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DIABOLUS AMANS

What if the Devil were a man in love,  
And loved a woman good as women be  
Who are not wicked ;—what's the sequel, say ?

—*Diabolus Amans.*

DIABOLUS AMANS

A DRAMATIC POEM



GLASGOW  
WILSON & McCORMICK, SAINT VINCENT STREET  
1885



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“A man can transform himself into an angel, if he will only, for a reasonable space of time, undertake an angel's office.”—Altered from *The Scarlet Letter*.



## DIABOLUS AMANS.

SCENE I.—*Midnight. Wine Party in the  
Rooms of Angelus.*

*Angelus (aside).*

WELL, one may live until he find the world  
No wiser, books no deeper than himself,  
And men no better ;—not that he is great  
—God knows!—but they are little. You  
    may sound  
The wells of old and new philosophy  
And drag the sacred rivers, you shall find  
Never a question drying up the life  
And one to answer it, never a wound  
And one to lay his hand upon the hurt  
To heal it: found I ne'er and ne'er shall find,  
Happen what may, and all things hap to me,  
In poet or in psalmist precedent.

*First Guest.*

What ails our Angelus, he sits so mute,  
Contracting that most odious habit known  
Of thinking answers to our table-talk  
And saying none? This custom must be  
checked

As most discouraging to that high art  
In which we are such amateurs, although  
We have more practice in it than our own,—  
The finest of the arts, the art to talk,  
The art to think with twenty brains at once.  
What if our Angel were a man in love?

*Angelus.*

What if the Devil were a man in love?

*Second Guest.*

What if the Devil were a God in love!  
Away with it, your fond antithesis,  
Your sharp division into good and bad:  
What has the Devil, I ask, to do with us,  
Who has no place or name in classic cult,  
Though pretty fairly dealt amongst the gods;

And when 'tis clear to reasonable men  
He cannot even live and much less love ?

*Angelus.*

But if the Devil were a man in love,  
And loved a woman good as women be  
Who are not wicked—what's the sequel, say,  
In this world or the world completing this ?  
If ever curve on Earth is sphered in Heaven,

[*Pointing through the open window to the  
bridge below*]

As yonder arch is rounded in the stream.

*Third Guest.*

Sequel, my Angel, sequel there is none.  
The Devil's duty were to hide his love  
As if it were calamity or crime,  
Lest haply his revealed awaken hers ;  
For women—that's the worst of it, you know—  
Will love you, if you love them, back again,  
And you by contact soil the stainless soul  
You love in all its petal-purity.

*Fourth Guest.*

The Devil hide his love?—the Devil, no!  
 Why should he? why should we, and what  
     are we?

—Not angels truly, what but in our way,  
 A petty retail way, *diaboli*,  
*Diaboli amantes?* Yet withal  
 Some woman loves us, and may live and die  
 In the belief that we are great and good,  
 If only we be wise and do not deem  
 It duty to profess ungodliness  
 Or even devilhood; and she, dear heart,  
 Is none the worse for us though petal-pure,  
 But all the better for her lovely love,  
 That grows upon a ruin like a flower,  
 Or ripens o'er a chasm like a fruit.

*Fifth Guest.*

Nay, mask yourself like Mephistopheles,  
 And if you be the plague, you foul the air;  
 If you be fire, you burn, although concealed  
 Or ladled out as water. She, poor soul,  
 When sitting by your side full-charged with  
     you,



Will find it harder to believe in God  
And keep the upward path that leads to Him.  
Then let her angel whisper in her ear :  
“ O maiden, judge another by your mood,  
The sort of love he wakens in your breast ;  
Down-dragging are your earthy, sensual souls,  
Uplifting are your stronger spirits ; say,  
Are you the better or the worse for them ;  
And know the spirits, know them by your  
own.”

*Sixth Guest.*

Fall to, my merry, merry men, fall to,  
The while I watch the fun and see you  
flooded  
Like ninepins when you side against the right.  
I call upon the doughtiest here to bear  
This witness unto Truth,—that though he go  
Goliath-armed against her, he shall lie  
Felled by a stripling-shepherd in a smock  
Who fights for her. As far as I can see  
There's nothing left the poor unfortunate,  
The Devil, but to drop his devilry :

Misgivings first, conviction, otherwise ;  
Next high resolve, conversion, if you will ;  
This is the sequel of the Devil's love.

*Fourth Guest.*

Ay, Hell, they say, is paved with good  
resolves.

*Seventh Guest.*

—And Heaven no less. Now, citizens, it is  
The hour of midnight, when the Wicked One,  
In mediæval language, walks the Earth ;  
And, with the kind permission of our host,  
We'll drink a parting cup,—success in such  
An enterprise to him who took the Ash-  
Tree Ygdrasil betwixt his burning palms,  
And shook like fruit the shining stars from  
Heaven.

*Second Guest.*

What, drink good luck unto the Devil's love !

*Angelus.*

No, no, success to him, repenting, man.

[*They drink and depart, one singing a song to the tune of "See the Conquering Hero comes."*]

*Well he knows who would be good,  
He can be the thing he would ;  
Ere the act the deed is done,  
Ere the fight the field is won ;  
In this realm alone can we  
Count upon the victory.*

*Rags beyond the Palace-gate  
Soil the Palace purple state ;  
Many a sick and sinful thing  
Shames the sceptre of the King ;  
And the doubt will oft intrude,  
Can this be and God be good ?*

*When we find in Nature's plan  
Platform for a perfect man ;  
Then we know the mind of Him  
Whom these shapes appalling dim ;  
Call him Christ or call him Buddh,  
God is for us,—God is good.*

*Angelus, alone.*

'Tis well they did not wive and father him,  
The Devil, for the wicked shall not wed  
Like other couples whose conceit it is  
To marry and have children.—Is it so ?  
Lives there the man who fears not fatherhood,  
To reproduce himself in son of his,  
Perpetuating his besetting sin,  
Creating generations yet unborn ?

What if I were the Devil ?—for who knows  
But one is he incarnate ?—if I were  
So damnéd I were happier in Hell ?  
But no ! as often as I sink, I rise ;  
However low I grovel, 'tis my virtue  
Never to rest in vice, but evermore  
My buoyant spirit boundeth back again  
In its sublime resilience to the stars.

If Helen whose eidôlon went to Troy,  
Had met it wandering by the banks of Nile !  
If there arose betwixt the Night and me  
The spectral self, and I survived the sight :  
But, as it is, I cannot see myself

For others, whose pursuits so poor and vain,  
Whose tastes and sports so barbarous, passion  
    prose,  
Have sunk into my soul such scorn of men  
That often I am half-inclined to fear,  
“ I am the best man I have ever known :”  
A thought to make the middle-sized in God  
Woeful as woman when 'tis proved too plain  
Her lordly equal in the other sex  
Is not a thought superior to herself  
With all her weakness ;—sad as Socrates  
On that bereaving night the messengers  
Returned from Delphi with the oracle  
That he, poor sage, not very great or wise,  
Was yet the wisest in the Fatherland.

[*Looks fixedly before him.*

Horror of horrors ! what art thou ?—myself ;  
O maddening apparition, how I hate thee ;  
Would thou wert flesh and blood that I might  
    slay thee !

[*Hides his face in his hands.*

SCENE II.—*A Field in the Sunset. Angelus sitting on a fallen tree.*

*Angelus.*

ALAS ! that virgin soul should fritter thus  
Its lately-liberated force away  
In fugitive affections, till 'tis fain  
To warm itself at someone else's fire,  
To light its lamp at other's. I am he  
Who drank the soul of woman in her love,  
Firing my blood with sacramental wine,  
—O sacrilege ! My compact with my loves  
Was that of Faust with Mephistopheles :  
Fill my imagination, haunt my dreams  
Waking, with rich romance, and I am thine,  
So long, no longer ; when my life has ceased  
To be atremble, and the air athrob  
With passion and desire, our compact ends.

O withering Passion, what can wither thee ?  
—Nothing but thine own self. Oh, predicate

Of Passion, above all that's fugitive,  
It passes : yester-eve in flush of prime  
Imperious, bearing down, and sweeping all  
Before it as a flood ; to-day 'tis naught,  
Forgotten, it has passed as utterly  
As last night's storm, and left no trace but  
wreck.

And now, I know not why, I think of you  
Who once so stormed my senses, drave such  
shocks

Through all my sky, but with no pulse the  
more,

No warmth of heart, no moisture of the eye,  
No tremor of the lip, no feeling left  
But scorn sufficing to disown the self  
That passed from fire to ice. Yes, I have  
dreamed

Of loving, but I have not loved till now.

What if this passion were as vain as those,  
What if this flood of feeling should subside  
And leave the shore all strewn with empty  
shells,

As other passions did before ! Ah no,

A man may fondly think himself in love  
 With every moon, but when he loves he knows.

[*Donna approaches in the distance.*

Beautiful beings are not fetched from far,  
 The Beautiful comes. False ties are full of  
 fear

And troubled joy and anguish and unrest ;  
 True ties are perfect.

[*He sees Donna.*

Lovely as the light  
 Through lilies ! Brow for God, but mouth  
 for man !

O lips, Love's very own, still strange to mine,  
 May I not feel for them but once, and live  
 On their remembered sweetness evermore ?  
 Never, no more than may Diabolus.  
 And I mistrust the love that can be won,  
 For if it can be won it can be lost,  
 Unstable as the gas that is condensed  
 At pressure of some thirty atmospheres.

She has perceived me and she makes for me ;  
 And I must play the part of middle age,



Superior to her youth, and smiling down  
 Her ignorance and inexperience,  
 Goethe or god. So soon as she appears  
 I shall be all she thinks me, spite of me,  
 With eyes star-full of aspirations, though  
 Such looking-up is straining to a sense  
 So played upon as mine—akin to his  
 Reclining on his couch at dead of night,  
 Trembling on sleep, and wakened throbbing-  
     wide  
 With feeling as of falling far in space,  
 Yea, falling, falling from eternity.

[*To Donna.*

My child, sit 'down by me, and say what  
     thought  
 As mute as yonder wistful woods is this,  
 A secret theirs and thine ; no thanks, I see,  
 To this book, . . . “Poems by . . .”  
     turned upside down ;  
 I wot it opens, this romance of life,  
 As every woman's at the page of love.

