

**EN227 Romantic and Victorian Poetry
2017/2018 module pack**

Set texts not included in the Norton anthologies:

PROSE

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3. Robert Buchanan, ‘The Fleshly School of Poetry’ 19–31
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POEMS

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Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757)

(Extracts from second edition, 1759)

FROM PART ONE

SECT. VI: Of the passions which belong to SELF-PRESERVATION.

Most of the ideas which are capable of making a powerful impression on the mind, whether simply of Pain or Pleasure, or of the modifications of those, may be reduced very nearly to these two heads, self-preservation and society; to the ends of one or the other of which all our passions are calculated to answer. The passions which concern self-preservation, turn mostly on pain or danger. The ideas of pain, sickness, and death, fill the mind with strong emotions of horror; but life and health, though they put us in a capacity of being affected with pleasure, they make no such impression by the simple enjoyment. The passions therefore which are conversant about the preservation of the individual, turn chiefly on pain and danger, and they are the most powerful of all the passions.

SECT. VII: Of the SUBLIME.

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. Without all doubt, the torments which we may be made to suffer, are much greater in their effect on the body and mind, than any pleasures which the most learned voluptuary could suggest, or than the liveliest imagination, and the most sound and exquisitely sensible body could enjoy. Nay I am in great doubt, whether any man could be found, who would earn a life of the most perfect satisfaction, at the price of ending it in the torments, which justice inflicted in a few hours on the late unfortunate regicide in France. But as pain is stronger in its operation than pleasure, so death is in general a much more affecting idea than pain; because there are very few pains, however exquisite, which are not preferred to death; nay, what generally makes pain itself, if I may say so, more painful, is, that it is considered as an emissary of this kind of terrors. When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience. The cause of this I shall endeavour to investigate hereafter.

SECT. VIII: Of the passions which belong to SOCIETY

The other head under which I class our passions, is that of society, which may be divided into two sorts. I) The society of the sexes, which answers the purposes of propagation; and next, II) that more general society, which we have with men and with other animals, and which we may in some sort be said to have even with the inanimate world. The passions belonging to the preservation of the individual, turn wholly on pain and danger; those which belong to generation, have their origin in gratifications and pleasures; the pleasure most directly belonging to this purpose is of a lively character, rapturous and violent, and confessedly the highest pleasure of sense; yet the absence of this so great an enjoyment, scarce amounts to an uneasiness; and except

at particular times, I do not think it affects at all. When men describe in what manner they are affected by pain and danger, they do not dwell on the pleasure of health and the comfort of security, and then lament the loss of these satisfactions: the whole turns upon the actual pains and horrors which they endure. But if you listen to the complaints of a forsaken lover, you observe, that he insists largely on the pleasures which he enjoyed, or hoped to enjoy, and on the perfection of the object of his desires; it is the loss which is always uppermost in his mind. The violent effects produced by love, which has sometimes been even wrought up to madness, is no objection to the rule which we seek to establish. When men have suffered their imaginations to be long affected with any idea, it so wholly engrosses them as to shut out by degrees almost every other, and to break down every partition of the mind which would confine it. Any idea is sufficient for the purpose, as is evident from the infinite variety of causes which give rise to madness: but this at most can only prove, that the passion of love is capable of producing very extraordinary effects, not that its extraordinary emotions have any connection with positive pain.

SECT. IX: The final cause of the difference between the passions belonging to Self-Preservation and those which regard the Society of the Sexes.

The final cause of the difference in character between the passions which regard self-preservation, and those which are directed to the multiplication of the species, will illustrate the foregoing remarks yet further; and it is, I imagine, worthy of observation even upon its own account. As the performance of our duties of every kind depends upon life, and the performing them with vigour and efficacy depends upon health, we are very strongly affected with whatever threatens the destruction of either; but as we were not made to acquiesce in life and health, the simple enjoyment of them is not attended with any real pleasure, lest satisfied with that, we should give ourselves over to indolence and inaction. On the other hand, the generation of mankind is a great purpose, and it is requisite that men should be animated to the pursuit of it by some great incentive. It is therefore attended with a very high pleasure; but as it is by no means designed to be our constant business, it is not fit that the absence of this pleasure should be attended with any considerable pain. The difference between men and brutes, in this point, seems to be remarkable. Men are at all times pretty equally disposed to the pleasures of love, because they are to be guided by reason in the time and manner of indulging them. Had any great pain arisen from the want of this satisfaction, reason, I am afraid, would find great difficulties in the performance of its office. But brutes who obey laws, in the execution of which their own reason has but little share, have their stated seasons; at such times it is not improbable that the sensation from the want is very troublesome, because the end must be then answered, or be missed in many, perhaps for ever; as the inclination returns only with its season.

SECT. X: Of BEAUTY

THE passion which belongs to generation, merely as such, is lust only; this is evident in brutes, whose passions are more unmixed, and which pursue their purposes more directly than ours. The only distinction they observe with regard to their mates, is that of sex. It is true, that they stick severally to their own species in preference to all others. But this preference, I imagine, does not arise from any sense of beauty which they find in their species, as Mr. Addison supposes, but from a law of some other kind to which they are subject; and this we may fairly conclude, from their apparent want of choice amongst those objects to which the barriers of their species have confined them. But man, who is a creature adapted to a greater variety and intricacy of relation, connects with the general passion, the idea of some social qualities, which direct and

heighten the appetite which he has in common with all other animals; and as he is not designed like them to live at large, it is fit that he should have something to create a preference, and fix his choice; and this in general should be some sensible quality; as no other can so quickly, so powerfully, or so surely produce its effect. The object therefore of this mixed passion which we call love, is the beauty of the sex. Men are carried to the sex in general, as it is the sex, and by the common law of nature; but they are attached to particulars by personal beauty. I call beauty a social quality; for where women and men, and not only they, but when other animals give us a sense of joy and pleasure in beholding them, (and there are many that do so) they inspire us with sentiments of tenderness and affection towards their persons; we like to have them near us, and we enter willingly into a kind of relation with them, unless we should have strong reasons to the contrary. But to what end, in many cases, this was designed, I am unable to discover; for I see no greater reason for a connection between man and several animals who are attired in so engaging a manner, than between him and some others who entirely want this attraction, or possess it in a far weaker degree. But it is probable, that providence did not make even this distinction, but with a view to some great end, though we cannot perceive distinctly what it is, as his wisdom is not our wisdom, nor our ways his ways.

SECT. XI: SOCIETY and SOLITUDE.

THE second branch of the social passions, is that which administers to society in general. With regard to this, I observe, that society, merely as society, without any particular heightenings, gives us no positive pleasure in the enjoyment; but absolute and entire solitude, that is, the total and perpetual exclusion from all society, is as great a positive pain as can almost be conceived. Therefore in the balance between the pleasure of general society, and the pain of absolute solitude, pain is the predominant idea. But the pleasure of any particular social enjoyment outweighs very considerably the uneasiness caused by the want of that particular enjoyment; so that the strongest sensations relative to the habitudes of particular society, are sensations of pleasure. Good company, lively conversations, and the endearments of friendship, fill the mind with great pleasure; a temporary solitude on the other hand, is itself agreeable. This may perhaps prove, that we are creatures designed for contemplation as well as action; since solitude as well as society has its pleasures; as from the former observation we may discern, that an entire life of solitude contradicts the purposes of our being, since death itself is scarcely an idea of more terror.

SECT. XII: SYMPATHY, IMITATION, and AMBITION.

Under this denomination of society, the passions are of a complicated kind, and branch out into a variety of forms agreeable to that variety of ends they are to serve in the great chain of society. The three principal links in this chain are sympathy, imitation, and ambition.

SECT. XIII: SYMPATHY.

It is by the first of these passions that we enter into the concerns of others; that we are moved as they are moved, and are never suffered to be indifferent spectators of almost any thing which men can do or suffer. For sympathy must be considered as a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man, and affected in many respects as he is affected; so that this passion may either partake of the nature of those which regard self-preservation, and turning upon pain may be a source of the sublime; or it may turn upon ideas of pleasure; and then, whatever has been said of the social affections, whether they regard society in general, or

only some particular modes of it, may be applicable here. It is by this principle chiefly that poetry, painting, and other affecting arts, transfuse their passions from one breast to another, and are often capable of grafting a delight on wretchedness, misery, and death itself. It is a common observation, that objects which in the reality would shock, are in tragical, and such like representations, the source of a very high species of pleasure. This taken as a fact, has been the cause of much reasoning. The satisfaction has been commonly attributed, first, to the comfort we receive in considering that so melancholy a story is no more than a fiction; and next, to the contemplation of our own freedom from the evils which we see represented. I am afraid it is a practice much too common in inquiries of this nature, to attribute the cause of feelings which merely arise from the mechanical structure of our bodies, or from the natural frame and constitution of our minds, to certain conclusions of the reasoning faculty on the objects presented to us; for I should imagine, that the influence of reason in producing our passions is nothing near so extensive as it is commonly believed.

SECT. XIV: The effects of SYMPATHY in the distresses of others.

To examine this point concerning the effect of tragedy in a proper manner, we must previously consider, how we are affected by the feelings of our fellow creatures in circumstances of real distress. I am convinced we have a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others; for let the affection be what it will in appearance, if it does not make us shun such objects, if on the contrary it induces us to approach them, if it makes us dwell upon them, in this case I conceive we must have a delight or pleasure of some species or other in contemplating objects of this kind. Do we not read the authentic histories of scenes of this nature with as much pleasure as romances or poems, where the incidents are fictitious? The prosperity of no empire, nor the grandeur of no king, can so agreeably affect in the reading, as the ruin of the state of Macedon, and the distress of its unhappy prince. Such a catastrophe touches us in history as much as the destruction of Troy does in fable. Our delight in cases of this kind, is very greatly heightened, if the sufferer be some excellent person who sinks under an unworthy fortune. Scipio and Cato are both virtuous characters, but we are more deeply affected by the violent death of the one, and the ruin of the great cause he adhered to, than with the deserved triumphs and uninterrupted prosperity of the other; for terror is a passion which always produces delight when it does not press too close, and pity is a passion accompanied with pleasure, because it arises from love and social affection. Whenever we are formed by nature to any active purpose, the passion which animates us to it, is attended with delight, or a pleasure of some kind, let the subject matter be what it will; and as our Creator has designed we should be united by the bond of sympathy, he has strengthened that bond by a proportionable delight; and there most where our sympathy is most wanted, in the distresses of others. If this passion was simply painful, we would shun with the greatest care all persons and places that could excite such a passion; as, some who are so far gone in indolence as not to endure any strong impression actually do. But the case is widely different with the greater part of mankind; there is no spectacle we so eagerly pursue, as that of some uncommon and grievous calamity; so that whether the misfortune is before our eyes, or whether they are turned back to it in history, it always touches with delight. This is not an unmixed delight, but blended with no small uneasiness. The delight we have in such things, hinders us from shunning scenes of misery; and the pain we feel, prompts us to relieve ourselves in relieving those who suffer; and all this antecedent to any reasoning, by an instinct that works us to its own purposes, without our concurrence.

SECT. XV: Of the effects of TRAGEDY.

It is thus in real calamities. In imitated distresses the only difference is the pleasure resulting from the effects of imitation; for it is never so perfect, but we can perceive it is an imitation, and on that principle are somewhat pleased with it. And indeed in some cases we derive as much or more pleasure from that source than from the thing itself. But then I imagine we shall be much mistaken if we attribute any considerable part of our satisfaction in tragedy to a consideration that tragedy is a deceit, and its representations no realities. The nearer it approaches the reality, and the further it removes us from all idea of fiction, the more perfect is its power. But be its power of what kind it will, it never approaches to what it represents. Chuse a day on which to represent the most sublime and affecting tragedy we have; appoint the most favourite actors; spare no cost upon the scenes and decorations; unite the greatest efforts of poetry, painting and music; and when you have collected your audience, just at the moment when their minds are erect with expectation, let it be reported that a state criminal of high rank is on the point of being executed in the adjoining square; in a moment the emptiness of the theatre would demonstrate the comparative weakness of the imitative arts, and proclaim the triumph of the real sympathy. I believe that this notion of our having a simple pain in the reality, yet a delight in the representation, arises from hence, that we do not sufficiently distinguish what we would by no means chuse to do, from what we should be eager enough to see if it was once done. We delight in seeing things, which so far from doing, our heartiest wishes would be to see redressed. This noble capital, the pride of England and of Europe, I believe no man is so strangely wicked as to desire to see destroyed by a conflagration or an earthquake, though he should be removed himself to the greatest distance from the danger. But suppose such a fatal accident to have happened, what numbers from all parts would crowd to behold the ruins, and amongst them many who would have been content never to have seen London in its glory? Nor is it either in real or fictitious distresses, our immunity from them which produces our delight; in my own mind I can discover nothing like it. I apprehend that this mistake is owing to a sort of sophism, by which we are frequently imposed upon; it arises from our not distinguishing between what is indeed a necessary condition to our doing or suffering any thing in general, and what is the cause of some particular act. If a man kills me with a sword, it is a necessary condition to this that we should have been both of us alive before the fact; and yet it would be absurd to say, that our being both living creatures was the cause of his crime and of my death. So it is certain, that it is absolutely necessary my life should be out of any imminent hazard before I can take a delight in the sufferings of others, real or imaginary, or indeed in anything else from any cause whatsoever. But then it is a sophism to argue from thence, that this immunity is the cause of my delight either on these or on any occasions. No one can distinguish such a cause of satisfaction in his own mind I believe; nay when we do not suffer any very acute pain, nor are exposed to any imminent danger of our lives, we can feel for others, whilst we suffer ourselves; and often then most when we are softened by affliction; we see with pity even distresses which we would accept in the place of our own.

SECT. XVI: IMITATION

THE second passion belonging to society is imitation, or, if you will, a desire of imitating, and consequently a pleasure in it. This passion arises from much the same cause with sympathy. For as sympathy makes us take a concern in whatever men feel, so this affection prompts us to copy whatever they do; and consequently we have a pleasure in imitating, and in whatever belongs to imitation merely as it is such, without any intervention of the reasoning faculty, but solely from our natural constitution, which providence has framed in such a manner as to find either pleasure or delight according to the nature of the object, in whatever regards the purposes of our being. It is by imitation far more than by precept that we learn every thing; and what we learn thus we acquire not only more effectually, but more pleasantly. This forms our manners, our opinions,

our lives. It is one of the strongest links of society; it is a species of mutual compliance which all men yield to each other, without constraint to themselves, and which is extremely flattering to all. Herein it is that painting and many other agreeable arts have laid one of the principal foundations of their power. And since by its influence on our manners and our passions it is of such great consequence, I shall here venture to lay down a rule, which may inform us with a good degree of certainty when we are to attribute the power of the arts, to imitation, or to our pleasure in the skill of the imitator merely, and when to sympathy, or some other cause in conjunction with it. When the object represented in poetry or painting is such, as we could have no desire of seeing in the reality; then I may be sure that its power in poetry or painting is owing to the power of imitation, and to no cause operating in the thing itself. So it is with most of the pieces which the painters call still life. In these a cottage, a dung hill, the meanest and most ordinary utensils of the kitchen, are capable of giving us pleasure. But when the object of the painting or poem is such as we should run to see if real, let it affect us with what odd sort of sense it will, we may rely upon it, that the power of the poem or picture is more owing to the nature of the thing itself than to the mere effect of imitation, or to a consideration of the skill of the imitator however excellent. Aristotle has spoken so much and so solidly upon the force of imitation in his poetics, that it makes any further discourse upon this subject the less necessary.

SECT. XVII: AMBITION.

Although imitation is one of the great instruments used by providence in bringing our nature towards its perfection, yet if men gave themselves up to imitation entirely, and each followed the other, and so on in an eternal circle, it is easy to see that there never could be any improvement amongst them. Men must remain as brutes do, the same at the end that they are at this day, and that they were in the beginning of the world. To prevent this, God has planted in man a sense of ambition, and a satisfaction arising from the contemplation of his excelling his fellows in something deemed valuable amongst them. It is this passion that drives men to all the ways we see in use of signaling themselves, and that tends to make whatever excites in a man the idea of this distinction so very pleasant. It has been so strong as to make very miserable men take comfort that they were supreme in misery; and certain it is, that where we cannot distinguish ourselves by something excellent, we begin to take a complacency in some singular infirmities, follies, or defects of one kind or other. It is on this principle that flattery is so prevalent; for flattery is no more than what raises in a man's mind an idea of a preference which he has not. Now whatever either on good or upon bad grounds tends to raise a man in his own opinion, produces a sort of swelling and triumph that is extremely grateful to the human mind; and this swelling is never more perceived, nor operates with more force, than when without danger we are conversant with terrible objects, the mind always claiming to itself some part of the dignity and importance of the things which it contemplates. Hence proceeds what Longinus has observed of that glor,ving [need to fix] and sense of inward greatness, that always fills the reader of such passages in poets and orators as are sublime; it is what every man must have felt in himself upon such occasions.

