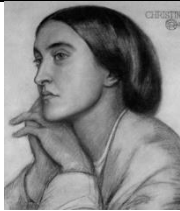


HPEN 7003 VICTORIAN READER (SELECTIONS OF POETRY)

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ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

CATARINA TO CAMOENS

(dying in his absence abroad, & referring to the poem in which he recorded the sweetness of her eyes).

I.

On the door you will not enter,
I have gazed too long: adieu!
Hope withdraws her peradventure;
Death is near me,--and not _you_.
Come, O lover,
Close and cover
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

II.

When I heard you sing that burden
In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
I but hearkened that of yours--
Only saying
In heart-playing,
"Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,
If the sweetest HIS have seen!"

III.

But all changes. At this vesper,
Cold the sun shines down the door.
If you stood there, would you whisper
"Love, I love you," as before,--
Death pervading
Now, and shading
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
As the sweetest ever seen?

IV.

Yes. I think, were you beside them,
Near the bed I die upon,

Though their beauty you denied them,
As you stood there, looking down,
You would truly
Call them duly,
For the love's sake found therein,
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

V.

And if _you_ looked down upon them,
And if _they_ looked up to _you_,
All the light which has foregone them
Would be gathered back anew:
They would truly
Be as duly
Love-transformed to beauty's sheen,
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

VI.

But, ah me! you only see me,
In your thoughts of loving man,
Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
Through the wavings of my fan;
And unweeting
Go repeating,
In your reverie serene,
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen----"

VII.

While my spirit leans and reaches
From my body still and pale,
Fain to hear what tender speech is
In your love to help my bale.
O my poet,
Come and show it!
Come, of latest love, to glean
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

VIII.

O my poet, O my prophet,
When you praised their sweetness so,

Did you think, in singing of it,
That it might be near to go?
Had you fancies
From their glances,
That the grave would quickly screen
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen"?

IX.

No reply. The fountain's warble
In the courtyard sounds alone.
As the water to the marble
So my heart falls with a moan
From love-sighing
To this dying.
Death forerunneth Love to win
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

X.

Will you come? When I'm departed
Where all sweetnesses are hid,
Where thy voice, my tender-hearted,
Will not lift up either lid.
Cry, O lover,
Love is over!
Cry, beneath the cypress green,
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

XI.

When the angelus is ringing,
Near the convent will you walk,
And recall the choral singing
Which brought angels down our talk?
Spirit-shriven
I viewed Heaven,
Till you smiled--"Is earth unclean,
Sweetest eyes were ever seen?"

XII.

When beneath the palace-lattice
You ride slow as you have done,

And you see a face there that is
Not the old familiar one,--
Will you oftly
Murmur softly,
"Here ye watched me morn and e'en,
Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

XIII.

When the palace-ladies, sitting
Round your gittern, shall have said,
"Poet, sing those verses written
For the lady who is dead,"
Will you tremble
Yet dissemble,--
Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen"?

XIV.

"Sweetest eyes!" how sweet in flowings
The repeated cadence is!
Though you sang a hundred poems,
Still the best one would be this.
I can hear it
"Twixt my spirit
And the earth-noise intervene--
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

XV.

But the priest waits for the praying,
And the choir are on their knees,
And the soul must pass away in
Strains more solemn-high than these.
Miserere
For the weary!
Oh, no longer for Catrine
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

XVI.

Keep my riband, take and keep it,

(I have loosed it from my hair)
Feeling, while you overweep it,
Not alone in your despair,
Since with saintly
Watch unfaintly
Out of heaven shall o'er you lean
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

XVII.
But--but _now_--yet unremoved
Up to heaven, they glisten fast;
You may cast away, Beloved,
In your future all my past:
Such old phrases
May be praises
For some fairer bosom-queen--
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

XVIII.
Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?
Faithless, faithless,--praised amiss
If a tear be of your showing,
Dropt for any hope of HIS!
Death has boldness
Besides coldness,
If unworthy tears demean
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

XIX.
I will look out to his future;
I will bless it till it shine.
Should he ever be a suitor
Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
Sunshine gild them,
Angels shield them,
Whatsoever eyes terrene
Be the sweetest HIS have seen!

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN

I
Nine years old! The first of any
Seem the happiest years that come.
Yet when I was nine, I said
No such word!—I thought instead
That the Greeks had used as many
In besieging Ilium.

II
Nine green years had scarcely brought me
To my childhood's haunted spring.
I had life, like flowers and bees
In betwixt the country trees,
And the sun the pleasure taught me
Which he teacheth every thing.

III
If the rain fell, there was sorrow,
Little head leant on the pane,
Little finger drawing down it
The long trailing drops upon it,
And the "Rain, rain, come to-morrow,"
Said for charm against the rain.

IV
Such a charm was right Canidian
Though you meet it with a jeer!
If I said it long enough,
Then the rain hummed dimly off,
And the thrush with his pure Lydian
Was left only to the ear;

V
And the sun and I together
Went a-rushing out of doors!
We, our tender spirits, drew
Over hill and dale in view,
Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,

In the footsteps of the showers.

VI

Underneath the chesnuts dripping,
Through the grasses wet and fair,
Straight I sought my garden-ground,
With the laurel on the mound,
And the pear-tree oversweeping
A side-shadow of green air.

VII

In the garden lay supinely
A huge giant wrought of spade!
Arms and legs were stretched at length
In a passive giant strength,—
The fine meadow turf, cut finely,
Round them laid and interlaid.

VIII

Call him Hector, son of Priam!
Such his title and degree.
With my rake I smoothed his brow,
Both his cheeks I weeded through,
But a rhymer such as I am,
Scarce can sing his dignity.

IX

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
Staring, winking at the skies,
Nose of gillyflowers and box.
Scented grasses put for locks,
Which a little breeze, at pleasure,
Set a-waving round his eyes.

X

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
With a glitter toward the light.
Purple violets for the mouth,
Breathing perfumes west and south;
And a sword of flashing lilies,
Holden ready for the fight.

XI

And a breastplate made of daisies,
Closely fitting, leaf on leaf.
Periwinkles interlaced
Drawn for belt about the waist;
While the brown bees, humming praises,
Shot their arrows round the chief.

XII

And who knows, (I sometimes wondered,)
If the disembodied soul
Of old Hector, once of Troy,
Might not take a dreary joy
Here to enter—if it thundered,
Rolling up the thunder-roll?

XIII

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,
In this body rude and rife
Just to enter, and take rest
'Neath the daisies of the breast—
They, with tender roots, renewing
His heroic heart to life?

XIV

Who could know? I sometimes started
At a motion or a sound!
Did his mouth speak—naming Troy,
With an *οτοτοτοτοι*?
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
Make the daisies tremble round?

XV

It was hard to answer, often:
But the birds sang in the tree—
But the little birds sang bold
In the pear-tree green and old,
And my terror seemed to soften

Through the courage of their glee.

XVI

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
And white blossoms, sleek with rain!
Oh, my garden, rich with pansies!
Oh, my childhood's bright romances!
All revive, like Hector's body,
And I see them stir again!

XVII

And despite life's changes—chances,
And despite the deathbell's toll,
They press on me in full seeming!
Help, some angel! stay this dreaming!
As the birds sang in the branches,
Sing God's patience through my soul!

