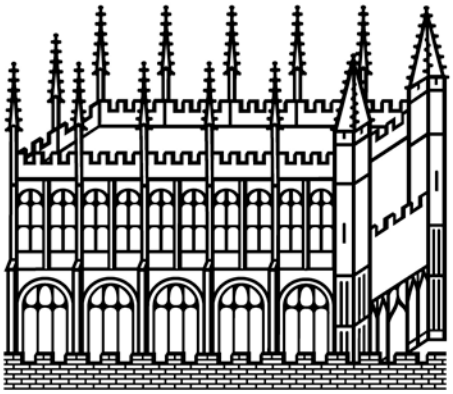

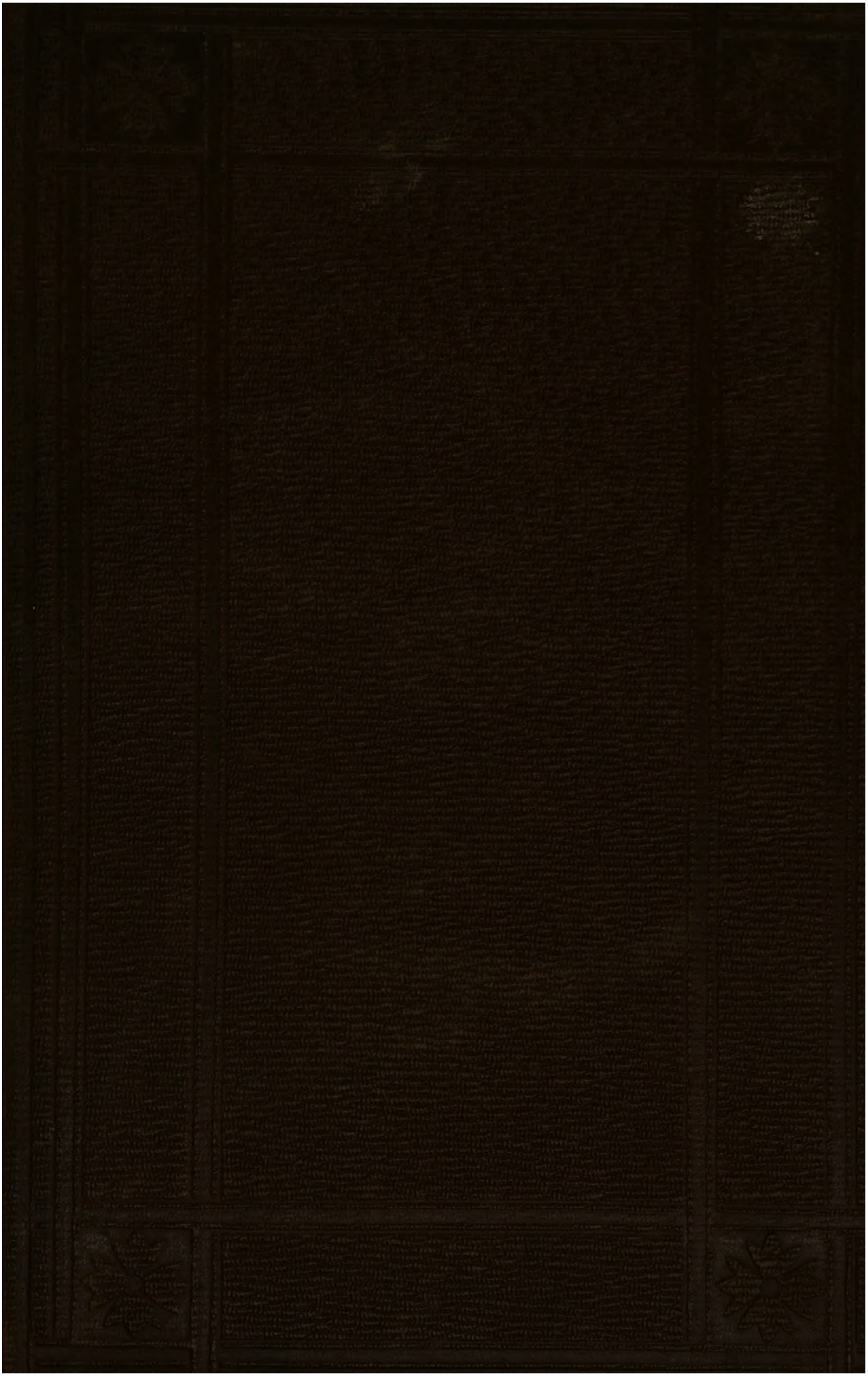


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Dr. Austen

with the best wishes of

Theodore Martin

Dublin — April 1853

CORREGGIO

A TRAGEDY

CORREGGIO

A TRAGEDY

BY ADAM OEHLENSCHLÄGER

TRANSLATED WITH NOTES BY

THEODORE MARTIN

LONDON
JOHN W PARKER AND SON WEST STRAND
MDCCCLIV


THE TAYLOR INSTITUTION
UNIVERSITY
21 MAR 1941
OF OXFORD

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

THE obscurity which hangs over the facts of Correggio's biography is not a little remarkable. Although his prolific pencil had been employed on works of great magnitude, which must, in the natural course of things, have drawn upon him the eyes of all Italy, it is a matter of uncertainty from what condition of life he sprang, under what masters he studied, how far the works of his great predecessors and contemporaries came under his view, and, finally, whether he was poor and sordid, or, on the contrary, fortunate in his circumstances and genial in his character. No authentic portrait of him exists, and although he was born only sixteen years before Vasari, and died when Vasari was twenty-two, that enthusiastic and pains-taking biographer obviously proceeds on the most vague rumours in his record of Correggio's character and life. The enquiries of more recent writers have cleared up many of the particulars of Correggio's history, and dispelled several erroneous impressions both as to the man, and the amount of recognition which he received from his contemporaries. Much, however, is still left in uncertainty, and this

uncertainty allows freer scope for a poetical treatment than would have been proper, had the facts of his life been more minutely and authentically chronicled. Of the true history of Correggio, so far as it has been ascertained, Oehlenschläger was fully cognisant, but he did not hesitate,—and no one will blame him for the license,—to leave these on one side, and to follow closely the ancient biographer of Italian art, whose errors will cling to the memory and quicken the imagination, long after more accurate and prosaic enquirers have shown them to be errors. All the characteristics of Correggio noted by Vasari have been skilfully wrought into the drama by the poet, and the incident, now well known to be apocryphal, of the artist's death from the effects of a draught of cold water, taken while overheated on his way to Correggio from Parma, laden with a sack of copper-money received in payment of a picture, furnishes a striking catastrophe to what is at once the first and the best of the art dramas in which continental writers have been prolific. The struggle of genius with adverse circumstances, its hopes, its dreams, its disappointments, its consolations, its antagonism to whatever is ignoble and mercenary, the purity of its affections, and the unselfishness of its intellect, are depicted in this play with a quiet truth which strikes directly to the heart, and with a fulness of beauty which satisfies the imagination.

The idea of the play was originally conceived by the poet in Paris in 1807, where he had opportunities of

seeing in the Louvre the spoils of the great picture galleries of Europe, with which it was at that time crowded. But it was at Parma, where the grandeur of Correggio's powers is manifested in the frescoes of the churches of San Giuseppe and San Giovanni, that this idea took actual shape.

'As I was gazing,' he says,* 'spectacles on nose, at the glorious cupola in the church of San Giovanni, the church gradually filled with people, who kneeled to their devotions round about me. I did not wish to appear conspicuous; at the same time to have knelt down with them would have appeared a piece of affectation on my part, so I withdrew into a corner, where I was not observed, and there I too prayed after my own fashion. I find this prayer recorded in my journal, along with sundry observations on art, which would be out of place here. It runs thus: 'Oh God, open and purify my heart, that it may recognise thy greatness, goodness, and beauty in nature, and in the works of man! Preserve my country, my king, my beloved, my friends! Let me not die in the land of the stranger, but return happily to my home! Give me alacrity and courage to pursue my course upon thy beautiful earth, with a heart void of hatred towards mine enemies, and strong to resist the prejudices of the world! Above all, bestow on me poetic power! Thou hast formed

* 'Meine Lebens-Erinnerungen von Adam Oehlenschläger.' Leipzig. 1850. Vol. ii. p. 196.

my mind for art, and this is the noblest telescope through which I can contemplate thy glory. After I am dead, let me live in my works, like this good Correggio, so that when I am dust, many a young heart may be gladdened and inspired by my poetry!' Such was my prayer beneath Correggio's cupola; and then the thought took palpable shape within my soul of a tragedy in which he should be the hero.'

This idea was immediately afterwards carried into execution in Rome, during the poet's residence there in the winter of 1809, where he lived on terms of close intimacy with the greatest of modern sculptors, his countryman Thorwaldsen. As Thorwaldsen is, of all moderns, the sculptor who approaches most nearly to the masters of Greece, so has Oehlenschläger of all poets been most deeply imbued with the spirit of Italian art in its culminating era. Nowhere has the impression which Italy and its treasures of pictorial art leaves upon the mind been more fully or exquisitely embodied than in this drama of Correggio, while the strength of pathos and tenderness of fancy peculiar to the northern nature give to his treatment of the story a deep and direct human interest, which is rarely to be found in the writers of the south. Tieck and a few critics of his school attacked the drama on its first appearance for what they called its sentimentalism, and in this cry they were joined by Goethe, who appears latterly to have conceived some pique against Oehlenschläger, notwithstanding his early and warm recognition of the

young Dane's remarkable dramatic powers; but the general voice of Europe at once placed it among the foremost efforts of its author's genius. That position it must always retain. Indeed, with the exception of his delightful drama of *Aladdin*, none of Oehlenschläger's numerous plays is so likely, either in subject or in treatment, to sustain his reputation wherever poetry is appreciated. Not only in Denmark, but throughout Germany, this tragedy forms part of the dramatic *répertoire*. When will either English actors or an English audience be educated to such a point as to admit of the performance on our stage of a work of this class?

Except a few extracts translated by Mr. R. P. Gillies in *Blackwood's Magazine* for December, 1820, and by Mrs. Howitt in her *Literature and Romance of Modern Europe*, the translator is not aware that any attempt has hitherto been made to present this drama in an English dress. His object has been to convey as vividly as he could the impression produced on his own mind by the original, and thereby to attract others, it may be, to the study of a writer, of great and various powers, who is too little known in England.

31, Onslow Square, Old Brompton,
10*th March*, 1854.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ANTONIO ALLEGRI, a Painter.
MARIA, his Wife.
GIOVANNI, his Son.
MICHAEL ANGELO, JULIO ROMANO, } celebrated Artists.
OTTAVIO, a Nobleman of Parma.
RICORDANO, a Nobleman of Florence.
CELESTINA, his Daughter.
SILVESTRO, a Monk.
BATTISTA, a Vintner.
FRANCESCO, his Son.
VALENTINO, NICOLO, and several Robbers.
LAURETTA, a Peasant Girl.
Messenger.
Servant.

ACT FIRST.

A square in the village of Correggio in the background a wood; to the right a large hotel; to the left ANTONIO'S *cottage, with a garden, in which he sits painting. His wife is sitting to him; her son Giovanni stands beside her, with an Agnus-Dei staff in his hand.*

ANTONIO.

STAND still, boy—hush! A moment, and I've done!
Then you may go to play again.

GIOVANNI.

Dear father,
And won't Giovanni, in the picture there,
Be soon done, too?

ANTONIO.

He will.

GIOVANNI.

And mother?

ANTONIO.

Ay!

GIOVANNI (*to his mother*).

Dear mother, you are Mary, that I see;
I am Giovanni; and my father paints us
There in the picture just as we are here;
But tell me where the little Jesus is,
That in the picture lies upon your breast?

MARIA.

In heaven.

GIOVANNI.

And how can father see him there?

MARIA.

He thinks of Jesus as the loveliest child
He can conceive.

GIOVANNI (*musing*).

Is that because he was
The loveliest of all children?

MARIA.

Yes.

ANTONIO.

Stand still!

GIOVANNI.

Father, shall I become a painter too?

ANTONIO.

Time will show that; if thou'rt industrious,
Perhaps!

GIOVANNI.

Oh father, I will be industrious!

(*Enter* SILVESTRO *from the wood. As he sees* ANTONIO *painting, he makes a sign to* MARIA, *and places himself, unobserved, behind* ANTONIO'S *chair, contemplating the picture.*)

SILVESTRO (*to himself*).

How beautiful!

IOVANNI (*to* SILVESTRO).

My father says, I too
Shall be a painter.

ANTONIO

(turns round and rises when he sees the hermit).

You here, reverend father!

SILVESTRO.

Do not let me disturb you; pray go on!
The colours will get dry.

ANTONIO.

Nay, for the present,
I've done enough, good father; and my boy
Will scarce submit to stand much longer still,
His young blood must be moving.

SILVESTRO.

How very beautiful this picture is!

ANTONIO.

I have another here, for you to hang
Within your cell!

SILVESTRO.

And you have thought of me?

ANTONIO.

The little thing is finish'd. You should be
Most truly welcome to the larger work,
But I, alas! must sell it presently;
We needs must live.

SILVESTRO.

My good Antonio,
I thank you from my heart! This lovely work
Would be too much for me; on me it would
Be thrown away. Nature is my great picture;
In yonder woodland shades divinity
Reveals itself to me. Pictures, my friend,

Are for the palace, the chateau, the church!
The man, whom levity and trivial cares
Wean step by step from nature and from God,
Is by the artist's hand led back to both.

ANTONIO.

Think you, our art is capable of that?

SILVESTRO.

Art is indeed the beauteous rainbow arch,
Which spans the void of space 'twixt earth and heaven.

ANTONIO.

That is religion's office, is it not?

SILVESTRO.

Not so; religion, like a cherub stands,
And bears the lovely toy upon her wings.

ANTONIO.

A toy! In very truth, you name it well!
I will go fetch your picture. [*Exit.*

SILVESTRO.

Good Maria,
Tell me, how fares it with Antonio's health?

MARIA.

Ah me! you see how pale he is.

SILVESTRO.

Nay, nay,
There's nothing, child, in that. Don't fret thyself.
He's very sensitive,—all artists are,—
Fire burns and wastes, you know, as well as warms.
Yet does his passion ne'er lay hold on him
With vulture talons, like a ravening beast;
It floats, a passing meteor, in the air,
And straight is quenched again. All that he needs
Is rest and cheerfulness, and these he has.

MARIA.

He is too good and gentle for this world;
Like his own art, a vision beautiful,
Which every passing cloud can overcast.
Oh, reverend father! there's a something here
Which says to me, I shall not keep him long.

SILVESTRO.

Maria, child!—what idle whims are these?
You weep?

MARIA.

Oh yes! I shall not keep him long.
His spirit pants to soar above the earth;
Life is no more to him than a grey mist,
Shot with the dyes of the eternal light.

SILVESTRO.

Does he not love thee, say?

MARIA.

Oh, yes! he loves me.

SILVESTRO.

And loves he not his child?

MARIA.

No father more.

SILVESTRO.

And loves he not all things are worthy love?

MARIA.

Heaven knows, he does, he does!

SILVESTRO.

Then dry your tears,
Trust God, and hope the best! His heart is full
Of this earth's sympathies and strivings yet.

All artists love the earth, because they love,
As children do, whate'er delights the sense.
True, like bold eagles, they at times are fain
To mount o'er rock and cloudland up to heaven,
Yet do they love to drop again to earth,
Which gives its nurture to their fiery blood.
Life must love life perforce; 'tis nature's law.
Believe me, hoary eld alone can gaze
On Death's drear blank abysses undismay'd.

MARIA.

He comes.

SILVESTRO.

My child, he must not see thee sad.

ANTONIO (*entering with a picture*).

Your picture, reverend father, here it is!

SILVESTRO.

Ah, so! a sweet repentant Magdalen!

ANTONIO.

Refuge she sought, like you, in woodland shades;
But not, like you, from love of solitude
And being all aweary of the world;
A sinful girl, who, stung by sharp remorse,
Fled to the thicket like a startled roe,
To leave life's dread seductions far behind.
Yet is it fine, methinks, when woman thus,
Though fallen once, uplifts herself again;
There are not many men who compass that.
Therefore 'tis meet that as a saint she stand
Before our eyes. And seeing that she was
A lovely woman, I have, so to speak,
Portrayed her in the picture as the goddess
Of woodland eremites,—as your own goddess.
Well, there she is!

SILVESTRO (*smiling*).

You artists, worst and best,
Can never quite abjure the pagan's creed.
As goddess! My own goddess!

ANTONIO.

Goddess, saint,
Are but two titles for one thing, I trow,—
Incarnate good, that works for our avail!

SILVESTRO.

So look'd at, possibly. A lovely picture!
The dusky forest gloom, the flaxen hair,
The pure white skin, the robe of azure blue,
The skull in contrast with youth's fullest bloom,
The woman's gentle grace, the mighty book,—
Herein you have, with matchless skill, resolved
Things opposite into divinest harmony.

ANTONIO.

I am indeed most glad it pleases you.

SILVESTRO.

I'll hang it up within my little cell;
There it will shed the dawn and sunset glow
Upon my morning and my evening prayers.
May Heaven compensate you, for I cannot;
I am a poor recluse. But pray accept
These roots, Antonio, for the love I bear you!
They're nourishing and wholesome, and their juice
Soothes, like some spicy draught, the weary frame!
Take them and drink them morning, friend, and eve,
At sunrise and at sunset; then shall I
Be on my knees before this lovely picture.
Their juice, my prayers, and your own nature, soon,
I trust, will bring you back to perfect health.

ANTONIO.

My illness has been gone this many a day.
Yet do I thank you heartily. I like
A spicy morning draught.

SILVESTRO.

Now fare ye well!

ANTONIO (*as* SILVESTRO *is about to retire*).

Tarry a moment, friend, and let me look!
Has not the little picture caught a speck?
(*contemplates the picture with affection.*)
No! 'Tis untouched.—So! Good! And now farewell!
(*Gives it back to him.*)

SILVESTRO.

Farewell! Yet once again accept my thanks! [*Exit.*

(*During the preceding dialogue, the boy* GIOVANNI *has fetched a piece of charcoal, and sketched some figures of men upon the wall of the hotel.*)

ANTONIO.

It always gives me pain to part, as now,
From any of my pictures. We become
So bound up with the thing our hands have formed;
It is a child, a portion of our soul!
How happy is the poet! He can have
His children all beside him at all times;
The painter, he is a poor father, who
Must send them forth into the great broad world,
Where they must thenceforth manage for themselves.
What is the boy about? How! painting fresco
Upon our neighbour's wall! Give over, child;
Landlord Battista will not suffer this.
You know he has forbidden it many a time.
Thou foolish urchin, do not draw the leg

So scraggy! (*helps him.*) So! That's something like
the thing.
Ha! ha! the rogue is not so very bad!
But he must have a cap, to be complete.

GIOVANNI.

Oh, and a sabre, father, and a sabre!

ANTONIO.

And so he must.

GIOVANNI.

Let me make that myself!

ANTONIO.

Long, mind, and crooked!

BATTISTA

(*enters from the hotel, and sees him*).

There the old fool stands,
Just like a little child, and helps the brat
To spoil my wall, in place of cuffing him.
Antonio, are you deaf?

ANTONIO (*with embarrassment*).

Ah, neighbour mine!

BATTISTA.

The devil! you too destroying all my wall?

ANTONIO.

Pray, take it not amiss, friend. Many a time
I have forbid the boy.

BATTISTA.

Forbid, and yet
You lend a helping hand?

ANTONIO.

You see he made
This veteran's leg preposterously lean.
Nay, never frown! What mischief can it do,
To have the small soldado standing there
Upon the wall, a trusty sentinel?
He'll serve to scare off robbers from your house.

BATTISTA.

That's more than you could do, with all your skill.
You let my wall alone, I say! If you
Won't punish your young whelp, I'll do't myself.

ANTONIO.

Come, come, friend, take it not so much amiss!
How can you be so angry with the boy?
The germ of what's to follow will peep out
Betimes. 'Tis instinct stirs within the child.
His fingers itch, and he perforce must paint.
Even so the duckling does not shun the brook.
Even so the young bird proves his pinion's strength.
Water and air lure them; and colours him.

BATTISTA.

Bah! Humbug! Saw you e'er my Francesco
Disfiguring the walls? There was a child,
Quiet, and well brought up! And now in Rome
He's growing a great painter.

ANTONIO.

Ah, indeed?

BATTISTA.

I tell you, a great painter, so he is!
A real artist, one who paints by rule,
By science, sir! When once his schooling's done,
Under his present master, I will send him
To Raphael, who shall turn him out complete.

ANTONIO.

But Raphael has been dead these eighteen years.

BATTISTA.

There's others living, then, as good as he!
I've money, and on him I stint it not;
And since the fashion has grown up of late
For every man to paint, why, zounds! my son
Shall paint it with the best. I've lots of cash!
On him I spare it not;—brushes I buy,
Chalks, colours, canvas, palettes, all he needs.
For to my thinking nothing is more sad,
Than art, kept down and marr'd by poverty.

ANTONIO.

And chiefly, when 'tis poverty of soul.

BATTISTA.

What's that you say? What do you mean by that?

ANTONIO.

Think you, it is the brush that makes the painter?
Trust me, it never did, and never can.

BATTISTA.

But my Francesco, look you, will be one!
None of your common village daubers he,
Who paint mere daylight,—no, but—

ANTONIO.

Night effects?
I can paint these too.

BATTISTA.

Oh! Your trumpery picture!
There is not even common sense in that.
You make the infant, like a glow-worm, shine.

ANTONIO.

