary." Here again a typical poet is personified, not, however, by means of his own poetic way of seeing, but of the prosaic way in which he is seen by a contemporary, the whole, of course, being poetically seen and presented by the over-poet. Browning himself, and in such a manifold way that the reader is enabled to conceive as vividly of the talker and his mental atmosphere and social background—the people and habitudes of the good old town of Valladolid—as of the betalked-of Corregidor himself; while by the totality of these concrete images an impression is conveyed of the dramatic mode of poetic expression which is far more convincing than any explicit theoretic statement of it could be, because so humanly animated.

"Artemis Prologizes" seems to have been selected to close this little opening sequence of poems on the poet, because that fragment of a larger projected work could find place here almost as if it were a poet's exercise in blank verse. Its smooth and spacious rhythm, flawless and serene as the distant Greek myth of the hero and the goddess it celebrates, is in striking contrast with the rougher, but brighter and more humanly colloquial blank verse of "Bishop Blougram's Apology," for example, or the stiff carefulness of the "Epistle" of Karshish. It might alone suffice, by

comparison with the metrical craftsmanship of the other poems of "Men and Women," to assure the observant reader that never was a good workman more baselessly accused of metrical carelessness than the poet who designedly varies his complicated verse-effects to suit every inner impulse belonging to his dramatic subject. A golden finish being in place in this statuesque, "Hyperion"-like monologue of Artemis, behold here it is, and none the less perfect because not merely the outcome of the desire to produce a polished piece of poetic mechanism.

Browning, perhaps, linked his next poem, "The Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician," with the calm prologizing of the Hellenic goddess, by association of the "wise pharmacies" of AEsculapius, with the inquisitive sagacity of Karshish, "the not-incurious in God's handiwork." By this ordering of the poems, the reader may now enjoy, at any rate, the contrasts between three historic phases of wisdom in bodily ills: the phase presented in the dependence of the old Greek healer upon simple physical effects, soothing "with lavers the torn brow," and laying "the stripes and jagged ends of flesh even once more"; and the phases typified, on the one side, by the ingenious Arab, sire of the modern scientist, whose patient correlation of facts and studious, sceptical scrutiny of cause and effect are caught in the bud in the diagnosis transmitted by Karshish to Abib, and, on the other side, by the Nazarene physician, whose inspired secret of summoning out of the believing soul of man the power to control his body—so baffled and fascinated Karshish, drawing his attention in Lazarus to just that connection of the known physical with the unknown psychical nature which is still mystically alluring the curiosity of investigators.

From the childlike, over-idealizing mood of Lazarus toward the God who had succored him, inducing in him so fatalistic an indifference to human concerns, there is but a step to the rapture of absolute theology expressed in the person of Johannes Agricola. Such poems as these put before the cool gaze of the present century the very men of the elder day of religion. Their robes shine with an unearthly light, and

their abstracted eyes are hypnotized by the effulgence of their own haloes. Yet the poet never fails to insinuate some naive foible in their personification, a numbness of the heart or an archaism of soul, which reveals the possessed one as but a human brother, after all, shaped by his environment, and embodying the spirit of an historic epoch out of which the current of modern life is still streaming.

The group of art poems which follows similarly presents a dramatic synthesis of the art of the Renaissance as represented by three types of painters. The religious devotion of the monastic painter, whose ecstatic spirit breathes in "Pictor Ignotus," probably gives this poem its place adjoining Agricola and Lazarus. His artist's hankering to create that beauty to bless the world with which his soul refrains from grossly satisfying, unites the poem with the two following ones. In the first of these the realistic artist, Fra Lippo, is graphically pictured personally ushering in the high noon of the Italian efflorescence. In the second, the gray of that day of art is silvering the self-painted portrait of the prematurely frigid and facile formalist, Andrea del Sarto. In "Pictor Ignotus" not only the personality of the often unknown and unnamed painting-brother of the monasteries is made clear, but also the nature of his beautiful cold art and the enslavement of both art and personality to ecclesiastical beliefs and ideals. In "Fra Lippo Lippi" not alone the figure of the frolicsome monk appears caught in his pleasure-loving escapade, amid that picturesque knot of alert-witted Florentine guards, ready to appreciate all the good points in his story of his life and the protection the arms of the Church and the favor of the Medici have afforded his genius, but, furthermore, is illustrated the irresistible tendency of the art-impulse to expand beyond the bounds set for it either by laws of Church or art itself, and to find beauty wheresoever in life it chooses to turn the light of its gaze. So, also, in "Andrea del Sarto," the easy cleverness of the unaspiring craftsman is not embodied apart from the abject relationship which made his very soul a bond-slave to the gross mandates of "the Cousin's whistle." Yet in all three poems the biographic and historic conditions contributing toward the individualizing

of each artist are so unobtrusively epitomized and vitally blended, that, while scarcely any item of specific study of the art and artists of the Renaissance would be out of place in illustrating the essential truth of the portraiture and assisting in the better appreciation of the poem, there is no detail of the workmanship which does not fall into the background as a mere accessory to the dominant figure through whose relationship to his art his station in the past is made clear.

This sort of dramatic synthesis of a salient, historical epoch is again strikingly disclosed in the following poem of the Renaissance period, "The Bishop Orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church." In this, again, the art-connoisseurship of the prelacy, so important an element in the Italian movement towards art-expression, is revealed to the life in the beauty-loving personality of the dying bishop. And by means, also, of his social ties with his nephews, called closer than they wish about him now; with her whom "men would have to be their mother once"; with old Gandolf, whom he fancies leering at him from his onion-stone tomb; and with all those strong desires of the time for the delight of being envied, for marble baths and horses and brown Greek manuscripts and mistresses, the seeds of human decay planted in the plot of Time, known as the Central Renaissance, by the same lingering fleshliness and self-destroying self-indulgence as was at home in pagan days, are livingly exposed to the historic sense.

Is the modern prelate portrayed in "Bishop Blougram's Apology," with all his bland subtlety, complex culture, and ripened perceptions, distant as the nineteenth century from the sixteenth, very different at bottom from his Renaissance brother, in respect to his native hankering for the pleasure of estimation above his fellows? Gigadibs is his Gandolf, whom he would craftily overtop. He is the one raised for the time above the commonalty by his criticism of the bishop, to whom the prelate would fain show how little he was to be despised, how far more honored and powerful he was among men. As for Gigadibs, it is to be noticed that Browning quietly makes him do more than leer enviously at his complacent competitor from a tomb-top. The

"sudden healthy vehemence" that struck him and made him start to test his first plough in a new world, and read his last chapter of St. John to better purpose than towards self-glorification beyond his fellows, is a parable of the more profitable life to be found in following the famous injunction of that chapter in John's Gospel, "Feed my sheep!" than in causing those sheep to motion one, as the bishop would have his obsequious wethers of the flock motion him, to the choice places of the sward.

So, as vivid a picture of the materialism and monopolizing of the present century sowing seeds of decay and self-destruction in the movement of this age toward love of the truth, of the beauty of genuineness in character and earnestness in aim, is portrayed through the realistic personality of the great modern bishop, in his easy-smiling after-dinner talk with Gigadibs, the literary man, as is presented of the Central Renaissance period in the companion picture of the Bishop of Saint Praxed's.

In Cleon, the man of composite art and culture, the last ripe fruitage of Greek development, is personified and brought into contact, at the moment of the dawn of Christianity in Europe, with the ardent impulse the Christian ideal of spiritual life supplied to human civilization. How close the wise and broad Greek culture came to being all-sufficing, capable of effecting almost enough of impetus for the aspiring progress of the world, and yet how much it lacked a warmer element essential to be engrafted upon its lofty beauty, the reader, upon whose imaginative vision the personality of Cleon rises, can scarcely help but feel.

The aesthetic and religious or philosophical interests vitally conceived and blended, which link together so many of the main poems of "Men and Women," close with "Cleon." Rudel, the troubadour, presenting, in the self-abandonment of his offering of love to the Lady of Tripoli, an impersonation of the chivalric love characteristic of the Provencal life of the twelfth century, intervenes, appropriately, last of all,

between the preceding poems and the epilogue, which devotes heart and brain of the poet himself, with the creatures of his hand, to his "Moon of Poets."

As these poetic creations now stand, they all seem, upon examination, to incarnate the full-bodied life of distinctive types of men, centred amid their relations with other men within a specific social environment, and fulfilling the possibilities for such unique, dramatic syntheses as were revealed but partially or in embryo here and there among the other shorter poems of this period of the poet's growth.

In one important particular the re-arrangement of the "Men and Women" group of poems made its title inappropriate. The graceful presence and love-lit eyes of the many women of the shorter love-poems were withdrawn, and Artemis, Andrea del Sarto's wife, the Prior's niece—"Saint Lucy, I would say," as Fra Lippo explains—and, perhaps, the inspirer of Rudel's chivalry, too, the shadowy yet learned and queenly Lady of Tripoli, alone were left to represent the "women" of the title. As for minor inexactitudes, what does it matter that the advantage gained by nicely selecting the poems properly belonging together, both in conception and artistic modelling, was won at the cost of making the reference inaccurate, in the opening lines of "One Word More," to "my fifty men and women, naming me the fifty poems finished"?—Or that the mention of Roland in line 138 is no longer in place with Karshish, Cleon, Lippo, and Andrea, now that the fantastic story of Childe Roland's desperate loyalty is given closer companionship among the varied experiences narrated in the "Dramatic Romances"? While as for the mention of the Norbert of "In a Balcony"—which was originally included as but one item along with the other contents of "Men and Women"—that miniature drama, although it stands by itself now, is still near enough at hand in the revised order to account for the allusion. These are all trifles—mere sins against literal accuracy. But the discrepancy in the title occasioned by the absence of women is of more importance. It is of especial interest, in calling attention to the fact that the creator of Pompilia, Balaustion, and the heroine of the "Inn Album"—all central figures, whence radiate

the life and spiritual energy of the work they ennoble—had, at this period, created no typical figures of women in any degree corresponding to those of his men.

CHARLOTTE PORTER HELEN A. CLARKE

"TRANSCENDENTALISM: A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS"

1855

Stop playing, poet! May a brother speak? 'Tis you speak, that's your error. Song's our art: Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts Instead of draping them in sights and sounds. —True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure up! But why such long prolusion and display, Such turning and adjustment of the harp, And taking it upon your breast, at length, Only to speak dry words across its strings? Stark-naked thought is in request enough: 10 Speak prose and hollo it till Europe hears! The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark, Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp— Exchange our harp for that—who hinders you? But here's your fault; grown men want thought, you think; Thought's what they mean by verse, and seek in verse. Boys seek for images and melody, Men must have reason—so, you aim at men. Quite otherwise! Objects throng our youth,'tis true; We see and hear and do not wonder much: 20 If you could tell us what they mean, indeed! As German Boehme never cared for plants Until it happed, a-walking in the fields, He noticed all at once that plants could speak, Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him. That day the daisy had an eye indeed— Colloquized with the cowslip on such themes! We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose. But by the time youth slips a stage or two While reading prose in that tough book he wrote 30 (Collating and emendating the same And settling on the sense most to our mind) We shut the clasps and find life's summer past. Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our loss—

Another Boehme with a tougher book And subtler meanings of what roses say— Or some stout Mage like him of Halberstadt, John, who made things Boehme wrote thoughts about? He with a "look you!" vents a brace of rhymes, And in there breaks the sudden rose herself, 40 Over us, under, round us every side, Nay, in and out the tables and the chairs And musty volumes, Boehme's book and all— Buries us with a glory, young once more, Pouring heaven into this shut house of life. So come, the harp back to your heart again! You are a poem, though your poem's naught. The best of all you showed before, believe, Was your own boy-face o'er the finer chords Bent, following the cherub at the top 50 That points to God with his paired half-moon wings.

NOTES "Transcendentalism" is a criticism, placed in the mouth of a poet, of another poet, whose manner of singing is prosaic, because it seeks to transcend (or penetrate beyond) phenomena, by divesting poetic expression of those concrete embodiments which enable it to appeal to the senses and imagination. Instead of bare abstractions being suited to the developed mind, it is the primitive mind, which, like Boehme's, has the merely metaphysical turn, and expects to discover the unincarnate absolute essence of things. The maturer mind craves the vitalizing method of the artist who, like the magician of Halberstadt, recreates things bodily in all their beautiful vivid wholeness. Yet the poet who sincerely holds so fragmentary a conception of art is himself a poem to the poet who holds the larger view. His boy-face singing to God above his ineffective harp-strings is a concrete image of this sort of poetic transcendentalism. [It is obvious that Browning uses the Halberstadt and not the Boehme method in presenting this embodiment of his subject. The supposition of certain commentators that Browning is here picturing his own artistic method as transcendental is a misconception of his characteristic theory of poetic art, as shown here and elsewhere.] 22. Boehme: Jacob, an "inspired" German shoemaker (1575-1624), who wrote "Aurora," "The Three Principles," etc., mystical commentaries on Biblical events. When twenty-five years old, says Hotham in

"Mysterium Magnum," 1653, "he was surrounded by a divine Light and replenished with heavenly Knowledge . . . going abroad into the Fieldes to a Greene before Neys-Gate at Gorlitz and viewing the Herbes and Grass of the Fielde, in his inward light he saw into their Essences . . . and from that Fountain of Revelation wrote [De Signatura Rerum]," on the signatures of things, the "tough book" to which Browning refers. 37. Halberstadt: Johann Semeca, called Teutonicus, a canon of Halberstadt in Germany, who was interested in the unchurchly study of mediaeval science and reputed to be a magician, possessing the vegetable stone supposed to make plants grow at will, having the same power over organic life that the philosopher's stone of the alchemists had over minerals, so that, like Albertus Magnus, another such mage of the Middle Ages, he could cause flowers to spring up in the midst of winter.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY

1855 I only knew one poet in my life: And this, or something like it, was his way. You saw go up and down Valladolid, A man of mark, to know next time you saw. His very serviceable suit of black Was courtly once and conscientious still, And many might have worn it, though none did: The cloak, that somewhat shone and showed the threads, Had purpose, and the ruff, significance. He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane, 10 Scenting the world, looking it full in face, An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels. They turned up, now, the alley by the church, That leads nowhither; now, they breathed themselves On the main promenade just at the wrong time: You'd come upon his scrutinizing hat Making a peaked shade blacker than itself Against the single window spared some house Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work— Or else surprise the ferret of his stick 20 Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks Of some new shop a-building, French and fine. He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade, The man who slices lemons into drink, The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys That volunteer to help him turn its winch.

He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye, And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string, And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall. He took such cognizance of men and things, 30 If any beat a horse, you felt he saw; If any cursed a woman, he took note; Yet stared at nobody—you stared at him, And found, less to your pleasure than surprise, He seemed to know you and expect as much. So, next time that a neighbor's tongue was loosed, It marked the shameful and notorious fact, We had among us, not so much a spy, As a recording chief-inquisitor, The town's true master if the town but knew 40 We merely kept a governor for form, While this man walked about and took account Of all thought, said and acted, then went home, And wrote it fully to our Lord the King Who has an itch to know things, he knows why, And reads them in his bedroom of a night. Oh, you might smile! there wanted not a touch, A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease As back into your mind the man's look came. Stricken in years a little—such a brow 50 His eyes had to live under!—clear as flint On either side the formidable nose Curved, cut and colored like an eagle's claw, Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate? When altogether old B. disappeared And young C. got his mistress, was't our friend, His letter to the King, that did it all? What paid the Woodless man for so much pains? Our Lord the King has favorites manifold, And shifts his ministry some once a month; 60 Our city gets new governors at whiles— But never word or sign, that I could hear, Notified to this man about the streets The King's approval of those letters conned The last thing duly at the dead of night. Did the man love his office? Frowned our Lord, Exhorting when none heard—"Beseech me not! Too far above my people—beneath me! I set the watch—how should the people know? Forget them, keep me all the more in mind!" 70 Was some such understanding 'twixt the two? I found no truth in one report at least— That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace, You found he ate his supper in a room Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall, And twenty naked girls to change his plate! Poor man, he lived another kind of life In that new stuccoed third house by the bridge, Fresh-painted,

rather smart than otherwise! 80 The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat, Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back, Playing a decent cribbage with his maid (Jacynth, you're sure her name was) o'er the cheese And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears, Or treat of radishes in April. Nine, Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he. My father, like the man of sense he was, Would point him out to me a dozen times; "'St—'St," he'd whisper, "the Corregidor!" 90 I had been used to think that personage Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt, And feathers like a forest in his hat, Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news, Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn, And memorized the miracle in vogue! He had a great observance from us boys; We were in error; that was not the man. I'd like now, yet had happy been afraid, To have just looked, when this man came to die, 100 And seen who lined the clean gay garret-sides And stood about the neat low truckle-bed, With the heavenly manner of relieving guard. Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief, Thro' a whole campaign of the world's life and death, Doing the King's work all the dim day long, In his old coat and up to knees in mud, Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust, And, now the day was won, relieved at once! No further show or need for that old coat, 110 You are sure, for one thing! Bless us, all the while How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I! A second, and the angels alter that. Well, I could never write a verse—could you? Let's to the Prado and make the most of time. NOTES "How it Strikes a Contemporary" is a portrait of the Poet as the unpoetic gossiping public of his day sees him. It is humorously colored by the alien point of view of the speaker, who suspects without understanding either the greatness of the poet's spiritual personality and mission, or the nature of his life, which is withdrawn from that of the commonalty, yet spent in clear-sighted universal sympathies and kindly mediation between Humanity and its God. 3. Valladolid: the royal city of the kings of Castile, before Philip II moved the Court to Madrid, where Cervantes, Calderon, and Las Casas lived and Columbus died. 76. Titian: pictures by the Venetian, Tiziano Vecellio (1477-1576), glowing in

color, presumably of large golden-haired women like his famous Venus. 90. Corregidor: the Spanish title for a magistrate, literally, a corrector, from corregir, to correct.

