THE ABDICATION.

1
From little signs, like little stars,
Whose faint impression on the sense
The very looking straight at mars,
Or only seen by confluence;
From instinct of a mutual thought,
Whence sanctity of manners flow'd;
From chance unconscious, and from what
Concealment, overconscious, show'd;
Her hand's less weight upon my arm,
Her lowlier mien; that match'd with this;
I found, and felt with strange alarm,
I stood committed to my bliss.

2
I grew assured, before I ask'd,
That she'd be mine without reserve,
And in her unclaim'd graces bask'd,
At leisure, till the time should serve,
With just enough of dread to thrill
The hope, and make it trebly dear;
Thus loth to speak the word to kill
Either the hope or happy fear.

3
Till once, through lanes returning late,
Her laughing sisters lagg'd behind;
THE ABDICATION.

And, ere we reach'd her father's gate,
    We paused with one presentient mind;
And, in the dim and perfumed mist,
    Their coming stay'd, who, friends to me,
And very women, loved to assist
    Love's timid opportunity.

'Twice rose, twice died my trembling word;
    The faint and frail Cathedral chimes
Spake time in music, and we heard
    The chafers rustling in the limes.
Her dress, that touch'd me where I stood,
    The warmth of her confided arm,
Her bosom's gentle neighbourhood,
    Her pleasure in her power to charm;
Her look, her love, her form, her touch,
    The least seem'd most by blissful turn,
Blissful but that it pleased too much,
    And taught the wayward soul to yearn.
It was as if a harp with wires
    Was traversed by the breath I drew;
And, oh, sweet meeting of desires,
    She, answering, own'd that she loved too.

5
Honoria was to be my bride!
    The hopeless heights of hope were scaled;
The summit won, I paused and sigh'd,
    As if success itself had fail'd.
It seem'd as if my lips approach'd
    To touch at Tantalus' reward,
And rashly on Eden life encroach'd,
    Half-blinded by the flaming sword.
The whole world's wealthiest and its best,
    So fiercely sought, appear'd, when found,
Poor in its need to be possess'd,
    Poor from its very want of bound.
My queen was crouching at my side,
    By love unsceptred and brought low,
Her awful garb of maiden pride
    All melted into tears like snow:
The mistress of my reverent thought,
    Whose praise was all I ask'd of fame,
In my close-watch'd approval sought
    Protection as from danger and blame;
Her soul, which late I loved to invest
    With pity for my poor desert,
Buried its face within my breast,
    Like a pet fawn by hunters hurt.
BOOK II.

THE PROLOGUE.

Her sons pursue the butterflies,
      Her baby daughter mocks the doves
With throbbing coo; in his fond eyes
      She's Venus with her little Loves;
Her footfall dignifies the earth,
      Her form's the native-land of grace,
And, lo, his coming lights with mirth
      Its court and capital her face!
Full proud her favour makes her lord,
      And that her flatter'd bosom knows.
She takes his arm without a word,
   . In lanes of laurel and of rose.
Ten years to-day has she been his.
      He but begins to understand,
He says, the dignity and bliss
      She gave him when she gave her hand.
She, answering, says, he disenchants
      The past, though that was perfect; he
Rejoins, the present nothing wants
      But briefness to be ecstasy.
He lauds her charms; her beauty's glow
      Wins from the spoiler Time new rays;
THE PROLOGUE.

Bright looks reply, approving so
   Beauty's elixir vitae, praise.
Upon a beech he bids her mark
   Where, ten years since, he carved her name;
It grows there with the growing bark,
   And in his heart it grows the same.
For that her soft arm presses his
   Close to her fond, maternal breast;
He tells her, each new kindness is
   The effectual sum of all the rest!
And, whilst the cushat, mocking, coo'd,
   They blest the days they had been wed,
At cost of those in which he woo'd,
   Till everything was three times said;
And words were growing vain, when Briggs,
   Factotum, Footman, Butler, Groom,
Who press'd the cyder, fed the pigs,
   Preserv'd the rabbits, drove the brougham,
And help'd, at need, to mow the lawns,
   And sweep the paths and thatch the hay,
Here brought the Post down, Mrs. Vaughan's
   Sole rival, but, for once, to-day,
Scarce look'd at; for the 'Second Book,
   Till this tenth festival kept close,
Was thus commenced, while o'er them shook
   The laurel married with the rose.

'The pulse of War, whose bloody beats
   'Sane purposes insanely work,
'Now with fraternal frenzy beats,
   'And binds the Christian to the Turk,
'And shrieking fifes'——
But, with a roar,
    In rush'd the Loves; the tallest roll'd
A hedgehog from his pinafore,
    Which saved his fingers; Baby, bold,
Touch'd it, and stared, and scream'd for life,
    And stretch'd her hand for Vaughan to kiss,
Who hugg'd his Pet, and ask'd his wife,
    'Is this for love, or love for this?'
But she turn'd pale, for, lo, the beast,
    Found stock-still in the rabbit-trap,
And feigning so to be deceased,
    And laid by Frank upon her lap,
Unglobed himself, and show'd his snout,
    And fell, scatt'ring the Loves amain,
With shriek, with laughter, and with shout;
    And, peace at last restored again,
The Bard, who this untimely hitch
    Bore with a calm magnanimous,
(The hedgehog roll'd into a ditch,
    And Venus sooth'd), proceeded thus:
CANTO I.

Accepted.

PRELUDES.

The Song of Songs.

The pulse of War, whose bloody heats
Sane purposes insanely work,
Now with fraternal frenzy beats,
And binds the Christian to the Turk,
And shrieking fifes and braggart flags,
Through quiet England, teach our breath
The courage corporate that drags
The coward to heroic death.
Too late for song! Who henceforth sings,
Must fledge his heavenly flight with more
Song-worthy and heroic things
Than hasty, home-destroying war,
While might and right are not agreed,
And battle thus is yet to wage,
So long let laurels be the meed
Of soldier as of poet sage;
Preludes.

But men expect the Tale of Love,
And weary of the Tale of Hate;
Lift me, O Muse, myself above,
And let the world no longer wait!

II.

The Kites.

I saw three Cupids (so I dream'd),
Who made three kites, on which were drawn,
In letters that like roses gleam'd,
'Plato,' 'Anacreon,' and 'Vaughan.'
The boy who held by Plato tried
His airy venture first; all sail,
It heav'nward rush'd till scarce descried,
Then pitch'd and dropp'd, for want of tail.
Anacreon's Love, with shouts of mirth
That pride of spirit thus should fall,
To his kite link'd a lump of earth,
And, lo, it would not soar at all.
Last, my disciple freighted his
With a long streamer made of flowers,
The children of the sod, and this
Rose in the sun, and flew for hours.

III.

Orpheus.

The music of the Sirens found
Ulysses weak, though cords were strong;
But happier Orpheus stood unbound,
And shamed it with a sweeter song.
His mode be mine. Of Heav'n I ask,
May I, with heart-persuading might,
Pursue the Poet's sacred task
Of superseding faith by sight,
Till ev'n the witless Gadarene,
    Preferring Christ to swine, shall know
That life is sweetest when it's clean.
    To prouder folly let me show
Earth by divine light made divine;
    And let the saints, who hear my word,
Say, 'Lo, the clouds begin to shine
    'About the coming of the Lord!'

IV.

Nearest the Dearest.

Till Eve was brought to Adam, he
    A solitary desert trod,
Though in the great society
    Of nature, angels, and of God.
If one slight column counterweighs
    The ocean, 'tis the Maker's law,
Who deems obedience better praise
    Than sacrifice of erring awe.

V.

Perspective.

What seems to us for us is true.
    The planet has no proper light,
And yet, when Venus is in view,
    No primal star is half so bright.
ACCE\textbf{T}ED.

1

What fortune did my heart foretell?
What shook my spirit, as I woke,
Like the vibration of a bell
Of which I had not heard the stroke?
Was it some happy vision shut
From memory by the sun's fresh ray?
Was it that linnet's song; or but
A natural gratitude for day?
Or the mere joy the senses weave,
A wayward ecstasy of life?
Then I remember'd, yester-eve
I won Honoria for my Wife.