XVIII

That no dreamer, no neglecter
Of the present's work unsped,
I may wake up and be doing,
Life's heroic ends pursuing,
Though my past is dead as Hector,
And though Hector is twice dead.

LORD WALTER'S WIFE

I

'But where do you go?' said the lady, while both sat under the yew,
And her eyes were alive in their depth, as the kraken beneath the sea-blue.

II

'Because I fear you,' he answered;--'because you are far too fair,
And able to strangle my soul in a mesh of your golfd-coloured hair.'

III

'Oh that,' she said, 'is no reason! Such knots are quickly undone,
And too much beauty, I reckon, is nothing but too much sun.'

IV

'Yet farewell so,' he answered; --'the sunstroke's fatal at times.
I value your husband, Lord Walter, whose gallop rings still from the limes.

V

'Oh that,' she said, 'is no reason. You smell a rose through a fence:
If two should smell it what matter? who grumbles, and where's the pretense?

VI

'But I,' he replied, 'have promised another, when love was free,
To love her alone, alone, who alone from afar loves me.'

VII

'Why, that,' she said, 'is no reason. Love's always free I am told.
Will you vow to be safe from the headache on Tuesday, and think it will hold?

VIII

'But you,' he replied, 'have a daughter, a young child, who was laid
In your lap to be pure; so I leave you: the angels would make me afraid.'

IX

'Oh that,' she said, 'is no reason. The angels keep out of the way;
And Dora, the child, observes nothing, although you should please me and stay.'

X

At which he rose up in his anger,--'Why now, you no longer are fair!
Why, now, you no longer are fatal, but ugly and hateful, I swear.'

XI

At which she laughed out in her scorn: 'These men! Oh these men overnice,
Who are shocked if a colour not virtuous is frankly put on by a vice.'

XII

Her eyes blazed upon him--'And you! You bring us your vices so near
That we smell them! You think in our presence a thought 'twould defame us to hear!

XIII

'What reason had you, and what right,--I appel to your soul from my life,--
To find me so fair as a woman? Why, sir, I am pure, and a wife.

XIV

'Is the day-star too fair up above you? It burns you not. Dare you imply
I brushed you more close than the star does, when Walter had set me as high?

XV

'If a man finds a woman too fair, he means simply adapted too much
To use unlawful and fatal. The praise! --shall I thank you for such?

XVI

'Too fair?--not unless you misuse us! and surely if, once in a while,
You attain to it, straightaway you call us no longer too fair, but too vile.

XVII

'A moment,--I pray your attention!--I have a poor word in my head
I must utter, though womanly custom would set it down better unsaid.

XVIII

'You grew, sir, pale to impertinence, once when I showed you a ring.
You kissed my fan when I dropped it. No matter! I've broken the thing.

XIX

'You did me the honour, perhaps, to be moved at my side now and then
In the senses--a vice, I have heard, which is common to beasts and some men.

XX

'Love's a virtue for heroes!--as white as the snow on high hills,
And immortal as every great soul is that struggles, endures, and fulfils.

XXI

'I love my Walter profoundly,--you, Maude, though you faltered a week,
For the sake of . . . what is it--an eyebrow? or, less still, a mole on the cheek?

XXII

'And since, when all's said, you're too noble to stoop to the frivolous cant
About crimes irresistible, virtues that swindle, betray and supplant.

XXIII

'I determined to prove to yourself that, whate'er you might dream or avow
By illusion, you wanted precisely no more of me than you have now.

XXIV

'There! Look me full in the face!--in the face. Understand, if you can,
That the eyes of such women as I am are clean as the palm of a man.

XXV

'Drop his hand, you insult him. Avoid us for fear we should cost you a scar--
You take us for harlots, I tell you, and not for the women we are.

XXVI

'You wronged me: but then I considered . . . there's Walter! And so at the end
I vowed that he should not be mulcted, by me, in the hand of a friend.

XXVII

'Have I hurt you indeed? We are quits then. Nay, friend of my Walter, be mine!
Come, Dora, my darling, my angel, and help me to ask him to dine.'

THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT

I.

I stand on the mark beside the shore
Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee,
Where exile turned to ancestor,
And God was thanked for liberty.
I have run through the night, my skin is as dark,
I bend my knee down on this mark . . .
I look on the sky and the sea.

II.

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you!
I see you come out proud and slow

From the land of the spirits pale as dew. . .
And round me and round me ye go!
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
All night long from the whips of one
Who in your names works sin and woe.

III.

And thus I thought that I would come
And kneel here where I knelt before,
And feel your souls around me hum
In undertone to the ocean's roar;
And lift my black face, my black hand,
Here, in your names, to curse this land
Ye blessed in freedom's evermore.

IV.

I am black, I am black;
And yet God made me, they say.
But if He did so, smiling back
He must have cast His work away
Under the feet of His white creatures,
With a look of scorn,--that the dusky features
Might be trodden again to clay.

V.

And yet He has made dark things
To be glad and merry as light.
There's a little dark bird sits and sings;
There's a dark stream ripples out of sight;
And the dark frogs chant in the safe morass,
And the sweetest stars are made to pass
O'er the face of the darkest night.

VI.

But we who are dark, we are dark!
Ah, God, we have no stars!
About our souls in care and cark
Our blackness shuts like prison bars:
The poor souls crouch so far behind,

That never a comfort can they find
By reaching through the prison-bars.

VII.

Indeed, we live beneath the sky, . . .
That great smooth Hand of God, stretched out
On all His children fatherly,
To bless them from the fear and doubt,
Which would be, if, from this low place,
All opened straight up to His face
Into the grand eternity.

VIII.

And still God's sunshine and His frost,
They make us hot, they make us cold,
As if we were not black and lost:
And the beasts and birds, in wood and fold,
Do fear and take us for very men!
Could the weep-poor-will or the cat of the glen
Look into my eyes and be bold?

IX.

I am black, I am black!--
But, once, I laughed in girlish glee;
For one of my colour stood in the track
Where the drivers drove, and looked at me--
And tender and full was the look he gave:
Could a slave look so at another slave?--
I look at the sky and the sea.

X.

And from that hour our spirits grew
As free as if unsold, unbought:
Oh, strong enough, since we were two
To conquer the world, we thought!
The drivers drove us day by day;
We did not mind, we went one way,
And no better a liberty sought.

XI.

In the sunny ground between the canes,
He said "I love you" as he passed:
When the shingle-roof rang sharp with the rains,
I heard how he vowed it fast:
While others shook, he smiled in the hut
As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-nut,
Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII.

I sang his name instead of a song;
Over and over I sang his name--
Upward and downward I drew it along
My various notes; the same, the same!
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near
Might never guess from aught they could hear,
It was only a name.

XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea--
We were two to love, and two to pray,--
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
Though nothing didst Thou say.
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun!
And now I cry who am but one,
How wilt Thou speak to-day?--

XIV.

We were black, we were black!
We had no claim to love and bliss:
What marvel, if each turned to lack?
They wrung my cold hands out of his,--
They dragged him . . . where ? . . . I crawled to touch
His blood's mark in the dust! . . . not much,
Ye pilgrim-souls, . . . though plain as this!

XV.