Prithee, blaspheme not! Common sense! Go to!
If you would comprehend what is divine,
Your soul must be by sense divine inspired.

BATTISTA.

'Odslife, you deem yourself divine, methinks?

ANTONIO.

Sir, I am poor, self-tutor'd, and I claim
No place beside the great immortal men,
Who with their glorious works have bless'd the world.
Nay more, their works have never met mine eyes.
Still, still, that Nature form'd me too, like them,
An artist,—that I merit not thy scorn,
I do believe, nor do I stand alone
In so believing.

BATTISTA.

Because silly fools
Have purchased now and then your showy daubs,
For sums a deal too large, you think so, eh?

ANTONIO.

Listen, Battista—you are mine host! Bravo!
You are a famous cook;—Bravissimo!
A famous cook is worthy of all honour.
You have found meals for me and my poor wife,
And I am some few scudi in your debt.
Have patience, I will sell my picture soon.
You must not let it disconcert you, friend,
Should your son prove no painter after all.
He can be something else. 'Twould never do,
Were all men to be painters for themselves.
There must be some to give the painters work.
Then do not fret,—have patience, and supply me
With what I want today, and one day more,
And I the next will pay you all I owe.

BATTISTA.

You shall have nought from me, till I am paid.

ANTONIO.

So be it—I cannot beg, I'll rather starve.

A MESSENGER (*enters and goes up to Battista.*)

A letter, sir, from Rome. [*Exit.*

BATTISTA

(*opens the letter and sees the signature.*)

From my son's master?
Now shall you see, this sings a different strain.

ANTONIO

(*stops him as he is about to read it.*)

Is this the first you have received from him?

BATTISTA.

Ay, but it will not be the last, I warrant.

ANTONIO.

He is reputed for a man of sense,
An honest man, and a good artist, too.
I'll wager now, that Lucas says, with me,
Your son, Francesco, ne'er will make a painter.

BATTISTA.

How?

ANTONIO.

Do you take the bet—the stake a dinner?

BATTISTA.

And what am I to have, if you shall lose?

ANTONIO.

My picture there!

BATTISTA.

The last that you have done?

ANTONIO.

My picture to a dinner, Lucas says,
Francesco ne'er will be a painter!

BATTISTA.

Well,
You are a headstrong, self-conceited fellow!
Blame no one but yourself, then, if you lose.

ANTONIO

(*offering him his hand*).

Fear not. Is it a bet?

BATTISTA.

I am content.
There is no need that we shake hands upon it.
'Tis only friends do that.

ANTONIO.

I am your foe,
As little, as Francesco is a painter.

BATTISTA.

That's to be seen.

ANTONIO.

Now read!

BATTISTA (*reads.*)

"Take back your son!
He ne'er was meant by Nature for an artist,
And you but waste your money in the hope."

(*making an effort to restrain his wrath.*)

ANTONIO.

Said I not well? I knew it must be so.

Look you, the bungler has some grains of sense.
Nay, nay, why chafe? You have no cause for wrath.
Rather rejoice, you've fallen into the hands
Of one who neither robs you of your gold,
Nor cheats your son of his more precious years.
Send for Francesco home, let him assist you,
In keeping house here,—that is better far,
And much more rational in every way.
Nay, be not angry! but submit in peace.
Adieu! you'll mind the wager; 'tis our need
Constrains me to remind you, not my will. [*Exit.*

BATTISTA.

'Take back your son; he ne'er was meant'—Confound it!
To have the saucy knave go crowing off,
Whilst I, poor devil, stand dumbfounded here!
Oh, that I knew some way to shame him!—ay!
To pull his pride down! There, there stands my house,
And there his cottage; not a stranger comes
Within my doors, but visits the dull rogue,
To look, forsooth, at these vile daubs of his.
They speak much more of him, in other towns,
Than of——

(*enter* OTTAVIO *from the hotel.*)

Here comes my Lord Ottavio!
I must be calm! He loves not solemn looks.

OTTAVIO.

Hilloah, Battista! How? You seem put out!
What have you there? A billet-doux? So ho!
Is it your sweetheart has discarded you?

BATTISTA.

Not me, sir, but my son she has.

OTTAVIO.

Your son! How so?

BATTISTA.

The Muse, or whatsoe'er the jade is call'd!
His master writes from Rome, to say I ought
To take him home, for he will never make
A painter.

OTTAVIO.

So! I'm very glad to hear it;
Now he can be my keeper of accounts,
My steward.

BATTISTA.

Oh, your Excellency! Thanks!

OTTAVIO.

I've long desired to make you this proposal;
You are too far away from me; I need
To have some person always near at hand.
I've miss'd you ever since you took this place.
'Tis not sufficient for my purpose, that
You come to me at Parma once a week.

BATTISTA.

Indeed your Excellency's kindness moves
My father's heart—I may say, unto tears.

OTTAVIO.

How came you by a notion so absurd,
As e'er to make a painter of the boy?

BATTISTA.

Because 'tis grown the fashion everywhere;
And artists now are held in such repute,
That even the nieces of the cardinals
Scarce serve them for their wives.

OTTAVIO.

Perhaps Antonio
Has put you on the thought by his example?

BATTISTA.

Oh, he's a miserable devil; ne'er
Set he his cap at dames of quality.
He was contented with much smaller game:
He took a potter's daughter for his wife.

OTTAVIO.

Battista, much I envy him his choice!
For she, compared with dames of quality,
Is as the rosebud to the painted vase.

BATTISTA.

You think so?

OTTAVIO.

Know you what has kept me here
So long?

BATTISTA.

Why, Hm! Your Eccellenza loves—

OTTAVIO.

You know?

BATTISTA.

The charming landscape, and my house
Serves as a summer villa, so to speak.
I'm sadly grieved your Eccellenza can't
Stay longer with us at the present time.

OTTAVIO.

And I am grieved more sadly! Have they put
The saddle on my horse?

BATTISTA.

They have, my lord!

OTTAVIO.

You follow me to town?

BATTISTA.

Yes, Eccellenza!
This afternoon.

OTTAVIO.

'Tis well! But, to return
To this same painter. Do you know, my friend,
That this poor painter doth a treasure own,
Which much I envy him?

BATTISTA.

What! he, my lord?
A treasure? He has nothing,—not a farthing.

OTTAVIO.

Yet many a ducat would I gladly give,
To be the lord of that same treasure, friend.

BATTISTA.

Your Eccellenza fills me with surprise!

OTTAVIO.

He has a rare Madonna, I were fain
To buy of him.

BATTISTA.

Oh, his new picture! Well,
Its utmost value can't be very great.
Permit me, Eccellenza, to remark,
'Tis no ideal of God's mother; no,
'Tis only his own wife, and nothing more.

OTTAVIO.

What would you say, if this original
Were, in my eyes, the loveliest of Madonnas?

BATTISTA.

Ah, now, my lord, a light breaks in on me:
The painter's wife has in your grace's eyes
Found grace.

OTTAVIO.

No more; your prate is from the mark!
In all man's intercourse with woman, grace
Flows ever from the woman, be she fair.
Beauty's her patent of nobility.

BATTISTA.

Your grace thinks like a cavalier, and does
High honour to your rank and ancestry.

OTTAVIO.

Yet were I loth to do the husband wrong.
You know him; say, is he the sort of man,
Who would——

BATTISTA.

Lord, lord! He's a good easy soul,
That goes through life as if it were a dream.
'Tis my belief he took himself a wife,
Simply that he might have a model cheap.
She is the sweetest creature in the world;
Your lordship call'd her well Madonna. Yet
Her husband does not treat her as he should;
He lets her want for all those small nick-nacks,
A wife so young and handsome must desire;
Nay more, he scarce can find her bread to eat.
Sweetly she bears her lot, and patiently:
Indeed your grace would do a Christian act,
To show some kindness to the dear good soul.

OTTAVIO

(*turns and observes* ANTONIO, *who has again come out, and is painting*).

Again at work on that delicious picture!
He has another, liker to her still,
Which is completely finished; that I'll buy.
To Parma he shall come with wife and child,
And paint the ceiling of my great saloon.

(*approaches* ANTONIO, *and salutes him.*)

BATTISTA (*aside*).

Oh rare, oh rare! my vengeance comes unsought!

OTTAVIO.

This picture, too, will soon be finished; eh,
Master Antonio?

ANTONIO.

Yes, my gracious lord!
I hope that I shall finish it to-day.

OTTAVIO.

You had another, similar to this
In all respects.

ANTONIO.

Not quite the same, my lord;
I've chosen here a different attitude.

OTTAVIO.

Ah! may I see it, master?

ANTONIO.

Certainly.

(*he fetches another picture.*)

OTTAVIO.

Is this commissioned?

ANTONIO.

No, my lord, it still
Awaits a purchaser.

OTTAVIO.

So fair a creature,
As your most exquisite Madonna there,
Will not have long to wait for one, methinks.
Admirers will be found at every turn.

ANTONIO.

Admirers are abundant, but, my lord,
Mere admiration will not do for me.
Some rare coincidence of things must chance,
Ere he who most admires shall purchase too.
If admiration, good my lord, were all,
I need not with my picture travel far.
I know a man who dotes on it—a man,
To whom I'd be most glad to yield it up,
So he could only pay for it.

OTTAVIO.

And he?

ANTONIO.

Is here—myself, my lord.

OTTAVIO.

Yourself? Even so.
I comprehend; well may you love the picture,
'Tis very nicely touch'd, and does you honour.

ANTONIO.

Ah, 'tis not for the honour that I love it:
An artist needs must love his handiwork.
This is not vanity; he loves it, as
The outgrowth, the expression of his soul.

OTTAVIO.

And yet, methinks, Master Antonio may
Find solace for the loss. I have been told,
This sweet Madonna does not emanate
Wholly and solely from the artist's brain;
But that in this our outward world lives one,
Who has contributed no scanty share.
You still retain the graceful prototype;
The perfect statue stands within your home,
And what you sell is but a plaster cast.

ANTONIO.

A cast this picture can no ways be called;
And yet 'tis more a portrait than perhaps
It ought to be, and therefore have I made
A second here, of more ideal turn.

OTTAVIO (*aside*).

Commend me to the portrait, though, my friend!
(*Aloud*) Antonio, will you sell this charming picture?

ANTONIO (*springs up*).

My gracious lord, I will—most readily.

OTTAVIO.

In Parma I have built a large saloon,
To hang the pictures which I value most.
There is no artist of repute, of whom
I have not some choice specimen, and you
Must also hang there.

ANTONIO.

My good lord, this honour
Surpasses my deserts. Have you indeed
Pictures by all the masters there?

OTTAVIO.

I have.

ANTONIO.

Except some few church pictures, I have seen
Nothing of the great masters.

OTTAVIO.

How did you
Become a painter, then?

ANTONIO.

God only knows.
It grew up bit by bit, I know not how.
I've studied nature constantly, 'tis true.

OTTAVIO.

Well, then, I wish to buy this work of yours.
To Parma bring it, and with all despatch,
And you shall then see all my treasures there.
I'll give you eighty scudi for the picture,
Paid down at once.

ANTONIO (*surprised*).

Oh, that's too much, my lord!
My picture is not worth so large a price.

OTTAVIO.

A nobleman should prize all noble things;
He chaffers not with artists, he rewards them,—
And as their patron aids.

ANTONIO.

My gracious lord!

OTTAVIO.

In Parma you shall paint my portrait too.
But prithee, master, will you kindly ask
Your sweet young wife to step one moment forth,
Till I assure me, if her portrait's like.

ANTONIO.

She is a little shy, my gracious lord,
Before strange people, and especially
Men of such rank as you—

OTTAVIO.

Nay, that's mere fancy!
Pray call her forth!

ANTONIO.

I will, if you desire it.
Yet, as I said, I have not sought to catch
A likeness in the way that you suppose;
For portrait painting, in its proper sense,
I do not understand. (*Calls*) Maria! Wife!—
'Tis only—well, well, you will see!—Maria!

MARIA (*enters*).

What do you want, dear husband?

(*observes* OTTAVIO, *and curtseys to him.*)

ANTONIO (*aside to her*).

This gentleman
Has bought my picture, gives me eighty scudi.
He is a nobleman; he prizes art,
And wants to see, if the Maria there
(*pointing to the picture*)
Resembles, sweetest, the Maria here.

OTTAVIA.

Your name, fair lady, is Maria too?

MARIA.

Yes, at your service.

OTTAVIO

(*looks cursorily at the picture, and closely at Maria*).

What delight I find
In tracing all the points wherein the two
Madonnas are alike, and where unlike.
Sir, 'tis most certain, you have shown much skill;
And to the natural bloom, the unmatch'd beauty,
Which are your bride's adornments, lent an air
Of holiness, of heavenward aspiration,
Which clothe her with a beauty nigh divine.
One thing alone, I know, clothes her more fairly;
The innocence, the sweet simplicity,
Which Nature's self has furnished her withal.
Who sees your picture only will be loud
In praise of the Madonna; he will say,
In Nature there is nought more beautiful!
But side by side who sees your wife and it,
In rapture must exclaim, This only God,
God only, and no painter, can create!

I, who delight in art and nature both,
Must equally admire your skilful hand,
And the sweet grace and beauty of your wife.

ANTONIO.

You are too gracious, good my lord.

OTTAVIO.

And now
Time presses, and I must away to horse,
Though I would gladly linger in the chains
Of beauty, nature, art. But you will come,
And stay with me in Parma? My palazzo
Is large; and there we shall find room for you,
And for your wife and child. You have already
Painted in Parma some most charming frescoes,
In San Giuseppe's church, and San Giovanni's;
And you shall paint the roof of my saloon.
Farewell, my friend! Farewell, sweet mistress! We
Shall meet ere long, and then it shall go hard
But we are happy as our hearts can wish. [*Exit.*

BATTISTA.

Well now, Antonio, well! And will you say,
I brought you evil tidings?

ANTONIO.

Come! your hand!
You are an honest fellow!

BATTISTA (*smiling malignantly*).

Ah, no doubt!
But I must go to get your dinner ready. [*Exit.*

ANTONIO.

By heavens, 'tis true; 'tis true! Whene'er our need
Is sorest, help is ever near at hand.
Come, wife, Maria, come, rejoice with me!
(*embraces her.*)

Is it not true, what I so oft maintain,
The world has some good people in it still ?
A man has but to toil,—achieve some work,—
And straight he finds a patron, help, and friends !
Thou lookest sad ! Nay, love, rejoice with me !
I cannot guide the pencil now ; no, no !
My hand is full of tremor, like my heart,
For very gladness. (*Enter* GIOVANNI) Come, thou darling boy,
Come with thy father ! We shall dine anon ;
Till then, my boy, we'll have a romp together.

(*Takes the boy in his arms and goes into the wood with him.*)

MARIA.

Rejoice ? Oh God, my heart forebodes some ill.
This lord, he shows too clearly by his look,
His touch—Oh, holy Virgin ! My Antonio,
Dost thou rejoice ? Thy pure, unspotted soul
Hath no suspicion of his vile intent.
Yet the betrayer shall be brought to shame.
But thou, thy hope, thy joy ! alas for them !
No longer is our heaven serene and blue,
A hot sirocco fans us with its breath ;
The hurricane ascends on murky clouds,
And lours above our little cottage home.
Alas, a doom is on our lowly lot !
The livid lightning, revelling in ruin,
Is charged with fate ! and we—who, who shall save us ?

END OF ACT FIRST.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE *as in First Act.*

MICHAEL ANGELO.—JULIO ROMANO.

JULIO.

COME! See, this place is cool, and 'neath the trees
The breeze is felt. Ha! there is the hotel;
A house of goodly size, as we were told,
And new withal. We are much better off
Here, than in Reggio.

MICHAEL.

Confound the rascal!

JULIO.

Nay, Master Michael, nay, your blood is hot;
No wonder, in a scorching day like this.
Come, sit beneath this tree, and let it cool;
Mine host, they say, is famous for his wine.
Rate not the driver with such venom, friend.
Wheels will break now and then, with every care;
Nay, on occasion, Time's great wheel itself
So lamely rolls, one almost might suppose,
It too were broke.

MICHAEL.

You and your wheels be hang'd!

JULIO.

Anon it goes as soft as sledge on snow,
Till we scarce think there is a wheel at all.

MICHAEL.

Pshaw, cease your jesting!

JULIO.

When your anger ceases.

MICHAEL.

You'll have to wait some time, then!

JULIO.

Be it so,
I've still some quips in store. Come, sit ye down
Under this oak; more meet, no doubt, it were,
The laurel flung its shadows round your head;
But, be content, this leaf is also fine,
Kin to the laurel.

MICHAEL (*seats himself*).

Ho! You grow polite!

JULIO.

Our dining with the duke in Modena,
Is now impossible.

MICHAEL.

So it would seem.

JULIO.

Our noble host, and he of Mantua,
Will wait for us in vain.

MICHAEL.

And let them wait!
'Twill serve them for an exercise in patience;
And they have need of one.

WAITER (*enters*).

Your orders, sirs?

JULIO.

Bring us some wine, my lad! What wines have you?

WAITER.

We have all sorts of wine, your Excellency.

MICHAEL.

All from one hogshead tapp'd, eh? Is't not so?

JULIO.

Bring us the best you have.

MICHAEL.

Nay! what the plague,
You always make folks set us down for princes,
Travelling, for some mere whim, incognito,
But who, by reckless ostentatious waste,
Let out their secret, when they pay their bill.
Say, varlet, how's your Florentine? Good, eh?

WAITER.

'Tis excellent.

MICHAEL.

A stoup of that, then! Quick! [*Exit waiter.*

JULIO.

Would you not rather have some sweeter wine?

MICHAEL.

Great heaven forefend! You fancy sweet wine? Stay,
I'll call the fellow back.

JULIO.

Nay, nay, I drink
What you drink.

MICHAEL.

You do wisely. Your sweet wine
Is rarely wholesome,—taken freely, never.
Here it were worse than want. Be on your guard

'Gainst all sweet wines. Remember, friend, they cost
Your master, the great Raphael, his life.

(*Enter waiter, with wine.*)

JULIO.

Here is the wine. (*pours out some, and drinks.*)
Ha! Famous! How refreshing
A cool draught is on such a broiling day!

MICHAEL (*tasting the wine.*)

This wine is trash. There's copper in it, knave!
Why, what the devil, would you poison us?
Another wine instanter,—better too,—
Or I will fling the goblet in your face!

WAITER.

Better we have, signor, but it is dear.

MICHAEL.

For five baiocchi I can have the best.
Bring it this instant, rogue!

WAITER (*aside*).

He knows what's what.

JULIO.

Still the old man in small things as in great!

MICHAEL.

What do you mean?

JULIO.

I mean, good Master Michael,
You might have been, had you been so disposed,
A wine merchant. Now can you fancy why?

MICHAEL.

Why, why?

JULIO.

Because Dame Nature, at your birth,
Endow'd you with the power, to make yourself,
Just as your fancy or your humour prompts,
Or great or small.

MICHAEL.

The last is wondrous easy,
As here, alas! we see. Is it not shameful?
Our Italy is a paradise; all round
Wine gushes from huge clusters hanging free
On every highway, by the noon-day sun
Warm'd, ripen'd, fill'd with spirit and with fire;
But then comes man, and with his knavish tricks
Spoils and adulterates heaven's glorious gift.
Is it not scandalous?

JULIO.

Well, well, don't fume!
Here comes a flask of better stuff no doubt.

(*Enter waiter, with wine.*)

MICHAEL (*tasting*).

The wine is good.

WAITER.

I wait your further orders.

MICHAEL.

Begone! We'll call you, when we want you, knave!

JULIO.

Shall we bespeak some dinner? And whilst they
Are making ready, we may to the church,
And see some pictures by the early masters.
There should be works of old Giotto's there,
Nay, even of Cimabue's.

MICHAEL.

Why, man, though

The place could boast the very finest heads
On golden grounds by holy Luke himself,
I would not go. Have I not broiled enough
Under this heat already, and shall I
Go poking in damp aisles, to see how long
Art stumbled in its early days of darkness?
I'm sick to death of all this stuff! It may
Amuse one's curiosity awhile;
But say, what can it teach me? Tell me that!
True drawing you will look for there in vain,
And heads I can invent and sketch myself.
You like such things, I don't! So get you gone.
You have adopted, as your Raphael's heir,
His passionate love for the old catholic life.
That's your affair, not mine; but have a care,
In your next picture, that you don't endow
Your hero with a set of legs and arms
A world too puny! Such things in a saint
May pass unchidden, but a hero's frame
Must be a shade more brawny and compact.

JULIO.

No painter makes his legs and arms, methinks,
More fitting for their place than Raphael did!
You speak as sculptor always—painter, never.
The stone expresses form, and colour soul.
Beauty of limb and mould we learn from Greece;
But in the stone the countenance is blanch'd,
And all the language of the eye is lost.
Rightly to feel the sentiment,—the soul,
Which from the face's lines discourses, we
Must closely scan art's simple infancy.

MICHAEL.

Well, go, scan till you're sick on't. I stay here.
I much prefer such breezes fanning me
Under the leafy shade of boughs like these,
To wandering in search of musty saints,
In chancels, choirs, and dismal oratories.

JULIO.

Go to! You've often talk'd this way before,
And yet have been persuaded in the end,
To visit some old work of art with me.
Say what you will, you love simplicity,
And quiet power. You have an artist's heart;
'Tis only on your lips the sceptic rails.

MICHAEL.

You are most condescending, most consoling!
Tush, man, your silken words are lost on me.
Nor soul have I, nor sentiment—I take
Your own new-fangled phrase—like your great master;
I am no Raphael, I am well aware.

JULIO.