2

Forth riding, while as yet the day
Was dewy, watching Sarum Spire,
Still beckoning me along my way,
And growing every minute higher,
I reach'd the Dean's. One blind was down,
Though nine then struck. My bride to be!
And had she rested ill, my own,
With thinking (oh, my heart!) of me?
I paced the streets; a pistol chose,
To guard my now important life
When riding late from Sarum Close;
At noon return'd. Good Mrs. Fife,
To my, 'The Dean, is he at home?'
   Said, 'No, Sir; but Miss Honor is;
And straight, not asking if I'd come,
   Announced me, 'Mr. Felix, Miss,'
   To Mildred, in the Study. There
We talk'd, she working. We agreed
   The day was fine; the Fancy-Fair
   Successful; 'Did I ever read
   'De Genlis?' 'Never.' 'Do! She heard
   'I was engaged.' 'To whom?' 'Miss Fry.'
   'Was it the fact?' 'No! 'On my word?'
   'What scandal people talk'd!' 'Would I
   'Hold out this skein of silk.' So pass'd
   I knew not how much time away.
   'How were her sisters?' 'Well.' At last
   I summon'd heart enough to say,
   'I hoped to have seen Miss Churchill too.'
   'Miss Churchill, Felix! What is this?
   'I said, and now I find 'tis true,
   'Last night you quarrel'd! Here she is.'

She came, and seem'd a morning rose
   When ruffling rain has paled its blush;
Her crown once more was on her brows;
   And, with a faint, indignant flush,
And fainter smile, she gave her hand,
   But not her eyes, then sate apart,
As if to make me understand
   The honour of her vanquish'd heart.
But I drew humbly to her side;
   And she, well pleased, perceiving me
Liege ever to the noble pride
   Of her unconquer'd majesty,
Once and for all put it away;
   The faint flush pass'd: and ther
Her loveliness, which rather lay
In light than colour, smiled and shone,
Till sick was all my soul with bliss;
Or was it with remorse and ire
Of such a sanctity as this
Subdued by love to my desire?
The Course of True Love.

Preludes.

The Changed Allegiance.

Watch how a bird, that captivated sings,
    The cage set open, first looks out,
Yet fears the freedom of his wings,
    And now withdraws, and flits about,
And now looks forth again; until,
    Grown bold, he hops on stool and chair,
And now attains the window-sill,
    And now confides himself to air.
The maiden so, from love's free sky
    In chaste and prudent counsels caged,
But longing to be loosen'd by
    Her suitor's faith declared and gaged,
When blest with that release desired,
    First doubts if truly she is free,
Then pauses, restlessly retired,
    Alarm'd at too much liberty;
But soon, remembering all her debt
    To plighted passion, gets by rote
Her duty; says, 'I love him!' yet
    The thought half chokes her in her throat;
And, like that fatal 'I am thine,'
   Comes with alternate gush and check
And joltlings of the heart, as wine
   Pour'd from a flask of narrow neck.
Is he indeed her choice? She fears
   Her Yes was rashly said, and shame,
Remorse, and ineffectual tears
   Revolt from his conceded claim.
Oh, treason! So, with desperate nerve,
   She cries, 'I am in love, am his,'
Lets run the cables of reserve,
   And floats into a sea of bliss,
And laughs to think of her alarm,
   Avows she was in love before,
Though his avowal was the charm
   Which open'd to her own the door.
She loves him for his mastering air,
   Whence, Parthian-like, she slaying flies;
His flattering look, which seems to wear
   Her loveliness in manly eyes;
His smile, which, by reverse, portends
   An awful wrath, should reason stir;
(How fortunate it is they're friends,
   And he will ne'er be wroth with her!)
His power to do or guard from harm;
   If he but chose to use it half,
And catch her up in one strong arm,
   What could she do but weep, or laugh!
His words, which still instruct, but so
   That this applause seems still implied,
'How wise in all she ought to know,
   'How ignorant of all beside!'
His skilful suit, which leaves her free,
   Gives nothing for the world to name,
And keeps her conscience safe, while he,
   With half the bliss, takes all the blame;
His clear repute with great and small;  
The jealousy his choice will stir;  
But, ten times more than ten times all,  
She loves him for his love of her.  
How happy 'tis he seems to see  
In her that utter loveliness  
Which she, for his sake, longs to be!  
At times, she cannot but confess  
Her other friends are somewhat blind;  
Her parents' years excuse neglect,  
But all the rest are scarcely kind,  
And brothers grossly want respect;  
And oft she views what he admires  
Within her glass, and sight of this  
Makes all the sum of her desires  
To be devotion unto his.  
But still, at first, whatever's done,  
A touch, her hand press'd lightly, she  
Stands dizzied, shock'd, and flush'd, like one  
Set sudden neck-deep in the sea;  
And, though her bond for endless time  
To his good pleasure gives her o'er,  
The slightest favour seems a crime,  
Because it makes her love him more.  
But that she ne'er will let him know;  
For what were love should reverence cease?  
A thought which makes her reason so  
Inscrutable, it seems caprice.  
With her, as with a desperate town,  
Too weak to stand, too proud to treat,  
The conqueror, though the walls are down,  
Has still to capture street by street;  
But, after that, habitual faith,  
Divorced from self, where late 'twas due,  
Walks nobly in its novel path,  
And she's to changed allegiance true;
And prizing what she can't prevent,
   (Right wisdom, often misdeem'd whim),
Her will's indomitably bent
   On mere submissiveness to him;
To him she'll cleave, for him forsake
   Father's and mother's fond command!
He is her lord, for he can take
   Hold of her faint heart with his hand.

II.

Beauty.

'Beauty deludes.' O shaft well shot,
   To strike the mark's true opposite!
That ugly good is scorn'd proves not
   'Tis beauty lies, but lack of it.
By Heaven's law the Jew might take
   A slave to wife, if she was fair;
So strong a plea does beauty make
   That, where 'tis seen, discretion's there.
If, by a monstrous chance, we learn
   That this illustrious vaunt's a lie,
Our minds, by which the eyes discern,
   See hideous contrariety,
And laugh at Nature's wanton mood,
   Which, thus a swinish thing to flout,
Though haply in its gross way good,
   Hangs such a jewel in its snout.

III.

Lais and Lucretia.

Did first his beauty wake her sighs?
   That's Lais! Thus Lucretia's known:
The beauty in her Lover's eyes
   Was admiration of her own.
THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

1

Oh, beating heart of sweet alarm,
Which stays the lover's step, when near
His mistress and her awful charm
Of grace and innocence sincere!
I held the half-shut door, and heard
The voice of my betrothed wife,
Who sang my verses, every word
By music taught its latent life;
With interludes of well-touch'd notes,
That flash'd, surprising and sercne,
As meteor after meteor floats
The soft, autumnal stars between.
There was a passion in her tone,
A tremor when she touch'd the keys,
Which told me she was there alone,
And uttering all her soul at ease.
I enter'd; for I did not choose
To learn how in her heart I throve,
By chance or stealth; beyond her use,
Her greeting flatter'd me with love.

2

With true love's treacherous confidence,
And ire, at last to laughter won,
She spoke this speech, and mark'd its sense,
By action, as her Aunt had done.
""You, with your looks and catching air,
""To think of Vaughan! You fool! You know,
""You might, with ordinary care,
""Ev'n yet be Lady Clitheroe.
""You're sure he'll do great things some day!
""Nonsense, he won't; he's dress'd too well.
""Dines with the Sterling Club, they say;
""Not commonly respectable!
""Half Puritan, half Cavalier!
""His curly hair I think's a wig;
""And, for his fortune, why, my Dear,
""'Tis not enough to keep a gig.
""Rich Aunts and Uncles never die;
""And what you bring won't do for dress;
""And so you'll live on Bye-and-bye,
""With oaten-cake and water-cress!"

4

'I cried, but did not let her see.
'At last she soften'd her dispraise,
'On learning you had bought for me
'A carriage and a pair of bays.
'But here she comes! You take her in
'To dinner. I impose this task:
'Make her approve my love; and win
'What thanks from me you choose to ask!'

5

'My niece has told you every word
'I said of you! What may I mean?
'Of course she has; but you've not heard
'How I abused you to the Dean;—
'Yes, I'll take wine; he's mad, like her;
'And she will have you: there it ends!
THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

' And, now I've done my duty, Sir,
   'And you've shown common-sense, we're friends!'

6

'Go, Child, and see him out yourself,'
   Aunt Maude said, after tea, 'and show
' The place, upon that upper shelf,
   'Where Petrarch stands, lent long ago.'

7

' These rose-leaves to my heart be press'd,
   'Honoria, while it aches for you!'
(The rose in ruin, from her breast,
   Fell, as I took a fond adieu.)
' You must go now, Love! ' 'See, the air
   'Is thick with starlight!' 'Let me tie
'This scarf on. Oh, your Petrarch! There!
   'I'm coming, Aunt! ' 'Sweet, Sweet!'
   'Good-bye!'