[*Opens the book at the passage which  
 follows :—*

*If thou be fit for friendship, art the called  
To this high calling, tread with sacred awe  
Within its precincts ; fear to enter, lest  
The early rashness be the latter doubt ;  
Doubt once, to love and trust for evermore.  
Take off thy shoes from off thy feet ere thou  
With infinite precautions, saving fears  
And preparation of the heart, engage  
In this the sweetest of the Mysteries.  
Initiated in these sacred rites,  
Return alone in silence to thy house,  
Be love thy secret even from thy friend,  
As the most potent charm thou knowest of,  
When other charms and incantations fail  
To lay the spirits or to summon them.  
Reserve " I love " for some extremity,  
Some supreme moment when this Time and  
Space  
Seem levelled to the nothingness they are,  
And nothing but the soul of things survives :  
Who dares to front the heavens and say he  
loves ?  
Love is too large a word for man to mouth.*

[*Aside.*

“Some supreme moment,” what is that but  
love?—

The thrilling moment when two spirits meet,  
Like streams that leapt from different heights  
to meet

In some delicious hollow of the hills,  
With added waters and a doubled life  
To pass together to the Great Unknown.

[*Some one at a distance sings unseen.*

*Spring, begin to wake the dene,  
Tingling into buds of green,  
Soft suffusing loamy lea,  
Meet for musing :*

“*Vive la Vie!*”

*Donna.*

*With one hand taking the book, and with  
the other loosening Angelus's hold.*

Nay, do not laugh at me, you must not laugh.  
It is my wont, you know, to take out books

And not to read them. Who could read  
to-night  
While God is tracing yonder burning scroll,  
Or speak when He is speaking? Oh, that sky,  
The glowing furnace-heart of flameless fire!  
Is it not wonderful? I am so glad  
To find you here; I somehow thought I  
must,—  
The sunset is so beautiful to-night.

*Angelus.*

Are not *all* sunsets beautiful, my child?  
The gray of eve as thrilling as the rose  
That burns to amber? Heaven is every-  
where,  
The sky broods over all, the sole domain,  
And no one shall sequester or enclose  
That common, as the wretches fence the moor  
And the sea-coast.

[*The song goes on.*

*Till with mellow sunny hours  
Into yellow fields of flowers,*

*Into clover-purpled sea,  
Running over,*

*Vive la Vie !*

All fair is Earth, and arts  
That oust us from one inch of earth and sky  
Are but a choice of evils ; in her court  
Beside her thistles purpling into flower,  
We are as brave in sacking as in silk  
And broidery of gold. And yet the crowd  
Prefer the rockets spat into the face  
Of the majestic moon to yon expanse,  
The night-blue stretch beyond the Northern  
Star :

For men are beauty-blind and deaf to boot,  
They do not see the glories at their gates,  
Gape as they may for comet and eclipse,  
And wonder at the lightning of the God  
Who first insisted on Himself in thunder.  
The poet sings unheard, Cassandra-wise,  
Never believed and never understood,  
Whate'er his language, 'tis a foreign tongue ;

The vespers might be Latin for the sense  
They bear to Protestant and Philistine.

[*The song goes on.*

*Sure the glowing life that came  
Budding, blowing, is the same  
That is moving here in me,  
Feeling, loving :*

*Vive la Vie !*

*Donna.*

O leave them, leave them ! thou and they  
have naught  
In common but thy scorn and hatred.

*Angelus.*

Nay,

I have no hatred. Truly love, and lo,  
All thought, all feeling, takes the form of love,  
And none is left to hate with.

*Donna.*

None, none, none !

Oh, life is lovely, and the day too short  
 For happiness that goes on in your dreams,  
 Wakes you at morning to the song of birds,  
 And that mysterious movement ere the dawn  
 —The quiver of recovered consciousness ;—  
 The dawn as fresh as if it were the first,  
 Nay, fresher in this season rich and full  
 With cumulative springs, with every leaf  
 Fashioned for its own flower—no other ; when  
 The night is made for morning, grief for joy,  
 And we to wonder if we are in Heaven.

[*Song.*

*Never having life, my brother,  
 Ever craving for another,  
 In the next so wilt thou be  
 Ever vexed so !*

*Vive la Vie !*

O Angelus, and is it possible  
 That some men in their deep ingratitude,  
 Having received God's gift of life, despise  
 The present, which He thought to please us  
 with,

And dare to ask Him in return, "Is life  
Worth living?"

*Angelus.*

Fools, they stretch their powers ! not so  
This lovely flower that dies upon thy breast;  
The question was not its to ask, nor thine,  
Nor mine, nor any man's. But dark the  
hours  
That settle o'er the soul, when you are 'ware  
Of sorrow, and your path runs parallel  
To the great host of the afflicted. Here  
So certain is the course of joy and ~~woe~~  
Alternate, summer, winter, that we count  
Unhappy them who laugh for they shall weep ;  
And sorrow is sad, believe me, child.

*Like the sapless, leafless tree,  
Joyless, hapless, though thou be,  
Only live and soon with me,  
Shout thy vive and*

*Vive la Vie !*



Ay me,

Who are we that we talk of happiness,  
Whose love is but an instant charmed from  
Life,  
Whose life is but a moment gained from  
Death.

As well might the condemned within the cell  
Dilate on earthly happiness as we ;  
We are not men discharged but men reprieved  
From fear and pain and punishment and  
death :

The sentence has been passed, the doom  
decreed,

The execution only is delayed,  
And well the happy know, at any hour  
Of night and morning, with his rod may  
knock

The Lictor, officer of justice, fell  
Of fate, to call us or our dearer self  
To that uncertain and most certain Death,  
Which in the final act, the closing scene,  
Doth make a tragedy of every life.

*Donna.*

If this is all, if there's no other.

*Grief why grieve for, making moan,  
Grief doth live for joy alone ;  
Without sadness, where would be  
Sense of gladness ?*

*Vive la Vie!*

Why

Need any be ashamed of happiness,  
Or call it earthly when 't comes from God,  
The Giver of all good? We will not wait  
Till we are sad to say, His will be done,—  
We'll say it now with glad and throbbing  
    hearts,  
For sunlight is His will, and birds and flow-  
    ers  
And childhood and high hopes and happi-  
    ness.  
So later, when the night is closing round,  
And lights are burning dim by open graves,

We yet may stretch our empty arms to  
 Heaven ;  
 God cannot take away what once He gave,  
 But keeps it for us still, for God is good.

*Nathless, in the last " amen "*  
*Who'd begin the feast again ?*  
*Could you give it, who'd agree*  
*To relive it ?*

*Vive la Vie !*

*Angelus.*

Why that your life-worth-living-one might  
 doubt :  
 'Tis hard to see that God is good, and this  
 Belief is living as it were by miracle  
 Just as it sprang : the sights and sounds of  
 earth  
 Do give the lie to goodness, and the life  
 Of feeling is—a woman's, pardon me,  
 Staggering your fed-by-hand, your rescued  
 faiths,

Making you wonder where was God, and  
 where

His angels when the fledgeling fell from nest,  
 Making you question if the Lord of Love  
 Be loving, if the Maker have a heart.

*With the best his life supplied,  
 Every guest is satisfied ;  
 Wherefore, give and give with glee,  
 Vive and vive and*

*Vive la Vie !*

*Donna.*

Nay, He is good, and nothing if not good !  
 I know it by the pity in my heart,  
 Which comes, I know not whence if not from  
 Him,  
 When sight of wrong and outrage cross my  
 path  
 And every pulse protests 'tis not of Him,  
 For I believe in God the Father. When  
 At early morn I watch Him make the day,  
 The glittering drops of rain upon the grass,

The mass of cherry bloom against the sky,  
The stainless white against the stainless blue,  
Do give the lie to our dark thoughts of Him  
And gently say to me : It must be Love,  
At least I do not know what else it is  
That makes the common hedge-row white  
with bloom.

Oh, see the sky reflected in the pool  
And in our faces ! We must paint this pool  
To-morrow in the sunset.

*Angelus (aside).*

Oh, that "we,"  
Love's pronoun !

*Donna.*

And how often have you said  
That, spite of this alternate hope and fear,  
Creation groaning in its pain till now,  
That the last word would be pronounced by  
God,  
And that last word were love and blessedness.

*Song.*

*I gathered for my love  
A blossom warm and white,  
She laid it on her breast,  
And there it died by night,—  
The night we parted,—pressed  
In one the kiss of years ;  
And still I see her eyes  
That looked their love through tears.*

*Angelus.*

My child, forgive my mournful middle age  
Casting cold shadow on the light of youth.  
Ah me, the last word has not yet been said,  
And the next words are sadness and farewell,  
Bereaving those who die as those who live,  
As sad to those who go as those who stay.

*Donna (pale).*

What, are you weary of us, Angelus ?

*Angelus.*

No more than God is weary of His worlds :

And yet must we rehearse Scene Third, Act  
Five,

The last, the awful parting shadowed out  
In every farewell sobbed upon the earth.

*[Tears fall down her cheeks.*

Donna, this must not be, these lustrous eyes  
Quite quenched in tears. Thou must not  
love me, dear.

Listen ! I have this—is it second sight?—  
Power to project from me the spectral self—  
The most appalling wraith, the ghost of  
ghosts,

It came to me but now at dead of night,  
Donna, I saw myself . . . *I saw myself.*

*[She ceases to weep and comes nearer.*

Nay, hear me, Donna, is this self, this *I*,  
The self I do not love, and could not love,  
The self which I would slay if it were flesh,  
A mate for my Beloved. O my love,  
Thy peer should be a nobler than thyself ;  
I wish thee better lot than loving me :  
Love thou the highest ; love not me but God.

*Donna.*

*Throwing her arms round him.*

It is not thou I love but God in thee:  
What else in one another do we love?

. . . . .

Now I am happy, I can part from thee,  
There is nothing that I would not do or dare ;  
Live we or die, no harm can come to love.

*Angelus.*

And I! I know thou wilt not let me lose  
By absence or by death. I go secure  
To the Antipodes or Further Heaven,  
Knowing thy consecrating soul will set  
And keep me where I could not keep myself,  
And reach me in my exile or my heaven,  
Not letting me grow strange. Never did she  
Who prayed for him she loved forget to love  
Her dearest even gathered to the dead :  
Such sweet provision is in piety  
For all fond hearts that fain would faithful be.

. . . . .



*Donna.*

O Angelus, I never prayed for this :  
"You help me" said by thee were all enough  
To make my heart beat high with happiness,  
It were enough indeed. And if at times  
I did desire thy love, it was for thee  
And love's sake, Angelus, because I feared  
One cannot love quite perfectly alone,  
And thou wert . . . wert not happy. Oh  
to see  
One's own love suffer and to sit apart  
Helpless, and with no right to live or die,—  
This is the pang of unrequited love,  
Which hath no second shaft when this is  
spent.

I feel what—what a child might feel perhaps,  
With all its latent life in it.

*Angelus.*

—A girl,  
The coming womanhood, the wife of years,  
Upfolded in her breast.

*Donna.*

—The spring, this spring,  
The glowing summer, with its golden eyes  
And rosy mornings, in its plenteous lap.

*Angelus.*

—The crescent rim that yonder silver-white  
Contains, as delicate as bubble blown,  
The filmy sphere of light, the perfect moon.