SECT. XVIII: The RECAPITULATION.

To draw the whole of what has been said into a few distinct points. The passions which belong to self-preservation, turn on pain and danger; they are simply painful when their causes immediately affect us; they are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger, without being actually in such circumstances; this delight I have not called pleasure, because it turns on pain, and because it is different enough from any idea of positive pleasure. Whatever excites this delight, I call sublime. The passions belonging to self-preservation

are the strongest of all the passions. The second head to which the passions are referred with relation to their final cause, is society. There are two sorts of societies. The first is, the society of sex. The passion belonging to this is called love, and it contains a mixture of lust; its object is the beauty of women. The other is the great society with man and all other animals. The passion subservient to this is called likewise love, but it has no mixture of lust, and its object is beauty; which is a name I shall apply to all such qualities in things as induce in us a sense of affection and tenderness, or some other passion the most nearly resembling these. The passion of love has its rise in positive pleasure; it is, like all things which grow out of pleasure, capable of being mixed with a mode of uneasiness, that is, when an idea of its object is excited in the mind with an idea at the same time of having irretrievably lost it. This mixed sense of pleasure I have not called pain, because it turns upon actual pleasure, and because it is both in its cause and in most of its effects of a nature altogether different. Next to the general passion we have for society, to a choice in which we are directed by the pleasure we have in the object, the particular passion under this head called sympathy has the greatest extent. The nature of this passion is to put us in the place of another in whatever circumstance he is in, and to affect us in a like manner; so that this passion may, as the occasion requires, turn either on pain or pleasure; but with the modifications mentioned in some cases in sect. As to imitation and preference nothing more need be said.

SECT. XIX: The CONCLUSION.

I believed that an attempt to range and methodize some of our most leading passions, would be a good preparative to such an enquiry as we are going to make in the ensuing discourse. The passions I have mentioned are almost the only ones which it can be necessary to consider in our present design; though the variety of the passions is great, and worthy in every branch of that variety of an attentive investigation. The more accurately we search into the human mind, the stronger traces we every where find of his wisdom who made it. If a discourse on the use of the parts of the body may be considered as an hymn to the Creator; the use of the passions, which are the organs of the mind, cannot be barren of praise to him, nor unproductive to ourselves of that noble and uncommon union of science and admiration, which a contemplation of the works of infinite wisdom alone can afford to a rational mind; whilst referring to him whatever we find of right, or good, or fair in ourselves, discovering his strength and wisdom even in our own weakness and imperfection, honouring them where we discover them clearly, and adoring their profundity where we are lost in our search, we may be inquisitive without impertinence, and elevated without pride; we may be admitted, if I may dare to say so, into the counsels of the Almighty by a consideration of his works. The elevation of the mind ought to be the principal end of all our studies, which if they do not in some measure effect, they are of very little service to us. But besides this great purpose, a consideration of the rationale of our passions seems to me very necessary for all who would affect them upon solid and sure principles. It is not enough to know them in general; to affect them after a delicate manner, or to judge properly of any work designed to affect them, we should know the exact boundaries of their several jurisdictions; we should pursue them through all their variety of operations, and pierce into the inmost, and what might appear inaccessible parts of our nature,

Quod latet arcana non enarrabile fibra

[“how the secret entrails lie unfathomable.” Persius, *Satires*, V].

Without all this it is possible for a man after a confused manner sometimes to satisfy his own mind of the truth of his work; but he can never have a certain determinate rule to go by, nor can he ever make his propositions sufficiently clear to others. Poets, and orators, and painters, and those who cultivate other

branches of the liberal arts, have without this critical knowledge succeeded well in their several provinces, and will succeed; as among artificers there are many machines made and even invented without any exact knowledge of the principles they are governed by. It is, I own, not uncommon to be wrong in theory and right in practice; and we are happy that it is so. Men often act right from their feelings, who afterwards reason but ill on them from principle; but as it is impossible to avoid an attempt at such reasoning, and equally impossible to prevent its having some influence on our practice, surely it is worth taking some pains to have it just, and founded on the basis of sure experience. We might expect that the artists themselves would have been our surest guides; but the artists have been too much occupied in the practice; the philosophers have done little, and what they have done, was mostly with a view to their own schemes and systems; and as for those called critics, they have generally sought the rule of the arts in the wrong place; they sought it among poems, pictures, engravings, statues and buildings. But art can never give the rules that make an art. This is, I believe, the reason why artists in general, and poets principally, have been confined in so narrow a circle; they have been rather imitators of one another than of nature; and this with so faithful an uniformity, and to so remote an antiquity, that it is hard to say who gave the first model. Critics follow them, and therefore can do little as guides. I can judge but poorly of any thing whilst I measure it by no other standard than itself. The true standard of the arts is in every man's power; and an easy observation of the most common, sometimes of the meanest things in nature, will give the truest lights, where the greatest sagacity and industry that slights such observation, must leave us in the dark, or what is worse, amuse and mislead us by false lights. In an enquiry, it is almost everything to be once in a right road. I am satisfied I have done but little by these observations considered in themselves; and I never should have taken the pains to digest them, much less should I have ever ventured to publish them, if I was not convinced that nothing tends more to the corruption of science than to suffer it to stagnate. These waters must be troubled before they can exert their virtues. A man who works beyond the surface of things, though he may be wrong himself, yet he clears the way for others, and may chance to make even his errors subservient to the cause of truth. In the following parts I shall enquire what things they are that cause in us the affections of the sublime and beautiful, as in this I have considered the affections themselves. I only desire one favour; that no part of this discourse may be judged of by itself and independently of the rest; for I am sensible I have not disposed my materials to abide the test of a captious controversy, but of a sober and even forgiving examination; that they are not armed at all points for battle; but dressed to visit those who are willing to give a peaceful entrance to truth.

Germaine de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), from the edition printed by Richard Bentley, London, 1833; online at archive.org (full novel: <https://archive.org/stream/corinneoritaly00stauoft#page/n7/mode/2up>)

BOOK II.

CORINNE AT THE CAPITOL.

CHAPTER I.

OSWALD awoke in Rome. The dazzling sun of Italy met his first gaze, and his soul was penetrated with sensations of love and gratitude for that heaven, which seemed to smile on him in these glorious beams. He heard the bells of numerous churches ringing, discharges of cannon from various distances, as if announcing some high solemnity. He enquired the cause, and was informed that the most celebrated female in Italy was about that morning to be crowned at the Capitol,—Corinne, the poet and improvisatrice, one of the loveliest women of Rome. He asked some questions respecting this ceremony, hallowed by the names of Petarch and of Tasso: every reply he received warmly excited his curiosity.

There can be nothing more hostile to the habits and opinions of an Englishman than any great publicity given to the career of a woman. But the enthusiasm with which all imaginative talents inspire the Italians, infects, at least for the time, even strangers, who forget prejudice itself among people so lively in the expression of their sentiments.

The common populace of Rome discuss their statues, pictures, monuments, and antiquities, with much taste; and literary merit, carried to a certain height, becomes with them a national interest.

On going forth into the public resorts, Oswald found that the streets through which Corinne was to pass had been adorned for her reception. The herd, who generally throng but the path of fortune or of power, were almost in a tumult of eagerness to look on one whose soul was her

only distinction. In the present state of the Italians, the glory of the fine arts is all their fate allows them; and they appreciate genius of that order with a vivacity which might raise up a host of great men, if applause could suffice to produce them—if a hardy life, strong interest, and an independent station were not the food required to nourish thought.

Oswald walked the streets of Rome, awaiting the arrival of Corinne: he heard her named every instant; every one related some new trait, proving that she united all the talents most captivating to the fancy. One asserted that her voice was the most touching in Italy; another, that, in tragic acting, she had no peer; a third, that she danced like a nymph, and drew with equal grace and invention: all said that no one had ever written or extemporised verses so sweet; and that, in daily conversation, she displayed alternately an ease and an eloquence which fascinated all who heard her. They disputed as to which part of Italy had given her birth; some earnestly contending that she must be a Roman, or she could not speak the language with such purity. Her family name was unknown. Her first work, which had appeared five years since, bore but that of Corinne. No one could tell where she had lived, nor what she had been, before that period; and she was now nearly six and twenty. Such mystery and publicity, united in the fate of a female of whom every one spoke, yet whose real name no one knew, appeared to Nevil as among the wonders of the land he came to see. He would have judged such a woman very severely in England; but he applied not *her* social etiquettes to Italy; and the crowning of Corinne awoke in his breast the same sensation which he would have felt on reading an adventure of Ariosto's.

A burst of exquisite melody preceded the approach of the triumphal procession. How thrilling is each event that is heralded by music! A great number of Roman nobles, and not a few foreigners, came first. "Behold her reinne of admirers!" said one. "Yes," replied another; "she receives a whole world's homage, but accords her preference to none. She is rich, independent; it is even believed, from her noble air, that she is a lady of high

birth, who wishes to remain unknown."—"A divinity veiled in clouds," concluded a third. Oswald looked on the man who spoke thus : every thing betokened him a person of the humblest class ; but the natives of the South converse as naturally in poetic phrases as if they imbibed them with the air, or were inspired by the sun.

At last four spotless steeds appeared in the midst of the crowd, drawing an antequely shaped car, beside which walked a maiden band in snowy vestments. Wherever Corinne passed, perfumes were thrown upon the air ; the windows, decked with flowers and scarlet hangings, were peopled by gazers, who shouted, "Long live Corinne ! Glory to beauty and to genius !"

This emotion was general ; but, to partake it, one must lay aside English reserve and French raillery ; Nevil could not yield to the spirit of the scene, till he beheld Corinne.

Attired like Domenichino's Sibyl, an Indian shawl was twined among her lustrous black curls, a blue drapery fell over her robe of virgin white, and her whole costume was picturesque, without sufficiently varying from modern usage to appear tainted by affectation. Her attitude was noble and modest : it might, indeed, be perceived that she was content to be admired ; yet a timid air blended with her joy, and seemed to ask pardon for her triumph. The expression of her features, her eyes, her smile, created a solicitude in her favour, and made Lord Nevil her friend even before any more ardent sentiment subdued him. Her arms were transcendently beautiful ; her figure tall, and, as we frequently see among the Grecian statues, rather robust — energetically characteristic of youth and happiness. There was something inspired in her air ; yet the very manner in which she bowed her thanks for the applause she received, betrayed a natural disposition sweetly contrasting the pomp of her extraordinary situation. She gave you at the same instant the idea of a priestess of Apollo advancing towards his temple, and of a woman born to fulfil the usual duties of life with perfect simplicity ; in truth, her every gesture elicited not more wondering conjecture, than it conciliated sympathy and affection. The nearer she approached the Capitol, so

fruitful in classic associations, the more these admiring tributes increased : the raptures of the Romans, the clearness of their sky, and, above all, Corinne herself, took electric effect on Oswald. He had often, in his own land, seen statesmen drawn in triumph by the people ; but this was the first time that he had ever witnessed the tender of such honours to a woman, illustrious only in mind. Her car of victory cost no fellow mortal's tear ; nor terror nor regret could check his admiration for those fairest gifts of nature — creative fancy, sensibility, and reason. These new ideas so intensely occupied him, that he noticed none of the long-famed spots over which Corinne proceeded. At the foot of the steps leading to the Capitol the car stopped, and all her friends rushed to offer their hands : she took that of Prince Castel Forte, the nobleman most esteemed in Rome for his talents and character. Every one approved her choice. She ascended to the Capitol, whose imposing majesty seemed graciously to welcome the light footsteps of woman. The instruments sounded with fresh vigour, the cannon shook the air, and the all-conquering Sibyl entered the palace prepared for her reception.

In the centre of the hall stood the senator who was to crown Corinne, surrounded by his brothers in office ; on one side, all the cardinals and most distinguished ladies of Rome ; on the other, the members of the Academy ; while the opposite extremity was filled by some portion of the multitude who had followed Corinne. The chair destined for her was placed a step lower than that of the senator. Ere seating herself in presence of that august assembly, she complied with the custom of bending one knee to the earth : the gentle dignity of this action filled Oswald's eyes with tears, to his own surprise ; but, in the midst of all this success, it seemed as if the looks of Corinne implored the protection of a friend, with which no woman, however superior, can dispense ; and he thought how delicious it were to be the stay of her, whose sensitiveness alone could render such a prop necessary. As soon as Corinne was seated, the Roman poets recited the odes and sonnets composed for this occasion : all praised her to the highest ; but in styles that described her no more than they would have

done any other woman of genius. The same mythological images and allusions must have been addressed to such beings from the days of Sappho to our own. Already Nevil disliked this kind of incense for her: he fancied that he could that moment have drawn a truer, a more finished portrait; such, indeed, as could have belonged to no one but Corinne.

CHAPTER II.

PRINCE CASTEL FORTÉ now took up the discourse, in a manner which riveted the attention of his audience. He was a man of fifty, with a measured address and commanding carriage. The assurance which Nevil had received, that he was but the friend of Corinne, enabled him to listen with unqualified delight to what, without such safeguard, he could not, even thus early, have heard, save with a confused sense of jealousy.

The Prince read some pages of unpretending prose, singularly fitted, notwithstanding to display the spirit of Corinne. He pointed out the particular merit of her works as partly derived from her profound study of foreign literature, teaching her to unite the graphic descriptions of the South, with that observant knowledge of the human heart which appears the inheritance of those whose countries offer fewer objects of external beauty. He lauded her graceful gaiety, that, free from ironical satire, seemed to spring but from the freshness of her fancy. He strove to speak of her tenderness; but it was easily to be seen that personal regret mingled with this theme. He touched on the difficulty for a woman so endowed to meet, in real life, with any object resembling the ideal image clad in the hues of her own heart; then contented himself by depicting the impassioned feelings which kindled her poetry, — her art of seizing on the most touching charms of nature, the deepest emotions of the soul. He complimented the originality of her expressions, which, arising from her own

peculiar turn of thought, constituted an involuntary spell, untarnished by the slightest cloud of mannerism. He spoke of her eloquence as a resistless power, which must transport most those who possessed the best sense and the truest susceptibility. "Corinne," said he, "is doubtless more celebrated than any other of our countrywomen; and yet it is only her friends who can describe her. The qualities of the soul, if real, always require to be guessed; fame, as well as obscurity, might prevent their detection, if some congenial sympathy came not to our aid." He dilated on her talent as an improvisatrice, as distinct from every thing which had been known by that name in Italy. "It is not only attributable," he continued, "to the fertility of her mind, but to her deep enthusiasm for all generous sentiments: she cannot pronounce a word that recalls them, but that inexhaustible source of thought overflows at her lips in strains ever pure and harmonious; her poetry is intellectual music, such as alone can embody the fleeting and delicate reveries of the heart." He extolled the conversation of Corinne, as one who had tasted all its delights. "There," he said, "is united all that is natural, fanciful, just, sublime, powerful, and sweet, to vary the mental banquet every instant; it is what Petrarch termed —

‘ Il parlar che nell' anima si sente;’ —

a language that is felt to the heart's core, and must possess much of the vaunted Oriental magic which has been given by the ancients to Cleopatra. The scenes I have visited with her, the lays we have heard together, the pictures she has shown me, the books she has taught me to enjoy, compose my universe. In all these is some spark of her life; and were I forced to dwell afar from her, I would, at least, surround myself with them, though certain to seek in vain for her radiant traces amongst them, when once she had departed."

"Yes!" he cried, as his glance accidentally fell upon Oswald; "look on Corinne, if you may pass your days with her—if that twofold existence can be long secured to you; but behold her not, if you must be condemned to

leave her. Vainly would you seek, however long you might survive, the creative spirit which multiplied in partaking all your thoughts and feelings: you would never find it more!"

Oswald shuddered at these words; his eyes were fixed on Corinne, who listened with an agitation self-love cannot produce; it belongs only to humility and to gratitude. Castel Forte resumed the address, which a momentary weakness had suspended. He spoke of Corinne as a painter and a musician; of her declamation and her dancing. "In all these exertions," he said, "she is still herself—confined to no one mode, nor rule—but expressing, in various languages, the enchantments of Art and Imagination. I cannot flatter myself on having faithfully represented one of whom it is impossible to form an idea till she herself is known; but her presence is left to Rome, as among the chief blessings beneath its brilliant sky. Corinne is the link that binds her friends to each other. She is the motive, the interest of our lives; we rely on her worth, pride in her genius, and say to the sons of other lands, 'Look on the personation of our own fair Italy. She is what we might be, if freed from the ignorance, envy, discord, and sloth, to which fate has reduced us.' We love to contemplate her, as a rare production of our climate, and our fine arts; a relic of the past, a prophetic of the future; and when strangers, pileless of the faults born of our misfortunes, insult the country whence have arisen the planets that illumined all Europe, still we but say to them, 'Look upon Corinne.' Yes; we will follow in her track, and be such men as she is a woman; if, indeed, men can, like women, make worlds in their own hearts; if our moral temperaments, necessarily dependent on social obligations and exterior circumstances, could, like hers, owe all their light to the glorious torch of poesy!"