ARTEMIS PROLOGIZES

1842 I am a goddess of the ambrosia courts, And save by Here, Queen of Pride, surpassed By none whose temples whiten this the world. Through heaven I roll my lucid moon along; I shed in hell o'er my pale people peace; On earth I, caring for the creatures, guard Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-bitch sleek, And every feathered mother's callow brood, And all that love green haunts and loneliness. Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging crowns 10 Of poppies red to blackness, bell and stem, Upon my image at Athenai here; And this dead Youth, Asclepios bends above, Was dearest to me. He, my buskined step To follow through the wild-wood leafy ways, And chase the panting stag, or swift with darts Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard low, Neglected homage to another god: Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight smoke Of tapers lulled, in jealousy despatched 20 A noisome lust that, as the gad bee stings, Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for himself The son of Theseus her great absent spouse. Hippolutos exclaiming in his rage Against the fury of the Queen, she judged Life insupportable; and, pricked at heart An Amazonian stranger's race should dare To scorn her, perished by the murderous cord: Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll The fame of him her swerving made not swerve. 30 And Theseus, read, returning, and believed, And exiled, in the blindness of his wrath, The man without a crime who, last as first, Loyal, divulged not to his sire the truth, Now Theseus from Poseidon had obtained That of his wishes should be granted three, And one he imprecated straight—"Alive May ne'er Hippolutos reach other lands!" Poseidon heard, ai ai! And scarce the prince Had stepped into the fixed boots of the car 40 That give the feet a stay against the strength Of the Henetian horses, and

around His body flung the rein, and urged their speed Along the rocks and shingles at the shore, When from the gaping wave a monster flung His obscene body in the coursers' path. These, mad with terror, as the sea-bull sprawled Wallowing about their feet, lost care of him That reared them; and the master-chariot-pole Snapping beneath their plunges like a reed, 50 Hippolutos, whose feet were trammelled fast, Was yet dragged forward by the circling rein Which either hand directed; nor they quenched The frenzy of their flight before each trace, Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woful car, Each boulder-stone, sharp stub and spiny shell, Huge fish-bone wrecked and wreathed amid the sands On that detested beach, was bright with blood And morsels of his flesh; then fell the steeds Head foremost, crashing in their mooned fronts, 60 Shivering with sweat, each white eye horror-fixed. His people, who had witnessed all afar, Bore back the ruins of Hippolutos. But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced (Indomitable as a man foredoomed) That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer, I, in a flood of glory visible, Stood o'er my dying votary and, deed By deed, revealed, as all took place, the truth. Then Theseus lay the wofullest of men, 70 And worthily; but ere the death-veils hid His face, the murdered prince full pardon breathed To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai wails. So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries, Lest in the cross-way none the honey-cake Should tender, nor pour out the dog's hot life; Lest at my fane the priests disconsolate Should dress my image with some faded poor Few crowns, made favors of, nor dare object Such slackness to my worshippers who turn 80 Elsewhere the trusting heart and loaded hand, As they had climbed Olumpos to report Of Artemis and nowhere found her throne— I interposed: and, this eventful night (While round the funeral pyre the populace Stood with fierce light on their black robes which bound Each sobbing head, while yet their hair they clipped O'er the dead body of their withered prince, And, in his palace, Theseus prostrated On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the slab 90 'T was bruised on, groaned away the heavy grief— As the pyre fell, and down the cross logs crashed Sending a crowd of sparkles through the night, And the gay fire, elate

with mastery, Towered like a serpent o'er the clotted jars Of wine, dissolving oils and frankincense, And splendid gums like gold) my potency Conveyed the perished man to my retreat In the thrice-venerable forest here. And this white-bearded sage who squeezes now 100 The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of fame, Asclepios, whom my radiant brother taught The doctrine of each herb and flower and root, To know their secret'st virtue and express The saving soul of all: who so has soothed With layers the torn brow and murdered cheeks, Composed the hair and brought its gloss again, And called the red bloom to the pale skin back, And laid the strips and lagged ends of flesh Even once more, and slacked the sinew's knot 110 Of every tortured limb—that now he lies As if mere sleep possessed him underneath These interwoven oaks and pines. Oh cheer, Divine presenter of the healing rod, Thy snake, with ardent throat and lulling eye, Twines his lithe spires around! I say, much cheer! Proceed thou with thy wisest pharmacies! And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-nymphs, Ply, as the sage directs, these buds and leaves That strew the turf around the twain! While I 120 Await, in fitting silence, the event. NOTES "Artemis Prologizes" represents the goddess Artemis awaiting the revival of the youth Hippolytus, whom she has carried to her woods and given to Asclepios to heal. It is a fragment meant to introduce an unwritten work and carry on the story related by Euripides in "Hippolytus," which see.

AN EPISTLE CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN

1855 Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs, The not-incurious in God's handiwork (This man's-flesh he hath admirably made, Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste, To coop up and keep down on earth a space That puff of vapor from his mouth, man's soul) —To Abib, all-sagacious in our art, Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast, Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks Befall the flesh through too

much stress and strain, 10 Whereby the wily vapor fain would slip Back and rejoin its source before the term— And aptest in contrivance (under God) To baffle it by deftly stopping such— The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace) Three samples of true snakestone—rarer still, One of the other sort, the melon-shaped, (But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs) And writeth now the twenty-second time. 20 My journeyings were brought to Jericho: Thus I resume. Who studious in our art Shall count a little labor un-repaid? I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone On many a flinty furlong of this land. Also, the country-side is all on fire With rumors of a marching hitherward: Some say Vespasian comes, some, his son. A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear; Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls: 30 I cried and threw my staff and he was gone. Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me, And once a town declared me for a spy; But at the end, I reach Jerusalem, Since this poor covert where I pass the night, This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence A man with plague-sores at the third degree Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here! 'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe, To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip 40 And share with thee whatever Jewry yields. A viscid choler is observable In tertians, I was nearly bold to say; And falling-sickness hath a happier cure Than our school wots of: there's a spider here Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs, Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-gray back; Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind, The Syrian runagate I trust this to? His service payeth me a sublimate 50 Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye. Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn, There set in order my experiences, Gather what most deserves, and give thee all— Or I might add, Judaea's gum-tragacanth Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained, Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry, In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy— Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar— 60 But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end. Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully, Protesteth his devotion is my price—

Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal? I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush, What set me off a-writing first of all, An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang! For, be it this town's barrenness—or else The Man had something in the look of him— His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth. 70 So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose In the great press of novelty at hand The care and pains this somehow stole from me) I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind, Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth? The very man is gone from me but now, Whose ailment is the subject of discourse. Thus then, and let thy better wit help all! 'Tis but a case of mania—subinduced By epilepsy, at the turning-point 80 Of trance prolonged unduly some three days: When, by the exhibition of some drug Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art Unknown to me and which 't were well to know, The evil thing out-breaking all at once Left the man whole and sound of body indeed, But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide, Making a clear house of it too suddenly, The first conceit that entered might inscribe Whatever it was minded on the wall 90 So plainly at that vantage, as it were, (First come, first served) that nothing subsequent Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls The just-returned and new-established soul Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart That henceforth she will read or these or none. And first—the man's own firm conviction rests That he was dead (in fact they buried him) —That he was dead and then restored to life By a Nazarene physician of his tribe: 100 —'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise. "Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry. Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume, Instead of giving way to time and health, Should eat itself into the life of life, As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all! For see, how he takes up the after-life. The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew, Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age, The body's habit wholly laudable, 110 As much, indeed, beyond the common health As he were made and put aside to show. Think, could we penetrate by any drug And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh, And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep! Whence has the man the balm that brightens all? This grown man eyes the

world now like a child. Some elders of his tribe, I should premise, Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep, To bear my inquisition. While they spoke, 120 Now sharply, now with sorrow, told the case, He listened not except I spoke to him, But folded his two hands and let them talk, Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool. And that's a sample how his years must go. Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life, Should find a treasure, can he use the same With straitened habits and with tastes starved small, And take at once to his impoverished brain The sudden element that changes things, 130 That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust? Is he not such an one as moves to mirth— Warily parsimonious, when no need, Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times? All prudent counsel as to what befits The golden mean, is lost on such an one: The man's fantastic will is the man's law. So here—we call the treasure knowledge, say, Increased beyond the fleshly faculty— 140 Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth, Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven: The man is witless of the size, the sum, The value in proportion of all things, Or whether it be little or be much. Discourse to him of prodigious armaments Assembled to besiege his city now, And of the passing of a mule with gourds— 'T is one! Then take it on the other side, Speak of some trifling fact, he will gaze rapt 150 With stupor at its very littleness, (Far as I see) as if in that indeed He caught prodigious import, whole results; And so will turn to us the bystanders In ever the same stupor (note this point) That we too see not with his opened eyes. Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play, Preposterously, at cross purposes. Should his child sicken unto death, why, look For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness, 160 Or pretermission of the daily craft! While a word, gesture, glance from that same child At play or in the school or laid asleep, Will startle him to an agony of fear, Exasperation, just as like. Demand The reason why—"'t is but a word," object— "A gesture"—he regards thee as our lord Who lived there in the pyramid alone, Looked at us (dost thou mind?) when, being young, We both would unadvisedly recite 170 Some charm's beginning,

from that book of his, Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst All into stars, as suns grown old are wont. Thou and the child have each a veil alike Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know! He holds on firmly to some thread of life— (It is the life to lead perforcedly) Which runs across some vast distracting orb 180 Of glory on either side that meagre thread, Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet— The spiritual life around the earthly life: The law of that is known to him as this, His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here. So is the man perplext with impulses Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on, Proclaiming what is right and wrong across, And not along, this black thread through the blaze— "It should be" balked by "here it cannot be." 190 And oft the man's soul springs into his face As if he saw again and heard again His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise. Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within Admonishes: then back he sinks at once To ashes, who was very fire before, In sedulous recurrence to his trade Whereby he earneth him the daily bread; And studiously the humbler for that pride, Professedly the faultier that he knows 200 God's secret, while he holds the thread of life. Indeed the especial marking of the man Is prone submission to the heavenly will— Seeing it, what it is, and why it is. 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last For that same death which must restore his being To equilibrium, body loosening soul Divorced even now by premature full growth: He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live So long as God please, and just how God please. 210 He even seeketh not to please God more (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please. Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be, Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do: How can he give his neighbor the real ground, His own conviction? Ardent as he is— Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old "Be it as God please" reassureth him. I probed the sore as thy disciple should: 220 "How, beast," said I, "this stolid carelessness Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march To stamp out like a little spark thy town, Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?"

He merely looked with his large eyes on me. The man is apathetic, you deduce? Contrariwise, he loves both old and young, Able and weak, affects the very brutes And birds—how say I? flowers of the field— As a wise workman recognizes tools 230 In a master's workshop, loving what they make. Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb: Only impatient, let him do his best, At ignorance and carelessness and sin— An indignation which is promptly curbed: As when in certain travel I have feigned To be an ignoramus in our art According to some preconceived design, And happed to hear the land's practitioners Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance, 240 Prattle fantastically on disease, Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace! Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source, Conferring with the frankness that befits? Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech Perished in a tumult many years ago, Accused—our learning's fate—of wizardry, Rebellion, to the setting up a rule 250 And creed prodigious as described to me. His death, which happened when the earthquake fell (Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss To occult learning in our lord the sage Who lived there in the pyramid alone) Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont! On vain recourse, as I conjecture it, To his tried virtue, for miraculous help— How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way! The other imputations must be lies; 260 But take one, though I loathe to give it thee, In mere respect for any good man's fame. (And after all, our patient Lazarus Is stark mad; should we count on what he says? Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech 'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.) This man so cured regards the curer, then, As—God forgive me! who but God himself, Creator and sustainer of the world, That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile! 270 —'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived, Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house; Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know, And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat, And must have so avouched himself, in fact, In hearing of this very Lazarus Who saith—but why all this of what he saith? Why write of trivial matters, things of price Calling at every

moment for remark? I noticed on the margin of a pool 280 Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort, Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange! Thy pardon for this long and tedious case, Which, now that I review it, needs must seem Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth! Nor I myself discern in what is writ Good cause for the peculiar interest And awe indeed this man has touched me with. Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus: 290 I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came A moon made like a face with certain spots Multiform, manifold and menacing: Then a wind rose behind me. So we met In this old sleepy town at unaware, The man and I. I send thee what is writ. Regard it as a chance, a matter risked To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose, Or steal, or give it thee with equal good. 300 Jerusalem's repose shall make amends For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine; Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell! The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think? So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too— So, through the thunder comes a human voice Saying, "0 heart I made, a heart beats here! Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself! Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine, But love I gave thee, with myself to love, 310 And thou must love me who have died for thee!" The madman saith He said so: it is strange. NOTES "An Epistle" gives the observations and opinions of Karshish, the Arab physician, writing to Abib, his master, upon meeting with Lazarus after he has been raised from the dead. Well versed in Eastern medical lore, he tries to explain the extraordinary phenomenon according to his knowledge. He attributes Lazarus' version of the miracle to mania induced by trance, and the means used by the Nazarene physician to awaken him, and strengthens his view by describing the strange state of mind in which he finds Lazarus—like a child with no appreciation of the relative values of things. Through his renewal of life he had caught a glimpse of it from the infinite point of view, and lives now only with the desire to please God. His sole active quality is a great love for all humanity, his impatience manifests itself only at sin and ignorance, and is quickly curbed.