*Donna.*

O Angelus, this rapture is a pain  
Sharp and persistent ; might it kill? ah what  
If Life proved mortal and we called it Death ;  
If one could like the plant that flowers and  
dies,  
If one could love and die, as poets dream,  
It were the sweetest death and one could die.

*Some one singing and going.*

*As our hearts beat together in mingled pulsa-  
tion,  
And with waves ever widening beat through  
creation,*

*Till the Heavens are aquiver with harmonies  
choral,  
And Ether vibrates with the splendour auroral ;*

*So let our spirits, sister and brother,  
Mingle together and melt in the other,  
Like the tints that we watch from the glowing  
embrasure,  
Crimson in amber, and amber in azure.*

*There in the light of glory supernal,  
In the broad day where sits the Eternal,  
Girt with true spirits, the mystical seven,  
Say, wilt thou love me, love me in Heaven ?*

*The song dies in the distance with the refrain :*

*Wilt thou, oh wilt thou, love me in Heaven ?*

SCENE III.—*A Lighted Room. Night.*

*Donna, alone,*

*playing on the organ and singing.*

*Thy joy, O Lord, thy joy,  
In cups of lilies stored,  
In some sweet soul that flowered at last,  
Some lovely life ignored ;  
Thy joy at holy eve,  
Among the hills with God,  
Left to the Priest and Pharisee  
Their temple's "Ichabod" :—  
Alas, I may not tell ;  
Nor step nor glance of mine  
Can follow thee where thou dost tread  
That Beulah land of thine.*

*My joys, O Lord, my joys  
With thine no kindred claim,  
They sometimes cost another peace  
And me regret and shame ;—*

*Some selfish pleasure planned,  
Some paltry triumph won,  
Some flower at best that blooms a day  
To droop before the sun :  
I'd shed my tears anew,  
These bitter tears of mine,  
To feel one joy of thine, O Lord,  
To feel one joy of thine.*

I copied this, when was it? I forget ;  
I had not heard of Angelus, and now  
It seems so insufficient, like my life  
Before he came, or life without him now,  
Not to be counted in the calendar.

*[Opens a Bible and turns the pages from  
the beginning.]*

What shall I read,—my early story-book,  
I liked it well, the Book of Genesis ?  
I read it so, I had it off by heart,  
And never never saw the harm of it.  
Leviticus and the Law I shall not read,  
I'm sure it was not made for girls like me,

Nor any moderns, one would hope, but just  
For priest and Levite and the laity  
Of darker dispensation. "Joshua"  
Is war, nine-tenths of it, and wars I hate,  
At least aggressive wars, and read them not,  
Especially when written by themselves,  
The people who engaged in them, for fear  
I take their part, as I am sure to do  
In novels with the "I," who'er he be.  
I won't read "Judges";—Samson figures  
there,  
He's not improving. Ah, the Book of Ruth  
—A woman, that's refreshing! but a man  
Wrote it, of course;—the Ancients were all  
men:  
A pretty love-scene with Naomi that!  
Though now-a-days a princess will be praised  
Who sticks to her own Church if Protestant.  
The rest of Ruth I skip, so Jewish 'tis  
Of widows changing hands in Hebrew style.  
If love is "secular," as it would seem,  
"Esther" is secular enough for love  
—The lowest word of all in some men's  
mouths:

Of love for woman—friendship at white heat,  
In Bible-worthies there is little sign,  
And next to none in ancient literature,  
Angelus says ;—nor is it wonderful,  
The women were mew'd-up in rooms, just  
cooks

And needlewomen, but for here and there  
A Deborah who lived a fuller life ;  
And so no man of sense and intellect  
Would make or could have made his wife  
his friend,

But had his Jonathan. Poor Jonathan,  
The love was on his side, it seems to me ;  
And David, in his In Memoriam,  
Confesses not his love for Jonathan,  
But Jonathan's for him. Poor Jonathan !

Ah, this is springy turf beneath our feet,  
We rise into the air of higher plane,  
The solemn epic of the soul and God,  
The psalmody that perished like an art,  
The wisdom—was it his?—of Solomon,  
Sweet moralist immoral, he who sang

The Song of Songs, in which the headings  
help,  
Or who the lovers, I had never dreamed,  
And yet if they were not the Church and  
Christ,  
They were such flesh as his own *Fatimas*.  
The burden sad and stern of seer sublime  
Is not the reading for the time of night,  
I'll give the morning hours to Malachi,  
And pass from lips to lives inspired—the Life  
Writ by biographer—not novelist,  
Who cannot draw *Derondas*;—letters, too,  
From grave apostles, martyrs, all grand men,  
To whom my love were an impertinence,  
And not the staple of a serious life,  
Though God is Love, but that's another love,  
They tell us; is it? Ends the book with  
Heaven,  
And that I am not ready for to-night;  
And if an angel called me, "Donna dear,"  
I should be loth to go, and I should say,  
"Oh not to-night, dear Angel, not to-night;  
I cannot leave him yet, my Angelus."



*[Again turns the pages without reading.]*

I have read these books before I went to  
sleep

Since ever I could read, excepting once  
I found no word for me,—I was so sad,  
And now I am too glad, too trembling-glad ;  
In vain I turn the leaves ;—the Bible seems  
A volume with the closing chapters gone,  
Or with the burning leaves of Sibyl lost ;  
There's nothing here that's half as glad as I ;  
There's nothing here that answers to my  
mood ;

There's nothing like my love for Angelus.

And where are those lost leaves?—in other  
books,

Sweet scripture of these latter times, the lay  
Of modern minstrel, the romance of days  
We love in. What's the Bible but the truth,  
Especially the truth of God and man ?  
And that is sacred be it here or there,  
In Middlemarch or Palestine. And so

If God is glad to see two love so well,  
And there's no word in what they call His  
Book  
That's human-glad enough for our young  
hearts  
Whose love is all ignored,—then let us turn  
Devoutly to a later word of God,  
And read the Bible in some other book  
Than Hebrew prophet or evangelist.

*[Lays down the book, puts out the taper,  
and sits by the window.]*

Ye stars, the same that on Creation's day  
Shouted for joy together, was there one  
Of all the sons of God that shouted then  
Whose thought could pierce as far in time  
and space  
As He could feel who loves so long, and  
dream  
The matin-song would last till vesper-hour,  
God never tiring of His stars in Heaven  
Nor of His daisies on the Earth? The break  
In Nature's course is not the miracle

Most marvellous, if such there ever were ;  
 If sun and moon and sea were ever stayed,  
 'Twas but to waken man by one brief pause  
 To that grand constancy—the Miracle  
 Perpetual which sustains their course, and  
                   brings

The seasons back again from year to year  
 From age to age for ever, with a charm  
 Beyond the telling of variety,  
 The same, the same, so many of the same,  
 Because One wearies not of them or us,  
 But binds us to Him faster-fast ; and so  
 The love that moved our fathers moves in us,  
 And still the streams our fathers gazed upon  
 Do meet and mingle in the lonely moor.

\*           \*           ●           \*

Oh, I am glad that when we cannot see  
 Each other we can see the stars, the same,  
 And the same heaven.

[*Kneels.*

O God, my heart is full  
 Of love and gratitude as yonder orb

Is full of light but has no pulse of prayer ;  
I have no wishes for myself or him,  
Except that all were happy as we are ;  
Thou canst but keep to us the good we have ;  
To ask for aught when we have all, were vain ;  
To ask for all with naught, were want of  
    faith ;  
I cannot pray : unless the soul of prayer  
Is thinking, feeling God, as I am now,  
And haply I am praying after all.

SCENE IV.—*Afternoon. Porch of a Country Church. Donna within playing on the organ.*

*Angelus, alone,  
singing to the tune played within.*

*Shadows gently setting  
in the grass of June,  
Under burning blue  
of summer afternoon,  
All the wealth I counted,  
all the joy it gave,  
Would I, could I, tell it,  
I should seem to rave.*

*Not for sovereign Saturn  
with his belt of light,  
Travelling in his splendour,  
with his moons by night;  
Not for any planet  
and the light it showers,  
Would I change this planet,  
this dear Earth of ours.*

Come, Donna, from that vault to this large  
    heaven,  
Leaving those painted flowers for yonder  
    slope  
Less green with grass than gold with butter-  
    cups.  
Give me a world of sky, for nothing else  
Is wide enough to breathe in—not a church ;  
The air that's bottled up from Sunday morn  
To Sunday night is of the nether pit,  
Diabolus, and God is out of doors ;  
Yea, if there's any place where He is not,  
It is a temple with its breathéd breath,  
Bad as a tavern or a theatre.

*When, alas, the light  
    grows dim, the birds fly low,  
Point not to the city  
    sheltered from the snow,  
Amaranths immortal,  
    gems and diamonds riven  
From the lurking splendours  
    Of the Further Heaven ;*

*Not the heaven of angels  
far away and cold,  
Which the sick and dying  
in their dreams behold.  
Ask me not to love  
the saints I never knew,  
Send me not to angels  
who would stay with you.*

Donna, dear heart, is none the worse for  
church,  
And lists devoutly to the priest, although  
The lessons for the day are in the fields,  
And he has little fresh to teach, for he  
Lives in a church and rarely climbs the hills  
For the last word of God. What if I preached,  
I might be found at church as oft as he.  
A banquet hath been spread, a "come"  
pronounced,  
But one and all the guests excuse themselves;  
For one is staring at a painted moon  
That never lit the faces in the pit,  
The pallid faces gazing at the play,

And is at table d'hôte in the hotel  
When the moon rises ere the sun goes down,  
And silver sheen takes up the amber rose  
Of that snow-maid, the Jungfrau of the Alps;  
And one is in the Royal Institute,  
Straining his neck for painter's buttercups,  
While God's have dropped their petals all  
unseen

In the sweet season of the Christian year,  
The London season—blush, barbarians blush,  
The spring will shed its bloom, the summer  
end,

The harvest pass and thou wilt not be saved :  
And he, the silly woman's god, the priest,  
Who should announce the message to the  
host,

Is holding octave services on end  
In pest-polluted air, and cannot come.  
This is the gospel of the open air,  
The gospel of the grass—on which the Lord  
Commanded his to sit and bade them too  
Consider lilies. . . Donna . . well, no  
need



To say all this to her, for she loves both  
The worship in the church and out-of-doors,  
And this shall be suppressed with that worse  
self  
Which seems suspended, should that self  
revive.  
For if the Devil were a man in love,  
And were beloved in spite of him by one  
Earth-maiden, petal-pure, 'tis plain to all  
The Devil's duty were, with fold on fold,  
To live like Lamia at a fearful strain  
Lest he should lapse into the thing he was.