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong!
Mere grief's too good for such as I.
So the white men brought the shame ere long
To strangle the sob of my agony.

They would not leave me for my dull
Wet eyes!--it was too merciful
To let me weep pure tears and die.

XVI.

I am black, I am black!--
I wore a child upon my breast
An amulet that hung too slack,
And, in my unrest, could not rest:
Thus we went moaning, child and mother,
One to another, one to another,
Until all ended for the best:

XVII.

For hark ! I will tell you low . . . Iow . . .
I am black, you see,--
And the babe who lay on my bosom so,
Was far too white . . . too white for me;
As white as the ladies who scorned to pray
Beside me at church but yesterday;
Though my tears had washed a place for my knee.

XVIII.

My own, own child! I could not bear
To look in his face, it was so white.
I covered him up with a kerchief there;
I covered his face in close and tight:
And he moaned and struggled, as well might be,
For the white child wanted his liberty--
Ha, ha! he wanted his master right.

XIX.

He moaned and beat with his head and feet,
His little feet that never grew--
He struck them out, as it was meet,
Against my heart to break it through.
I might have sung and made him mild--
But I dared not sing to the white-faced child
The only song I knew.

XX.

I pulled the kerchief very close:
He could not see the sun, I swear,
More, then, alive, than now he does
From between the roots of the mango . . . where
. . . I know where. Close! a child and mother
Do wrong to look at one another,
When one is black and one is fair.

XXI.

Why, in that single glance I had
Of my child's face, . . . I tell you all,
I saw a look that made me mad . . .
The master's look, that used to fall
On my soul like his lash . . . or worse!
And so, to save it from my curse,
I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII.

And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,
He shivered from head to foot;
Till, after a time, he lay instead
Too suddenly still and mute.
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold, . . .
I dared to lift up just a fold . . .
As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

XXIII.

But my fruit . . . ha, ha!--there, had been
(I laugh to think on't at this hour! . . .)
Your fine white angels, who have seen
Nearest the secret of God's power, . . .
And plucked my fruit to make them wine,
And sucked the soul of that child of mine,
As the humming-bird sucks the soul of the flower.

XXIV.

Ha, ha, for the trick of the angels white!
They freed the white child's spirit so.
I said not a word, but, day and night,

I carried the body to and fro;
And it lay on my heart like a stone . . . as chill.
--The sun may shine out as much as he will:
I am cold, though it happened a month ago.

XXV.

From the white man's house, and the black man's hut,
I carried the little body on,
The forest's arms did round us shut,
And silence through the trees did run:
They asked no question as I went,--
They stood too high for astonishment,--
They could see God sit on His throne.

XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
I bore it on through the forest . . . on:
And when I felt it was tired at last,
I scooped a hole beneath the moon.
Through the forest-tops the angels far,
With a white sharp finger from every star,
Did point and mock at what was done.

XXVII.

Yet when it was all done aright, . . .
Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed,
All, changed to black earth, . . . nothing white, . . .
A dark child in the dark,--ensued
Some comfort, and my heart grew young:
I sate down smiling there and sung
The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

XXVIII.

And thus we two were reconciled,
The white child and black mother, thus:
For, as I sang it, soft and wild
The same song, more melodious,
Rose from the grave whereon I sate!
It was the dead child singing that,
To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX.

I look on the sea and the sky!
Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored lay,
The free sun rideth gloriously;
But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away
Through the earliest streaks of the morn.
My face is black, but it glares with a scorn
Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX.

Ah!--in their 'stead, their hunter sons!
Ah, ah! they are on me--they hunt in a ring--
Keep off! I brave you all at once--
I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting!
You have killed the black eagle at nest, I think:
Did you never stand still in your triumph, and shrink
From the stroke of her wounded wing?

XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!--)
I wish you, who stand there five a-breast,
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
A little corpse as safely at rest
As mine in the mangos!--Yes, but she
May keep live babies on her knee,
And sing the song she liketh best.

XXXII.

I am not mad: I am black.
I see you staring in my face--
I know you, staring, shrinking back--
Ye are born of the Washington-race:
And this land is the free America:
And this mark on my wrist . . . (I prove what I say)
Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.

XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then? Not a sound!
I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun.
I only cursed them all around,

As softly as I might have done
My very own child!--From these sands
Up to the mountains, lift your hands,
O slaves, and end what I begun!

XXXIV.

Whips, curses; these must answer those!
For in this UNION, you have set
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,
Each loathing each: and all forget
The seven wounds in Christ's body fair;
While HE sees gaping everywhere
Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

XXV.

Our wounds are different. Your white men
Are, after all, not gods indeed,
Nor able to make Christs again
Do good with bleeding. We who bleed . . .
(Stand off!) we help not in our loss!
We are too heavy for our cross,
And fall and crush you and your seed.

XXXVI.

I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky:
The clouds are breaking on my brain;
I am floated along, as if I should die
Of liberty's exquisite pain--
In the name of the white child, waiting for me
In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,
White men, I leave you all curse-free
In my broken heart's disdain!

AURORA LEIGH (Novel in verse: - extracts)

Book 1: conflicting images of the mother

Father, then, and child,
We lived among the mountains many years,
God's silence on the outside of the house,
And we, who did not speak too loud, within;
And old Assunta to make up the fire,
Crossing herself whene'er a sudden flame
Which lightened from the firewood, made alive
That picture of my mother on the wall.
The painter drew it after she was dead;
And when the face was finished, throat and hands,
Her cameriera carried him, in hate
Of the English-fashioned shroud, the last brocade
She dressed in at the Pitti. 'He should paint
No sadder thing than that,' she swore, 'to wrong
Her poor signora.' Therefore, very strange
The effect was. I, a little child, would crouch
For hours upon the floor, with knees drawn up
And gaze across them, half in terror, half
In adoration, at the picture there,—
That swan-like supernatural white life,
Just sailing upward from the red stiff silk
Which seemed to have no part in it, nor power
To keep it from quite breaking out of bounds:
For hours I sate and stared. Assunta's awe
And my poor father's melancholy eyes
Still pointed that way. That way, went my thoughts
When wandering beyond sight. And as I grew
In years, I mixed, confused, unconsciously,
Whatever I last read or heard or dreamed,
Abhorrent, admirable, beautiful,
Pathetical, or ghastly, or grotesque,
With still that face . . . which did not therefore change,
But kept the mystic level of all forms
And fears and admirations; was by turn
Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and sprite,—

A dauntless Muse who eyes a dreadful Fate,
A loving Psyche who loses sight of Love,
A still Medusa, with mild milky brows
All curdled and all clothed upon with snakes
Whose slime falls fast as sweat will; or, anon,
Our Lady of the Passion, stabbed with swords
Where the Babe sucked; or, Lamia in her first
Moonlighted pallor, ere she shrunk and blinked,
And, shuddering, wriggled down to the unclean;
Or, my own mother, leaving her last smile
In her last kiss, upon the baby-mouth
My father pushed down on the bed for that,—
Or, my dead mother, without smile or kiss,
Buried at Florence. All which images,
Concentred on the picture, glassed themselves
Before my meditative childhood, .