Karshish, not able to realize this new plane of vision in which had been revealed to Lazarus the equal worth of all things in the divine plan, is incapable of understanding Lazarus; but in spite of his attempt to make light of the case, he is deeply impressed by the character of Lazarus, and has besides a hardly acknowledged desire to believe in this revelation, told of by Lazarus, of God as Love. Professor Corson says of this poem: "It may be said to polarize the idea, so often presented in Browning's poetry, that doubt is a condition of the vitality of faith." 17. Snakestone: a name given to any substance used as a remedy for snake-bites; for example, some are of chalk, some of animal charcoal, and some of vegetable substances. 28. Vespasian: Nero's general who marched against Palestine in 66, and was succeeded in the command, when he was proclaimed Emperor (70-79), by his son, Titus. 29. Black lynx: the Syrian lynx is distinguished by black ears. 43. Tertians: fevers, recurring every third day; hence the name. 44. Falling-sickness: epilepsy. Caesar's disease ("Julius Caesar," I. 2, 258). 45. There's a spider here: "The habits of the aranead here described point very clearly to some one of the Wandering group, which stalk their prey in the open field or in divers lurking-places, and are distinguished by this habit from the other great group, known as the Sedentary spiders, because they sit or hang upon their webs and capture their prey by means of silken snares. The next line is not determinative of the species, for there is a great number of spiders any one of which might be described as 'Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-gray back.' We have a little Saltigrade or Jumping spider, known as the Zebra spider (Epiblemum scenicum), which is found in Europe, and I believe also in Syria. One often sees this species and its congeners upon the ledges of rocks, the edges of tombstones, the walls of buildings, and like situations, hunting their prey, which they secure by jumping upon it. So common is the Zebra spider, that I might think that Browning referred to it, if I were not in doubt whether he would express the stripes of white upon its ash-gray abdomen by the word 'mottles.' However, there arc other spiders belonging to the same tribe (Saltigrades) that really

are mottled. There are also spiders known as the Lycosids or Wolf spiders or Ground spiders, which are often of an ash-gray color, and marked with little whitish spots after the manner of Browning's Syrian species. Perhaps the poet had one of these in mind, at least he accurately describes their manner of seeking prey. The next line is an interrupted one, 'Take five and drop them. . . .' Take five what? Five of these ash-gray mottled spiders? Certainly. But what can be meant by the expression 'drop them'? This opens up to us a strange chapter in human superstition. It was long a prevalent idea that the spider in various forms possessed some occult power of healing, and men administered it internally or applied it externally as a cure for many diseases. Pliny gives a number of such remedies. A certain spider applied in a piece of cloth, or another one ('a white spider with very elongated thin legs'), beaten up in oil is said by this ancient writer upon Natural History to form an ointment for the eyes. Similarly, 'the thick pulp of a spider's body, mixed with the oil of roses, is used for the ears.' Sir Matthew Lister, who was indeed the father of English araneology, is quoted in Dr. James's Medical Dictionary as using the distilled water of boiled black spiders as an excellent cure for wounds." (Dr. H. C. McCook in Poet-lore, Nov., 1889.) 53. Gum-tragacanth: yielded by the leguminous shrub, Astragalus tragacantha. 60. Zoar: the only one that was spared of the five cities of the plain (Genesis 14. 2). 108. Lazarus . . . fifty years of age: in The Academy, Sept. 16, 1896, Dr. Richard Garnett says: "Browning commits an oversight, it seems to me, in making Lazarus fifty years of age at the eve of the siege of Jerusalem, circa 68 A. D." The miracle is supposed to have been wrought about 33 A. D., and Lazarus would then have been only fifteen, although according to tradition he was thirty when he was raised from the dead, and lived only thirty years after. Upon this Prof. Charles B. Wright comments in Poet-lore, April, 1897: "I incline to think that the oversight is not Browning's. Let us stand by the tradition and the resulting age of sixty-five. . . . Karshish is simply stating his professional judgment. Lazarus is given an age suited to his appearance—he seems a man of fifty. The years have touched

him lightly since 'heaven opened to his soul.' . . . And that marvellous physical freshness deceives the very leech himself." 177. Greek fire: used by the Byzantine Greeks in warfare, first against the Saracens at the siege of Constantinople in 673 A. D. Therefore an anachronism in this poem. Liquid fire was, however, known to the ancients, as Assyrian bas-reliefs testify. Greek fire was made possibly of naphtha, saltpetre, and sulphur, and was thrown upon the enemy from copper tubes; or pledgets of tow were dipped in it and attached to arrows. 281. Blue-flowering borage: (Borago officianalis). The ancients deemed this plant one of the four "cordial flowers," for cheering the spirits, the others being the rose, violet, and alkanet. Pliny says it produces very exhilarating effects.

JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION

1842

There's heaven above, and night by night I look right through its gorgeous roof; No suns and moons though e'er so bright Avail to stop me; splendor-proof I keep the broods of stars aloof: For I intend to get to God, For 't is to God I speed so fast, For in God's breast, my own abode, Those shoals of dazzling glory, passed, I lay my spirit down at last. 10 I lie where I have always lain, God smiles as he has always smiled; Ere suns and moons could wax and wane, Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled The heavens, God thought on me his child; Ordained a life for me, arrayed Its circumstances every one To the minutest; ay, God said This head this hand should rest upon Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun. 20 And having thus created me, Thus rooted me, he bade me grow, Guiltless forever, like a tree That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know The law by which it prospers so: But sure that thought and word and deed All go to swell his love for me, Me, made because that love had need Of something irreversibly Pledged solely its content to be. 30 Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend, No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop! I have God's warrant, could I

blend All hideous sins, as in a cup, To drink the mingled venoms up; Secure my nature will convert The draught to blossoming gladness fast: While sweet dews turn to the gourd's hurt, And bloat, and while they bloat it, blast, As from the first its lot was cast. 40 For as I lie, smiled on, full-fed By unexhausted power to bless, I gaze below on hell's fierce bed, And those its waves of flame oppress, Swarming in ghastly wretchedness; Whose life on earth aspired to be One altar-smoke, so pure!—to win If not love like God's love for me, At least to keep his anger in; And all their striving turned to sin. 50 Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white With prayer, the broken-hearted nun, The martyr, the wan acolyte, The incense-swinging child—undone Before God fashioned star or sun! God, whom I praise; how could I praise, If such as I might understand, Make out and reckon on his ways, And bargain for his love, and stand, Paying a price, at his right hand? 60 NOTES "Johannes Agricola in Meditation" presents the doctrine of predestination as it appears to a devout and poetic soul whose conviction of the truth of such a doctrine has the strength of a divine revelation. Those elected for God's love can do nothing to weaken it, those not elected can do nothing to gain it, but it is not his to reason why; indeed, he could not praise a god whose ways he could understand or for whose love he had to bargain. Johannes Agricola: (1492-1566), Luther's secretary, 1519, afterward in conflict with him, and author of the doctrine called by Luther antinomian, because it rejected the Law of the Old Testament as of no use under the Gospel dispensation. In a note accompanying the first publication of this poem, Browning quotes from "The Dictionary of All Religions" (1704): "They say that good works do not further, nor evil works hinder salvation; that the child of God cannot sin, that God never chastiseth him, that murder, drunkenness, etc., are sins in the wicked but not in him, that the child of grace being once assured of salvation, afterwards never doubteth . . . that God doth not love any man for his holiness, that sanctification is no evidence of justification." Though many antinomians taught thus, says George Willis Cooke in his "Browning Guide Book," it does not correctly

represent the position of Agricola, who in reality held moral obligations to be incumbent upon the Christian, but for guidance in these he found in the New Testament all the principles and motives necessary.

PICTOR IGNOTUS

FLORENCE, 15-1845

I could have painted pictures like that youth's Ye praise so. How my soul springs up! No bar Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes! —Never did fate forbid me, star by star, To outburst on your night with all my gift Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk To the centre, of an instant; or around Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan 10 The license and the limit, space and bound, Allowed to truth made visible in man. And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw, Over the canvas could my hand have flung, Each face obedient to its passion's law, Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue; Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood, A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace, Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place; 20 Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up, And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved— 0 human faces, hath it spilt, my cup? What did ye give me that I have not saved? Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!) Of going—I, in each new picture—forth, As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell, To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South, or North, Bound for the calmly-satisfied great State, Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went, 30 Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight, Through old streets named afresh from the event, Till it reached home, where learned age should greet My face, and youth, the star not yet distinct Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!— Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked With love about, and praise, till life should end, And then not go to heaven, but linger here, Here on my earth, earth's

every man my friend— The thought grew frightful, 't was so wildly dear! 40 But a voice changed it. Glimpses of such sights Have scared me, like the revels through a door Of some strange house of idols at its rites! This world seemed not the world it was before: Mixed with my loving trusting ones, there trooped . . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun To press on me and judge me? Though I stooped Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun, They drew me forth, and spite of me . . . enough! These buy and sell our pictures, take and give, 50 Count them for garniture and household-stuff, And where they live needs must our pictures live And see their faces, listen to their prate, Partakers of their daily pettiness, Discussed of—"This I love, or this I hate, This likes me more, and this affects me less!" Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint These endless cloisters and eternal aisles With the same series. Virgin, Babe and Saint, 60 With the same cold calm beautiful regard— At least no merchant traffics in my heart; The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart; Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke, They moulder on the damp wall's travertine, 'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke. So, die my pictures! surely, gently die! O youth, men praise so—holds their praise its worth? 70 Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry? Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth? NOTES "Pictor Ignotus" is a reverie characteristic of a monastic painter of the Renaissance who recognizes, in the genius of a youth whose pictures are praised, a gift akin to his own, but which he has never so exercised, spite of the joy such free human expression and recognition of his power would have given him, because he could not bear to submit his art to worldly contact. So he has chosen to sink his name in unknown service to the Church, and to devote his fancy to pure and beautiful but cold and monotonous repetitions of sacred themes. His gentle regret that his own pictures will moulder unvisited is half wonderment that the youth can endure the sullying of his work by secular fame. 67. Travertine: a white limestone, the name being a corruption of

[Tiburtinus], from [Tibur] , now Tivoli, near Rome, whence this stone comes.

FRA LIPPO LIPPI

1855

1 am poor brother Lippo, by your leave! You need not clap your torches to my face. Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk! What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds, And here you catch me at an alley's end Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar? The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up, Do—harry out, if you must show your zeal, Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole, And nip each softling of a wee white mouse, 10 [Weke], [weke], that's crept to keep him company! Aha, you know your betters! Then, you'll take Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat, And please to know me likewise. Who am I? Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call? Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici, I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best! Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged, How you affected such a gullet's-gripe! 20 But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves Pick up a manner nor discredit you: Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets And count fair prize what comes into their net? He's Judas to a tittle, that man is! Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends. Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go Drink out this quarter-florin to the health Of the munificent House that harbors me (And many more beside, lads! more beside!) 30 And all's come square again. I'd like his face—His, elbowing on his comrade in the door With the pike and lantern—for the slave that holds John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say) And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped! It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk, A wood-coal or the like? or you should see! Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so. What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down, 40 You know them and they take you? like enough! I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—

'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first. Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch. Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands To roam the town and sing out carnival, And I've been three weeks shut within my mew, A-painting for the great man, saints and saints And saints again. I could not paint all night— Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air. 50 There came a hurry of feet and little feet, A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whifts of song— [Flower o' the broom, Take away love, and our earth is a tomb! Flower o' the quince, I let Lisa go, and what good is life since? Flower o' the thyme]—and so on. Round they went. Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight—three slim shapes, And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood, That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went, 61 Curtain and counterpane and coverlet, All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots, There was a ladder! Down I let myself, Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped, And after them. I came up with the fun Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met— [Flower o' the rose, If I've been merry, what matter who knows?] And so as I was stealing back again 70 To get to bed and have a bit of sleep Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast With his great round stone to subdue the flesh, You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see! Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head— Mine's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting's in that! If Master Cosimo announced himself, Mum's the word naturally; but a monk! Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now! 80 I was a baby when my mother died And father died and left me in the street. I starved there. God knows how, a year or two On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks, Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day, My stomach being empty as your hat, The wind doubled me up and down I went. Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand, (Its fellow was a stinger as I knew) And so along the wall, over the bridge, 90 By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there, While I stood munching my first bread that month: "So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father Wiping his own mouth, 't was refection-time— "To quit

this very miserable world? Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?" thought I; By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me; 1 did renounce the world, its pride and greed, Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house, Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici 100 Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old. Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure, 'T was not for nothing—the good bellyful, The warm serge and the rope that goes all round, And day-long blessed idleness beside! "Let's see what the urchin's fit for"—that came next, Not overmuch their way, I must confess. Such a to-do! They tried me with their books: Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste! [Flower o' the clove, 110 All the Latin I construe is, "amo" I love!] But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets Eight years together, as my fortune was, Watching folk's faces to know who will fling The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires, And who will curse or kick him for his pains, Which gentleman processional and fine, Holding a candle to the Sacrament, Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch The droppings of the wax to sell again, 120 Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped, How say I?—nay, which dog bites?, which lets drop His bone from the heap of offal in the street— Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike, He learns the look of things, and none the less For admonition from the hunger-pinch. I had a store of such remarks, be sure, Which, after I found leisure, turned to use. I drew men's faces on my copy-books, Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge, 130 Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes, Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's, And made a string of pictures of the world Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun, On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black. "Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out, d' ye say? In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark. What if at last we get our man of parts, We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine 140 And put the front on it that ought to be!" And hereupon he bade me daub away. Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank, Never was such prompt disemburdening. First, every sort of monk, the black and white, I drew them, fat and

lean : then, folk at church, From good old gossips waiting to confess Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends— To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot, Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there 150 With the little children round him in a row Of admiration, half for his beard and half For that white anger of his victim's son Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm, Signing himself with the other because of Christ (Whose sad face on the cross sees only this After the passion of a thousand years) Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head, (Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf, 160 Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers (The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone, I painted all, then cried "'T is ask and have; Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat, And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall. The monks closed in a circle and praised loud Till checked, taught what to see and not to see, Being simple bodies—"That's the very man! Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog! That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes 170 To care about his asthma: it's the life!" But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked; Their betters took their turn to see and say: The Prior and the learned pulled a face And stopped all that in no time. "How? what's here? Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all! Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game! Your business is not to catch men with show, With homage to the perishable clay, 180 But lift them over it, ignore it all, Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh. Your business is to paint the souls of men— Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no, it's not . . . It's vapor done up like a new-born babe— (In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth) It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul! Give us no more of body than shows soul! Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God, That sets us praising—why not stop with him? 190 Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head With wonder at lines, colors, and what not? Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms! Rub all out, try at it a second time. Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts, She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say— Who went and danced

and got men's heads cut off! Have it all out! "Now, is this sense, I ask? A fine way to paint soul, by painting body So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further 200 And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white When what you put for yellow's simply black, And any sort of meaning looks intense When all beside itself means and looks naught. Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn, Left foot and right foot, go a double step, Make his flesh liker and his soul more like, Both in their order? Take the prettiest face, The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty You can't discover if it means hope, fear, 210 Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these? Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue, Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash, And then add soul and heighten them three-fold? Or say there's beauty with no soul at all— (I never saw it—put the case the same—) If you get simple beauty and naught else, You get about the best thing God invents: That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed, Within yourself, when you return him thanks. 220 "Rub all out! "Well, well, there's my life, in short, And so the thing has gone on ever since. I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds: You should not take a fellow eight years old And make him swear to never kiss the girls. I'm my own master, paint now as I please— Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house! Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front— Those great rings serve more purposes than just To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse! 230 And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work, The heads shake still—"It's art's decline, my son! You're not of the true painters, great and old; Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find; Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer: Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!" [Flower o' the pine, You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!] I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know! 240 Don't you think they're the likeliest to know, They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage, Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint To please them—sometimes do and sometimes don't; For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints— A laugh, a cry, the business of the world— [(Flower o' the

peach, Death for us all, and his own life for each!)] And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over, 250 The world and life's too big to pass for a dream, And I do these wild things in sheer despite, And play the fooleries you catch me at, In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so, Although the miller does not preach to him The only good of grass is to make chaff. What would men have? Do they like grass or no— May they or may n't they? all I want's the thing Settled forever one way. As it is, 260 You tell too many lies and hurt yourself: You don't like what you only like too much, You do like what, if given you at your word, You find abundantly detestable. For me, I think I speak as I was taught; I always see the garden and God there A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned, The value and significance of flesh, I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards, You understand me: I'm a beast, I know. 270 But see, now—why, I see as certainly As that the morning-star's about to shine, What will hap some day. We've a youngster here Comes to our convent, studies what I do, Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop: His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the monks— They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk— He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace, I hope so—though I never live so long, I know what's sure to follow. You be judge! 280 You speak no Latin more than I, belike; However, you're my man, you've seen the world —The beauty and the wonder and the power, The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades, Changes, surprises,—and God made it all! —For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no, For this fair town's face, yonder river's line, The mountain round it and the sky above, Much more the figures of man, woman, child, These are the frame to? What's it all about? 290 To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon, Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say. But why not do as well as say—paint these Just as they are, careless what comes of it? God's works—paint any one, and count it crime To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works Are here already; nature is complete: Suppose you reproduce her (which you can't) There's no advantage! you must beat her, then." For, don't you mark? we're

made so that we love 300 First when we see them painted, things we have passed Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see; And so they are better, painted—better to us, Which is the same thing. Art was given for that; God uses us to help each other so, Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now, Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk, And trust me but you should, though! How much more, If I drew higher things with the same truth! That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place, 310 Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh, It makes me mad to see what men shall do And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us, Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good: To find its meaning is my meat and drink. "Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer!" Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain It does not say to folk—remember matins, Or, mind you fast next Friday! "Why, for this What need of art at all? A skull and bones, 320 Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best, A bell to chime the hour with, does as well. I painted a Saint Laurence six months since At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style: " How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?" I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns— "Already not one phiz of your three slaves Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side, But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content, The pious people have so eased their own 330 With coming to say prayers there in a rage: We get on fast to see the bricks beneath. Expect another job this time next year, For pity and religion grow i' the crowd— Your painting serves its purpose! Hang the fools! —That is—you'll not mistake an idle word Spoke in a huff by a poor monk. God wot, Tasting the air this spicy night which turns The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine! Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now! 340 It's natural a poor monk out of bounds Should have his apt word to excuse himself: And hearken how I plot to make amends. I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece . . . There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the nuns! They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint God in the midst. Madonna and her babe, Ringed by a bowery flowery angel-brood, Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet 350 As puff on puff of grated orris-root When

