

*The Ring and the Book*

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Robert Browning

*The Ring  
and  
the Book*

Shearsman Books

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## Introduction

This is one of a series of volumes published in a somewhat tardy celebration of the bicentenary of the author's birth—he was born in May 1812, and this volume sees the light of day in September 2012. At the date of writing, celebrations have been decidedly muted, and Edward Lear, Browning's exact contemporary, has received a good deal more attention. Why the neglect? The easy response would be that certain Victorian authors have simply gone out of fashion, that Browning wrote far too much, and at too great a length, for an age where attention spans have grown ever shorter, and that we now simply prefer his wife's poetry. In the case of Elizabeth Barrett, a extraordinarily fine poet, this marks a return to the situation that Robert Browning himself would have recognised during her lifetime, for, while his wife still lived, her fame completely eclipsed his. His own fame was to rise after her death, following his return to London from Florence, and the publication of the *magnum opus* that was to seal his reputation, *The Ring and the Book*, a huge work which almost no-one today reads, at least not voluntarily.

This edition of *The Ring and the Book* seeks to persuade the 21st century reading public to tackle this complex but rewarding work, in theory a poem made from more than 21,000 lines of blank verse, but in fact a verse novel. Perhaps the only reason why it has not usually been granted this unusual classification is that its form is deceptive, and it is far less obviously novel-like than, say, Pushkin's *Yevgeny Onegin*. Browning's work is structured in twelve books, all of which take the form of blank-verse dramatic monologues—the form most associated with Browning—and we are given the views of all parties to the trial that lies at the heart of the story, as well as the views of the general public, for and against the accused. The reader thus circles the action, while also pursuing a more linear path through the trial process. The use of multiple viewpoints, and the fact that the author appears to step back from the action and allow it to speak for itself—thanks to his remarkable source material—lends the book a remarkably modern air, notwithstanding the somewhat fustian-tinged diction and the plethora of information on late 18th century Rome. The text of the poem here is that of the first edition of 1868–9.

## THE STORY

Browning's source material for this work was a set of bound documents, which he happened upon in a Florentine market—quarto-sized, and partly printed, partly manuscript. It was titled *Romana Homicidiorum*—"Roman murder-case", as the author styled it—and it had an enormous impact on him. He thought it an ideal subject for a novel and offered it to a number of other Victorian writers, including, oddly, Tennyson, but none took the bait. Some years later, once again resident in London following the death of his wife, Browning took up the story himself. The source material (available in *The Old Yellow Book*—see *Further Reading* on p.12—runs as follows.

Count Guido Franceschini is a nobleman of good lineage, native to Arezzo, in Tuscany. He appears not to have been too successful in life, although he had served in the retinue of a Cardinal at some point, and had also seen some military service. His brother, Abate Paolo, seems to have had greater success in life. Given Guido's lack of obvious prospects, the family decide that he should be married to a woman of means. An introduction is made to a middle-class Roman woman, Violante Comparini, who is mother to a thirteen-year-old daughter, Pompilia. The Comparini family is well-off, and Violante is much taken with the idea of her daughter marrying into the nobility. Her husband is less enamoured of the proposition, but Violante arranges the marriage in secret, leaving her husband no choice in the matter, and a substantial dowry is paid to Guido. All leave Rome for Arezzo, where they are to live in the Franceschini house.

Inevitably, all parties are disappointed. The Comparini discover that their new relative is poor, and the parents apparently do not behave in a manner befitting their lower station in life. After a number of quarrels they leave Arezzo for Rome. Pompilia is a less-than-enthusiastic wife, but is in no position to do anything about her situation. The disillusioned Violante has her revenge by confessing that Pompilia was in fact an adopted child, her birth mother having been a Roman prostitute. Pompilia's newly-revealed status means that she is not actually the heir to the Comparini, and thus has no legal right to the dowry, as originally contracted.

Guido feels himself dishonoured by these revelations and is worried that he will be cast back into poverty by the loss of the dowry. He contests Violante's statement and at home he beats his wife and threatens to kill



her. He also tries to entrap her as an adulteress by leaving her to receive the attentions of a number of young men of Arezzo, among them one Giuseppe Caponsacchi, a young priest—actually, a subdeacon, the lowest order of priest, but still bound by the laws of celibacy. Pompilia eventually decides to flee back to Rome and persuades Caponsacchi to assist her in reaching her parents.

Having reached Castelnuovo, on the outskirts of Rome, the pair are surprised by Guido, who delivers them to the legal authorities in the city. Pompilia is taken to a nunnery, and Caponsacchi is sent off to Civita Vecchia for three years—a demotion. When it is realised that Pompilia is carrying a child, she is released to the care of her parents, but still has the status of a prisoner. She bears a son, Gaetano, but two weeks after the birth, Guido and four henchmen break in, kill Pompilia's parents, and mortally wound Pompilia herself. The perpetrators are caught almost immediately, and are tried and sentenced to death. Guido is beheaded, as befits his noble status, while his helpers are hanged. Pompilia lives on for a further four days and protests her innocence in a final statement.

As may be apparent, the characters involved are venal in one way or another or, in the case of Pompilia, trapped. The Roman trial was a lurid *cause célèbre* in 1698, with the whole city debating the truth or otherwise of the accusations. Pompilia is easily portrayed as a wronged innocent, but it is an awkward fact that the inconsistencies of her evidence suggest that she was *not* entirely innocent. Subsequently, further evidence has been found to cast doubt upon other parts of her testimony. Guido hoped to frame her for adultery because, at the time, it was widely considered acceptable to kill one's wife in such a matter of honour and he was indeed able to win a suit against her in Arezzo shortly before the fatal assault. By contrast, if she were innocent, as she protested, he would be guilty of a capital crime. The Roman court, however, found for Pompilia, and Guido paid the ultimate price, proving himself to be as poor a plotter as he had been in other aspects of his life.

Browning's version of these events paints Pompilia in a much better light, as might be expected, and lends credence to Caponsacchi's motives. Pompilia's monologue in Book VII is a masterpiece, as is that of her doomed husband, awaiting his execution, in Book XI. The power of the book however lies in the multiplicity of its voices, the way in which the same events are seen from various standpoints, and the subversion of truth that is entailed in this structure.

## THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- 1680    *16 July.* Pompilia is born, and adopted by the Comparini.
- 1693    *6 Sept.* Pompilia married to Count Guido Franceschini. *30 Nov.* All leave Rome for Arezzo.
- 1694    *March.* Pompilia's parents return to Rome; Violante declares Pompilia illegitimate and sues for the return of the dowry.
- 1697    *23 April.* Pompilia leaves Arezzo with Giuseppe Caponsacchi.  
          *1 May.* Guido surprises the pair at Castelnuovo; Pompilia and Giuseppe are arrested and brought to Rome.  
          *24 Sept.* The court in Rome hands down its verdict in the case of Pompilia's flight with Caponsacchi.  
          *18 Dec.* Pompilia gives birth to a son, Gaetano.
- 1698    *2 Jan.* Guido and four others kill the Comparini, and leave Pompilia mortally wounded.  
          *3-6 Jan.* [Books II-VII].  
          *6 Jan.* Pompilia dies.  
          *Late Jan.* Murder trial begins [Books VIII-IX].  
          *18 Feb.* Guido and his accomplices are found guilty.  
          *20 Feb.* The Pope rejects Guido's appeal [Book X]; Guido informed [Book XI].  
          *22 Feb.* Guido and his accomplices are executed [Book XII].

## THE LEGAL PROCESSES

- 1694    (1) Suit by the Comparini to declare Pompilia illegitimate.
- 1695    (2) Countersuit by Guido and Pompilia to prevent annulment of the dowry. The court finds in favour of Guido, but Pompilia's father appeals all the decisions. No final judgement was reached before the assassination of the Comparini and their daughter.
- 1697    (3) Guido brings a suit against Pompilia and Caponsacchi for flight and adultery. The court ordered that Caponsacchi be

“relegated” (demoted) to Civita Vecchia for three years, and that Pompilia be confined to a Nunnery. N.B. no judgement was in fact made on Pompilia’s guilt or otherwise. Caponsacchi’s sentence is more akin to a slap on the wrist for an indiscretion, than a punishment.

(4) Pompilia sues for a legal separation from Guido. Process not completed before the deaths of both parties.

(5) Suit in Arezzo against Pompilia for flight and adultery. Caponsacchi is not sued. Judgement handed down in favour of Guido in December, which, by Tuscan law, gave Guido clearance to murder his wife.

1698 (6) Trial of Guido and his accomplices for murder.

(7) Suit by the Nunnery of the Convertites to acquire the estate of Pompilia after her death, the grounds being her sinful state. (By Roman law at the time, this institution had the right to inherit the estate of women of loose morals, or “fallen women”.) Browning was wrong about this order caring for Pompilia before he death; in fact she was lodged with the Conservatorio di Santa Croce della Penitenza, but this makes little difference to the story, and Browning’s version is tighter from a dramatic point of view.

(8) Counter-suit by the Franceschini family claiming her estate. The court rules that Pompilia’s estate should be turned over to her executor, and thus to her son, Gaetano, upon reaching his majority. In September 1698 the court formally cleared Pompilia’s name.