*Me when I first saw you  
oft my heart misgave,  
Lest I spake with spirit  
who had passed the grave;  
Yea, you seeméd ever  
in your sweet perfection,  
Such as saint is storied  
in the resurrection.*

*Love, be my offences  
lighter found or graver,*

*When One comes to judgment,  
witness in my favour,  
When I saw God's best,  
then best I loved it too,  
Beauty—Goodness—God  
I loved in loving you.*

*[The organ ceases, and presently Donna appears in the porch. Angelus draws her down to his side on the bench.]*

Donna, my darling, what has come to thee?  
Thou art so tall and strong and free and gay  
And self-sustaining, not like one I knew  
That entered rooms as she would go again,  
Not sure of welcome ; then I thought that  
thou  
Wouldst with the strength of weakness lean  
on me,  
And I should hold thee with the strength of  
ten,  
Incorporating thy sweet soul in mine ;  
And lo ! I find thy forces shame my own :

Calmer and stronger dost thou seem to me,  
Yes, even taller than in days gone by.

*Donna.*

Tall, am I?—I am rather tall, I think ;  
On tiptoe I were nearly tall as thou.  
Thou wilt not smile me down in days to  
    come

As in the days gone by ; for in the hour  
I knew myself beloved of thee, I lost  
The old distrust of self and fear of thee  
And others, reconciled my spirit rose,  
I stood at my full height, I moved along  
In a profounder heaven, a wider earth,  
With lighter step and fuller pulse, the blood  
Of heroes and of lovers in my veins.

If I grow grand and strong for love of thee,  
Own sister to the *Portias* in the plays  
I used to think of as a caste removed,  
I shall not wonder much or count it strange ;  
Love shall work miracles, transform the mood  
As surely as the water into wine  
At Cana in the presence of the Lord.

*Angelus (aside).*

Alas, I am not such that love of me  
Should make thee even lovelier than thou art.

[*To her.*

Hast thou no fears, then?

*Donna.*

—Fears of what, of whom?

*Angelus.*

Oh, Donna, thou hast never dreamed a  
dream,  
Saying the while, "I know it is a dream,  
And yet I will pursue it."

*Donna.*

—Not awake.

*Angelus.*

And thou art safe from the devouring fears  
Of the unfaithful.

*Donna.*

I had fears at first  
Because of my unworthiness. But love  
Makes good my claim, and now I question if  
There lives the hero-saint or poet-prince  
Too high for her who loves him.

*Angelus.*

Would you deem  
Diabolus that loved more worthy love  
Than Angelus that loved not ?

*Donna.*

Yes, but then,  
Could any be Diabolus and love,  
Or loving could he be Diabolus ?

*Angelus.*

He could not love and be Diabolus ;  
The more a being loves the less he sins ;  
And perfect love were perfect purity ;  
So ran the rhyme my mother taught to me :

“ Heed the silver whisper.  
 Heard the din above ;  
 To be good, be happy,  
 To be happy, love.”

*Donna.*

There should be other ways of being good  
 Than being happy, since we cannot all  
 Love and be happy and must all be good.  
 But yet I understand you, now I seem  
 To have no dealings any more with Death,  
 For there is naught of me that is not God,  
 Because I live His life and love His love.  
 O Angelus, you do believe in God.

*Angelus.*

Do I *believe*, Beloved, do I *live* ?  
 Such cold words could not come into my  
 heart,  
 Although they might be put into my lips,  
 When all my being palpitates with God :  
 Have I not said “ I love ?” is not all said  
 When “ love ” is said ? stop with the name of  
 God :

Ah why so many words for what is one ?  
What ! shall the mark of the unlettered boor  
Be counted valid in the courts of law,  
And not the signature of lettered scribe ?  
Shall *credo's* uttered anxiously and oft  
As if the Lord would die when these should  
    end,  
Be counted as confession of belief,  
And this "I love," the sum and substance  
    sure  
Of all the faiths, not hold in Earth and  
    Heaven ?  
My Best-Beloved, were I God Himself,  
I could not be more sure of Him than now,  
And wherefore ask me then if I believe ;  
No lover lives and not believes in God.

*Donna.*

And if you loved me not you would believe.

*Angelus.*

Yes, I believe He is because I am,  
That as my body and mine outward life

Are sacramental solely of a self  
Invisible and real, so this, the world  
I gaze on, this material universe,  
Is but the sacrament of soul, and else  
Nothing, unmeaning and irrelevant.  
And there's another world in which we live  
As sure and certain though invisible ;  
I have been reasoned with and God revealed  
In pages of my own biography,  
That precious passage which is God's aside,  
God's *entre nous* to man. Remember too  
I am a poet, and as such I hang  
Directly on the Being who inspires,  
The Breath that bloweth when and where it  
    lists,  
And without which I am as other men :  
Dependent as a babe upon the breast,  
What can a poet but believe in God ?

*Donna.*

—And so in immortality. 'Twere strange  
If the Eternal only loved in time,  
If all the Father-pains He takes with us



From birth to death were brought to sudden  
close,  
While we His creatures will not hear of Death  
As bringing to an end immortal love :

*[Points to an open grave and holds faster the  
hand of Angelus.*

Or how could we confront that dreadful day  
When Death has come and gone, and phan-  
toms rule  
The house, and shadows flit upon the stairs,  
And rooms are full of emptiness, and things  
Are relics, and a nothing fills our eyes,  
And just a print will pain us, and we turn  
From happy sights—the mother and the child.  
Even the mated robin on the lawn,  
And we are sad for lovers, yes for all  
That live and are to die as trembling doves  
Pursued by bird of prey. If Death's a fact,  
And God is not one or the life to come,  
Ah, why begin what is so soon to end !

*Angelus.*

Ah why, indeed, e'en if a mortal man  
Could entertain a love immortal, God  
A mortal, which were sure absurd! And so  
We stand committed, Donna, thou and I,  
For when two lovers sit as we do now,  
Their arms encircled and their lives involved,  
They hereby give it as their act and deed,  
They do believe their loves will be prolonged,  
They do believe in immortality.

*Donna.*

Ah yes, there ought to be another life  
To which this leads us up, for here so much  
It takes us long to learn is little used,  
At least the last experience of Death.

*Angelus.*

There ought—there is; nothing so possible :—  
My body has been paralysed by frost  
And winter, and my soul been doubly live ;  
And now my soul hath sickened unto death,  
And this coarse clay, my body, never ailed ;

Methinks the twain might go their several  
ways

Without a break in continuity  
Of this mysterious *Me*. Nay, more than this,  
I have dropped my body some five times or  
so,

But *I* am *I*, the same *I* that I was,  
I have risen again ; it is not hard  
To hold the resurrection from the dead.

And now, my Donna, what was once a hope  
And then a faith, is now a passionate  
Conviction which no argument could shake  
Or strengthen. 'Tis the heart that apprehends  
Immortal verities and not the brain ;  
Not with the ear is mortal beauty seen,  
Not with the eye is earthly music heard,  
Nor with the brain immortal truth perceived.  
At church last night I stood not far from thee,  
The people vanished from me and the priest,  
The aisles receded and the lights grew dim,  
The *Nunc dimittis* died upon my ear,  
The Earth was far away as Hesperus,

And Heaven was all as breathing-close as  
thou,  
My heart was beating outwards into space,  
I felt it pulsing at the furthest sphere  
With ever-widening waves of consciousness,  
I swept all space, I tenanted all time,  
For I was God, I was Eternity :  
And how then should I not believe myself  
Eternal ?

*Donna.*

How indeed ! and I, dear love,  
Was one with God for I was one with thee.  
'Twas a strange night ! there was a power in  
it  
That filled all thought and left no interval  
To think in. After you were gone, I went  
Into my room and near the window sat,  
There was no breeze and yet the air was live,  
Night held her breath and yet the poplar  
stirred,—  
You know the tallest poplar near the house ?

*Angelus.*

O yes, the poplar, that aspiring tree,  
 That earnest grower, with no leaf or shoot  
 But is determined upwards, no asides,  
 Deflections walnut-wise to right and left  
 With moods in growth. How life is simpli-  
     fied  
 By singleness of aim, and unity  
 Of purpose, one direction in the growth  
 And that to Heaven.

*Donna.*

Well, in that spot I sat  
 Where it is easiest to pray, since there  
 I use to sit thinking of God and Heaven,

*Angelus (aside.)*

—Thinking of nothing at five minutes' end,  
 To my most certain knowledge.

*Donna.*

. . . . and of thee ;  
 There first to God I told my love for thee,

And prayed for thee when I could naught but  
 pray.  
 And long I sat and mused but could not  
 pray ;  
 My lips were voiceless, dream-delayed and  
 locked,  
 Whene'er I thought of thee. For it were  
 hard  
 For me who am a part of thee. . . .

*Angelus.*

Ay, ay,  
 A very part of me art thou ; in thee  
 I am young and innocent ; when thou dost  
 sing  
 Thine evening-hymn I seem to sing in thee ;  
 And when thou kneelest I am praying too.

*Donna.*

And when I do not pray, my Angelus ?

*Angelus.*

Ay me, my creed, I had forgotten that ;

It is an accident—I mean the creed—  
Concerning which you are not well informed.  
If I be Christian or Mohammedan  
Or both, or Catholic or Protestant  
Or neither,—these are points you cannot  
clear

More than the mother questioned by her child  
If God were Catholic or Protestant.

And yet with some you'll not misunderstand  
My slack observance of your special rites,  
The service done to man in prayer and praise,  
Deeming me "irreligious," "sceptical,"  
Joining two words that are not joined in  
Heaven.

Albeit Science and Philosophy  
And Resignation stop the mouth of Prayer,  
You may believe since all who live and love,  
Yea, all men under pressure speak with  
Heaven,

Not to be nice or to prescribe the way,  
Out of the depths I cry to thee, O God!  
And though I am not one of those who pat

The Almighty on the back, and say " Good  
God "

As if He were a dog, yet doubtless I  
Being a man, do give some exercise  
To that sublimest instinct of the soul  
Its passion for its God, whate'er His name.

*Donna.*

Ah, be not vexed but hear me, Angelus.  
I fell asleep at last, my prayer unprayed,  
A sullen child that has not said " good-night,"  
And kissed its mother ere it goes to bed.  
And as I slept I dreamed. And in my dream  
We were together in a hollow earth,  
A concave hemisphere, a dungeon deep,—  
Deeper than heaven was high ; the sky a roof  
Crossed by a sun that set in sickly haste  
So to be quit of such a world as this,—  
And by a moon, the moon's eye shot with  
blood,  
That opened on us but to close again  
And leave us to a night outlasting day.  
And thou didst chafe and suffer more than I,



For I had wings and could have left that life,  
Would I have come into the upper air  
Without thee, Angelus. And when I woke,  
Throb followed hard on throb, as wave on  
    wave,  
In that full flood of feeling with the thought  
I had been faithful in my dreams to thee,  
And had not left my Angelus for Heaven.