'Ah, Love, to me 'tis death to part,
   'Yet you, my sever'd life, smile on!'
'These "Good-nights," Felix, break my heart;
   'I'm only gay till you are gone!'
With love's bright arrows from her eyes,
   And balm on her permissive lips,
She pass'd, and night was a surprise,
   As when the sun at Quito dips.
Her beauties were like sunlit snows,
   Flush'd but not warm'd with my desire.
Oh, how I loved her! Fiercely glows
   In the pure air of frost the fire.
Who for a year is sure of fate!
   I thought, dishearten'd, as I went,
Wroth with the Dean, who bade me wait,
   And vex'd with her, who seem'd content.
THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

Nay, could eternal life afford
That tyranny should thus deduct
From this fair land, which call'd me lord,
A year of the sweet usufruct?
It might not and it should not be!
I'd go back now, and he must own,
At once, my love's compulsive plea.
I turn'd, I found the Dean alone.
'Nonsense, my friend; go back to bed!
'Its half-past twelve!' 'July, then, Sir?'
'Well, come to-morrow,' at last he said;
'And you may talk of it with her.'
A light gleam'd as I pass'd the stair.
A pausing foot, a flash of dress,
And a sweet voice. 'Is Felix there?'
'July, Love!' 'Says Papa so?' 'Yes!'
CANTO III.

The County Ball.

PRELUDES.

I.

Love Ceremonious.

Keep your undrest, familiar style
For strangers, but respect your friend,
Her most, whose matrimonial smile
Is and asks honour without end.
'Tis found, and needs it must so be,
That life from love's allegiance flags,
When love forgets his majesty
In sloth's unceremonious rags.
Let love make home a gracious Court;
There let the world's rude, hasty ways
Be fashion'd to a loftier port,
And learn to bow and stand at gaze;
And let the sweet respective sphere
Of personal worship there obtain
Circumference for moving clear
None treading on another's train.
This makes that pleasures do not cloy,
And dignifies our mortal strife
With calmness and considerate joy,
Befitting our immortal life.
II.

The Rainbow.

A stately rainbow came and stood,
    When I was young, in High-Hurst Park;
Its bright feet lit the hill and wood
    Beyond, and cloud and sward were dark;
And I, who thought the splendour ours
    Because the place was, t'wards it flew,
And there, amidst the glittering showers,
    Gazed vainly for the glorious view.
With whatsoever's lovely, know
    It is not ours; stand off to see,
Or beauty's apparition so
    Puts on invisibility.

III.

A Paradox.

To tryst Love blindfold goes, for fear
    He should not see, and eyeless night
He chooses still for breathing near
    Beauty, that lives but in the sight.
THE COUNTY BALL.

I

Well, Heaven be thank'd my first-love fail'd,
   As, Heaven be thank'd, our first-loves do!
Thought I, when Fanny past me sail'd,
   Loved once, for what I never knew,
Unless for colouring in her talk,
   When cheeks and merry mouth would show
Three roses on a single stalk,
   The middle wanting room to blow,
And forward ways, that charm'd the boy
   Whose love-sick mind, misreading fate,
Scarce hoped that any Queen of Joy
   Could ever stoop to be his mate.

But there danced she, who from the leaven
   Of ill preserv'd my heart and wit
All unawares, for she was heaven,
   Others at best but fit for it.
One of those lovely things she was
   In whose least action there can be
Nothing so transient but it has
   An air of immortality.
I mark'd her step, with peace elate,
   Her brow more beautiful than morn,
Her sometime look of girlish state
   Which sweetly waived its right to scorn;
THE COUNTY BALL.

The giddy crowd, she grave the while,
Although, as 'twere beyond her will,
Around her mouth the baby smile,
That she was born with, linger'd still.
Her ball-dress seem'd a breathing mist,
From the fair form exhaled and shed,
Raised in the dance with arm and wrist
All warmth and light, unbracelet'd.
Her motion, feeling 'twas beloved,
The pensive soul of tune express'd,
And, oh, what perfume, as she moved,
Came from the flowers in her breast!
How sweet a tongue the music had!
'Beautiful Girl,' it seem'd to say,
'Though all the world were vile and sad,
'Dance on; let innocence be gay.'
Ah, none but I discern'd her looks,
When in the throng she pass'd me by,
For love is like a ghost, and brooks
Only the chosen seer's eye;
And who but she could e'er divine
The halo and the happy trance,
'When her bright arm reposed on mine,
In all the pauses of the dance!

3

Whilst so her beauty fed my sight,
And whilst I lived in what she said,
Accordant airs, like all delight
Most sweet when noted least, were play'd;
And was it like the Pharisee
If I in secret bow'd my face
With joyful thanks that I should be,
Not as were many, but with grace,
And fortune of well-nurtured youth,
And days no sordid pains defile,
And thoughts accustom'd to the truth,
    Made capable of her fair smile?

Charles Barton follow'd down the stair,
    To talk with me about the Ball,
And carp at all the people there.
    The Churchills chiefly stirr'd his gall:
    'Such were the Kriemhilds and Isondes
    'You storm'd about at Trinity!
    'Nothing at heart but handsome Blondes!
    'Folk say that you and Fanny Fry—'
    'They err! Good-night! Here lies my course,
    'Through Wilton.' Silence blest my ears,
And, weak at heart with vague remorse,
    A passing poignancy of tears
Attack'd mine eyes. By pale and park
    I rode, and ever seem'd to see,
In the transparent starry dark,
    That splendid brow of chastity,
That soft and yet subduing light,
    At which, as at the sudden moon,
I held my breath, and thought 'how bright!'
    That guileless beauty in its noon,
Compelling tribute of desires
    Ardent as day when Sirius reigns,
Pure as the permeating fires
    That smoulder in the opal's veins.
CANTO IV.

Love in Idleness.

Prelude.

I.

Honour and Desert.

O QUEEN, awake to thy renown,
Require what 'tis our wealth to give,
And comprehend and wear the crown
Of thy despised prerogative!
I, who in manhood's name at length
With glad songs come to abdicate
The gross regality of strength,
Must yet in this thy praise abate,
That, through thine erring humbleness
And disregard of thy degree,
Mainly, has man been so much less
Than fits his fellowship with thee.
High thoughts had shaped the foolish brow,
The coward had grasp'd the hero's sword,
The vilest had been great, hadst thou,
Just to thyself, been worth's reward.
But lofty honours undersold
Seller and buyer both disgrace;
And favours that make folly bold
Banish the light from virtue's face.
II.

Love and Honour.

What man with baseness so content,
   Or sick with false conceit of right,
As not to know that the element
   And inmost warmth of love's delight
Is honour? Who'd not rather kiss
   A duchess than a milkmaid, prank
The two in equal grace, which is
   Precedent Nature's obvious rank?
Much rather, then, a woman deck'd
   With saintly honours, chaste and good,
Whose thoughts celestial things affect,
   Whose eyes express her heavenly mood!
Those lesser vaunts are dimm'd or lost
   Which plume her name or paint her lip,
Extinct in the deep-glowing boast
   Of her angelic fellowship.

III.

Valour misdirected.

' I'll hunt for dangers North and South,
   'To prove my love, which sloth maligns'
What seems to say her rosy mouth?
   'I'm not convinced by proofs but signs.'
LOVE IN IDLENESS.

What should I do? In such a wife,
Fortune had lavish'd all her store,
And nothing now seem'd left for life
But to deserve her more and more.
To this I vow'd my life's whole scope;
And Love said, 'I forewarn you now,
'The Maiden will fulfil your hope
‘Only as you fulfil your vow.'

A promised service, (task for days),
Was done this morning while she slept,
With that full heart which thinks no praise
Of vows which are not more than kept;
But loftier work did love impose,
And studious hours. Alas, for these,
While she from all my thoughts arose
Like Venus from the restless seas!

I conn'd a scheme, with mind elate:
My Uncle's land would fall to me,
My skill was much in school debate,
My friends were strong in Salisbury;
A place in Parliament once gain'd,
Thro' saps first labour'd out of sight,
LOVE IN IDLENESS.

Far loftier peaks were then attain'd
With easy leaps from height to height;
And that o'erwhelming honour paid,
Or recognised, at least, in life,
Which this most sweet and noble Maid
Should yield to him who call'd her Wife.