Book 1: On women's education

So it was.
I broke the copious curls upon my head
In braids, because she liked smooth ordered hair.
I left off saying my sweet Tuscan words
Which still at any stirring of the heart
Came up to float across the English phrase,
As lilies, (Bene . . . or che ch'è) because
She liked my father's child to speak his tongue.
I learnt the collects and the catechism,
The creeds, from Athanasius back to Nice,
The Articles . . . the Tracts against the times,
(By no means Buonaventure's 'Prick of Love,')
And various popular synopses of
Inhuman doctrines never taught by John,
Because she liked instructed piety.
I learnt my complement of classic French
(Kept pure of Balzac and neologism,)
And German also, since she liked a range
Of liberal education,—tongues, not books.

I learnt a little algebra, a little
 Of the mathematics,—brushed with extreme flounce
 The circle of the sciences, because
 She disliked women who are frivolous.
 I learnt the royal genealogies
 Of Oviedo, the internal laws
 Of the Burmese Empire, . . by how many feet
 Mount Chimborazo outsoars Himmeleh,
 What navigable river joins itself
 To Lara, and what census of the year five
 Was taken at Klagenfurt,—because she liked
 A general insight into useful facts.
 I learnt much music,—such as would have been
 As quite impossible in Johnson's day
 As still it might be wished—fine sleights of hand
 And unimagined fingering, shuffling off
 The hearer's soul through hurricanes of notes
 To a noisy Tophet; and I drew . . costumes
 From French engravings, nereids neatly draped,
 With smirks of simmering godship,—I washed in
 From nature, landscapes, (rather say, washed out.)
 I danced the polka and Cellarius,
 Spun glass, stuffed birds, and modelled flowers in wax,
 Because she liked accomplishments in girls.
 I read a score of books on womanhood
 To prove, if women do not think at all,
 They may teach thinking, (to a maiden aunt
 Or else the author)—books demonstrating
 Their right of comprehending husband's talk
 When not too deep, and even of answering
 With pretty 'may it please you,' or 'so it is,'—
 Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,
 Particular worth and general missionariness,
 As long as they keep quiet by the fire
 And never say 'no' when the world says 'ay,'
 For that is fatal,—their angelic reach
 Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn,
 And fatten household sinners—their, in brief,
 Potential faculty in everything
 Of abdicating power in it: she owned

She liked a woman to be womanly,
 And English women, she thanked God and sighed,
 (Some people always sigh in thanking God)
 Were models to the universe. And last
 I learnt cross-stitch, because she did not like
 To see me wear the night with empty hands,
 A-doing nothing. So, my shepherdess
 Was something after all, (the pastoral saints
 Be praised for't) leaning lovelorn with pink eyes
 To match her shoes, when I mistook the silks;
 Her head uncrushed by that round weight of hat
 So strangely similar to the tortoise-shell
 Which slew the tragic poet.

By the way,
 The works of women are symbolical.
 We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull our sight,
 Producing what? A pair of slippers, sir,
 To put on when you're weary—or a stool
 To tumble over and vex you . . 'curse that stool!
 Or else at best, a cushion where you lean
 And sleep, and dream of something we are not,
 But would be for your sake. Alas, alas!
 This hurts most, this . . that, after all, we are paid
 The worth of our work, perhaps.

In looking down
 Those years of education, (to return)
 I wondered if Brinvilliers suffered more
 In the water torture, . . flood succeeding flood
 To drench the incapable throat and split the veins . .
 Than I did.

Book 6: Aurora finds the lost Marian now a prostitute with an illegitimate baby in Paris

startled by a voice
 That slowly, faintly, with long breaths that marked
 The interval between the wish and word,
 Inquired in stranger's French, 'Would that be much,

'That branch of flowering mountain-gorse?'—'So much?
'Too much for me, then!' turning the face round
So close upon me, that I felt the sigh
It turned with.

'Marian, Marian!'—face to face—
'Marian! I find you. Shall I let you go?'
I held her two slight wrists with both my hands;
'Ah, Marian, Marian, can I let you go?'
—She fluttered from me like a cyclamen,
As white, which, taken in a sudden wind,
Beats on against the palisade.—'Let pass,'
She said at last. 'I will not,' I replied;
'I lost my sister Marian many days,
And sought her ever in my walks and prayers,
And now I find her . . . do we thrown away
The bread we worked and prayed for,—crumble it
And drop it, . . . to do even so by thee
Whom still I've hungered after more than bread,
My sister Marian?—can I hurt thee, dear?
Then why distrust me? Never tremble so.
Come with me rather, where we'll talk and live,
And none shall vex us. I've a home for you
And me and no one else' . . .

She shook her head.

'A home for you and me and no one else
Ill-suits one of us: I prefer to such,
A roof of grass on which a flower might spring,
Less costly to me than the cheapest here;
And yet I could not, at this hour, afford
A like home, even. That you offer yours,
I thank you. You are good as heaven itself—
As good as one I knew before . . . Farewell.'
I loosed her hands. 'In his name, no farewell!'
(She stood as if I held her,) 'for his sake,
For his sake, Romney's! by the good he meant,
Ay, always! by the love he pressed for once,—
And by the grief, reproach, abandonment,
He took in change' . . .

'He, Romney! who grieved him?
Who had the heart for't? what reproach touch'd him?

Be merciful,—speak quickly.'

'Therefore come.

I answered with authority,—'I think
We dare to speak such things, and name such names,
In the open squares of Paris!'

Not a word

She said, but, in a gentle humbled way,
(As one who had forgot herself in grief)
Turned round and followed closely where I went.
As if I led her by a narrow plank
Across devouring waters, step by step,—
And so in silence we walked on a mile.

And then she stopped: her face was white as wax.
'We go much further?'

'You are ill,' I asked,

'Or tired?'

She looked the whiter for her smile.
'There's one at home,' she said, 'has need of me
By this time,—and I must not let him wait.'

'Not even,' I asked, 'to hear of Romney Leigh?'
'Not even,' she said, 'to hear of Mister Leigh.'

'In that case,' I resumed, 'I go with you,
And we can talk the same thing there as here.
None waits for me: I have my day to spend.'

Her lips moved in a spasm without a sound,—
But then she spoke. 'It shall be as you please;
And better so,—'tis shorter seen than told.
And though you will not find me worth your pains,
That even, may be worth some pains to know,
For one as good as you are.'

ROBERT BROWNING

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

I

OH Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 'tis with such a heavy mind!

II

Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants were the kings,
Where Saint Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?

III

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and 'tis arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept the carnival:
I was never out of England—it's as if I saw it all.

IV

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you say?

V

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red,—
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might base his head?

VI

Well, and it was graceful of them—they'd break talk off and afford
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet—he, to finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

VII

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished, sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions—"Must we die?"
Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might last! we can but try!

VIII

"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are you still as happy?"—"Yes. And
you?"
—"Then, more kisses!"—"Did I stop them, when a million seemed so few?"
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be answered to!

IX

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare say!
"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!"
"I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!"

X

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

XI

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I creep thro' every nerve.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned:
"Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice earned."
"The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be discerned.

XIII

"Yours for instance: you know physics, something of geology,
"Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree;
"Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not die, it cannot be!