*Angelus.*

Nay, better far leave Angelus for Heaven  
Than Heaven for Angelus.

[*aside.*

Alas, if thou  
Become assimilated unto that  
Thou lovest . . . grow like me ; thus with  
    the weeds  
The flowers of sweetest superstitions pulled,  
The garden of the soul a wilderness,  
The fount of first affections choked and dry,  
The track quite lost, forgotten the way Home.  
Oh, I had rather lose thy love than thee ;

I would not have thee by a touch the less,—  
The pensive joy, the sympathetic grief,  
The fond fidelity of heart that holds  
To all the dear traditions of the hearth,—  
The faith that was thy father's. Well I wot  
Nothing is left me but to grow like thee,  
And, as the children say, be good—but how  
Is still the problem that remains to solve,  
Nor yet perchance insoluble; for sure  
The Devil's self were good for her he loved;  
For what is good, and love is not as good?  
And what is fair, and love is not as fair?  
And what is high, and love is not as great?  
And so in circles ever widening out,  
Love shall be co-extensive with the life,  
And e'en Diabolus an angel be.

## SCENE V.

*Sunday. A Town in France. The Interior  
of an Evangelical Church. Congregation  
Singing. Angelus.*

*Angelus (aside.)*

This morning stopping short of Notre-Dame,  
I passed into this church, in hopes, maybe,  
To find some milder genius preside  
Than that fat priest who preaches Christ and  
Church

In the spirit of the Devil ; otherwise,  
I had worshipped all as well in Notre-Dame,  
In grand cathedral breathing ancient prayer,  
As well as in a plain conventicle,  
*Sine qua non* of Presbyterian sires  
Whose God was just a good Scotch minister.

*Hymn.*

*Hadst thou a desert earth tenanted lonely,  
Hadst thou rebelled against goodness all-  
tender,*

*Then had He died for thee, died for thee only;  
 For so dire the offence, and so dear the  
 offender,  
 He had died for thee only.*

*Leaving the Fair of Earth's Folly, my Brother,  
 Go on a pilgrimage passionate, lonely;  
 Weep by the River of Tears as if other  
 Never had sinned, and as if for thee only  
 He had died, O my Brother.*

*Angelus (aside.)*

Weep, must we weep? the programme is begun  
 With tears and lamentations, pilgrims all,  
 Since Bunyan, start upon their pilgrimage  
 All sighs and tears, although their hearts be  
 dry  
 As last year's heather. Tell not us to weep  
 In Lenten woes of three-hour agonies,  
 When God is feeling through the violets,  
 And pilgrimages should be made to flowers.  
 We may control our words and then our acts  
 And next our thoughts, and, in the end  
 perchance,

Our feelings even, but we would not weep  
 To order with a grief conventional  
 And hollow as the Sodom that we leave,  
 The rotten, burning city of the plain.

[*Pastor preaches.*

Folly to think a man had aught for me,  
 To linger in a place with hope forlorn  
 That any soul had struggled into light  
 And might descend at seasons to the plain  
 With an evangel. First we had a prayer  
 To listen to, didactic, beautiful,  
 To Milton's god who loves the livelong day  
 To list to his own praise, of which a man  
 Modestly wearies ; now the sequel in  
 A sermon, text, *Prepare to meet thy God*  
 —My childhood's *monstr' horrend' inform'*  
*ingens.*

Why have I hither come when after all  
 I must, with sense—the sixth of deafness,  
 sweep  
 The speaker from my mind to realise  
 The power of spirits and the world unseen.

*Pastor.*

O thou who sittest thus with folded arms  
 In pride of intellect and prime of days,  
 Shall I bate any word for ears refined  
 And tell thee less than the unlettered boor,  
 Thou art a sinner, knowest thou hast sinned,  
 And as a soul that sinneth thou must die.

*Angelus (aside.)*

Sin, what is sin?—so artificial seems  
 The line 'twixt vice and virtue, changing so  
 With clime and century ; shifting for state  
 And subject, man and woman, you and me.  
 Ay, once I sinned a sin that was a sin  
 Though christened such, and knew ; and one  
     with me  
 Sinned without knowing, with a conscience  
     clear,  
 Died early in my arms as white a soul  
 As ever preened its plumage for the skies.  
 But I, I knew what Sin was by its wake,  
 Its scorching track of fire ; as in the East  
 You see the purples of the sun that sinks

In splendour, in the faces of the crowd  
 The power and passion of the orator,  
 And in the lover's eyes the loveliness  
 Of his affianced maiden. Then I knew  
 That I had dulled the edge of finer joys,  
 And lost the livelier sense of life and love  
 And beauty ; that thereafter, Eden lost,  
 I should not feel so finely, think so well,  
 Nor even love as I might else have loved :  
 I knew, in other phrase, that sin *is* sin,  
 And he who sinneth hath begun to die.

*Pastor.*

Thou feelest in thy soul the need of blood  
 Shed to remit thy sin.

*Angelus, (aside.)*

Not so, my friend,  
 The need of blood hath never crossed my  
 mind,

. . . . .

And thou repeating wilt not prove thy point.

*Pastor.*

That blood was spilt for thee on Calvary ;  
There did the Sinless for thy sins present  
Himself a pure oblation ; yea, God sent  
His Son—a dearer self to sacrifice—  
To die for thee the death thou shouldst have  
    died,  
To pay the penalty thou should'st have paid  
Justice offended.

*Angelus (aside.)*

—which is satisfied  
By one injustice more, a murder foul,  
The death of innocence for guilt. Ah me,  
Poor Pastor, thou art lost then more than I  
Whose sense is not perverted to the point  
Of seeing justice where no justice is.

*Pastor.*

Man, who art thou that thou shouldst answer  
    God ?  
Who hath declared it by the mouth of all



His servants—prophets and evangelists,  
The soul that sinneth it shall die, but He  
Hath raised a symbol for His sin-sick souls  
Smitten of serpent in the wilderness,  
And if they turn the eye of faith to Him,  
And trust not to their works, which cannot  
    save,  
And reason not upon the plank that's flung  
To save them from destruction, they shall live;  
Thou hast but to believe and thou art saved.  
But thou hast scruples, learned moralist,  
Too simple this for thy philosophy,  
As was the plunge in Jordan's sacred stream  
To the proud stomach of the Syrian.

*Angelus (aside.)*

O ye good Christians evangelical,  
So satisfied no sinner can be saved  
By what he all the same can lose himself  
For ever and for ever—works, to wit ;  
'Tis faith that saves, Believe and live, you  
    say,  
Running away with texts to miss the sense

Of all the life and lessons of your Lord :  
And yet, if you consider well, belief,  
Be it a motion of the head or heart,  
Is still a sort of work, not easy, nay  
The hardest, and to some impossible,  
If there be other things—a book or church—  
We must believe ere we believe in him,  
Who was, if we may heed evangelist,  
Who was what God would be were God a man ;  
Who to the leper said, “ I will . . . be clean ! ”  
Never such stuff, your version of Saint Paul  
—A nut as hard as Hegel—cried in streets  
And corners by your cheap Salvation-Jacks,  
Stuff which sublimest seer and gentlest bard  
Soon as they lipped no longer soared in song,  
But falling plump as Icarus they lay  
Like lumber with the prose of sound divines.

Say, shall I make for chapel catholic  
With cemetery beaded like bazaar,  
And bow before their altar wax and paint  
And paper, pour my sorrows on the breast  
Of their enamelled Virgin, kiss the feet

Of their cold Christ in plaster ; where the  
priest,  
The man who pulls the wires and scorns the  
show,  
The hoary sinner with the underlip,  
Shrives you of sin, unshriven of his own,  
And offers up a pagan sacrifice,  
The body and the blood—revolting phrase  
Which I reject with loathing. Once for all,  
In rite or dogma flourished as divine,  
Whate'er offends the taste and shocks the  
sense,  
And quarrels with the tints of Earth and Sky,—  
Whate'er is prose and is not poetry,  
Father of Lies, I relegate to thee,  
And I will none of it : that rag and paste,  
That papery sentiment, those stuccoed saints,  
Those "stations" coloured ill and ill-bestowed,  
That gilt o'erlaid with dirt most catholic,  
That manufactured wafer,—not for me !  
—I am a poet ! and the soul of all  
Hath sacraments more fitting ; Sea and Sky,

These are the symbols of the Infinite,  
These are the letters of the Everlasting.

Christ went into a mountain once to pray ;  
And who was ever on the lonely hills,  
And leapt from crag to crag, and looked  
adown

The long green hollows stretching far and fired  
With mellow light, and dimpling with the soft  
And growing shadows of the afternoon,  
And could refrain from shouting up to  
Heaven ?

And I remember in my early youth  
I wandered through the Alps, and passed  
inspired

Within the precincts of the Awful Mount,  
Up through the pines, their branches stream-  
ing hoar

With lichen, up into the light beyond,  
Up where the torrent strode the precipice,  
Up where the waves ran mountains high and  
froze

In leaping, up where pinnacled in blue

The glacier shot, the white blown flame of ice ;  
And there, with hands uplifted like my soul,  
I stood all prayer before the mighty Blanc.  
Yes, I will visit those high Alps again ;  
Olympus was the dwelling of the gods,  
And still the mountains are the home of Him  
Who dwelleth not in temples made with  
hands.

## SCENE VI.

*Sunday Afternoon. Coffee-Room of an Inn at Bex. The snowy summits of Dent du Morcle and Dent du Midi seen through the open windows. An English lady singing in the next room, the door of which is partly open. Angelus and Ferdinand.*

*Angelus, writing in the recess of a window.*

Again from the Hôtel des Bains at Bex  
I write, my Donna, staying on because  
I like the place—I won't think why, for sure  
Even with persons though there be a "but"  
There never is a "for" in love, much less  
With places everyone of which is fair  
And fairer than all others, though the snobs  
Pester you, "Do you think Lucerne or Thun  
The lovelier? the glacier of the Rhone  
Or Mer de Glace the finer?" Then the inn  
Lies out of Cockneydom, though even here  
There are some English visitors, a set  
Of three—best company excepting two

Entirely one. These three I like them much,  
The elder lady and the gushing girls ;  
Some good great-grand-mamma has lately  
died,

And grand-mamma, with nothing earthly now  
Detaining her at home, has come abroad,  
Bringing these girls—kind creatures with a  
thought

E'en for the stranger. Lonely of all guests  
Are we, the strangers, torn from all we love,  
Finding no solace but to reproduce  
Our darlings and to make them live and act  
Where we are, *here* and *there*, by doing that  
Which they would do if they were here—  
accost

The aged unbefriended, or give up  
The corner of a carriage to a child  
That thinks it such a treat to “ride” by  
train.