The powers of mighty men are various.
You both are true archangels in your art.
Michael, or Raphael, which is first? If he
Be like a cherub fair with silver pinions,
And blooming childlike head, you flame in mail,
A seraph borne on six vast oaring wings.

MICHAEL.

The liquor's coppery fumes make you poetic.
Away, Sir Urian!—I meant to say
Sir Uriel. Of course, you are the third?
Eh, friend? Go to, sir flatterer, you may
Fool silly women,—me you don't.

JULIO.

Come, come!

MICHAEL.

I won't!

JULIO.

Well, stay, and order something good
For our refection.

MICHAEL.

I am sorely grieved,
You cannot feast it with the duke to-day.
A homely citizen of Florence I,
And used to craftsman's fare. Dine you with me,
You must put up with homely entertainment.

JULIO.

Get what you please.

MICHAEL.

Commend me to your saints!

JULIO.

I will acquaint them of your Lenten fare;
'Twill please them well. They love such penances.
[*Exit.*

MICHAEL.

Thou merry knave! 'Gad, his shrewd banterings
Have well nigh cured me of my surly fit.
A right good soul is Julio Romano,
Would he but lay his fopperies aside. (*drinks.*)
[*Enter* BATTISTA.
What sort of monkey have we here, I wonder?

BATTISTA.

I've just this moment heard, with deep dismay,
The very near escape your grace has had,
In this unlucky business of the carriage.
The heavens be praised that matters are no worse!
'Tis a God's mercy that you were not hurt,
No fracture of the skull, or broken arm,
Or, what were worse than all, a broken leg.
For, come the worst to the worst, your grace belike
Might do without your arms—but without legs,
How could one ever get along in life?
Still, since an accident there was to be,

'Tis fortunate it happened where it did.
Self-praise becometh no man; but my house
Is good, and holds all heart of man could wish.

MICHAEL.

Of that we've had a sample in your wine.

BATTISTA.

I've given it roundly to that careless knave,
For bringing common wine to gentlefolks
Of your condition. There must always be
Distinction. We're all mortal men, 'tis true,
But, lord, degrees are different!

MICHAEL.

Copper, sir,
No mortal man can in his vitals bear.

BATTISTA.

It is not copper, Eccellenza; only
A little wormwood, meant to make the wine
Savour a trifle bitter on the tongue.
'Tis wholesome, very. Yet it stands to reason,
Your grace should have a higher class of wine.

MICHAEL.

I'm neither gracious nor an Eccellenza;
Nor needs I should be, sir, to get good wine.

BATTISTA.

May I be bold enough to ask your name?

MICHAEL.

They call me Master Michael,—Michael of Florence.

BATTISTA (*aside*).

Michael of Florence? And with such a carriage,
Attendants, horses! Bah! I'll stake my life,

'Tis some great gentleman!—his pride proves that.
But fair and soft! his fancies must be humour'd.
(*aloud.*)
Ah, so, good Master!—Michael of Florence, eh?
Ha! ha!—What would you like to have for dinner?

MICHAEL.

Laugh you at me?

BATTISTA.

Nay, heaven forefend! He! he!
'Tis only at the name. Ha! ha!

MICHAEL.

The devil!
And pray, sir, what's the matter with the name?
'Tis one a duke, sir, need not blush to wear.

BATTISTA.

Oh, no; most certainly. Names are but titles,
Mere sounds that, spoken, die away in air.
Thus, for example, I am called Battista;
Yet that implies not that I am baptized,
Because—in fact, the thing is clear as day.

MICHAEL.

And what, pray, think you, does my name import?

BATTISTA.

There's something under it.

MICHAEL.

You know me, then?

BATTISTA.

Yes, by your attributes, most gracious sir.

MICHAEL.

Have you seen any of my handiworks?
My attributes, as you are pleased to call them?

BATTISTA.

Well—attributes;—I mean the style you travel.

MICHAEL (*impatiently*).

Know you that I am Buonarotti, sir?

BATTISTA.

Can this be true? How! Michael—Buonarotti!
Yes, to be sure, the words exactly fit;
There only needs to add the Angelo,
And then we have the whole great man complete!
O rare good luck! Does my poor house contain
The mightiest of artists? Luck indeed!

MICHAEL.

It may be so, my friend. I sit *outside*.

BATTISTA.

Oh, blessings on the day!—most happy day!
Most noble sir, order, eat, drink, and sleep
Within my house unto your heart's content!
I'll not accept one penny from you, sir,—
No, not a maravedi!

MICHAEL.

How so?

BATTISTA.

How so?
Think you, mine host, who erewhile entertained
The Raphael, for whom the Raphael painted
A glorious picture in his dining-hall,
At parting, in requital—think you, sir,
He is the only man of all our craft,
Who bears a love for art within his breast?
No, surely not! And as, by all the world,
You're rated thrice as great as Raphael,
My admiration, wonder, and delight,
Of course are thrice as great!

MICHAEL.

And so, of course,
'Tis fit my gratitude, thrice greater, too,
Should paint three pictures for your dining-hall?

BATTISTA.

The heavens forbid! The smallest chip of marble,
By your rare master chisel lightly touched,
What other talisman need I than that,
To draw all Europe thronging to my house?

MICHAEL.

It grieves me I lack leisure, else I'd carve
An allegoric statue for your hall
Of Selfishness—the figure large as life.
I have the model ready to my hand.

(*Observes* ANTONIO, *who has returned and resumed his work.*)

What do I see? Per Bacco! as I live,
A painter, in his work abstracted,—lost!
Why, yes, it is so. Man, why beg of me,
When you possess here, at your very door,
Men who have both the power to paint, and will?

BATTISTA (*aside*).

I shall get nothing out of him, that's clear.
Well, I must turn his presence to account.

MICHAEL.

Who is that man, who paints so busily?

BATTISTA.

He is my best, most intimate of friends.

MICHAEL.

A choice recommendation! (*aside.*) If he be
As noble in his art as in his friendship,
He'll surely reach its highest pinnacle.

BATTISTA.

(*Aside.*) It works. (*Aloud.*) Great sir, you ought indeed to know him!
He's an original genius;—does not mould
Himself on great examples, nor by study;
No, no; with him all comes by nature, straight
From his own fancy. ''Tis the only way,'
I often hear him say; 'for artifice
Destroys all real art.' There as he sits,
Though you'd not guess it by his looks, I swear,
He thinks he's more than match for Raphael!

MICHAEL.

A modest estimate!

BATTISTA.

And yet he is
A good and worthy creature; only he
Can't bear to hear of artists city-bred.
He thinks their life may be more brilliant, but
He calls it much outcry and little wool.

MICHAEL.

There he is right; sheep pasturing and wool
Thrive ever best where grass doth most abound.

BATTISTA.

His little son, too, has a deal of genius;
There is a sketch of his upon the wall.
His father gave him very little help.
You cannot fancy his delight, good soul!
When he observed the boy's dexterity.

MICHAEL.

I long to know a man of mark so great;
If such the apple, what must be the tree!

BATTISTA.

So please you, I will introduce you, sir.

MICHAEL.

As brother in the art.

BATTISTA.

I would prefer
Not to announce your name.

MICHAEL.

Well, as you please!
Go babble with him to your heart's content,
And leave me here to drain my cup in peace.

BATTISTA (*goes up to* ANTONIO).

A good digestion to you, friend Antonio!
I hope your meal was to your mind to-day?

ANTONIO.

Dear sir, in sooth I'm heartily ashamed;
You've shown yourself so good and kind to me—
Whilst I to you—but pray forgive me, friend—
We are not always masters of our moods.

BATTISTA.

Nay, nay, I was the surlier of the two.
You know one cannot always be himself.
But what of that, if all be right at heart?

ANTONIO.

No doubt, no doubt!

BATTISTA.

Old neighbours are we, and
Good friends withal; or, if we are not so,
Why, then we may be.

ANTONIO.

Certainly we may.

BATTISTA.

How gets the picture on?

ANTONIO.

It is completed,
The colours nearly dry. I paint but slowly,
In order that the colours may not run.

BATTISTA.

The other picture, how does it come on?
You go with it to-day to Parma, eh?
My Lord Antonio's all impatience for it.

ANTONIO.

Not more impatient for the picture he,
Than I am for the money.

BATTISTA.

Go at noon;
You may be back again ere eventide.

ANTONIO.

I'll have to be on foot, then, all day long.

BATTISTA.

The road is good, and this is summer time.

ANTONIO.

It will be late before I cross the wood,
And there are robbers there.

BATTISTA.

Tush! Never fear!

ANTONIO.

And I must buy some colours, too, in Parma.

BATTISTA.

Nay, spare your money. You lay out almost
As much for colours as they bring you in.

ANTONIO.

Ultramarine and purple I must buy;
How can I paint without my colours?

BATTISTA.

Do
Like other artists.

ANTONIO.

Ah, he is no painter,
Who loves not colours, nor has felt the need
Of their bright tints and lustres manifold.

BATTISTA.

You should know best, of course. But now to speak
Of something else. You see the man who sits
There at the table drinking?

ANTONIO.

Yes I do.
A portly man, and bears him well. Who is he?

BATTISTA.

A manufacturer—a dyer—who
Has made some money, on the strength of which,
The vulgar upstart prates with coarse conceit
Of all things, and is satisfied with none.

ANTONIO.

Indeed! indeed!

BATTISTA.

This wine, for instance, which
You've drunk this many a day, and liked it well,
The Florentine,—even that contents him not.
He must, forsooth, have something quite select.

ANTONIO.

Rich folks are used to dainty things, you know.

BATTISTA.

The fellow's hurt my feelings to the quick;
Each word he spoke was coarse and scurrilous.

ANTONIO.

Oh, shame!

BATTISTA.

I'll be avenged!

ANTONIO.

Nay, let it pass.

BATTISTA.

Well, my revenge shall not be so severe.
The best revenge upon a dunce is wit.

ANTONIO.

There you are right.

BATTISTA.

Wit I have none, my friend,
But you have plenty.

ANTONIO.

I? Heaven save the mark!
Bright spirits sometimes make me full of whim,
But witty I am not—I cannot sting.

BATTISTA.

See, he approaches us, to view your picture!
Now, master, if you really are my friend,
So far oblige me as to tackle him
The merest bit. Nay, to it! You will feel
The way to set about it better far
Than I can prompt you. Take my word for it,
He'll soon give you your cue.

ANTONIO.

We get our answer
According as we halloo in the wood!

MICHAEL (*advancing*).

Have I permission, sir, to see your cards?

ANTONIO.

Oh, surely, sir! I play alone, 'tis true;
But you'll not blab the secret of my hand?

MICHAEL.

Have you no fear of growing stupid, thus?

ANTONIO.

Oh, no! Approach as closely as you please.

MICHAEL
(*looks with astonishment at the picture*).

Ha, what a play of colours!

ANTONIO.

So! The dame
Is gay enough? A Bellamira, eh?

MICHAEL.

Good man, you colour excellently well.

ANTONIO.

Indeed? Might I not be a dyer, too?

MICHAEL.

What do you mean by that? Do you not hear?
I tell you seriously, your colour's good.

ANTONIO.

Alas! sir, no; I'm pale, if anything.

MICHAEL.

You've talent.

ANTONIO.

You don't say so?

MICHAEL
(*excited, but checking himself*).
Yes, sir—talent!

ANTONIO.
Well, I believe it, since you've said so twice.

MICHAEL.
Yet, sir, you cannot draw, and are, to boot,
As trivial in your art as in your life.

ANTONIO.
How so?

MICHAEL.
Where, for example, did you learn
To twist these pretty little fingers so?

ANTONIO
(*Rises up and contemplates with surprise first*
MICHAEL, *and then the picture.*)
You think—

MICHAEL.
And what an over-sugar'd smile?
The picture's excellent; more pity, then,
You're out so far in the foreshortening.

ANTONIO.
How so, sir?

MICHAEL.
Seriously, do you believe,
You know the way to draw a leg or arm?

ANTONIO.
Who are you?

MICHAEL (*takes up a crayon*).
Look! Then tell me what you think.
Suppose this upper arm extended,—and

The boy's left leg joined to the ancle,—thus,—
Instead of dangling there, as now it does,
Like a distorted sausage, puff'd and swollen!

ANTONIO.

You mean, then—Yes, by heaven! I think you're right.
Who are you?

MICHAEL (*haughtily*).

One who has a right to speak,
And one to whom you more respect had shown,
Had you not been a very bungler, sir.

ANTONIO.

Who are you? God in heaven! Who?

MICHAEL.

Your servant!

(*He is about to retire, when* ANTONIO *seizes his hand, and examines a large signet ring which has caught his eye.*)

ANTONIO.

You are — Great heavens! THE VINTAGE OF THE DRYADS!
I know this ring by reputation well;
You—you are Buonarotti!

MICHAEL.

Possibly. [*Going.*

ANTONIO.

Oh, stay—if only for a moment, stay!
Forgive me, if unluckily I have
From levity, caprice, and much misled—
(*seizes his picture.*)
Look at this picture yet once more! Once more
Tell me—no, no, you will not tell me so!

Oh, mighty master! say, am I a bungler?
Do you indeed think so?

MICHAEL
(*contemptuously and with violence*).

Go, go! you are
A pitiful, weak creature! Full, at first,
Of self-conceit and boorish pride,—anon,
Of vile servility and boyish tears.
Go to! You never will set foot within
Art's sanctuary. Though colour's dazzling hues
May glow before your eyes, and on your canvas,
A spirit so irresolute and abject
To real greatness ne'er will cleave its way.
[*Exit, followed by* BATTISTA.

ANTONIO (*lays his picture aside*).

Is it a dream? Or was it Buonarotti,
The mighty artist, who was here? Were these
The words he spoke? I hope 'tis but a dream!
(*Sits down with his hands before his eyes: then starts up.*)
My brain whirls round, and yet I am awake.
A voice of dreadful note has broke my sleep:
I am a bungler! Surely, surely not!
I'd ne'er believe it, had these ears not heard
Great Buonarotti's self proclaim me so.
(*Stands lost in thought.*)
Mists rosy-radiant swam before mine eyes.
I deem'd them forms of universal truth,
And seized my brush to fix what then I saw,
When lo! my work resolved to mist again!
A gaudy toy, devoid of feeling, soul,
Invention, purpose, dignity, proportion!
This I had ne'er surmised! Day after day,
I went to work, I did, with guileless heart,
And soul devoutly fervent. As I sat

Before my canvas, then meseem'd as though
I knelt before the Great Eternal's shrine,
And He revealed unto my wondering eyes
His far-off majesty. But I was wrong;
Alas! how wrong! how wrong! (*a pause.*)
When but a child,
One day I went to Florence with my father.
Whilst he was buying in the market-place,
I slipp'd away to San Lorenzo's church;
There at the tombs I stood of Julius, and
Lorenzo, and those forms immortal saw,
The Day, the Night, the Twilight, and the Dawn
Of Michael Angelo, in pure white marble.
A moment's glance was all that I could steal,
Yet did that glance sink deep into my soul;
It was the one sole work of high true art
My eyes had look'd upon. It was so strange,
So grand, so fine, and yet so dead, so still,
That I felt glad, when, issuing forth, I saw
The clear blue sky, and dappled flowers again.
Now in that vaulted tomb once more I stand,
And all bright forms of gay and transient grace
Again have fled, and leave me shuddering
Before that Night and Twilight, self-annull'd.
So be it; henceforth I will paint no more!
God knows, I ne'er did so from vanity,
But rather as the bee constructs his cell,
Or as the bird instinctive builds his nest.
Oh, if 'twere all a dream!—Once more he shall,
Ay, yet once more—not passionately, in wrath,
But with serene and tranquil dignity,
Like his own Day there on Lorenzo's tomb,
Repeat that word to me—and then—good night,
Thou beauteous art! I'm what I was before,
A poor, untutor'd peasant. Be it so!
I will not grieve, nor yield me to despair;
I still can boast a quiet conscience. Grant,
I be no artist, abject I am not;

Ay, though the mightiest Angelo of earth
Should say I were, here is a voice that cries,
Such thou art not! And that voice comes from God!

MARIA (*enters*).

What is the matter, dear Antonio? Sad?
Not painting? This is marvellous indeed.
Alone, and yet not busy at your work!

ANTONIO.

Maria, dearest wife, my painting's done.

MARIA.

How! Have you finish'd, quite?

ANTONIO (*pressing her hand mournfully*).

I have, my child.

MARIA.

What ails you? Heavens! you weep, Antonio?

ANTONIO.

Not so, my love!

MARIA.

Dear husband, what's the matter?
Speak to me!

ANTONIO.

Dearest wife, be not alarmed.
I have been turning over in my mind
The life we lead, its future and its past,
And I have felt that this pursuit of mine
Provides us bread, but does not make us happy,
And therefore have I inwardly resolved
To give it up.

MARIA.

I understand you not.

ANTONIO.

When seven years since I ask'd you for my bride
From your old father, you perchance remember,
What were the old man's words. 'Antonio,' said he,
'Give up this painting. He that dwells like you,
Dreaming for ever in the world of art,
Will ne'er get on in life. The artist makes
A sorry husband; in his heart his wife
Is second to his Muse; and daughter, son,
Are in the children of his brain forgot.'

MARIA.

A good, kind soul he was, a homely root,
That spread and grew in silence 'neath the soil,
But was not meant to culminate in flower.
Think not of what he spake!

ANTONIO.

'Become,' he said, 'a potter, and like me
Paint little pictures on the clay for sale.
So live with wife and child, aloof from care,
Your time, your life, devoted all to them.'

MARIA.

He had not power to see, that what I loved
Was your aspiring soul, your gifted mind;
Nay more, that 'twas thy art which made me happy,
Because it was a portion of my love.

ANTONIO.

We often think things are, love, which are not.
I have not made you happy, as you say.

MARIA.

Antonio, do you wish to give me pain?

ANTONIO (*embracing her.*)

Thou art an angel! Murmur never crossed

Thy lips. But no, I have not made thee happy.
I have not given thee, darling, as I should,
The riches of my heart, but wasted them
On airy phantoms chiefly. What I earn'd
I spent in part upon expensive colours,
And have not managed wisely with the rest.
At times we lived in superfluity,
But oftener lack'd the barest necessaries.
Thy gentle heart hath thus been sorely tried.
No matter, this shall be no longer so!
We will not aim at the impossible.
No more wild fancies! I am humbled now;
I'll step back to mine old obscurity,
And a good artist if I may not be,
I shall be a good husband, a good father.

MARIA.

Thou not an artist! Thou! If that be so,
Art blooms not on this earth.

ANTONIO.

Dear wife, thou lov'st me.

MARIA.

Yes; for I know thee wholly, what thou art.

ANTONIO

(*takes her by the hand, and conducts her to his picture, and contemplates her and the picture by turns*).

Thy smile is sweet, is innocent. You see
This mincing sugar'd simper?

MARIA.

Antonio!

ANTONIO.

Its faults, I see them now. Ah, why had I
No trusty friend, who might long, long ago

Have told me of them? For I feel within
The capability to set them right.

MARIA.

Great heavens! what can have happen'd?

ANTONIO.

Yet, methinks
There is a something here in this poor picture
Not quite to be despised. 'Tis not mere colour,
Not mere dexterity of hand, not merely
The undulating play of light and shade,
But something too of beautiful, of grand.

MARIA.

What can have happen'd? Answer me, Antonio!

ANTONIO (*after a pause, more tranquilly*).

Once more he shall pronounce it. Twice he hath
Thunder'd the sentence forth, yet must it be
A third time utter'd; and, if utter'd, why,—
Thenceforth I'll paint on clay.

MARIA.

Who has been here?

ANTONIO.

The famous Michael Angelo Buonarotti.

MARIA.

And he? What said he?

ANTONIO.

Hush, child! Let us wait,
Till for the third time he pronounce the sentence.
I cannot tear myself without a pang
From that fair loftier world. Ay, yet once more,
Once more, and then—then I will paint on clay!

END OF SECOND ACT.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE *as before.*

ANTONIO

(*discovered, looking at his picture*).

IT only wants the varnish now. The veil
Is too transparent yet. Oh, that I might
Withdraw this from the gaze of all the world!
The other picture is not half so good.
It is not surely honest to accept
So large a sum for such inferior work?
But yet his lordship chose it for himself,
And named the price without a word from me.
I told him at the time it was too much.
(*takes up his brush.*)
Now will I paint a little hyacinth
Into the grass. When lovely maidens die,
Men scatter simple flowers upon their tombs.
My hope, that was so lovely—it is dead.
So then, in tribute of a sad farewell,
I'll plant one flower,—and then——How shall I live,
When I can paint no longer? It has grown
As needful to me now, as life itself.
Well, I will toil the whole long week-days through
For wife and child,—ay, with my hands I'll toil!
But Sunday morning still shall be my own.
Yes, then shall Iris, blooming as of yore,
With her aërial bow of sevenfold hues,
Descend to greet me at the early dawn.
Then will I draw, and colour, and invent
For mine own pastime. Any way it is

A blameless pleasure. In my home I'll hang
The little pictures. They at least will serve
To decorate the walls. Maria loves them,
So does my little boy; and when I die,
And some stray pilgrim, wandering here, shall see
The rich-hued canvas hanging on the walls,
The sight will touch him;—all are not so hard
As this great Angelo—and he will say,
High aspirations had this man at least,
And loved his art in pure sincerity.

JULIO ROMANO

(*enters, but keeps at some distance, contemplating* ANTONIO *unobserved*).