## NOTES

A basic glossary is provided at the back of this volume, but, even a cursory glance at the text would show the reader that it would be possible to fill another book, the size of the current volume, with commentary. The glossary covers basic things that the reader might wish to know, explaining names of people and places, and also some of the Latin phrases scattered throughout the book. The Latin used extensively throughout Books VIII and IX, that is the monologues by the lawyers for the defence and for the prosecution, is glossed within the text by Browning himself; one can

therefore skip the Latin entirely and just read the English, although the verse will obviously not scan if one does so. For those who wish to follow up more detailed explanatory matter, there is a free downloadable PDF at archive.org of A.K. Cook's *A Commentary Upon Browning's 'The Ring and the Book'* (Oxford University Press, 1920), which runs to some 340 pages of dense type. The text analysed by Cook is the present one, i.e. that of the first edition. The URL for this PDF is :

[http://ia700208.us.archive.org/2/items/  
commentaryuponbr00cookuoft/commentaryuponbr00cookuoft.pdf](http://ia700208.us.archive.org/2/items/commentaryuponbr00cookuoft/commentaryuponbr00cookuoft.pdf)

*(Enter the entire two lines above, without the forced break introduced here, into a browser window. The file runs to some 20MB and may take some time to download.)*

#### FURTHER READING

Robert Browning: *The Ring and the Book*, ed. Richard D. Altick (London: Penguin Books 1971). [Currently out of print. Referred to in this volume as *Altick*.] Excellent reading edition that uses the first-edition text; now out of print, alas. If it were in print, this Shearsman edition would not be necessary.

Robert Browning: *The Poetical Works*, Vols VII, VIII, IX, ed. Stefan Hawlin and Tim Burnett (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998-2004).

A.K. Cook *A Commentary Upon Robert Browning's 'The Ring and the Book'* (Oxford: OUP 1920; reprint Hamden, CT: Archon Books 1966). [Referred to in this volume as *Cook*.]

Charles W. Hodell (ed.) *The Old Yellow Book: Source of Robert Browning's 'The Ring and the Book'* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution 1908; 2nd ed. London: J.M. Dent; New York: E.P. Dutton 1911). *Free PDF download of the Carnegie edition available from archive.org*: <http://ia700308.us.archive.org/8/items/oldyellowbooksou00hodeuoft/oldyellowbooksou00hodeuoft.pdf>

*Project Gutenberg has the 2nd edition as a viewable file here*: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/38238/38238-h/38238-h.htm>

William Irvine & Park Honan: *The Book, The Ring and The Poet. A Biography of Robert Browning*. (London: The Bodley Head 1974)

Tony Frazer  
August 2012

*Book 1*

*The Ring and the Book*



Do you see this Ring?

'T is Rome-work, made to match

(By Castellani's imitative craft)

Etrurian circlets found, some happy morn,

After a dropping April; found alive

Spark-like 'mid unearthed slope-side figtree-roots

That roof old tombs at Chiusi: soft, you see,

Yet crisp as jewel-cutting. There's one trick,

(Craftsmen instruct me) one approved device

And but one, fits such slivers of pure gold

10

As this was,—such mere oozings from the mine,

Virgin as oval tawny pendent tear

At beehive-edge when ripened combs o'erflow,—

To bear the file's tooth and the hammer's tap:

Since hammer needs must widen out the round,

And file emboss it fine with lily-flowers,

Ere the stuff grow a ring-thing right to wear.

That trick is, the artificer melts up wax

With honey, so to speak; he mingles gold

With gold's alloy, and, duly tempering both,

20

Effects a manageable mass, then works.

But his work ended, once the thing a ring,

Oh, there's repristination! Just a spirt

O' the proper fiery acid o'er its face,

And forth the alloy unfastened flies in fume;

While, self-sufficient now, the shape remains,

The rondure brave, the liliated loveliness,

Gold as it was, is, shall be evermore:

Prime nature with an added artistry—

No carat lost, and you have gained a ring.

30

What of it? 'T is a figure, a symbol, say;

A thing's sign: now for the thing signified.

Do you see this square old yellow Book, I toss

I' the air, and catch again, and twirl about

By the crumpled vellum covers,—pure crude fact

Secreted from man's life when hearts beat hard,

And brains, high-blooded, ticked two centuries since?

Examine it yourselves! I found this book,

Gave a lira for it, eightpence English just,  
 (Mark the predestination!) when a Hand, 40  
 Always above my shoulder, pushed me once,  
 One day still fierce 'mid many a day struck calm,  
 Across a Square in Florence, crammed with booths,  
 Buzzing and blaze, noontide and market-time;  
 Toward Baccio's marble,—ay, the basement-ledge  
 O' the pedestal where sits and menaces  
 John of the Black Bands with the upright spear,  
 'Twixt palace and church,—Riccardi where they lived,  
 His race, and San Lorenzo where they lie.  
 This book,—precisely on that palace-step 50  
 Which, meant for lounging knaves o' the Medici,  
 Now serves re-venders to display their ware,—  
 'Mongst odds and ends of ravage, picture-frames  
 White through the worn gilt, mirror-sconces chipped,  
 Bronze angel-heads once knobs attached to chests,  
 (Handled when ancient dames chose forth brocade)  
 Modern chalk drawings, studies from the nude,  
 Samples of stone, jet, breccia, porphyry  
 Polished and rough, sundry amazing busts  
 In baked earth, (broken, Providence be praised!) 60  
 A wreck of tapestry, proudly-purposed web  
 When reds and blues were indeed red and blue,  
 Now offered as a mat to save bare feet  
 (Since carpets constitute a cruel cost)  
 Treading the chill scagliola bedward: then  
 A pile of brown-etched prints, two *crazie* each,  
 Stopped by a conch a-top from fluttering forth  
 —Sowing the Square with works of one and the same  
 Master, the imaginative Sienese  
 Great in the scenic backgrounds—(name and fame 70  
 None of you know, nor does he fare the worse:)  
 From these ... Oh, with a Lionard going cheap  
 If it should prove, as promised, that Joconde  
 Whereof a copy contents the Louvre!—these  
 I picked this book from. Five compeers in flank  
 Stood left and right of it as tempting more—  
 A dog's-eared Spicilegium, the fond tale



O' the Frail One of the Flower, by young Dumas,  
 Vulgarized Horace for the use of schools,  
 The Life, Death, Miracles of Saint Somebody, 80  
 Saint Somebody Else, his Miracles, Death and Life,—  
 With this, one glance at the lettered back of which,  
 And 'Stall!' cried I: a *lira* made it mine.

Here it is, this I toss and take again;  
 Small-quarto size, part print part manuscript:  
 A book in shape but, really, pure crude fact  
 Secreted from man's life when hearts beat hard,  
 And brains, high-blooded, ticked two centuries since.  
 Give it me back! The thing's restorative  
 I' the touch and sight. 90

That memorable day,  
 (June was the month, Lorenzo named the Square)  
 I leaned a little and overlooked my prize  
 By the low railing round the fountain-source  
 Close to the statue, where a step descends:  
 While clinked the cans of copper, as stooped and rose  
 Thick-ankled girls who brimmed them, and made place  
 For marketmen glad to pitch basket down,  
 Dip a broad melon-leaf that holds the wet,  
 And whisk their faded fresh. And on I read 100  
 Presently, though my path grew perilous  
 Between the outspread straw-work, piles of plait  
 Soon to be flapping, each o'er two black eyes  
 And swathe of Tuscan hair, on festas fine:  
 Through fire-irons, tribes of tongs, shovels in sheaves,  
 Skeleton bedsteads, wardrobe-drawers agape,  
 Rows of tall slim brass lamps with dangling gear,—  
 And worse, cast clothes a-sweetening in the sun:  
 None of them took my eye from off my prize.  
 Still read I on, from written title-page 110  
 To written index, on, through street and street,  
 At the Strozzi, at the Pillar, at the Bridge;  
 Till, by the time I stood at home again  
 In Casa Guidi by Felice Church,

Under the doorway where the black begins  
With the first stone-slab of the staircase cold,  
I had mastered the contents, knew the whole truth  
Gathered together, bound up in this book,  
Print three-fifths, written supplement the rest.

*'Romana Homicidiorum'*—nay,

120

Better translate—'A Roman murder-case:

'Position of the entire criminal cause

'Of Guido Franceschini, nobleman,

'With certain Four the cutthroats in his pay,

'Tried, all five, and found guilty and put to death

'By heading or hanging as befitted ranks,

'At Rome on February Twenty Two,

'Since our salvation Sixteen Ninety Eight:

'Wherein it is disputed if, and when,

'Husbands may kill adulterous wives, yet 'scape

130

'The customary forfeit.'

Word for word,

So ran the title-page: murder, or else

Legitimate punishment of the other crime,

Accounted murder by mistake,—just that

And no more, in a Latin cramp enough

When the law had her eloquence to launch,

But interfilleted with Italian streaks

When testimony stooped to mother-tongue,—

That, was this old square yellow book about.

140

Now, as the ingot, ere the ring was forged,

Lay gold, (beseech you, hold that figure fast!)