What else is absence for? what else is left  
To the bereaved by absence or by death,  
But thus to multiply the lovely lost,

And make the blessed free of Earth and  
 Heaven,  
 And carry on the dead for evermore,  
 As Christians Christ? or absence were too  
 hard ;  
 To have one's body eating, drinking here,  
 The while one's soul was thinking, throbbing  
 there,  
 Were something worse than death to me who  
 am  
 Body and soul, heart, brain, for ever yours.

[*Stops to listen to a song.*]

*My heart is throbbing still  
 As in that heavenly dream  
 Of vessel moored at marge  
 And doubled in the stream :  
 O Love—O Pain,  
 Give me my land again.*

*God to the lonely man  
 In Patmos gave a dream,  
 A dream of Heaven, that did*



*Celestial city seem :*  
*But I, O God,*  
*Would kneel and kiss the sod.*

*Dreams of the fields are mine*  
*Who in the city dwell ;*  
*And passion is of pain,*  
*The sorrowful love well :*  
*Gone is the pain,*  
*I have my hills again.*

*My lips their kisses rain,*  
*On one beloved head,*  
*Warm as we give the quick,*  
*Pure as we give the dead.*  
*O Love—O Bliss,*  
*My lips shall keep her kiss !*

Well, I was telling you about the three :—  
 This rainy day they met with one they knew  
 In England, and the pleasure felt by one  
 Of these two girls was pretty to behold  
 And plain, as happens, unto all save him

Who roused it—sitting yonder, young, poor  
thing,

But with a face expressing thought, and past  
The rawness of the striplings we abide  
With the reflection they may yet be men  
And so endurable.—Whom the gods love  
Do not die young, they live to seventy-five,  
And suffer all the bliss and woe of men,  
And learn whatever may be learned below  
Even the sense of dying, since there is  
Another life immortal. But this youth,  
The hero of the girl with sea-blue eyes,  
Looks wretched and is drinking—brandy  
poured

On brain alight with Burgundy. 'Tis hard  
That one should be so happy in her love,  
The other reckless in his misery.  
And if I risking wrath expostulate,  
He'll rate me as a raving Ribbonite :  
It is not pleasant in another's eyes  
To see your face as in a gravy-spoon  
Distorted, yet for yonder girl who might  
Be you, my Donna, I will warn the lad.

[*To Ferdinand.*

Pardon my ten years' seniority.  
 Brandy is not a beverage to be bought  
 At buffet or at bar, sir ; 'tis a drug]  
 To be prescribed by the practitioner,  
 Bottled and sold by druggists, labelled  
 "Poison."

*Ferdinand,*  
*having thrown the brandy out of the window.*

Physician, heal thyself, the proverb runs,  
 And what if I, prescribed myself the drug,  
 Swallowed by spoonfuls with the wryest face,  
 And discontinued when the patient mends.  
 You find a fellow white about the lips  
 And ring for brandy, when, by Bacchus, O  
 Humiliating fact, the patient here  
 Whom friendship could not soothe nor love  
 console,  
 Is lightened of his load, his griefs are gone !  
 Give wine to him that is of heavy heart,  
 Yea, spirits, with a use quite scriptural.

*Angelus.*

Ay, give him brandy, since unholy writ  
Declares 'tis better to be drunk than sad.

*Ferdinand, fingering a cigar.*

Or give him a cigar to drug despair ;  
Nor count him all unhappy who can smoke,  
Who knows the genial influence of a weed,  
For he or crazed with care, or crossed in love  
Or marriage, or still worse bedunned to death,  
Where once he would have kept awake o'  
    nights,  
Debating ways and means, if suicide  
Is recommended in the case of some  
To dodge our Tuke and Maudsley,—he, I  
    say,  
Thanks to Sir Walter, carries in a case  
A sovereign remedy against Despair :  
Jove hath his lightning ; Ajax his cigar.

*Angelus.*

Is man, then, not to graduate in grief ?  
Shall he, too clever for his god, elude

The pain which gives an opportunity  
 To be a hero ? happy he must feel ;  
 Care is too crushing, misery too mad :  
 The coward cannot suffer, so he smokes.

*Ferdinand.*

One of those cowards by your leave am I  
 Who cannot dwell with anguish, see no good  
 In grief which makes me wicked ; could I  
     smoke  
 Or burn him out, I would with all my heart,  
 This arch-blaspheming god of Christendom,  
 This devil of Despair and Misery.

*Song.*

*Thy grief, O Lord, thy grief,  
 Was like thyself unknown,  
 For this bad dream of sin and shame  
 And sorrow not thine own :  
 The crucifixion-pain  
 Was lost in grief for man,  
 Who stoned the prophets, slew the saints,  
 Since ever Earth began.*

*But who of woman born  
 Can sound a grief divine,  
 Who follow to Gethsemane  
 And grieve such griefs as thine ?*

*My griefs, O Lord, my griefs,  
 Must I repent of these,  
 Of hopes below the stars that seem  
 The sport of every breeze ?  
 If selfishness and pride  
 Had found no place therein,  
 Would happy love be jealous pain  
 And very sorrow sin ?  
 I'd give my latest joy,  
 Yea, all these joys of mine,  
 To weep one tear of thine, O Lord,  
 To weep one tear of thine.*

*Ferdinand.*

You hear that hymn ?—the sorrow spawned  
 of sin  
 Is sinful ; good is grief and doing good  
 When you are good, no sooner, on my soul,

Though worshipped and enshrined like any  
 saint

Illustrious in the Church's calendar.

Oh, name not grief to me, spell not the word,

It has no virtue. Sorrow as the soul

Is, selfish or sublime ; as pure as love

And purifying, or as passion foul

And fouling. Grief divine and sacred, griefs

Of heroes, martyrs and philanthropists,

A man—Prometheus downwards—well might

claim

His sole inheritance, nor yield an inch

For all that men call pleasure ; lower griefs

But shame and sicken.

[ *Walks up and down, his hands thrust into his  
 pockets. Stops at Angelus.*

I'll discharge my soul,

A stranger is as good as any priest,

And you shall moralise on misery.

Dogged by the Furies, I have left my land

To miss the play to be performed at church,

A marriage, call it, or a pantomime,

A *tableau-vivant*, where no mortal prays  
Or thinks of praying.

*Angelus.*

And the actors there ?

*Ferdinand.*

The woman that I loved was one and I  
Was not the other.

*Angelus.*

Ha ! and who is she ?

*Ferdinand.*

—A Juno and a Venus rolled in one :  
A siren tongue that talks your soul away  
As others sing it ; what the sex is not,  
Good fellow, *civis mundi*, facile, free,  
All curves, no angles, saving to her foes ;  
When she throws back her head and treads  
the floor,  
A sceptre would not make her more superb  
Or men more subject. See her and at first



She shocks you, then she charms you, draws  
you off

From all your company, absorbs you quite,  
Clearing a space about you; then when you  
Adopt her gods and kin and are fast hers,  
There comes a sense of insecurity,  
The unreality you feel in dreams,  
A jealous fear of people she has known,  
Loathing of all the men who come too near,  
Men who are stamped with strong virility,  
For these are sure to gravitate to her,  
Matter to matter. Comes at last a day  
You find yourself a third for her you love,  
*De trop*, supplanted. Then beneath the soil  
Of easy temper, sweet facility,  
You come to rock immovable to force,  
Impermeable to tears. The game is up :  
You know the woman when you break with  
her.

*Angelus.*

And so you love this woman?

*Ferdinand.*

*Love, not I!*

*Loved, if you will.*

*Angelus.*

There's no past tense to "love."

*Ferdinand.*

I never loved her then. A week ago  
 Taking my everlasting leave of her,  
 I thought of Humpty Dumpty on the wall,  
 Of love once fallen from its high estate,  
 And thought 'twas rather more than she  
     could do

To set my old love on its legs again.  
 It is not love from which I suffer now,  
 But selfish sense of vacancy, the pain  
 You deify, and which I seek to lull  
 With liquors, though I like them not, with  
     hate

That rushed to fill the vacuum left by love,  
 A hate of her and all and you and me,  
 The race is so accursed. Who trusts a man

Is just an Alpine sheep that does not know  
The genus brute and beast, the species man,  
And trusts the monster, as I trusted her,  
Who now trust none, but hug my hatred—so.

[*Folds his arms.*]

Hateful is every shape of humankind,  
Just as the statue of the citizen  
Unveiled before the rogue has been revealed,  
Is hateful to his fellow-citizens,  
Humiliated to have honoured him,  
Curse of the widow and the fatherless.

*Angelus.*

Unrighteousness imputed, let it pass ;  
I judged as harshly when I was your age ;  
Misanthropy was ever young and raw.  
But note ! a boy, I boated in a stream  
A man was angling in ; he swore at me,  
And wished my boat might be capsized ; but  
when  
I, voting him a brute, had leaned too far  
Over the vessel and upset the boat

Just where the current was too strong for me,  
Then he, perceiving I was overpowered,  
Flung off his jacket, plunged into the stream,  
Although he had a wife and child at home  
To starve if any harm should come to him.

*Ferdinand.*

A hard-mouthed soft Samaritan was that !  
But will one swallow make a summer ?

*Angelus.*

—Or

The want of it a winter ?

*Ferdinand.*

No. Well, well,  
You may a man among a thousand find,  
But where's the woman ? Talk of Lucifer  
As "he" and "him" ! our grammar is at  
    fault ;  
The Devil is a woman with brown eyes.

*Angelus.*

Since you are suffering from those blinding  
orbs  
You spoke of and see naught but blots and  
blurs,  
I will not call you ingrate. Not far hence  
Are eyes that melt in a diviner blue  
Than heaven upon you. And you like a fool  
Closed your palm over paste and dropped the  
pearl.

*Ferdinand, starting.*

What Lucy yonder ! If the loveliest eyes  
Lighted themselves at mine, alas for me !  
For bitter, three times bitter, is the love  
We never can return at least in kind,  
Nor would return. Oh, never may I lapse  
To those who love me ! come what may, from  
that,  
Ye Gods, preserve me !

*Angelus.*

Yet you'll lapse to them,  
And rightly ; if the acorn fits the cup,

The cup must fit the acorn. Second love,  
What is it but the virtue of an oak,  
The more than meekness of a willow-stump,  
Which blasted by the thunder-bolt of Jove,  
Or mutilated by the hand of men,  
Doth not though headless, shelled of heart,  
refuse

To put forth through the splinter that it is,  
The early leaf and blossom, to the hour  
Obedient, when the old feeling wellet up  
In greenness at the coming of the Spring.  
And sure there may be consciousness in trees,  
And stirrings in the flowers of that Great Soul  
Who feels His way through Nature up to  
man.