The instant the Prince ceased to speak, was followed by an unanimous outbreak of admiration, even from the leaders of the State, although the discourse had ended by an indirect censure on the present situation of Italy; so true it is, that there men practise a degree of liberality which, though it extends not to any improvement of their

institutions, readily pardons superior minds, for a mild dissent from existing prejudices. Castel Forte was a man of high repute in Rome. He spoke with a sagacity remarkable among a people usually wiser in actions than in words. He had not, in the affairs of life, that ability which often distinguishes an Italian; but he shrank not from the fatigue of thinking, as his happy countrymen are wont to do; trusting to arrive at all truths by intuition, even as their soil bears fruit, unaided, save by the favour of heaven.

CHAPTER III.

CORINNE rose, as the Prince finished his oration. She thanked him by an inclination of the head, which diffidently betrayed her sense of having been praised in a strain after her own heart. It was the custom for a poet crowned at the Capitol to extemporise or recite in verse, ere receiving the destined bays. Corinne sent for her chosen instrument, the lyre, more antique in form and simpler in sound than the harp: while tuning it, she was oppressed by so violent a tremor, that her voice trembled as she asked what theme she was to attempt. "The glory and welfare of Italy!" cried all near her. "Ah, yes!" she exclaimed, already sustained by her own talents; "the glory and welfare of Italy!" Then, animated by her love of country, she breathed forth thoughts to which prose or another language can do but imperfect justice.

CHANT OF CORINNE AT THE CAPITOL. *

Cradle of Letters! Mistress of the World!
Soil of the Sun! Italia! I salute thee!
How oft the human race have worn thy yoke,
The vassals of thine arms, thine arts, thy sky!

Olympus for Ausonia once was left,
And by a God. Of such a land are born
Dreams of the golden time, for there man looks
Too happy to suppose him criminal.

* For the translation of this Ode, the proprietor of the Standard Novels is indebted to the pen of Miss L. E. Landon.

By genius Rome subdued the world, then reign'd
A queen by liberty. The Roman mind
Set its own stamp upon the universe;
And, when barbarian hordes whelm'd Italy,
Then darkness was entire upon the earth.

Italia reappear'd, and with her rose
Treasures divine, brought by the wandering Greeks;
To her were then reveal'd the laws of Heaven.
Her daring children made discovery
Of a new hemisphere: Queen still she held
Thought's sceptre; but that laurell'd sceptre made
Ungrateful subjects.

Imagination gave her back the world
Which she had lost. Painters and poets shaped
Earth and Olympus, and a heaven and hell.
Her animating fire, by Genius kept,
Far better guarded than the Pagan God's,
Found not in Europe a Prometheus
To bear it from her.

And wherefore am I at the Capitol?
Why should my lowly brow receive the crown
Which Petrarch wore? which yet suspended hangs
Where Tasso's funeral cypress mournful waves:
Why? oh, my countrymen! but that you love
Glory so well, that you repay its search
Almost like its success.

Now, if you love that glory which too oft
Chooses its victims from its vanquishers,
Those which itself has crown'd; think, and be proud
Of days which saw the perish'd Arts reborn.
Your Dante! Homer of the Christian age,
The sacred poet of Faith's mysteries, —
Hero of thought, — whose gloomy genius plunged
In Styx, and pierced to hell; and whose deep soul
Was like the abyss it fathom'd.

Italia! as she was in days of power
Reviv'd in Dante: such a spirit stir'd
In old republics: bard and warrior too,
He lit the fire of action 'mid the dead,
Till 'en his shadows had more vigorous life
Than real existence; still were they pursued
By earthly memories: passions without aim
Gnaw'd at their heart, still fever'd by the past;

Yet less irrevocable seem'd that past,
Than their eternal future.

Metinks that Dante, banish'd his own soil,
Bore to imagined worlds his actual grief,
Ever his shades enquire the things of life,
As ask'd the poet of his native land;
And from his exile did he paint a hell.
In his eyes Florence set her stamp on all;
The ancient dead seem'd Tuscans like himself:
Not that his power was bounded, but his strength;
And his great mind forced all the universe
Within the circle of its thought.

A mystic chain of circles and of spheres
Led him from Hell to Purgatory; thence
From Purgatory unto Paradise:
Faithful historian of his glorious dream,
He fills with light the regions most obscure;
The world created in his triple song
Is brilliant, and complete, and animate,
Like a new planet seen within the sky.

All upon earth doth change to poetry
Beneath his voice: the objects, the ideas,
The laws, and all the strange phenomena,
Seem like a new Olympus with new Gods, —
Fancy's mythology, — which disappears
Like Pagan creeds at sight of paradise,
That sea of light, radiant with shining stars,
And love, and virtue.

The magic words of our most noble bard
Are like the prism of the universe; —
Her marvels there reflect themselves, divide,
And re-create her wonders; sounds paint hues,
And colours melt in harmony. The rhyme —
Sounding or strange, and rapid or prolong'd —
That charm of genius, triumph of high art;
Poetry's divination, which reveals
All nature's secrets, such as influence
The heart of man.

From this great work did Dante hope the end
Of his long exile; and he call'd on Fame
To be his mediator: but he died
Too soon to reap the laurels of his land.
Thus wastes the transitory life of man

In adverse fortunes ; and he glory wins,
 If some chance tide, more happy, floats to shore.
 The grave is in the port ; and destiny,
 In thousand shapes, heralds the close of life
 By a return of happiness.

Thus the ill-fated Tasso, whom your praise,
 O Romans ! 'mid his wrongs, could yet console,—
 The beautiful, the chivalric, the brave,
 Dreaming the deeds, feeling the love he sung,—
 With awe and gratitude approach'd your walls,
 As did his heroes to Jerusalem.
 They named the day to crown him ; but its eve
 Death bade him to his feast, the terrible !
 The Heaven is jealous of the Earth ; and calls
 Its favourites from the stormy waves of time.

'Twas in an age more happy and more free
 Than Tasso's, that, like Dante, Petrarch sang :
 Brave poet of Italian liberty.
 Elsewhere they know him only by his love :
 Here memories more severe aye consecrate
 His sacred name ; his country could inspire
 Even more than Laura.

His vigils gave antiquity new life ;
 Imagination was no obstacle
 To his deep studies : that creative power
 Conquer'd the future, and reveal'd the past.
 He prov'd how knowledge lends invention aid ;
 And more original his genius seem'd,
 When, like the powers eternal, it could be
 Present in every time.

Our laughing climate and our air serene
 Inspired our Ariosto : after war,
 Our many long and cruel wars, he came
 Like to a rainbow ; varied and as bright
 As that glad messenger of summer hours,
 His light, sweet gaiety is like nature's smile,
 And not the irony of man.

Raffaële, Galileo, Angelo,
 Pergolese ; you ! intrepid voyagers,
 Greedy of other lands, though Nature never
 Could yield ye one more lovely than your own ;
 Come ye, and to our poets join your fame :
 Artists, and sages, and philosophers,

Ye are, like them, the children of a sun
 Which kindles valour, concentrates the mind,
 Develops fancy, each one in its turn ;
 Which hurls content, and seems to promise all,
 Or make us all forget.

Know ye the land where orange-trees are blooming ;
 Where all heaven's rays are fertile, and with love ?
 Have you inhaled these perfumes, luxury !
 In air already so fragrant and so soft ?
 Now answer, strangers ; Nature, in your home,
 Is she as generous or as beautiful ?

Not only with vine-leaves and ears of corn
 Is Nature dress'd, but 'neath the feet of man,
 As at a sovereign's feet, she scatters flowers
 And sweet and useless plants, which, born to please,
 Disdain to serve.

Here pleasures delicate, by nature nurs'd,—
 Felt by a people who deserve to feel :—
 The simplest food suffices for their wants.
 What though her fountains flow with purple wine
 From the abundant soil, they drink them not !
 They love their sky, their arts, their monuments ;
 Their land, the ancient, and yet bright with spring ;
 Brilliant society ; refined delight :
 Coarse pleasures, fitting to a savage race,
 Suit not with them.

Here the sensation blends with the idea ;
 Life ever draws from the same fountain-head ;
 The soul, like air, expands o'er earth and heaven.
 Here Genius feels at ease ; its reveries
 Are here so gentle ; its unrest is soothed :
 For one lost aim a thousand dreams are given,
 And nature cherishes, if man oppress ;
 A gentle hand consoles, and binds the wound :
 Even for the griefs that haunt the stricken heart,
 Is comfort here : by admiration fill'd,
 For God, all goodness ; taught to penetrate
 The secret of his love ; not by brief days—
 Mysterious heralds of eternity—
 But in the fertile and majestic breast
 Of the immortal universe !

Corinne was interrupted for some moments by impetuous applause. Oswald alone joined not in the noisy transport around him. He had bowed his head on his hand, when Corinne said—

“E'en for the sorrows of the stricken heart
Is comfort here:”

he had not raised it since. Corinne observed him ; and, from his features, the colour of his hair, his dress, his height—indeed, from his whole appearance—recognised him as English. She was struck by the mourning which he wore, and his melancholy countenance. His gaze, then fixed upon herself, seemed gently to reproach her: she entered into his thoughts, and felt a wish to sympathise with him, by speaking of happiness with less reliance, and consecrating some few verses to Death in the midst of a festival. With this intention she again took up her lyre ; a few prolonged and touching tones silenced the assemblage, while thus she continued :—

Yet there are griefs which our consoling sky
May not efface : but where will grief convey
Noble and soft impressions to the soul,
As it does here ?

Elsewhere the living cannot find them space
For all their hurrying paths, and ardent hopes ;
And deserts, ruins, vacant palaces,
Leave a vast vacancy to shadows :—Rome,
Is she not now the country of the tomb ?

The Coliseum, and the obelisks—
The wonders brought from Egypt and from Grece—
From the extremity of time, here met,
From Romulus to Leo,—all are here,
Greatness attracting greatness, that one place
Might garner all that man could screen from time :
All consecrate to funeral monuments.
Our idle life is scarcely here perceived :
The silence of the living to the dead
Is homage : they endure, but we decay.

The dead alone are honour'd, and alone
Recorded still ;—our destinies obscure

Contrast the glories of our ancestors ;
Our present life leaves but the past entire,
And deep the quiet around memory :
Our trophies are the work of those no more :
Genius itself ranks 'mid th' illustrious dead.

It is Rome's secret charm to reconcile
Imagination with our long last sleep.
We are resign'd ourselves, and suffer less
For those we love. The people of the South
Paint closing life in hues less terrible
Than do the gloomy nations of the North :
The sun, like glory, even warms the grave.

The chill, the solitude of sepulchres
'Neath our fair sky, beside our funeral urns
So numerous, less haunt the frighted soul.
We deem they wait for us, yon shadowy crowd :
And from our silent city's loneliness
Down to the subterranean one below
It is a gentle passage.

The edge of grief is blunted thus, and turn'd,
Not by a harden'd heart, a wither'd soul,
But by a yet more perfect harmony,—
An air more fragrant,—blending with our life,
We yield ourselves to Nature with less fear—
Nature, whose great Creator said of old,—
“The lilies of the vale, lo ! they toil not,
And neither do they spin :
Yet the great Solomon, in all his glory,
Was not array'd like one of these.”

Oswald was so enchanted by these stanzas, that he testified his transport with a vehemence unequalled by the Romans themselves : in sooth, it was to him, rather than to her countrymen, that the second improvisation of Corinne had been addressed. The generality of Italians read poetry with a kind of monotonous chant, that destroys all effect. (3) In vain the words vary, the impression is ever the same ; because the accent is unchanged : but Corinne recited with a mobility of tone which increased the charm of its sustained harmony. It was like listening to different airs, all played on the same celestial organ.

A language so stately and sonorous, breathed by so

gentle and affecting a voice, awakened a very novel sensation in the mind of Oswald. The natural beauties of the English tongue are all melancholy; tinted by clouds, and tuned by lashing waves: but Italian, among sounds, may be compared to scarlet, among colours; its words ring like clarions of victory, and glow with all the bliss a delicious clime can shower on human hearts. When, therefore, Italian is spoken by a faltering tongue, its splendour melts, its concentrated force causes an agitation resistless as unforeseen. The intents of Nature seem defeated, her bounties useless or repulsed; and the expression of sorrow in the midst of enjoyment, surprises, touches us more deeply, than would despair itself, if sung in those northern languages, which it seems to have inspired.

CHAPTER IV.

THE senator took the crown of bays and myrtle he was to place on the brow of Corinne. She removed the shawl which had bound the ebon curls that now fell about her shoulders, and advanced with an air of pleased thankfulness, which she strove not to dissemble. Again she knelt; but not in trepidation, as at first. She had just spoken, had filled her soul with godlike images; enthusiasm had surmounted timidity; she was no longer the shrinking maid, but the inspired vestal who exultingly devoted herself to the worship of Genius.

When the chaplet was set upon her head, the musicians sent forth one of those triumphant airs which so powerfully exalt the soul. The clash of cymbals, and the flourish of trumpets, overwhelmed Corinne afresh; her eyes filled, she sunk on a seat, and covered her face. Oswald rushed from the crowd, and made a few steps towards her, but an uncontrollable embarrassment kept him silent. Corinne, taking care that he should not detect her, looked on him for some time; and when Prince Castel Forte took her hand to lead her from the Capitol, she yielded in abs-

traction, frequently turning, on various pretexts, to gaze again on Oswald. He followed her; and as she descended the steps, one of these gestures displaced her crown, which Oswald hastily raised, and presenting it, said in Italian a few words, implying that humble mortals lay at the feet of their deities the crowns they dare not place upon their brows. (4) What was his astonishment when Corinne thanked him in English, with that insular accent, which can scarce ever be acquired on the Continent: he remained motionless, till, feeling himself almost faint, he leaned against one of the basaltic lions that stand at the foot of the staircase. Corinne gazed on him again, forcibly struck by his emotion; but they led her to her car, and the whole crowd had disappeared, long ere Oswald recovered his presence of mind. Till now, he had been enchanted as with a most attractive foreigner; but that English intonation had brought back all the recollections of his country, and, as it were, naturalised in his heart the charms of Corinne. Was she English? Had she not passed many years of her life in England? He could not guess; but it was impossible that study alone could have taught her to speak thus. She must have lived in the same country with himself.

Who could tell, but that their families might have been related? perhaps he had even seen her in his childhood. There is often in the heart some innate image of the beings we are to love that lends to our first sight of them almost an air of recognition. Oswald had believed the Italians, though impassioned, too vacillating for deep or constant affection. Already had the words of Corinne given him a totally distinct view of their character. What then must he feel should he thus at once revive the remembrance of his home, and receive a new-born life, for future enjoyment, without being weaned from the past? In the midst of these reveries he found himself on the bridge of St. Angelo, which leads to the castle of that name, or rather to Adrian's tomb, which has been converted into a fortress. The silence of the scene, the pale waves of the Tiber, the moon-beams that lit up the statues, till they appeared like pallid phantoms, steadfastly watching the current of time, by which they could be influenced no more; all these ob-

jects recalled him to his habitual train of thought : he lay his hand on his breast, and felt the portrait of his father, which he always wore ; he drew it forth, and gazed on it, while the cause of the felicity he had just enjoyed but too strongly reminded him of all that long since had tempted his rebellion against his parent.

“ Ever haunting memory ! ” he cried, with revived remorse, “ too wronged and too forgiving friend ! could I have believed myself capable of feeling so much pleasure thus soon after thy loss ? but it is not thine indulgent spirit which rebukes me : thou wouldst have me happy in spite of my faults ; or may I not mistake thy mandates now uttered from above, I, who misunderstood them while thou wert yet on earth ? ”

Robert Buchanan, "The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr D. G. Rossetti", *The Contemporary Review*, 18 (October 1871), 334-350.

(Buchanan published this essay under the name Thomas Maitland)

Poems. By DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI. Fifth Edition. London: F. S. Ellis.

IF, on the occasion of any public performance of Shakspeare's great tragedy, the actors who perform the parts of Rosencranz and Guildenstern were, by a preconcerted arrangement and by means of what is technically known as "gagging," to make themselves fully as prominent as the leading character, and to indulge in soliloquies and business strictly belonging to Hamlet himself, the result would be, to say the least of it, astonishing; yet a very similar effect is produced on the unprejudiced mind when the "walking gentlemen" of the fleshly school of poetry, who bear precisely the same relation to Mr. Tennyson as Rosencranz and Guildenstern do to the Prince of Denmark in the play, obtrude their lesser identities and parade their smaller idiosyncrasies in the front rank of leading performers. In their own place, the gentlemen are interesting and useful. Pursuing still the theatrical analogy, the present drama of poetry might be cast as follows: Mr. Tennyson supporting the part of Hamlet, Mr. Matthew Arnold that of Horatio, Mr. Bailey that of Voltimand, Mr. Buchanan that of Cornelius, Messrs. Swinburne and Morris the parts of Rosencranz and Guildenstern, Mr. Rossetti that of Osric, and Mr. Robert Lytton that of "A Gentleman." It will be seen that we have left no place for Mr. Browning, who may be said, however, to play the leading character in his own peculiar fashion on alternate nights.