XIV

"As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
"Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop:
"What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

XV

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old

For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove!
 But cockle, spurge, according to their law
 Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
 You 'd think; a burr had been a treasure trove. 60

No! penury, inertness and grimace,
 In the strange sort, were the land's portion. "See
 Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,
 "It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
 'T is the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place, 65
 Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

If there push'd any ragged thistle=stalk
 Above its mates, the head was chop'd; the bents
 Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
 In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to baulk 70
 All hope of greenness? 'T is a brute must walk
 Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
 In leprosy; thin dry blades prick'd the mud
 Which underneath look'd kneaded up with blood. 75
 One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
 Stood stupefied, however he came there:
 Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

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

I shut my eyes and turn'd them on my heart. 85
 As a man calls for wine before he fights,
 I ask'd one draught of earlier, happier sights,
 Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
 Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art:
 One taste of the old time sets all to rights. 90

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
 Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
 Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
 An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
 That way he us'd. Alas, one night's disgrace! 95
 Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

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

Better this present than a past like that;
 Back therefore to my darkening path again!
 No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain. 105
 Will the night send a howlet of a bat?
 I asked: when something on the dismal flat
 Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

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

So petty yet so spiteful All along, 115
 Low scrubby alders kneel'd down over it;
 Drench'd willows flung them headlong in a fit
 Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
 The river which had done them all the wrong,
 Whate'er that was, roll'd by, deterr'd no whit. 120

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how I fear'd
 To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
 Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
 For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
 —It may have been a water-rat I spear'd, 125

But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.		A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,	160
Glad was I when I reach'd the other bank.		Sail'd past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penn'd	
Now for a better country. Vain presage!		That brush'd my cap—perchance the guide I sought.	
Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage		For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,	
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank	130	Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place	
Soil to a plash? Toads in a poison'd tank,		All round to mountains—with such name to grace	165
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—		Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.	
The fight must so have seem'd in that fell cirque.		How thus they had surpris'd me,—solve it, you!	
What penn'd them there, with all the plain to choose?		How to get from them was no clearer case.	
No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,	135	Yet half I seem'd to recognize some trick	
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work		Of mischief happen'd to me, God knows when—	170
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk		In a bad perhaps. Here ended, then,	
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.		Progress this way. When, in the very nick	
And more than that—a furlong on—why, there!		Of giving up, one time more, came a click	
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,	140	As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den.	
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel		Burningly it came on me all at once,	175
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air		This was the place! those two hills on the right,	
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,		Couch'd like two bulls lock'd horn in horn in fight,	
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.		While, to the left, a tall scalp'd mountain ... Duncce,	
Then came a bit of stubb'd ground, once a wood,	145	Dotard, a-doing at the very nonce,	
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth		After a life spent training for the sight!	180
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,		What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?	
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood		The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,	
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood—		Built of brown stone, without a counter-part	
Bog, clay, and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.	150	In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf	
Now blotches rankling, color'd gay and grim,		Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf	185
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's		He strikes on, only when the timbers start.	
Broke into moss or substances like thus;		Not see? because of night perhaps?—Why, day	
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him		Came back again for that! before it left,	
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim	155	The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:	
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.		The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,	190
And just as far as ever from the end,		Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—	
Nought in the distance but the evening, nought		“Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!”	
To point my footstep further! At the thought,		Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it toll'd	

Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
 Of all the lost adventurers my peers,— 195
 How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
 And such was fortunate, yet each of old
 Lost, lost! one moment knell'd the woe of years.

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

FRA LIPPO LIPPI'

I 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 — hurry 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
 , , 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 whiffs 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 —
 If I've been merry, what matter who knows?hy
 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;
 I 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 antiphony'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 disembodying.
 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 fumed;
 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, 190
 That sets us praising — why not stop with him?
 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!"
 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!

LOVE IN A LIFE

I
 Room after room,
 I hunt the house through
 We inhabit together.
 Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—
 Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her
 Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
 As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew:
 Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II
 Yet the day wears,
 And door succeeds door;
 I try the fresh fortune—
 Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
 Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
 Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?
 But 'tis twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
 Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

MEMORABILIA

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

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

III

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

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

MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

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

But to myself they turned (since none puts by
 The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
 And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
 How such a glance came there; so, not the first
 Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
 Her husband's presence only, called that spot
 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek; perhaps
 Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
 Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
 Must never hope to reproduce the faint
 Half-flush that dies along her throat." Such stuff
 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
 For calling up that spot of joy. She had
 A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
 Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
 Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
 The dropping of the daylight in the West,
 The bough of cherries some officious fool
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
 She rode with round the terrace—all and each
 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked
 Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
 In speech—which I have not—to make your will
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
 Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
 Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—
 E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
 Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
 The company below, then. I repeat,

The Count your master's known munificence
 Is ample warrant that no just pretense
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

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

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

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

I
 I wonder do you feel to-day
 As I have felt since, hand in hand,
 We sat down on the grass, to stray
 In spirit better through the land,
 This morn of Rome and May?

II
 For me, I touched a thought, I know,
 Has tantalized me many times,
 (Like turns of thread the spiders throw
 Mocking across our path) for rhymes
 To catch at and let go.

III
 Help me to hold it! First it left
 The yellowing fennel, run to seed
 There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
 Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
 Took up the floating weft,

IV
 Where one small orange cup amassed
 Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
 Among the honey-meal: and last,
 Everywhere on the grassy slope
 I traced it. Hold it fast!

V
 The champaign with its endless fleece
 Of feathery grasses everywhere!
 Silence and passion, joy and peace,
 An everlasting wash of air—
 Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI
 Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
 Such miracles performed in play,
 Such primal naked forms of flowers,

Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers!

VII

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

VIII

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?

IX

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part my part
In life, for good and ill.

X

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

XI

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

XII

Just when I seemed about to learn!

Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

GOBLIN MARKET

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
“Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpeck’d cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheek’d peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy.”

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bow’d her head to hear,
Lizzie veil’d her blushes:
Crouching close together

In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
“Lie close,” Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head:
“We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?”
“Come buy,” call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.

“Oh,” cried Lizzie, “Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men.”
Lizzie cover’d up her eyes,
Cover’d close lest they should look;
Laura rear’d her glossy head,
And whisper’d like the restless brook:
“Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds weight.
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Through those fruit bushes.”
“No,” said Lizzie, “No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us.”
She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat’s face,
One whisk’d a tail,
One tramp’d at a rat’s pace,
One crawl’d like a snail,
One like a wombat prowl’d obtuse and furry,

One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretch'd her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen
Turn'd and troop'd the goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
"Come buy, come buy."
When they reach'd where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One rear'd his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown
(Men sell not such in any town);
One heav'd the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her:
"Come buy, come buy," was still their cry.
Laura stared but did not stir,
Long'd but had no money:
The whisk-tail'd merchant bade her taste
In tones as smooth as honey,
The cat-faced purr'd,
The rat-faced spoke a word
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
One parrot-voiced and jolly
Cried "Pretty Goblin" still for "Pretty Polly;"—

One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
"Good folk, I have no coin;
To take were to purloin:
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,
And all my gold is on the furze
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather."
"You have much gold upon your head,"
They answer'd all together:
"Buy from us with a golden curl."
She clipp'd a precious golden lock,
She dropp'd a tear more rare than pearl,
Then suck'd their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flow'd that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?
She suck'd and suck'd and suck'd the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
She suck'd until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gather'd up one kernel stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turn'd home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
"Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Pluck'd from bowers

Where summer ripens at all hours?
 But ever in the noonlight
 She pined and pined away;
 Sought them by night and day,
 Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;
 Then fell with the first snow,
 While to this day no grass will grow
 Where she lies low:
 I planted daisies there a year ago
 That never blow.
 You should not loiter so.”
 “Nay, hush,” said Laura:
 “Nay, hush, my sister:
 I ate and ate my fill,
 Yet my mouth waters still;
 To-morrow night I will
 Buy more;” and kiss’d her:
 “Have done with sorrow;
 I’ll bring you plums to-morrow
 Fresh on their mother twigs,
 Cherries worth getting;
 You cannot think what figs
 My teeth have met in,
 What melons icy-cold
 Piled on a dish of gold
 Too huge for me to hold,
 What peaches with a velvet nap,
 Pellucid grapes without one seed:
 Odorous indeed must be the mead
 Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
 With lilies at the brink,
 And sugar-sweet their sap.”