*Ferdinand.*

Yes, yes, I see what you are driving at !  
Man, selfish to the last, must have a god  
All to himself, and made express for him,  
It were so dreadful not to have a god.  
And on this showing the last wretch of all  
Is God, the godless, and I now see why

I woke this morning saying, "God, poor  
God :"

For His own sake, let us hope there is none  
at all.

How can He bear His own Eternity,  
Or why when He is strong are men so weak,  
And why when making did He make us thus,—  
So gross a failure that if I were God,  
Grasping the pillars of the universe,  
I would pull in my heavens upon their heads,  
I would destroy the creatures I had made,  
And then like Samson with the Philistines  
I would bow down my head and perish with  
them.

I hail the hour whene'er, I care not when,  
The race of man may come to be extinct,  
That with the last of *genus homo* too  
May perish this intolerable pain,  
This aching, smarting, bleeding consciousness  
With which you would inform the universe.

*Angelus (aside).*

Why should I try to prove him in the wrong ?

One would not argue with a fevered pulse,  
Or seek to contradict delirium,  
But give the patient cooling drinks, and find  
Some searching remedy for his complaint.

*Ferdinand.*

Then you in this same craze for consciousness  
Will have the planets—thick as motes in  
beams—  
People with sentient beings like yourself  
And organised to suffer ; not content,  
The flowers, forsooth, are conscious and have  
souls,  
Which God forbid. For who would wish  
them sense,  
Those daises which the girls decapitate  
To string them in a chain to deck themselves,  
After their sex,—those primroses they pull  
And drop at noonday on the dusty road  
To faint and perish in their own limp leaves.

*Angelus.*

—Which luckily escape these Philistines.



This aching, smarting, bleeding consciousness  
Conceive of—no you cannot—without pain,  
And where's the curse of it? Well, here is  
    grief,  
And while we may not guess the good of it,  
We'll see it does not harm us. Felled to  
    earth  
By that hard hitter from the shoulder, Fate,  
We'll go not to revenge ourselves on God  
Straight to the Devil. Well do men predict  
Of constitution throwing off disease,  
Of sinful soul that falls to rise again  
And falling is not utterly cast down.  
Power to recover is a power, the mark  
Distinctive between man and man, the seal  
Set on the foreheads of the souls elect.  
The soul of man, the Mansoul that we know,  
Suffers a siege and lifelong, which demands  
Protracted heroism, and the strength  
That beaten, baffled, crushed and left for  
    dead,  
Always recovers and repairs the breach  
As fast as it is made, and from the walls

Shouts "no surrender!" to the foe beneath :  
 Till Death, our good ally, with succour sure  
 Cuts through the sharp fire and relieves the  
     town,  
 And rolling clouds of dust retreating show  
 The enemy retires, the siege is raised.

*[Ferdinand abruptly goes and is soon heard  
 singing to the instrument in the next room.]*

*In the thick of battle we  
 Live and quick with misery,  
 Death, we name thee o'er and o'er,  
 Ours we claim thee :  
   Vive la Mort.*

*By the dense artillery plied,  
 Sinew tense and nostril wide,  
 Those be raging, furious war  
 Sternly waging :  
   Vive la Mort.*

*On the field of battle poured,  
 By their shield and broken sword,*

*In the riot rolled in gore,  
These be quiet :*

*Vive la Mort.*

*Drums may rattle, but which way  
Goes the battle, careless they,  
Where the bending plain they tore  
Fierce contending :*

*Vive la Mort.*

*Break not lightest sleep that is,  
For the brightest waking bliss  
Never deeper blessing bore ;  
Wake no sleeper :*

*Vive la Mort.*

*We who grope and darkling move,  
Lost to hope and left of love,  
Death, we name thee o'er and o'er,  
Ours we claim thee :*

*Vive la Mort.*

*When thy morrow come at length,  
In the sorrow that is strength,*

*We will meet thee at the door,  
Smile and greet thee,  
Vive la Mort.*

*Angelus (alone).*

Heureka! I could whistle like a boy,  
And throw my cap into the air for glee.

## SCENE VII.

*The same as before.*

*Angelus (alone, writing).*

Do you remember, Dear, that afternoon  
We sat and talked together in the porch  
—Saint Saviour's ; *you*, maybe, were satisfied  
With that profession of one's faith, through *me*  
Conviction like electric current ran :—  
Believe in God and immortality  
He cannot, he whose life is not divine,  
Whose life is not eternal. What if I  
Named the seven devils in possession—if  
There were but seven, or even one of these?—  
It were not good for any man to hear  
Though he were priest. What if I did but  
hint  
Mysterious at some guilty passion past?—

That were to gain in picturesque effect  
And int'rest. Then if out of church I owned  
To general sinfulness and no one sin,  
Why, you would count such censure of one-  
self

Mere modesty and think the more of me.  
But after you were gone, I said : O God,  
Send me to Heaven, if sent a man can be,  
Send me to Purgatory, yea to Hell,  
If so in me thou garner up the good,  
And burn the bad in fire unquenchable.

Pythagoras and Plato taught their schools,  
The soul of man, a spark from the Divine,  
Contracted in its tenement of flesh  
Impurities that must be purged away  
Here and hereafter. And the Roman Church  
Appoints full many penances on Earth,  
And speaks to purgatory pains beyond  
Burnt into Dante's verse ; but as we list  
We marvel much what virtue is in Pain  
Or what in Joy itself, to purify ;  
And be there such, a man's salvation, sure,

Which he in fear and trembling shall work  
out,

Cannot depend on such an accident  
As pain and penitence, belief and joy ;  
On what it lies not in his power to think,  
On what it lies not in his power to feel.

And so I travelled from my home in thee,  
Sore with the parting-pain, the open wound  
Of absence, sick with longing for the land  
That sprang in burning green from sapphire  
sea,

The Land of the Belovéd. Hour by hour  
Among the saffron-fields of Switzerland  
I sought to lull to sleep my lonely pain,  
And solve the problem that was still unsolved  
In halting by the wayside-images,  
Or kneeling in the twilight of the shrines  
Where other pilgrims knelt and seemed at  
rest.

To dream of happiness was too absurd,  
To help a little in the happiness  
Of others,—that, no more, was left to me ;

And that I found at first a sedative,  
And then a tonic ; calm I seemed and strong,  
And much was clear that erst had been  
obscure.

And lo ! one night, my early self, the Past,  
Stood like an angel by the present Me ;  
Linked and divided were we by a chain  
That coiled about my feet and sent its chill  
Through all my shuddering frame, a fearful  
coil

Of actions forged and cast in triple steel.  
And when the phantom-self and phantom-  
chain

Had vanished like a vision, saw I then  
That right was possible as wrong had been,  
'That as I lost my heaven I might regain  
By doing good each day and all day long.  
And I who pity Goodness in her teens,  
Awkward, unhappy, dwelling on defect  
In chronic penitence—the Devil's trick  
To keep her harping on her wretched self,  
I too will practise Virtue like an art,



Until it be a habit, till it move  
 Involuntary as a muscle moves,  
 No longer studied, forced, unnatural  
 And conscious as a clown of Sunday clothes.

Sound the philosophy—*believe and live* ;  
*Live and believe* were just as sound, I wis ;  
 If faith precede or works, or if the twain  
 Shall run abreast, ay, be discovered one,  
 I know not, care not, this, at least, I know :—

Wouldst thou believe in God, thou must be  
     good ;  
 Outside of goodness shalt thou find no God,  
 Although thou look for Him in His own  
     House  
 His Palace—emerald Earth and azure Heaven.  
 Thou must be true to trust, what not to trust  
 Were foulest wrong, the best-belovéd One,  
 So stainless, in her sweet integrity  
 Surrendered to thee, with her virgin heart  
 And that first love which trusts :—the true  
     can trust,

They only, for the false no vow can hold,  
Or silence satisfy, or oath assure ;  
The faithless lover is an infidel ;  
The hell of liars is distrust and doubt  
Of love and truth itself. So man projects  
His shadow on the spacious universe,  
E'en to the furthest satellite, the last  
Outrider of the Majesty of Heaven.  
The pure in heart, the true in word and  
deed,  
The strong to suffer and renounce, the great  
In loving, as they live the Blessed Life,  
May come to know the else unknowable,  
Best known unto the best. Thou must be  
God  
To see Him, know Him and believe in Him.

SCENE VIII.—*Dusk. The Leads of a London Hospital. Patient lying under an awning. Angelus and Sister Sibyl.*

*Angelus (aside).*

'Tis good to be upon the housetops here,  
The city with its surging roofs below,  
The murmur like the murmur of the sea,  
The breezes like the wind from western wave;  
While yonder, one by one, the stars appear  
Summoning Earth, their fellow-citizen,  
To take upon herself her ancient rights,  
And sit with them in council most sublime,  
The solemn council of the universe:  
Not by the ocean, not among the Alps,  
Have I beheld sight more significant,  
More sacramental of the Infinite.

*Sister Sibyl,  
singing at the bedside of the patient.*

*“ Meadows mounting to the sky,  
Cowslips, Daisies, here am I,  
Come to see you where you grow,  
Not to gather you and go.”*

*“ Come to see us, come again,  
You who leave the flowers for men ;  
We have stayed and you have ranged,  
We're the same and you are changed ;”*

*“ Yes, my treasure-trove re-found,  
Plantain, leaning on the ground,  
Still the bloomy stalk I knew,  
Still the down to keep the dew.”*

*“ Eye afire and cheek aflame,  
Once with burning steps you came,  
And an hour or more would lie  
Looking in the Daisy's eye.”*

*“ So as in and out I pass,  
Daisy-Pleiads in the grass,  
Fair as those that star the Blue,  
I would fill my soul with you.”*

*“ Then you brought us one whose eyes  
Came between you and the skies,  
While we flowers of little worth,  
Came between her and the earth.”*

*“ Name her not ; that joy is brief,—  
Nay, that joy is past, is grief ;  
Short the pleasure, long the pain,  
Which we mortals give or gain,”*

*“ Once you were alone and glad,  
Now you're lonely and so sad ;  
Is there nothing we can do,  
Are we not enough for you ?”*

*“ No, alas, I would ye were,  
Burdened is the sense I bear ;  
Wisdom's self could scarce atone  
For the fresher feeling flown.”*

*“ O my dear ones, to be healed  
Of the hurt that's ill-concealed,  
Of the deadness after pain,  
God must make me o'er again.”*

*“ But when He this way shall walk,  
Cowslip drooping on the stalk,  
Little Daisy, perfect star,  
He will leave you as you are.”*

[*To Angelus.*

Oh this homesickness for the country which  
You feel in London in a hospital !  
Whene'er I close my eyes I see the moors,  
The gorgeous intergrowth of gorse and heath,  
The shadows of the fern and glittering brake,  
Beside the waters of the lovely Lyd  
Where it is doubled by a nameless stream.