So, in this book lay absolutely truth,

Fanciless fact, the documents indeed,

Primary lawyer-pleadings for, against,

The aforesaid Five; real summed-up circumstance

Adduced in proof of these on either side,

Put forth and printed, as the practice was,

At Rome, in the Apostolic Chamber's type,

And so submitted to the eye o' the Court

150

Presided over by His Reverence

Rome's Governor and Criminal Judge,—the trial  
 Itself, to all intents, being then as now  
 Here in the book and nowise out of it;  
 Seeing, there properly was no judgment-bar,  
 No bringing of accuser and accused,  
 And whoso judged both parties, face to face  
 Before some court, as we conceive of courts.  
 There was a Hall of Justice; that came last:  
 For justice had a chamber by the hall 160  
 Where she took evidence first, summed up the same,  
 Then sent accuser and accused alike,  
 In person of the advocate of each,  
 To weigh that evidence' worth, arrange, array  
 The battle. 'T was the so-styled Fisc began,  
 Pleased (and since he only spoke in print  
 The printed voice of him lives now as then)  
 The public Prosecutor—'Murder's proved;  
 'With five ... what we call qualities of bad,  
 'Worse, worst, and yet worse still, and still worse yet;  
 'Crest over crest crowning the cockatrice, 170  
 'That beggar hell's regalia to enrich  
 'Count Guido Franceschini: punish him!  
 Thus was the paper put before the court  
 In the next stage, (no noisy work at all),  
 To study at ease. In due time like reply  
 Came from the so-styled Patron of the Poor,  
 Official mouthpiece of the five accused  
 Too poor to fee a better,—Guido's luck  
 Or else his fellows', which, I hardly know,— 180  
 An outbreak as of wonder at the world,  
 A fury-fit of outraged innocence,  
 A passion of betrayed simplicity:  
 'Punish Count Guido? For what crime, what hint  
 'O' the colour of a crime, inform us first!  
 'Reward him rather! Recognize, we say,  
 'In the deed done, a righteous judgment dealt!  
 'All conscience and all courage,—there's our Count  
 'Charactered in a word; and, what's more strange,  
 'He had companionship in privilege, 190

'Found four courageous conscientious friends:  
 'Absolve, applaud all five, as props of law,  
 'Sustainers of society!—perchance  
 'A trifle over-hasty with the hand  
 'To hold her tottering ark, had tumbled else;  
 'But that's a splendid fault whereat we wink,  
 'Wishing your cold correctness sparkled so!  
 Thus paper second followed paper first,  
 Thus did the two join issue—nay, the four,  
 Each pleader having an adjunct. 'True, he killed 200  
 '—So to speak—in a certain sort—his wife,  
 'But laudably, since thus it happened!' quoth one:  
 Whereat, more witness and the case postponed.  
 'Thus it happened not, since thus he did the deed,  
 'And proved himself thereby portentousest  
 'Of cutthroats and a prodigy of crime,  
 'As the woman that he slaughtered was a saint,  
 'Martyr and miracle!' quoth the other to match:  
 Again, more witness, and the case postponed.  
 'A miracle, ay—of lust and impudence; 210  
 'Hear my new reasons!' interposed the first:  
 '—Coupled with more of mine!' pursued his peer.  
 'Beside, the precedents, the authorities!'  
 From both at once a cry with an echo, that!  
 That was a firebrand at each fox's tail  
 Unleashed in a cornfield: soon spread flare enough,  
 As hurtled thither and there heaped themselves  
 From earth's four corners, all authority  
 And precedent for putting wives to death,  
 Or letting wives live, sinful as they seem. 220  
 How legislated, now, in this respect,  
 Solon and his Athenians? Quote the code  
 Of Romulus and Rome! Justinian speak!  
 Nor modern Baldo, Bartolo be dumb!  
 The Roman voice was potent, plentiful;  
*Cornelia de Sicariis* hurried to help  
*Pompeia de Parricidiis*; *Julia de*  
 Something-or-other jostled *Lex* this-and-that,  
 King Solomon confirmed Apostle Paul:

That nice decision of Dolabella, eh? 230  
 That pregnant instance of Theodoric, oh!  
 Down to that choice example Ælian gives  
 (An instance I find much insisted on)  
 Of the elephant who, brute-beast though he were,  
 Yet understood and punished on the spot  
 His master's naughty spouse and faithless friend;  
 A true tale which has edified each child,  
 Much more shall flourish favoured by our court!  
 Pages of proof this way, and that way proof,  
 And always—once again the case postponed. 240

Thus wrangled, brangled, jangled they a month,  
 —Only on paper, pleadings all in print,  
 Nor ever was, except i' the brains of men,  
 More noise by word of mouth than you hear now—  
 Till the court cut all short with 'Judged, your cause.  
 'Receive our sentence! Praise God! We pronounce  
 'Count Guido devilish and damnable:  
 'His wife Pompilia in thought, word and deed,  
 'Was perfect pure, he murdered her for that:  
 'As for the Four who helped the One, all Five— 250  
 'Why, let employer and hirelings share alike  
 'In guilt and guilt's reward, the death their due!'

So was the trial at end, do you suppose?  
 'Guilty you find him, death you doom him to?  
 'Ay, were not Guido, more than needs, a priest,  
 'Priest and to spare!'—this was a shot reserved;  
 I learn this from epistles which begin  
 Here where the print ends,—see the pen and ink  
 Of the advocate, the ready at a pinch!—  
 'My client boasts the clerkly privilege, 260  
 'Has taken minor orders many enough,  
 'Shows still sufficient chrism upon his pate  
 'To neutralize a blood-stain: *presbyter*,  
 '*Primae tonsurae, subdiaconus*,  
 '*Sacerdos*, so he slips from underneath  
 'Your power, the temporal, slides inside the robe

'Of mother Church: to her we make appeal  
'By the Pope, the Church's head!'

A parlous plea,

Put in with noticeable effect, it seems; 270  
'Since straight,'—resumes the zealous orator,  
Making a friend acquainted with the facts,—  
'Once the word "clericality" let fall,  
'Procedure stopped and freer breath was drawn  
'By all considerate and responsible Rome.'  
Quality took the decent part, of course;  
Held by the husband, who was noble too:  
Or, for the matter of that, a churl would side  
With too-refined susceptibility,  
And honour which, tender in the extreme, 280  
Stung to the quick, must roughly right itself  
At all risks, not sit still and whine for law  
As a Jew would, if you squeezed him to the wall,  
Brisk-trotting through the Ghetto. Nay, it seems,  
Even the Emperor's Envoy had his say  
To say on the subject; might not see, unmoved,  
Civility menaced throughout Christendom  
By too harsh measure dealt her champion here.  
Lastly, what made all safe, the Pope was kind,  
From his youth up, reluctant to take life, 290  
If mercy might be just and yet show grace;  
Much more unlikely then, in extreme age,  
To take a life the general sense bade spare.  
'T was plain that Guido would go scatheless yet.

But human promise, oh, how short of shine!  
How topple down the piles of hope we rear!  
Now history proves ... nay, read Herodotus!  
Suddenly starting from a nap, as it were,  
A dog-sleep with one shut, one open orb,  
Cried the Pope's great self,—Innocent by name 300  
And nature too, and eighty-six years old,  
Antonio Pignatelli of Naples, Pope  
Who had trod many lands, known many deeds,  
Probed many hearts, beginning with his own,

And now was far in readiness for God,—  
 'T was he who first bade leave those souls in peace,  
 Those Jansenists, re-nicknamed Molinists,  
 ('Gainst whom the cry went, like a frowsty tune,  
 Tickling men's ears—the sect for a quarter of an hour  
 I' the teeth of the world which, clown-like, loves to chew 310  
 Be it but a straw 'twixt work and whistling-while,  
 Taste some vituperation, bite away,  
 Whether at marjoram-sprig or garlic-clove,  
 Aught it may sport with, spoil, and then spit forth)  
 'Leave them alone,' bade he, 'those Molinists!  
 'Who may have other light than we perceive,  
 'Or why is it the whole world hates them thus?'  
 Also he peeled off that last scandal-rag  
 Of Nepotism; and so observed the poor  
 That men would merrily say, 'Halt, deaf and blind, 320  
 'Who feed on fat things, leave the master's self  
 'To gather up the fragments of his feast,  
 'These be the nephews of Pope Innocent!—  
 'His own meal costs but five carlines a day,  
 'Poor-priest's allowance, for he claims no more.'  
 —He cried of a sudden, this great good old Pope,  
 When they appealed in last resort to him,  
 'I have mastered the whole matter: I nothing doubt.  
 'Though Guido stood forth priest from head to heel,  
 'Instead of, as alleged, a piece of one,— 330  
 'And further, were he, from the tonsured scalp  
 'To the sandaled sole of him, my son and Christ's,  
 'Instead of touching us by finger-tip  
 'As you assert, and pressing up so close  
 'Only to set a blood-smutch on our robe,—  
 'I and Christ would renounce all right in him.  
 'Am I not Pope, and presently to die,  
 'And busied how to render my account,  
 'And shall I wait a day ere I decide  
 'On doing or not doing justice here? 340  
 'Cut off his head to-morrow by this time,  
 'Hang up his four mates, two on either hand,  
 'And end one business more!'

So said, so done—

Rather so writ, for the old Pope bade this,  
I find, with his particular chirograph,  
His own no such infirm hand, Friday night;  
And next day, February Twenty Two,  
Since our salvation Sixteen Ninety Eight,  
—Not at the proper head-and-hanging-place 350  
On bridge-foot close by Castle Angelo,  
Where custom somewhat staled the spectacle,  
(’T was not so well i’ the way of Rome, beside,  
The noble Rome, the Rome of Guido’s rank)  
But at the city’s newer gayer end,—  
The cavalcading promenading place  
Beside the gate and opposite the church  
Under the Pincian gardens green with Spring,  
’Neath the obelisk ’twixt the fountains in the Square,  
Did Guido and his fellows find their fate, 360  
All Rome for witness, and—my writer adds—  
Remonstrant in its universal grief,  
Since Guido had the suffrage of all Rome.