There sits the Muse's favourite! He paints
Another picture, which will wrap the world
Once more in wonder. How I long to know
A man of powers so noble! Hold awhile!
Let me enjoy my pleasure in long draughts!
Am I awake? Is this not fancy's dream?
I little thought, in coming to Correggio,
That I should find a second Raphael here.
Oh, marvellous! most strange and marvellous!
In our great cities we erect great schools,
Our princes aid ambition, industry,
Our youth is moulded on the choicest models,
From very infancy our hearts are train'd;—
Then comes some glorious opportunity
To exercise the art, so throughly learn'd,
And what do we approve ourselves, we scholars?
Why, scholars,—good, apt scholars certainly,
But genius is not to be foster'd so.
It blooms not in the hothouse;—all the warmth
And nursing care of artificial aid
Develop not the fruit that charms the world.
In the wild wood, untended, it must grow,
A seedling scatter'd by the winds of chance,
Ripening by chance, a forest miracle,

And ere we wot of it, and while we gaze
In hopeless awe on what the Past has left,
And think that Genius is for ever flown,
Lo, there it stands again before our eyes,
And we,—we look, and are again amazed!
Strange, that a Bethlehem so oft gives birth
To the Divine; that the benignant angel,
Who bringeth light and joy into the world,
So oft should find his cradle in a manger!

(*Approaches* ANTONIO, *and contemplates his work.*)

ANTONIO.

Stand there, thou little azure hyacinth!
Thy violet paleness is the type of death.

JULIO

(*again retiring, and looking at* ANTONIO).

He wears the aspect of his pictures,—gentle,
Genial, and full of feeling; but that air
Of sadness is a stranger to his works:
The full warm bloom, which glows so richly there,
Spreads not its tints upon his delicate cheek.

ANTONIO.

Another traveller here! A stranger, too!

(*They exchange salutations.*)

JULIO.

Your pardon, signor, if perchance I now
Disturb you! But I could not leave this place,
Till I had paid my homage to the artist,
Whose genius is its crowning ornament.

ANTONIO.

Alas! dear God, then will you only know
A man dejected, poor, and sore distraught!

JULIO.

How! This so glowing sun glad others merely,
And have no warmth nor radiance for itself?

ANTONIO.

Good sir, your words are kind, you cannot mean
To mock me; but you wound me to the quick,
Although you think it not. A sun!
(*Lays his hand on his breast.*)
Did you but know
What an abyss is here, how dark, how dark!
Not one poor star to gleam from out my night.

JULIO (*with animation*).

Nay, from your 'NIGHT' a quenchless glory beams,
That with a halo of immortal light
Shall one day crown your head. How are you call'd?

ANTONIO.

Antonio Allegri is my name.

JULIO (*musing.*)

Antonio Allegri, of Correggio!
How can that name sound strangely on mine ear,
Which soon shall vibrate far on every tongue?
I have beheld your 'Night,' Antonio,
There in the church. You wish'd to represent,
And you have wrought a miracle! The light
Pierces the murky night of earthly life,
And glads the shepherds. Of these shepherds I
Am one. You see me stand before you, still
In wonder lost, and comprehending not
The sight miraculous which now I see,
Holding my hands before mine eyes, in doubt,
If what I look upon be not delusion.

ANTONIO.

Alas! 'tis all too much delusion, sir!
Your heart is noble; you are fond of art;
But let me say, without offence, you are
No better judge of it than I myself.

JULIO.

You speak in riddles, good Antonio.

ANTONIO.

For long I've been a riddle to myself.

JULIO.

You are a marvel to me every way;
Grown to perfection, with no hand to guide,
Yet to the world so little known the while,
So little knowing, too, your proper worth!

ANTONIO.

What think you of this picture, may I ask?

JULIO.

How poor are words to utter what I feel!
If I say 'beautiful,' what have I said?
Till now I deem'd the Raphaelesque Madonna
The one sole peerless mother of our Lord;
I could not picture her in other guise.
Here she is different, quite, quite different,
And yet Maria, too! More the sweet wife,
The mother, than the glorious queen of heaven.
Raphael has raised to heaven what was of earth,
You draw the heavenly downwards from the skies,
To marry with a form of earthly mould.

ANTONIO.

And do you see no fault, then, in the picture?

JULIO.

Fault! Where so much has been achieved, there's none.
Who would, 'mid such exuberance of power,
Complain, because perchance not all is there?

ANTONIO.

And what, what is not there?

JULIO.

All that can make
The work a glorious masterpiece is there!
It lives and breathes an atmosphere divine!
Fine in conception, full of pregnant thought,
Handled with patience, sentiment, and fire;
What ask we more?

ANTONIO.

Your panegyric done,
Now tell me of the faults!

JULIO.

Your genius
Has nowhere fail'd. Even where your hand has stray'd,
Where memory's fleeting forms have slipp'd your grasp,
You, by your force, expression, sentiment,
Conception, to the faults have given a charm,
Which is indeed peculiarly your own.
In this, too, you resemble Raphael!

ANTONIO.

Tell me, good signor, where my hand has stray'd?
You cannot think what happiness you give,
In pointing out my faults.

JULIO.

Well then, belike,

The mere anatomist might, here and there,
Find some defects of drawing in your picture.

ANTONIO.

For instance ?

JULIO.

The foreshortening of this arm
Is not quite accurate. The boy's leg, too,
Is, to my thought, a trifle all too plump,
And wants a firmer outline. You are fond
Of soft and round contours, and thence it comes,
You strive to shun all straight and rigid lines.

ANTONIO.

Once more, once more, and then I breathe again !
How does it strike you,—the Madonna's smile ?
The infant's too ?

JULIO.

Uncommon, but most lovely.

ANTONIO.

Not mawkish, simpering, o'ercloy'd with sweetness ?

JULIO.

So have I seen in dreams the angels smile.

ANTONIO.

Ah God, and so, too, has it been with me !

JULIO (*smiles*).

And do you grieve to have succeeded, then ?

ANTONIO.

I grieve, because I've gone so far astray.

JULIO.

Again you speak in riddles.

ANTONIO.

Oh, signor,
You've voiced the inmost feelings of my soul;
It comforts me to think that there be men,
Besides myself,—sound-hearted, thoughtful men,
Who in the self-same wise can go astray!
What more surprises me, is the true judgment
You have pronounced on my deficiencies.
Therein you err not; you have only shaped it
In mild and kindly terms; and, sooth to say,
Your words, so just, so sensible, had brought
Unbounded joy, but that I knew too well,—
Alas! I've only lately come to know it—
That all I do is valueless and vain.

JULIO.

Who can have told you that?

ANTONIO.

The greatest artist
Of this our time, it may be, of all times.

JULIO.

How! Michael Angelo!

ANTONIO.

'Twas even he!

JULIO.

I guess'd as much; that broken wheel, I see,
Within his brain is spinning madly still.

ANTONIO.

I knew not who he was, and thoughtlessly
Offended him. The owner of that house,
A strange, mad knave, who bears me no good will,
Came up and told me, that his guest, who sat
At yonder table, drinking, was a dyer,—

A coarse-tongued churl, who had insulted him,
One who knew nothing, yet would dogmatise
On all things. So I own, I met him not
With that respect which is his righteous due.
He spoke to me in caustic surly tone,
And I made answer to him scoffingly,
Whereon he grew incensed, and called me 'bungler!'
Abject and base, and said, though I might have
An eye for colour, and its gaudy hues,
I never should be able to achieve
True beauty and true grandeur.

JULIO (*with animation*).

There he is right!
Achieve you never will—you have achieved,
Ay, even beyond the Sistine chapel's self.

ANTONIO

(*makes a deprecating gesture with his hand*).

Ah, dear signor!

JULIO.

I see you think I speak
As blind men speak of colours. 'Tis not so.
I am nò Angelo, no Michael I,
But a mere mortal man, yet I'm a Roman;
No Cæsar truly, yet a Julius.
I too have learn'd to know what painting is.
The mighty Raphael Sanzio was my master,
His lofty spirit hovers o'er me still,
And I on such a theme may claim to speak.

ANTONIO.

O heavens! you, you are Julio Romano?

JULIO.

I am.

ANTONIO.

You Julio Romano! Can it be?
The famous painter? Raphael's favourite?

JULIO.

I was so.

ANTONIO.

And you tell me, I am no bungler?

JULIO.

I tell you, that since Raphael parted hence,
Our country has no greater painter known
Than you, Antonio Allegri of Correggio!

ANTONIO (*sits down*).

Your pardon, gentle signor! My brain reels!
Your words have stunn'd me with a wild surprise,
And in the maze I cannot see my way.
All my existence, like an unknown brook,
Has flow'd along in shadow until now.
As little did I dream I could be great,
As that my powers were bent on hopeless aims.
All simply trusting to the Muse and fate,
I went on painting, and my labour throve.
Now—in the course of one brief day—have two
Of art's most famous masters sought my home.
One strikes me down into the nether dust,
The other lifts me up beyond the clouds.
What shall I think? Is this a dream, or no?

JULIO.

And if that one should say, as I have said,
What then?

ANTONIO.

How! Michael Angelo? Think you,
That he would ever——

JULIO.

'Tis his way to do
What no one dreams of. His impetuous spirit
Is less of God than Titan, and his greatness
Resembles that of the primeval world.
Grace is not in his nature. The younger Amor
Fires not his heart for individual objects,
But the old Eros in his bosom folds
The universe with arms of giant grasp;
No winged urchin, but a youth full grown,
All life and vigour. I will speak to him.
Rest thee at ease; I understand his ways;
The Titan has a human heart. Like Chronos,
His children still are of majestic growth,
But there is nought of cannibal in him.
He rather, like Prometheus, snatcheth fire
From heaven, to animate earth's common clay.
Let but the storm blow o'er, Antonio,
And he too will do justice to your work.
I see him coming. Go into the house.

ANTONIO.

I know not what to think, or what believe.

[*Exit.*

MICHAEL (*enters*).

Now we may start.

JULIO.

Alas! not yet, my friend;
A greater carriage wheel is broken now,
That must be mended ere we stir a foot.

MICHAEL.

What do you mean by that?

JULIO.

Just what I say.
You've not forgot the pretty water-mill,

Erected lately down the river there?
If I err not, the model for that mill
Was by yourself improved in Florence once.

MICHAEL.

A goodly work!

JULIO.

Now listen, and be wroth!
A man of rank, for lack of else to do,
Stopp'd, just as we did, to inspect the mill,
And for his sport would have it set to work.
But as the miller was not cap in hand,
Our noble's haughty blood boils up amain,
And with his sword he hacks and hews the works,
Just where the maker's cunning hand had link'd
The cogs and rivets with the nicest skill.
This done, he mounts his horse, and rides away.
The mill is stopp'd, the miller in despair.

MICHAEL.

This miller must be righted. I will have
One of our carriage horses saddled straight,
And down to see him! He must have amends.
Could I but light on that same churl, full soon
I'd clip the wings of his high mightiness!

JULIO.

'Twere well indeed, methinks, if you could clip
The haughty wings of overbearing pride.

MICHAEL.

What do you mean?

JULIO.

You're fond of poetry,
Have written sonnets, fashioned rhymes yourself.
Forgive me, then, for thus addressing you
In allegoric phrase; the naked truth
Is almost too unpleasant.

MICHAEL.

I love the nude;
Garments are nothing but the veils to beauty.
No beating round the bush, sir, if you please.

JULIO.

You need but to apply a larger scale
To all that I have told you, and you have
The plain unvarnished truth. The pretty mill
Is human nature, and the noble's pride
Is artist's pride; the sword a cutting word,
The shatter'd wheels, a heart stabb'd to the core.

MICHAEL.

Aha!

JULIO.

You see, we need no horses here.
Without their aid you can at once assist,
Nay more, chastise, if so you have a mind;
The culprit is in reach of punishment.

MICHAEL (*gravely and haughtily*).

It well beseems you, sir, to hold to me
This language.

JULIO.

Buonarotti, wherefore force me
To use it, then? How! Think you, I forget
The reverence which I owe your genius,
Your master-hand? No, 'tis that very reverence
Constrains me thus to parley with you; for
'Tis not one kind of master-skill, or genius,
I prize, but all, that to one lofty aim
Work in accord with impulses divine,—
Howe'er obscure, or poor in worldly wealth,—
Well knowing, that the glorious tree of life,
Which we in common phrase call genius, grows
Much oftener on the bare and arid rock,
Than in the rich and cultivated vale.

MICHAEL.

Ho! You should be a rhetorician, sir!

JULIO.

I read full well the meaning of that taunt,
Yet does it gall me not. The artist's words,
You think, are, like the hero's, works and deeds.
There you are right! Nor need I now repeat,
How often, Angelo, my heart has bent
In reverential wonderment before
Your lofty godlike instinct, and mute wisdom.
Yet man is not an artist, and no more,
But man as well. To show the beauteous traits
Of sweet humanity is likewise art.
Yours is a spirit strong, and rich in act;
Most frankly do I own it; well, be just,
And mock me not, if you discern in me
A man of homely sense, nor lacking quite
Those higher gifts that issue from the gods.
I wish no honey'd speeches from you now;
Your act it was, which set my tongue at large,
Your act has equal power to fetter it.

MICHAEL.

Well, sir, what would you?

JULIO.

Look you, Buonarotti,
You've wounded to the quick this worthy painter,
By calling him a bungler. Is he a bungler?

MICHAEL.

Why, what a plague care I, sir, what he is?

JULIO.

And do you care for art no longer, then?

MICHAEL.

Let every man look to his own concerns.
I do, and there an end! Small matter 'tis
To me, what others choose to say of me;
If he's no bungler, why, 'tis well for him.
He is a saucy varlet, that I know.

JULIO.

He is a good, kind-hearted, worthy man.
This vintner is his foe, and led him wrong
By telling him, you were a dyer,—yea,
A supercilious conceited fellow,
Prating of all things, and informed of none.
He wish'd to raise your spleen 'gainst this poor man,
Because he hates him.

MICHAEL.

Spake the rascal so?

JULIO.

Now then, you see, Antonio's not to blame!
He did not know you.

MICHAEL.

Courtesy is due
To strangers, as to friends.

JULIO.

And did you show it?

(MICHAEL *is silent.*)

But one word more, my friend, and I have done!
What we have both so unexpectedly
Beheld this morning must—how could it else?—
Have filled you with surprise no less than me.
You are no purblind dullard, that in wood
Carves pretty playthings, with no eyes to mark
What others do. With you, friend, art is science;

No form of it escapes your piercing glance;
Therefore you know as well as I, and better,
How great an artist this poor hamlet boasts.
You have seen many of his pieces there
(*pointing to the inn*)
In the saloon; his Leda, Danaë.
Not in Madonnas merely lies his skill.
In Parma he has painted, as I learn,
Some frescoes full of poetry and power.
Go to the church there, see his 'Night,' and then
If his deserts appear not to your soul
As bright as day, why, day will dawn no more.

MICHAEL.

The man has talent, and I told him so.

JULIO.

Talent! A sorry phrase; an alms we use
To fling to every beggar; is talent all
You can discover in this masterpiece?

MICHAEL.

The work has gross defects.

JULIO.

Defects it has,
Because 'tis human. What has not defects?
Think you that you have never failed—that you
Are perfect? Is mere drawing, think you, all
That makes a painter? What is it at best?
An adjunct needful to a higher end,
But still an adjunct merely. Simple outlines
Are never found in nature; they but serve
To mark the space where body terminates.
Body itself, and colouring, and life,
With light and shade,—painting consists in these.
To blend with beauty thought, expression—this
Is genius, and are these awanting here?

MICHAEL.

The picture has no grandeur, none, of style.

JULIO.

What do you mean by grandeur? For myself
I call deep truth, and high-toned beauty, grand.
Your works have shown us that corporeal grandeur
With spiritual grandeur may combine.
But grand conceptions do not need expanse
Of space or body, to deserve the name.
In all your works a daring nigh sublime,
Powers of vast scope, and noble purpose breathe.
Yet man is man, and ne'er will be a god.
As man, befits him bear a child-like heart
And lowly spirit; and I will confess,
Though 'tis most certain that your bold large style,—
Perchance some natural inclination also,—
Have driven me, Julio, too, the lesser planet,
Out of my gentle Raphaelitish course,
Some little towards the violent and severe,
Yet a good genial heart, which seeks expression
In art's pure forms, is, and will always be,
What most in art, even as in life, I prize;
And where I recognise its presence, there
The angel of the conscience is reveal'd, and points
With lily stem the pathway to my home.

MICHAEL.

So feel not I!

JULIO.

Your feelings take a range
Of vaster circuit. Yet the softer feelings
Come o'er you oftener than even you believe.
See your Madonna in St. Peter's, how
She sits the type of tenderness divine,
Stone though she be, her dead Son in her lap!
With human-hearted deep humility

Your Adam of the Sistine Chapel takes
Life and his soul from the Almighty's hand.
By heaven, there's nothing in man's heart or brain,
But hath at some time throbb'd and wrought in yours.
Your manner's hard; yet is your ruggedness
Only a noble, and time-hallowed rust,
And under it the solid metal shines.
Forgive me, if my words, as is most like,
Have given you umbrage; well I feel that all
Which I have said, you better know yourself.
I only spoke, the sooner to dispel
The tempest here; and sooner to relieve
This poor man of his trouble; for your words
Have quite bereft him of his cheerfulness
And self-possession; and your words alone
Have power to give them back to him again.

MICHAEL.

Hm!

BATTISTA (*entering*).

The carriage is quite ready, sirs! I wait
But your command to put the horses to.

MICHAEL.

My Julio, will you see to this? I have
A word to speak with this same worthy man.

JULIO.

Oh, certainly! [*Exit.*

MICHAEL.

What was it that you said
About me to this painter—eh—to-day?

BATTISTA.

I say of you! What does your honour mean?

MICHAEL.

Your worship said I was a dyer, eh?
A coarse-tongued, haughty, self-conceited fellow?

BATTISTA.

Sir, may eternal justice punish me
From now till doomsday, if I ——

MICHAEL.

Hold your peace!
Eternal justice gives itself but small
Concern about such rascals as yourself;
Best have a care that temporal justice, sir,
O'ertake you not! Birds for the gallows ripe
Are sure to be tuck'd up. Canst construe that?

BATTISTA.

Your honour is ——

MICHAEL.

A dyer, coarse in grain!

(*takes a whip from the table*).

Well, for coarse colours we coarse brushes use.
What would you say, now, should I paint your shoulders
All over crimson, friend, or say, dark blue?

BATTISTA.

God be my stay!

MICHAEL.

Then he'll have work to do.
Your wretched soul, your base and abject nature,
These are your stay! I will not soil my fingers.
Yet were it best you rid me of your presence,
And quickly too, for this divining rod,
Here in my hand, hath an amazing sting,
And would be charmed to come upon the trace
Of hidden fountains on your lusty shoulders.

BATTISTA.

Great sir, 'tis all mistake,—it is, indeed! [*Exit.*

MICHAEL.

No doubt, but get ye gone, sir! How! The knave
Has chafed me! Ha! now I can comprehend
How 'twas the painter here, unhappy devil—

(*sits down before the picture.*)

A work like this is not read at a glance.
No matter what they show me in the whirl
And turmoil of my rage—my blood boils up
Before my eyes as well as in mine ears.
Then your didactic prating nettles me.
What I should think, I can myself find out;
And Julio—he—as though I could not, I—
Well, well,—he felt this, though, himself! By Jove,
The picture's finely handled! This is painting!
And how poetical,—trees, landscape, flowers!
What lovely drapery! This reflected light!
The woman's charming, yes, by heaven, she is!
The John, too, exquisite, the little Christ
Sublimely fair. Per Bacco, this is colour!
And I,—although the Pope would make me paint,
Although I chased the scurvy Florentines,
Like those that vended doves, from out the temple,
And climbed myself into the scaffolding,
And worked some half-year in such surly mood,
That I had all but killed his Holiness,
By flinging down a pail, because he came
Prying so early to my studio,—
I am no painter, no, not I,—I know it.
I am a sculptor. What of sculpture's art
In painting can be used, why, that is mine!
In drawing and design I stand alone,
But as for dipping in the paint-pot, zounds
I understand it not, that's very clear,
And this man does, and that most thoroughly.

(*Enter* GIOVANNI *from the house; seeing a stranger, he stops.*)

MICHAEL.

Come hither, little one! (GIOVANNI *advances.*)
A handsome child!
He is not downcast at the sight of strangers;
No shyness here! Come hither, little fellow!
(GIOVANNI *goes up to him.*)
How now? Yes, surely, this is the Giovanni
Of yonder picture.

GIOVANNI.

Yes, I am Giovanni;
My father painted me.

MICHAEL.

So, so! Thou art
A son, then, of Antonio's?

GIOVANNI.

Yes, my mother
Is also there.

MICHAEL.

Where?

GIOVANNI.

There she sits!

MICHAEL.

Aha!

GIOVANNI.

There is the little Jesus child; but him
We have not in our home.

MICHAEL.

No? Where is he?

GIOVANNI (*pointing upwards*).

Up yonder! He is yonder in the sky.

MICHAEL.

Up yonder?

GIOVANNI.

Yes, he sits there in the clouds,
With other little angel-boys.

MICHAEL.

Indeed!
And what do they do there?

GIOVANNI.

They play together.

MICHAEL (*kisses him*).

Dear child! Come, sit down here upon my knee,
Here, on my lap!

GIOVANNI.

I'll ride upon your knee.
You are my pony. Now I'll ride away
To Parma.

MICHAEL.

Very good! But I must lift you,
My little friend, for you've no stirrups. Eh?

GIOVANNI.

No more I have. The cutler's making them.

MICHAEL.

So, so?

GIOVANNI (*riding*).

Sa, sa! Hup, hup, hup! Get along!
The pony must trot on, and never stop.