4

I fix'd this rule: in Sarum Close
To make two visits every week,
The first to-day; and, save on those,
I nought would do, think, read, or speak,
Which did not help my settled will
To earn the Statesman's proud applause.
And now, forthwith, to mend my skill
In ethics, politics, and laws,
The Statesman's learning! Flush'd with power
And pride of freshley-form'd resolve,
I read Helvetius half-an-hour;
But, halting in attempts to solve
Why, more than all things else that be,
A lady's grace hath force to move
That sensitive appetency
Of intellectual good, call'd love,
Took Blackstone down, only to draw
My swift-deriving thoughts ere long
To love, which is the source of law,
And, like a king, can do no wrong;
Then open'd Hyde, where loyal hearts,
With faith unpropp'd by precedent,
Began to play rebellious parts.
O, mighty stir that little meant!
How dull the crude, plough'd fields of fact
To me who trod the Elysian grove!
How idle all heroic act
By the least suffering of love!
LOVE IN IDLENESS.

I could not read; so took my pen,
   And thus commenced, in form of notes,
A Lecture for the Salisbury men,
   With due regard to Tory votes:
   'A road's a road, though worn to ruts;
      'They speed who travel straight therein;
   'But he who tacks and tries short cuts
      'Gets fools' praise and a broken shin—'
And here I stopp'd in sheer despair;
   But, what to-day was thus begun,
I vow'd, up starting from my chair,
   To-morrow should indeed be done;
So loosed my chafing thoughts from school,
   To play with fancy as they chose,
And then, according to my rule,
   I dress'd, and came to Sarum Close.

5

Ah, that sweet laugh!    Diviner sense
   Did Nature, forming her, inspire
To omit the grosser elements,
   And make her all of air and fire!

To-morrow, Cowes' Regatta fell:
   The Dean would like his girls to go,
If I went too.    'Most gladly.'    Well,
   I did but break a foolish vow!
Unless Love's toil has love for prize,
   (And then he's Hercules), above
All other contrarieties
   Is labour contrary to love.
No fault of Love's, but nature's laws!
   And Love, in idleness, lies quick;
For as the worm whose powers make pause,
   And swoon, through alteration sick,
The soul, its wingless state dissolved,
    Awaits its nuptial life complete,
All indolently self-convolved,
    Cocoon'd in silken fancies sweet.
CANTO V.

The Queen's Room.

PRELUDES.

Rejected.

PERHAPS she's dancing somewhere now!
The thoughts of light and music wake
Sharp jealousies, that grow and grow
Till silence and the darkness ache.
He sees her step, so proud and gay,
Which, ere he spake, foretold despair;
Thus did she look, on such a day,
And such the fashion of her hair;
And thus she stood, when, kneeling low,
He took the bramble from her dress,
And thus she laugh'd and talk'd, whose 'No,'
Was sweeter than another's 'Yes.'
He feeds on thoughts that most deject;
He impudently feigns her charms,
So reverenced in his own respect,
Dreadfully clasp'd by other arms;
And turns, and puts his brows, that ache,
Against the pillow where 'tis cold.
If, only now his heart would break!
But, oh, how much a heart can hold.
II.

Rachel.

You loved her, and would lie all night
Thinking how beautiful she was,
And what to do for her delight.
Now both are bound with alien laws!
Be patient; put your heart to school;
Weep if you will, but not despair;
The trust that nought goes wrong by rule
Should ease this load the many bear.
Love, if there's heav'n, shall meet his dues,
Though here unmatch'd, or match'd amiss;
Meanwhile, the gentle cannot choose
But learn to love the lips they kiss.
Ne'er hurt the homely sister's ears
With Rachel's beauties; secret be
The lofty mind whose lonely tears
Protest against mortality.

III.

The Heart's Prophecies.

Be not amazed at life; 'tis still
The mode of God with his elect
Their hopes exactly to fulfil,
In times and ways they least expect.
THE QUEEN'S ROOM.

1
There's nothing happier than the days
   In which young Love makes every thought
Pure as a bride's blush, when she says
   'I will' unto she knows not what;
And lovers, on the love-lit globe,
   For love's sweet sake, walk yet aloof,
And hear Time weave the marriage-robe,
   Attraction warp and reverence woof!

2
My Housekeeper, my Nurse of yore,
   Cried, as the latest carriage went,
'Well, Mr. Felix, Sir, I'm sure
   The morning's gone off excellent!
'I never saw the show to pass
   The ladies, in their fine fresh gowns,
'So sweetly dancing on the grass,
   To music with its ups and downs.
'We'd such work, Sir, to clean the plate;
   'Twas just the busy times of old.
'The Queen's room, Sir, look'd quite like state.
   Miss Smythe, when she went up, made bold
'To peep into the Rose Boudoir,
   'And cried, "How charming! all quite new;"
'And wonder'd who it could be for.
   'All but Miss Honor look'd in too.
'But she's too proud to peep and pry.
'None's like that sweet Miss Honor, Sir!
'Excuse my humbleness, but I
'Pray Heav'n you'll get a wife like her!
'The Poor love dear Miss Honor's ways
'Better than money. Mrs. Rouse,
'Who ought to know a lady, says
'No finer goes to Wilton House.
'Miss Bagshaw thought that dreary room
'Had kill'd old Mrs. Vaughan with fright;
'She would not sleep in such a tomb
'For all her host was worth a night!
'Miss Fry, Sir, laugh'd; they talk'd the rest
'In French; and French Sir's Greek to me.
'But, though they smiled, and seem'd to jest,
'No love was lost, for I could see
'How serious-like Miss Honor was—'
'Well, Nurse, this is not my affair.
'The ladies talk'd in French with cause.
'Good-day; and thank you for your prayer.'

3
I loiter'd through the vacant house,
Soon to be her's; in one room stay'd,
Of old my mother's. Here my vows
Of endless thanks were oftenest paid.
This room its first condition kept;
For, on her road to Sarum Town,
Therein an English Queen had slept,
Before the Hurst was half-pull'd down.
The pictured walls the place became:
Here ran the Brook Anaurus, where
Stout Jason bore the wrinkled dame
Whom serving changed to Juno; there,
Ixion's selfish hope, instead
Of the nuptial goddess, clasp'd a cloud;
THE QUEEN'S ROOM.

And, here, translated Psyche fed
    Her gaze on Love, not disallow'd.

And in this chamber had she been,
    And into that she would not look,
My Joy, my Vanity, my Queen,
    At whose dear name my pulses shook!
To others how express at all
    My worship in that joyful shrine?
I scarcely can myself recall
    What peace and ardour then were mine!
And how more sweet than aught below,
    The daylight and its duties done,
It felt to fold the hands, and so
    Relinquish all regards but one;
To see her features in the dark;
    To lie and meditate once more
The grace I did not fully mark,
    The tone I had not heard before;
And from my pillow then to take
    Her notes, her picture, and her glove,
Put there for joy when I should wake,
    And press them to the heart of love;
And then to whisper 'Wife!' and pray
    To live so long as not to miss
That unimaginable day
    Which farther seems the nearer 'tis;
And still from joy's unfathom'd well
    To drink, in dreams, while on her brows
Of innocence ineffable
    Blossom'd the laughing bridal rose.
CANTO VI.

The Love-Letters.

PRELUDES.

Love's Perversity.

How strange a thing a lover seems
To animals that do not love!
Lo, where he walks and talks in dreams,
And flouts us with his Lady's glove;
How foreign is the garb he wears;
And how his great devotion mocks
Our poor propriety, and scares
The undevout with paradox!

His soul, through scorn of worldly care,
And great extremes of sweet and gall,
And musing much on all that's fair,
Grows witty and fantastical;
He sobbs his joy and sings his grief,
And evermore finds such delight
In simply picturing his relief,
That 'plaining seems to cure his plight;
He makes his sorrow, when there's none;
His fancy blows both cold and hot;
Next to the wish that she'll be won,
His first hope is that she may not;
PRELUDES.

He sues, yet deprecates consent;
   Would she be captured she must fly;
She looks too happy and content,
   For whose least pleasure he would die.
Oh, cruelty, she cannot care,
   For one to whom she's always kind!
He says he's nought, but, oh, despair,
   If he's not Jove to her fond mind!
He's jalous if she pets a dove,
   She must be his with all her soul;
Yet 'tis a postulate in love
   That part is greater than the whole;
And all his apprehension's stress,
   When he's with her, regards her hair,
Her hand, a ribbon of her dress,
   As if his life were only there;
Because she's constant, he will change,
   And kindest glances coldly meet,
And, all the time he seems so strange,
   His soul is fawning at her feet;
Of smiles and simple heaven grown tired,
   He wickedly provokes her tears,
And when she weeps, as he desired,
   Falls slain with ecstasies of fears;
He blames her, though she has no fault,
   Except the folly to be his;
He worships her, the more to exalt
   The profanation of a kiss;
Health's his disease; he's never well
   But when his paleness shames her rose;
His faith's a rock-built citadel,
   Its sign a flag that each way blows;
His o'erfed fancy frets and fumes;
   And Love, in him, is fierce, like Hate,
And ruffles his ambrosial plumes
   Against the bars of time and fate.