This may seem a frivolous and inadequate way of opening our remarks on a school of verse-writers which some people regard as possessing great merits; but in good truth, it is scarcely possible to discuss with any seriousness the pretensions with which foolish friends and small critics have surrounded the fleshly school, which, in spite of its spasmodic ramifications in the erotic direction, is merely one of the many sub-Tennysonian schools expanded to supernatural dimensions, and endeavouring by affectations all its own to overshadow its connection with the great original. In the sweep of one single poem, the weird and doubtful "Vivien," Mr. Tennyson has concentrated all the epicene force which, wearisomely expanded, constitutes the characteristic of the writers at present under consideration; and if in "Vivien" he has indicated for them the bounds of sensualism in art, he has in "Maud," in the dramatic person of the hero, afforded distinct precedent for the hysteric tone and overloaded style which is now so familiar to readers of Mr. Swinburne. The fleshliness of "Vivien" may indeed be described as the distinct quality held in common by all the members of the last sub-Tennysonian school, and it is a quality which becomes unwholesome when there is no moral or intellectual quality to temper and control it. Fully conscious of this themselves, the fleshly gentlemen have bound themselves by solemn league and covenant to extol fleshliness as the distinct and supreme end of poetic and pictorial art; to aver that poetic expression is greater than poetic thought, and by inference that the body is greater than the soul, and sound superior to sense; and that the poet, properly to develop his poetic faculty, must be an intellectual hermaphrodite, to whom the very facts of day and night are lost in a whirl of æsthetic terminology. After Mr. Tennyson has probed the depths of modern speculation in a series of commanding moods, all right and interesting in him as the reigning personage, the walking gentlemen, knowing that something of the sort is expected from all leading performers, bare their roseate bosoms and aver that *they* are creedless; the only possible question here being, if any disinterested person cares twopence

whether Rosencranz, Guildenstern, and Osric are creedless or not—their self-revelation on that score being so perfectly gratuitous? But having gone so far, it was and is too late to retreat. Rosencranz, Guildenstern, and Osric, finding it impossible to risk an individual bid for the leading business, have arranged all to play leading business together, and mutually to praise, extol, and imitate each other; and although by these measures they have fairly earned for themselves the title of the Mutual Admiration School, they have in a great measure succeeded in their object—to the general stupefaction of a British audience. It is time, therefore, to ascertain whether any of these gentlemen has actually in himself the making of a leading performer. When the *Athenæum*—once more cautious in such matters—advertised nearly every week some interesting particular about Mr. Swinburne’s health, Mr. Morris’s holiday-making, or Mr. Rossetti’s genealogy, varied with such startling statements as “We are informed that Mr. Swinburne dashed off his noble ode *at a sitting*,” or “Mr. Swinburne’s songs have already reached a second edition,” or “Good poetry seems to be in demand; the first edition of Mr. O’Shaughnessy’s poems is exhausted;” when the *Academy* informed us that “During the past year or two Mr. Swinburne has written several novels” (!), and that some review or other is to be praised for giving Mr. Rossetti’s poems “the attentive study which they demand”—when we read these things we might or might not know pretty well how and where they originated; but to a provincial eye, perhaps, the whole thing really looked like leading business. It would be scarcely worth while, however, to inquire into the pretensions of the writers on merely literary grounds, because sooner or later all literature finds its own level, whatever criticism may say or do in the matter; but it unfortunately happens in the present case that the fleshly school of verse-writers are, so to speak, public offenders, because they are diligently spreading the seeds of disease broadcast wherever they are read and understood. Their complaint too is catching, and carries off many young persons. What the complaint is, and how it works, may be seen on a very slight examination of the works of Mr. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, to whom we shall confine our attention in the present article.

Mr. Rossetti has been known for many years as a painter of exceptional powers, who, for reasons best known to himself, has shrunk from publicly exhibiting his pictures, and from allowing anything like a popular estimate to be formed of their qualities. He belongs, or is said to belong, to the so-called Pre-Raphaelite school, a school which is generally considered to exhibit much genius for colour, and great indifference to perspective. It would be unfair to judge the painter by the glimpses we have had of his works, or by the photographs which are sold of the principal paintings. Judged by the photographs, he is an artist who conceives unpleasantly, and draws ill. Like Mr. Simeon Solomon, however, with whom he seems to have many points in common, he is distinctively a colourist, and of his capabilities in colour we cannot speak, though we should guess that they are great; for if there is any good quality by which his poems are specially marked, it is a great sensitiveness to hues and tints as conveyed in poetic epithet. These qualities, which impress the casual spectator of the photographs from his pictures, are to be found abundantly among his verses. There is the same thinness and transparence of design, the same combination of the simple and the grotesque, the same morbid deviation from healthy forms of life, the same sense of weary, wasting, yet exquisite sensuality; nothing virile, nothing tender, nothing completely sane; a superfluity of extreme sensibility, of delight in beautiful forms, hues, and tints, and a deep-seated indifference to all agitating forces and agencies, all tumultuous griefs and sorrows, all the thunderous stress of life, and all the straining storm of speculation. Mr. Morris is often pure, fresh, and wholesome as his own great model; Mr. Swinburne startles us more than once by some fine flash of insight; but the mind of Mr. Rossetti is like a glassy mere, broken only by the dive of some water-bird or the hum of winged insects, and brooded over by an atmosphere of insufferable closeness, with a light blue sky above it, sultry depths mirrored within it, and a surface so thickly sown with water-lilies that it retains its glassy smoothness even in the strongest wind. Judged relatively to his poetic associates, Mr. Rossetti must be pronounced inferior to either. He cannot tell a pleasant story like Mr.

Morris, nor forge alliterative thunderbolts like Mr. Swinburne. It must be conceded, nevertheless, that he is neither so glibly imitative as the one, nor so transcendently superficial as the other.

Although he has been known for many years as a poet as well as a painter—as a painter and poet idolized by his own family and personal associates—and although he has once or twice appeared in print as a contributor to magazines, Mr. Rossetti did not formally appeal to the public until rather more than a year ago, when he published a copious volume of poems, with the announcement that the book, although it contained pieces composed at intervals during a period of many years, “included nothing which the author believes to be immature.” This work was inscribed to his brother, Mr. William Rossetti, who, having written much both in poetry and criticism, will perhaps be known to bibliographers as the editor of the worst edition of Shelley which has yet seen the light. No sooner had the work appeared than the chorus of eulogy began. “The book is satisfactory from end to end,” wrote Mr. Morris in the Academy; “I think these lyrics, with all their other merits, the most complete of their time; nor do I know what lyrics of any time are to be called *great*, if we are to deny the title to these.” On the same subject Mr. Swinburne went into a hysteria of admiration: “golden affluence,” “jewel-coloured words,” “chastity of form,” “harmonious nakedness,” “consummate fleshly sculpture,” and so on in Mr. Swinburne’s well-known manner when reviewing his friends. Other critics, with a singular similarity of phrase, followed suit. Strange to say, moreover, no one accused Mr. Rossetti of naughtiness. What had been heinous in Mr. Swinburne was majestic exquisiteness in Mr. Rossetti. Yet we question if there is anything in the unfortunate “Poems and Ballads” quite so questionable on the score of thorough nastiness as many pieces in Mr. Rossetti’s collection. Mr. Swinburne was wilder, more outrageous, more blasphemous, and his subjects were more atrocious in themselves; yet the hysterical tone slew the animalism, the furiousness of epithet lowered the sensation; and the first feeling of disgust at such themes as “Laus Veneris” and “Anactoria,” faded away into comic amazement. It was only a little mad boy letting off squibs; not a great strong man, who might be really dangerous to society. “I *will* be naughty!” screamed the little boy; but, after all, what did it matter? It is quite different, however, when a grown man, with the self-control and easy audacity of actual experience, comes forward to chronicle his amorous sensations, and, first proclaiming in a loud voice his literary maturity, and consequent responsibility, shamelessly prints and publishes such a piece of writing as this sonnet on “Nuptial Sleep”:—

*At length their long kiss severed, with sweet smart:
And as the last slow sudden drops are shed
From sparkling eaves when all the storm has fled,
So singly flagged the pulses of each heart.
Their bosoms sundered, with the opening start
Of married flowers to either side outspread
From the knit stem; yet still their mouths, burnt red,
Fawned on each other where they lay apart.*

Sleep sank them lower than the tide of dreams,
And their dreams watched them sink, and slid away.
Slowly their souls swam up again, through gleams
Of watered light and dull drowned waifs of day;
Till from some wonder of new woods and streams
He woke, and wondered more: for there she lay.

This, then, is “the golden affluence of words, the firm outline, the justice and chastity of form.” Here is a full-grown man, presumably intelligent and cultivated, putting on record for other full-grown men to read, the most secret mysteries of sexual connection, and that with so sickening a desire to reproduce the sensual mood, so careful a choice of epithet to convey mere animal sensations, that we merely shudder at the shameless nakedness. We are no purists in such matters. We hold the sensual part of our nature to be as holy as the spiritual or intellectual part, and we believe that such things must find their equivalent in all; but it is neither poetic, nor manly, nor even human, to obtrude such things as the themes of whole poems. It is simply nasty. Nasty as it is, we are very mistaken if many readers do not think it nice. English society of one kind purchases the *Day’s Doings*. English society of another kind goes into ecstasy over Mr. Solomon’s pictures—pretty pieces of morality, such as “Love dying by the breath of Lust.” There is not much to choose between the two objects of admiration, except that painters like Mr. Solomon lend actual genius to worthless subjects, and thereby produce veritable monsters—like the lovely devils that danced round Saint Anthony. Mr. Rossetti owes his so-called success to the same causes. In poems like “Nuptial Sleep,” the man who is too sensitive to exhibit his pictures, and so modest that it takes him years to make up his mind to publish his poems, parades his private sensations before a coarse public, and is gratified by their applause.

It must not be supposed that all Mr. Rossetti’s poems are made up of trash like this. Some of them are as noteworthy for delicacy of touch as others are for shamelessness of exposition. They contain some exquisite pictures of nature, occasional passages of real meaning, much beautiful phraseology, lines of peculiar sweetness, and epithets chosen with true literary cunning. But the fleshly feeling is everywhere. Sometimes, as in “The Stream’s Secret,” it is deliciously modulated, and adds greatly to our emotion of pleasure at perusing a finely-wrought poem; at other times, as in the “Last Confession,” it is fiercely held in check by the exigencies of a powerful situation and the strength of a dramatic speaker; but it is generally in the foreground, flushing the whole poem with unhealthy rose-colour, stifling the senses with overpowering sickliness, as of too much civet. Mr. Rossetti is never dramatic, never impersonal—always attitudinizing, posturing, and describing his own exquisite emotions. He is the “Blessed Damozel,” leaning over the “gold bar of heaven,” and seeing

“Time like a pulse shake fierce
Thro’ all the worlds;”

he is “heaven-born Helen, Sparta’s queen,” whose “each twin breast is an apple sweet;” he is Lilith the first wife of Adam; he is the rosy Virgin of the poem called “Ave,” and the Queen in the “Staff and Scrip;” he is “Sister Helen” melting her waxen man; he is all these, just as surely as he is Mr. Rossetti soliloquizing over Jenny in her London lodging, or the very nuptial person writing erotic sonnets to his wife. In petticoats or pantaloons, in modern times or in the middle ages, he is just Mr. Rossetti, a fleshly person, with nothing particular to tell us or teach us, with extreme self-control, a strong sense of colour, and a careful choice of diction. Amid all his “affluence of jewel-coloured words,” he has not given us one rounded and noteworthy piece of art, though his verses are all art; not one poem which is memorable for its own sake, and quite separable from the displeasing identity of the composer. The nearest approach to a perfect whole is the “Blessed Damozel,” a peculiar poem, placed first in the book, perhaps by accident, perhaps because it is a key to the poems which follow. This poem appeared in a rough shape many years ago in the *Germ*, an unwholesome periodical started by the Pre-Raphaelites, and suffered, after gasping through a few feeble numbers, to die the death of all such publications. In spite of its affected title, and of numberless affectations throughout the text, the “Blessed Damozel” has great merits of its own, and a few lines of real genius. We

have heard it described as the record of actual grief and love, or, in simple words, the apotheosis of one actually lost by the writer; but, without having any private knowledge of the circumstance of its composition, we feel that such an account of the poem is inadmissible. It does not contain one single note of sorrow. It is a “composition,” and a clever one. Read the opening stanzas:—

“The blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of water stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

“Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.”

This is a careful sketch for a picture, which, worked into actual colour by a master, might have been worth seeing. The steadiness of hand lessens as the poem proceeds, and although there are several passages of considerable power,—such as that where, far down the void,

“this earth
Spins like a fretful midge,”

or that other, describing how

“the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf,”—

the general effect is that of a queer old painting in a missal, very affected and very odd. What moved the British critic to ecstasy in this poem seems to us very sad nonsense indeed, or, if not sad nonsense, very meretricious affectation. Thus, we have seen the following verses quoted with enthusiasm, as italicised—

“And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

“From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce

Thro' all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
 Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
 The stars sang in their spheres.”

It seems to us that all these lines are very bad, with the exception of the two admirable lines ending the first verse, and that the italicised portions are quite without merit, and almost without meaning. On the whole, one feels disheartened and amazed at the poet who, in the nineteenth century, talks about “damozels,” “citherns,” and “citoles,” and addresses the mother of Christ as the “Lady Mary,”—

“With her five handmaidens, whose names
 Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
 Margaret and Rosalys.”

A suspicion is awakened that the writer is laughing at us. We hover uncertainly between picturesqueness and namby- pamby, and the effect, as Artemus Ward would express it, is “weakening to the intellect.” The thing would have been almost too much in the shape of a picture, though the workmanship might have made amends. The truth is that literature, and more particularly poetry, is in a very bad way when one art gets hold of another, and imposes upon it its conditions and limitations. In the first few verses of the “Damozel” we have the subject, or part of the subject, of a picture, and the inventor should either have painted it or left it alone altogether; and, had he done the latter, the world would have lost nothing. Poetry is something more than painting; and an idea will not become a poem because it is too smudgy for a picture.

In a short notice from a well-known pen, giving the best estimate we have seen of Mr. Rossetti’s powers as a poet, the *North American Review* offers a certain explanation for affectation such as that of Mr. Rossetti. The writer suggests that “it may probably be the expression of genuine moods of mind in natures too little comprehensive.” We would rather believe that Mr. Rossetti lacks comprehension than that he is deficient in sincerity; yet really, to paraphrase the words which Johnson applied to Thomas Sheridan, Mr. Rossetti is affected, naturally affected, but it must have taken him a great deal of trouble to become what we now see him—such an excess of affectation is not in nature.[1] There is very little writing in the volume spontaneous in the sense that some of Swinburne’s verses are spontaneous; the poems all look as if they had taken a great deal of trouble. The grotesque mediævalism of “Stratton Water” and “Sister Helen,” the mediæval classicism of “Troy Town,” the false and shallow mysticism of “Eden Bower,” are one and all essentially imitative, and must have cost the writer much pains. It is time, indeed, to point out that Mr. Rossetti is a poet possessing great powers of assimilation and some faculty for concealing the nutriment on which he feeds. Setting aside the “Vita Nuova” and the early Italian poems, which are familiar to many readers by his own excellent translations, Mr. Rossetti may be described as a writer who has yielded to an unusual extent to the complex influences of the literature surrounding him at the present moment. He has the painter’s imitative power developed in proportion to his lack of the poet’s conceiving imagination. He reproduces to a nicety the manner of an old ballad, a trick in which Mr. Swinburne is also an adept. Cultivated readers, moreover, will recognise in every one of these poems the tone of Mr. Tennyson broken up by the style of Mr. and Mrs. Browning, and disguised here and there by the eccentricities of the Pre-Raphaelites. The “Burden of Nineveh” is a philosophical edition of “Recollections of the Arabian Nights;” “A Last Confession” and “Dante at Verona” are, in the minutest trick and form of thought, suggestive of Mr. Browning; and that the sonnets have

been largely moulded and inspired by Mrs. Browning can be ascertained by any critic who will compare them with the "Sonnets from the Portuguese." Much remains, nevertheless, that is Mr. Rossetti's own. We at once recognise as his own property such passages as this:—

"I looked up
And saw where a brown-shouldered harlot leaned
Half through a tavern window thick with vine.
Some man had come behind her in the room
And caught her by her arms, and she had turned
With that coarse empty laugh on him, as now
He *munched her neck with kisses, while the vine
Crawled in her back.*

Or this:—

"As I stooped, her own lips rising there
Bubbled with brimming kisses at my mouth."