This is the bookful; thus far take the truth,  
The untempered gold, the fact untampered with,  
The mere ring-metal ere the ring be made!  
And what has hitherto come of it? Who preserves  
The memory of this Guido, and his wife  
Pompilia, more than Ademollo’s name,  
The etcher of those prints, two *crazie* each, 370  
Saved by a stone from snowing broad the Square  
With scenic backgrounds? Was this truth of force?  
Able to take its own part as truth should,  
Sufficient, self-sustaining? Why, if so—  
Yonder’s a fire, into it goes my book,  
As who shall say me nay, and what the loss?  
You know the tale already: I may ask,  
Rather than think to tell you, more thereof,—  
Ask you not merely who were he or she,  
Husband and wife, what manner of mankind, 380  
But how you hold concerning this and that



Other yet-unnamed actor in the piece.  
 The young frank handsome courtly Canon, now,  
 The priest, declared the lover of the wife,  
 He who, no question, did elope with her,  
 For certain bring the tragedy about,  
 Giuseppe Caponsacchi;—his strange course  
 I' the matter, was it right or wrong or both?  
 Then the old couple, slaughtered with the wife  
 By the husband as accomplices in crime, 390  
 Those Comparini, Pietro and his spouse,—  
 What say you to the right or wrong of that,  
 When, at a known name whispered through the door  
 Of a lone villa on a Christmas night,  
 It opened that the joyous hearts inside  
 Might welcome as it were an angel-guest  
 Come in Christ's name to knock and enter, sup  
 And satisfy the loving ones he saved;  
 And so did welcome devils and their death?  
 I have been silent on that circumstance 400  
 Although the couple passed for close of kin  
 To wife and husband, were by some accounts  
 Pompilia's very parents: you know best.  
 Also that infant the great joy was for,  
 That Gaetano, the wife's two-weeks' babe,  
 The husband's first-born child, his son and heir,  
 Whose birth and being turned his night to day—  
 Why must the father kill the mother thus  
 Because she bore his son and saved himself?

Well, British Public, ye who like me not, 410  
 (God love you!) and will have your proper laugh  
 At the dark question, laugh it! I laugh first.  
 Truth must prevail, the proverb vows; and truth  
 —Here is it all i' the book at last, as first  
 There it was all i' the heads and hearts of Rome  
 Gentle and simple, never to fall nor fade  
 Nor be forgotten. Yet, a little while,  
 The passage of a century or so,  
 Decads thrice five, and here's time paid his tax,

Oblivion gone home with her harvesting, 420  
 And all left smooth again as scythe could shave.  
 Far from beginning with you London folk,  
 I took my book to Rome first, tried truth's power  
 On likely people. 'Have you met such names?  
 'Is a tradition extant of such facts?  
 'Your law-courts stand, your records frown a-row:  
 'What if I rove and rummage?' '—Why, you'll waste  
 'Your pains and end as wise as you began!  
 'Everyone snickered: 'names and facts thus old  
 'Are newer much than Europe news we find 430  
 'Down in to-day's *Diario*. Records, quotha?  
 'Why, the French burned them, what else do the French?  
 'The rap-and-rending nation! And it tells  
 'Against the Church, no doubt,—another gird  
 'At the Temporality, your Trial, of course?'  
 '—Quite otherwise this time,' submitted I;  
 'Clean for the Church and dead against the world,  
 'The flesh and the devil, does it tell for once.'  
 '—The rarer and the happier! All the same,  
 'Content you with your treasure of a book, 440  
 'And waive what's wanting! Take a friend's advice!  
 'It's not the custom of the country. Mend  
 'Your ways indeed and we may stretch a point:  
 'Go get you manned by Manning and new-manned  
 'By Newman and, mayhap, wise-manned to boot  
 'By Wiseman, and we'll see or else we won't!  
 'Thanks meantime for the story, long and strong,  
 'A pretty piece of narrative enough,  
 'Which scarce ought so to drop out, one would think,  
 'From the more curious annals of our kind. 450  
 'Do you tell the story, now, in oft-hand style,  
 'Straight from the book? Or simply here and there,  
 '(The while you vault it through the loose and large)  
 'Hang to a hint? Or is there book at all,  
 'And don't you deal in poetry, make-believe,  
 'And the white lies it sounds like?'

Yes and no!

From the book, yes; thence bit by bit I dug

The lingot truth, that memorable day,  
 Assayed and knew my piecemeal gain was gold,— 460  
 Yes; but from something else surpassing that,  
 Something of mine which mixed up with the mass,  
 Made it bear hammer and be firm to file.  
 Fancy with fact is just one falt the more;  
 To-wit, that fancy has informed, transpierced,  
 Thridded and so thrown fast the facts else free,  
 As right through ring and ring runs the djereed  
 And binds the loose, one bar without a break.  
 I fused my live soul and that inert stuff,  
 Before attempting smithcraft, on the night 470  
 After the day when,—truth thus grasped and gained,—  
 The book was shut and done with and laid by  
 On the cream-coloured massive agate, broad  
 'Neath the twin cherubs in the tarnished frame  
 O' the mirror, tall thence to the ceiling-top.  
 And from the reading, and that slab I leant  
 My elbow on, the while I read and read,  
 I turned, to free myself and find the world,  
 And stepped out on the narrow terrace, built  
 Over the street and opposite the church, 480  
 And paced its lozenge-brickwork sprinkled cool;  
 Because Felice-church-side stretched, a-glow  
 Through each square window fringed for festival,  
 Whence came the clear voice of the cloistered ones  
 Chanting a chant made for midsummer nights—  
 I know not what particular praise of God,  
 It always came and went with June. Beneath  
 I' the street, quick shown by openings of the sky  
 When flame fell silently from cloud to cloud,  
 Richer than that gold snow Jove rained on Rhodes, 490  
 The townsmen walked by twos and threes, and talked,  
 Drinking the blackness in default of air—  
 A busy human sense beneath my feet:  
 While in and out the terrace-plants, and round  
 One branch of tall datura, waxed and waned  
 The lamp-fly lured there, wanting the white flower.  
 Over the roof o' the lighted church I looked  
 A bowshot to the street's end, north away

Out of the Roman gate to the Roman road  
 By the river, till I felt the Apennine. 500  
 And there would lie Arezzo, the man's town,  
 The woman's trap and cage and torture-place,  
 Also the stage where the priest played his part,  
 A spectacle for angels,—ay, indeed,  
 There lay Arezzo! Farther then I fared,  
 Feeling my way on through the hot and dense,  
 Romeward, until I found the wayside inn  
 By Castelnuovo's few mean hut-like homes  
 Huddled together on the hill-foot bleak,  
 Bare, broken only by that tree or two  
 Against the sudden bloody splendour poured 510  
 Cursewise in his departure by the day  
 On the low house-roof of that squalid inn  
 Where they three, for the first time and the last,  
 Husband and wife and priest, met face to face.  
 Whence I went on again, the end was near,  
 Step by step, missing none and marking all,  
 Till Rome itself, the ghastly goal, I reached.  
 Why, all the while,—how could it otherwise?—  
 The life in me abolished the death of things, 520  
 Deep calling unto deep: as then and there  
 Acted itself over again once more  
 The tragic piece. I saw with my own eyes  
 In Florence as I trod the terrace, breathed  
 The beauty and the fearfulness of night,  
 How it had run, this round from Rome to Rome—  
 Because, you are to know, they lived at Rome,  
 Pompilia's parents, as they thought themselves,  
 Two poor ignoble hearts who did their best  
 Part God's way, part the other way than God's, 530  
 To somehow make a shift and scramble through  
 The world's mud, careless if it splashed and spoiled,  
 Provided they might so hold high, keep clean  
 Their child's soul, one soul white enough for three,  
 And lift it to whatever star should stoop,  
 What possible sphere of purer life than theirs  
 Should come in aid of whiteness hard to save.

I saw the star stoop, that they strained to touch  
 And did touch and depose their treasure on,  
 As Guido Franceschini took away 540  
 Pompilia to be his for evermore,  
 While they sang 'Now let us depart in peace,  
 'Having beheld thy glory, Guido's wife!'  
 I saw the star supposed, but fog o' the fen,  
 Gilded star-fashion by a glint from hell;  
 Having been heaved up, haled on its gross way,  
 By hands unguessed before, invisible help  
 From a dark brotherhood, and specially  
 Two obscure goblin creatures, fox-faced this,  
 Cat-clawed the other, called his next of kin 550  
 By Guido the main monster,—cloaked and caped,  
 Making as they were priests, to mock God more,—  
 Abate Paul, Canon Girolamo.  
 These who had rolled the starlike pest to Rome  
 And stationed it to suck up and absorb  
 The sweetness of Pompilia, rolled again  
 That bloated bubble, with her soul inside,  
 Back to Arezzo and a palace there—  
 Or say, a fissure in the honest earth  
 Whence long ago had curled the vapour first, 560  
 Blown big by nether fires to appal day:  
 It touched home, broke, and blasted far and wide.  
 I saw the cheated couple find the cheat  
 And guess what foul rite they were captured for,—  
 Too fain to follow over hill and dale  
 That child of theirs caught up thus in the cloud  
 And carried by the Prince o' the Power of the Air  
 Whither he would, to wilderness or sea.  
 I saw them, in the potency of fear,  
 Break somehow through the satyr-family 570  
 (For a grey mother with a monkey-mien,  
 Mopping and mowing, was apparent too,  
 As, confident of capture, all took hands  
 And danced about the captives in a ring)  
 —Saw them break through, breathe safe, at Rome again,  
 Saved by the selfish instinct, losing so