ladies crowd to Church at midsummer. And then i' the front, of course a saint or two— Saint John, because he saves the Florentines, Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white The convent's friends and gives them a long day, And Job, I must have him there past mistake, The man of Uz (and Us without the z, Painters who need his patience). Well, all these Secured at their devotion, up shall come 360 Out of a corner when you least expect, As one by a dark stair into a great light, Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!— Mazed, motionless and moonstruck—I'm the man! Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear? I, caught up with my monk's-things by mistake, My old serge gown and rope that goes all round, I, in this presence, this pure company! Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape? Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing 370 Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!" —Addresses the celestial presence, "nay— He made you and devised you, after all, Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there draw— His camel-hair make up a painting-brush? We come to brother Lippo for all that, [Iste perfecit opus.]" So, all smile— I shuffle sideways with my blushing face Under the cover of a hundred wings Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay 380 And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut, Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off To some safe bench behind, not letting go The palm of her, the little lily thing That spoke the good word for me in the nick, Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say. And so all's saved for me, and for the church A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence! Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights, no lights! 390 The street's hushed, and I know my own way back, Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning. Zooks! NOTES "Fra Lippo Lippi" is a dramatic monologue which incidentally conveys the whole story of the occurrence the poem starts from—the seizure of Fra Lippo by the City Guards, past midnight, in an equivocal neighborhood—and the lively talk that arose thereupon, outlines the character and past life of the Florentine artist-monk (1412-1469) and the subordinate personalities of the group of officers; and makes all this contribute towards the

presentation of Fra Lippo as a type of the more realistic and secular artist of the Renaissance who valued flesh, and protested against the ascetic spirit which strove to isolate the soul. 7. The Carmine: monastery of the Del Carmine friars. 17. Cosimo: de' Medici (1389-1464), Florentine statesman and patron of the arts. 23. Pilchards: a kind of fish. 53. Flower o' the broom: of the many varieties of folk-songs in Italy that which furnished Browning with a model for Lippo's songs is called a stornello. The name is variously derived. Some take it as merely short for ritornillo; others derive it from a storno, to sing against each other, because the peasants sing them at their work, and as one ends a song, another caps it with a fresh one, and so on. These stornelli consist of three lines. The first usually contains the name of a flower which sets the rhyme, and is five syllables long. Then the love theme is told in two lines of eleven syllables each, agreeing by rhyme, assonance, or repetition with the first. The first line may be looked upon as a burden set at the beginning instead of, as is more familiar to us, at the end. There are also stornelli formed of three lines of eleven syllables without any burden. Browning has made Lippo's songs of only two lines, but he has strictly followed the rule of making the first line, containing the address to the flower, of five syllables. The Tuscany versions of two of the songs used by Browning are as follows: "Flower of the pine! Call me not ever happy heart again, But call me heavy heart, 0 comrades mine." "Flower of the broom! Unwed thy mother keeps thee not to lose That flower from the window of the room." 67. Saint Laurence: the church of San Lorenzo. 88. Aunt Lapaccia: by the death of Lippo's father, says Vasari, he "was left a friendless orphan at the age of two . . . under the care of Mona Lapaccia, his aunt, who brought him up with very great difficulty till his eighth year, when, being no longer able to support the burden, she placed him in the Convent of the Carmelites." 121. The Eight: the magistrates of Florence. 130. Antiphonary: the Roman Service-Book, containing all that is sung in the choir—the antiphones, responses, etc.; it was compiled by Gregory the Great. 131. joined legs and arms to the long music-notes:

the musical notation of Lippo's day was entirely different from ours, the notes being square and oblong and rather less suited for arms and legs than the present rounded notes. 139. Camaldolese: monks of Camaldoli.—Preaching Friars: the Dominicans. 189. Giotto: reviver of art in Italy, painter, sculptor, and architect (1266-1337). 196. Herodias: Matthew xiv.6-11. 235. Brother Angelico: Fra Angelico, Giovanni da Fiesole (1387-1455), flower of the monastic school of art, who was said to paint on his knees. 236. Brother Lorenzo: Lorenzo Monaco, of the same school. 276. Guidi : Tommaso Guidi, or Masaccio, nicknamed "Hulking Tom" (1401-1429). [Vasari makes him Lippo's predecessor. Browning followed the best knowledge of his time in making him, instead, Lippo's pupil. Vasari is now thought to be right.] 323. A Saint Laurence . . . at Prato: near Florence, where Lippi painted many saints. [Vasari speaks of a Saint Stephen painted there in the same realistic manner as Browning's Saint Laurence, whose martyrdom of broiling to death on a gridiron affords Lippo's powers a livelier effect.] The legend of this saint makes his fortitude such that he bade his persecutors turn him over, as he was "done on one side." 346. Something in Sant Ambrogio's: picture of the Virgin crowned with angels and saints, painted for Saint Ambrose Church, now at the Belle Arti in Florence. Vasari says by means of it he became known to Cosimo. Browning, on the other hand, crowns his poem with Lippo's description of this picture as an expiation for his pranks. 354. Saint John: the Baptist; see reference to camel-hair, line 375 and Matthew iii. 4. 355. Saint Ambrose: (340-397), Archbishop of Milan. 358. Man of Uz : Job i. 1. 377. [Iste perfecit opus]: this one completed the work. 381. Hot cockles: an old-fashioned game.

ANDREA DEL SARTO

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER")

1855

But do not let us quarrel any more, No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once: Sit down and all shall happen as you wish. You turn your face, but does it bring your heart? I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear, Treat his own subject after his own way, Fix his own time, accept too his own price, And shut the money into this small hand When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly? Oh, I'll content him—but to-morrow. Love! 10 I often am much wearier than you think, This evening more than usual, and it seems As if—forgive now—should you let me sit Here by the window with your hand in mine And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole, Both of one mind, as married people use, Quietly, quietly the evening through, I might get up to-morrow to my work Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try. To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this! 20 Your soft hand is a woman of itself, And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside. Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve For each of the five pictures we require: It saves a model. So! keep looking so— My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds! —How could you ever prick those perfect ears, Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet— My face, my moon, my everybody's moon, Which everybody looks on and calls his, 30 And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn, While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less. You smile? why, there's my picture ready made, There's what we painters call our harmony! A common grayness silvers everything— All in a twilight, you and I alike —You, at the point of your first pride in me (That's gone you know)—but I, at every point; My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole. 40 There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top; That length of convent-wall across the way Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside; The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease, And autumn grows, autumn in everything. Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape— As if I saw alike my work and self And all that I was born to be and do, A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand. How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead; 50 So free we seem, so fettered fast we are! I feel he laid the fetter:

let it lie! This chamber for example—turn your head— All that's behind us! You don't understand Nor care to understand about my art, But you can hear at least when people speak: And that cartoon, the second from the door —It is the thing. Love! so such things should be— Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say. I can do with my pencil what I know, 60 What I see, what at bottom of my heart I wish for, if I ever wish so deep— Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly, I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge, Who listened to the Legate's talk last week, And just as much they used to say in France. At any rate 'tis easy, all of it! No sketches first, no studies, that's long past: I do what many dream of, all their lives, —Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do, 70 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such On twice your fingers, and not leave this town, Who strive—you don't know how the others strive To paint a little thing like that you smeared Carelessly passing with your robes afloat— Yet do much less, so much less. Someone says, (I know his name, no matter)—so much less! Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged. There burns a truer light of God in them, In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain, 80 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine. Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know, Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me, Enter and take their place there sure enough, Though they come back and cannot tell the world. My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here. The sudden blood of these men! at a word— Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too. I, painting from myself and to myself, 90 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame Or their praise either. Somebody remarks Morello's outline there is wrongly traced, His hue mistaken; what of that? or else, Sightly traced and well ordered; what of that? Speak as they please, what does the mountain care? Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray Placid, and perfect with my art: the worse! I know both what I want and what might gain, 100 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh "Had I been two, another and myself, Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.

Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth The Urbinate who died five years ago. ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.) Well, I can fancy how he did it all, Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see, Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him, Above and through his art—for it gives way; 110 That arm is wrongly put—and there again— A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines, Its body, so to speak: its soul is right, He means right—that, a child may understand. Still, what an arm! and I could alter it: But all the play, the insight and the stretch— Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out? Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul, We might have risen to Rafael, I and you! Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think— 120 More than I merit, yes, by many times. But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow, And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth, And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare— Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind! Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged "God and the glory! never care for gain. The present by the future, what is that? Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo! 130 Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!" I might have done it for you. So it seems: Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules. Beside, incentives come from the soul's self; The rest avail not. Why do I need you? What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo? In this world, who can do a thing, will not; And who would do it, cannot, I perceive: Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power— And thus we half-men struggle. At the end, 140 God, I conclude, compensates, punishes. 'T is safer for me, if the award be strict, That I am something underrated here, Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth. I dared not, do you know, leave home all day, For fear of chancing on the Paris lords. The best is when they pass and look aside; But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all. Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time, And that long festal year at Fontainebleau! 150 I surely then could sometimes leave the ground, Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear, In that humane great monarch's golden look— One finger in his beard or twisted curl Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile, One arm about my shoulder, round my

neck, The jingle of his gold chain in my ear, I painting proudly with his breath on me, All his court round him, seeing with his eyes, Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls 160 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts— And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond, This in the background, waiting on my work, To crown the issue with a last reward! A good time, was it not, my kingly days? And had you not grown restless . . . but I know— 'T is done and past; 't was right, my instinct said, Too live the life grew, golden and not gray, And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt Out of the grange whose four walls make his world. 170 How could it end in any other way? You called me, and I came home to your heart. The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost? Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold, You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine! "Rafael did this, Andrea painted that; The Roman's is the better when you pray, But still the other's Virgin was his wife—" Men will excuse me, I am glad to judge 180 Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows My better fortune, I resolve to think. For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives, Said one day Agnolo, his very self, To Rafael's . . . I have known it all these years . . . (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see, Too lifted up in heart because of it) "Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how, 190 Who, were he set to plan and execute As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings, Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!" To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong. I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see, Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go! Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out! Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth, (What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo? Do you forget already words like those?) 200 If really there was such a chance, so lost— Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased. Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed! This hour has been an hour! Another smile? If you would sit thus by me every night I should work better, do you comprehend? I mean that I should earn more, give you more. See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;

Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall, The cue-owls speak the name we call them by. 210 Come from the window, love—come in, at last, Inside the melancholy little house We built to be so gay with. God is just. King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights When I look up from painting, eyes tired out, The walls become illumined, brick from brick Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold, That gold of his I did cement them with! Let us but love each other. Must you go? That Cousin here again? he waits outside? 220 Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans? More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that? Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend? While hand and eye and something of a heart Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth? I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit The gray remainder of the evening out, Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly How I could paint, were I but back in France, One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face, 230 Not yours this time! I want you at my side To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—Judge all I do and tell you of its worth. Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend. I take the subjects for his corridor, Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there, And throw him in another thing or two If he demurs; the whole should prove enough To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside, What's better and what's all I care about, 240 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff! Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he, The Cousin! what does he to please you more? I am grown peaceful as old age to-night. I regret little, I would change still less. Since there my past life lies, why alter it? The very wrong to Francis!—it is true I took his coin, was tempted and complied, And built this house and sinned, and all is said. My father and my mother died of want. 250 Well, had I riches of my own? you see How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot. They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died: And I have labored somewhat in my time And not been paid profusely. Some good son Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try! No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes, You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night. This must suffice me here. What would one have? In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—

260 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem, Meted on each side by the angel's reed, For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me To cover—the three first without a wife, While I have mine! So—still they overcome Because there's still Lucrezia—as I choose. Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love. NOTES "Andrea del Sarto." This monologue reveals, beside the personalities of both Andrea and Lucretia and the main incidents of their lives, the relations existing between Andrea's character, his choice of a wife, and the peculiar quality of his art; the whole serving, also, to illustrate the picture on which the poem is based. The gray tone that silvers the picture pervades the poem with an air of helpless, resigned melancholy, and sets forth the fatal quality of facile craftsmanship joined with a flaccid spirit. —Mr. John Kenyon, Mrs. Browning's cousin, asked Browning to get him a copy of the picture of Andrea and his wife in the Pitti Palace. Browning, being unable to find one, wrote this poem describing it, instead. Andrea (1486-1531), because his father was a tailor, was called del Sarto, also, il pittore senza errori, "the faultless painter." 2. Lucrezia: di Baccio del Fede, a cap-maker's widow, says Vasari, who ensnared Andrea "before her husband's death, and who delighted in trapping the hearts of men." 15. Fiesole: a hillside city on the Arno, three miles west of Florence. 93. Morello: the highest of the Apennine mountains north of Florence. 105. The Urbinate: Raphael Santi (1483-1520), so called because born at Urbino. 106. Vasari: painter and writer of the "Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Painters," which supplied Browning with material for this poem and for "Fra Lippo." 130. Agnolo: Michel Agnolo Buonarotti, painter, sculptor, and 1architect (1475-564). 149. Francis: Francis I of France (1494-1547), who invited Andrea to his Court at Fontainebleau, where he was loaded with gifts and honors, until, says Vasari, "came to him certain letters from Florence written to him by his wife . . . with bitter complaints," when, taking "the money which the king confided to him for the purchase of pictures and statues, . . . he set off . . . having sworn on the Gospels to return in a few months. Arrived in Florence, he lived joyously with his wife for some time, making presents to her

father and sisters, but doing nothing for his own parents, who died in poverty and misery. When the period specified by the king had come . . . he found himself at the end not only of his own money but . . . of that of the king." 184. Agnolo . . . to Rafael: Angelo's remark is given thus by Bocchi, "Bellezze di Firenze"; "There is a bit of a manikin in Florence who, if he chanced to be employed in great undertakings as you have happened to be, would compel you to look well about you." 210. Cue-owls: the owl's cry gives it its common name in various languages and countries; the peculiarity of its cry as to the predominant sound of oo or ow naming the species. This Italian [a`]ulo] is probably the [Bubo], of the same family as our cat-owl. Buffon gives its note, [he-hoo], [boo-hoo]; hence the Latin name, [Bubo]. 241. Scudi: Italian coins. 261. The New Jerusalem: Revelation 21.15-17. 263. Leonard: Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), painter, sculptor, architect, and engineer, who, together with Rafael and Agnolo, incarnates the genius of the Renaissance. He visited the same Court to which Andrea was invited, and was said to have died in the arms of Francis I.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH

ROME, 15—

1845

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity! Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back? Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well— She, men would have to be your mother once, Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was! What's done is done, and she is dead beside, Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since, And as she died so must we die ourselves, And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream. Life, how and what is it? As here I lie 10 In this state-chamber, dying by degrees, Hours and long

hours in the dead night, I ask "Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all. Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace; And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know: —Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care; Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South He graced his carrion with. God curse the same! Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence 20 One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side, And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats, And up into the aery dome where live The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk; And I shall fill my slab of basalt there, And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest, With those nine columns round me, two and two, The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands: Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse. 30 —Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone, Put me where I may look at him! True peach, Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize! Draw close: that conflagration of my church —What then? So much was saved if aught were missed! My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood, Drop water gently till the surface sink, And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . . Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft, 40 And corded up in a tight olive-frail, Some lump, ah God, of [lapis lazuli], Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape, Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . . Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all, That brave Frascati villa with its bath, So, let the blue lump poise between my knees, Like God the Father's globe on both his hands Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay, For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst! 50 Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years: Man goeth to the grave, and where is he? Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black— 'T was ever antique-black I meant! How else Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath? The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me, Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so, The Saviour at his sermon on the mount, Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan 60 Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off, And Moses with the tables . . . but I know Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee, Child of my bowels, Anselm?