VOL. I.
II.

The Power of Love.

Samson the Mighty, Solomon
   The Wise, and Holy David all
Must doff their crowns to Love, for none
   But fell as Love would scorn to fall!
And what may fallen spirits win,
   When stripes and precepts cannot move?
Only the sadness of all sin,
   When look'd at in the light of Love.
THE LOVE-LETTERS.

'You ask, Will admiration halt,
'Should spots appear within my Sun?
'Oh, how I wish I knew your fault,
'For Love's tired gaze to rest upon!
'Your graces, which have made me great,
'Will I so loftily admire,
'Yourself yourself shall emulate,
'.And be yourself your own desire.
'I'll nobly mirror you too fair,
'And, when you're false to me your glass,
'What's wanting you'll by that repair,
'So bring yourself through me to pass.
'O Dearest, tell me how to prove
'Goodwill which cannot be express'd;
'The beneficial heart of love
'Is labour in an idle breast.
'Name in the world your chosen part,
'And here I vow, with all the bent
'And application of my heart
'To give myself to your content.
'Would you live on, home-worshipp'd, thus,
'Not proudly high nor poorly low?
'Indeed the lines are fall'n to us
'In pleasant places! Be it so.
'But would you others heav'nward move,
'By sight not faith, while you they admire?
'I'll help with zeal as I approve
' That just and merciful desire.
' High as the lonely moon to view
' I'll lift your light; do you decree
' Your place, I'll win it; for from you
' Command inspires capacity.
' Or, unseen, would you sway the world
' More surely? Then in gracious rhyme
' I'll raise your emblem, fair unfurl'd
' With blessing in the breeze of time.
' Faith removes mountains, much more love;
' Let your contempt abolish me
' If ought of your devisal prove
' Too hard or high to do or be.'

I ended. 'From your Sweet-Heart, Sir,'
Said Nurse, 'The Dean's man brings it
down.'
I could have kiss'd both him and her!
'Nurse, give him that, with half-a-crown.'
How beat my heart, how paused my breath,
When with perversely fond delay,
I broke the seal, that bore a wreath
Of roses link'd with one of bay.

3
'I found your note. How very kind
'To leave it there! I cannot tell
'How pleased I was, or how you find
'Words to express your thoughts so well.
'The Girls are going to the Ball
'At Wilton. If you can, do come;
'And any day this week you call
'Papa and I shall be at home.
‘You said to Mary once—I hope
‘ In jest—that women should be vain:
‘ On Saturday your friend (her Pope),
‘ The Bishop dined with us again.
‘ She put the question, if they ought?
‘ He turn’d it cleverly away
‘ (For giddy Mildred cried, she thought
‘ We must), with “What we must we may.”
‘ Dear papa laugh’d, and said ’twas sad
‘ To think how vain his girls would be,
‘ Above all Mary, now she had
‘ Episcopal authority.
‘ But I was very dull, dear friend,
‘ And went upstairs at last, and cried.
‘ Be sure to come to-day, or send
‘ A rose-leaf kiss’d on either side.
‘ Adieu! I am not well. Last night
‘ My dreams were wild: I often woke,
‘ The summer-lightning was so bright;
‘ And when it flash’d I thought you spoke.’
CANTO VII.

The Revulsion.

PRELUDES.

Joy and Use.

Can ought compared with wedlock be
For use? But He who made the heart
To use proportions joy. What if
Has join'd let no man put apart
Sweet Order has its draught of bliss
Graced with the pearl of God's consent,
Ten times delightful in that 'tis
Considerate and innocent.
In vain Disorder grasps the cup;
The pleasure's not enjoy'd but spilt,
And, if he stoops to lick it up,
It only tastes of earth and guilt.
His sorry raptures rest destroys;
To live, like comets, they must roam;
On settled poles turn solid joys,
And sunlike pleasures shine at home.

II.

'She was Mine.'

'Th' tears o'erprize thy loss! Thy wife,
'In what was she particular?
'Others of comely face and life,
  'Others as chaste and warm there are,
 'And when they speak they seem to sing;
  'Beyond her sex she was not wise;
 'And there is no more common thing
  'Than kindness in a woman's eyes.
 'Then wherefore weep so long and fast,
  'Why so exceedingly repine!
 'Say, how has thy Beloved surpass'd
  'So much all others?'  'She was mine.'
THE REVULSION.

'Twas when the spousal time of May
   Hangs all the hedge with bridal wreaths,
And air's so sweet the bosom gay
   Gives thanks for every breath it breathes;
When like to like is gladly moved,
   And each thing joins in Spring's refrain,
'Let those love now who never loved;
   'Let those who have loved love again;'
That I, in whom the sweet time wrought,
   Lay stretch'd within a lonely glade,
Abandon'd to delicious thought,
   Beneath the softly twinkling shade.
The leaves, all stirring, mimick'd well
   A neighbouring rush of rivers cold,
And, as the sun or shadow fell,
   So these were green and those were gold;
In dim recesses hyacinths droop'd,
   And breadths of primrose lit the air,
Which, wandering through the woodland, stoop'd
   And gather'd perfumes here and there;
Upon the spray the squirrel swung,
   And careless songsters, six or seven,
Sang lofty songs the leaves among,
   Fit for their only listener, Heaven.
I sigh'd, 'Immeasurable bliss
   'Gains nothing by becoming more!
THE REVULSION.

' Millions have meaning; after this
' Cyphers forget the integer.'

And so I mused, till musing brought
   A dream that shook my house of clay,
And, in my humbled heart, I thought,
   To me there yet may come a day
With this the single vestige seen
   Of comfort, earthly or divine,
My sorrow some time must have been
   Her portion, had it not been mine.
Then I, who knew, from watching life,
   That blows foreseen are slow to fall,
Rehearsed the losing of a wife,
   And faced its terrors each and all.
The self-chastising fancy show'd
   The coffin with its ghastly breath;
The innocent sweet face that owed
   None of its innocence to death;
The lips that used to laugh; the knell
   That bade the world beware of mirth;
The heartless and intolerable
   Indignity of 'earth to earth,'
At morn remembering by degrees
   That she I dream'd about was dead;
Love's still recurrent jubilees,
   The days that she was born, won, wed;
The duties of my life the same,
   Their meaning for the feelings gone;
Friendship impertinent, and fame
   Disgusting; and, more harrowing none,
Small household troubles fall'n to me,
   As, 'What time would I dine to-day?'
And, oh, how could I bear to see
   The noisy children at their play.
THE REVULSION.

Besides, where all things limp and halt,
       Could I go straight, should I alone
Have kept my love without default
       Pitch’d at the true and heavenly tone?
The festal-day might come to mind
       That miss’d the gift which more endears:
The hour which might have been more kind,
       And now less fertile in vain tears;
The good of common intercourse,
       For daintier pleasures, then despised,
Now with what passionate remorse,
       What poignancy of hunger prized!
The little wrong, now greatly rued,
       Which no repentance now could right;
And love; in disbelieving mood,
       Deserting his celestial height.
Withal to know, God’s love sent grief
       To make me less the world’s, and more
Meek-hearted: ah, the sick relief!
       Why bow’d I not my heart before?

3

‘What,’ I exclaimed, with chill alarm,
       ‘If this fantastic horror shows.
‘The feature of an actual harm!’
       And, coming straight to Sarum Close,
As one who dreams his wife is dead,
       And cannot in his slumber weep,
And moans upon his wretched bed,
       And wakes, and finds her there asleep,
And laughs and sighs, so I, not less
       Relieved, beheld, with blissful start,
The light and happy loveliness
       Which lay so heavy on my heart.
CANTO VIII.

The Koh-i-noor.

Preludes.