MICHAEL.

Good, good! Have we not come to Parma yet?

GIOVANNI.

Not yet! Not yet! But we are half way there.

MICHAEL.

Now we dismount, and enter the hotel
To get refreshment.

GIOVANNI.

Yes, to get refreshment.

(MICHAEL *feels in his pockets.*)

What have you in your pocket?

MICHAEL.

Wait a bit!
(*Aside*) These comfits were for Master Martin's children;
But they must wait. Besides, in Modena,
I can buy something else for them. (*Takes out a comfit.*)
Look here!
Do you like sugar-plums, my little friend?

GIOVANNI (*snatching at them*).

Oh, I'm so fond of sugar-plums!

MICHAEL.

Stay, stay!
But may you eat them?

GIOVANNI.

Oh yes, that I may!

MICHAEL.

There, then! (GIOVANNI *begins to eat.*)
But you must eat them in my lap!

GIOVANNI (*getting away from him*).

No, I must eat in the hotel, I must,
Whilst my horse rests.

MICHAEL.

And chews a little oats;
Shall I not have some oats?

GIOVANNI.

Come, pony, come,
Here are some oats for you!
(*puts a comfit into* MICHAEL'S *mouth.*)

MICHAEL (*seizes him.*)

You little rogue!
Call me a pony? Well, 'tis God's chastisement.
I called thy father bungler, so I did,
And by the eternal Muses on Olympus,
He is as little that, as I a pony!
[*Enter* MARIA.

GIOVANNI.

Here comes my mother

MICHAEL.

That thy mother, boy?
A lovely woman, very like the Mary.
(*Places the boy on the ground, and rises.*)

GIOVANNI.

Oh mother, here's a stranger gentleman;
And he has given me sugar-plums. Look here!

MICHAEL.

Madonna, may I hope for your forgiveness?

MARIA.

Oh noble sir, I thank you for your kindness.
Hast thank'd the gentleman? (*To* GIOVANNI.)

GIOVANNI.

I thank you, sir!

MARIA.

You forward boy, where are your manners, sir?

MICHAEL.

Let him alone, dear madam, do not mar
With the distortions of our o'er-nice age
His nature's pure unwarp'd simplicity.

MARIA.

You're fond of little ones?

MICHAEL.

Because they are
So great. You live here?

MARIA.

Yes, this is our cottage.

MICHAEL.

Antonio, the painter, is your husband?

MARIA.

He is, signor.

MICHAEL.

If in his life he be
As truly good, as in his works he shows,
Then you indeed must be a happy wife.

MARIA.

Signor, his art is but a pale reflex
Of the bright sun within.

MICHAEL.

Indeed?

MARIA.

Indeed.

MICHAEL.

And yet you seem unhappy, out of spirits.
A worthy active man, a handsome wife,
A darling child—here is a paradise
Of bliss domestic, perfect and complete.

MARIA.

Yet lacks there something for that perfect bliss.

MICHAEL.

And that is?

MARIA.

Worldly fortune.

MICHAEL.

Are not, then,
Beauty and genius in themselves a fortune?

MARIA.

In many a floweret lurks the canker worm!
My husband has been ill; he's sensitive;
Impressions, slight ones, move him to the quick.
This very day he had a heavy blow.

MICHAEL.

I know what happened. Michael Angelo
Was here, and dropped some irritating words.

MARIA.

He wounded him most deeply.

MICHAEL.

But, perchance,

Friend Angelo said only what was truth.
He told him, he would never be a painter.
Who is to say but Angelo was right?
He ought to know, if anybody should.

MARIA.

No! though an angel were to come from heaven
And tell me so, I'd not believe him!

MICHAEL.

How!
Are you so confident in your opinion?

MARIA.

Of this at least I am most confident,
That in my soul I love Antonio;
His works are from himself inseparable,
So in my soul I love his glorious art.

MICHAEL.

And that suffices you? You love, nor care
To sound the principles your love is based on?

MARIA.

You men may sound and judge by principle,
But only to a point; for you, like us,
Must often trust to simple feeling too.

MICHAEL.

Bravo, Madonna! This is what I like.
Forgive me for thus putting you to proof;
So fits it wives should think. But touching, now,
This Michael Angelo,—he is a rough
Strange fellow, that is not to be denied;
Yet trust me, not so heartless in the main!
His words are oft the clanking of the Cyclops,
When the fire roars too fiercely;—yet he can

Be quiet too; then he amasses stores
Of feeling and of thought, on which to draw
For many a future day; just as the camel
Drinks deeply of the spring for after-need
Along the burning desert. The volcano
Is dread, yet fertile too. Its wrath once spent,
Men throng in shoals to build along its brink;
The seed shoots up anon to swelling grain;
The chasm puts on a robe of shrubs and flowers,
And all is redolent of life and joy.

MARIA.

I do believe you, sir.

MICHAEL.

The merest trifles
Are oft the antecedents of great deeds.
The mountain sometimes doth bring forth a mouse;
But mice have often brought forth mountains too.
Then marvel not, if a most scurvy trick
Of yon malicious hosteler have set
Friend Angelo at variance with your husband.
One hasty word begets another straight.
It is not only love, you know, that wears
A bandage on his eyes,—wrath does the same.

MARIA.

You speak most sagely and most kindly, sir.

MICHAEL.

The Buonarotti sent me here—I am
His friend,—that I might tell you this from him;
And as a proof, in what regard he holds
Antonio, offers him this ring,
(*takes a ring from his finger.*)
And begs,
He'll wear it henceforth as a pledge of friendship.
They'll meet in person at some future day;

And then Antonio will have surer cause,
To know that Buonarotti means him well,
And has been zealous to advance his fortunes. [*Exit.*

ANTONIO

(*who has come out of the cottage, but has remained in the background.*)

Maria, love, what did he say to thee?

MARIA.

The stranger?

ANTONIO.

Yes, he, Michael Angelo!

MARIA.

Great heaven, Antonio! Is it possible?
Michael himself?

ANTONIO.

Yes, yes! Himself, himself!
There is but one such man in all the world.

MARIA.

Oh, blessed chance! Rejoice, Antonio!
He fondled our dear boy, and to myself
Spoke with respectful kindness. See, this ring
He sent thee as a gift. He prizes, loves thee,
And, noble heart! will make our weal his care.

ANTONIO.

Oh, my Maria, and can this be so?
Julio was right!

MARIA.

He values, honours thee!

ANTONIO.

This ring, too! Oh ye heavens! Come, come, Maria!

He only humbled me in dust, to make
My after rise more great and glorious.
Oh! heavens, dare I, dare I believe it real?
Come, I will thank him with these brimming eyes,
Close to my bosom press him, and be blest!

MARIA.

Yes, he is right, great Buonarotti's right;
Now blooms for us a paradise of bliss.

[*Exeunt into the hotel.*

BATTISTA

(*comes forward, looks after him, and, after a pause, says*)—

I'll make this paradise of yours complete;
There is no paradise without its snake!

END OF ACT THIRD.

ACT THE FOURTH.

A large Picture Gallery in Parma.

OTTAVIO, BATTISTA, *with books of accounts.*

OTTAVIO.

I'M satisfied, your bills are all correct.

BATTISTA.

A letter, signor, I have just received.
'Tis from my son; he writes to me from Florence;
Perhaps he will be here this afternoon.

OTTAVIO.

Ah, that is well; and look you, not a word
Of what I said to you of Nicolo!

BATTISTA.

By heavens, it takes my breath away, to think
That he, a bandit of the Apennines,
Should dare take service in your lordship's house,
To lie in wait the better for his prey!

OTTAVIO.

I've cause to think, the trick is nothing new.
Your thievish villains boldly ply their game,
Both in the wood 'twixt Reggio and Parma,
And wheresoever else there's aught to steal.
But fair and soft; one bird is in the net,
And soon his mates shall keep him company.

BATTISTA.

The things we live to see! Lord, lord, what men
Be in the world!

OTTAVIO.

Enough of this! And now,
To speak of matter which concerns me more.
Antonio the painter comes to-day?

BATTISTA.

He's on the road, and will be here anon.

OTTAVIO.

Oh that the fair Maria came with him!

BATTISTA.

She'll not be long behind him, Eccellenza!
Strew but your peas, and pigeons flock apace.
But one thing strikes me as embarrassing,
So please my gracious lord to let me speak—

OTTAVIO.

Proceed! proceed!

BATTISTA.

Your Grace is on the eve
Of entering into matrimonial bonds.
The lovely Celestina will be here
From Florence with her father presently;—
How will that suit?

OTTAVIO.

Let this not trouble you!
The lovely Celestina, like her name,
Is heavenly! Now, though as a Christian soul,
I love what's heavenly, and most dearly prize it,
Yet being also flesh and blood, the things
Of earth have also charms for me. The lady
Beams on me like a chilly winter's sun;

She is too sage, too lofty, too high-soul'd.
'Tis doubtful if she'll have me; if she does,
'Tis purely from the love she bears her father,
Who's bent on the alliance; me she loves not.

BATTISTA.

Nay, love will come in time.

OTTAVIO.

Perhaps it may;
As likely not. I beg no woman's love.
I know her worth: she's rich and beautiful;
Not one of our young Florentine noblesse,
But would esteem it as his dearest pride,
To gain possession of the lady's hand.
I'd have her for my wife; it flatters me,
To be the lord of that which all would win.
The heart, though, has emotions, rights as well,
Which will be heard, and Celestina here
Must bend before the lowly artist's wife.

BATTISTA.

Yet, my good lord, two women in one house,
How will that work?

OTTAVIO.

Oh, rarely! Celestina
Is young, enthusiastic, unsuspecting,
Maria silent, unexacting, meek.
I am uneasy on one point alone,—
Antonio's staying in my house to paint.
The lady is an adept in the art,
And paints with skill. Now with such matters I
Am little conversant; Geronimo, my uncle,
Bequeathed these pictures to me as his heir.
I value them as other furniture,
Nor less, nor more. Now, look you! should it prove
Antonio is no artist, where am I?

He's poor, of no repute. This troubles me,
For I would wish in any case to pass
In her opinion for a connoisseur.

BATTISTA.

That is an awkward business, certainly,
For, good my lord, he is a sorry knave;
My word upon 't, a dauber!

OTTAVIO.

What know you
About such things? You bear the man a grudge.
No more!

BATTISTA.

Well, time will show. Ha! there he is,
Crossing the garden!

OTTAVIO.

Say you so?

BATTISTA.

'Tis he.
How he stands gazing at the flower plots there,
Like any strolling pedlar, with his picture
Slung on his back! He stoops, and smells the flowers.
I shouldn't wonder if he dared to pluck;
I'll tackle him, if he does.

OTTAVIO.

Let him alone!
I'll step aside. The palace, the great rooms,
The furniture, the servants, may impress
His lively fancy; men of such a stamp
Are caught more readily by outward show,
Than we are apt to think. Anon I'll come.
This very day I must propose my terms.

BATTISTA.

Were it not better, at some pliant hour—

OTTAVIO.

The thing I cannot buy, I will not steal. [*Exit.*

BATTISTA (*alone*).

Thou wilt not steal? Then I will do so for thee.
I will have vengeance, bloody vengeance, too,
As surely as I am a Calabrese!
The whipthong of that Michael Angelo,
Though threatened merely, burns into my back,
In ruddy welts. It has revived my hate,
And my hot-coursing blood will never cool,
Till his that brought this shame on me shall flow!
(*muses.*)
So Nicolo was a bandit, and is still.
Good! Then at least he knows the way to—Hush!
No poet I, 'tis not for me to rhyme. [*Exit.*

ANTONIO

(*enters, carrying his picture on his back.*)

Arrived at last! Good heavens, how tired I am!
(*Puts his picture down, takes a chair, and sits.*)
It was so hot, the road so long, the sun
So scorching! Ha! the air's refreshing here.
Ah me, how happy are earth's great ones! They
May dwell in these cool palaces of stone,
That hold, like excavated rocks, at bay
The fury of the sunbeams. Freely rise
The vaulted roofs, broad pillars cast a shade;
Fresh bubbling springs plash in the vestibules,
And cool both air and walls. Heavens! who would not
Be lodged like this! Well, so shall I be soon.
How smoothly and how pleasantly one mounts
Along the broad, cold marble staircases!
Antiques in every niche,—fine busts, that look
Serenely down with a majestic calm.
(*casts a look round the room.*)

This hall, too, is right noble in its style.
Ha! what is this I see? With paintings fill'd?
It is the picture gallery. Oh! blessed Virgin,
I'm in a temple, and I knew it not!
Here hang the glorious trophies of your art,
Italia's painters!—will for ages hang,
As rich-emblazon'd scutcheons o'er the tombs
Of heroes dead, to witness of their deeds.
Oh, all ye saints, which shall I first peruse?
Landscapes, and animals, heroes, and Madonnas!
Mine eye flits round, as does a bee amidst
An hundred different flowers. Alas! I see,
For too much seeing, nought. I only feel
Art's fresh and noble presence move me deeply.
Oh, I were fain to bow me down, and weep
Within this temple of my ancestors!
Look there! That picture's beautiful! Yet no,
'Tis not so fine as first I thought it. Well,
They cannot all be choice. What have we here?
No, that's too merely pretty. In my life
I ne'er saw anything like this before;
An aged woman, furbishing a pot,
Within her kitchen; in the corner, see!
A cat asleep, and, near, a white-hair'd boy
Is blowing bubbles through a tobacco pipe.
It never struck me until now, that one
Could make a picture out of things like these;
And yet this kitchen now, it looks so trim,
So bright and clean, 'tis quite a treat to see!
How finely the sun strikes through the green leaves,
In at the window, on the brazen pot!
Who was it painted this? Is that the name
Beneath the picture? (*Reads*) Flemish, hm! Unknown!
Flemish? What country can that be, I wonder?
Can it be far from Milan? Oh, look there,
At these large pictures! Tables strewed with flowers,
With glasses partly fill'd, and lemons peel'd,
And dogs, and little birds. (*Starts*) What have we here?

Why this is exquisite! Ha, ha, ha, ha!
Four greedy greybeards counting o'er their gold!
But what comes next? It is our Saviour's birth.
I know it well, Master Mantegna's work!
How sweetly winds the mountain pathway here;
How fine the three kings bending there before
Child Jesus, and the eternal queen of heaven!
Here is another picture, much the same,
A little quaint, but very nicely felt.
The ox on the Madonna's shoulder lays
His snout, and peers with curious wonder down;
The Moor grins kindly too,—his heart is touch'd.
The small Bambino in the casket gropes,
To find a plaything there. By Albert Durer.
He was a German, that I know. One sees,
There be good worthy men behind the mountains,
True painters, too. Heavens, what a glorious picture!
A princely dame, young, blooming, full of soul;
How the eye burns, how smiles the little mouth!
How nobly on her sits the rose-hued hat
Of velvet, and the full deep velvet sleeves!
By Leonard' da Vinci. Well might he
Be called Magician;—this indeed is painting!
The next there is a king, which seems to me
Touch'd in the self-same style; perhaps it is
By Leonardo too; he painted it,
When he was young, most probably. (*Reads*) By Holbein.
I know him not. I know you there, old friends!
How farest thou, worthy Perugino, with
Thy soft green tone, thy figures ranged to match
On either side, thy still repeated thoughts,
And thy unfailing Saint Sebastian!
Still thou'rt a glorious fellow! Though, perchance,
Some more invention had not been amiss.
There are the mighty thronèd; yonder hangs
A powerful picture, the full size of life.
A noble greybeard! 'Tis the holy Job.

Grandly conceived, and executed grandly!
That surely is by Raphael. (*Reads*) No. By—Fra
Bartolomeo. Ah, the pious monk!
It is not every monk can work like this.

Who could find time to look at all that's here?
There at the end a silken curtain hangs;
No doubt behind it is the best of all.
I must see this before Ottavio comes.
(*draws back the curtain, and discloses Raphael's Saint Cecilia.*)
This is the Saint Cecilia! There she stands,
And in her down-droop'd hand the organ bears.
Scatter'd and broken at her feet are cast
Mere worldly instruments; but even the organ
Drops silenced with her hand, as in the clouds
She hears the seraphs quiring. Her eye soars!
By whom is this? It is not painting; no,
'Tis poetry—yes, poetry! As thus I gaze,
And gaze, I see not the great artist merely,
But also the great man!
Here is sublime, celestial poesy,
Express'd in colours. Such, too, is my aim,
The goal I strive in my best hours to reach.
(*Enter* OTTAVIO. ANTONIO, *without saluting him, and wholly absorbed in the picture, asks him*)
This picture, whose is it?

OTTAVIO (*coldly*).
'Tis Raphael's.

ANTONIO
(*with joyful enthusiasm*).
Ha, then I am a painter too!

OTTAVIO.
I've known that, friend,
For some few weeks, you must for years have known it.

ANTONIO.

I know it now, but knew it not before.

OTTAVIO (*aside*).

The vain, conceited fool! Battista's right.
Well, well, so much the better! (*Aloud*) Good
Antonio,
I like to see this hearty confidence.
You differ from all other artists quite,
Who've stood before this picture, self-convinced
Of their own utter insignificance.

ANTONIO
(*who has never taken his eye from the picture*).

Yes, I can see: if poverty feel not
Its emptiness before such wealth as this,
Then it will never feel it.

OTTAVIO (*aside*).

Why, this man
Is utterly transform'd. (*Aloud.*) You, on the con-
trary,
Of your own riches seem the more assured.

ANTONIO.

Yes, here I feel my powers in all their force!
Here do I feel I am a painter too.
Here do I see the emotions of my heart,
And the conceptions of my inmost soul
Express'd, as I have felt them in the best
And happiest moments of my youthful years;
To give them shape, was mostly past my power.
I have a heart can feel like Raphael's; but
My soul is not so clear, so strong of grasp;
My hand is more expert, more plastic, yet
His brain is stouter, takes a wider range.
I smile, while Raphael is grave; I am

For ever swept, while Raphael sweeps along.
Heavens! what a picture! Here I learn to know
Myself in all my weakness and my strength;
Here is the standard; it exalts me high,
For, standing here, I feel anigh to heaven,
But still, as feels a man to angels near!
And whilst my bosom swells with rapt delight
And exultation, lowly bends my head
Before the grandeur I can ne'er attain.

OTTAVIO (*coldly*).

You've brought with you that picture of your own?

ANTONIO (*collecting himself*).

It stands there in the corner, good my lord!

OTTAVIO.

Pray, bring it forward.
(ANTONIO *brings forward the picture*).
Excellent, i'faith!
That charming woman seems as though she lived.
Still, to be frank with you, I do not like
This drapery. Tell me, wherefore did you not
Portray her simply, as in life she is?
By heav'n, Maria can't be made more fair.

ANTONIO.

My object was to paint, sir, the Madonna.

OTTAVIO.

And is Maria not your Donna, then?

ANTONIO.

Your pardon, sir, I understand you not.

OTTAVIO.

Nay, now, I know full well, you artists live

In fancy more than in the actual world,
Loving air-phantoms more, and lovely dreams,
Than things that truly live and breathe around you.
Now 'tis not so with me, the very least;
And all must follow as their bent inclines.
No artist I, nor poet; I am content
With plain reality. This being so,
We two can live together charmingly.
The one need never cross the other's path.
You love the fair ideal, I the fact.

ANTONIO.

Your pardon, sir, I understand you not;
What do you mean by this?

OTTAVIO.

My dear Antonio,
I will deal honestly and frankly by you.
You are a plain, blunt man, and understand not
What we of courtly breeding call finesse.
Look you, my good Antonio, you are poor;
I grieve to see you pining day by day;
You paint fine pictures, and remain unknown.
What profits it how bright your candle burns,
If hid beneath a bushel? 'Tis my wish
To make you happy. My palazzo's large,
Our richest nobles daily flock to it.
You shall stay here, and paint, and live at ease.

ANTONIO.

My gracious lord, is this no idle dream?
Does fate begin to smile on me at last?
From my first boyhood, like a Will-o'-the-Wisp,
It still has flitted near me but to mock me.
When I essay'd to grasp it, it was gone!
And there I stood in darkness as before.

OTTAVIO.

Your troubles shall be ended; by the Saints,

There's nought so culpable, as not to make
A fellow-creature happy, when we can.

ANTONIO.

You think most generously.

OTTAVIO.

And so do you.

ANTONIO.

I've felt your kindness deeply from the first.

OTTAVIO.

Then you would make me happy, if it lay
Within your power to do so?

ANTONIO.

Certainly!
But you, my gracious lord, are fortune's child,
And how can one so poor as I am make you happy?

OTTAVIO.

Ah, all's not gold that glitters, good Antonio,—
I am not happy! no, in sooth I am not!

ANTONIO.

My heart is sad for you. Can this be so,
My good, kind lord? And yet all, all is yours,
That any child of clay could wish to have!

OTTAVIO.

Ay, all indeed, but not the chiefest bliss.

ANTONIO.

The chiefest bliss? That every man, methinks,
May have, if he desire.

OTTAVIO.

What do you call
The chief, Antonio?

ANTONIO.

Confidence in God,
A spotless heart, and an untroubled conscience.

OTTAVIO.

Oh, yes! No doubt, no doubt! That is the chief,
Yes,—for eternity. But man lives here
In time, and here must taste some bliss supreme,
Else never say that he is truly happy.

ANTONIO.

That is most true.

OTTAVIO.

The revelation, friend,
Of the divine on this dim spot of earth
Is that which we call Love. Now, commonly
It is developed in that noble form,
Which we style art and genius; or not less,
Though more contracted and condensed, when vow'd
To one especial object, and that one
The loveliest in the world, a charming woman.