Or this:—

"Have seen your lifted silken skirt
Advertise dainties through the dirt!"

Or this:—

"What more prize than love to impel thee,
Grip and lip my limbs as I tell thee!"

Passages like these are the common stock of the walking gentlemen of the fleshly school. We cannot forbear expressing our wonder, by the way, at the kind of women whom it seems the unhappy lot of these gentlemen to encounter. We have lived as long in the world as they have, but never yet came across persons of the other sex who conduct themselves in the manner described. Females who bite, scratch, scream, bubble, munch, sweat, writhe, twist, wriggle, foam, and in a general way slaver over their lovers, must surely possess some extraordinary qualities to counteract their otherwise most offensive mode of conducting themselves. It appears, however, on examination, that their poet-lovers conduct themselves in a similar manner. They, too, bite, scratch, scream, bubble, munch, sweat, writhe, twist, wriggle, foam, and slaver, in a style frightful to hear of. Let us hope that it is only their fun, and that they don't mean half they say. At times, in reading such books as this, one cannot help wishing that things had remained for ever in the asexual state described in Mr. Darwin's great chapter on Palingenesis. We get very weary of this protracted hankering after a person of the other sex; it seems meat, drink, thought, sinew, religion for the fleshly school. There is no limit to the fleshliness, and Mr. Rossetti finds in it its own religious justification much in the same way as Holy Willie:—

"Maybe thou let'st this fleshly thorn
Perplex thy servant night and morn,
'Cause he's so gifted.

If so, thy hand must e'en be borne,
Until thou lift it."

Whether he is writing of the holy Damozel, or of the Virgin herself, or of Lilith, or Helen, or of Dante, or of Jenny the street-walker, he is fleshly all over, from the roots of his hair to the tip of his toes; never a true lover merging his identity into that of the beloved one; never spiritual, never tender; always self-conscious and æsthetic. "Nothing," says a modern writer, "in human life is so utterly remorseless—not love, not hate, not ambition, not vanity—as the artistic or æsthetic instinct morbidly developed to the suppression of conscience and feeling;" and at no time do we feel more fully impressed with this truth than after the perusal of "Jenny," in some respects the finest poem in the volume, and in all respects the poem best indicative of the true quality of the writer's humanity. It is a production which bears signs of having been suggested by Mr. Buchanan's quasi-lyrical poems, which it copies in the style of title, and particularly by "Artist and Model;" but certainly Mr. Rossetti cannot be accused, as the Scottish writer has been accused, of maudlin sentiment and affected tenderness. The two first lines are perfect:—

"Lazy laughing languid Jenny,
Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea;"

And the poem is a soliloquy of the poet—who has been spending the evening in dancing at a casino—over his partner, whom he has accompanied home to the usual style of lodgings occupied by such ladies, and who has fallen asleep with her head upon his knee, while he wonders, in a wretched pun—

"Whose person or whose purse may be
The lodestar of your reverie?"

The soliloquy is long, and in some parts beautiful, despite a very constant suspicion that we are listening to an emasculated Mr. Browning, whose whole tone and gesture, so to speak, is occasionally introduced with startling fidelity; and there are here and there glimpses of actual thought and insight, over and above the picturesque touches which belong to the writer's true profession, such as that where, at daybreak—

"lights creep in
Past the gauze curtains half drawn-to,
And *the lamp's doubled shade grows blue.*"

What we object to in this poem is not the subject, which any writer may be fairly left to choose for himself; nor anything particularly vicious in the poetic treatment of it; nor any bad blood bursting through in special passages. But the whole tone, without being more than usually coarse, seems heartless. There is not a drop of piteousness in Mr. Rossetti. He is just to the outcast, even generous; severe to the seducer; sad even at the spectacle of lust in dimity and fine ribbons. Notwithstanding all this, and a certain delicacy and refinement of treatment unusual with this poet, the poem repels and revolts us, and we like Mr. Rossetti least after its perusal. We are angry with the fleshly person at last. The "Blessed Damozel" puzzled us, the "Song of the Bower" amused us, the love-sonnet depressed and sickened us, but "Jenny," though distinguished by less special viciousness of thought and style than any of these, fairly makes us lose patience. We detect its fleshliness at a glance; we perceive that the scene was fascinating less through its human tenderness than

because it, like all the others, possessed an inherent quality of animalism. “The whole work” (“Jenny,”) writes Mr. Swinburne, “is worthy to fill its place for ever as one of the most perfect poems of an age or generation. There is just the same life-blood and breadth of poetic interest in this episode of a London street and lodging as in the song of ‘Troy Town’ and the song of ‘Eden Bower;’ just as much, and no jot more,”—to which last statement we cordially assent; for there is bad blood in all, and breadth of poetic interest in none. “Vengeance of Jenny’s case,” indeed!— when such a poet as this comes fawning over her, with tender compassion in one eye and æsthetic enjoyment in the other!

It is time that we permitted Mr. Rossetti to speak for himself, which we will do by quoting a fairly representative poem entire:—

LOVE-LILY.

“Between the hands, between the brows,
Between the lips of Love-Lily,
A spirit is born whose birth endows
My blood with fire to burn through me;
Who breathes upon my gazing eyes,
Who laughs and murmurs in mine ear,
At whose least touch my colour flies,
And whom my life grows faint to hear.

“Within the voice, within the heart,
Within the mind of Love-Lily,
A spirit is born who lifts apart
His tremulous wings and looks at me;
Who on my mouth his finger lays,
And shows, while whispering lutes confer,
That Eden of Love’s watered ways
Whose winds and spirits worship her.

“Brows, hands, and lips, heart, mind, and voice,
Kisses and words of Love-Lily,—
Oh! bid me with your joy rejoice
Till riotous longing rest in me!
Ah! let not hope be still distraught,
But find in her its gracious goal,
Whose speech Truth knows not from her thought,
Nor Love her body from her soul.”

With the exception of the usual “riotous longing,” which seems to make Mr. Rossetti a burthen to himself, there is nothing to find fault with in the extreme fleshliness of these verses, and to many people who live in the country they may even appear beautiful. Without pausing to criticise a thing so trifling—as well might we dissect a cobweb or anatomize a medusa—let us ask the reader’s attention to a peculiarity to which all the

students of the fleshly school must sooner or later give their attention—we mean the habit of accenting the last syllable in words which in ordinary speech are accented on the penultimate:—

“Between the hands, between the brows,
Between the lips of Love-Lilee!”

which may be said to give to the speaker's voice a sort of cooing tenderness just bordering on a loving whistle. Still better as an illustration are the lines:—

“Saturday night is market night
Everywhere, be it dry or wet,
And market night in the Haymar-*ket!*”

which the reader may advantageously compare with Mr. Morris's

“Then said the king
Thanked be thou; *neither for nothing*
Shalt thou this good deed do to me;”

or Mr. Swinburne's

“In either of the twain
Red roses full of rain;
She hath for bondwomen
All kinds of flowers.”

It is unnecessary to multiply examples of an affectation which disfigures all these writers—Guildenstern, Rosencranz, and Osric; who, in the same spirit which prompts the ambitious nobodies that rent London theatres in the “empty” season to make up for their dullness by fearfully original “new readings,” distinguish their attempt at leading business by affecting the construction of their grandfathers and great-grandfathers, and the accentuation of the poets of the court of James I. It is in all respects a sign of remarkable genius, from this point of view, to rhyme “was” with “grass,” “death” with “lièth,” “love” with “of,” “once” with “suns,” and so on *ad nauseam*. We are far from disputing the value of bad rhymes used occasionally to break up the monotony of verse, but the case is hard when such blunders become the rule and not the exception, when writers deliberately lay themselves out to be as archaic and affected as possible. Poetry is perfect human speech, and these archaisms are the mere fiddlededeeding of empty heads and hollow hearts. Bad as they are, they are the true indication of falser tricks and affectations which lie far deeper. They are trifles, light as air, showing how the wind blows. The soul's speech and the heart's speech are clear, simple, natural, and beautiful, and reject the meretricious tricks to which we have drawn attention.

It is on the score that these tricks and affectations have procured the professors a number of imitators, that the fleshly school deliver their formula that great poets are always to be known because their manner is immediately reproduced by small poets, and that a poet who finds few imitators is probably of inferior rank—by which they mean to infer that they themselves are very great poets indeed. It is quite true that they are imitated. On the stage, twenty provincial “stars” copy Charles Kean, while not one copies his father; there are dozens of actors who reproduce Mr. Charles Dillon, and not one who attempts to reproduce Macready. When

we take up the poems of Mr. O'Shaughnessy, [2] we are face to face with a second-hand Mr. Swinburne; when we read Mr. Payne's queer allegories, [3] we remember Mr. Morris's early stage; and every poem of Mr. Marston's [4] reminds us of Mr. Rossetti. But what is really most droll and puzzling in the matter is, that these imitators seem to have no difficulty whatever in writing nearly, if not quite, as well as their masters. It is not bad imitations they offer us, but poems which read just like the originals; the fact being that it is easy to reproduce sound when it has no strict connection with sense, and simple enough to cull phraseology not hopelessly interwoven with thought and spirit. The fact that these gentlemen are so easily imitated is the most damning proof of their inferiority. What merits they have lie with their faults on the surface, and can be caught by any young gentleman as easily as the measles, only they are rather more difficult to get rid of. All young gentlemen have animal faculties, though few have brains; and if animal faculties without brains will make poems, nothing is easier in the world. A great and good poet, however, is great and good irrespective of manner, and often in spite of manner; he is great because he brings great ideas and new light, because his thought is a revelation; and, although it is true that a great manner generally accompanies great matter, the manner of great matter is almost inimitable. The great poet is not Cowley, imitated and idolized and reproduced by every scribbler of his time; nor Pope, whose trick of style was so easily copied that to this day we cannot trace his own hand with any certainty in the *Iliad*; nor Donne, nor Sylvester, nor the Della Cruscans. Shakspeare's blank verse is the most difficult and Jonson's the most easy to imitate, of all the Elizabethan stock; and Shakspeare's verse is the best verse, because it combines the great qualities of all contemporary verse, with no individual affectations; and so perfectly does this verse, with all its splendour, intersect with the style of contemporaries *at their best*, that we would undertake to select passage after passage which would puzzle a good judge to tell which of the Elizabethans was the author— Marlowe, Beaumont, Dekkar, Marston, Webster, or Shakspeare himself. The great poet is Dante, full of the thunder of a great Idea; and Milton, unapproachable in the serene white light of thought and sumptuous wealth of style; and Shakspeare, all poets by turns, and all men in succession; and Goethe, always innovating, and ever indifferent to innovation for its own sake; and Wordsworth, clear as crystal and deep as the sea; and Tennyson, with his vivid range, far-piercing sight, and perfect speech; and Browning, great, not by virtue of his eccentricities, but because of his close intellectual grasp. Tell "Paradise Lost," the "Divine Comedy," in naked prose; do the same by *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Lear*; read Mr. Hayward's translation of "Faust;" take up the "Excursion," a great poem, though its speech is nearly prose already; turn the "Guinevere" into a mere story; reproduce Pompilia's last dying speech without a line of rhythm. Reduced to bald English, all these poems, and all great poems, lose much; but how much do they not retain? They are poems to the very roots and depths of being, poems born and delivered from the soul, and treat them as cruelly as you may, poems they will remain. So it is with all good and thorough creations, however low in their rank; so it is with the "Ballad in a Wedding" and "Clever Tom Clinch," just as much as with the "Epistle of Karsheesh," or Goethe's torso of "Prometheus;" with Shelley's "Skylark," or Alfred de Musset's "A la Lune," as well as Racine's "Athalie," Victor Hugo's "Parricide," or Hood's "Last Man." A poem is a poem, first as to the soul, next as to the form. The fleshly persons who wish to create form for its own sake are merely pronouncing their own doom. But *such*form! If the Pre-Raphaelite fervour gains ground, we shall soon have popular songs like this:—

"When winds do roar, and rains do pour,
 Hard is the life of the sailor;
 He scarcely as he reels can tell

The side-lights from the binnacle;
He looketh on the wild *water*,” &c.,

and so on, till the English speech seems the speech of raving madmen. Of a piece with other affectations is the device of a burthen, of which the fleshly persons are very fond for its own sake, quite apart from its relevancy. Thus Mr. Rossetti sings:—

“Why did you melt your waxen man,
 Sister Helen?
To-day is the third since you began.
The time was long, yet the time ran,
 Little brother.
 (*O mother, Mary mother,*
Three days to-day between Heaven and Hell.)

This burthen is repeated, with little or no alteration, through thirty-four verses, and might with as much music, and far more point, run as follows:—

Why did you melt your waxen man,
 Sister Helen?
To-day is the third since you began.
The time was long, yet the time ran,
 Little brother.
 (*O Mr. Dante Rossetti,*
What stuff is this about Heaven and Hell?)

³⁴⁹ About as much to the point is a burthen of Mr. Swinburne’s, something to the following effect:—

“We were three maidens in the green corn,
 Hey chickaleerie, the red cock and gray,
Fairer maidens were never born,
 One o’clock, two o’clock, off and away.”

We are not quite certain of the words, as we quote from memory, but we are sure our version fairly represents the original, and is quite as expressive. Productions of this sort are “silly sooth” in good earnest, though they delight some newspaper critics of the day, and are copied by young gentlemen with animal faculties morbidly developed by too much tobacco and too little exercise. Such indulgence, however, would ruin the strongest poetical constitution; and it unfortunately happens that neither masters nor pupils were naturally very healthy. In such a poem as “Eden Bower” there is not one scrap of imagination, properly so-called. It is a clever grotesque in the worst manner of Callot, unredeemed by a gleam of true poetry or humour. No good poet would have wrought into a poem the absurd tradition about Lilith; Goethe was content to glance at it merely, with a grim smile, in the great scene in the Brocken. We may remark here that poems of this unnatural and morbid kind are only tolerable when they embody a profound meaning, as do Coleridge’s “Ancient Mariner” and “Cristabel.” Not that we would insult the memory of Coleridge by comparing his exquisitely

conscientious work with this affected rubbish about “Eden Bower” and “Sister Helen,” though his influence in their composition is unmistakable. Still more unmistakable is the influence of that most unwholesome poet, Beddoes, who, with all his great powers, treated his subjects in a thoroughly insincere manner, and is now justly forgotten.

The great strong current of English poetry rolls on, ever mirroring in its bosom new prospects of fair and wholesome thought. Morbid deviations are endless and inevitable; there must be marsh and stagnant mere as well as mountain and wood. Glancing backward into the shady places of the obscure, we see the once prosperous nonsense-writers each now consigned to his own little limbo—Skelton and Gower still playing fantastic tricks with the mother-tongue; Gascoigne outlasting the applause of all, and living to see his own works buried before him; Silvester doomed to oblivion by his own fame as a translator; Carew the idol of courts, and Donne the beloved of schoolmen, both buried in the same oblivion; the fantastic Fletchers winning the wonder of collegians, and fading out through sheer poetic impotence; Cowley shaking all England with his pindarics, and perishing with them; Waller, the famous, saved from oblivion by the natural note of one single song—and so on, through league after league of a flat and desolate country which once was prosperous, till we come again to these fantastic figures of the fleshly school, with their droll mediæval garments, their funny archaic speech, and the fatal marks of literary consumption in every pale and delicate visage. Our judgment on Mr. Rossetti, to whom we in the meantime confine our judgment, is substantially that of the *North American Reviewer*, who believes that “we have in him another poetical man, and a man markedly poetical, and of a kind apparently, though not radically, different from any of our secondary writers of poetry, but that we have not in him a new poet of any weight;” and that he is “so affected, sentimental, and painfully self-conscious, that the best to be done in his case is to hope that this book of his, having unpacked his bosom of so much that is unhealthy, may have done him more good than it has given others pleasure.” Such, we say, is our opinion, which might very well be wrong, and have to undergo modification, if Mr. Rossetti was younger and less self-possessed. His “maturity” is fatal.

[1] “Why, sir, Sherry is dull, naturally dull; but it must have taken him a great deal of trouble to become what we now see him—such an excess of stupidity is not in nature.”—Boswell’s Life.

[2] “An Epic of Women.” By Arthur W. E. O’Shaughnessy. (Hotten.)

[3] “The Masque of Shadows.” By John Payne. (Pickering.)

[4] “Songtide, and other Poems.” By Philip Bourke Marston. (Ellis.)

‘80: ON RESERVE IN COMMUNICATING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE’

Part I: ‘From the example of our Lord’

1. General allusions to this mode of concealment.

THE object of the present inquiry is to ascertain, whether there is not in GOD’S dealings with mankind, a very remarkable holding back of sacred and important truths, as if the knowledge of them were injurious to persons unworthy of them. And if this be the case, it will lead to some important practical reflections. [. . .]