I

_In Love._

If he's capricious she'll be so,
   But, if his duties constant are,
She lets her loving favour glow
   As steady as a tropic star;
Appears there nought for which to weep,
   She'll weep for nought, for his dear sake;
She clasps her sister in her sleep;
   Her love in dreams is most awake.
Her soul, that once with pleasure shook,
   Did any eyes her beauty own,
Now wonders how they dare to look
   On what belongs to him alone;
The indignity of taking gifts
   Exhilarates her loving breast;
A rapture of submission lifts
   Her life into celestial rest;
There's nothing left of what she was;
   Back to the babe the woman dies,
And all the wisdom that she has
   Is to love him for being wise.
She's confident because she fears,
And, though discreet when he's away,
If none but her dear despot hears,
She prattles like a child at play.
Perchance, when all her praise is said,
He tells the news, a battle won,
On either side ten thousand dead.
'Alas!' she says; but, if 'twere known,
She thinks, 'He's looking on my face!
'I am his joy; whate'er I do,
'He sees such time-contenting grace
'In that, he'd have me always so!'
And, evermore, for either's sake,
To the sweet folly of the dove,
She joins the cunning of the snake,
To rivet and exalt his love;
Her mode of candour is deceit;
And what she thinks from what she'll say,
(Although I'll never call her cheat),
Lies far as Scotland from Cathay.
Without his knowledge he was won;
Against his nature kept devout;
She'll never tell him how 'twas done,
And he will never find it out.
If, sudden, he suspects her wiles,
And hears her forging chain and trap,
And looks, she sits in simple smiles,
Her two hands lying in her lap.
Her secret (privilege of the Bard,
Whose fancy is of either sex),
Is mine; but let the darkness guard
Myst'ries that light would more perplex!
II.

Love Thinking.

What lifts her in my thought so far

Beyond all else? Let Love not err!

'Tis that which all right women are,

But which I'll know in none but her.

She is to me the only Ark

Of that high mystery which locks

The lips of joy, or speaks in dark

Enigmas and in paradox;

That potent charm, which none can fly,

Nor would, which makes me bond and free,

Nor can I tell if first 'twas I

Chose it, or it elected me;

Which, when I look intentest, lo,

Cheats most mine eyes, albeit my heart,

Content to feel and not to know,

Perceives it all in every part;

I kiss its cheek; its life divine

Exhales from its resplendent shroud;

Ixion's fate reversed is mine,

Authentic Juno seems a cloud;

I feel a blessed warmth, I see

A bright circumference of rays,

But darkness, where the sun should be,

Fills admiration with amaze;

And when, for joys relief, I think

To fathom with the line of thought

The well from which I, blissful, drink,

The spring's so deep I come to nought.
III.

The Kiss.

'I saw you take his kiss!' 'Tis true.
'O, modesty!' 'Twas strictly kept:
He thought me asleep; at least, I knew
'He thought I thought he thought I slept.'
THE KOH-I-NOOR.

'Be man's hard virtues highly wrought,
'But let my gentle Mistress be,
'In every look, word, deed, and thought,
'Nothing but sweet and womanly!
'Her virtues please my virtuous mood,
'But what at all times I admire
'Is, not that she is wise or good,
'But just the thing which I desire.
'With versatility to sing
'The theme of love to any strain,
'If oft'nest she is anything,
'Be it careless, talkative, and vain.
'That seems in her supremest grace
'Which, virtue or not, apprises me
'That my familiar thoughts embrace
'Unfathomable mystery.'

I answer'd thus; for she desired
To know what mind I most approved;
Partly to learn what she inquired,
Partly to get the praise she loved.

I praised her, but no praise could fill
The depths of her desire to please,
Though dull to others as a Will
To them that have no legacies.
The more I praised the more she shone,
Her eyes incredulously bright,
And all her happy beauty blown
Beneath the beams of my delight.
Sweet rivalry was thus begot;
By turns, my speech, in passion’s style,
With flatteries the truth o’ershot,
And she surpass’d them with her smile.

‘You have my heart so sweetly seized,
‘And I confess, nay, ’tis my pride
‘That I’m with you so solely pleased,
‘That, if I’m pleased with aught beside,
‘As music, or the month of June,
‘My friend’s devotion, or his wit,
‘A rose, a rainbow, or the moon,
‘It is that you illustrate it.
‘All these are parts, you are the whole;
‘You fit the taste for Paradise,
‘To which your charms draw up the soul
‘As turning spirals draw the eyes.
‘Nature to you was more than kind;
‘’Twas fond perversity to dress
‘So much simplicity of mind
‘In such a pomp of loveliness!
‘But, praising you, the fancy deft
‘Flies wide, and lets the quarry stray,
‘And, when all’s said, there’s something left,
‘And that’s the thing I meant to say.’
‘Dear Félix!’ ‘Sweet, my Love!’ But there
Was Aunt Maude’s noisy ring and knock!
‘Stay, Félix; you have caught my hair.
‘Stoop! Thank you!’ ‘May I have that lock?’
'Not now. Good morning, Aunt!' 'Why, Puss, 'You look magnificent to-day.' 'Here's Felix, Aunt.' 'Fox and green goose! 'Who handsome gets should handsome pay!' 'Aunt, you are friends!' 'Ah, to be sure! 'Good morning! Go on flattering, Sir; 'A woman, like the Koh-i-noor, 'Mounts to the price that's put on her.'
The Nursling of Civility.

O, how the woman once was woo'd:
Forth leapt the savage from his lair,
And fell'd her, and to nuptials rude
He dragg'd her, bleeding, by the hair.
From that to Chloe's dainty wiles
And Portia's dignified consent,
What distance! But these Pagan styles
How far below Time's fair intent!
Siegfried sued Kriemhild. Sweeter life
Could Love's self covet? Yet 'tis sung
In what rough sort he chid his wife
For want of curb upon her tongue!
Shall Love, where last I leave him, halt?
Nay; none can fancy or foresee
To how strange bliss may time exalt
This nursling of civility.
II.

*The Foreign Land.*

A woman is a foreign land,
Of which, though there he settle young,
A man will ne'er quite understand
The customs, politics, and tongue.
The foolish hie them post-haste through,
See fashions odd, and prospects fair,
Learn of the language, 'How d'ye do,'
And go and brag they have been there.
The most for leave to trade apply,
For once, at Empire's seat, her heart,
Then get what knowledge ear and eye
Glean chancewise in the life-long mart.
And certain others, few and fit,
Attach them to the Court, and see
The Country's best, its accent hit,
And partly sound its polity.

III.

*Disappointment.*

' The bliss which woman's charms bespeak,
' I've sought in many, found in none!'
' In many 'tis in vain you seek
' What only can be found in one.'
THE FRIENDS.

Frank's long, dull letter, lying by
The gay sash from Honoria's waist,
Reproach'd me; passion spared a sigh
For friendship without fault disgraced.
How should I greet him? how pretend
I felt the love he once inspired?
Time was when either, in his friend,
His own deserts with joy admired;
We took one side in school-debate,
Like hopes pursued with equal thirst,
Were even-bracketed by Fate,
Twin-Wranglers, seventh from the First;
And either loved a lady's laugh
More than all music; he and I
Were perfect in the pleasant half
Of universal charity.

From pride of likeness thus I loved
Him, and he me, till love begot
The lowliness which now approved
Nothing but that which I was not.
Blest was the pride of feeling so
Subjected to a girl's soft reign.
She was my vanity, and, oh,
"All other vanities how vain!"
Frank follow'd in his letter's track,
   And set my guilty heart at ease
By echoing my excuses back
   With just the same apologies.
So he had slighted me as well !
   Nor was my mind disburthen'd less
When what I sought excuse to tell
   He of himself did first confess.

Each, rapturous, praised his lady's worth ;
   He eloquently thus: ' Her face
' Is the summ'd sweetness of the earth,
   ' Her soul the glass of heaven's grace,
' To which she leads me by the hand ;
   ' Or, briefly all the truth to say
' To you, who briefly understand,
   ' She is both heaven and the way.
' Displeasures and resentments pass
   ' Athwart her charitable eyes
' More fleetingly than breath from glass,
   ' Or truth from foolish memories ;
' Her heart's so touch'd with others' woes
   ' She has no need of chastisement ;
' Her gentle life's conditions close,
   ' Like God's commandments, with content,
' And make an aspect calm and gay,
   ' Where sweet affections come and go,
' Till all who see her, smile and say,
   ' How fair, and happy that she's so !
' She is so lovely, true, and pure,
   ' Her virtue virtue so endears,
' That often, when I think of her,
   ' Life's meanness fills mine eyes with tears—'
‘You paint Miss Churchill! Pray go on—’
‘She’s perfect, and, if joy was much
‘To think her nature’s paragon,
‘’Tis more that there’s another such!’