Golden head by golden head,
 Like two pigeons in one nest
 Folded in each other’s wings,
 They lay down in their curtain’d bed:
 Like two blossoms on one stem,
 Like two flakes of new-fall’n snow,
 Like two wands of ivory

Tipp’d with gold for awful kings.
 Moon and stars gaz’d in at them,
 Wind sang to them lullaby,
 Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
 Not a bat flapp’d to and fro
 Round their rest:
 Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
 Lock’d together in one nest.

Early in the morning
 When the first cock crow’d his warning,
 Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
 Laura rose with Lizzie:
 Fetch’d in honey, milk’d the cows,
 Air’d and set to rights the house,
 Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
 Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
 Next churn’d butter, whipp’d up cream,
 Fed their poultry, sat and sew’d;
 Talk’d as modest maidens should:
 Lizzie with an open heart,
 Laura in an absent dream,
 One content, one sick in part;
 One warbling for the mere bright day’s delight,
 One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:
 They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
 Lizzie most placid in her look,
 Laura most like a leaping flame.
 They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
 Lizzie pluck’d purple and rich golden flags,
 Then turning homeward said: “The sunset flushes
 Those furthest loftiest crags;
 Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
 No wilful squirrel wags,
 The beasts and birds are fast asleep.”
 But Laura loiter’d still among the rushes
 And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill;
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
"Come buy, come buy,"
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, "O Laura, come;
I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:
You should not loiter longer at this brook:
Come with me home.
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
Each glowworm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows dark:
For clouds may gather
Though this is summer weather,
Put out the lights and drench us through;
Then if we lost our way what should we do?"

Laura turn'd cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
"Come buy our fruits, come buy."
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?
Must she no more such succous pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind?
Her tree of life droop'd from the root:
She said not one word in her heart's sore ache;
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudg'd home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
So crept to bed, and lay
Silent till Lizzie slept;

Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnash'd her teeth for baulk'd desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry:
"Come buy, come buy;"—
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon wax'd bright
Her hair grew thin and grey;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dew'd it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watch'd for a waxing shoot,
But there came none;
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dream'd of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crown'd trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetch'd honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook:
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
To watch her sister's cankerous care
Yet not to share.

She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy;"—
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men,
The yoke and stir
Poor Laura could not hear;
Long'd to buy fruit to comfort her,
But fear'd to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,
In earliest winter time
With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp winter time.

Till Laura dwindling
Seem'd knocking at Death's door:
Then Lizzie weigh'd no more
Better and worse;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kiss'd Laura, cross'd the heath with clumps of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook:
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laugh'd every goblin
When they spied her peeping:
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,

Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel- and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,
Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes,—
Hugg'd her and kiss'd her:
Squeez'd and caress'd her:
Stretch'd up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates:
"Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,
Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them,
Pomegranates, figs."—

"Good folk," said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:
"Give me much and many: —
Held out her apron,
Toss'd them her penny.
"Nay, take a seat with us,
Honour and eat with us,"
They answer'd grinning:
"Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful and starry:
Such fruits as these
No man can carry:
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,

Half their flavour would pass by.
 Sit down and feast with us,
 Be welcome guest with us,
 Cheer you and rest with us.”—
 “Thank you,” said Lizzie: “But one waits
 At home alone for me:
 So without further parleying,
 If you will not sell me any
 Of your fruits though much and many,
 Give me back my silver penny
 I toss’d you for a fee.”—
 They began to scratch their pates,
 No longer wagging, purring,
 But visibly demurring,
 Grunting and snarling.
 One call’d her proud,
 Cross-grain’d, uncivil;
 Their tones wax’d loud,
 Their looks were evil.
 Lashing their tails
 They trod and hustled her,
 Elbow’d and jostled her,
 Claw’d with their nails,
 Barking, mewling, hissing, mocking,
 Tore her gown and soil’d her stocking,
 Twitch’d her hair out by the roots,
 Stamp’d upon her tender feet,
 Held her hands and squeez’d their fruits
 Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
 Like a lily in a flood,—
 Like a rock of blue-vein’d stone
 Lash’d by tides obstreperously,—
 Like a beacon left alone
 In a hoary roaring sea,
 Sending up a golden fire,—
 Like a fruit-crown’d orange-tree
 White with blossoms honey-sweet
 Sore beset by wasp and bee,—

Like a royal virgin town
 Topp’d with gilded dome and spire
 Close beleaguer’d by a fleet
 Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
 Twenty cannot make him drink.
 Though the goblins cuff’d and caught her,
 Coax’d and fought her,
 Bullied and besought her,
 Scratch’d her, pinch’d her black as ink,
 Kick’d and knock’d her,
 Maul’d and mock’d her,
 Lizzie utter’d not a word;
 Would not open lip from lip
 Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
 But laugh’d in heart to feel the drip
 Of juice that syrapp’d all her face,
 And lodg’d in dimples of her chin,
 And streak’d her neck which quaked like curd.
 At last the evil people,
 Worn out by her resistance,
 Flung back her penny, kick’d their fruit
 Along whichever road they took,
 Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
 Some writh’d into the ground,
 Some div’d into the brook
 With ring and ripple,
 Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
 Some vanish’d in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,
 Lizzie went her way;
 Knew not was it night or day;
 Sprang up the bank, tore thro’ the furze,
 Threaded copse and dingle,
 And heard her penny jingle
 Bouncing in her purse,—
 Its bounce was music to her ear.
 She ran and ran

As if she fear'd some goblin man
Dogg'd her with gibe or curse
Or something worse:
But not one goblin scurried after,
Nor was she prick'd by fear;
The kind heart made her windy-paced
That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
And inward laughter.

She cried, "Laura," up the garden,
"Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeez'd from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me;
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men."