Ah, ye hope To revel down my villas while I gasp Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at! Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then! 'T is jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve. My bath must needs be left behind, alas! 70 One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut, There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world— And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts, And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs? —That's if ye carve my epitaph aright, Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word, No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line— Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need! And then how I shall lie through centuries, 80 And hear the blessed mutter of the mass, And see God made and eaten all day long, And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke! For as I lie here, hours of the dead night, Dying in state and by such slow degrees, I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook, And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point, And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work: 90 And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts Grow, with a certain humming in my ears, About the life before I lived this life, And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests, Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount, Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes, And new-found agate urns as fresh as day, And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet, —Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend? No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best! 100 Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage. All lapis, all, sons! Else I give the Pope My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart? Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick, They glitter like your mother's for my soul, Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze, Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term, And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down, 110 To comfort me on my entablature Whereon I am to lie till I must ask "Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there! For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone— Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat As if the corpse they

keep were oozing through— And no more lapis to delight the world! Well go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there, But in a row: and, going, turn your backs 120 —Ay, like departing altar-ministrants, And leave me in my church, the church for peace, That I may watch at leisure if he leers— Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone, As still he envied me, so fair she was! NOTES "The Bishop orders his Tomb" This half-delirious pleading of the dying prelate for a tomb which shall gratify his luxurious artistic tastes and personal rivalries, presents dramatically not merely the special scene of the worldly old bishop's petulant struggle against his failing power, and his collapse, finally, beneath the will of his so-called nephews, it also illustrates a characteristic gross form of the Renaissance spirit encumbered with Pagan survivals, fleshly appetites, and selfish monopolizings which hampered its development.— "It is nearly all that I said of the Central Renaissance—its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin—in thirty pages of the 'Stones of Venice,' put into as many lines, Browning's being also the antecedent work" (Ruskin). The Church of St.Praxed is notable for the beauty of its stone-work and mosaics, one of its chapels being so extraordinarily rich that it was called [Orto del Paradiso], or the Garden of Paradise; and so, although the bishop and his tomb there are imaginary, it supplies an appropriate setting for the poetic scene. 1. Vanity, saith the preacher: Ecclesiastes 1.2. 21. Epistle-side: the right-hand side facing the altar, where the epistle is read by the priest acting as celebrant, the gospel being read from the other side by the priest acting as assistant. 25. Basalt: trap-rock, leaden or black in color. 31. Onion stone: for the Italian [cipollino], a kind of greenish-white marble splitting into coats like an onion, [cipolla]; hence so called. 41. Olive-frail: a basket made of rushes, used for packing olives. 42. Lapis lazuli: a bright blue stone. 46. Frascati: near Rome, on the Alban hills. 48. God the Father's globe: in the group of the Trinity adorning the altar of Saint Ignatius at the church of Il Gesu in Rome. 51. Weaver's shuttle: Job 7.6. 54. Antique-black: Nero antico. Browning gives the English equivalent for the name of

this stone. 58. Tripod: the seat with three feet on which the priestess of Apollo sat to prophesy, an emblem of the Delphic oracle. Thyrsus: the ivy-coiled staffer spear stuck in a pine-cone, symbol of Bacchic orgy. These, with the other Pagan tokens and pictures, mingle oddly but significantly with the references to the Saviour, Saint Praxed, and Moses. See also line 92, where Saint Praxed is confused with the Saviour, in the mind of the dying priest. Saint Praxed, the virgin daughter of a Roman Senator and friend of Saint Paul, in whose honor the Bishop's Church is named, is again brought forward in lines 73-75 in a queer capacity which pointedly illustrates the speaker and his time. 66. Travertine: see note "Pictor Ignotus," 67. 68. jasper: a dark green stone with blood-red spots, susceptible of high polish. 77. Tully's: Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-46 B. C.). 79. Ulpian: a Roman jurist (170-228 A. D.), belonging to the degenerate age of Roman literature. 99. [Elucescebat]: he was illustrious; formed from [elucesco], an inceptive verb from [eluceo]: in post classic Latin. 102. Else I give the Pope my villas: perhaps a threat founded on the custom of Julius II and other popes, according to Burckhardt, of enlarging their power "by making themselves heirs of the cardinals and clergy . . . Hence the splendor of tile tombs of the prelates . . . a part of the plunder being in this way saved from the hands of the Pope." 108. A vizor and a Term: a mask, and a bust springing from a square pillar, representing the Roman god Terminus, who presided over boundaries.

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY

1855

No more wine? then we'll push back chairs and talk. A final glass for me, though: cool, i' faith! We ought to have our Abbey back, you see. It's different, preaching in basilicas, And doing duty in some masterpiece Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart! I doubt if they're half baked, those chalk rosettes, Ciphers and

stucco-twiddlings everywhere; It's just like breathing in a lime-kiln: eh? These hot long ceremonies of our church 10 Cost us a little—oh, they pay the price, You take me—amply pay it! Now, we'll talk. So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs. No deprecation—nay, I beg you, sir! Beside 't is our engagement: don't you know, I promised, if you'd watch a dinner out, We'd see truth dawn together?—truth that peeps Over the glasses' edge when dinner's done, And body gets its sop and holds its noise And leaves soul free a little. Now's the time: 20 Truth's break of day! You do despise me then. And if I say, "despise me"—never fear! 1 know you do not in a certain sense— Not in my arm-chair, for example: here, I well imagine you respect my place ([Status, entourage], worldly circumstance) Quite to its value—very much indeed: —Are up to the protesting eyes of you In pride at being seated here for once— You'll turn it to such capital account! 30 When somebody, through years and years to come, Hints of the bishop—names me—that's enough: "Blougram? I knew him"—(into it you slide) "Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day, All alone, we two; he's a clever man: And after dinner—why, the wine you know— Oh, there was wine, and good!—what with the wine . . . 'Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk! He's no bad fellow, Blougram; he had seen Something of mine he relished, some review: 40 He's quite above their humbug in his heart, Half-said as much, indeed—the thing's his trade. I warrant, Blougram 's sceptical at times: How otherwise? I liked him, I confess!" [Che che], my dear sir, as we say at Rome, Don't you protest now! It's fair give and take; You have had your turn and spoken your home-truths: The hand's mine now, and here you follow suit. Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays— You do despise me; your ideal of life 50 Is not the bishop's: you would not be I. You would like better to be Goethe, now, Or Buonaparte, or, bless me, lower still, Count D'Orsay—so you did what you preferred, Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot help, Believed or disbelieved, no matter what, So long as on that point, whate'er it was, You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself. —That, my ideal never can include, Upon that element of truth and worth

60 Never be based! for say they make me Pope— (They can't—suppose it for our argument!) Why, there I'm at my tether's end, I've reached My height, and not a height which pleases you: An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say. It's like those eerie stories nurses tell, Of how some actor on a stage played Death, With pasteboard crown, sham orb and tinselled dart, And called himself the monarch of the world; Then, going in the tire-room afterward, 70 Because the play was done, to shift himself, Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly, The moment he had shut the closet door, By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope At unawares, ask what his baubles mean, And whose part he presumed to play just now. Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true! So, drawing comfortable breath again, You weigh and find, whatever more or less I boast of my ideal realized 80 Is nothing in the balance when opposed To your ideal, your grand simple life, Of which you will not realize one jot. I am much, you are nothing; you would be all, I would be merely much: you beat me there. No, friend, you do not beat me: hearken why! The common problem, yours, mine, every one's, Is—not to fancy what were fair in life Provided it could be—but, finding first What may be, then find how to make it fair 90 Up to our means: a very different thing! No abstract intellectual plan of life Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws, But one, a man, who is man and nothing more, May lead within a world which (by your leave) Is Rome or London, not Fool's-paradise. Embellish Rome, idealize away, Make paradise of London if you can, You're welcome, nay, you're wise. A simile! We mortals cross the ocean of this world 100 Each in his average cabin of a life; The best's not big, the worst yields elbow-room. Now for our six months' voyage—how prepare? You come on shipboard with a landsman's list Of things he calls convenient: so they are! An India screen is pretty furniture, A piano-forte is a fine resource, All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf, The new edition fifty volumes long; And little Greek books, with the funny type 110 They get up well at Leipsic, fill the next: Go on! slabbed marble, what a bath it makes! And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us add! 'T were pleasant could Correggio's fleeting

glow Hang full in face of one where'er one roams, Since he more than the others brings with him Italy's self—the marvellous Modenese!— Yet was not on your list before, perhaps. —Alas, friend, here's the agent . . . is 't the name? The captain, or whoever's master here— 120 You see him screw his face up; what's his cry Ere you set foot on shipboard? "Six feet square!" If you won't understand what six feet mean, Compute and purchase stores accordingly— And if, in pique because he overhauls Your Jerome, piano, bath, you come on board Bare—why, you cut a figure at the first While sympathetic landsmen see you off; Not afterward, when long ere half seas over, You peep up from your utterly naked boards 130 Into some snug and well-appointed berth, Like mine for instance (try the cooler jug— Put back the other, but don't jog the ice!) And mortified you mutter "Well and good; He sits enjoying his sea-furniture; 'Tis stout and proper, and there's store of it; Though I've the better notion, all agree, Of fitting rooms up. Hang the carpenter, Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances— I would have brought my Jerome, frame and all!" 140 And meantime you bring nothing: never mind— You've proved your artist-nature: what you don't You might bring, so despise me, as I say. Now come, let's backward to the starting-place. See my way: we're two college friends, suppose. Prepare together for our voyage, then; Each note and check the other in his work— Here's mine, a bishop's outfit; criticise! What's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too? Why first, you don't believe, you don't and can't, 150 (Not statedly, that is, and fixedly And absolutely and exclusively) In any revelation called divine. No dogmas nail your faith; and what remains But say so, like the honest man you are? First, therefore, overhaul theology! Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think, Must find believing every whit as hard: And if I do not frankly say as much, The ugly consequence is clear enough. 160 Now wait, my friend: well, I do not believe— If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed, Absolute and exclusive, as you say. You're wrong—I mean to prove it in due time. Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall, So give up hope accordingly to solve— (To

you, and over the wine). Our dogmas then With both of us, though in unlike degree, Missing full credence—overboard with them! 170 I mean to meet you on your own premise: Good, there go mine in company with yours! And now what are we? unbelievers both, Calm and complete, determinately fixed To-day, to-morrow and forever, pray? You'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think! In no wise! all we've gained is, that belief, As unbelief before, shakes us by fits, Confounds us like its predecessor. Where's The gain? how can we guard our unbelief, 180 Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here. Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch, A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death, A chorus-ending from Euripides— And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears As old and new at once as nature's self, To rap and knock and enter in our soul, Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring, Round the ancient idol, on his base again— The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly. 190 There the old misgivings, crooked questions are— This good God—what he could do, if he would, Would, if he could—then must have done long since: If so, when, where and how? some way must be— Once feel about, and soon or late you hit Some sense, in which it might be, after all. Why not, "The Way, the Truth, the Life?" —That way Over the mountain, which who stands upon Is apt to doubt if it be meant for a road; While, if he views it from the waste itself, 200 Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow, Not vague, mistakable! what's a break or two Seen from the unbroken desert either side? And then (to bring in fresh philosophy) What if the breaks themselves should prove at last The most consummate of contrivances To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith? And so we stumble at truth's very test! All we have gained then by our unbelief Is a life of doubt diversified by faith, 210 For one of faith diversified by doubt: We called the chess-board white—we call it black. "Well," you rejoin, "the end's no worse, at least; We've reason for both colors on the board: Why not confess then, where I drop the faith And you the doubt, that I'm as right as you?" Because, friend, in the next place, this being so, And both things even—faith and unbelief Left to a man's choice—we'll proceed a step,

Returning to our image, which I like. 220 A man's choice, yes—but a cabin-passenger's— The man made for the special life o' the world— Do you forget him? I remember though! Consult our ship's conditions and you find One and but one choice suitable to all; The choice, that you unluckily prefer, Turning things topsy-turvy—they or it Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief Bears upon life, determines its whole course, Begins at its beginning. See the world 230 Such as it is—you made it not, nor I; I mean to take it as it is—and you, Not so you'll take it—though you get naught else. I know the special kind of life I like, What suits the most my idiosyncrasy, Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit In power, peace, pleasantness and length of days. I find that positive belief does this For me, and unbelief, no whit of this. —For you, it does, however?—that, we'll try! 240 'T is clear, I cannot lead my life, at least, Induce the world to let me peaceably, Without declaring at the outset, "Friends, I absolutely and peremptorily Believe!"—I say, faith is my waking life: One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals, We know, but waking's the main point with us, And my provision's for life's waking part. Accordingly, I use heart, head and hand All day, I build, scheme, study, and make friends; 250 And when night overtakes me, down I lie, Sleep, dream a little, and get done with it, The sooner the better, to begin afresh. What's midnight's doubt before the dayspring's faith? You, the philosopher, that disbelieve, That recognize the night, give dreams their weight— To be consistent you should keep your bed, Abstain from healthy acts that prove you man, For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares! And certainly at night you'll sleep and dream, 260 Live through the day and bustle as you please. And so you live to sleep as I to wake, To unbelieve as I to still believe? Well, and the common sense o' the world calls you Bed-ridden—and its good things come to me. Its estimation, which is half the fight, That's the first-cabin comfort I secure: The next . . . but you perceive with half an eye! Come, come, it's best believing, if we may; You can't but own that! Next, concede again, 270 If once we choose belief, on all accounts We can't be too decisive in our faith, Conclusive and

exclusive in its terms, To suit the world which gives us the good things. In every man's career are certain points Whereon he dares not be indifferent; The world detects him clearly, if he dare, As baffled at the game, and losing life. He may care little or he may care much For riches, honor, pleasure, work, repose, 280 Since various theories of life and life's Success are extant which might easily Comport with either estimate of these; And whoso chooses wealth or poverty, Labor or quiet, is not judged a fool Because his fellow would choose otherwise; We let him choose upon his own account So long as he's consistent with his choice. But certain points, left wholly to himself, When once a man has arbitrated on, 290 We say he must succeed there or go hang. Thus, he should wed the woman he loves most Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or need— For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch, Or follow, at the least, sufficiently, The form of faith his conscience holds the best, Whate'er the process of conviction was: For nothing can compensate his mistake On such a point, the man himself being judge: He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul. 300 Well now, there's one great form of Christian faith I happened to be born in—which to teach Was given me as I grew up, on all hands, As best and readiest means of living by; The same on examination being proved The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise And absolute form of faith in the whole world— Accordingly, most potent of all forms For working on the world. Observe, my friend! Such as you know me, I am free to say, 310 In these hard latter days which hamper one, Myself—by no immoderate exercise Of intellect and learning, but the tact To let external forces work for me, —Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread; Bid Peter's creed, or rather, Hildebrand's, Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world And make my life an ease and joy and pride; It does so—which for me 's a great point gained, Who have a soul and body that exact 320 A comfortable care in many ways. There's power in me and will to dominate Which I must exercise, they hurt me else: In many ways I need mankind's respect, Obedience, and the love that's born of fear: While at the same time, there's a taste I have, A toy of soul, a titillating

thing, Refuses to digest these dainties crude. The naked life is gross till clothed upon: I must take what men offer, with a grace 330 As though I would not, could I help it, take An uniform I wear though over-rich— Something imposed on me, no choice of mine; No fancy-dress worn for pure fancy's sake And despicable therefore! now folk kneel And kiss my hand—of course the Church's hand. Thus I am made, thus life is best for me, And thus that it should be I have procured; And thus it could not be another way, I venture to imagine. You'll reply, 340 So far my choice, no doubt, is a success; But were I made of better elements, With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you, I hardly would account the thing success Though it did all for me I say. But, friend, We speak of what is; not of what might be, And how 'twere better if 'twere otherwise. I am the man you see here plain enough: Grant I'm a beast, why, beasts must lead beasts' lives! Suppose I own at once to tail and claws; 350 The tailless man exceeds me: but being tailed I'll lash out lion fashion, and leave apes To dock their stump and dress their haunches up. My business is not to remake myself, But make the absolute best of what God made. Or—our first simile—though you prove me doomed To a viler berth still, to the steerage-hole, The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should strive To make what use of each were possible; And as this cabin gets upholstery, 360 That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw. But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes Enumerated so complacently, On the mere ground that you forsooth can find In this particular life I choose to lead No fit provision for them. Can you not? Say you, my fault is I address myself To grosser estimators than should judge? And that's no way of holding up the soul, 370 Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools'— Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that. I pine among my million imbeciles (You think) aware some dozen men of sense Eye me and know me, whether I believe In the last winking Virgin, as I vow, And am a fool, or disbelieve in her And am a knave—approve in neither case, Withhold their voices though I look their way: 380 Like Verdi when, at

his worst opera's end (The thing they gave at Florence—what's its name?) While the mad houseful's plaudits near outbang His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones, He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths Where sits Rossini patient in his stall. Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here— That even your prime men who appraise their kind Are men still, catch a wheel within a wheel, See more in a truth than the truth's simple self, 390 Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street Sixty the minute; what's to note in that? You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack; Him you must watch—he's sure to fall, yet stands! Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things. The honest thief, the tender murderer, The superstitious atheist, demirep That loves and saves her soul in new French books— We watch while these in equilibrium keep The giddy line midway: one step aside, 400 They're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line Before your sages—just the men to shrink From the gross weights, coarse scales and labels broad You offer their refinement. Fool or knave? Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave When there's a thousand diamond weights between? So, I enlist them. Your picked twelve, you'll find, Profess themselves indignant, scandalized At thus being held unable to explain How a superior man who disbelieves 410 May not believe as well: that's Schelling's way! It's through my coming in the tail of time, Nicking the minute with a happy tact. Had I been born three hundred years ago They'd say, "What's strange? Blougram of course believes;" And, seventy years since, "disbelieves of course." But now, "He may believe; and yet, and yet How can he?" All eyes turn with interest. Whereas, step off the line on either side— You, for example, clever to a fault, 420 The rough and ready man who write apace, Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less— You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares? Lord So-and-so—his coat bedropped with wax, All Peter's chains about his waist, his back Brave with the needlework of Noodledom— Believes! Again, who wonders and who cares? But I, the man of sense and learning too, The able to think yet act, the this, the that, I, to believe at this late time of day! 430 Enough; you see, I need not fear contempt.