5
Praising and paying back their praise
With rapturous hearts, t’ward Sarum Spire
We walk’d, in evening’s golden haze,
Friendship from passion stealing fire.
In joy’s crown danced the feather jest,
And, parting by the Deanery door,
Clasp’d hands, less shy than words, confess’d
We had not been true friends before.
CANTO X.

The Epitaph.

PRELUDES.

I

Frost in Harvest.

The lover who, across a gulf
Of ceremony, views his Love,
And dares not yet address herself,
Pays worship to her stolen glove.
The gulf o'erleapt, the lover wed,
It happens oft, (let truth be told),
The halo leaves the sacred head,
Respect grows lax, and worship cold,
And all love's May-day promising,
Like song of birds before they pair,
Or flush of flowers in boastful Spring,
Dies out, and leaves the Summer bare.
Yet should a man, it seems to me,
Honour what honourable is,
For some more honourable plea
Than only that it is not his.
The gentle wife, who decks his board
And makes his day to have no night,
Whose wishes wait upon her lord,
Who finds her own in his delight
Is she another now than she
Who, mistress of her maiden charms,
At his wild prayer, incredibly
Committed them to his proud arms?
Unless her choice of him's a slur
Which makes her proper credit dim,
He never enough can honour her
Who past all speech has honour'd him.

II.

_Felicity._

To marry her and take her home!
The poet, painting pureness, tells
Of lilies; figures power by Rome;
And each thing shows by something else!
But through the songs of poets look,
And who so lucky to have found
In universal nature's book
A likeness for a life so crown'd!
Here they speak best who best express
Their inability to speak,
And none are strong, but who confess
With happy skill that they are weak.

III.

_Marriage Indissoluble._

'In heaven none marry.' Grant the most
Which may by this dark word be meant,
Who shall forbid the eternal boast
' ‘I kiss’d, and kiss’d with her consent!'
If here, to Love, past favour is
A present boast, delight, and chain,
What lacks of honour, bond, and bliss,
Where Now and Then are no more twain!
THE EPITAPH.

I

'At Church, in twelve hours more, we meet!
'This, Dearest, is our last farewell.'
'Oh, Felix, do you love me?' 'Sweet,
'Why do you ask?' 'I cannot tell.'

2

And was it no vain fantasy
That raised me from the earth with pride?
Should I to-morrow verily
Be Bridegroom, and Honoria Bride?
Should I, in simple fact, henceforth
Live unconditionally lord
Of her whose smile for brightest worth
Seem'd all too bountiful reward?
Incredible life's promise seem'd,
Or, credible, for life too great;
Love his own deity blasphemed,
And doff'd at last his heavenly state.
What law, if man could mount so high,
To further insolence set bars,
And kept the chaste moon in the sky,
And bade him not tread out the stars!

3

Patience and hope had parted truce,
And, sun-like, Love obscured his ray
With dazzling mists, driven up profuse
Before his own triumphant way.
I thought with prayer how Jacob paid
The patient price of Rachel; then,
Of that calm grace Tobias said,
And Sarah's innocent 'Amen.'
Without avail! O'erwhelming wealth,
The wondrous gift of God so near,
Which should have been delight and health,
Made heart and spirit sick and sere.
Until at last the soul of love,
That recks not of its own delight,
Awoke and bade the mists remove,
And then once more I breathed aright;
And I rehears'd my marriage vow,
And swore her welfare to prefer
To all things, and for aye as now
To live, not for myself, but her.
Forth, from the glittering spirit's peace
And gaiety ineffable,
Stream'd to the heart delight and ease,
As from an overflowing well;
And, orderly deriving thence
Its pleasure perfect and allow'd,
Bright with the spirit shone the sense,
As with the sun a fleecy cloud.
If now to part with her could make,
Her pleasure greater, sorrow less,
I for my epitaph would take
'To serve seem'd more than to possess.'
And I perceiv'd, (the vision sweet
Dimming with happy dew mine eyes),
That love and joy are torches lit
From altar-fires of sacrifice.
Across the sky the daylight crept,
    And birds grew garrulous in the grove,
And on my marriage-morn I slept
    A soft sleep, undisturb'd by love.
CANTO XI.

The Wedding.

PRELUDES.

I.

Platonic Love.

Right art thou who wouldst rather be
A doorkeeper in Love’s fair house,
Than lead the wretched revelry
Where fools at swinish troughs carouse.
But do not boast of being least;
And if to kiss thy Mistress’ skirt
Amaze thy brain, scorn not the Priest
Whom greater honours do not hurt.
Stand off and gaze, if more than this
Be more than thou canst understand,
Revering him whose power of bliss,
Angelic, dares to seize her hand,
Or whose seraphic love makes flight
To the apprehension of her lips;
And think, the sun of such delight
From thine own darkness takes eclipse.
And, wouldst thou to the same aspire,
This is the art thou must employ,
Live greatly; so shalt thou acquire
Unknown capacities of joy.
II.

A Demonstration.

Nature, with endless being rise,
   Parts each thing into ‘him’ and ‘her,’
And, in the arithmetic of life,
   The smallest unit is a pair;
And thus, oh, strange, sweet half of me,
   If I confess a loftier flame,
If more I love high Heaven than thee,
   I more than love thee, thee I am;
And, if the world’s not built of lies,
   Nor all a cheat the Gospel tells,
If that which from the dead shall rise
   Be I indeed, not something else,
There’s no position more secure
   In reason or in faith than this,
That those conditions must endure,
   Which, wanting, I myself should miss.

III.

The Symbol.

As if I chafed the sparks from glass,
   And said, ‘It lightens,’ hitherto
The songs I’ve made of love may pass
   For all but for proportion true;
But likeness and proportion both
   Now fail, as if a child in glee,
Catching the flakes of the salt froth,
   Cried, ‘Look, my mother, here’s the sea.’
Yet, by the help of what’s so weak,
   But not diverse, to those who know,
And only unto those I speak,
   May far-inferring fancy show
PRELUDES.

Love's living sea by coasts uncurb'd,
   Its depth, its mystery, and its might,
Its indignation if disturb'd,
   The glittering peace of its delight.

IV.

Constancy rewarded.

I vow'd unvarying faith, and she,
   To whom in full I pay that vow,
Rewards me with variety
   Which men who change can never know.
THE WEDDING.

Life smitten with a feverish chill,
The brain too tired to understand,
In apathy of heart and will,
I took the woman from the hand
Of him who stood for God, and heard
Of Christ, and of the Church his Bride;
The Feast, by presence of the Lord
And his first Wonder, beautified;
The mystic sense to Christian men;
The bonds in innocency made,
And gravely to be enter'd then
For children, godliness, and aid,
And honour'd, and kept free from smirch;
And how a man must love his wife
No less than Christ did love his Church,
If need be, giving her his life;
And, vowing then the mutual vow,
The tongue spoke, but intention slept.
'Tis well for us Heaven asks not how
We take this oath, but how 'tis kept.

O, bold seal of a bashful bond,
Which makes the marriage-day to be,
To those before it and beyond,
An iceberg in an Indian sea!
3

‘Now, while she’s changing,’ said the Dean,
‘Her bridal for her travelling dress,
‘I’ll preach allegiance to your queen!
‘Preaching’s the thing which I profess;
‘And one more minute’s mine! You know
‘I’ve paid my girl a father’s debt,
‘And this last charge is all I owe.
‘She’s your’s; but I love more than yet
‘You can; such fondness only wakes
‘When time has raised the heart above
‘The prejudice of youth, which makes
‘Beauty conditional to love.
‘Prepare to meet the weak alarms
‘Of novel nearness: recollect
‘The eye which magnifies her charms
‘Is microscopic for defect.
‘Fear comes at first; but soon, rejoiced,
‘You’ll find your strong and tender loves,
‘Like holy rocks by Druids poised,
‘The least force shakes, but none removes.
‘Her strength is your esteem; beware
‘Of finding fault; her will’s unnerv’d
‘By blame; from you ’twould be despair;
‘But praise that is not quite deserv’d
‘Will all her noble nature move
‘To make your utmost wishes true.
‘Yet think, while mending thus your Love,
‘Of matching her ideal too!
‘The death of nuptial joy is sloth:
‘To keep your mistress in your wife,
‘Keep to the very height your oath,
‘And honour her with arduous life.
‘Lastly, no personal reverence doff.
‘Life’s all externals unto those
THE WEDDING.

'Who pluck the blushing petals off,
'To find the secret of the rose.—
'How long she's tarrying! Green's Hotel
'I'm sure you'll like. The charge is fair,
'The wines good. I remember well
'I stay'd once, with her Mother, there.
'A tender conscience of her vow
'That Mother had! She's so like her!'
But Mrs. Fife, much flurried, now
Whisper'd, 'Miss Honor's ready, Sir.'