Their loved one left with haters. These I saw,  
 In recrudescency of baffled hate,  
 Prepare to wring the uttermost revenge  
 From body and soul thus left them: all was sure, 580  
 Fire laid and cauldron set, the obscene ring traced,  
 The victim stripped and prostrate: what of God?  
 The cleaving of a cloud, a cry, a crash,  
 Quenched lay their cauldron, cowered i' the dust the crew,  
 As, in a glory of armour like Saint George,  
 Out again sprang the young good beauteous priest  
 Bearing away the lady in his arms,  
 Saved for a splendid minute and no more.  
 For, whom i' the path did that priest come upon,  
 He and the poor lost lady borne so brave, 590  
 —Checking the song of praise in me, had else  
 Swelled to the full for God's will done on earth—  
 Whom but a dusk misfeatured messenger,  
 No other than the angel of this life,  
 Whose care is lest men see too much at once.  
 He made the sign, such God-glimpse must suffice,  
 Nor prejudice the Prince o' the Power of the Air,  
 Whose ministration piles us overhead  
 What we call, first, earth's roof and, last, heaven's floor,  
 Now grate o' the trap, then outlet of the cage: 600  
 So took the lady, left the priest alone,  
 And once more canopied the world with black.  
 But through the blackness I saw Rome again,  
 And where a solitary villa stood  
 In a lone garden-quarter: it was eve,  
 The second of the year, and oh so cold!  
 Ever and anon there fluttered through the air  
 A snow-flake, and a scanty couch of snow  
 Crusted the grass-walk and the garden-mould.  
 All was grave, silent, sinister,—when, ha? 610  
 Glimmeringly did a pack of were-wolves pad  
 The snow, those flames were Guido's eyes in front,  
 And all five found and footed it, the track,  
 To where a threshold-streak of warmth and light  
 Betrayed the villa-door with life inside,

While an inch outside were those blood-bright eyes,  
 And black lips wrinkling o'er the flash of teeth,  
 And tongues that lolled—Oh God that madest man!  
 They parleyed in their language. Then one whined—  
 That was the policy and master-stroke— 620  
 Deep in his throat whispered what seemed a name—  
 'Open to Caponsacchi!' Guido cried:  
 'Gabriel!' cried Lucifer at Eden-gate.  
 Wide as a heart, opened the door at once,  
 Showing the joyous couple, and their child  
 The two-weeks' mother, to the wolves, the wolves  
 To them. Close eyes! And when the corpses lay  
 Stark-stretched, and those the wolves, their wolf-work done,  
 Were safe-embosomed by the night again,  
 I knew a necessary change in things; 630  
 As when the worst watch of the night gives way,  
 And there comes duly, to take cognizance,  
 The scrutinizing eye-point of some star—  
 And who despairs of a new daybreak now?  
 Lo, the first ray protruded on those five!  
 It reached them, and each felon writhed transfixed.  
 Awhile they palpitated on the spear  
 Motionless over Tophet: stand or fall?  
 'I say, the spear should fall—should stand, I say!'  
 Cried the world come to judgment, granting grace 640  
 Or dealing doom according to world's wont,  
 Those world's-bystanders grouped on Rome's crossroad  
 At prick and summons of the primal curse  
 Which bids man love as well as make a lie.  
 There prattled they, discoursed the right and wrong,  
 Turned wrong to right, proved wolves sheep and sheep wolves,  
 So that you scarce distinguished fell from fleece;  
 Till out spoke a great guardian of the fold,  
 Stood up, put forth his hand that held the crook,  
 And motioned that the arrested point decline: 650  
 Horribly off, the wriggling dead-weight reeled,  
 Rushed to the bottom and lay ruined there.  
 Though still at the pit's mouth, despite the smoke  
 O' the burning, tarriers turned again to talk

And trim the balance, and detect at least  
 A touch of wolf in what showed whitest sheep,  
 A cross of sheep redeeming the whole wolf,—  
 Vex truth a little longer:—less and less,  
 Because years came and went, and more and more  
 Brought new lies with them to be loved in turn. 660  
 Till all at once the memory of the thing,—  
 The fact that, wolves or sheep, such creatures were,—  
 Which hitherto, however men supposed,  
 Had somehow plain and pillar-like prevailed  
 I' the midst of them, indisputably fact,  
 Granite, time's tooth should grate against, not graze,—  
 Why, this proved sandstone, friable, fast to fly  
 And give its grain away at wish o' the wind.  
 Ever and ever more diminutive,  
 Base gone, shaft lost, only entablature, 670  
 Dwindled into no bigger than a book,  
 Lay of the column; and that little, left  
 By the roadside 'mid the ordure, shards and weeds.  
 Until I haply, wandering that way,  
 Kicked it up, turned it over, and recognized,  
 For all the crumblement, this abacus,  
 This square old yellow book,—could calculate  
 By this the lost proportions of the style.

This was it from, my fancy with those facts,  
 I used to tell the tale, turned gay to grave, 680  
 But lacked a listener seldom; such alloy,  
 Such substance of me interfused the gold  
 Which, wrought into a shapely ring therewith,  
 Hammered and filed, fingered and favoured, last  
 Lay ready for the renovating wash  
 O' the water. 'How much of the tale was true?'  
 I disappeared; the book grew all in all;  
 The lawyers' pleadings swelled back to their size,—  
 Doubled in two, the crease upon them yet,  
 For more commodity of carriage, see!— 690  
 And these are letters, veritable sheets  
 That brought posthaste the news of Florence, writ



At Rome the day Count Guido died, we find,  
To stay the craving of a client there,  
Who bound the same and so produced my book.  
Lovers of dead truth, did ye fare the worse?  
Lovers of live truth, found ye false my tale?

Well, now; there's nothing in nor out o' the world  
Good except truth: yet this, the something else,  
What's this then, which proves good yet seems untrue? 700  
This that I mixed with truth, motions of mine  
That quickened, made the inertness malleolable  
O' the gold was not mine,—what's your name for this?  
Are means to the end, themselves in part the end?  
Is fiction which makes fact alive, fact too?  
The somehow may be thishow.

I find first

Writ down for very A B C of fact,  
'In the beginning God made heaven and earth;'  
From which, no matter with what lisp, I spell 710  
And speak you out a consequence—that man,  
Man,—as befits the made, the inferior thing,—  
Purposed, since made, to grow, not make in turn,  
Yet forced to try and make, else fail to grow,—  
Formed to rise, reach at, if not grasp and gain  
The good beyond him,—which attempt is growth,—  
Repeats God's process in man's due degree,  
Attaining man's proportionate result,—  
Creates, no, but resuscitates, perhaps.  
Inalienable, the arch-prerogative 720  
Which turns thought, act—conceives, expresses too!  
No less, man, bounded, yearning to be free,  
May so project his surplusage of soul  
In search of body, so add self to self  
By owning what lay ownerless before,—  
So find, so fill full, so appropriate forms—  
That, although nothing which had never life  
Shall get life from him, be, not having been,  
Yet, something dead may get to live again,  
Something with too much life or not enough, 730

Which, either way imperfect, ended once:  
 An end whereat man's impulse intervenes,  
 Makes new beginning, starts the dead alive,  
 Completes the incomplete and saves the thing.  
 Man's breath were vain to light a virgin wick,—  
 Half-burned-out, all but quite-quenched wicks o' the lamp  
 Stationed for temple-service on this earth,  
 These indeed let him breathe on and relume!  
 For such man's feat is, in the due degree,  
 —Mimic creation, galvanism for life, 740  
 But still a glory portioned in the scale.  
 Why did the mage say,—feeling as we are wont  
 For truth, and stopping midway short of truth,  
 And resting on a lie,—‘I raise a ghost’?  
 ‘Because,’ he taught adepts, ‘man makes not man.  
 ‘Yet by a special gift, an art of arts,  
 ‘More insight and more oversight and much more  
 ‘Will to use both of these than boast my mates,  
 ‘I can detach from me, commission forth  
 ‘Half of my soul; which in its pilgrimage 750  
 ‘O'er old unwandered waste ways of the world,  
 ‘May chance upon some fragment of a whole,  
 ‘Rag of flesh, scrap of bone in dim disuse,  
 ‘Smoking flax that fed fire once: prompt therein  
 ‘I enter, spark-like, put old powers to play,  
 ‘Push lines out to the limit, lead forth last  
 ‘(By a moonrise through a ruin of a crypt)  
 ‘What shall be mistily seen, murmuringly heard,  
 ‘Mistakenly felt: then write my name with Faust's!  
 Oh, Faust, why Faust? Was not Elisha once?— 760  
 Who bade them lay his staff on a corpse-face.  
 There was no voice, no hearing: he went in  
 Therefore, and shut the door upon them twain,  
 And prayed unto the Lord: and he went up  
 And lay upon the corpse, dead on the couch,  
 And put his mouth upon its mouth, his eyes  
 Upon its eyes, his hands upon its hands,  
 And stretched him on the flesh; the flesh waxed warm:  
 And he returned, walked to and fro the house,

And went up, stretched him on the flesh again,  
And the eyes opened. 'T is a credible feat  
With the right man and way.

770

Enough of me!  
The Book! I turn its medicinale leaves  
In London now till, as in Florence erst,  
A spirit laughs and leaps through every limb,  
And lights my eye, and lifts me by the hair,  
Letting me have my will again with these  
—How title I the dead alive once more?