—Except it's yours! Admire me as these may, You don't. But whom at least do you admire? Present your own perfection, your ideal, Your pattern man for a minute—oh, make haste, Is it Napoleon you would have us grow? Concede the means; allow his head and hand, (A large concession, clever as you are) Good! In our common primal element Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know— 440 We're still at that admission, recollect!) Where do you find—apart from, towering o'er The secondary temporary aims Which satisfy the gross taste you despise— Where do you find his star?—his crazy trust God knows through what or in what? it's alive And shines and leads him, and that's all we want. Have we aught in our sober night shall point Such ends as his were, and direct the means Of working out our purpose straight as his, 450 Nor bring a moment's trouble on success With after-care to justify the same? —Be a Napoleon, and yet disbelieve— Why, the man's mad, friend, take his light away! What's the vague good o' the world, for which you dare With comfort to yourself blow millions up? We neither of us see it! we do see The blown-up millions—spatter of their brains And writhing of their bowels and so forth, In that bewildering entanglement 460 Of horrible eventualities Past calculation to the end of time! Can I mistake for some clear word of God (Which were my ample warrant for it all) His puff of hazy instinct, idle talk, "The State, that's I," quack-nonsense about crowns, And (when one beats the man to his last hold) A vague idea of setting things to rights, Policing people efficaciously, More to their profit, most of all to his own; 470 The whole to end that dismallest of ends By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the Church, And resurrection of the old regime? Would I, who hope to live a dozen years, Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such? No: for, concede me but the merest chance Doubt may be wrong—there's judgment, life to come With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt proves right? This present life is all?—you offer me Its dozen noisy years, without a chance 480 That wedding an archduchess, wearing lace, And getting called by divers new-coined names, Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine, Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like!

Therefore I will not. Take another case; Fit up the cabin yet another way. What say you to the poets? shall we write Hamlet, Othello—make the world our own, Without a risk to run of either sort? I can't!—to put the strongest reason first. 490 "But try," you urge, "the trying shall suffice; The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life: Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to fate!" Spare my self-knowledge—there's no fooling me! If I prefer remaining my poor self, I say so not in self-dispraise but praise. If I'm a Shakespeare, let the well alone; Why should I try to be what now I am? If I'm no Shakespeare, as too probable— His power and consciousness and self-delight 500 And all we want in common, shall I find— Trying forever? while on points of taste Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and I Are dowered alike—I'll ask you, I or he, Which in our two lives realizes most? Much, he imagined—somewhat, I possess. He had the imagination; stick to that! Let him say, "In the face of my soul's works Your world is worthless and I touch it not Lest I should wrong them"—I'll withdraw my plea. 510 But does he say so? look upon his life! Himself, who only can, gives judgment there. He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces To build the trimmest house in Stratford town; Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things, Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's lute; Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too, And none more, had he seen its entry once, Than "Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal." Why then should I who play that personage, 520 The very Pandulph Shakespeare's fancy made, Be told that had the poet chanced to start From where I stand now (some degree like mine Being just the goal he ran his race to reach) He would have run the whole race back, forsooth, And left being Pandulph, to begin write plays? Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's best! Did Shakespeare live, he could but sit at home And get himself in dreams the Vatican, Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls, 530 And English books, none equal to his own, Which I read, bound in gold (he never did). —Terni's fall, Naples' bay and Gothard's top— Eh, friend? I could not fancy one of these; But, as I pour this claret, there they are: I've gained them—crossed St. Gothard last July With

ten mules to the carriage and a bed Slung inside; is my hap the worse for that? We want the same things, Shakespeare and myself, And what I want, I have: he, gifted more, 540 Could fancy he too had them when he liked, But not so thoroughly that, if fate allowed, He would not have them ...also in my sense. We play one game; I send the ball aloft No less adroitly that of fifty strokes Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high Which sends them back to me: I wish and get. He struck balls higher and with better skill, But at a poor fence level with his head, And hit—his Stratford house, a coat of arms, 550 Successful dealings in his grain and wool— While I receive heaven's incense in my nose And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess. Ask him, if this life's all, who wins the game? Believe—and our whole argument breaks up. Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat; Only, we can't command it; fire and life Are all, dead matter's nothing, we agree: And be it a mad dream or God's very breath, The fact's the same—belief's fire, once in us, 560 Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself; We penetrate our life with such a glow As fire lends wood and iron—this turns steel, That burns to ash—all's one, fire proves its power For good or ill, since men call flare success. But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn. Light one in me, I'll find it food enough! Why, to be Luther—that's a life to lead, Incomparably better than my own. He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says, 570 Sets up God's rule again by simple means, Re-opens a shut book, and all is done. He flared out in the flaring of mankind; Such Luther's luck was: how shall such be mine? If he succeeded, nothing's left to do: And if he did not altogether—well, Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be I might be also. But to what result? He looks upon no future: Luther did. What can I gain on the denying side? 580 Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts, Read the text right, emancipate the world— The emancipated world enjoys itself With scarce a thank-you: Blougram told it first It could not owe a farthing—not to him More than Saint Paul! 't would press its pay, you think? Then add there's still that plaguy hundredth chance Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run— For what gain? not

for Luther's, who secured A real heaven in his heart throughout his life, 590 Supposing death a little altered things. "Ay, but since really you lack faith," you cry, "You run the same risk really on all sides, In cool indifference as bold unbelief. As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him. It's not worth having, such imperfect faith, No more available to do faith's work Than unbelief like mine. Whole faith, or none!" Softly, my friend! I must dispute that point. Once own the use of faith, I'll find you faith. 600 We're back on Christian ground. You call for faith; I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists. The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say, If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does? By life and man's free will. God gave for that! To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice: That's our one act, the previous work's his own. You criticise the soul? it reared this tree— This broad life and whatever fruit it bears! What matter though I doubt at every pore, 610 Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends, Doubts in the trivial work of every day, Doubts at the very bases of my soul In the grand moments when she probes herself— If finally I have a life to show, The thing I did, brought out in evidence Against the thing done to me underground By hell and all its brood, for aught I know? I say, whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt? All's doubt in me; where's break of faith in this? 620 It is the idea, the feeling and the love, God means mankind should strive for and show forth Whatever be the process to that end— And not historic knowledge, logic sound, And metaphysical acumen, sure! "What think ye of Christ," friend? when all's done and said, Like you this Christianity or not? It may be false, but will you wish it true? Has it your vote to be so if it can? Trust you an instinct silenced long ago 630 That will break silence and enjoin you love What mortified philosophy is hoarse, And all in vain, with bidding you despise? If you desire faith—then you've faith enough: What else seeks God—nay, what else seek ourselves? You form a notion of me, we'll suppose, On hearsay; it's a favorable one: "But still" (you add) "there was no such good man, Because of contradiction in the facts. One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome, 640 This

Blougram; yet throughout the tales of him I see he figures as an Englishman." Well, the two things are reconcilable. But would I rather you discovered that, Subjoining—"Still, what matter though they be? Blougram concerns me naught, born here or there." Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask! Naked belief in God the Omnipotent, 0mniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much The sense of conscious creatures to be borne. 650 It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare. Some think, Creation's meant to show him forth: I say it's meant to hide him all it can, And that's what all the blessed evil's for. Its use in Time is to environ us, Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough Against that sight till we can bear its stress. Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart Less certainly would wither up at once 660 Than mind, confronted with the truth of him. But time and earth case-harden us to live; The feeblest sense is trusted most; the child Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place, Plays on and grows to be a man like us. With me, faith means perpetual unbelief Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe. Or, if that's too ambitious—here's my box— I need the excitation of a pinch 670 Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes. "Leave it in peace" advise the simple folk: Make it aware of peace by itching-fits, Say I—let doubt occasion still more faith! You 'll say, once all believed, man, woman, child, In that dear middle-age these noodles praise. How you'd exult if I could put you back Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony, Geology, ethnology, what not, 680 (Greek endings, each the little passing-bell That signifies some faith's about to die) And set you square with Genesis again— When such a traveller told you his last news, He saw the ark a-top of Ararat But did not climb there since 'twas getting dusk And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot! How should you feel, I ask, in such an age, How act? As other people felt and did; With soul more blank than this decanter's knob, 690 Believe—and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate Full in belief's face, like the beast you'd be! No, when the fight begins within himself, A man's worth something. God

stoops o'er his head, Satan looks up between his feet—both tug— He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul wakes And grows. Prolong that battle through his life! Never leave growing till the life to come! Here, we've got callous to the Virgin's winks That used to puzzle people wholesomely: 700 Men have outgrown the shame of being fools. What are the laws of nature, not to bend If the Church bid them?—brother Newman asks. Up with the Immaculate Conception, then— On to the rack with faith!—is my advice. Will not that hurry us upon our knees, Knocking our breasts, "It can't be—yet it shall! Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope? Low things confound the high things!" and so forth. That's better than acquitting God with grace 710 As some folk do. He's tried—no case is proved, Philosophy is lenient—he may go! You'll say, the old system's not so obsolete But men believe still: ay, but who and where? King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes; But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint Believes God watches him continually, As he believes in fire that it will burn, Or rain that it will drench him? Break fire's law, 720 Sin against rain, although the penalty Be just a singe or soaking? "No," he smiles; "Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves." The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is great, My faith's still greater, then my faith's enough. I have read much, thought much, experienced much, Yet would die rather than avow my fear The Naples' liquefaction may be false, When set to happen by the palace-clock According to the clouds or dinner-time. 730 I hear you recommend, I might at least Eliminate, decrassify my faith Since I adopt it; keeping what I must And leaving what I can—such points as this. I won't—that is, I can't throw one away. Supposing there's no truth in what I hold About the need of trial to man's faith, Still, when you bid me purify the same, To such a process I discern no end. Clearing off one excrescence to see two, 740 There's ever a next in size, now grown as big, That meets the knife: I cut and cut again! First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last But Fichte's clever cut at God himself? Experimentalize on sacred things! I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain To stop betimes: they all get drunk alike.

The first step, I am master not to take. You'd find the cutting-process to your taste As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned, 750 Nor see more danger in it—you retort. Your taste's worth mine; but my taste proves more wise When we consider that the steadfast hold On the extreme end of the chain of faith Gives all the advantage, makes the difference With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule: We are their lords, or they are free of us, Justas we tighten or relax our hold. So, other matters equal, we'll revert To the first problem—which, if solved my way 760 And thrown into the balance, turns the scale— How we may lead a comfortable life, How suit our luggage to the cabin's size. Of course you are remarking all this time How narrowly and grossly I view life, Respect the creature-comforts, care to rule The masses, and regard complacently "The cabin," in our old phrase. Well, I do. I act for, talk for, live for this world now, As this world prizes action, life and talk: 770 No prejudice to what next world may prove, Whose new laws and requirements, my best pledge To observe then, is that I observe these now, Shall do hereafter what I do meanwhile. Let us concede (gratuitously though) Next life relieves the soul of body, yields Pure spiritual enjoyment: well, my friend, Why lose this life i' the meantime, since its use May be to make the next life more intense? Do you know, I have often had a dream 780 (Work it up in your next month's article) Of man's poor spirit in its progress, still Losing true life forever and a day Through ever trying to be and ever being— In the evolution of successive spheres— Before its actual sphere and place of life, Halfway into the next, which having reached, It shoots with corresponding foolery Halfway into the next still, on and off! As when a traveller, bound from North to South, 790 Scouts far in Russia: what's its use in France? In France spurns flannel: where's its need in Spain? In Spain drops cloth, too cumbrous for Algiers! Linen goes next, and last the skin itself, A superfluity at Timbuctoo. When, through his journey, was the fool at ease? I'm at ease now, friend; worldly in this world, I take and like its way of life; I think My brothers, who administer the means, Live better for my comfort—that's good too; 800 And God, if he pronounce upon such

life, Approves my service, which is better still. If he keep silence—why, for you or me Or that brute beast pulled-up in to-day's "Times," What odds is 't, save to ourselves, what life we lead? You meet me at this issue: you declare— All special-pleading done with—truth is truth, And justifies itself by undreamed ways. You don't fear but it's better, if we doubt, To say so, act up to our truth perceived 810 However feebly. Do then—act away! 'T is there I'm on the watch for you. How one acts Is, both of us agree, our chief concern: And how you 'll act is what I fain would see If, like the candid person you appear, You dare to make the most of your life's scheme As I of mine, live up to its full law Since there's no higher law that counterchecks. Put natural religion to the test You've just demolished the revealed with—quick, 820 Down to the root of all that checks your will, All prohibition to lie, kill and thieve, Or even to be an atheistic priest! Suppose a pricking to incontinence— Philosophers deduce you chastity Or shame, from just the fact that at the first Whoso embraced a woman in the field, Threw club down and forewent his brains beside, So, stood a ready victim in the reach Of any brother savage, club in hand; 830 Hence saw the use of going out of sight In wood or cave to prosecute his loves: I read this in a French book t' other day. Does law so analyzed coerce you much? Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where matters end, But you who reach where the first thread begins, You'll soon cut that!—which means you can, but won't, Through certain instincts, blind, unreasoned-out, You dare not set aside, you can't tell why, But there they are, and so you let them rule. 840 Then, friend, you seem as much a slave as I, A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite, Without the good the slave expects to get, In case he has a master after all! You own your instincts? why, what else do I, Who want, am made for, and must have a God Ere I can be aught, do aught?—no mere name Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth, To wit, a relation from that thing to me, Touching from head to foot—which touch I feel, 850 And with it take the rest, this life of ours! I live my life here; yours you dare not live, —Not as I state it, who (you please subjoin) Disfigure such a life and call it names.

While, to your mind, remains another way For simple men: knowledge and power have rights, But ignorance and weakness have rights too. There needs no crucial effort to find truth If here or there or anywhere about: We ought to turn each side, try hard and see, 860 And if we can't, be glad we've earned at least The right, by one laborious proof the more, To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage. Men are not angels, neither are they brutes: Something we may see, all we cannot see. What need of lying? I say, I see all, And swear to each detail the most minute In what I think a Pan's face—you, mere cloud: I swear I hear him speak and see him wink, For fear, if once I drop the emphasis, 870 Mankind may doubt there's any cloud at all. You take the simple life—ready to see, Willing to see (for no cloud 's worth a face)— And leaving quiet what no strength can move, And which, who bids you move? who has the right? I bid you; but you are God's sheep, not mine; ["Pastor est tui Dominus."] You find In this the pleasant pasture of our life Much you may eat without the least offence, Much you don't eat because your maw objects, 880 Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock Open great eyes at you and even butt, And thereupon you like your mates so well You cannot please yourself, offending them; Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep, You weigh your pleasure with their butts and bleats And strike the balance. Sometimes certain fears Restrain you, real checks since you find them so; Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks: And thus you graze through life with not one lie, 890 And like it best. But do you, in truth's name? If so, you beat—which means you are not I— Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with, But motioned to the velvet of the sward By those obsequious wethers' very selves. Look at me. sir; my age is double yours: At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed, What now I should be—as, permit the word, I pretty well imagine your whole range 900 And stretch of tether twenty years to come. We both have minds and bodies much alike: In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric, My daily bread, my influence and my state? You're young. I'm old; you must be old one day; Will you find then, as I do hour by hour, Women

their lovers kneel to, who cut curls From your fat lap-dog's ear to grace a brooch— Dukes, who petition just to kiss your ring— With much beside you know or may conceive? 910 Suppose we die to-night: well, here am I, Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me, While writing all the same my articles On music, poetry, the fictile vase Found at Albano, chess, Anacreon's Greek. But you—the highest honor in your life, The thing you'll crown yourself with, all your days, Is—dining here and drinking this last glass I pour you out in sign of amity Before we part forever. Of your power 920 And social influence, worldly worth in short, Judge what's my estimation by the fact, I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech, Hint secrecy on one of all these words! You're shrewd and know that should you publish one The world would brand the lie—my enemies first, Who'd sneer—"the bishop's an arch-hypocrite And knave perhaps, but not so frank a fool." Whereas I should not dare for both my ears Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile, 930 Before the chaplain who reflects myself— My shade's so much more potent than your flesh. What's your reward, self-abnegating friend? Stood you confessed of those exceptional And privileged great natures that dwarf mine— A zealot with a mad ideal in reach, A poet just about to print his ode, A statesman with a scheme to stop this war, An artist whose religion is his art— I should have nothing to object: such men 940 Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them, Their drugget's worth my purple, they beat me. But you—you 're just as little those as I— You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age, Write statedly for Blackwood's Magazine, Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul Unseized by the Germans yet—which view you'll print— Meantime the best you have to show being still That lively lightsome article we took Almost for the true Dickens—what's its name? 950 "The Slum and Cellar, or Whitechapel life Limned after dark!" it made me laugh, I know, And pleased a month, and brought you in ten pounds. —Success I recognize and compliment, And therefore give you, if you choose, three words (The card and pencil-scratch is quite enough) Which whether here, in Dublin or New York, Will get you, prompt as at my