Whirl'd off at last, for speech I sought,
To keep shy Love in countenance;
But, whilst I vainly tax'd my thought,
Her voice deliver'd mine from trance:
'Look, is not this a pretty shawl,
'Aunt's parting gift!' 'She's always kind.'
'The new wing spoils Sir John's old Hall:
'You'll see it, if you pull the blind.'

5

I drew the silk: in heaven the night
Was dawning; lovely Venus shone,
In languishment of tearful light,
Swathed by the red breath of the sun.
CANTO XII.

Husband and Wife.

PRELUDES.

I.

The Married Lover.

Why, having won her, do I woo?  
Because her spirit's vestal grace  
Provokes me always to pursue,  
But, spirit-like, eludes embrace;  
Because her womanhood is such  
That, as on court-days subjects kiss  
The Queen's hand, yet so near a touch  
Affirms no mean familiariness,  
Nay, rather marks more fair the height  
Which can with safety so neglect  
To dread, as lower ladies might,  
That grace could meet with disrespect,  
Thus she with happy favour feeds  
Allegiance from a love so high  
That thence no false conceit proceeds  
Of difference bridged, or state put by;  
Because, although in act and word  
As lowly as a wife can be,  
Her manners, when they call me lord,  
Remind me 'tis by courtesy;
Not with her least consent of-will,
    Which would my proud affection hurt,
But by the noble style that still
    Imputes an unattain'd desert;
Because her gay and lofty brows,
    When all is won which hope can ask,
Reflect a light of hopeless snows
    That bright in virgin ether bask;
Because, though free of the outer court
    I am, this Temple keeps its shrine
Sacred to Heaven; because, in short,    
    She's not and never can be mine.

II

_The Amaranth._

Feasts satiate; stars distress with height;
    Friendship means well, but misses reach,
And wearies in its best delight
    Vex'd with the vanities of speech;
Too long regarded, roses even
    Afflict the mind with fond unrest;
And to converse direct with Heaven
    Is oft a labour in the breast;
Whate'er the up-looking soul admires,
    Whate'er the senses' banquet be,
Fatigues at last with vain desires,
    Or sickens by satiety;
But truly my delight was more
    In her to whom I'm bound for aye
Yesterday than the day before,
    And more to-day than yesterday.
HUSBAND AND WIFE.

I, while the shop-girl fitted on
   The sand-shoes, look'd where, down the bay,
The sea glow'd with a shrouded sun.
   'I'm ready, Felix; will you pay?'
That was my first expense for this
   Sweet Stranger, now my three days' Wife.
How light the touches are that kiss
   The music from the chords of life!

Her feet, by half-a-mile of sea,
   In spotless sand left shapely prints;
With agates, then, she loaded me;
   (The lapidary call'd them flints);
Then, at her wish, I hail'd a boat,
   To take her to the ships-of-war,
At anchor, each a lazy mote
   Black in the brilliance, miles from shore.

The morning breeze the canvas fill'd,
   Lifting us o'er the bright-ridged gulf,
And every lurch my darling thrill'd
   With light fear smiling at itself;
And, dashing past the Arrogant,
   Asleep upon the restless wave,
After its cruise in the Levant;
We reach'd the Wolf, and signal gave
For help to board: with caution meet,
My bride was placed within the chair,
The red flag wrapp'd about her feet,
And so swung laughing through the air.

'Look, Love,' she said, 'there's Frederick Graham,
'My cousin, whom you met, you know.'
And seeing us, the brave man came,
And made his frank and courteous bow,
And gave my hand a sailor's shake,
And said, 'You ask'd me to the Hurst:
'I never thought my luck would make
'Your wife and you my guests the first.'
And Honor, cruel, 'Nor did we:
'Have you not lately changed your ship?'
'Yes: I'm Commander, now,' said he,
With a slight quiver of the lip.
We saw the vessel, shown with pride;
Took luncheon; I must eat his salt!
Parting he said, (I fear my bride
Found him unselfish to a fault),
His wish, he saw, had come to pass,
(And so, indeed, her face express'd),
That that should be, whatever 'twas,
Which made his Cousin happiest.
We left him looking from above;
Rich bankrupt! for he could afford
To say most proudly that his love
Was virtue and its own reward.
But others loved as well as he,
(Thought I, half-anger'd), and if fate,
Unfair, had only fashion'd me
   As hapless, I had been as great.

5
As souls, ambitious, but low-born,
   If raised past hope by luck or wit,
All pride of place will proudly scorn,
   And live as they'd been used to it,
So we two wore our strange estate:
   Familiar, unaffected, free,
We talk'd, until the dusk grew late,
   Of this and that; but, after tea,
As doubtful if a lot so sweet
   As ours was ours in very sooth,
Like children, to promote conceit,
   We feign'd that it was not the truth;
And she assumed the maiden coy,
   And I adored remorseless charms,
And then we clapp'd our hands for joy,
   And ran into each other's arms.
THE EPILOGUE.

'A H, dearest Wife, a fresh-lit fire
'Sends forth to heaven great shows of ssume,
'And watchers, far away, admire;
'But when the flames their power assume,
'The more they burn the less they show,
'The clouds no longer smirch the sky,
'And then the flames intensest glow
'When far-off watchers think they die.
'The fumes of early love my verse
'Has figured—' 'You must paint the flame!'
'Twould merit the Promethean curse!
'But now, Sweet, for your praise and blame.
'You speak too boldly; veils are due
'To women's feelings.' 'Fear not this!
'Women will vow I say not true,
'And men believe the lips they kiss.'
'I did not call you "Dear" or "Love;"
'I think, till after Frank was born.'
'That fault I cannot well remove;
'The rhymes'—but Frank now blew his horn,
And Walter bark'd, on hands and knees,
At Baby in the mignonette,
And all made, full-cry, for the trees
Where Felix and his Wife were set.
Again disturb'd, (crickets have cares!)
True to their annual use they rose,
To offer thanks at Evening Prayers
   In three times sacred Sarum Close.

Passing, they left a gift of wine
   At Widow Neale's. Her daughter said:
   'O, Ma'am, she's sinking! For a sign,
   'She cried just now, of him that's dead,
   '"Mary, he's somewhere close above,
   '"Weeping and wailing his dead wife,
   '"With forceful prayers and fatal love
   '"Conjuring me to come to life.
   '"A spirit is terrible though dear!
   '"It comes by night, and sucks my breath,
   '"And draws me with desire and fear.'
   'Ah, Ma'am, she'll soon be his in death!

Vaughan," when his kind Wise's eyes were dry,
   Said, 'This thought crosses me, my Dove;
   'If Heaven should proffer, when we die,
   'Some unconceiv'd, superior love,
   'How take the exchange without despair,
   'Without worse folly how refuse?'
But she, who, wise as she was fair,
   For subtle doubts had simple clues,
   Said, 'Custom sanctifies, and faith
   'Is more than joy: ah, how desire
   'In any heaven a different path,
   'Though, found at first, it had been higher?
   'Yet love makes death a dreadful thought!
   'Felix, at what a price we live!'
But present pleasures soon forgot
   The future's dread alternative;
For, as became the festal time,
   He cheer'd her heart with tender praise,
And speeches wanting only rhyme
To make them like his winged lays.
He discommended girlhood. 'What
'For sweetness like the ten-years' wife,
'Whose customary love is not
'Her passion, or her play, but life?
'With beauties so maturely fair,
'Affecting, mild, and manifold,
'May girlish charms no more compare
'Than apples green with apples gold.
'Ah, still unpraised Honoria, Heaven,
'When you into my arms it gave,
'Left nought hereafter to be given
'But grace to feel the good I have.'

4
Her own and manhood's modesty
Made dumb her love, but, on their road,
His hand in hers felt soft reply,
And like rejoinder fond bestow'd;
And, when the carriage set them down,
'How strange,' said he, 'twould seem to meet,
'When pacing, as we now this town,
'A Florence or a Lisbon Street,
'That Laura or that Catherine, who,
'In the remote, romantic years,
'From Petrarch or Camoens drew
'Their songs and their immortal tears!' But here their converse had its end;
For, crossing the Cathedral Lawn,
There came an ancient college-friend,
Who, introduced to Mrs. Vaughan,
Lifted his hat, and bow'd and smiled,
And fill'd her kind large eyes with joy,
By patting on the cheek her child,
With, 'Is he yours, this handsome boy?'