As the first view, we have the remarkable fact of the many generations of the heathen world, in a state of great ignorance of many things which we know to be of the very highest importance to our well-being. In the next place, we may notice the silence observed, respecting a future and eternal life in the books of Moses, as one of “the secret things which belonged unto GOD.” The fact that the Patriarchs were supported by an indefinite, but full assurance of GOD’S unfailing goodness, which could not cease with this life, will be a confirmation of this point; for it shows that it was in some measure revealed unto them, as they could bear it. In the next place, the numerous rites and types are instances of a veil thrown remarkably over moral and spiritual truth; for it is very evident that to David and others, they conveyed all the “secrets of wisdom,” and spoke of “the hands *washed* in innocency,” and “the *sacrifice* of a broken heart,” and “the *circumcision* of the heart”—but it was through a veil. The expression “I am a stranger upon earth, hide not thy commandments from me,” seem to imply, that the commandments being hid from him was the thing which the Psalmist apprehended from unworthiness; and the verse preceding, “open thou mine eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things of the law,” and indeed the whole of the 119th Psalm, indicates something great and wonderful, contained in the commandments beyond the letter. Origen says (contr. Cels. p. 197.) “if the law of Moses had not any thing of a more latent meaning, the prophet would not have said, ‘open mine eyes, that I may behold the wonderful things of thy law.’ The descriptions of the Messiah’s kingdom in the prophets were exactly of this kind, such as a carnal mind would take literally; a good man would see that God had something better for those that waited for Him.”

[. . .]

4. The teaching by Parables.

I cannot but conceive that there must have been this intention of veiling truth in the Parables. It has been said indeed that they render moral truths more plain and easy, as well as more engaging; and that this was their purpose. But is this the case? They are easy to us, as all such things seem to be when explained; but were they so at the time? Was not the Crucifixion foretold nine times to the Apostles, and yet it was said distinctly that they did not understand it, although it does not appear to us, who know the circumstances, so difficult? Does not the place where the word parable occurs, often imply that this was its meaning or effect? [. . .]

In speaking of a Parable as a veil, I would be cautious against mentioning anything as the end proposed in the operations of GOD: which, of course, to confine to one end and purpose, we may perceive would be quite impossible, as in the works of Nature; I would only say that the Parable did serve this purpose among others. Might it not be that the most spiritual and heavenly precepts were thus left to the rude and rough world, so

that the veil of the figure might still be over them, though disclosing its import to any attentive and thoughtful person; performing thus by themselves through the wonderful wisdom of GOD, that which He has commanded us to observe, in not “giving that which is holy to the dogs,” and not “casting pearls before swine.”

This view of a parable as a veil of the truth seems generally confirmed by the Fathers. A Parable is explained by Theophylact (see Schleusner) as “a dark saying.” Cyril (in the Catechesis vi.) says, “Is it only the GOD of the Old Testament who hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not? Hath not JESUS Himself said, ‘therefore I speak unto them in Parables, that seeing they might not perceive.’ Was it from hating them that he wished them not to see? Or, was it not that they were unworthy to do so, since they had closed their eyes?” and again, the same writer says, “To those who could not hear He spoke in parables, and privately expounded them to His disciples. The brightness of glory was for these; and blindness for unbelievers.”

Clement of Alexandria says (Stromata, B. vi. p. 676.) “Neither Prophecy nor our Saviour Himself promulgated the divine mysteries in such a manner that they might easily be apprehended by all persons, but discoursed in Parables. Certainly the Apostles say concerning the LORD, ‘that He spake all things in Parables, and without a Parable spake He not unto them.’” “And even in the law and prophets,” he adds, “it was He that spake to them in Parables.”

And Chrysostom in like manner. “Had He not wished them to hear and to be saved, He would have been silent, and not have spoken in Parables. But by this means He moveth them, by speaking things overshadowed and darkened.” (Homil. on St. Matt. xiii.)

5. The manner of our Lord’s Miracles,—their concealment, &c.

The miracles of our blessed LORD were the other mode of His teaching mankind and disclosing His Divinity—and will not all that has been said forcibly apply to them also? Would it not appear (if I may so express myself with reverence) that He walked about, infinitely desirous to communicate good, without any limit or measure of His own goodness or power, but yet bound, as it were, in some very wonderful manner, by the unfitness of mankind to receive Him? For as He is revealed to us as more than willing to forgive, but as it were unable to do so unless we repent; in like manner is He also as desirous to manifest Himself to us, but as it were unable to do so, unless we are fitly disposed for it. Is it not very observable that the miracles recorded were to the very utmost of the faith of the person seeking relief, but as it were unable to go beyond? By a word, and at a distance, if so asked, as in the case of the Centurion: by laying on His hand, if the request went to this, as in Jairus’s daughter: by a more speedy cure of another intervening by touching the hem of His garment, if such the belief; and He is spoken of as unable to work miracles (except a few) because they believed not: A very memorable expression, which incidentally occurs as marking the sole bounds of His power and will. [. . .]

The frequent instances of our LORD forbidding them to mention His miracles, is usually accounted for by His not wishing to call the attention of the Jews, and provoke persecution on the one hand, and that the people might not make Him a King on the other, for which on more than one occasion we have an Evangelist’s authority. But may we not see more in it than this? forbearing to work miracles before some persons seems to be like that of keeping from them what was already done. [. . .]

And if we take the instance of those miracles which appear to have been the most public, those, for instance, of the loaves and fishes, with 5000 persons on one occasion, and 4000 on the other partaking of them; even here it would appear as if there was somehow a sort of secret character about the miracle, for the multitudes

were afterwards following our SAVIOUR, because they ate the bread, but not considering the miracle; and of the disciples themselves, of whom it is said, (by some doubtless very important coincidence of expression by the four Evangelists on both occasions,) that they distributed the bread as it grew in their hands, it is said immediately after on the sea, that they considered not the miracle. It was not, therefore, even on this public occasion like an overpowering sign from heaven, but the Divine agency even here retiring in some degree from view, as in His natural providence.

Part II: The example of our Lord confirmed by His Moral Government

7. That Christ, as seen in the conduct of good men, thus conceals Himself.

There is another mode in which we may find (I would speak with reverence) the presence of JESUS CHRIST, as still in the world, and His manner of dealing with mankind, and that is in the usual conduct of good men, especially if such conduct is at all marked by any peculiarity, and such peculiarity increasing as they advance in strictness of life. And this I think we may find to be the case: for notwithstanding that a spirit of true charity has a natural desire to communicate itself, and is, of all things, the most expansive and extending, yet in all such cases, we may still perceive the indwelling of CHRIST in them, still seeking, as it were, to hide Himself; for, I think, they are all marked by an inclination, as far as it is possible, of retiring, and shrinking from public view. [. . .]

As our blessed SAVIOUR in various ways retired from the view of men, and hid His glories, so it is remarkable how little we know of the saints of GOD; of one of the most eminent of the disciples we know nothing, and next to nothing, of St. John's private history and character. Indeed, what little we do know of them is but as it were accidental, and the exception to the general rule, as in the letters of St. Paul: and even there, casual intimations greatly tend to shew our ignorance respecting them, as of the Revelations of St. Paul, of the time he spent in Arabia, and at Tarsus. Add to these, how many things are there, which more immediately respect our LORD Himself, the account of which, as St. John says, would have been more than the world could contain, yet all lost in silence. So also the things pertaining to the kingdom which were spoken for the forty days. "Verily, thou art a GOD that hidest thyself, O GOD of Israel, the SAVIOUR. (Is. xlv.)

It must have occurred to every one, with some surprise at first, how much the sacred people, having the visible presence of GOD among them, and containing, as it were, the eternal destinies of mankind, were overlooked by, and unknown to, the more polished and powerful nations of the world. Gibbon has not failed to take hold of this circumstance. And, in like manner, how little Christianity was noticed or known to heathen writers at a time when it was secretly changing the whole face of the world, the salt of the earth, and on which the earth depended for its existence. There may be something analogous to this in cases of unknown individuals still. And all such are examples of what Aristotle says of virtuous principle, "[ei gar kai to ogko mikron est, dunamei kai timioteti poly mallon hyperechei panton],"

"though in external appearance it be but small, yet, in power and worth, it is very far indeed superior to all things." (Ethics, b. x. c. vii. ad finem.) In the second place, there is another circumstance, which would tend to produce the same effect, viz. that reserve, or retiring delicacy, which exists naturally in a good man, unless injured by external motives, and which is of course the teaching of GOD through him. Something of this kind always accompanies all strong and deep feeling, so much so that indications of it have been considered the characteristic of genuine poetry, as distinguishing it from that which is only fictitious or poetic feeling." It is

the very protection of all sacred and virtuous principle, and which, like the bloom which indicates life and freshness, when once lost cannot be restored. Which is thus expressed in a Latin hymn;

“Se sub serenis vultibus

Austera virtus occultit:

Timet videri; ne suum,

Dum prodit, amittat decus.”

Paris. Brev. Comm. Mul.

Such a reserve on other subjects of sublime or delicate feeling is only a type of the same in religion; where, of course, from the very nature of the subject, it must be much greater, inasmuch as it comprehends all feelings and all conduct which are directed to Him who is invisible, and who reads the language of the heart, and to whom silence may often best speak. Every thing which has GOD for its end gives rise to feelings which do not admit of expression. This seems to be implied in the difference which Aristotle speaks of, when he says there are objects which are worthy of higher feelings than praise can express, and such we look upon with honour and veneration. We do, indeed, often speak of such with words of praise, as we do of the Supreme Being, but in so doing we stand upon lower ground, and rather turn to each other than to Him, and introduce relation and comparison, which necessarily must be drawn from human and inferior objects: but we then descend from the higher, but silent, impressions of awe, veneration, and wonder.

‘87: ON RESERVE IN COMMUNICATING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE’:

Part V: The Principle Opposed to Certain Modern Religious Opinions

7. On eloquent preaching and delivery.

There is another important point in which the modern system is opposed to Scripture in breaking the spirit of reserve, viz., in attaching so great a value to preaching as to disparage Prayer and Sacraments in comparison. According to this the Church of GOD would be the House of Preaching; but Scripture calls it the House of Prayer. But with regard to the subject of preaching altogether, it is, in the present day, taken for granted, that eloquence in speech is the most powerful means of promoting religion in the world. But if this be the vase, it occurs to one as remarkable, that there is no intimation of this in Scripture: perhaps no single expression can be found in any part of it that implies it: there is no recommendation of rhetoric in precept, or example, or prophecy. There is no instance of it; no part of Scripture itself appears in this shape, as the remains of what was delivered with powerful eloquence. Many parts of it consist of poetry, none of oratory; and it is remarkable that the former partakes more of this reserve, the latter less so. It speaks of instruction, “precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little,” but never of powerful appeals of speech. The great teacher of the Gentiles, in whom we would most of all have expected to find it, was “weak in bodily presence, and in speech contemptible;” and rendered so, it is supposed, by “a thorn in the flesh.” Whereas, it would be thought by many now, that the great requisites for a successful minister are a powerful bodily presence and eloquent speech. Indeed, St. Paul says, that the effect of the words of men’s wisdom would be to render the Cross of CHRIST of none effect. It is, moreover, observable, that in Scripture all the words denoting a minister of the Gospel throw us back on the commission. Such, for instance, is the word “Apostle,” or “the Sent,” which title is repeated with a remarkable frequency and emphasis, and united, in one instance, with the

awful and high expression, "As my FATHER hath sent me, even so I send you." And the word "preaching," as now used, has a meaning attached to it derived from modern notions, which we shall not find in Scripture. "A preacher," indeed, properly conveys the same idea as "Apostle," and really signifies the same thing—"a herald;" for, of course, all the office of a herald depends on him that sent him, not so much on himself, or his mode of delivering his message. All other words, in like manner adopted in the Church, speak the same; they all designate him as one *ministering* or *servng* at GOD'S altar, not as one whose first object is to be useful to men; such, for instance, are the appellations of *diaconus*, *sacerdos*. It is curious that our word "minister," implying also the same, comes to be commonly used in the other sense, being applied, like that of preacher, to self-created teachers. Thus do men's opinions invest sacred appellations with new meaning, according to the change in their own views.

If people in general were now asked what was the most powerful means of advancing the cause of religion in the world, we should be told that it was eloquence of speech or preaching: and the excellency of speech we know consists in delivery; that is the first, the second, and the third requisite. Whereas, if we were to judge from Holy Scripture, of what were the best means of promoting Christianity in the world, we should say obedience; and if we were to be asked the second, we should say obedience; and if we were to be asked the third, we should say obedience. And it is evident, that if the spirit of obedience exists, simple and calm statement of truth will go far. Not that we would be thought entirely to depreciate preaching as a mode of doing good; it may be necessary in a weak and languishing state; but it is the characteristic of this system as opposed to that of the Church, and we far the undue exaltation of an instrument which Scripture, to say the least, has never recommended. And, indeed, if from Revelation we turn to the great teachers of morals which have been in the world, we shall be surprised to find how little they esteemed it useful for their purpose. The exceeding jealous apprehension of rhetoric which Socrates evinces is remarkable, as shown throughout the *Gorgias*. Nor does it ever seem to have occurred to the sages of old, as a means of promoting morality; and yet some of them, as Pythagoras and Socrates, made this purpose, *viz.*, that of improving the principles of men, the object of their lives: and the former was remarkable for his mysterious discipline, and the silence he imposed; the latter for a mode of questioning, which may be considered as entirely an instance of this kind of reserve in teaching.

Part VI: The System of the Church, One of Reserve

8. Untenable objections on the ground of our present position.

But there are some objections to this treatise, of a very obvious and simple kind, which it is difficult to know how to answer, as they arise from a strange misapprehension *in limine* of the nature of the subject: objections which, as was stated before, are necessarily implied in the very word revelation. It is thought, for instance, that the command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel unto every creature," is an insurmountable objection to the whole argument. Whereas, it should be considered, that the whole matter under consideration is, not whether the Gospel is to be preached or not, for of course there could be no doubt among Christians on that subject, but respecting the most effectual mode of preaching it: without taking this for granted as the first axiom among Christians, *viz.* that the Gospel is to be preached, the whole inquiry has no meaning.

With rather more appearance of reason it is alleged, that our LORD'S conduct is no example for us in this case; as He has said, "what I tell you in the ear, that preach ye on the housetops;" and "men do not light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." Now if there was any weight in these passages against this reserve, it would be merely that of one Scripture

expression opposed to another; for there are several commands in the same discourse of an opposite character, and therefore of course they admit of explanation without contradicting each other. The obvious meaning of these passages of course is “Think not that My kingdom is to be confined, as now it is, to you few alone, it is to be preached to all the world;” and such a declaration evidently does not interfere with this principle of holy reserve, as the guide and mode of doing this most sincerely and effectually. And indeed to the latter text it is added, as if showing us the way by which we were to extend the truth, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works,” as Chrysostom says, not of course that they were to display their works in any way, but that if they keep the fire burning within them, it necessarily must shine. And besides which it appears, on many occasions, when expressions of this kind are used, that they have a reference also to the day of Judgment; as if it had been said, “Wonder not that My ways are so much in secret, and that I require your works also to be done so much in secret, and unlike those of the Pharisees; a time is coming when every thing whatever shall be publicly made known, to all men and angels.” As if it were in some measure an explanation given, that that great manifestation will be a counterpart to this reserve.

But that these expressions respecting the general knowledge of the Gospel throughout the world, do in no way affect this rule of reserve, will be evident if we consider the various periods of the Divine economy as various manifestations of CHRIST. And it will be easily perceived that they are all characterized by this same law. First of all the term manifestation is applied to our LORD’S appearing in the flesh; it is applied to Him at His birth; it is applied to the coming and calling of the Gentiles; it is applied to the Presentation in the temple; it is applied to our LORD at His Baptism: and to the first miracle He performed in Cana of Galilee. It is applied to Him more especially in His miracles and teaching. All these we celebrate in the Epiphany, as will be seen in the successive Gospels for that season; but how secretly and mysteriously were they all conducted? All these are manifestations of GOD seen in the flesh, our Immanuel. And all these are with this reserve. In like manner the preach-ing of the Gospel, and the extension of the Kingdom, are more fully manifestations of GOD; but as in the former cases CHRIST was known and acknowledged but by a very few, notwithstanding those manifestations of Himself; so is it now. It is evident that in some sense even now the manifestation of Himself must be according to some law of exceeding reserve and secrecy, for our LORD has said that if any man will keep His commandments He will love him, and will manifest Himself unto him; that He would “manifest Himself to His disciples, and not unto the world.” Now as it is too obvious that many do not keep His commandments, therefore to many He is not manifested. So that to us all, even now our LORD observes this rule of concealing Himself even in His manifestations; and therefore all His manifestations in His Church are ways of reserve.