Count Guido Franceschini the Aretine,  
Descended of an ancient house, though poor,  
A beak-nosed bushy-bearded black-haired lord,  
Lean, pallid, low of stature yet robust,  
Fifty years old,—having four years ago  
Married Pompilia Comparini, young,  
Good, beautiful, at Rome, where she was born,  
And brought her to Arezzo, where they lived  
Unhappy lives, whatever curse the cause,—  
This husband, taking four accomplices,  
Followed this wife to Rome, where she was fled  
From their Arezzo to find peace again,  
In convoy, eight months earlier, of a priest,  
Aretine also, of still nobler birth,  
Giuseppe Caponsacchi,—and caught her there  
Quiet in a villa on a Christmas night,  
With only Pietro and Violante by,  
Both her putative parents; killed the three,  
Aged, they, seventy each, and she, seventeen,  
And, two weeks since, the mother of his babe  
First-born and heir to what the style was worth  
O' the Guido who determined, dared and did  
This deed just as he purposed point by point.  
Then, bent upon escape, but hotly pressed,  
And captured with his co-mates that same night,  
He, brought to trial, stood on this defence—  
Injury to his honour caused the act;

780

790

800

That since his wife was false, (as manifest  
 By flight from home in such companionship,  
 Death, punishment deserved of the false wife  
 And faithless parents who abetted her  
 I' the flight aforesaid, wronged nor God nor man.  
 'Nor false she, nor yet faithless they,' replied  
 The accuser; 'cloaked and masked this murder glooms;  
 'True was Pompilia, loyal too the pair;  
 'Out of the man's own heart this monster curled,  
 'This crime coiled with connivancy at crime,  
 'His victim's breast, he tells you, hatched and reared;  
 'Uncoil we and stretch stark the worm of hell!  
 A month the trial swayed this way and that  
 Ere judgment settled down on Guido's guilt;  
 Then was the Pope, that good Twelfth Innocent,  
 Appealed to: who well weighed what went before,  
 Affirmed the guilt and gave the guilty doom.

820

Let this old woe step on the stage again!  
 Act itself o'er anew for men to judge,  
 Not by the very sense and sight indeed—  
 (Which take at best imperfect cognizance,  
 Since, how heart moves brain, and how both move hand,  
 What mortal ever in entirety saw?)  
 —No dose of purer truth than man digests,  
 But truth with falsehood, milk that feeds him now,  
 Not strong meat he may get to bear some day—  
 To-wit, by voices we call evidence,  
 Uproar in the echo, live fact deadened down,  
 Talked over, bruited abroad, whispered away,  
 Yet helping us to all we seem to hear:  
 For how else know we save by worth of word?

830

Here are the voices presently shall sound  
 In due succession. First, the world's outcry  
 Around the rush and ripple of any fact  
 Fallen stonewise, plumb on the smooth face of things;  
 The world's guess, as it crowds the bank o' the pool,  
 At what were figure and substance, by their splash:

840

Then, by vibrations in the general mind,  
 At depth of deed already out of reach.  
 This threefold murder of the day before,—  
 Say, Half-Rome's feel after the vanished truth;  
 Honest enough, as the way is: all the same,  
 Harbours in the centre of its sense  
 A hidden germ of failure, shy but sure, 850  
 Should neutralize that honesty and leave  
 That feel for truth at fault, as the way is too.  
 Some prepossession such as starts amiss,  
 By but a hair's-breadth at the shoulder-blade,  
 The arm o' the feeler, dip he ne'er so brave;  
 And so leads waveringly, lets fall wide  
 O' the mark his finger meant to find, and fix  
 Truth at the bottom, that deceptive speck.  
 With this Half-Rome,—the source of swerving, call  
 Over-belief in Guido's right and wrong 860  
 Rather than in Pompilia's wrong and right:  
 Who shall say how, who shall say why? 'T is there—  
 The instinctive theorizing whence a fact  
 Looks to the eye as the eye likes the look.  
 Gossip in a public place, a sample-speech.  
 Some worthy, with his previous hint to find  
 A husband's side the safer, and no whit  
 Aware he is not Æacus the while,—  
 How such an one supposes and states fact  
 To whosoever of a multitude 870  
 Will listen, and perhaps prolong thereby  
 The not-unpleasant flutter at the breast,  
 Born of a certain spectacle shut in  
 By the church Lorenzo opposite. So, they lounge  
 Midway the mouth o' the street, on Corso side,  
 'Twixt palace Fiano and palace Ruspoli,  
 Linger and listen; keeping clear o' the crowd,  
 Yet wishful one could lend that crowd one's eyes,  
 (So universal is its plague of squint)  
 And make hearts beat our time that flutter false: 880  
 —All for the truth's sake, mere truth, nothing else!  
 How Half-Rome found for Guido much excuse.

Next, from Rome's other half, the opposite feel  
 For truth with a like swerve, like unsuccess,—  
 Or if success, by no more skill but luck:  
 This time, through rather siding with the wife,  
 However the fancy-fit inclined that way,  
 Than with the husband. One wears drab, one, pink;  
 Who wears pink, ask him 'Which shall win the race,  
 'Of coupled runners like as egg and egg?'  
 '—Why, if I must choose, he with the pink scarf.'  
 Doubtless for some such reason choice fell here.  
 A piece of public talk to correspond  
 At the next stage of the story; just a day  
 Let pass and new day bring the proper change.  
 Another sample-speech i' the market-place  
 O' the Barberini by the Capucins;  
 Where the old Triton, at his fountain-sport,  
 Bernini's creature plated to the paps,  
 Puffs up steel sleet which breaks to diamond dust,  
 A spray of sparkles snorted from his conch,  
 High over the caritellas, out o' the way  
 O' the motley merchandizing multitude.  
 Our murder has been done three days ago,  
 The frost is over and gone, the south wind laughs,  
 And, to the very tiles of each red roof  
 A-smoke i' the sunshine, Rome lies gold and glad:  
 So, listen how, to the other half of Rome,  
 Pompilia seemed a saint and martyr both!

890

900

Then, yet another day let come and go,  
 With pause prelude still of novelty,  
 Hear a fresh speaker!—neither this nor that  
 Half-Rome aforesaid; something bred of both:  
 One and one breed the inevitable three.  
 Such is the personage harangues you next;  
 The elaborated product, *tertium quid*:  
 Rome's first commotion in subsidence gives  
 The curd o' the cream, flower o' the wheat, as it were,  
 And finer sense o' the city. Is this plain?  
 You get a reasoned statement of the case,

910

920

Eventual verdict of the curious few  
 Who care to sift a business to the bran  
 Nor coarsely bolt it like the simpler sort.  
 Here, after ignorance, instruction speaks;  
 Here, clarity of candour, history's soul,  
 The critical mind, in short: no gossip-guess.  
 What the superior social section thinks,  
 In person of some man of quality  
 Who,—breathing musk from lace-work and brocade,  
 His solitaire amid the flow of frill, 930  
 Powdered peruke on nose, and bag at back,  
 And cane dependent from the ruffled wrist,—  
 Harangues in silvery and selectest phrase  
 'Neath waxlight in a glorified saloon  
 Where mirrors multiply the girandole:  
 Courting the approbation of no mob,  
 But Eminence This and All-Illustrious That  
 Who take snuff softly, range in well-bred ring,  
 Card-table-quitters for observance' sake,  
 Around the argument, the rational word— 940  
 Still, spite its weight and worth, a sample-speech.  
 How quality dissertated on the case.

So much for Rome and rumour; smoke comes first:  
 Once the smoke risen untroubled, we descry  
 Clearlier what tongues of flame may spire and spit  
 To eye and ear, each with appropriate tinge  
 According to its food, pure or impure.  
 The actors, no mere rumours of the act,  
 Intervene. First you hear Count Guido's voice,  
 In a small chamber that adjoins the court, 950  
 Where Governor and Judges, summoned thence,  
 Tommati, Venturini and the rest,  
 Find the accused ripe for declaring truth.  
 Soft-cushioned sits he; yet shifts seat, shirks touch,  
 As, with a twitchy brow and wincing lip  
 And cheek that changes to all kinds of white,  
 He proffers his defence, in tones subdued  
 Near to mock-mildness now, so mournful seems

The obtuser sense truth fails to satisfy;  
 Now, moved, from pathos at the wrong endured, 960  
 To passion; for the natural man is roused  
 At fools who first do wrong, then pour the blame  
 Of their wrong-doing, Satan-like, on Job.  
 Also his tongue at times is hard to curb;  
 Incisive, nigh satiric bites the phrase,  
 Rough-raw, yet somehow claiming privilege  
 —It is so hard for shrewdness to admit  
 Folly means no harm when she calls black white!  
 —Eruption momentary at the most,  
 Modified forthwith by a fall o' the fire, 970  
 Sage acquiescence; for the world's the world,  
 And, what it errs in, Judges rectify:  
 He feels he has a fist, then folds his arms  
 Crosswise and makes his mind up to be meek.  
 And never once does he detach his eye  
 From those ranged there to slay him or to save,  
 But does his best man's-service for himself,  
 Despite,—what twitches brow and makes lip wince,—  
 His limbs' late taste of what was called the Cord,  
 Or Vigil-torture more facetiously. 980  
 Even so; they were wont to tease the truth  
 Out of loath witness (toying, trifling time)  
 By torture: 't was a trick, a vice of the age,  
 Here, there and everywhere, what would you have?  
 Religion used to tell Humanity  
 She gave him warrant or denied him course.  
 And since the course was much to his own mind,  
 Of pinching flesh and pulling bone from bone  
 To unhusk truth a-hiding in its hulls,  
 Nor whisper of a warning stopped the way, 990  
 He, in their joint behalf, the burly slave,  
 Bestirred him, mauled and maimed all recusants,  
 While, prim in place, Religion overlooked;  
 And so had done till doomsday, never a sign  
 Nor sound of interference from her mouth,  
 But that at last the burly slave wiped brow,  
 Let eye give notice as if soul were there,



Muttered ' 'T is a vile trick, foolish more than vile,  
 'Should have been counted sin; I make it so:  
 'At any rate no more of it for me—  
 'Nay, for I break the torture-engine thus!  
 Then did Religion start up, stare amain,  
 Look round for help and see none, smile and say  
 'What, broken is the rack? Well done of thee!  
 'Did I forget to abrogate its use?  
 'Be the mistake in common with us both!  
 '—One more fault our blind age shall answer for,  
 'Down in my book denounced though it must be  
 'Somewhere. Henceforth find truth by milder means!  
 Ah but, Religion, did we wait for thee  
 To ope the book, that serves to sit upon,  
 And pick such place out, we should wait indeed!  
 That is all history: and what is not now,  
 Was then, defendants found it to their cost.  
 How Guido, after being tortured, spoke.