eyebrow's wink, Such terms as never you aspired to get In all our own reviews and some not ours. 960 Go write your lively sketches! be the first "Blougram, or The Eccentric Confidence"— Or better simply say, "The Outward-bound." Why, men as soon would throw it in my teeth As copy and quote the infamy chalked broad About me on the church-door opposite. You will not wait for that experience though, I fancy, howsoever you decide, To discontinue—not detesting, not Defaming, but at least—despising me! 970 _____ Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour Sylvester Blougram, styled [in partibus Episcopus, nec non]—(the deuce knows what It's changed to by our novel hierarchy) With Gigadibs the literary man, Who played with spoons, explored his plate's design, And ranged the olive-stones about its edge, While the great bishop rolled him out a mind Long crumpled, till creased consciousness lay smooth. For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke. 980 The other portion, as he shaped it thus For argumentatory purposes, He felt his foe was foolish to dispute. Some arbitrary accidental thoughts That crossed his mind, amusing because new, He chose to represent as fixtures there, Invariable convictions (such they seemed Beside his interlocutor's loose cards Flung daily down, and not the same way twice) While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue 990 Is never bold to utter in their truth Because styled hell-deep ('t is an old mistake To place hell at the bottom of the earth) He ignored these—not having in readiness Their nomenclature and philosophy: He said true things, but called them by wrong names. "On the whole," he thought, "I justify myself On every point where cavillers like this Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of fence, I close, he's worsted, that's enough for him. 1000 He's on the ground: if ground should break away I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach. His ground was over mine and broke the first: So, let him sit with me this many a year!" He did not sit five minutes. Just a week Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence. Something had struck him in the "Outward-bound" Another way than Blougram's purpose was: And having bought,

not cabin-furniture 1010 But settler's-implements (enough for three) And started for Australia—there, I hope, By this time he has tested his first plough, And studied his last chapter of St. John. NOTES "Bishop Blougram's Apology" is made over the wine after dinner to defend himself from the criticisms of a doubting young literary man, who despises him because he considers that he cannot be true to his convictions in conforming to the doctrines of the Catholic Church. He builds up his defence from the proposition that the problem of life is not to conceive ideals which cannot be realized, but to find what is and make it as fair as possible. The bishop admits his unbelief, but being free to choose either belief or unbelief, since neither can be proved wholly true, chooses belief as his guiding principle, because he finds it the best for making his own life and that of others happy and comfortable in this world. Once having chosen faith on this ground, the more absolute the form of faith, the more potent the results; besides, the bishop has that desire of domination in his nature, which the authorization of the Church makes safer for him. To Gigadibs' objection that were his nature nobler, he would not count this success, he replies he is as God made him, and can but make the best of himself as he is. To the objection that he addresses himself to grosser estimators than he ought, he replies that all the world is interested in the fact that a man of his sense and learning, too, still believes at this late hour. He points out the impossibility of his following an ideal like Napoleon's, for, conceding the merest chance that doubt may be wrong, and judgment to follow this life, he would not dare to slaughter men as Napoleon had for such slight ends. As for Shakespeare's ideal, he can't write plays like his if he wanted to, but he has realized things in his life which Shakespeare only imagined, and which he presumes Shakespeare would not have scorned to have realized in his life, judging from his fulfilled ambition to be a gentleman of property at Stratford. He admits, however, that enthusiasm in belief, such as Luther's, would be far preferable to his own way of living, and after this, enthusiasm in unbelief, which he might have if it were not for that plaguy chance that doubt may be wrong. Gigadibs interposes

that the risk is as great for cool indifference as for bold doubt. Blougram disputes that point by declaring that doubts prove faith, and that man's free will preferring to have faith true to having doubt true tips the balance in favor of faith, and shows that man's instinct or aspiration is toward belief; that unquestioning belief, such as that of the Past, has no moral effect on man, but faith which knows itself through doubt is a moral spur. Thus the arguments from expediency, instinct, and consciousness, all bear on the side of faith, and convince the bishop that it is safer to keep his faith intact from his doubts. He then proves that Gigadibs, with all his assumption of superiority in his frankness of unbelief, is in about the same position as himself, since the moral law which he follows has no surer foundation than the religious law the bishop follows, both founded upon instinct. The bishop closes as he began, with the consciousness that rewards for his way of living are of a substantial nature, while Gigadibs has nothing to show for his frankness, and does not hesitate to say that Gigadibs will consider his conversation with the bishop the greatest honor ever conferred upon him. The poet adds some lines, somewhat apologetic for the bishop, intimating that his arguments were suited to the calibre of his critic, and that with a profounder critic he would have made a more serious defence. Speaking of a review of this poem by Cardinal Wiseman (1801-1865), Browning says in a letter to a friend, printed in [Poet-lore], May, 1896: "The most curious notice I ever had was from Cardinal Wiseman on [Blougram]—[i.e.], himself. It was in the [Rambler], a Catholic journal of those days, and certified to be his by Father Prout, who said nobody else would have dared put it in." This review praises the poem for its "fertility of illustration and felicity of argument," and says that "though utterly mistaken in the very groundwork of religion, though starting from the most unworthy notions of the work of a Catholic bishop, and defending a self-indulgence every honest man must feel to be disgraceful, [it] is yet in its way triumphant." 6. Brother Pugin: (1810-1852), an eminent English architect, who, becoming a Roman Catholic, designed many structures for that Church. 34. Corpus Christi Day:

Thursday after Trinity Sunday, when the Feast of the Sacrament of the Altar is celebrated. 45. Che: what. 54. Count D' Orsay: (1798-1852), a clever Frenchman, distinguished as a man of fashion, and for his drawings of horses. 113. Parma's pride, the 'Jerome . . . Correggio . . . the Modenese: the picture of Saint Jerome in the Ducal Academy at Parma, by Correggio, who was born in the territory of Modena, Italy. 184. A chorus-ending from Euripides: the Greek dramatist, Euripides (480 B. C.- 406 B. C.), frequently ended his choruses with this thought—sometimes with slight variations in expression: "The Gods perform many things contrary to our expectations, and those things which we looked for are not accomplished; but God hath brought to pass things unthought of." 316. Peter's . . . or rather, Hildebrand's: the claim of Hildebrand, Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) for temporal power and authority exceeding Saint Peter's, the founder of the Roman Church. 411. Schelling: the German philosopher (1775-1854). 472. Austrian marriage: the marriage of Marie Louise, daughter of the Emperor of Austria, to Napoleon I. 475. Austerlitz: fought with success by Napoleon, in 1805, against the coalition of Austria, Russia, and England, and resulting in the alliance mentioned with Austria and fresh overtures to the Papal power and the old French nobility. 514. Trimmest house in Stratford: New Place, a mansion in the heart of the town, built for Sir Hugh Clopton, and known for two centuries as his "great house," bought with nearly an acre of ground by Shakespeare, in 1597. 516. Giulio Romano: Italian painter (1492-1546), referred to in "Winter's Tale," v. ii. 105. —Dowland: English musician, praised for his lute-playing in a sonnet in "The Passionate Pilgrim," attributed to Shakespeare. 519. "Pandulph," etc.: quotation from "King John," iii. i. 138. 568. Luther: Martin (1483-1546), whose enthusiasm reformed the Church. 577. Strauss: (1808-1874), one of the Tuebingen philosophers, author of a Rationalistic "Life of Jesus." 626. "What think ye," etc.: Matthew 22.42. 664. Ichors o'er the place: ichor=serum, which exudes where the skin is broken, coats the hurt, and facilitates its healing. 667. Snake 'neath Michael's foot: Rafael's picture in the Louvre of Saint Michael

slaying the dragon. 703. Brother Newman: John Henry (1801-1890), leader of the Tractarian movement at Oxford, which approached the doctrines of the Roman Church. The last (90th) tract was entirely written by him. The Bishop of Oxford was called upon to stop the series, and in 1845 Dr. Newman entered the Romish Church. 715. King Bomba: means King Puffcheek, King Liar, a sobriquet given to Ferdinand II, late king of the Two Sicilies. —Lazzaroni: Naples beggars, so called from the Lazarus of the Parable, Luke 16.20. 716. Antonelli: Cardinal, secretary of Pope Pius IX. 728. Naples' liquefaction: the supposed miracle of the liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius the Martyr. A small quantity of it is preserved in a crystal reliquary in the great church at Naples, and when brought into the presence of the head of the saint, it melts. 732. Decrassify: make less crass or gross. 744. Fichte: (1761-1814), celebrated German metaphysician, who defined God as the "moral order of the universe." 877. "[Pastor est tui Dominus]": the Lord is your shepherd. 915. Anacreon: Greek lyric poet of the sixth century B. C. 972. [In partibus Episcopus], etc.: "In countries where the Roman Catholic faith is not regularly established, as it was not in England before the time of Cardinal Wiseman, there were no bishops of sees in the kingdom itself, but they took their titles from heathen lands."

CLEON

"As certain also of your own poets have said"—

1855

Cleon the poet (from the sprinkled isles, Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea, And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps "Greece")— To Protus in his Tyranny: much health! They give thy letter to me, even now: I read and seem as if I heard thee speak. The master of thy galley still unlades Gift after gift; they block my court at

last And pile themselves along its portico Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee: 10 And one white she-slave from the group dispersed Of black and white slaves (like the chequer-work Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift, Now covered with this settle-down of doves), One lyric woman, in her crocus vest Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands Commends to me the strainer and the cup Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine. Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence! For so shall men remark, in such an act 20 Of love for him whose song gives life its joy, Thy recognition of the use of life; Nor call thy spirit barely adequate To help on life in straight ways, broad enough For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest. Thou, in the daily building of thy tower— Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil, Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth, Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect— 30 Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake— Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope Of some eventual rest a-top of it, Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed, Thou first of men mightst look out to the East: The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest the sun. For this, I promise on thy festival To pour libation, looking o'er the sea, Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak Thy great words, and describe thy royal face— 40 Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most, Within the eventual element of calm. Thy letter's first requirement meets me here. It is as thou hast heard: in one short life I, Cleon, have effected all those things Thou wonderingly dost enumerate. That epos on thy hundred plates of gold Is mine—and also mine the little chant, So sure to rise from every fishing-bark When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their net. 50 The image of the sun-god on the phare, Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine; The Poecile, o'er-storied its whole length, As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too. I know the true proportions of a man And woman also, not observed before; And I have written three books on the soul, Proving absurd all written hitherto, And putting us to ignorance again. For music—why, I have combined the moods, 60 Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine; Thus much the people know and

recognize, Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not. We of these latter days, with greater mind Than our forerunners, since more composite, Look not so great, beside their simple way, To a judge who only sees one way at once, One mind-point and no other at a time— Compares the small part of a man of us With some whole man of the heroic age, 70 Great in his way—not ours, nor meant for ours. And ours is greater, had we skill to know: For, what we call this life of men on earth, This sequence of the soul's achievements here Being, as I find much reason to conceive, Intended to be viewed eventually. As a great whole, not analyzed to parts, But each part having reference to all— How shall a certain part, pronounced complete, Endure effacement by another part? 80 Was the thing done?—then, what's to do again? See, in the chequered pavement opposite, Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb, And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid— He did not overlay them, superimpose The new upon the old and blot it out, But laid them on a level in his work, Making at last a picture; there it lies. So, first the perfect separate forms were made, The portions of mankind; and after, so, 90 Occurred the combination of the same. For where had been a progress, otherwise? Mankind, made up of all the single men— In such a synthesis the labor ends. Now mark me! those divine men of old time Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point The outside verge that rounds our faculty; And where they reached, who can do more than reach? It takes but little water just to touch At some one point the inside of a sphere, 100 And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest In due succession: but the finer air Which not so palpably nor obviously, Though no less universally, can touch The whole circumference of that emptied sphere, Fills it more fully than the water did; Holds thrice the weight of water in itself Resolved into a subtler element. And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full Up to the visible height—and after, void; 110 Not knowing air's more hidden properties. And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus To vindicate his purpose in our life: Why stay we on the earth unless to grow? Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out, That he or other god descended here And, once for all, showed

simultaneously What, in its nature, never can be shown, Piecemeal or in succession;—showed, I say, The worth both absolute and relative 120 Of all his children from the birth of time, His instruments for all appointed work. I now go on to image—might we hear The judgment which should give the due to each, Show where the labor lay and where the ease, And prove Zeus' self, the latent everywhere! This is a dream;—but no dream, let us hope, That years and days, the summers and the springs, Follow each other with unwaning powers. The grapes which dye thy wine are richer far, 130 Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock; The wave plum than the savage-tasted drupe; The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet; The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers; That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave, Sleeping above her robe as buoyed by clouds, Refines upon the women of my youth. What, and the soul alone deteriorates? I have not chanted verse like Homer, no— Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved 140 And painted men like Phidias and his friend; I am not great as they are, point by point. But I have entered into sympathy With these four, running these into one soul, Who, separate, ignored each other's art. Say, is it nothing that I know them all? The wild flower was the larger; I have dashed Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit, And show a better flower if not so large: 150 I stand myself. Refer this to the gods Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare (All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext That such a gift by chance lay in my hand, Discourse of lightly or depreciate? It might have fallen to another's hand: what then? I pass too surely: let at least truth stay! And next, of what thou followest on to ask. This being with me as I declare, 0 king, My works, in all these varicolored kinds, 160 So done by me, accepted so by men— Thou askest, if (my soul thus in men's hearts) I must not be accounted to attain The very crown and proper end of life? Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up, I face death with success in my right hand: Whether I fear death less than dost thyself The fortunate of men? "For" (writest thou) "Thou leavest much behind, while I leave naught. Thy

life stays in the poems men shall sing, 170 The pictures men shall study; while my life, Complete and whole now in its power and joy, Dies altogether with my brain and arm, Is lost indeed; since, what survives myself? The brazen statue to o'erlook my grave, See on the promontory which I named. And that—some supple courtier of my heir Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps, To fix the rope to, which best drags it down. I go then: triumph thou, who dost not go!" 180 Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind. Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief, That admiration grows as knowledge grows? That imperfection means perfection hid, Reserved in part, to grace the after-time? If, in the morning of philosophy, Ere aught had been recorded, nay perceived, Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird, 190 Ere man, her last, appeared upon the stage— Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced The perfectness of others yet unseen. Conceding which—had Zeus then questioned thee "Shall I go on a step, improve on this, Do more for visible creatures than is done?" Thou wouldst have answered, "Ay, by making each Grow conscious in himself—by that alone. All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock, The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims 200 And slides, forth range the beasts, the birds take flight, Till life's mechanics can no further go— And all this joy in natural life is put Like fire from off thy finger into each, So exquisitely perfect is the same. But 't is pure fire, and they mere matter are; It has them, not they it: and so I choose For man, thy last premeditated work (If I might add a glory to the scheme) That a third thing should stand apart from both, 210 A quality arise within his soul, Which, intro-active, made to supervise And feel the force it has, may view itself, And so be happy." Man might live at first The animal life: but is there nothing more? In due time, let him critically learn How he lives; and, the more he gets to know Of his own life's adaptabilities, The more joy-giving will his life become. Thus man, who hath this quality, is best. 220 But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said: "Let progress end at once—man make no step Beyond the natural man, the

better beast, Using his senses, not the sense of sense." In man there's failure, only since he left The lower and inconscious forms of life. We called it an advance, the rendering plain Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life, And, by new lore so added to the old, Take each step higher over the brute's head. 230 This grew the only life, the pleasure-house, Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul, Which whole surrounding flats of natural life Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to; A tower that crowns a country. But alas, The soul now climbs it just to perish there! For thence we have discovered ('t is no dream— We know this, which we had not else perceived) That there's a world of capability For joy, spread round about us, meant for us, 240 Inviting us; and still the soul craves all, And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot more Than ere thou clombst the tower to look abroad! Nay, so much less as that fatigue has brought Deduction to it." We struggle, fain to enlarge Our bounded physical recipiency, Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life, Repair the waste of age and sickness: no, It skills not! life's inadequate to joy, As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take. 250 They praise a fountain in my garden here Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise. What if I told her, it is just a thread From that great river which the hills shut up, And mock her with my leave to take the same? The artificer has given her one small tube Past power to widen or exchange—what boots To know she might spout oceans if she could? She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread; 260 And so a man can use but a man's joy While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast, "See, man, how happy I live, and despair— That I may be still happier—for thy use!" If this were so, we could not thank our Lord, As hearts beat on to doing; 'tis not so— Malice it is not. Is it carelessness? Still, no. If care—where is the sign? I ask, And get no answer, and agree in sum, 0 king, with thy profound discouragement, 270 Who seest the wider but to sigh the more. Most progress is most failure: thou sayest well. The last point now:—thou dost except a case— Holding joy not impossible to one With artist-gifts—to such a man as I Who leave behind me living works indeed; For, such