(Dedication) TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

TRUE PHILOSOPHER AND INSPIRED POET
WHO BY THE SPECIAL GIFT AND CALLING OF ALMIGHTY GOD
WHETHER HE SANG OF MAN OR OF NATURE
FAILED NOT TO LIFT UP MEN'S HEARTS TO HOLY THINGS
NOR EVER CEASED TO CHAMPION THE CAUSE
OF THE POOR AND SIMPLE
AND SO IN PERILOUS TIMES WAS RAISED UP
TO BE A CHIEF MINISTER
NOT ONLY OF SWEETEST POETRY
BUT ALSO OF HIGH AND SACRED TRUTH
THIS TRIBUTE, SLIGHT THOUGH IT BE, IS OFFERED
BY ONE OF THE MULTITUDE WHO FEEL EVER INDEBTED
FOR THE IMMORTAL TREASURE OF HIS SPLENDID POEMS
IN TESTIMONY OF
RESPECT, AFFECTION, AND GRATITUDE

TO THE READER

There are many pleas which I might naturally put forward in this Introduction in order to win a kindly criticism for this slight work of mine; but I see that I have urged nearly all of them in my Inaugural Lecture. Yet I confess there is one thing which I did not anticipate. I did not foresee that in these last few years it would be perils threatening the Church, more than perils threatening the State which would withdraw the minds of us all from the delights of quiet literary study. Yet so it has been, and had I not been encouraged by the opinion of those to whose judgement I chiefly defer on such a point that there is a real possibility that discussions on poetry may not be without profit even in the sphere of religion, I should neither at the outset have undertaken the task of delivering these lectures, nor have decided now to publish them.

I fear too, that I may be blamed for undue delay in their publication: but they needed long and careful revision: and if at length they are free—would that I could think so—of any serious blemishes, I should wish my readers to give the whole credit of that to a dear friend, well skilled himself in these literary studies, who has been generous enough to burden a life which has tasks enough of its own with the further task of correcting my mistakes.

[. . .]

VOLUME 1

The mind indeed, oppressed and overcome by a crowd of great thoughts, pressing in upon it at one and the same 'time, knew not where to turn, and sought for some such relief and solace for itself as tears give to the worn-out body. And this is to feel the same craving as I ascribed to men torn by violent passion; but there was this difference, the latter shrunk, through shame, from any speech: the former feeling is higher and nobler, and therefore is neither able nor willing to be expressed in the speech of daily life.

I say therefore that that Almighty Power, which governs and harmonizes, not heaven and earth only, but also the hearts of men, has furnished amplest comfort for sufferers of either kind in the gift of Poetry. I will not

now take pains to consider what Poetry fully means: even were I able to define it exactly, this is not the fitting opportunity: there are two points only, and points which no one will traverse, which I should wish to be allowed to assume as axiomatic; the first, that Poetry, of whatever kind, is, in one way or other, closely associated with measure and a definite rhythm of sound: the second, that its chief aim is to recall, to renew, and bring vividly before us pictures of absent objects: partly it has to draw out and bring to light things cognate or similar to each object it represents, however slight the connexion may be; partly it has to systematize and explain the connexion between them: in a word, it is the handmaid to Imagination and Fancy. In both of these processes it exhibits, assuredly, wonderful efficacy in soothing men's emotions and steadying the balance of their mind. For while we linger over language and rhythm, it occupies our minds and diverts them from cares and troubles: when, further, it gives play to Imagination, summons before us the past, forecasts the future, in brief, paints all things in the hues which the mind itself desires, we feel that it is sparing and merciful to the emotions that seethe within us, and that, for a while, we enjoy at least that solace which Dido once fruitlessly craved, to her woe:

a transient grace
To give this madness breathing-space.¹

But how can the needs of modest reserve, and that becoming shrinking from publicity before noticed, be better served than if a troubled or enthusiastic spirit is able to express its wishes by those indirect methods best known to poets? At all events, it is remarkable how felicitous are the outlets which minds moved by strong excitement, and aspiring by a kind of blind impulse to high ideals, have sometimes found for themselves, by following the leadings of measure and rhythm, as they first offered, like a labyrinthine clue. They needed, in fact, some clue to guide them amid a thousand paths to take the right, and this clue, as every one can see, scansion and measure, simply in themselves, are well able to supply.

Let us therefore deem the glorious art of Poetry a kind of medicine divinely bestowed upon man: which gives healing relief to secret mental emotion, yet without detriment to modest reserve: and, while giving scope to enthusiasm, yet rules it with order and due control. But while all unanimously acclaim its eminent efficacy in this regard, it has occurred to no one, as far as I know, to make use of this special feature as the starting-point for explaining the origin of Poetry, and as the means of dividing it into its various branches. Yet I think both that this can be done and done with advantage. And therefore I have decided, with such care and accuracy as in me lie, to make the attempt. The road is clear then, gentlemen, for me to develop my views such as they are, and commend them to your kind indulgence: I have myself experienced that indulgence on many occasions in the past, and it will, I know, never be denied to any one who may err simply through the failings of natural ability, not for lack of taking pains: and I earnestly beg and pray you to hear the speaker and to judge of what is said, with fair and generous mind.

[. . .]

VOLUME 2

Since it is clear, or at least a probable hypothesis, that in the highest of all interests, on which alone depends the final happiness of the race of man, poetry was providentially destined to prepare the way for Revealed Truth itself, and to guide and shape men's minds for reception of still nobler teaching, it is consistent to see the same principle at work in what I may call less important departments of its influence I cling to the belief that, in each several age of the world, in each several region of the earth, true and genuine Poetry has, by its silent influence, fostered sincere and grave piety. We shall not readily find an instance of any state, provided indeed it enjoy the

advantage of stable law and morality, which has changed its existing religious belief for a more serious and holier creed, unless the tone of its favourite poets has first undergone a change. And assuredly, wherever religion has been weakened, there men fall back into the condition in which our ancestors were before embracing Christianity. There is no reason, then, why they should not be raised gradually to a better life by the same means and method, namely, by a new order of Poetry.

For instance (to keep to our own country), remember that renowned circle of writers who flourished among ourselves in the time of Elizabeth. Was not the tone and temper of poets and of poetry such as, even though the writers were unconscious of it, exactly accorded with the healthier religious spirit which was destined to prevail in the reign of Charles? To particularize—Shakespeare, the greatest of them all, the delight of all the world, especially of young England, did he effect nothing, who sometimes by jest, sometimes by bitter satire, lashed chiefly those very mischiefs which, in the age immediately following, were to work such, fatal harm in our State? who always seems to be in his best and happiest mood when some hypocrite in religion or some disloyal subject is being put to shame. And did not the youth who grew up in studious love of Spenser enter with well-prepared minds into the contest with those turbulent foes who were wont to assail royal ladies and priests of religion with insult and abuse?

I say nothing of another fact, which nevertheless must have had great influence; on the one side we see men who estimate all things after a certain inborn sense of right and fitting; and, on the other, those who, like all the Epicurean school, look for some visible and material gain from every action. Now the noble poems of Shakespeare and Spenser had not merely taught men to shun the multitude, but, much more important, lifted their minds to piety and religion: for each of them always tests what can be seen by reference to a standard of heavenly truth, whether he is treating of the deeds and affairs of men or the splendid charm of earth and sky: and this has always been the chief aim of the Catholic Church, though after her own mystical and lofty fashion. And so, in this respect also I should hold that splendid harvest of great poems to have led the way to a sounder religious belief.

Thus much as to the fact itself: let us now briefly consider the causes of it. For it is hard to believe that these two—Poetry and Theology—would have proved such true allies unless there was a hidden tie of kinship between them; nor could we possibly place a nobler crown upon our whole work, than by briefly developing the essential principle and quality which they have in common.

And here, as, so often before, we must go back to the very beginning and foundation of all Poetry. Our conclusion was, that this divine art essentially consisted in a power of healing and restoring overburdened and passionate minds. It follows that the more deeply any feeling penetrates human affections, and the more permanently it influences them, the closer are its relationships and associations with Poetry. Now, partly the very nature of religion in itself, partly the actual confession of all who can be supposed to have the faintest sense of true piety, impress on us the fact that nothing takes such entire possession of the human heart, and, in a way, concentrates its feeling, as the thought of God and an eternity to come: nowhere is our feeble mortal nature more conscious of its helplessness; nothing so powerfully impels it, sadly and anxiously, to look round on all sides for remedy and relief. As a result of this, Religion freely and gladly avails itself of every comfort and assistance which Poetry may afford: such as the regularity, the modulations, the changes of rhythm; the use of language sometimes restrained, sometimes eager and passionate; and all those other methods which all men feel after, but only a few can express. Moreover, a true and holy religion will turn such aids to the fullest account, because it, most of all, feels itself overwhelmed in the presence of the boundless vastness of the Universe: and this is so both when in early days, before Truth itself was fully revealed, simple untrained races were being taught by some dim outlines and types, and when more advanced believers are being trained to find utterance and language worthy to express their gratitude for God's great mercies to them.

Moreover, from this common weakness there springs a common use of this external world and of all objects which appeal to the senses. And in this regard it is marvellous how Piety and Poetry are able to help each other. For, while Religion seeks out, as I said, on all sides, not merely language but also anything which may perform the office of language and help to express the emotions of the soul; what aid can be imagined more grateful and more timely than the presence of Poetry, which leads men to the secret sources of Nature, and supplies a rich wealth of similes whereby a pious mind may supply and remedy, in some sort, its powerlessness of speech; and may express many things more touchingly, many things more seriously and weightily, all things more truly, than had been possible without this aid? Conversely, should we ask how, pre-eminently, 'came honour and renown to prophetic bards and their poems,'² it is Religion that has most to be thanked for this. For, once let that magic wand, as the phrase goes, touch any region of Nature, forthwith all that before seemed secular and profane is illumined with a new and celestial light: men come to realize that the various images and similes of things, and all other poetic charms, are not merely the play of a keen and clever mind, nor to be put down as empty fancies: but rather they guide us by gentle hints and no uncertain signs, to the very utterances of Nature, or we may more truly say, of the Author of Nature. And thus it has come to pass, that great and pre-eminent poets have almost been ranked as the representatives of religion, and their sphere has been treated with religious reverence. In short, Poetry lends Religion her wealth of symbols and similes; Religion restores these again to Poetry, clothed with so splendid a radiance that they appear to be no longer merely symbols, but to partake (I might almost say) of the nature of sacraments.

There is, too, another strong tie of kinship which binds these two together, in that each is controlled by a tone of modest and religious reserve. For, on the one hand, all who carefully try to imitate Nature are forced to observe a certain restraint and reserve: at least thus far, that, like her, they approach each stage of beauty by a quiet and well-ordered movement, not suddenly or, to use a mathematical phrase, *per saltum* (as do those who have no scruple in appearing boldly in public); and, on the other hand, the whole principle of piety, such at least as is wisely governed, is ordered by the rule divinely laid down in Holy Scripture, that things of highest worth should, for the most part, not be offered to listless and unprepared minds; but only be brought into the light when the eyes of those who gaze on them have been disciplined and purified. Thus the controlling Power which tempers and orders all things has compelled each, by a kind of decree, not to permit any one to have full fruition of the beautiful form and features of Truth, except his devotion be such as leads him to take zealous pains to search her out. Certainly no one who has been trained in this principle from his earliest years and into whose mind it has sunk deeply will ever allow himself to expose the sacred mysteries either of Nature or Religion to public view without regard to the temper and training of his hearers. He would rather be charged with obscurity than pour forth all truths, secret and open alike, without restraint; he would rather be criticized as wanting in ability than wanting in reserve.

Lastly, both in Poetry and in Religion, an indefinably tender and keen feeling for what is past or out of sight or yet to come, will ever assert and claim a high place of honour for itself. For those who, from their very heart, either burst into poetry, or seek the Deity in prayer, must needs ever cherish with their whole spirit the vision of something more beautiful, greater and more lovable, than all that mortal eye can see. Thus the very practice and cultivation of Poetry will be found to possess, in some sort the power of guiding and composing the mind to worship and prayer: provided indeed the poems contain nothing hurtful either to religion or morality.

I think we have now shown ample reason for believing that, since the relationships between Poetry and Religion are so close and so varied, it was by no mere accident, but by divine providence, that the former has often paved and prepared the way for the latter. And it follows that whatever is wont to corrupt and undermine Religion will to a great degree correspond with that which injures and degrades poets and poetry. For men may either praise in their poems things unworthy: and this may be compared with the error of those who make gods

of earthly and perishable things: or they may praise worthy things not whole-heartedly, but rather out of imitation and fashion: and this is, as you know, the most discreditable of all faults in matters of piety or religion. Such men are called hypocrites, the term being borrowed from the stage: and hence we may infer that as these have only the empty show of virtue, so the others have only an empty form of Poetry, and that each is very far indeed from the reality.

Now as the faults in the two are so much alike, we may well consider whether the remedy will not be much the same in each case. In each the most important precept is this: be on your guard against the belief that anything is effected by mere admiration, without effort and action on your own part. No poet will ever be great who does not constantly spend time and toil in studying the beauty of earth and sky so as to make every detail of the whole bear upon the object, of his own love and enthusiasm: nor will any one make the slightest progress in holiness and piety who is content with the empty praises of good books or good men and makes no attempt to imitate them in his own life. In the second place, when a man has once chosen the field of work for which his true; bent best fits him, let him keep bravely and persistently to it; let him not, by restlessly flitting from subject to subject, waste his powers and fail of all result: and, most important of all, let him not stain good with evil, pure with impure. These are the mottoes for those who aim either at being wise men in life or at winning renown in literature as poets. To both alike will apply the saying, ‘put your whole heart into what you are doing’: let it be something simple and clearly defined, something for which eye and mind will be on the watch at all times.

But on so well known a theme I am afraid that I may easily weary you by saying too much, and, indeed, I am under some apprehension that the same criticism may be made upon the greater part of these lectures. And so, at length to place some sort of crown upon the whole work, and at the same time not to end without a word of happy augury and a kindly hope—that would indeed be very unfitting in one whom, unworthy as he is, you have so highly honoured and with whose imperfect performance you have borne so indulgently—this one thing I desire to impress upon, and commend to all my younger hearers,

Only then will Poetry be fitly followed and studied, when those who love it remember that it is a gift to mankind, given that, like a “high-bora handmaid, it may wait upon and minister to true Religion; and therefore it is to be honoured, not with lip-service, but really and truly, with all modesty, constancy, and purity. On this wholly depends the hope we venture to cherish to-day, that, in years to come, that deeper loftier note of Poetry which has for so many years been sounded in our ears may have good fruit and issue to the happy increase of those studies which are peculiarly termed Divine. May God grant, if this may perchance be His own will, that it be not hindered, even in the smallest degree by fault or failure on the part of any one of us!

[*The Badger*]

The badger grunting on his woodland track
With shaggy hide and sharp nose scrowed with black
Roots in the bushes and the woods and makes
A great hugh burrow in the ferns and brakes
With nose on ground he runs a awkward pace
And anything will beat him in the race
The shepherds dog will run him to his den
Followed and hooted by the dogs and men
The woodman when the hunting comes about
Go round at night to stop the foxes out 10
And hurrying through the bushes ferns and brakes
Nor sees the many hol[e]s the badger makes
And often through the bushes to the chin
Breaks the old holes and tumbles headlong in

When midnight comes a host of dogs and men
Go out and track the badger to his den
And put a sack within the hole and lye
Till the old grunting badger passes bye
He comes and hears they let the strongest loose
The old fox hears the noise and drops the goose 20
The poacher shoots and hurrys from the cry
And the old hare half wounded buzzes bye
They get a forked stick to bear him down
And clapt the dogs and bore him to the town
And bait him all the day with many dogs
And laugh and shout and fright the scampering hogs
He runs along and bites at all he meets
They shout and hollo down the noisey streets

[continued...]