1000

1010

Also hear Caponsacchi who comes next,  
 Man and priest—could you comprehend the coil!—  
 In days when that was rife which now is rare.  
 How, mingling each its multifarious wires,  
 Now heaven, now earth, now heaven and earth at once,  
 Had plucked at and perplexed their puppet here,  
 Played off the young frank personable priest;  
 Sworn fast and tonsured plain heaven's celibate,  
 And yet earth's clear-accepted servitor,  
 A courtly spiritual Cupid, squire of dames  
 By law of love and mandate of the mode.  
 The Church's own, or why parade her seal,  
 Wherefore that chrism and consecrative work?  
 Yet verily the world's, or why go badged  
 A prince of sonneteers and lutanists,  
 Show colour of each vanity in vogue  
 Borne with decorum due on blameless breast?  
 All that is changed now, as he tells the court  
 How he had played the part excepted at;  
 Tells it, moreover, now the second time:

1020

1030

Since, for his cause of scandal, his own share  
 I' the flight from home and husband of the wife,  
 He has been censured, punished in a sort  
 By relegation,—exile, we should say,  
 To a short distance for a little time,— 1040  
 Whence he is summoned on a sudden now,  
 Informed that she, he thought to save, is lost,  
 And, in a breath, bidden re-tell his tale,  
 Since the first telling somehow missed effect,  
 And then advise in the matter. There stands he,  
 While the same grim black-panelled chamber blinks  
 As though rubbed shiny with the sins of Rome  
 Told the same oak for ages—wave-washed wall  
 Whereto has set a sea of wickedness.  
 There, where you yesterday heard Guido speak, 1050  
 Speaks Caponsacchi; and there face him too  
 Tommati, Venturini and the rest  
 Who, eight months earlier, scarce repressed the smile,  
 Forewent the wink; waived recognition so  
 Of peccadillos incident to youth,  
 Especially youth high-born; for youth means love,  
 Vows can't change nature, priests are only men,  
 And love needs stratagem and subterfuge:  
 Which age, that once was youth, should recognize,  
 May blame, but needs not press too hard against. 1060  
 Here sit the old Judges then, but with no grace  
 Of reverend carriage, magisterial port.  
 For why? The accused of eight months since,—the same  
 Who cut the conscious figure of a fool,  
 Changed countenance, dropped bashful gaze to ground,  
 While hesitating for an answer then,—  
 Now is grown judge himself, terrifies now  
 This, now the other culprit called a judge,  
 Whose turn it is to stammer and look strange,  
 As he speaks rapidly, angrily, speech that smites: 1070  
 And they keep silence, bear blow after blow,  
 Because the seeming-solitary man,  
 Speaking for God, may have an audience too,  
 Invisible, no discreet judge provokes.  
 How the priest Caponsacchi said his say.

Then a soul sighs its lowest and its last  
 After the loud ones,—so much breath remains  
 Unused by the four-days' dying; for she lived  
 Thus long, miraculously long, 't was thought,  
 Just that Pompilia might defend herself. 1080  
 How, while the hireling and the alien stoop,  
 Comfort, yet question,—since the time is brief,  
 And folk, allowably inquisitive,  
 Encircle the low pallet where she lies  
 In the good house that helps the poor to die,—  
 Pompilia tells the story of her life.  
 For friend and lover,—leech and man of law  
 Do service; busy helpful ministrants  
 As varied in their calling as their mind,  
 Temper and age: and yet from all of these, 1090  
 About the white bed under the arched roof,  
 Is somehow, as it were, evolved a one,—  
 Small separate sympathies combined and large,  
 Nothings that were, grown something very much:  
 As if the bystanders gave each his straw,  
 All he had, though a trifle in itself,  
 Which, plaited all together, made a Cross  
 Fit to die looking on and praying with,  
 Just as well as if ivory or gold.  
 So, to the common kindness she speaks, 1100  
 There being scarce more privacy at the last  
 For mind than body: but she is used to bear,  
 And only unused to the brotherly look.  
 How she endeavoured to explain her life.

Then, since a Trial ensued, a touch o' the same  
 To sober us, flustered with frothy talk,  
 And teach our common sense its helplessness.  
 For why deal simply with divining-rod,  
 Scrape where we fancy secret sources flow,  
 And ignore law, the recognized machine, 1110  
 Elaborate display of pipe and wheel  
 Framed to unchoke, pump up and pour apace  
 Truth in a flowery foam shall wash the world?

The patent truth-extracting process,—ha?  
 Let us make all that mystery turn one wheel,  
 Give you a single grind of law at least!  
 One orator, of two on either side,  
 Shall teach us the puissance of the tongue  
 —That is, o' the pen which simulated tongue  
 On paper and saved all except the sound 1120  
 Which never was. Law's speech beside law's thought?  
 That were too stunning, too immense an odds:  
 That point of vantage, law let nobly pass.  
 One lawyer shall admit us to behold  
 The manner of the making out a case,  
 First fashion of a speech; the chick in egg,  
 And masterpiece law's bosom incubates.  
 How Don Giacinto of the Arcangeli,  
 Called Procurator of the Poor at Rome,  
 Now advocate for Guido and his mates,— 1130  
 The jolly learned man of middle age,  
 Cheek and jowl all in laps with fat and law,  
 Mirthful as mighty, yet, as great hearts use,  
 Despite the name and fame that tempt our flesh,  
 Constant to that devotion of the hearth,  
 Still captive in those dear domestic ties!—  
 How he,—having a cause to triumph with,  
 All kind of interests to keep intact,  
 More than one efficacious personage  
 To tranquillize, conciliate and secure, 1140  
 And above all, public anxiety  
 To quiet, show its Guido in good hands,—  
 Also, as if such burdens were too light,  
 A certain family-feast to claim his care,  
 The birthday-banquet for the only son—  
 Paternity at smiling strife with law—  
 How he brings both to buckle in one bond;  
 And, thick at throat, with waterish under-eye,  
 Turns to his task and settles in his seat  
 And puts his utmost means to practice now: 1150  
 Wheezes out law and whiffles Latin forth,  
 And, just as though roast lamb would never be,

Makes logic levigate the big crime small:  
 Rubs palm on palm, rakes foot with itchy foot,  
 Conceives and inchoates the argument,  
 Sprinkling each flower appropriate to the time,  
 —Ovidian quip or Ciceronian crank,  
 A-bubble in the larynx while he laughs,  
 As he had fritters deep down frying there.  
 How he turns, twists, and tries the oily thing 1160  
 Shall be—first speech for Guido 'gainst the Fisc.

Then with a skip as it were from heel to head,  
 Leaving yourselves fill up the middle bulk  
 O' the Trial, reconstruct its shape august,  
 From such exordium clap we to the close;  
 Give you, if we dare wing to such a height,  
 The absolute glory in some full-grown speech  
 On the other side, some finished butterfly,  
 Some breathing diamond-flake with leaf-gold fans,  
 That takes the air, no trace of worm it was, 1170  
 Or cabbage-bed it had production from.  
 Giovambattista o' the Bottini, Fisc,  
 Pompilia's patron by the chance of the hour,  
 To-morrow her persecutor,—composite, he,  
 As becomes who must meet such various calls—  
 Odds of age joined in him with ends of youth.  
 A man of ready smile and facile tear,  
 Improvised hopes, despairs at nod and beck,  
 And language—ah, the gift of eloquence!  
 Language that goes as easy as a glove 1180  
 O'er good and evil, smoothenes both to one.  
 Rashness helps caution with him, fires the straw,  
 In free enthusiastic careless fit,  
 On the first proper pinnacle of rock  
 Which happens, as reward for all that zeal,  
 To lure some bark to founders and bring gain:  
 While calm sits Caution, rapt with heavenward eye,  
 A true confessor's gaze amid the glare,  
 Beacons to the breaker, death and hell.  
 'Well done, thou good and faithful!' she approves: 1190

'Hadst thou let slip a faggot to the beach,  
'The crew had surely spied thy precipice  
'And saved their boat; the simple and the slow,  
'Who should have prompt forestalled the wrecker's fee:  
'Let the next crew be wise and hail in time!'