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutch'd her hair:
"Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden?
Must your light like mine be hidden,
Your young life like mine be wasted,
Undone in mine undoing,
And ruin'd in my ruin,
Thirsty, canker'd, goblin-ridden?"—
She clung about her sister,
Kiss'd and kiss'd and kiss'd her:
Tears once again
Refresh'd her shrunken eyes,
Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth;
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
She kiss'd and kiss'd her with a hungry mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loath'd the feast:
Writhing as one possess'd she leap'd and sung,
Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks stream'd like the torch
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
Or like an eagle when she stems the light
Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins, knock'd at her heart,
Met the fire smouldering there
And overbore its lesser flame;
She gorged on bitterness without a name:
Ah! fool, to choose such part
Of soul-consuming care!
Sense fail'd in the mortal strife:
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,
Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topp'd waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
That night long Lizzie watch'd by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cool'd her face
With tears and fanning leaves:
But when the first birds chirp'd about their eaves,

And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass
Bow'd in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
And new buds with new day
Open'd of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laugh'd in the innocent old way,
Hugg'd Lizzie but not twice or thrice;
Her gleaming locks show'd not one thread of grey,
Her breath was sweet as May
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years
Afterwards, when both were wives
With children of their own;
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
Their lives bound up in tender lives;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them of her early prime,
Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time:
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,
Their fruits like honey to the throat
But poison in the blood;
(Men sell not such in any town):
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote:
Then joining hands to little hands
Would bid them cling together,
"For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands."

WHEN I AM DEAD, MY DEAREST

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

ALFRED TENNYSON

MARIANA

"Mariana in the Moated Grange"
(Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*)

With blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all:
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the gable-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Unlifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
She only said, "My life is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

Her tears fell with the dews at even;
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
She could not look on the sweet heaven,
Either at morn or eventide.
After the flitting of the bats,
When thickest dark did trance the sky,
She drew her casement-curtain by,
And glanced athwart the glooming flats.
She only said, "The night is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

Upon the middle of the night,
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow:
The cock sung out an hour ere light:
From the dark fen the oxen's low
Came to her: without hope of change,
In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn,
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn

About the lonely moated grange.
She only said, "The day is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

About a stone-cast from the wall
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,
And o'er it many, round and small,
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.
Hard by a poplar shook alway,
All silver-green with gnarled bark:
For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding gray.
She only said, "My life is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said "I am aweary, aweary
I would that I were dead!"

And ever when the moon was low,
And the shrill winds were up and away,
In the white curtain, to and fro,
She saw the gusty shadow sway.
But when the moon was very low
And wild winds bound within their cell,
The shadow of the poplar fell
Upon her bed, across her brow.
She only said, "The night is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

All day within the dreamy house,
The doors upon their hinges creak'd;
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,
Or from the crevice peer'd about.
Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
Old voices called her from without.

She only said, "My life is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead!"

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,
The slow clock ticking, and the sound
Which to the wooing wind aloof
The poplar made, did all confound
Her sense; but most she loathed the hour
When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
Athwart the chambers, and the day
Was sloping toward his western bower.
Then said she, "I am very dreary,
He will not come," she said;
She wept, "I am weary, weary,
Oh God, that I were dead!"

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

I
Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

II
"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.

Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

III
Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred.

IV
Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre stroke
Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

V
Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell.
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

VI
When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

St. SIMON STYLITES

Although I be the basest of mankind,
From scalp to sole one slough and crust of sin,
Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven, scarce meet
For troops of devils, mad with blasphemy,
I will not cease to grasp the hope I hold
Of saintdom, and to clamour, mourn and sob,
Battering the gates of heaven with storms of prayer,
Have mercy, Lord, and take away my sin.

Let this avail, just, dreadful, mighty God,
This not be all in vain, that thrice ten years,
Thrice multiplied by superhuman pangs,
In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and cold,
In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes and cramps,
A sign betwixt the meadow and the cloud,
Patient on this tall pillar I have borne
Rain, wind, frost, heat, hail, damp, and sleet, and snow;
And I had hoped that ere this period closed
Thou wouldst have caught me up into thy rest,
Denying not these weather-beaten limbs
The meed of saints, the white robe and the palm.

O take the meaning, Lord: I do not breathe,
Not whisper, any murmur of complaint.

Pain heaped ten-hundred-fold to this, were still
Less burthen, by ten-hundred-fold, to bear,
Than were those lead-like tons of sin that crushed
My spirit flat before thee.

O Lord, Lord,
Thou knowest I bore this better at the first,
For I was strong and hale of body then;
And though my teeth, which now are dropped away,
Would chatter with the cold, and all my beard
Was tagged with icy fringes in the moon,
I drowned the whoopings of the owl with sound
Of pious hymns and psalms, and sometimes saw
An angel stand and watch me, as I sang.
Now am I feeble grown; my end draws nigh;
I hope my end draws nigh: half deaf I am,
So that I scarce can hear the people hum
About the column's base, and almost blind,
And scarce can recognize the fields I know;
And both my thighs are rotted with the dew;
Yet cease I not to clamour and to cry,
While my stiff spine can hold my weary head,
Till all my limbs drop piecemeal from the stone,
Have mercy, mercy: take away my sin.

O Jesus, if thou wilt not save my soul,
Who may be saved? who is it may be saved?
Who may be made a saint, if I fail here?
Show me the man hath suffered more than I.
For did not all thy martyrs die one death?
For either they were stoned, or crucified,
Or burned in fire, or boiled in oil, or sawn
In twain beneath the ribs; but I die here
Today, and whole years long, a life of death.
Bear witness, if I could have found a way
(And heedfully I sifted all my thought)
More slowly-painful to subdue this home
Of sin, my flesh, which I despise and hate,
I had not stinted practice, O my God.

For not alone this pillar-punishment,
Not this alone I bore: but while I lived
In the white convent down the valley there,
For many weeks about my loins I wore
The rope that haled the buckets from the well,
Twisted as tight as I could knot the noose;
And spake not of it to a single soul,
Until the ulcer, eating through my skin,
Betrayed my secret penance, so that all
My brethren marvelled greatly. More than this
I bore, whereof, O God, thou knowest all.

Three winters, that my soul might grow to thee,
I lived up there on yonder mountain-side.
My right leg chained into the crag, I lay
Pent in a roofless close of ragged stones;
Inswathed sometimes in wandering mist, and twice
Blackened with thy branding thunder, and sometimes
Sucking the damps for drink, and eating not,
Except the spare chance-gift of those that came
To touch my body and be healed, and live:
And they say then that I worked miracles,
Whereof my fame is loud amongst mankind,
Cured lameness, palsies, cancers. Thou, O God,
Knowest alone whether this was or no.
Have mercy, mercy; cover all my sin.

Then, that I might be more alone with thee,
Three years I lived upon a pillar, high
Six cubits, and three years on one of twelve;
And twice three years I crouched on one that rose
Twenty by measure; last of all, I grew
Twice ten long weary weary years to this,
That numbers forty cubits from the soil.

I think that I have borne as much as this -
Or else I dream -and for so long a time,
If I may measure time by yon slow light,
And this high dial, which my sorrow crowns -
So much -even so.

And yet I know not well,
For that the evil ones come here, and say,
"Fall down, O Simeon: thou hast suffered long
For ages and for ages!" then they prate
Of penances I cannot have gone through,
Perplexing me with lies; and oft I fall,
Maybe for months, in such blind lethargies
That Heaven, and Earth, and Time are choked.

But yet
Bethink thee, Lord, while thou and all the saints
Enjoy themselves in heaven, and men on earth
House in the shade of comfortable roofs,
Sit with their wives by fires, eat wholesome food,
And wear warm clothes, and even beasts have stalls,
I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the light,
Bow down one thousand and two hundred times,
To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the Saints;
Or in the night, after a little sleep,
I wake: the chill stars sparkle; I am wet
With drenching dews, or stiff with crackling frost.
I wear an undressed goatskin on my back;
A grazing iron collar grinds my neck;
And in my weak lean arms I lift the cross,
And strive and wrestle with thee till I die:
O mercy, mercy! wash away my sin.