ANTONIO.

And oh, what artist ever liv'd on earth,
Who did not strive to couple both these loves
In bonds inseparable?

OTTAVIO.

But still the Muse
Holds sovereign sway in every artist's heart.

ANTONIO.

Most true, for the beloved one is his Muse!

OTTAVIO.

And this same Muse doth change with every moon.
The Muses number, at the lowest count,
Nine lovely, fascinating maids, you know.

ANTONIO.

Yet every Muse bestows her special art,
And every artist loves his special Muse.

OTTAVIO.

The mighty Raphael, to whom you stoop'd
Your head but now, had several, methinks.

ANTONIO.

Poor Raphael! Because he had not one.

OTTAVIO.

How, Raphael no Muse?

ANTONIO.

Oh yes, in heaven,
In his desire, his aspiration, what
By him was his Divine Idea called.
Now he has found her surely, and his soul
No more, like his inspired Cecilia, need
Bend her pure eyes upon the distant blue
In search of a contentment, full, divine.
Now he enjoys and clasps her to his breast.
He sought her here in vain, poor Raphael!
And therefore flung his starved and thirsty soul
Into the sea of sense, and drank oblivion.

OTTAVIO.

Are you more happy, then?

ANTONIO.

Heaven knows, I am!
Unhappy Raphael! what avail'd it thee,
Thou wert so fair and blooming? What avail'd
Thy potent friends, the Pope, and Rome's acclaim?
What gain to thee the charming Fornarina?
Or what the Cardinal's uncomely niece?

Thou didst not find earth's first and dearest boon,
A gentle, virtuous, true-hearted wife!
No fond Maria rested on thy heart,
And having that, how richer far am I
In my poor hut, than thou with all thy fame?

OTTAVIO.

Then you are satisfied, Maria loves you
With all her heart?

ANTONIO.

Of that I am as sure,
As that I live.

OTTAVIO.

'Tis well! When I say well,
I only mean for you, not well for me.
So fare you well, I will not mar your peace.
(*Antonio starts.*)
I thought you loved your Muse, and her alone;
And that your wife in woman's fashion loved
Herself, and next herself, whatever pleased
Her senses and her whims. 'Twas therefore I
Invited you to live with me in Parma;
My object was to gratify all three.
But now I see my plan will never work.
You and your wife are both romantic. Well,
Dream, or reality, it matters not,
Whatever makes us happy must be real.
So God commend you to his grace, Antonio!
Stay here you cannot. You would find it hard,
Now, after what has passed. But do not fear!
I will not steal beneath the cloud of night,
A fox into your dovecote. Though I'm fond
Of doves, I need not get at them by stealth;
It suits me better far to purchase them
In the broad noonday on the market-place.
Then fare you well! Salute your lovely wife!
By heaven! I purposed fairly by us all.

If any one have cause for discontent
In this affair, why, then, that one am I.
Adieu, sir! You shall paint me many more
Such pictures as the present. Meanwhile rest,
And look around you to your heart's content.
Battista shall the eighty scudi bring. [*Exit.*

ANTONIO (*alone*).

This was his purpose? This his boasted love
For art? This the respect he felt for artists?
The patronage? Esteem? Fool that I am!
Mock'd here again by a mere phantom light!
I am avenged; he went away ashamed.
Ashamed? Avenged? I? Am not I the culprit,
A gentle sheep, submissive unto wrong?
No, he shall fight with me; I'll not endure
The infamy; what though he be a lord,
A piece of noble clay, so stamp'd by chance,
I bear a noble soul, mark'd out by God,
And in the book of ages I shall live,
When he lies mouldering in forgotten dust.
I'll be avenged! The sword shall do me right.
A murderer? Rather bear my wrong in peace!
And should I fall—Maria, my Giovanni,
And thou, loved art! Pshaw! this excitement is
A thing to smile at. Men of war may fight!
With them a froward temper, and contempt
For death and danger, is their simple duty.
They have nought else to do,—it is their glory!
The artist works by spirit, and his rank
Is therefore with the ministers of peace.
God did not place a sword within his hand.
The enchanter's wand, which conjures spirits, can
Create life, but is impotent to kill.
I will endure my wrong, as the great type
Of all good men below endured his shame.
For he that on this wilderness of earth
Seeks to achieve the lofty and the noble,

Must ever stoop to bear the martyr's cross;
'Tis only after death his life begins.
Look round me now? Contemplate now the pictures?
How can I? Oh the things that I have known,
In this brief day; hope, insolence, despair,
Supreme delight,—this journey, heat, fatigue!
I'm very weary, and mine eyelids droop.
Here let me rest awhile, to gather strength
For the long tiresome journey home again.
(*Sits down on a chair, and falls asleep.*)

Enter RICORDANO *with his daughter* CELESTINA, *the latter carrying a wreath of laurel in her hand.*

RICORDANO.

So here we are, my child.

CELESTINA.

Merely as guests.
Is it not so?

RICORDANO.

Yes, wayward Celestina,
Because you wish it so.

CELESTINA.

Nay, you, dear father!

RICORDANO.

I wish your happiness, Heaven knows I do!
You think you will not find it with Ottavio.
So be it, then! I will forego my plans.
On his own flippant folly lie the blame,
Rash, thoughtless youth! Yet this I will uphold,
His heart is good.

CELESTINA.

His heart? Has he a heart?

RICORDANO.

You women think that heart is all in all.

CELESTINA.

So speaks the man, that has himself the largest.

RICORDANO.

Oh flatterer!

CELESTINA.

Ottavio has none;
Trust me, dear father, none. He is not wicked;
But he is selfish, dissolute, and proud.
He loves me not, I love not him; and yet,
Dear father, can you wish——

RICORDANO.

Well, be it so!
I will forego the promise that I made
My friend Lorenzo on his dying bed,
By intermarriage of my child with his,
To bind our families in closer ties.
I acted hastily; may God forgive me!

CELESTINA.

Father, there will be joy in heaven, that thus
You made not shipwreck of your daughter's peace.

RICORDANO.

By heavens, when I bethink me, were it not
A sin, dear girl, to force so sweet a bud
As thou—there is no vanity in this;
I am thy father, but thy heart, thy beauty,
God gave to thee, not I—to force so sweet
A bud into a hard and arid soil;
This too, when every youthful gardener
Within the Paradise, that circles Florence,
Yearns with full soul to make that blossom his?

CELESTINA.

Dear father, if I be a little flower,

Beneath thy shadowing oak my buds shall blow,
And I will nestle closely to thy heart.

RICORDANO.

And stirs no love yet in thy bosom, child?

CELESTINA.

For God, for thee, for all that's good and fair!

RICORDANO.

But for no suitor?

CELESTINA.

No.

RICORDANO.

My pretty one!
Not yet? Well, it will come, girl. Oh, believe me,
Boy Cupid will have vengeance, howsoe'er
He seem to bear your scorn contentedly.
When you surmise it least, lo, all at once
He'll stand before you, dreadful as a Silvio,
And change thee to a languishing Dorinda.

CELESTINA.

Father, I'll be prepared.

RICORDANO.

My little Muse!
Such I perforce must call you. Cold as ice,
You scorn the passion of the sons of earth,
And live in nature and in art alone.
For whom do you intend this laurel wreath?

CELESTINA.

How should I know, dear father? As we cross'd
The palace garden, from the bush a bough
Bent down, and got entangled in my hair.
To punish it, I tore it from the stem,
And straightway in my hand it grew a wreath.

RICORDANO.

Beyond all doubt, to crown thy Raphael!
There hangs the picture.

CELESTINA.

Ah, a glorious room!

RICORDANO.

And yet you would forsake this lovely shrine.

CELESTINA.

Ah, yes!

RICORDANO.

It might be yours.

CELESTINA.

Dear father, say,
Couldst thou not buy these glorious gems of art
From Lord Ottavio?

RICORDANO.

Nay, child, dost thou know
The worth of a collection such as this?

CELESTINA.

No, for 'tis priceless; yet Ottavio, he
Will not demur; for he loves money more
Than pictures. He'll demand no higher price,
Than you would rate your daughter at, I'm sure.
You'll be a gainer by the business, then.
You only give him gold, and keep your child.

RICORDANO.

You little, witching Circe, you! Stay here!
Enjoy yourself among your favourites,
Whilst I go in and seek Ottavio.
I'll tell him my opinion, your resolve.
He must make up his mind to bear it.

CELESTINA.

Oh,
For such a courtly man, that will be easy;
Trust me, the sacrifice won't cost him much.

RICORDANO.

You will not be his wife, but you remain,
As his relation, still a friend,—a sister.

CELESTINA.

Assuredly; and as a friend and sister,
I will come many a time, as now, to pay
My duty to Ottavio and—the pictures.

RICORDANO.

You saucy girl!

CELESTINA.

Say, I shall follow soon.

RICORDANO.

Poor fellow, can you look him in the face,
Upon the back of your refusal?

CELESTINA.

Nay,
The whole thing is a jest, and nothing more.
Yet I must try to hide the thorn with flowers.

RICORDANO.

Go to, you are a wilful, wayward girl! (*Exit.*)

CELESTINA (*alone*).

Once more I am amidst my darling pictures!
Treasures of art, and shall I leave you, thus?
Must all your beauties here be left to fade,
In dust, unloved, among barbarians,
With none of nobler soul to feel your worth?

It shall not be! Oh, let me, sweet Cecilia,
Lay down my laurel-garland at thy feet.
What have we here? A picture? A new picture,
Its face turn'd to the wall. Is't possible?
Ottavio purchase pictures? Well, 'tis sure
To be a gem! (*turns the picture round.*)
How! Do I dream? No, no!
This picture's by Antonio Allegri,
The great, and, until now, unnoticed painter,
After whose works I've copied many heads,
Of whom we heard so much from Buonarotti
And Julio Romano, when they met us
Upon the road this morning. Angelo
Made him a present of his ring at parting,
And will make interest for him with the duke.
(*Looks at the picture.*)
How exquisite is this, how full of life!
The mother of our Lord! Oh, what a face,
All reverence, meekness, and sweet holy calm!
The Saviour beams in gentle majesty,
Giovanni—oh, upon my breast I long
To take the boy, and kiss him o'er and o'er!
Heavens! what a perfect darling is the child!
Nature assuredly supplied the type;
Invention never fashion'd aught so fair.
Oh, exquisite! What sentiment, what colour!
(*After standing for a while wrapt in contemplation, she continues*—)
This picture I must crown. I now can see
Why the bough droop'd and check'd me as I pass'd.
It was a sweet presentiment of what
I now behold. Ah, if I could but crown
The artist so, unseen, even by himself.
Well, I will crown him in his picture here.
(*As she is about to place the wreath upon the picture, she perceives* ANTONIO *asleep.*)
Jesu Maria shield me, who is here!
(*Starts back, but immediately recovers herself.*)

He's fast asleep. Who can this person be?
How has he come into the room?
(*Approaches him cautiously.*)
He's not
A man of rank, nor even a citizen,
Still less a serving man. His dress is plain,
Loosely put on, but very clean, though poor;
A handsome head, but pale! What noble features!
How high the forehead! Gracious powers, what's this?
Yes, he has Buonarotti's signet ring
Upon his finger! All good saints, it is,
It is Antonio Allegri's self!
No doubt, he brought the picture here himself,
And, wearied with the walk, has fallen asleep.
(*She regards him with the greatest sympathy, and when she sees that he is fast asleep, drops on her knee before him, the better to examine his features.*)
Ah me, how sad, yet noble, is his look!
He seems as he had borne no common share
Of this world's shocks, and yet he is not old.
Ah no, thou gifted being!
(*Rises up, and says, in a low and timid voice,*)
Dare I crown him!
Oh, no; great heavens! if he should chance to wake!
If any one should come! No, I will hang
The wreath here on the picture, so when he
Awakes, he'll see that he is prized!
(*Hangs the wreath upon the picture, and steps back.*)
So, so!—
Yet, no, that will not do. It looks so cold,
Cold, and unmeaning! There the living man
Sits with bare head, while on the hard, dead wood
A chaplet hangs. Courage! I must be bold.
Oh, all good saints, be helpful to me now,
And let me happily achieve my venture!
(*Places the wreath gently upon his head, then glides softly back.*)

That is the spot; there's where it should be! So!
The chaplet now is in its proper place.
It blends so finely with his dusky hair.
How grandly arches his brow under it!
Yes, that will do! Thank heaven, he did not stir,
And now, farewell, ere long we'll meet again.
He moves, breathes heavily.—Away, away! (*Exit.*)

ANTONIO
(*starts up, awakening from a dream*).

Where am I? This cool, dim-lit gallery
Is not Elysium! (*Reflects.*) Ah, heaven! I've been
Asleep, and dreamt. No, it was more than dream;
'Twas a presentiment of bliss to come!
I wandered 'mong the meadows of the blest,
That seem'd more fair than Dante pictured them,
And found myself within the Muses' grove;
Full in my view I saw their temple rise,
Built of white marble, high and gloriously,
With granite columns, and fair statues deck'd,
And fill'd within with pictures and with books.
Around me, on the grass, there lay reclined
The greatest artists, modern and of old,
Sculptors and poets, painters, architects.
Perch'd like a pigmy fly upon a man,
The mighty Phidias on the shoulder sat
Of a huge block, that seem'd like Hercules.
The splinters thick before his chisel flew;
And firmly in his soul he grasp'd the while
All the proportions of the Titan frame.
Apelles, with a smile, his pencil dipp'd
In morn's red dawn, and painted wondrous shapes
On clouds, that were by angels borne away.
There on his organ Palestrina play'd;
The organ pipes went through the universe,
And the four winds inspired the sounding air,
Whilst at his side Cecilia stood and sang.
Hard by the sacred fount old Homer sat,

He spoke, and all the poets throng'd to hear.
Then the great Raphael, lovely as in life,
Into the circle led me by the hand,
And on his shoulders quivered silver wings;
Whereon the Muse stepp'd forth—oh, shall I e'er
Forget that form of matchless loveliness,
Pure as the dew of early dawn, and bright,
And fresh, and radiant, as the new blown rose?—
And with her snow-white hand upon my brow
She placed the dusky laurel wreath, and said,
'Thee I devote to Immortality!'
On this I woke. Yet is it with me still,
As though I felt the chaplet on my hair.
(*Raises his hand to his head, and feels the wreath.*)
Great heaven! what do I see? Can this be so?
Are not the days of miracles gone by?
(*Enter* BATTISTA *with* NICOLO, *who carries a bag of money*).
My friend Battista, who, who has been here?

BATTISTA.

How should I know? See, here's the money you
Were promised by his lordship for your picture.
In copper you must take the sum. In that
The peasant pays the noble what he owes.
'Twill bend your back a little bit, no doubt,
But you've been used to burdens many a day.
Though you're a prodigy of painters now,
You'll not forget your father was a porter.
The weight upon your back will serve, methinks,
As a remembrancer of whence you sprung.
'Tis good to have such little jogs at times.
They help to keep down pride and self-conceit.

ANTONIO.

Can you not give me silver, friend Battista,
As much as will suffice my present needs?
The rest can wait. Look you, the road is long,

I've walk'd it once already, I am tired,
Yet you would have me bear this load to boot.
Do me this favour, friend!

BATTISTA.

Pshaw! friend indeed!
You are my foe.

ANTONIO.

What have I done to you?

BATTISTA.

The insult and the shame, which I to-day
Endured from Michael Angelo, I owe
To you and only you; now 'tis my turn,
And I'll take care to pay you off in kind.

ANTONIO.

How will you compass that?

BATTISTA.

There is the money!
I've taken off what you were in my debt.
So get you gone, and never venture more
To set your foot within the palace gate.

ANTONIO.

What means this burst of rage?

BATTISTA.

They give you money,
Rings of great price, and laurel wreaths, I see.
Well, my fine gentleman, you shall receive
A gift from me as well.

ANTONIO.

Constrain your wrath!

BATTISTA.

I'm more disposed to cool it.

ANTONIO.

Well, sir, do
What you can justify to Heaven. I fear not
I have, what you at little seem to rate,
A stainless conscience. Should you do me wrong,
He that guides all will turn it to my good.
Farewell! I bear no hatred in my breast.
The bag, the burden cannot cramp my mind.
(*Places the wreath of laurel on his head, and lifts the bag upon his shoulders.*)
In the sweat of thy face thou, man, through all thy days
Thy bread shalt eat, such was the Lord's decree.
Though the load weigh my body down to earth,
The blessed laurel-wreath shall lift my head;
Lightly I take the road, and strong of heart. [*Exit.*

BATTISTA.

The bag is no light weight—eh, Nicolo?

NICOLO.

It is a deal of money.

BATTISTA.

Seventy scudi!
But what, friend, is the money to the ring
He wears upon his finger? That is priceless.
What is't o'clock?

NICOLO.

We have a good hour yet,
If I mistake not, to the Ave Mary.

BATTISTA.

Then sinks the sun, and all will soon be dark.

He must this evening to Correggio !
But the wood's shady, cool; it won't take long
To cross. Well, what I meant to say was this:
You ask'd me, Nicolo, to-day, for leave
To visit your old mother, did you not?
All day we've had a host of things to do,
But now there's nothing to prevent your going.
Be off at once! But by to-morrow, noon,
Be sure you're back again.

NICOLO.

A thousand thanks! [*Exit.*

BATTISTA

He's gone! Oh, rare! If that indeed thou be
A robber, an assassin, prove it now!
(*stands musing for a moment.*)
I dropp'd no hint; I bargain'd for no terms;
He goes to see his mother! To permit
A son to pay his duty to his mother,
Is a most Christian act. My conscience is
Clear and unspotted. Should Allegri fall,
Why, 'tis God's chastisement, not my revenge.
I wash my hands, for I am innocent.

END OF ACT FOURTH.

ACT THE FIFTH.

A wood; in the back-ground Silvestro's hut. A large, gnarled oak near the hut, fitted up as a chapel; the picture of the Magdalen, in a frame, suspended on the tree. Little stone steps lead up to the tree, the hollow and branches of which are cut out and interwoven so as to form a circular temple. In the fore-ground, large plane trees, and to the right, a fountain bubbling from a mound of earth and stones, and winding away in a rivulet through the wood.

VALENTINO.

(*An aged bandit, very large and stalwart, with a swarthy brown visage; his hair caught up in a green net, over which he wears a broad round hat; a pair of pistols in his belt, a sword by his side, a carbine on his shoulders. He sits ruminating beside the fountain.*)

How all things change with time; and with them, too,
Changes the way we look at,—think of them!
Some thirty years ago I ranged the woods,
And hated this proud world ferociously.
Then did the shadow of these boughs beget
A thirst for blood within me. If I chanced
Upon a hollow tree, I viewed it, then,
But as an ambuscade and tower of strength,
To make my swoop from on the traveller.—
The flowers appeared no better in my eyes
Than rank weeds, good but to be trodden down.
I ne'er felt happier, or more content,
Than after massacre and plunder; then

I revell'd in my cavern with my band,
And felt myself a Pluto, kin to Jove,
A mighty king of the grim nether world.
All this is alter'd now, as age comes on!
My flesh creeps coldly now in this dark cave,
As though its shadows said, Soon shalt thou rest
In darkness evermore! Enjoy the light,
The little space it yet is left to thee.
I have no pleasure now in shedding blood,
And never do, unless in sudden wrath,
Or as a piece of needful policy.
'The aged Valentino!' 'Tis a name
Brings livid fear to every lip that speaks it.
The women stop the squalling of their brats
In nurseries with it, and in the very court
The haughty judge is silent when he hears it,
Grows pale, and drops his pen in trembling fear.
I am a deal more dreaded than the devil.
Nor do I find my strength has fail'd me yet;
But, out! alas! I want the pluck I had.
What can the reason be? I cannot tell!
For, though I be a bandit and a murderer,
I never ceased, because of this, to be
A good, sound Christian too. The one is quite
Consistent with the other. True it is,
That in my life I've not been over nice,
That I have scored full many a pate across,
Slit a few throats, dishonour'd wives and maids,
And help'd myself to money and such like;
But yet no man shall say of me, that I
Have let one day go by, I have not said
At least three paternosters; I, besides,
Have gone with punctuality to mass,
And purchased absolution for myself,
As well for sins gone by as sins to come.
This being so, why, any man would think
I should be sure to travel post to heaven,
Now, in my failing years; and yet my fear

More slow than any vetturino crawls
Along the upward road. At unawares
Will an avenging angel, fiery-eyed,
Start from the thicket, mark me with a gun,
Wrest from me all my little sum of hope,
And hurl me down, like Lucifer of old,
Deep through the earth into the pit of hell.

Enter SILVESTRO *from the hut; he kneels before the picture of the Magdalen, and repeats his evening prayer.*

There is the eremite, the old Silvestro.
A feeble man, pale, haggard in the face:
Yet does his eye look strong and full of light.
My cheek is brown and vigorous as autumn,
But when my eye is mirror'd in the brook,
Methinks, 'tis full of trouble, wan as Saturn,
And trembling cold with an uncertain light.
So killing is one solitary thought,
So full of balm are confidence and hope.

SILVESTRO
(*rises, and advances towards him*).

The Lord be with you, friend!

VALENTINO.

Thanks for your wish!
Do you know me, holy father?

SILVESTRO.

Yes, you are
A huntsman.

VALENTINO.

Ay, a rifleman!

SILVESTRO.

And so
We both are anchorites.

VALENTINO.

And greybeards both!

SILVESTRO.

And both aweary of the world.

VALENTINO.

It seems so!

SILVESTRO.

And therefore both of us direct our eyes
Away from earth to God's eternity.

VALENTINO.

If that would profit aught.