Just so compounded is the outside man,  
Blue juvenile pure eye and pippin cheek,  
And brow all prematurely soiled and seamed  
With sudden age, bright devastated hair.  
Ah, but you miss the very tones o' the voice, 1200  
The scrannel pipe that screams in heights of head,  
As, in his modest studio, all alone,  
The tall wight Stands a-tiptoe, strives and strains,  
Both eyes shut, like the cockerel that would crow,  
Tries to his own self amorously o'er  
What never will be uttered else than so—  
To the four walls, for Forum and Mars' Hill,  
Speaks out the poesy which, penned, turns prose.  
Clavecinist debarred his instrument,  
He yet thrums—shirking neither turn nor trill, 1210  
With desperate finger on dumb table-edge—  
The sovereign rondo, shall conclude his Suite,  
Charm an imaginary audience there,  
From old Corelli to young Haendel, both  
I' the flesh at Rome, ere he perforce go print  
The cold black score, mere music for the mind—  
The last speech against Guido and his gang,  
With special end to prove Pompilia pure.  
How the Fisc vindicates Pompilia's fame.

Then comes the all but end, the ultimate 1220  
Judgment save yours. Pope Innocent the Twelfth,  
Simple, sagacious, mild yet resolute,  
With prudence, probity and—what beside  
From the other world he feels impress at times,  
Having attained to fourscore years and six,—  
How, when the court found Guido and the rest  
Guilty, but law supplied a subterfuge  
And passed the final sentence to the Pope,

He, bringing his intelligence to bear  
 This last time on what ball behoves him drop 1230  
 In the urn, or white or black, does drop a black,  
 Send five souls more to just precede his own,  
 Stand him in stead and witness, if need were,  
 How he is wont to do God's work on earth.  
 The manner of his sitting out the dim  
 Droop of a sombre February day  
 In the plain closet where he does such work,  
 With, from all Peter's treasury, one stool,  
 One table and one lathen crucifix.  
 There sits the Pope, his thoughts for company; 1240  
 Grave but not sad,—nay, something like cheer  
 Leaves the lips free to be benevolent,  
 Which, all day long, did duty firm and fast.  
 A cherishing there is of foot and knee,  
 A chafing loose-skinned large-veined hand with hand,—  
 What steward but knows when stewardship earns its wage,  
 May levy praise, anticipate the lord?  
 He reads, notes, lays the papers down at last,  
 Muses, then takes a turn about the room;  
 Unclasps a huge tome in an antique guise, 1250  
 Primitive print and tongue half obsolete,  
 That stands him in diurnal stead; opes page,  
 Finds place where falls the passage to be conned  
 According to an order long in use:  
 And, as he comes upon the evening's chance,  
 Starts somewhat, solemnizes straight his smile,  
 Then reads aloud that portion first to last,  
 And at the end lets flow his own thoughts forth  
 Likewise aloud, for respite and relief,  
 Till by the dreary relics of the west 1260  
 Wan through the half-moon window, all his light,  
 He bows the head while the lips move in prayer,  
 Writes some three brief lines, signs and seals the same,  
 Tinkles a hand-bell, bids the obsequious Sir  
 Who puts foot presently o' the closet-sill  
 He watched outside of, bear as superscribed  
 That mandate to the Governor forthwith:

Then heaves abroad his cares in one good sigh,  
Traverses corridor with no arm's help,  
And so to sup as a clear conscience should.  
The manner of the judgment of the Pope.

1270

Then must speak Guido yet a second time,  
Satan's old saw being apt here—skin for skin,  
All a man hath that will he give for life.  
While life was graspable and gainable, free  
To bird-like buzz her wings round Guido's brow,  
Not much truth stiffened out the web of words  
He wove to catch her: when away she flew  
And death came, death's breath rivelled up the lies,  
Left bare the metal thread, the fibre fine  
Of truth, i' the spinning: the true words come last.  
How Guido, to another purpose quite,  
Speaks and despairs, the last night of his life,  
In that New Prison by Castle Angelo  
At the bridge-foot: the same man, another voice.

1280

On a Stone bench in a close fetid cell,  
Where the hot vapour of an agony,  
Struck into drops on the cold wall, runs down  
Horrible worms made out of sweat and tears—  
There crouch, well nigh to the knees in dungeon-straw,  
Lit by the sole lamp suffered for their sake,  
Two awe-struck figures, this a Cardinal,  
That an Abate, both of old styled friends  
Of the part-man part-monster in the midst,  
So changed is Franceschini's gentle blood.  
The tiger-cat screams now, that whined before,  
That pried and tried and trod so gingerly,  
Till in its silkiness the trap-teeth join;  
Then you know how the bristling fury foams.  
They listen, this wrapped in his folds of red,  
While his feet fumble for the filth below;  
The other, as beseems a stouter heart,  
Working his best with beads and cross to ban  
The enemy that comes in like a flood  
Spite of the standard set up, verily

1290

1300



And in no trope at all, against him there:  
 For at the prison-gate, just a few steps  
 Outside, already, in the doubtful dawn,  
 Thither, from this side and from that, slow sweep  
 And settle down in silence solidly, 1310  
 Crow-wise, the frightful Brotherhood of Death.  
 Black-hatted and black-hooded huddle they,  
 Black rosaries a-dangling from each waist;  
 So take they their grim station at the door,  
 Torches alight and cross-bones-banner spread,  
 And that gigantic Christ with open arms,  
 Grounded. Nor lacks there aught but that the group  
 Break forth, intone the lamentable psalm,  
 'Out of the deeps, Lord, have I cried to thee!'—  
 When inside, from the true profound, a sign 1320  
 Shall bear intelligence that the foe is foiled,  
 Count Guido Franceschini has confessed,  
 And is absolved and reconciled with God.  
 Then they, intoning, may begin their march,  
 Make by the longest way for the People's Square,  
 Carry the criminal to his crime's award:  
 A mob to cleave, a scaffolding to reach,  
 Two gallows and Mannaia crowning all.  
 How Guido made defence a second time.

Finally, even as thus by step and step 1330  
 I led you from the level of to-day  
 Up to the summit of so long ago,  
 Here, whence I point you the wide prospect round—  
 Let me, by like steps, slope you back to smooth,  
 Land you on mother-earth, no whit the worse,  
 To feed o' the fat o' the furrow: free to dwell,  
 Taste our time's better things profusely spread  
 For all who love the level, corn and wine,  
 Much cattle and the many-folded fleece.  
 Shall not my friends go feast again on sward, 1340  
 Though cognizant of country in the clouds  
 Higher than wistful eagle's horny eye  
 Ever unclosed for, Mid ancestral crags,

When morning broke and Spring was back once more,  
And he died, heaven, save by his heart, unreached?  
Yet heaven my fancy lifts to, ladder-like,—  
As Jack reached, holpen of his beanstalk-rungs!

A novel country: I might make it mine  
By choosing which one aspect of the year  
Suited mood best, and putting solely that 1350  
On panel somewhere in the House of Fame,  
Landscaping what I saved, not what I saw:  
—Might fix you, whether frost in goblin-time  
Startled the moon with his abrupt bright laugh,  
Or, August's hair afloat in filmy fire,  
She fell, arms wide, face foremost on the world,  
Swooned there and so singed out the strength of things.  
Thus were abolished Spring and Autumn both,  
The land dwarfed to one likeness of the land,  
Life cramped corpse-fashion. Rather learn and love 1360  
Each facet-flash of the revolving year!—  
Red, green and blue that whirl into a white,  
The variance now, the eventual unity,  
Which make the miracle. See it for yourselves,  
This man's act, changeable because alive!  
Action now shrouds, now shows the informing thought;  
Man, like a glass ball with a spark a-top,  
Out of the magic fire that lurks inside,  
Shows one tint at a time to take the eye:  
Which, let a finger touch the silent sleep, 1370  
Shifted a hair's-breadth shoots you dark for bright,  
Suffuses bright with dark, and baffles so  
Your sentence absolute for shine or shade.  
Once set such orbs,—white styled, black stigmatized,—  
A-rolling, see them once on the other side  
Your good men and your bad men every one,  
From Guido Franceschini to Guy Faux,  
Oft would you rub your eyes and change your names.

Such, British Public, ye who like me not,  
(God love you!)—whom I yet have laboured for 1380

Perchance more careful whoso runs may read  
 Than erst when all, it seemed, could read who ran,—  
 Perchance more careless whoso reads may praise  
 Than late when he who praised and read and wrote  
 Was apt to find himself the self-same me,—  
 Such labour had such issue, so I wrought  
 This arc, by furtherance of such alloy,  
 And so, by one spirt, take away its trace  
 Till, justifiably golden, rounds my ring.

A ring without a posy, and that ring mine?

1390

O lyric Love, half-angel and half-bird  
 And all a wonder and a wild desire,—  
 Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,  
 Took sanctuary within the holier blue,  
 And sang a kindred soul out to his face,—  
 Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart—  
 When the first summons from the darkling earth  
 Reached thee amid thy chambers, blanched their blue,  
 And bared them of the glory—to drop down,  
 To toil for man, to suffer or to die,—  
 This is the same voice: can thy soul know change?  
 Hail then, and hearken from the realms of help!  
 Never may I commence my song, my due  
 To God who best taught song by gift of thee,  
 Except with bent head and beseeching hand—  
 That still, despite the distance and the dark,  
 What was, again may be; some interchange  
 Of grace, some splendour once thy very thought,  
 Some benediction anciently thy smile:  
 —Never conclude, but raising hand and head  
 Thither where eyes, that cannot reach, yet yearn  
 For all hope, all sustainment, all reward,  
 Their utmost up and on,—so blessing back  
 In those thy realms of help, that heaven thy home,  
 Some whiteness which, I judge, thy face makes proud,  
 Some wanness where, I think, thy foot may fall!

1400

1410