He turns about to face the loud uproar
 And drives the rebels to their very doors 30
 The frequent stone is hurled where ere they go
 When badgers fight and every ones a foe
 The dogs are clapt and urged to join the fray
 The badger turns and drives them all away
 Though scar[c]ely half as big dimute and small
 He fights with dogs for hours and beats them all
 The heavy mastiff savage in the fray
 Lies down and licks his feet and turns away
 The bull dog knows his match and waxes cold
 The badger grins and never leaves his hold 40
 He drive[s] the crowd and follows at their heels
 And bites them through the drunkard swears and reels

 The frighted women takes the boys away
 The blackguard laughs and hurrys on the fray
 He trys to reach the woods a awkward race
 But sticks and cudgels quickly stop the chace
 He turns agen and drives the noisey crowd
 And beats the many dogs in noises loud
 He drives away and beats them every one
 And then they loose them all and set them on 50
 He falls as dead and kicked by boys and men
 Then starts and grins and drives the crowd agen
 Till kicked and torn and beaten out he lies
 And leaves his hold and cackles groans and dies

To a Fallen Elm

Old Elm that murmured in our chimney top
 The sweetest anthem autumn ever made
 And into mellow whispering calms would drop
 When showers fell on thy many colored shade
 And when dark tempests mimic thunder made
 While darkness came as it would strangle light
 With the black tempest of a winter night
 That rocked thee like a cradle to thy root
 How did I love to hear the winds upbraid
 Thy strength without while all within was mute 10

It seasoned comfort to our hearts desire
We felt thy kind protection like a friend
And pitched our chairs up closer to the fire
Enjoying comforts that was never penned

Old favourite tree thoust seen times changes lower
But change till now did never come to thee
For time beheld thee as his sacred dower
And nature claimed thee her domestic tree
Storms came and shook thee with a living power
Yet stedfast to thy home thy roots hath been 20
Summers of thirst parched round thy homely bower
Till earth grew iron—still thy leaves was green
The children sought thee in thy summer shade
And made their play house rings of sticks and stone
The mavis sang and felt himself alone
While in thy leaves his early nest was made
And I did feel his happiness mine own
Nought heeding that our friendship was betrayed

Friend not inanimate—tho stocks and stones
There are and many clothed in flesh and bones 30
Thou ownd a language by which hearts are stirred
Deeper than by the attribute of words
Thine spoke a feeling known in every tongue
Language of pity and the force of wrong
What cant asumes what hypocrites may dare
Speaks home to truth and shows it what they are

I see a picture that thy fate displays
And learn a lesson from thy destiny
Self interest saw thee stand in freedoms ways
So thy old shadow must a tyrant be 40
Thoust heard the knave abusing those in power
Bawl freedom loud and then oppress the free
Thoust sheltered hypocrites in many a shower
That when in power would never shelter thee
Thoust heard the knave supply his canting powers
With wrongs illusions when he wanted friends
That bawled for shelter when he lived in showers
And when clouds vanished made thy shade amends

With axe at root he felled thee to the ground
And barked of freedom—O I hate that sound 50

It grows the cant terms of enslaving tools
To wrong another by the name of right
It grows a liscence with oer bearing fools
To cheat plain honesty by force of might
Thus came enclosure—ruin was her guide
But freedoms clapping hands enjoyed the sight
Tho comforts cottage soon was thrust aside
And workhouse prisons raised upon the scite
Een natures dwelling far away from men
The common heath became the spoilers prey 60
The rabbit had not where to make his den
And labours only cow was drove away
No matter—wrong was right and right was wrong
And freedoms brawl was sanction to the song

Such was thy ruin music making Elm
The rights of freedom was to injure thine
As thou wert served so would they overwhelm
In freedoms name the little that is mine
And these are knaves that brawl for better laws
And cant of tyranny in stronger powers 70
Who glut their vile unsatiated maws
And freedoms birthright from the weak devours

Felicia Hemans, 'Properzia Rossi' (1828)

—Tell me no more, no more
Of my soul's lofty gifts! Are they not vain
To quench its haunting thirst for happiness?
Have I not lov'd, and striven, and fail'd to bind
One true heart unto me, whereon my own
Might find a resting-place, a home for all
Its burden of affections? I depart,
Unknown, tho' Fame goes with me; I must leave
The earth unknown. Yet it may be that death
Shall give my name a power to win such tears
As would have made life precious.

I.

ONE dream of passion and of beauty more!
And in its bright fulfillment let me pour
My soul away! Let earth retain a trace
Of that which lit my being, tho' its race
Might have been loftier far.—Yet one more dream!
From my deep spirit one victorious gleam

Ere I depart! For thee alone, for thee!
May this last work, this farewell triumph be,—
Thou, lov'd so vainly! I would leave enshrined
Something immortal of my heart and mind,
That yet may speak to thee when I am gone,
Shaking thine inmost bosom with a tone
Of lost affection;—something that may prove
What she hath been, whose melancholy love
On thee was lavish'd; silent pang and tear,
And fervent song, that gush'd when none were near,
And dream by night, and weary thought by day,
Stealing the brightness from her life away,—
While thou—Awake! not yet within me die,
Under the burden and the agony
Of this vain tenderness—my spirit, wake!
Ev'n for thy sorrowful affection's sake,
Live! in thy work breathe out!—that he may yet
Feeling sad mastery there, perchance regret
Thine unrequited gift.

II.

It comes,—the power
Within me born, flows back; my fruitless dower
That could not win me love. Yet once again
I greet it proudly, with its rushing train
Of glorious images:—they throng—they press—
A sudden joy lights up my loneliness,—
I shall not perish all!

The bright work grows
Beneath my hand, unfolding, as a rose,
Leaf after leaf, to beauty; line by line,
I fix my thought, heart, soul, to burn, to shine,
Thro' the pale marble's veins. It grows—and now
I give my own life's history to thy brow,
Forsaken Ariadne! thou shalt wear
My form, my lineaments; but oh! more fair,
Touched into lovelier being by the glow
Which in me dwells, as by the summer-light
All things are glorified. From thee my wo
Shall yet look beautiful to meet his sight,

When I am pass'd away. Thou art the mould,
Wherein I pour the fervent thoughts, th' untold,
The self-consuming! Speak to him of me,
Thou, the deserted by the lonely sea,
With the soft sadness of thine earnest eye,
Speak to him, lorn one, deeply, mournfully,
Of all my love and grief! Oh! could I throw
Into thy frame a voice, a sweet, and low,
And thrilling voice of song!—when he came nigh,
To send the passion of its melody
Thro' his pierced bosom—on its tones to bear
My life's deep feeling as the southern air
Wafts the faint myrtle's breath,—to rise, to swell,
To sink away in accents of farewell,
Winning but one, *one* gush of tears, whose flow
Surely my parted spirit yet might know,
If love be strong as death!

III.

Now fair thou art,
Thou form, whose life is of my burning heart!

Yet all the vision that within me wrought,
 I cannot make thee! Oh! I might have given
 Birth to creations of far nobler thought,
 I might have kindled, with the fire of heaven,
 Things not of such as die! But I have been
 Too much alone; a heart, whereon to lean,
 With all these deep affections that o'erflow
 My aching soul, and find no shore below,
 An eye to be my star; a voice to bring
 Hope o'er my path like sounds that breathe of spring,
 These are denied me—dreamt of still in vain,—
 Therefore my brief aspirings from the chain,
 Are ever but as some wild fitful song,
 Rising triumphantly, to die ere long
 In dirge-like echoes.

IV.

Yet the world will see
 Little of this, my parting work, in thee,
 Thou shalt have fame! Oh, mockery! give the reed
 From storms a shelter,—give the drooping vine
 Something round which its tendrils may entwine,—
 Give the parch'd flower a rain-drop, and the meed
 Of love's kind words to woman! Worthless fame!
 That in *his* bosom wins not for my name
 Th' abiding place it ask'd! Yet how my heart,
 In its own fairy world of song and art,
 Once beat for praise!—Are those high longings o'er?
 That which I have been can I be no more?—
 Never, oh! never more; tho' still thy sky
 Be blue as then, my glorious Italy!
 And tho' the music, whose rich breathings fill
 Thine air with soul, be wandering past me still,
 And tho' the mantle of thy sunlight streams
 Unchang'd on forms instinct with poet-dreams;

Never, oh! never more! Where'er I move,
 The shadow of this broken-hearted love
 Is on me and around! Too well *they* know,
 Whose life is all within, too soon and well,
 When there the blight hath settled;—but I go
 Under the silent wings of Peace to dwell;
 From the slow wasting, from the lonely pain,

The inward burning of those words—"in vain,"
Sear'd on the heart—I go. 'Twill soon be past,
Sunshine, and song, and bright Italian heaven,
And thou, oh! thou, on whom my spirit cast
Unvalued wealth,—who know'st not what was given
In that devotedness,—the sad, and deep,
And unrepaid—farewell! If I could weep
Once, only once, belov'd one! on thy breast,
Pouring my heart forth ere I sink to rest!
But that were happiness, and unto me
Earth's gift is *fame*. Yet I was form'd to be
So richly bless'd! With thee to watch the sky,
Speaking not, feeling but that thou wert nigh:

With thee to listen, while the tones of song
Swept ev'n as part of our sweet air along,
To listen silently;—with thee to gaze
On forms, the deified of olden days,—
This had been joy enough;—and hour by hour,
From its glad well-springs drinking life and power,
How had my spirit soar'd, and made its fame
A glory for thy brow!—Dreams, dreams!—the fire
Burns faint within me. Yet I leave my name—
As a deep thrill may linger on the lyre
When its full chords are hush'd—awhile to live,
And one day haply in thy heart revive
Sad thoughts of me:—I leave it, with a sound,
A spell o'er memory, mournfully profound—
I leave it, on my country's air to dwell,—
Say proudly yet—"Twas hers who lov'd me well! "

Emily Brontë, 'Faith and Despondency' (1846)

"The winter wind is loud and wild,
Come close to me, my darling child;
Forsake thy books, and mateless play;
And, while the night is gathering gray,
We'll talk its pensive hours away;--

"Terne, round our sheltered hall
November's gusts unheeded call;
Not one faint breath can enter here
Enough to wave my daughter's hair,
And I am glad to watch the blaze
Glance from her eyes, with mimic rays;
To feel her cheek, so softly pressed,
In happy quiet on my breast,

"But, yet, even this tranquillity
Brings bitter, restless thoughts to me;
And, in the red fire's cheerful glow,
I think of deep glens, blocked with snow;
I dream of moor, and misty hill,
Where evening closes dark and chill;
For, lone, among the mountains cold,
Lie those that I have loved of old.
And my heart aches, in hopeless pain,
Exhausted with repinings vain,
That I shall greet them ne'er again!"

"Father, in early infancy,
When you were far beyond the sea,
Such thoughts were tyrants over me!
I often sat, for hours together,
Through the long nights of angry weather,
Raised on my pillow, to descry
The dim moon struggling in the sky;
Or, with strained ear, to catch the shock,
Of rock with wave, and wave with rock;
So would I fearful vigil keep,
And, all for listening, never sleep.
But this world's life has much to dread,
Not so, my Father, with the dead.

"Oh! not for them, should we despair,

The grave is drear, but they are not there;
Their dust is mingled with the sod,
Their happy souls are gone to God!
You told me this, and yet you sigh,
And murmur that your friends must die.
Ah! my dear father, tell me why?
For, if your former words were true,
How useless would such sorrow be;
As wise, to mourn the seed which grew
Unnoticed on its parent tree,
Because it fell in fertile earth,
And sprang up to a glorious birth--
Struck deep its root, and lifted high
Its green boughs in the breezy sky.

“But, I'll not fear, I will not weep
For those whose bodies rest in sleep,--
I know there is a blessed shore,
Opening its ports for me and mine;
And, gazing Time's wide waters o'er,
I weary for that land divine,
Where we were born, where you and I
Shall meet our dearest, when we die;
From suffering and corruption free,
Restored into the Deity.”

“Well hast thou spoken, sweet, trustful child!
And wiser than thy sire;
And worldly tempests, raging wild,
Shall strengthen thy desire--
Thy fervent hope, through storm and foam,
Through wind and ocean's roar,
To reach, at last, the eternal home,
The steadfast, changeless shore!”

A Musical Instrument

I

What was he doing, the great god Pan,¹
 Down in the reeds by the river?
 Spreading ruin and scattering ban,²
 Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,
 5 And breaking the golden lilies afloat
 With the dragon-fly on the river.

II

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
 From the deep cool bed of the river:
 The limpid water turbidly ran,
 10 And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
 And the dragon-fly had fled away,
 Ere he brought it out of the river.

III

High on the shore sat the great god Pan
 While turbidly flowed the river;
 15 And hacked and hewed as a great god can,
 With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
 Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed
 To prove it fresh from the river.

IV

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
 20 (How tall it stood in the river!)

Then drew the pith,³ like the heart of a man,
 Steadily from the outside ring,
 And notched the poor dry empty thing
 In holes, as he sat by the river.

V

25 "This is the way," laughed the great god Pan
 (Laughed while he sat by the river),
 "The only way, since gods began
 To make sweet music, they could succeed."
 Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
 30 He blew in power by the river.

VI

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
 Piercing sweet by the river!
 Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
 The sun on the hill forgot to die,
 35 And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
 Came back to dream on the river.

VII

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
 To laugh as he sits by the river,
 Making a poet out of a man:
 40 The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,—
 For the reed which grows nevermore again
 As a reed with the reeds in the river.
 —1862

¹ the god of woods, fields, and flocks, having a human body with goat's legs, horns, and ears. According to Greek myth, the nymph Syrinx, in attempting to escape Pan's pursuit of her, was metamorphosed into a reed in a stream. Pan turned the reed into a shepherd's pipe.

² curses; condemnation.

³ the central tissue.

Christina Rossetti, 'Consider' (1863)

Consider
The lilies of the field whose bloom is brief:—
 We are as they;
 Like them we fade away,
As doth a leaf.

Consider
The sparrows of the air of small account:
 Our God doth view
Whether they fall or mount,—
 He guards us too.

Consider
The lilies that do neither spin nor toil,
 Yet are most fair:—
 What profits all this care
And all this coil?

Consider
The birds that have no barn nor harvest-weeks;
 God gives them food:—
Much more our Father seeks
 To do us good.

Christina Rossetti, 'Who has seen the wind' (1869)

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you:
But when the leaves hang trembling,
The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I:
But when the trees bow down their heads,
The wind is passing by.

Amy Levy, 'Magdalen'

All things I can endure, save one.
The bare, blank room where is no sun;
The parcelled hours; the pallet hard;
The dreary faces here within;
The outer women's cold regard;
The Pastor's iterated "sin";--
These things could I endure, and count
No overstrain'd, unjust amount;
No undue payment for such bliss--
Yea, all things bear, save only this:
That you, who knew what thing would be,
Have wrought this evil unto me.
It is so strange to think on still--
That you, that you should do me ill!
Not as one ignorant or blind,
But seeing clearly in your mind
How this must be which now has been,
Nothing aghast at what was seen.
Now that the tale is told and done,
It is so strange to think upon.
You were so tender with me, too!
One summer's night a cold blast blew,
Closer about my throat you drew
That half-slipt shawl of dusky blue.
And once my hand, on summer's morn,
I stretched to pluck a rose; a thorn
Struck through the flesh and made it bleed
(A little drop of blood indeed!)
Pale grew your cheek you stoopt and bound
Your handkerchief about the wound;
Your voice came with a broken sound;
With the deep breath your breast was riven;
I wonder, did God laugh in Heaven?

How strange, that you should work my woe!
How strange! I wonder, do you know
How gladly, gladly I had died
(And life was very sweet that tide)
To save you from the least, light ill?
How gladly I had borne your pain.
With one great pulse we seem'd to thrill,--

Nay, but we thrill'd with pulses twain.

Even if one had told me this,
"A poison lurks within your kiss,
Gall that shall turn to night his day:"
Thereon I straight had turned away--
Ay, tho' my heart had crack'd with pain--
And never kiss'd your lips again.

At night, or when the daylight nears,
I hear the other women weep;
My own heart's anguish lies too deep
For the soft rain and pain of tears.
I think my heart has turn'd to stone,
A dull, dead weight that hurts my breast;
Here, on my pallet-bed alone,
I keep apart from all the rest.
Wide-eyed I lie upon my bed,
I often cannot sleep all night;
The future and the past are dead,
There is no thought can bring delight.
All night I lie and think and think;
If my heart were not made of stone,
But flesh and blood, it needs must shrink
Before such thoughts. Was ever known
A woman with a heart of stone?

The doctor says that I shall die.
It may be so, yet what care I?
Endless reposing from the strife?
Death do I trust no more than life.
For one thing is like one arrayed,
And there is neither false nor true;
But in a hideous masquerade
All things dance on, the ages through.
And good is evil, evil good;
Nothing is known or understood
Save only Pain. I have no faith
In God, or Devil, Life or Death.

The doctor says that I shall die.
You, that I knew in days gone by,
I fain would see your face once more,
Con well its features o'er and o'er;

And touch your hand and feel your kiss,
Look in your eyes and tell you this:
That all is done, that I am free;
That you, through all eternity,
Have neither part nor lot in me.

‘In the Mile End Road’

How like her! But 'tis she herself,
Comes up the crowded street,
How little did I think, the morn,
My only love to meet!

Whose else that motion and that mien?
Whose else that airy tread?
For one strange moment I forgot
My only love was dead.

‘Contradictions’

Now, even, I cannot think it true,
My friend, that there is no more you.
Almost as soon were no more I,
Which were, of course, absurdity!
Your place is bare, you are not seen,
Your grave, I'm told, is growing green;
And both for you and me, you know,
There's no Above and no Below.
That you are dead must be inferred,
And yet my thought rejects the word.