O Lord, thou knowest what a man I am;
A sinful man, conceived and born in sin:
'Tis their own doing; this is none of mine;
Lay it not to me. Am I to blame for this,
That here come those that worship me? Ha! ha!
They think that I am somewhat. What am I?
The silly people take me for a saint,
And bring me offerings of fruit and flowers:
And I, in truth (thou wilt bear witness here)
Have all in all endured as much, and more,
Than many just and holy men, whose names
Are registered and calendared for saints.

Good people, you do ill to kneel to me.
 What is it I can have done to merit this?
 I am a sinner viler than you all.
 It may be I have wrought some miracles,
 And cured some halt and maimed; but what of that?
 It may be, no one, even among the saints,
 May match his pains with mine; but what of that?
 Yet do not rise; for you may look on me,
 And in your looking you may kneel to God.
 Speak! is there any of you halt or maimed?
 I think you know I have some power with Heaven
 From my long penance: let him speak his wish.

Yes, I can heal him. Power goes forth from me.
 They say that they are healed. Ah, hark! they shout
 "St Simeon Stylites." Why, if so,
 God reaps a harvest in me! O my soul,
 God reaps a harvest in thee. If this be,
 Can I work miracles and not be saved?
 This is not told of any. They were saints.
 It cannot be but that I shall be saved;
 Yea, crowned a saint. They shout, "Behold a saint!"
 And lower voices saint me from above.
 Courage, St Simeon! This dull chrysalis
 Cracks into shining wings, and hope ere death
 Spreads more and more and more, that God hath now
 Sponged and made blank of crimeful record all
 My mortal archives.

O my sons, my sons,
 I, Simeon of the pillar, by surname
 Stylites, among men; I, Simeon,
 The watcher on the column till the end;
 I, Simeon, whose brain the sunshine bakes;
 I, whose bald brows in silent hours become
 Unnaturally hoar with rime, do now
 From my high nest of penance here proclaim
 That Pontius and Iscariot by my side
 Showed like fair seraphs. On the coals I lay,

A vessel full of sin: all hell beneath
 Made me boil over. Devils plucked my sleeve,
 Abaddon and Asmodeus caught at me.
 I smote them with the cross; they swarmed again.
 In bed like monstrous apes they crushed my chest:
 They flapped my light out as I read: I saw
 Their faces grow between me and my book;
 With colt-like whinny and with hoggish whine
 They burst my prayer. Yet this way was left,
 And by this way I 'scaped them. Mortify
 Your flesh, like me, with scourges and with thorns;
 Smite, shrink not, spare not. If it may be, fast
 Whole Lents, and pray. I hardly, with slow steps,
 With slow, faint steps, and much exceeding pain,
 Have scrambled past those pits of fire, that still
 Sing in mine ears. But yield not me the praise:
 God only through his bounty hath thought fit,
 Among the powers and princes of this world,
 To make me an example to mankind,
 Which few can reach to. Yet I do not say
 But that a time may come -yea, even now,
 Now, now, his footsteps smite the threshold stairs
 Of life -I say, that time is at the doors
 When you may worship me without reproach;
 For I will leave my relics in your land,
 And you may carve a shrine about my dust,
 And burn a fragrant lamp before my bones,
 When I am gathered to the glorious saints.

While I spake then, a sting of shrewdest pain
 Ran shrivelling through me, and a cloudlike change,
 In passing, with a grosser film made thick
 These heavy, horny eyes. The end! the end!
 Surely the end! What's here? a shape, a shade,
 A flash of light. Is that the angel there
 That holds a crown? Come, blessed brother, come.
 I know thy glittering face. I waited long;
 My brows are ready. What! deny it now?
 Nay, draw, draw, draw nigh. So I clutch it. Christ!
 'Tis gone: 'tis here again; the crown! the crown!

So now 'tis fitted on and grows to me,
And from it melt the dews of Paradise,
Sweet! sweet! spikenard, and balm, and frankincense.
Ah! let me not be fooled, sweet saints: I trust
That I am whole, and clean, and meet for Heaven.

Speak, if there be a priest, a man of God,
Among you there, and let him presently
Approach, and lean a ladder on the shaft,
And climbing up into my airy home,
Deliver me the blessed sacrament;
For by the warning of the Holy Ghost,
I prophesy that I shall die tonight,
A quarter before twelve.

But thou, O Lord,
Aid all this foolish people; let them take
Example, pattern: lead them to thy light.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

Part I.

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot;

And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever

By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?
Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."

Part II.

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near

Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
"I am half-sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

Part III.

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A redcross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.

The bridle-bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra," by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

Part IV.

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale-yellow woods were waning,

The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
 Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
 The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse--
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance--
With a glassy countenance
 Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right--
The leaves upon her falling light--
Thro' the noises of the night
 She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly,
 Turn'd to tower'd Camelot;
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,

A gleaming shape she floated by,
A corse between the houses high,
 Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
 All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
 The Lady of Shalott."

THE LOTUS EATERS

"Courage!" he said, and pointed toward the land,
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,

Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seem'd the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them,
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, "We will return no more";
And all at once they sang, "Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

CHORIC SONG

I

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;

Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep."

II

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown:
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
"There is no joy but calm!"
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

III

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
 Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
 Death is the end of life; ah, why
 Should life all labour be?
 Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
 And in a little while our lips are dumb.
 Let us alone. What is it that will last?
 All things are taken from us, and become
 Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.
 Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
 To war with evil? Is there any peace
 In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
 All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
 In silence; ripen, fall and cease:
 Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

V
 How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
 With half-shut eyes ever to seem
 Falling asleep in a half-dream!
 To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
 Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
 To hear each other's whisper'd speech;
 Eating the Lotos day by day,
 To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
 And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
 To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
 To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
 To muse and brood and live again in memory,
 With those old faces of our infancy
 Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
 Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

VI
 Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
 And dear the last embraces of our wives
 And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change:
 For surely now our household hearths are cold,
 Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
 And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.

Or else the island princes over-bold
 Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
 Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
 And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
 Is there confusion in the little isle?
 Let what is broken so remain.
 The Gods are hard to reconcile:
 'Tis hard to settle order once again.
 There is confusion worse than death,
 Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
 Long labour unto aged breath,
 Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars
 And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

VII
 But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
 How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
 With half-dropt eyelid still,
 Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
 To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
 His waters from the purple hill—
 To hear the dewy echoes calling
 From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—
 To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
 Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
 Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
 Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

VIII
 The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:
 The Lotos blows by every winding creek:
 All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone:
 Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
 Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is blown.
 We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
 Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge was seething
 free,
 Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in the sea.
 Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
 In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined

On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world:
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery
 sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying
 hands.

But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd—down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.

Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

TITHONUS

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream
The ever-silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd

To his great heart none other than a God!
I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
Like wealthy men, who care not how they give.
But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,
And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,
And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:
Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer given
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?
'The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.'

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground;
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave:
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

BREAK, BREAK, BREAK

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.