a poem, such a painting lives. What? dost thou verily trip upon a word, Confound the accurate view of what joy is (Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine) 280 With feeling joy? confound the knowing how And showing how to live (my faculty) With actually living?—Otherwise Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king? Because in my great epos I display How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act— Is this as though I acted? if I paint, Carve the young Phoebus, am I therefore young? Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself The many years of pain that taught me art! 290 Indeed, to know is something, and to prove How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more; But, knowing naught, to enjoy is something too. Yon rower, with the moulded muscles there, Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I. I can write love-odes: thy fair slave's an ode. I get to sing of love, when grown too gray For being beloved: she turns to that young man, The muscles all a-ripple on his back. I know the joy of kingship: well, thou art king! 300 "But," sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat, To find thee trip on such a mere word) "what Thou writest, paintest, stays; that does not die: Sappho survives, because we sing her songs, And AEschylus, because we read his plays!" Why, if they live still, let them come and take Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy cup, Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive? Say rather that my fate is deadlier still, In this, that every day my sense of joy 310 Grows more acute, my soul (intensified By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen; While every day my hairs fall more and more, My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase— The horror quickening still from year to year, The consummation coming past escape When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy— When all my works wherein I prove my worth, Being present still to mock me in men's mouths, Alive still, in the praise of such as thou, 320 I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man, The man who loved his life so over-much, Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible, I dare at times imagine to my need Some future state revealed to us by Zeus, Unlimited in capability For joy, as this is in desire for joy, —To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us: That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait On purpose

to make prized the life at large— 330 Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death, We burst there as the worm into the fly, Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But no! Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas, He must have done so, were it possible! Live long and happy, and in that thought die; Glad for what was! Farewell. And for the rest, I cannot tell thy messenger aright Where to deliver what he bears of thine To one called Paulus; we have heard his fame 340 Indeed, if Christus be not one with him— I know not, nor am troubled much to know. Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew, As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised, Hath access to a secret shut from us? Thou wrongest our philosophy, 0 king, In stooping to inquire of such an one, As if his answer could impose at all! He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write. Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves 350 Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ; And (as I gathered from a bystander) Their doctrine could be held by no sane man. NOTES "Cleon" expresses the approach of Greek thought at the time of Christ towards the idea of immortality as made known by Cleon, a Greek poet writing in reply to a Greek patron whose princely gifts and letter asking comment on the philosophical significance of death have just reached him. The important conclusions reached by Cleon in his answer are that the composite mind is greater than the minds of the past, because it is capable of accomplishing much in many lines of activity, and of sympathizing with each of those simple great minds that had reached the highest possible perfection "at one point." It is, indeed, the necessary next step in development, though all classes of mind fit into the perfected mosaic of life, no one achievement blotting out any other. This soul and mind development he deduces from the physical development he sees about him. But since with the growth of human consciousness and the increase of knowledge comes greater capability to the soul for joy while the failure of physical powers shuts off the possibility of realizing joy, it would have been better had man been left with nothing higher than mere sense like the brutes. Dismissing the idea of immortality through one's works as unsatisfactory to the individual, he finally

concludes that a long and happy life is all there is to be hoped for, since, had the future life which he has sometimes dared to hope for been possible, Zeus would long before have revealed it. He dismisses the preaching of one Paulus as untenable. "As certain also of your own poets have said": this motto hints that Paul's speech at Athens (Acts 17.22-28) suggests and justifies Browning's conception of such Greek poets as Cleon seeking "the Lord, if haply they might feel after him." Paul's quotation, "For we are also his offspring," is from the "Phoenomena" by Aratus, a Greek poet of his own town of Tarsus. 1. Sprinkled isles: probably the Sporades, so named because they were scattered, and in opposition to the Cyclades, which formed a circle around Delos. 51. Phare: light-house. The French authority, Allard, says that though there is no mention in classical writings of any light-house in Greece proper, it is probable that there was one at the port of Athens as well as at other points in Greece. There were certainly several along both shores of the Hellespont, besides the famous father of all light-houses, on the island of Pharos, near Alexandria. Hence the French name for light-house, phare. 53. Poecile: the portico at Athens painted with battle pictures by Polygnotus the Thasian. 60. Combined the moods: in Greek music the scales were called moods or modes, and were subject to great variation in the arrangement of tones and semitones. 83. Rhomb . . . lozenge . . . trapezoid: all four-sided forms, but differing as to the parallel arrangement of their sides and the obliquity of their angles. 140. Terpander: musician of Lesbos (about 650 B. C.), who added three strings to the four-stringed Greek lyre. 141. Phidias: the Athenian sculptor (about 430 B. C.) —and his friend: Pericles, ruler of Athens (444-429 B.C.). Plutarch speaks of their friendship in his Life of Pericles. 304. Sappho: poet of Lesbos, supreme among lyricists (about 600 B. C.). Only fragments of her verse remain. 305. AEschylus: oldest of the three great Athenian dramatists (525-472 B. C.). 340. Paulus; we have have heard his fame: Paul's mission to the Gentiles carried him to many of the islands in the AEgean Sea as well as to Athens and Corinth (Acts 13-21).

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

1842

I I know a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives First, when he visits, last, too, when he leaves The world; and, vainly favored, it repays The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze By no change of its large calm front of snow. And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know, He cannot have perceived, that changes ever At his approach; and, in the lost endeavor To live his life, has parted, one by one, With all a flower's true graces, for the grace 10 Of being but a foolish mimic sun, With ray-like florets round a disk-like face. Men nobly call by many a name the Mount As over many a land of theirs its large Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe Is reared, and still with old names, fresh names vie, Each to its proper praise and own account: Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively. II Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look Across the waters to this twilight nook, 20 —The far sad waters. Angel, to this nook! III Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed? Go!—saying ever as thou dost proceed, That I, French Rudel, choose for my device A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice Before its idol. See! These inexpert And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt The woven picture; 't is a woman's skill Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed 30 On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees On my flower's breast as on a platform broad: But, as the flower's concern is not for these But solely for the sun, so men applaud In vain this Rudel, he not looking here But to the East—the East! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear!

NOTES "Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli": Rudel symbolizes his love as the aspiration of the sunflower that longs only to become like the sun, so losing a flower's true grace, while the sun does not even perceive the flower. He imagines himself as a pilgrim revealing to the Lady of Tripoli by means of this symbol the entire sinking of self in his love for her. Even men's praise of his songs is no more to him than the

bees which bask on a sunflower are to it. Rudel was a Provencal troubadour, and lived in the twelfth century. The Crusaders, returning from the East, spread abroad wonderful reports of the beauty, learning, and wit of the Countess of Tripoli, a small duchy on the Mediterranean, north of Palestine. Rudel, although never having seen her, fell in love with her and composed songs in honor of her beauty, and finally set out to the East in pilgrim's garb. On his way he was taken ill, but lived to reach the port of Tripoli. The countess, being told of his arrival, went on board the vessel. When Rudel heard she was coming, he revived, said she had restored him to life by her coming, and that he was willing to die, having seen her. He died in her arms; she gave him a rich and honorable burial in a sepulchre of porphyry on which were engraved verses in Arabic.

ONE WORD MORE

TO E. B. B.

1855

[Originally appended to the collection of Poems called "Men and Women," the greater portion of which has now been, more correctly, distributed under the other titles of this edition.-R. B.]

I There they are, my fifty men and women Naming me the fifty poems finished! Take them, Love, the book and me together: Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also. II Rafael made a century of sonnets, Made and wrote them in a certain volume Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil Else he only used to draw Madonnas: These, the world might view—but one, the volume. Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you. 10 Did she live and love it all her life-time? Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets, Die, and let it drop beside her pillow Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory, Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving— Cheek, the world was wont to hail

a painter's, Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's? You and I would rather read that volume, (Taken to his beating bosom by it) Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael, 20 Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas— Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno, Her, that visits Florence in a vision, Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre— Seen by us and all the world in circle. IV You and I will never read that volume. Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it. Guido Reni dying, all Bologna Cried, and the world cried too, "Ours, the treasure!" 30 Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished. V Dante once prepared to paint an angel: Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice." While he mused and traced it and retraced it, (Peradventure with a pen corroded Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for, When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked, Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma, Bit into the live man's flesh, for parchment, Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle, 40 Let the wretch go festering through Florence)— Dante, who loved well because he hated, Hated wickedness that hinders loving, Dante standing, studying his angel— In there broke the folk of his Inferno. Says he—"Certain people of importance" Such he gave his daily dreadful line to) "Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet." Says the poet—"Then I stopped my painting." You and I would rather see that angel, 50 Painted by the tenderness of Dante, Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno. VII You and I will never see that picture. While he mused on love and Beatrice, While he softened o'er his outlined angel, In they broke, those "people of importance;" We and Bice bear the loss forever. VIII What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture? This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not Once, and only once, and for one only, 60 (Ah, the prize !) to find his love a language Fit and fair and simple and sufficient— Using nature that's an art to others, Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature. Ay, of all the artists living, loving, None but would forego his proper dowry— Does he paint? he fain would write a poem— Does he write? he fain would paint a picture, Put to proof art alien to the artist's, Once, and only once, and for one only, 70 So to be the man and

leave the artist, Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow. IX Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement! He who smites the rock and spreads the water, Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him, Even he, the minute makes immortal, Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute, Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing. While he smites, how can he but remember, So he smote before, in such a peril, 80 When they stood and mocked—"Shall smiting help us?" When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy!" When they wiped their mouths and went their journey, Throwing him for thanks—"But drought was pleasant." Thus old memories mar the actual triumph; Thus the doing savors of disrelish; Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat; O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate, Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture. For he bears an ancient wrong about him, 90 Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces, Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude— "How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us?" Guesses what is like to prove the sequel— "Egypt's flesh-pots-nay, the drought was better." X Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant! Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance, Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat. Never dares the man put off the prophet. XI Did he love one face from out the thousands, 100 (Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely, Were she but the Ethiopian bondslave), He would envy yon dumb patient camel, Keeping a reserve of scanty water Meant to save his own life in the desert; Ready in the desert to deliver (Kneeling down to let his breast be opened) Hoard and life together for his mistress. XII I shall never, in the years remaining, Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues, 110 Make you music that should all-express me; So it seems: I stand on my attainment. This of verse alone, one life allows me; Verse and nothing else have I to give you. Other heights in other lives, God willing; All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love! XIII Yet a semblance of resource avails us— Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it. Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly, Lines I write the first time and the last time. 120 He who works in fresco, steals a hair brush, Curbs the liberal hand,

subservient proudly, Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little, Makes a strange art of an art familiar, Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets. He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver, Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess. He who writes, may write for once as I do. XIV Love, you saw me gather men and women, Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy, 130 Enter each and all, and use their service, Speak from every mouth—the speech, a poem. Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows, Hopes and tears, belief and disbelieving: I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's, Karshish, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty. Let me speak this once in my true person, Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea, Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence; Pray you, look on these my men and women, 140 Take and keep my fifty poems finished; Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also! Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things. Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self! Here in London, yonder late in Florence, Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured. Curving on a sky imbrued with color, Drifted over Fiesole by twilight, Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth. Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato, 150 Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder, Perfect till the nightingales applauded. Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished, Hard to greet, she traverses the houseroofs, Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver, Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish. XVI What, there's nothing in the moon noteworthy? Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal, Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy), All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos), 160 She would turn a new side to her mortal, Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman— Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace, Blind to Galileo on his turret, Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even! Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal— When she turns round, comes again in heaven, Opens out anew for worse or better! Proves she like some portent of an iceberg Swimming full upon the ship it founders, 170 Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals? Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain? Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest, Stand

upon the paved work of a sapphire. Like the bodied heaven in his clearness Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work, When they ate and drank and saw God also! XVII What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know. 180 Only this is sure—the sight were other, Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence, Dying now impoverished here in London. God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with, One to show a woman when he loves her! XVIII This I say of me, but think of you, Love! This to you—yourself my moon of poets! Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder, Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you! 190 There, in turn I stand with them and praise you— Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it. But the best is when I glide from out them, Cross a step or two of dubious twilight, Come out on the other side, the novel Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of, Where I hush and bless myself with silence. XIX Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas, Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno, Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it, 200 Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom! R. B. NOTES "One Word More" is the dedication to Elizabeth Barrett Browning which was appended to "Men and Women" as first published when it contained fifty poems since distributed under other titles. The poet, recalling how Rafael when he would all-express his love, wrote sonnets to the loved one, and how Dante prepared to paint an angel for Beatrice, draws the conclusion that there is no artist but longs to give expression to his supreme love in some other art than his own which would be the medium of a spontaneous, natural outburst of feeling in a way impossible in the familiar forms of his own art. Thus he would gain a man's joy and miss the artist's sorrow, for, like the miracles of Moses, the work of the artist is subject to the cold criticism of the world, which expects him nevertheless always to be the artist, and has no sympathy for him as a man. Since there is no other art but poetry in which it is possible for Browning to express himself, he will at least drop his accustomed dramatic form and speak in his own person; though it be poor, let it stand as a symbol for all-expression. Yet does she not know him, for he has shown

her his soul-side as one might imagine the moon showing another side to a mortal lover, which would remain forever as much a mystery to the outside world as the vision seen by Moses, etc. Similarly, he has admired the side his moon of poets has shown the whole world in her poetry, but he blesses himself with the thought of the other side which he alone has seen. 5. Century of sonnets: Rafael is known to have written four love sonnets on the back of sketches for his wall painting, the "Disputa," which are still preserved in collections, one of them in the British Museum. The Italian text of these sonnets with English translations are given in Wolzogen's Life of him translated by F. E. Bunn[e`]tt. Did he ever write a hundred? It is supposed that the lost book once owned by Guido Reni, apparently the one referred to in stanza iv, was a book of drawings. Perhaps these also bore sonnets on their backs, or Browning guessed they did. 10. Who that one: Margarita, a girl Rafael met and loved in Rome, two portraits of whom exist—one in the Barberini Palace, Rome, the other in the Pitti, in Florence. They resemble the Sistine and other Madonnas by Rafael. 21. Madonnas, etc.: "San Sisto," now in Dresden; "Foligno," in the Vatican, Rome; the one in Florence is called "del Granduca," and represents her appearing in a vision; the one in the Louvre, called "La Belle Jardini[e`]re," is seated in a garden among lilies. 32. Dante once, etc.: "On that day," writes Dante, "Vita Nuova," xxxv, "which fulfilled the year since my lady had been made of the citizens of eternal life, remembering of her as I sat alone, I betook myself to draw the resemblance of an angel upon certain tablets." That this lady was Beatrice Portinari, as Browning supposes, Dante's devotion to her, in both "The New Life" and "The Divine Comedy," should leave no doubt. Yet the literalness of Mr. W. M. Rossetti makes him obtuse here, as he and other commentators seem to be in their understanding of Browning throughout this stanza. Browning evidently contrasts Dante's tenderness here towards Beatrice with the remorselessness of his pen in the "Inferno" (see Cantos 32 and 33), where he stigmatized his enemies as if using their very flesh for his parchment, so that ever after in the eyes of all Florence they

seemed to bear the marks of the poet's hate of their wickedness. It was people of this sort, grandees of the town, Browning fancies, who again "hinder loving," breaking in upon the poet and seizing him unawares forsooth at this intimate moment of loving artistry. "Chancing to turn my head," Dante continues, "I perceived that some were standing beside me to whom I should have given courteous greeting, and that they were observing what I did: also I learned afterwards that they had been there a while before I perceived them." The tender moment was over. He stopped the painting, simply saying, "Another was with me." 74. He who smites the rock: Moses, whose experience in smiting the rock for water (Exodus 17.1-7; Numbers 20.1-11) is likened to the sorrow of the artist, serving a reckless world. 97. Sinai-forehead's . . . brilliance: Exodus 19.9, 16; 34.30. 101. Jethro's daughter: Moses' wife, Zipporah (Exodus 2.16, 21). 102. AEthiopian bondslave: Numbers 12.1. 122. Liberal hand: the free hand of the fresco-painter cramped to do the exquisite little designs fit for the missal marge = margin of a Prayer-book. 150. Samminiato: San Miniato, a church in Florence. 161. Turn a new side, etc.: the side turned away from the earth which our world never sees. 163. Zoroaster: (589-513 B. C.), founder of the Persian religion, and worshipper of light, whose habit it was to observe the heavens from his terrace, 164. Galileo: (1564-1642), constructor of the first telescope, leading him to discover that the Milky Way was an assemblage of starry worlds, and the earth a planet revolving on its axis and about an orbit, for which opinion he was tried and condemned. When forced to retire from his professorship at Padua, he continued his observations from his own house in Florence. 164. Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats: Homer celebrates the moon in the "Hymn to Diana" (see Shelley's translation), and makes Artemis upbraid her brother Phoebus when he claims that it is not meet for gods to concern themselves with mortals (Iliad, xxi. 470). Keats, in "Endymion," sings of her love for a mortal. 174. Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, etc.: Exodus 24.1, 10.

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