SILVESTRO.

Why should it not?

VALENTINO.

You are a pious man; at the first tap,
St. Peter will admit you; but for me,
A wild, loose-living fellow, and a huntsman,
That hosts of harmless animals has slain!—

SILVESTRO.

And were you even a bandit, if you turn
Repentant to the cross, imploring grace,
It will not be denied you.

VALENTINO.

Do you know me?

SILVESTRO.

I know you, Valentino.

VALENTINO.

And fear nothing?

SILVESTRO.

No; rather do I hope, with God's good aid,
To chase away all anguish from your heart.

VALENTINO.

You know, then, what is stirring in my mind?

SILVESTRO.

Not rocks alone and forest trees, my son,
Are privy to your pangs; I know them too.

Enter several bandits, leading FRANCESCO BATTISTA.

BRUNO.

A pretty poppet this, with purse well lined,
And full cramm'd knapsack on his back to boot!
Captain, by your good leave, I'd like to pluck
This bird's fine feathers off, and then to twist
His neck about—he is the vintner's son,
Son of that hunx Battista in Correggio.

SECOND ROBBER.

The avaricious hound that spoils our trade!

THIRD ROBBER.

That often has refused us a cool draught,
Night's lodgings, and all common courtesies,
When, as poor artizans, we sought his roof.

VALENTINO.

A sneaking hypocrite, an envious knave,
A pitiful, backbiting, cursed villain!
Bandits are angels pure compared with him;
For strength and prudence can at least forearm
Against assault; but yonder crawling snake
Stings folks to death or ever they're aware.
My blood boils, when I think of such a scoundrel!
For it was all his blame, that Nicostrato,
My brother and my friend in death and life,

Was beat to death with clubs ; his manly limbs
Hack'd and disfigured by the hangman's knives,
Because his lordship's cur,—his lordship ne'er
Had done it—counsell'd stretching on the rack.
So take his son ; I give him as a victim,
His blood shall serve to cool my vengeance in.

(*The bandits are about to lead off* FRANCESCO; *he casts himself at* VALENTINO'S *feet, and exclaims*)

FRANCESCO.

Mercy, oh, mercy !

VALENTINO

(*half drawing his stiletto*).

Hence, thou viper's spawn !

SILVESTRO

(*seizes the picture of the Magdalen with one hand, and* VALENTINO'S *arm with the other*).

Mercy ! What has the miserable youth
E'er done to thee ? Curb thy unholy rage !
If nature's everlasting dictates fail
To move thy harden'd disposition, still
Show that thou art a Christian man at least,
Spare the poor youth, nor desecrate the presence
Of this blest picture here with innocent blood !
Behold this skull,—even such shalt thou become,
Behold this book,—it is the Bible, where
For thee is written the command, that thou
Shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Behold
This saintly woman, who with hero's strength
Divorced herself from sin. Do thou the like,
And save thy soul alive ; be human !

VALENTINO

(*starts back in amazement, when he sees the picture*).

Hold !
Let him go free ! By Heaven, the Saint is near,—

Is present! Not her picture, she herself,
Has stay'd my hand. Do you all see her there,
The Sancta Magdalena? Do you see
The suppliant for fallen and sinful souls?
Our own sweet saint; do you see her?

ALL THE ROBBERS,
(*who have involuntarily taken off their hats, and knelt before the picture*).

Yes, we do!
How fair she is, how pictured to the life!
Ora pro nobis, Sancta Magdalena!
(*Cross themselves*).

VALENTINO (*to* FRANCESCO).

Go hence in peace! And for thy rescue thank
This blessed saint, and next to her the man,
Unto whose soul her brightness was reveal'd,
That he might show her to his fellow-men!

SILVESTRO (*to* FRANCESCO).

This picture's by Antonio Allegri,
The humble painter, and thy father's neighbour.
(*Exit* FRANCESCO).

(*To* VALENTINO)

I thank thee!

VALENTINO.

We shall meet again to-morrow.
(*Exit* SILVESTRO *into the hut*).

NICOLO (*enters*).

Captain, 'tis well I've lighted on you here.
A painter, one Antonio, of Correggio,
Will presently go by; upon his back
He bears a huge sack fill'd with copper coin,
And, what is better still, upon his finger
The loveliest signet ring!

VALENTINO.

Thou coward beast!
And thou wouldst rob the worthy artist, who
Can make such glorious saints, and even in hearts
Of iron kindle feelings such as these?
Does he not live at strife with all the world,
Even as ourselves? Is he not hunted down,
And scorned like us? Artists and bandits are
Both people of one order. Both avoid
The broad and dusty road of daily life,
And for themselves make pleasant, shady paths
Through flowery glades. What, hurt an artist, thou
Disgraceful varlet! Thou a hero, thou!
Was it for this I sent thee to the house
Of the rich nobleman, that thou shouldst filch
From the poor labourer his daily wage?
Pack to the devil, cur! Thou merit'st not
To live in any honourable band
Of gallant fellows!

NICOLO.

But I thought—

VALENTINO.

Go hang!
Down to the cave, down every man of you!
I've much, ay much to tell you yet to-day.
A little time, and I must leave the band;
For I am old, and conscience has its rights
As well as you. Quite long enough you've reap'd
The harvest of my labour and my brains.
There lack not precedents of kings who've laid,
Because of failing years, their sceptres down,
And I shall follow their example soon.
Whilst yet I stay with you, no murder, look you!
The wealthy you may plunder as before,
The poor you shall permit to pass scot free.
Such my command. Will you obey it?

ALL.

Yes,
If you'll consent to stay amongst us still.

VALENTINO.

No further foray shall we make to-night.
Antonio goes free through bush and brake,
And no loose birds shall hover on his path,
But such as carol sweetly from the boughs.
(*Exeunt banditti*).

ANTONIO

(*enters, carrying the bag; on his bare head he wears the laurel wreath; he throws down the bag, and seats himself beside the fountain*).

I can no more. My strength is wholly spent.
Thank heaven, thank heaven, here is the spring at last!
Oh for a goblet now, that I might drink!
If I could only reach my home, to give
The money to my darling! What alarms
Will rack her, as night falls, and I come not!
What's this? The blood is mounting to my head.
(*Takes off the laurel wreath and contemplates it*).
'Tis very fresh and cool,—my head is burning.
'Thee I devote to Immortality!'
But immortality begins with death.
Ha, my fair goddess! was thy meaning this?
(LAURETTA, *a peasant girl, with her milk-pail on her head, is seen crossing the wood*).
Who comes so blithe, and singing as she goes?
Lauretta? Yes, our neighbour's daughter, going
To milk her kids, at this late hour, a-field!

LAURETTA.

Why, as I live, it is Antonio!

ANTONIO.

Good evening, Lauretta!

LAURETTA.

Here at last!
Your wife, Maria, has been full of fears,
Because you were so long in coming back.

ANTONIO.

I've walk'd as rapidly as I was able.

LAURETTA.

'Tis a long way to go, and you are tired?
No wonder either.

ANTONIO.

Will you, my good girl,
Lend me your pail to take a drink with it.
I've nothing here to lift the water in.

LAURETTA.

Where have you left your hat?

ANTONIO.

My hat? In Parma.

LAURETTA.

And what is that you have there on your head?
A laurel wreath! It sits upon you bravely.
A comely ornament! Who gave it you?

ANTONIO.

One from above!

LAURETTA.

You artists, you forget
All else among your dreams. I will not have
An artist for my husband; should I marry,
I'll choose a man who won't, at all events,
Forget his wife.

ANTONIO.

Nay, good Lauretta, nay!
I never did forget Maria, never!

LAURETTA

(dips her pail in the fountain, and gives it to him to drink).

Now drink your fill!

ANTONIO (*drinks eagerly*).

How exquisitely cool!

LAURETTA.

Right from the caverns of the lower world.

ANTONIO (*smiling*).

Thanks, thanks to thee, thou sweet Rebecca, thanks!
I shall provide thee some day with a husband.

LAURETTA.

Why not at once?

ANTONIO (*tries to get up*).

I must be going now—
I'm very tired! (*sits down again*).

LAURETTA.

Sit still, and rest awhile!
Maria's coming with her little boy,
To meet you, and will very soon be here;
So wait, and you may go together home!

ANTONIO.

Strange, but I feel a sinking at the heart!

LAURETTA.

You're too much given to sadness, Master Anton!

This comes of painting pictures of the saints.
Come, sit beneath this tree, and rest your limbs,
And I will sing you there a little song,
Will chime delightfully beside the spring.

ANTONIO.

Yes, sing, my child, and brighten up my heart!

LAURETTA (*sings.*)

The fairy dwells in the rocky hall,
The pilgrim sits by the waterfall;
The waters tumble as white as snow,
From the rocks above to the pool below;
Sir Pilgrim, plunge in the dashing spray,
And you shall be my own love alway!

From the bonds of the body thy soul I'll free,
Thou shalt merrily dance in the woods with me.
Sir Pilgrim, into the waters dash,
And ivory white thy bones I'll wash.
Deep, deep shalt thou rest in my oozy home,
And the waterfall o'er thee shall burst in foam.

The pilgrim he thrills, and to rise were fain,
But his limbs are so weary, he strives in vain.
The fairy she comes with her golden hair,
And she hands him a goblet of water fair;
He drinks the cool draught, and he feels amain
The frenzy of fever in heart and brain.

It chills his marrow, it chills his blood,
He has drunken of death's deceitful flood;
Pale, pale he sinks on the roses red,
There lies the pilgrim, and he is dead.
The whirlpool sweeps him far down, and there
His bones 'mongst the sedges lie blanch'd and bare.

And now from the body the soul is free,
Now at midnight it comes to the greenwood tree;
In spring, when the mountain stream runs high,
His ghost with the fairy goes dancing by;
Then shines through the forest the wan moon's beam,
And through the clear waters his white bones gleam.

(*Rising.*)

But it grows late, and I must leave you now,
'Tis time I were away to milk my kids.
God speed you! Soon Maria will be here
With your Giovanni for you.

ANTONIO.

Many thanks!

LAURETTA.

No cause for that! [*Exit.*

ANTONIO (*gazes after her.*)

Thou'rt right! A frightful song,
A trumpet-call of death; a jubilate
Of the dark powers that work beneath the world!
Such thistles Italy did ne'er beget
Upon her flowery breast. Fair Lombardess,
Thou from thy mother didst inherit them,
And she from hers, to whom through years they came
Down from that ancestress, who hang'd herself
In knotted coil of a wild horse's tail,
Mad with the thought, that her barbarian lord
The battle lost. She said to me, God speed you!
And not Farewell! She handed me the draught
Of death,—the fairy with the golden locks!
It chill'd my marrow, and it chill'd my blood.
By heaven, I lived the ballad through, the while
She with a heart so blithe was singing it.

(*Collects himself, is silent for a moment, and then proceeds more calmly.*)

It is with fancy as with every power,
With every spark of flame; before it dies,
It flashes up, but once, a bright farewell.
So be it; I fear not. If she were a fairy,
Then the fair being who in Parma crown'd
My head with laurel, was my Muse; so too
Maria will no wretched widow be,
She is the heavenly Maria's self;
Giovanni, thou no sireless orphan art,

Thou art Giovanni's self, the little angel,
Who follow'd with the Agnus-Dei staff
Maria unto earth, to consummate
And guide my art to Christianity's
Aggrandisement and glory. Yes, 'tis so!

(*Cheerfully.*)

How sweet the evening is, how blue and cool!
The coolness fans me with its angel wings,
And soothes me. East, a whispering rain is falling;
The sun sinks in the west, but in the south
Still paints a glorious rainbow on the dew.
How gladsomely the green smiles forth on me,
Like hope from out the blue eternity!
I feel as though the seven blest colours beam'd
A bright all hail! in this my parting hour,
As though they beckon'd me from these dim shades
On to pure light, their stainless parent's home.

(*Takes up the bag.*

I take thee up, thou heavy load of life,
For the last time. Thou cruel Mammon! Still
The spirit's foe, whose aims are not of earth!
Thou art avenged! The little that my pencil
Wrested from thee, oppress'd my shoulders ever
With iron weight. Soon shall I live without you!
Oh come, Maria! my Giovanni, come!
Only one look, one little, last farewell!
Yes, thou kind heaven, I ask but this one joy,
Life's sweetest—and I die without a murmur! [*Exit.*

(*On the other side, enter* MARIA *with* GIOVANNI; *he has the Agnus-Dei staff in his hand.*)

GIOVANNI.

Why does not father come, dear mother—why?

MARIA.

He will come soon, I hope; he has had much
To do to-day in Parma.

GIOVANNI.

It grows dark
Already, mother dear; I am afraid.

MARIA.

That you ought not to be, Giovanni, no!
He who does nothing wicked, need not fear
The darkness.

GIOVANNI.

Not a minute since, the sky
Was bright and lovely; colours of all hues,
And little clouds, together play'd and kiss'd.
But now they all are vanished; the sun sets.
Look! it is gone! and now there's nothing left
But one dark streak, blood-red, across the sky.

MARIA.

But dost thou see yon gracious countenance
Behind the branches?

GIOVANNI.

Yes, it is the moon.

MARIA.

Her light begins not, till the other sets;
'Tis mild and sweet, and soothing to the soul.

(*sits down beside the spring*)

GIOVANNI.

Oh, look at these Forget-me-nots all round
Among the grass! May I go pluck a wreath,
Till father comes?

MARIA.

Yes, do so, do, my child!

[*Exit* GIOVANNI.

LAURETTA (*sings behind the scenes.*)

It chills his marrow, it chills his blood,
He has drunken of death's deceitful flood.
Pale, pale he sinks on the roses red,
There lies the pilgrim, and he is dead;
The whirlpool sweeps him far down, and there
His bones 'mongst the sedges lie blanch'd and bare.

(*enters*)

Ah, neighbour mine, Maria, are you there?
I felt quite sure you'd not be long behind.

MARIA.

Hast thou not seen Antonio, Lauretta?

LAURETTA.

Oh, yes, I have. Only some minutes since
I gave him water here and sang to him.

MARIA.

My God! where is he?

(*Sees* ANTONIO *at a distance.*)

LAURETTA.

There he comes again!
Well, that will be a treat to you! You're both
As fond and loving quite as if you were
A plighted pair, and not old married folks.
I'll not intrude upon your happiness.
Besides, 'tis growing late; so, friend, good night!

(*calls out at the wing.*)

A good night's rest to you, Antonio! [*Exit.*

(*Enter* ANTONIO, *pale as death.*)

MARIA.

Antonio!

ANTONIO.

(*Throws down the bag.*) Maria, there is money!

So have I cared for thee and thy poor boy
Some little space. I can no more. And may
Almighty God provide for you hereafter!

MARIA.

Antonio! holy Mother of our Lord!

ANTONIO (*embraces her.*)

Thou art not that? No, no! Thou art my wife,
Poor girl, alas! forlorn and widow'd now!
Thank heaven! at length my hot impetuous blood
Has found a liberal channel; now 'tis air
Courses along my veins!

MARIA.

Thou'rt pale and bloody!

ANTONIO.

No, bloodless, my dear love; unto the earth
Her portion have I given, and now I am
No longer troubled with these feverish dreams.
Say, was not that Lauretta, passed just now,
The youthful maiden with the golden locks?
No wicked demon? Not my Atropos?

MARIA.

Antonio!

ANTONIO.

And thou, thou art my wife,
Giovanni is my son,—both flesh and blood,
Not heavenly spirits, deathless and sublime,
That feel no pity, for they know no pain.
You shall have pain; alas! too much, too much!

MARIA.

Unhappy that I am!

ANTONIO.

Be not dismay'd!

Give me the bridal kiss, my darling bride!
Fear not to touch my lips, it is not blood.
That is all gone; I wash'd them in the spring.
They're only violet-blue, my own dear love.
Tinged with the fine dust of the butterfly,
As, newly born, it soars away to heaven.

MARIA.

Oh, my Antonio, thou hast been bleeding!
Almighty God, am I to lose thee, then?

ANTONIO.

A time must come to lose me, my beloved!
A moment earlier or later, sweet,
What matters it? The moment has its pangs,
But it is over soon, and oh, Maria,
That moment lights us to eternity!

MARIA.

Oh, my belovèd!

ANTONIO.

Wilt thou promise me,
That thou wilt bear that moment? That thy tears
Shall flow not bitterly as flows the blood
Of sacrificial lamb: but as a balm
And solace to the heart; pure, beauteous pearls
Of sympathy, humanity, and love?

MARIA.

Depart, depart in peace—I promise thee!

ANTONIO.

Where is my boy?

MARIA (*calls at the wing.*)
Giovanni! Gathering flowers.

ANTONIO.

To strew his father's bier. Go in, Maria,

To our old friend Silvestro; bid him come,
To minister the sacrament to me.

MARIA.

He sleeps! Yet—must I?—

ANTONIO.

Yes! He soon will come.

MARIA.

I go—but dread!

ANTONIO.

My darling, dost thou fear?

MARIA

(kisses his forehead, looks up to heaven, and says):
Thou'lt see me instantly again.

ANTONIO

(looks affectionately in her face, and presses her hand.)
Oh, yes! [*Exit Maria.*
The parting is but brief.
(*Enter Giovanni.*) Giovanni, come!
My darling child! What hast thou there?

GIOVANNI.

A wreath,
For you, my father, of Forget-me-nots.

ANTONIO (*kisses him*).

Thou little innocent, poor, orphan'd boy!
The Eternal will watch over thee.

GIOVANNI.

Nay, thou,
My father, wilt watch over me!

ANTONIO.

Kneel down!

GIOVANNI.

Yes, my dear father! (*kneels.*)

ANTONIO

(*laying his hand on Giovanni's head*).

Thou, my darling boy,
Receive thy father's blessing! More, alas!
I cannot give thee, yet a father's blessing
Is potent, spoken at his parting hour.

GIOVANNI (*kisses Antonio's hand*).

Thou art so pale, my father!

ANTONIO.

I am weary,
Now I will rest, until your mother comes. (*lies down*).

GIOVANNI.

Yes, father, sleep, and I will watch by thee.
(*sits down beside his father*).
My father sleeps. What has he on his head?
Ah, such a pretty laurel wreath! I'll give him
My wreath as well; and when he wakes again,
That will delight him and my mother too.
(*places the wreath on his father's head*).

BATTISTA

(*advances through the trees with his son* FRANCESCO).

And are you then quite certain, that this picture,
Which saved your life, was quite a little thing,
About the size of this?

FRANCESCO.

Yes, certain, quite!
It was the blessed Magdalena; sweetly,
Most sweetly painted.

BATTISTA.

With long golden hair,
A dress of azure blue, a skull, and book.

FRANCESCO.

Quite so, and painted by Antonio.
(*points to the chapel.*)

BATTISTA.

And he has saved thy life—whilst I to him—
Well, well, thank God, my purpose came to nought.

FRANCESCO.

Who lies there, pale and bleeding, on the ground?
A little child is by his side.

BATTISTA.

Where, where?

FRANCESCO.

Look, there!

BATTISTA (*crosses himself*).

Jesu Maria!

FRANCESCO.

You grow pale?

BATTISTA.

Ha! seest thou yonder corpse?

FRANCESCO.

Yes. Come, my father,
Let us—

BATTISTA (*holds him back*).

How! miserable boy, art mad?
Dost thou not see the angel with the dead?

FRANCESCO.

A little boy!

(GIOVANNI, *with his Agnus Dei staff, beckons them to be quiet*).

BATTISTA.

Thou'rt blind; dost thou not see
The Agnus Dei staff? He threatens us!
'Tis John, the holy hermit! Come! Away!

FRANCESCO.

What is amiss, dear father?

BATTISTA.

Everything!
See there, again he threatens with the staff!

FRANCESCO.

You are bewildered.

BATTISTA.

Home! 'Tis growing late.
The chilly evening air strikes to my heart.
Home, home, I say, I shall be better there!
'Tis nought to speak about,—a fever merely,—
And should you often hear me in my dreams
Talking of murder, bloodshed—heed me not,
They are but empty words.

FRANCESCO.

Nay, father, father!

BATTISTA.

For 'tis, I tell you, merely accident,
That he did save my boy Francesco's life,
In the same moment that I murder'd him!

FRANCESCO.

Father!

BATTISTA.

Again he threatens! Let us fly!

(*Exeunt*).

(*Enter* SILVESTRO *and* MARIA).

MARIA.

Oh, my Antonio, art thou still here?

GIOVANNI.

Hush, my dear mother, hush, my father sleeps!

MARIA (*kneeling down*).

'Tis over! Oh, my life is gone from me!

GIOVANNI.

What do you want, dear mother? Why dost weep?
My father sleeps; he's weary, let him rest,
He soon will rise again!

MARIA

(*lifts him in her arms, and kisses him*).

Thou blessed angel,
My only joy, my stay, Antonio's son!

SILVESTRO.

Subdue the outcry of thy heart, Maria!
Alarm not the poor boy; he thinks his father
Is only sleeping.

MARIA.

Oh, sweet happy faith!
I too believe it. Heaven speaks to us by
The mouth of this dear innocent. Yes, yes,
He sleeps, and soon we too shall sleep, and soon
Awake in heaven.

SILVESTRO.

Yes, of a surety, yes!

(MARIA *sits down beside the fountain, and weeps; the little* GIOVANNI *sits quietly beside his father's body.* SILVESTRO *stands contemplating them with emotion. Enter a* MESSENGER).

MESSENGER

(*accosting* SILVESTRO, *who stands between him and the body*).

Is this the straight road to Correggio?

SILVESTRO.

It is.

MESSENGER.

Know you Antonio Allegri,
Good hermit?

SILVESTRO.

Yes. What news hast thou for him?

MESSENGER.

A good evangile; now his fortune's made.

SILVESTRO.

Most true, his real fortune.

MESSENGER.

How! You know, then?

SILVESTRO.

Know what?

MESSENGER.

That our good Duke of Mantua
Sends him, by me, a summons to the court!
There shall Antonio in his service stay,
Distinguish'd, honour'd, bountifully paid.
For Michael Angelo and Julio
Romano spoke of him to-day, in terms

So full of ardour, that his Highness sent me
Away post haste, to fetch Antonio,
With wife and child, to Mantua to-morrow.

SILVESTRO.

With all thy speed, thou still art come too late.

MESSENGER.

How so?

SILVESTRO (*stepping aside*).

There lies the martyr, fall'n already,
Beneath the load of jealousy and want.

MESSENGER.

Great heaven, and is he dead? Is this Allegri?

SILVESTRO.

This was Allegri. Many a year will come
And go, before our world again can say—
There is Allegri!

MESSENGER.

Ah, I well believe you!

SILVESTRO.

Salute thy duke! Say to him, 'twas humane,
On the request of two such famous men,
To wish to do a noble artist right.
But say besides, it had been worthier far,
Had he himself found out the wondrous art
Of this great man,—himself had succour'd it,
Nor left it to a chance, alas! too late!
To make him sensible—what he has lost.

MESSENGER.

Poor soul! poor soul! And so he died of want

SILVESTRO.

Bewail him not, the blessed one! 'Tis true,
His weary head has droop'd, but the twin wreaths
Which circle those pale temples tenderly,—
The wreath of honour, of remembrance,—these,
I say to thee, resplendently will shine,
When many a golden crown has fallen in dust!

MESSENGER.

I do believe you. He was great indeed!

GIOVANNI (*weeping*).

My father does not sleep—he's dead! he's dead!

SILVESTRO.

Weep, my poor boy! thou hast good cause to weep.
Thou, too, Maria, join thy tears with mine.
The world must marvel, it has nought to mourn.
He in his works shall live for evermore,
A great exemplar to all time. But oh,
For us a husband, father, friend has died!
The whole world cannot recompense our loss!
We shall regain him in yon heaven alone!

CURTAIN FALLS.

NOTES.

And in this cry they were joined by Goethe.

Introductory Notice.—Page vi.

WHEN Oehlenschläger, then a young man of twenty-seven, visited Germany in 1806, Goethe was among the first to recognise his genius, and to encourage the young poet to pursue the career which had opened so gloriously in his brilliant drama of 'Aladdin.' He incited him to be his own translator into German, and acting upon this instigation Oehlenschläger subsequently published his 'Aladdin' and all his best dramatic works in German as well as in Danish, writing the former language with a vigour and freshness which few natives have surpassed. A cloud, how arising Oehlenschläger himself never ascertained, obscured Goethe's affection for him in future years, but Oehlenschläger's enthusiastic regard for the poet of Weimar burned to the last as warmly as in the days when he dedicated to him his German version of 'Aladdin' in the following beautiful poem, which Jean Paul, in his own happy style, called 'the inclination of a sun-flower towards its god.'

TO GOETHE.

BORN in far northern clime,
Came to mine ears sweet tidings in my prime,
From fairy land;
Where flowers eternal blow,
Where power and beauty go,
Knit in a magic band.

Oft, when a child, I'd pore
In rapture on the ancient Saga lore;
When on the wold
The snow was falling white,
I, shuddering with delight,
Felt not the cold.

When with his pinion chill
The winter smote the castle on the hill,
It fann'd my hair;
I sat in my small room,
And through the lamp-lit gloom
Saw Spring smile fair.

And though my love in youth
Was all for Northern energy and truth,
And Northern feats;
Yet for my fancy's feast
The flower-apparelled East
Unveiled its sweets.

To manhood as I grew,
From north to south, from south to north I flew;
I was possessed
By yearnings to give voice in song
To all that had been struggling long
Within my breast.

I heard bards manifold,
But at their minstrelsy my heart grew cold;
Dim, colourless became
My childhood's visions grand;
Their tameness only fann'd
My wilder flame.

Who did the young bard save?
Who to his eye a keener vision gave,
That he the child
Amor beheld, astride
The lion, far off ride,
Careering wild?

Thou, great and good! Thy spell-like lays
Did the enchanted curtain raise
From fairy land,
Where flowers eternal blow,
Where power and beauty go,
Knit in a loving band.

Well pleased thou heardest long
Within thy halls the stranger minstrel's song;
Taught to aspire
By thee, my spirit leapt
To bolder heights, and swept
The German lyre.

Oft have I sung before,
And many a hero of our Northern shore
With grave stern mien,
By sad Melpomene,
Called from his grave we see
Stalk o'er the scene.

And greeting they will send
To friend Aladdin, cheerly as a friend:
The oak's thick gloom
Prevails not wholly, where
Warbles the nightingale, and fair
Flowers waft perfume.

On thee, to whom I owe
New life, what shall my gratitude bestow?
Nought has the bard
Save his own song! And this
Thou dost not, trivial as the tribute is,
With scorn regard.

Ah, so! A sweet repentant Magdalen.—Page 6.

The picture here suggested by the poet is manifestly the famous Magdalen of the Dresden Gallery, familiar in Longhi's engraving, and of which fine *replicas* exist in the Palazzo Borghese in Rome, and also in Lord Ward's collection. As a specimen of the extravagance to which the cant of criticism will lead even great men, it may be noted, that Tieck found great fault with the poet for making Silvestro hang up this picture in his chapel in the forest, in the Fifth Act, as a piece of barbarism shocking to the nerves of a dilettante. In the same spirit, he first maintains that the picture spoken of is the Dresden picture, and then proves elaborately that it could not be so. Of all men in the world, Tieck, whose fancy is erratic to a vice, should have been the last to blame the excusable license in Oehlenschläger, of indicating, as he has done in this scene, a picture which is familiar to every lover of art, and was therefore best of all fitted for dramatic reference.

You make the infant like a glowworm shine.—Page 11.

The allusion here is to the famous picture, '*La Notte*,' in the Dresden Gallery, where the light, in accordance with the old legend, proceeds from the new-born babe, an effect which Correggio seems to have been the first to attempt, and in which he has never been surpassed. Vasari speaks with enthusiasm of this

picture as something 'quite wonderful.' But with all its excellence, the absence of the feeling, in the Mary and the other figures, of the divinity of the child on which they are gazing, makes this picture by no means so satisfactory as many others of Correggio's pictures of sacred subjects.

And artists now are held in such repute,
That even the nieces of the cardinals
Scarce serve them for their wives.—Page 16.

Here, and in a subsequent passage (p. 96), the poet alludes to the betrothal of Raphael to Maria Bibbiena, the niece of Bernardo Divizio, Cardinal of Bibbiena. This alliance was postponed for some cause which is not known, and she died before Raphael, as we learn from the inscription placed in the Pantheon, in accordance with the painter's testamentary injunction. It seems very clear from a letter by Raphael to his uncle Simone di Battista di Ciarla, dated 1st July, 1514, quoted by Passavant, in which the subject is mentioned, that on his side considerations of prudence and friendship rather than love prevailed. The delay in celebrating the marriage has been conjectured by Passavant and others to have been occasioned by the lady's ill health; but, where all is conjecture, it seems quite as likely that Raphael was in no hurry to break the connexion with the mistress who held control over his heart to the last, for a marriage in which his feelings were in no way interested. —(*See Passavant's Raphael.* Leipzig. 1839. *Erster Theil, pp.* 235—237. *And Vasari's Lives.* Bohn. 1851. Vol. 3, p. 59.)

There at the tombs I stood of Julius, and
Lorenzo, and those forms immortal saw,
The Day, the Night, the Twilight, and the Dawn
Of Michael Angelo, in pure white marble.—Page 48.

Most English readers will remember the fine lines in Rogers' *Italy*, devoted to these celebrated tombs, where

'From age to age,
Two ghosts are sitting on their sepulchres.'

These are the two famous statues, one of Lorenzo de' Medici, grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and father of Catharine de' Medici, and the other of Giuliano de' Medici, third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Both tombs are of the same character, each consisting of a sarcophagus, surmounted by a statue, and supported by colossal reclining figures, one male and the other female, those called Day and Night being on Giuliano's monument, and those called Dawn and Twilight on Lorenzo's. There is no apparent

reason why these names might not be interchanged, or, indeed, why the figures should bear these names at all. The purpose of these allegorical figures is difficult to divine. They seem inappropriate, as they certainly are unpleasing, the attitudes being constrained, and wanting the repose which the mind expects in monumental sculpture. But however we may feel disposed to question their fitness, they bear the impress of a mind habituated to grand conceptions, and form a noble basement for the matchless statues which surmount them. Of these the finest is Lorenzo, which is thus admirably described by a recent American writer,—'He is seated, and in armour, the face resting on the hand. The figure is so full of character and expression, that all the details are unobserved. It has the dignity and repose of sculpture, and the individuality of a portrait. The mind is too much moved to stoop to the contemplation of a fold of drapery or the position of a limb. The air of the figure is thoughtful and contemplative. It is that of a man meditating some great design, and not without a dash of the formidable. There is something dangerous in that deep, solemn stillness, and intense self-involution. Deadly will be the spring that follows the uncoiling of those folds.'—*Hillard's Six Months in Italy.* Murray. 1853. Vol. 1, p. 105.

Of the many glorious works of art, which the Crystal Palace will be the means of showing for the first time in adequate copies to the untravelled Englishman, none are finer than these famous tombs, of which casts have been obtained of the size of the original.

You have seen many of his pieces there
In the saloon; his Leda, Danaë.—Page 68.

Correggio's Leda is now in the Berlin Museum, along with another of his pictures of the same class, Io embraced by Jupiter. The heads in both pictures are new, that of the Io being by Prudhon. The Duke of Orleans, in a squeamish fit at the warmth of the expression of the originals, had them cut out. His sensitiveness, to be consistent, should not have stopped where it did.—(*See Kugler's Handbook of Painting in Italy.*) Both pictures are masterly in their kind; but that kind is not of the best. The Leda is particularly admirable. Goethe must have had this picture in his mind, when writing the famous passage in the Second Part of 'Faust,' where his hero, in the search for Helen, has a waking vision of that incident which led to Helen's birth.

FAUST.

I wake indeed! I see them well,
These forms of grace unmatchable,
In beauty palpable to sight!

What transports strange my spirits seize,
Can these be dreams, or memories,
  The shadows of an old delight?
The limpid waters as they stray
Through bushes green, that gently sway
  Above them, scarce a murmur make;
An hundred rills together meet
In one broad clear unruffled sheet
  Of water deep—a crystal lake:
And female forms, young, sleek, and fair,
That fill the eye with rapture, there
  Are doubled in the mirror bright;
They mix and dip with merry hum,
Some swimming, shyly wading some,
  And shout and splash in sportive fight.
Could these content, mine eye should find
Enjoyment here; but no, my mind
  Looks farther, and with vision keen
Would pierce yon thick-embowering roof
Of clustering leaves, whose tangled woof
  Conceals the glory of their Queen.

A wonder, lo! swans bright of hue,
From leaf-screen'd nooks swim into view
  With slow majestic pace;
Two and two serenely steering,
Head and crest yet proudly rearing,
  As conscious of their grace.
Yet one that breasts the glassy tide,
Outstripping all, a statelier pride
  And bearing seems to vaunt,
With pinions all blown proudly out,
He cleaves the waves that curl about,
  And nears the sacred haunt.
The rest glide softly to and fro,
With feathers smooth and white as snow;
  But lo! their crests in wrath they set,
And put to flight the timorous maids,
Who, seeking safety in the glades,
  Their mistress queen forget.

The Danaë is in the Palazzo Borghese in Rome. Correggio has done the most with a subject, which no skill can ever reconcile with pure taste. Danaë lies half reclining on a sumptuous couch, at the end of which sits Love, catching the golden rain-drops in her drapery. In front of the couch are two *amorini* intent on sharpening an arrow. We cannot agree with Kugler in thinking that

Danaë's figure 'is modelled with exquisite softness.' On the contrary it is rather meagre, as if by this characteristic, and the unattractive expression of her face, the artist had meant to indicate a hard and mercenary nature, in which true passion had no place. The Cupids are in his most exquisite manner. They are not like the Cupid of Horace's ode to Barine:—

'Ferus et Cupido
Semper ardentes acuens sagittas
Cote cruenta,'

but playful urchins, full of the rosy life of childhood, crowing in anticipation over the bewilderment of heart and the odd contrarieties likely to arise from the sweet venom of their shafts. The despair, and madness, and death of the fiercer Amor are quite beyond their sphere. Of all Correggio's children, we know none more admirable than these.

And I—although the Pope would make me paint, &c.—Page 72.

The allusion here is to the circumstances under which the frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel were executed. Michael Angelo, who had no previous experience in fresco painting, and had returned to Rome, expecting to complete the sculpture for the magnificent tomb contemplated by Julius II. for himself, (of which the Moses, in San Pietro in Vincoli, and the figures of the Captives, now in the Louvre, were to form a part,) was greatly disappointed to find the idea of the tomb abandoned, and his imperious Holiness determined to have the ceiling of the Chapel painted by the hand which had shown its supremacy in sculpture. 'The labour,' says Vasari, 'was great and difficult, and our artist, aware of his own inexperience, did all he could to excuse himself from undertaking the work, proposing, at the same time, that it should be confided to Raphael. But the more he refused, the more Pope Julius insisted; impetuous in all his desires, and stimulated by the competitors of Michelagnolo, more especially by Bramante, he was on the point of making a quarrel with our artist, when the latter, finding His Holiness determined, resolved to accept the task.'—(*Vasari's Lives. Translated by Mrs. J. Foster.* Bohn. 1852. Vol. 5, p. 254.) Michelagnolo summoned to his assistance several Florentine artists, including Granacci, Giuliano Bugiardini, Jacopo di Sandro, the elder Indaco, Agnolo da Donnino, and Aristotile da Sangallo, who were all versed in the processes of fresco painting. Their work, however, was so unsatisfactory to their master, that he determined to destroy all that they had done. 'He then,' says Vasari, 'shut himself up in the Chapel, and not only would he never again permit the building to be opened to

them, but he likewise refused to see any one of them at his house. Finally, therefore, and when the jest appeared to them to be carried too far, they returned, ashamed and mortified, to Florence. Michelagnolo then made arrangements for performing the whole work himself, sparing no care or labour, in the hope of bringing the same to a satisfactory termination, nor would he ever permit himself to be seen, lest he should give occasion for a request to show the work.'

This dislike to allow his work to be seen while in progress gave rise to the incident mentioned in the text, or at all events to the story as told by Vasari. The Pope, finding himself as rigorously excluded as other people, is reported to have bribed Michelagnolo's assistants, and in this way to have obtained admission to the Chapel. Michelagnolo, suspecting what was on foot, had concealed himself, and, to startle the intruder, of whose dignity he was not aware, flung down a plank from the scaffolding.

This is the Saint Cecilia!—Page 90.

This glorious picture, now in the Gallery of the Academy at Bologna, was painted by Raphael, in 1513, to the order of a noble Bolognese lady, Elena Duglioli dall' Oglio, who was inspired to build a chapel to Saint Cecilia in the Church of San Giovanni in Monte, at Bologna. It was on contemplating this picture, that Correggio is said, in the well known anecdote, to have exclaimed, *'Anch' io son' pittore!'* The anecdote is apocryphal, but no one will deny to Oehlenschläger the praise of having turned it to excellent account. Nor is Antonio's apostrophe to the picture more beautiful than true. Criticism before this consummate work gives place to an enthusiasm of emotion, for which no fitter words could be found than those which the poet has placed in Antonio's mouth. Our attention is fixed by the poet on the Saint Cecilia alone, and the same thing occurs on looking at the picture itself, for the Saint Paul and the Magdalen, though fine in themselves, seem intrusive. The celestial harmony has not reached their ears. This is one of the many great pictures in Italy of which no good engravings exist, and the influence of which is thus in a great measure lost.

The chaplet now is in its proper place.—Page 106.

Oehlenschläger mentions in his Autobiography, that the incident of crowning Antonio was suggested to him by his being caught by a branch in the manner described by Celestina in the text, in the gardens of the Villa Borghese, while meditating how to

compensate Correggio for the wound caused to his feelings by the unworthy project of Ottavio. 'Never shall I forget,' he says, 'how, when I was reading the play to my Danish friends in Rome, and Christel Riepenhausen at the passage where Celestina crowns Correggio said, in a cool and indifferent way—'Hm, that is pretty!' Thorwaldsen started up, looked at him with flashing eyes, and exclaimed, 'No, that is grand!'—*Selbst-Biographie*, Vol. ii., p. 151. Breslau. 1839.

What gain to thee the charming Fornarina?—Page 96.

The universal adoption of this name as applied to Raphael's mistress is a curious instance, among many, how a bold invention comes in time to be adopted as fact. Of Raphael's mistress nothing is known beyond what is recorded by Vasari, who in matters of this kind is not always to be relied on, that Raphael had a mistress, who lived with him in Rome, and for whom he made liberal provision on being seized by the sudden and rapid illness which carried him off. The name 'La Fornarina,' according to Passavant (vol. i. p. 227), is used for the first time in the middle of the last century by T. Puccini ('Real Galleria di Firenze,' p. 6.) and yet this name is repeated as confidently now-a-days, as though it had been regularly transmitted from Raphael's own time. Who the lady was, or what were her peculiar fascinations, is merely a matter of conjecture; but that she possessed qualities of a rare and noble order no one can doubt who has felt the elevation and sweetness, unequalled by any other artist, which distinguish Raphael's women. Such a man could never have loved ignobly, and the intercourse with a spirit so gloriously endowed as his must have developed all the latent womanly excellence, which, in the first instance, had attracted Raphael towards her. Of the many portraits, scattered through the galleries of Italy, which bear her name, Passavant, in his 'Life of Raphael,' (vol. i. p. 224, *et seq.*) satisfactorily shows, that the only one which can be genuine is that in the Pitti Palace in Florence. The portrait in the Barberini Palace in Rome, which is generally received as the likeness of Raphael's mistress, speaks forcibly against the claim set up for it, in the cold and unintellectual characteristics of the face, and the absence of every quality calculated to attract, or at least to hold under the spell of years, a man of refined tastes and thoughtful habits. But the historical evidences are conclusive against both this and the more agreeable female portrait in the tribune of the Uffizi in Florence. It must gratify all who have lingered over the winning, and noble, and most womanly fear tures of the portrait in the Pitti Palace, shaping a history for he-

who so looked and smiled with such 'serious sweetness,' to be informed, upon grounds which place the question almost beyond a doubt, that this picture preserves for us the lineaments on which Raphael gazed with the growing fondness of years of intimacy, and that the arguments in favour of this conclusion are confirmed by the fact, that it is the same face which we see idealised in his Saint Cecilia and in the Madonna di San Sisto. This portrait is thus spoken of by the eloquent American writer quoted in a previous note:—'The face is not one of rare beauty, nor is it in the earliest bloom of youth, but it is a winning and cordial face, breathing gentleness, warmth of heart, and resolute firmness of purpose, were it needed. It is, too, a domestic countenance, suggesting a happy wife and mother, and a home brightened by an active spirit and a loving nature. There is so much character and such marked individuality in the countenance, that we cannot pass it by as a mere 'Portrait of a Lady.' We are constrained to pause and speculate, and to say to ourselves, 'Who were you that look out of the canvas with that loving, sensible, animated face?' But we ask in vain. It is a fragment of the past, telling no story, and linked to no associations. It is a face without a history.'—(*Six Months in Italy*, Vol. i., p. 121). Learn from Passavant that this is indeed the portrait of Raphael's mistress, and what better history can be desired for such a face?

Thou from thy mother didst inherit them,
And she from hers, &c.—Page 123.

Oehlenschläger probably refers in this passage to the desperate resolution of the Cimbrian women after the great defeat by Marius of the Cimbrian army, at the Adige (B.C. 102.) 'The first act of the wives of the Cimbri,' says Michelet, in his *History of France*, 'was to set their children at liberty by death; they strangled them, or cast them under the wheels of their waggons. They then hanged themselves; fastening themselves by a running knot to the horns of their oxen, and goading them on so as to ensure their being trampled to pieces.'

How gladsomely the green smiles forth on me,
Like hope from out the blue eternity.—Page 124.

Green, among the northern nations, is regarded as the colour of hope. The whole of this passage, like many others in Oehlenschläger's writings, was suggested by an incident in his own life, when in Germany in 1806. 'In order to enjoy Goethe's society

for other eight days,' he writes, 'I went to Jena, where he passed some time previously to making his usual summer trip to Carlsbad. It was a sultry day when I walked from Weimar to Jena; I was warm, and slaked my thirst hurriedly at an ice-cold spring by the wayside. When I reached Jena, I felt a contraction at the chest, which at first caused me some uneasiness, and I thought,—'How if you should have done yourself harm by the draught of cold water when you were over-heated?' I was along with Goethe in the house of Fromman, the bookseller, but the spasms were so violent that I could not fully enjoy his society. Still I did not mention to any one what I was suffering. Looking out of the window, I beheld a large brilliant rainbow, in which the line of green, the colour of hope, was particularly bright. As I gazed upon it, my alarm vanished; and two days afterwards my pain was gone. But the feeling of that day and the image of the rainbow hovered before my mind's eye, when, three years afterwards, I composed the fifth act of Correggio.'—*Meine Lebens-Erinnerungen*, Vol. ii., p. 62.

THE END.

LONDON:
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS, CHANDOS STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.