*Angelus.*

You have not then forgotten those old days  
At Darland ; I was thinking of them too ;  
The days when we would strike across the  
moor :  
Of those who started with us, one we left  
Upon the road, or rather he left us,  
And one has dipped into the Northern Lights,  
And one has gone into the Southern Sun,

And some have served the state and most  
themselves :

But unto you of us it has been given  
To live a life, the hardest task of all ;  
And so when first I set myself to live,  
I thought of Sibyl then as an expert,  
Yes, as a traveller who has cut his way  
Through half a continent, whom it were well  
To question of the road, the Blessed Life,  
That is your own, up to this House of God.  
Ay, do you now retrace the path for me,  
Now that the twilight touches tenderly  
The dreary line of brick and stone and slate,  
Till earth seems no more solid than a cloud  
Or land the sailor sights and leaves behind ;  
And flesh is spirit that has passed the grave  
And haply from some other sphere at eve  
Watches the stars, that one by one come  
forth,  
And far among them all this old old Earth.

*Sister Sibyl.*

Indeed you have distanced me ; for I, as one

Who would recover a forgotten dream,  
I painfully have plodded through the Past  
To Darland days, the early womanhood  
Of study, music, travel, life ahead ;  
What was I not to do, what not believe,  
All, all, the Wonderful, the Beautiful !  
Most vivid to me is the day I left  
And wandered round the rooms, the empty  
rooms,  
—One does, you know—and knew that I had  
been  
Happier than I suspected at the time.  
But no ! that youth and childhood are not  
mine,  
I being other : know you, ah, you must,  
How a great grief annihilates the Past,  
Annihilating us ? But women's woes,  
As like each other they as woman is  
To woman ! note you at the word how men  
Will shrug their shoulders, look significant,  
Self-satisfied, as who should say, " We know ;  
We ask not *what* but *who* is woman's grief."



*Angelus.*

The idiots, with their cant about the sex !  
You suffered and a wounded life you bore  
Like the Phœnician Queen, or wounded hind  
That hurt by careless marksman drags itself  
Into the thickets seeking some relief,  
Ah vainly, with the weapon in its side.  
At length the healing forces of the soul,  
The disposition to recovery,  
The sights and sounds of the external world,  
The barley blown in ripples by the breeze,—  
All these begin to tell upon the soul,  
And it consents to live : and when you rise  
You find the sunsets still are beautiful,  
And there the poppy peers above the corn  
To see a world whose very weeds are flowers.

*Sister Sibyl.*

But I am other than the one I was ;  
My strength has spent itself in suffering ;  
And that initial force of life and love  
Which goes with some men even to the grave,  
The initial force with which my soul was flung

From out the Fiery Fount of Energy,  
Hath slackened, and I feel them slackening  
still—

These energies so bright which fired my  
cheek

And lit mine eye with more than mortal fire ;  
And I, with halting step and languid pulse,  
Should penetrate the silence of the hills,  
And wander listless up those endless lanes  
Of flowery loveliness, where the Sweet Spirit  
As one who murmurs the beloved name,  
Repeats Himself in foxglove and in fern.

Well, we have God, but in those days of death  
The Heart that pulses through the universe  
Seemed very cold,—I knew not if it beat.  
When the advancing tide did flood my heart  
And flush my soul with streams of life and  
love,

How could I other than believe in God ?  
But now the tide was low and being ebbd,  
I could not feel Him flood the soul as then,  
And often questioned if there was a God.

But then at times the logic of events,  
The drift of Providence, was so pronounced,  
So argued Thought and Feeling, as to force  
Conviction there's a God and if there's none  
There ought to be one : then I felt for Him,  
And spoke as those in dimly-lighted rooms,  
Uncertain whether there was One to hear.

*Angelus.*

A sceptic yet not undevout, ye wise !  
A man may say "No God," more piously  
Than others shriek "The Devil, Hell, for  
ever !"

*Sister Sibyl.*

My heart was overcome with weariness,  
And did not quicken at the thought of  
Heaven ;  
With His bright gift of immortality  
God could not tempt my soul ; I turned  
away,  
Like a sick child that is not pleased with  
toys,

From all that saint or poet dreamed of  
Heaven,  
Or Sybarite invented. Then methought  
If I had sighted land and gained the port  
*Il Paradiso*, I would ask to see  
The father whom I never saw on Earth,  
And then perhaps to die, at least to sleep ;  
And I would lay me for a long repose,  
And God should suffer and respect my sleep.

*Angelus.*

And those who met you, Cousin Sibyl, then,  
Supposed you languid and indifferent,  
Judging you harshly ; truly, who can know  
Another well enough to blame and scorn ?

*Sister Sibyl.*

And then I came to London. Here the life  
Of cities with their sorrows lodged in me  
A passion for the simply-suffering,—  
The aged with the burdens of the young,  
The young as worn and weary as the old,  
The sickly, pining, starving underpaid,—

We padded with the pleasant theory  
Of "their own fault" and cuckoo cry of  
"drink"

—Effect or cause, what Solomon can say  
Pending the Judgment. "Sights" of London  
town,

"Attractions of the city," lie beyond  
The beat of Regent Circus, Rotten Row,—  
The squalid thoroughfare, the sunless close,  
The loveless lane, the tatter-tenement,  
The lodging foul—where one can haply  
breathe

Through broken window-pane unstuffed with  
rag—

Of bodies scarce as starving as the soul,  
So hideous that our little children here  
Cry, not to leave the hospital for home.  
And once I thought: "What if I clear my  
caste,

Work in a mill, adopt the garb of these,—  
Their scanty fare, the people of one room,  
I hardly dare to look them in the face  
Ashamed of being better-off than they,

More healthy, warmer-housed, and fuller  
 grown,  
 More cultured, more refined and even loved.'  
 And then I saw it all.—If I were God,

*Angelus.*

Who would be,—conscious of the woe of all  
 Creation ?

*Sister Sibyl.*

. . . and I sat among the stars,  
 The sons of morn, and missed but one of  
 these,  
 Then would I sit delightless, lost in thought,  
 And leaving all the happy born in Heaven,  
 And striking out into the gulfs of space,  
 Would go a-mourning through Eternity  
 Would go a-wandering after the one lost :  
 And so did God, so must, recover Earth  
 And that sad star of morning, Lucifer,  
 Or in my thoughts I had transcended Him,

The stream had bubbled up above its Fount,  
And—Death and Darkness!—I, not He,  
were God.

*Angelus (aside).*

And yet our highest thought may miss the  
mark,  
Stop short of Him ; for who of mortal men.  
Who, saving God, dare predicate of Him,  
More than my dog may predicate of me.

*Sister Sibyl.*

And so disrobed of His divinity  
Emmanuel took our flesh and lived our life,  
And shared our grief, and bore our very sin,  
And drew us up to Him upon the Cross.  
Well is the crucifix the sign of her  
Who carries on the Passion of our Lord,  
And promises the most to doubtful hearts.

*Angelus.*

Can that which promises perform the most ?  
“ Methinks the lady doth protest too much.”

Cousin, this crucifix upon the sleeve,  
Depicting Christ in His death-agony  
As none would wear a friend, doth only give  
A suffering Lord, one-sided view of Him  
Whose joy was quenchless even on the cross.

*Sister Sibyl.*

But I, you see, was ever ware of pain,  
And only bore the woe of all the world  
By thinking of our Lord's. At length one  
night  
Which I had watched and fasted through, He  
came,  
Majestic, calm, and still the crucified,  
And all my course was clear ;—the convent-  
life,  
That and no other now was possible.

*Angelus.*

Ah there we must have parted company !  
And no more chance in this low world of ours  
With you and such as you to meet, and so  
Recover from the pleasure-loving sets



With which the paths of social life are snared.  
Oh leave us not, spirits of stronger wing,  
Lest bent beneath the weight of earthy souls,  
Society describe a sharper depth,  
And gravitate for ever to the earth.

Ah, be you sure that what is bad for us,  
Your fellow-creatures, is not good for you—  
This cooping cloister walling out the world.  
Have you at least the freedom of a fowl  
To forage in the fields with dainty step  
For grain and gravel,—freedom of a cat  
That loves to find, else sickly, spiritless,  
Its tender blade of grass, its patch of sun,  
Its little interests. Do ye not know,  
Ye pietists prospective, saints would-be,  
To flourish like a tree of God, you spread  
Your roots in earth, your branches in the sky,  
You spread a surface to the sun and air,  
You cut yourself from nought in heaven or  
earth

To the last influence of the Pleiades,  
To the last molecule, the particle  
Infinitesimal, which goes to make

The miscellaneous man : for what is saint  
But man complete and likest Him who is  
The Universal, not a Specialist  
As was the Dweller on Olympus, Mars  
Lord of the spear, Apollo of the lyre.  
No monk is God, no mediæval saint,  
No priest or deacon, pope or pietist,  
And who shall take upon himself to say  
What son of mortal man most pleasures Him?  
The painter Brown, Bohemian, camping out,  
And reproducing with devoutest hand  
The latest touches of the Master, may  
Be pillar of the temple all as much  
As priests who dole out sacramental wine.  
As presbyters who pass the plate for pence.

*Sister Sibyl.*

Well, in my convent—one of Mercy—was  
Small leisure for the dreaming devotee,  
The luxury of solitude was brief,  
Your prayer and meditation were prescribed  
And every hour was ruled. I scrubbed the  
floor,

And taught the young, and visited the old,  
Doing as bid,—I was not bid to read,  
There were no books except devotional.  
You need to have no brain to lead that life.  
Imagination, judgment, little used  
As climbing muscle grow as obsolete,  
And you decline from that grand Prototype  
The Intellect Supreme, the Eternal Mind.  
At such starvation and the flabbiness  
Of intellectual famine panic-struck,  
Although in presence of the nuns full oft  
The last “prostration” scene had been re-  
hearsed,  
In constancy of soul I changed my course,—  
I left my convent, still a Catholic,  
And in my ward here Sister Sibyl still.

*Angelus.*

And here the index of intelligence  
Must stand a little low ; you need to fill  
Your soul when drained and dry at every  
fount,  
At books and music and society,

And at the silence of the sky and stars.  
Methinks the common nurse might best supply  
The need of these

[*Points to the sleeping patient.*

with less of private loss.

*Sister Sibyl.*

It may be so. I came to learn to nurse,  
Beginning so the programme I had planned,  
And longer than I thought I linger here  
—Beyond my convent-term—in hospital;  
One stays the longer for the power to go.  
When I was trained to nurse and trained to  
teach,  
I thought to settle down in yonder East,  
To live what seemed to me the life of lives,  
Worthy of Christ if He should come again,  
Forming a little centre there of light  
And love among the lost of London poor.  
But all the same, as you yourself have said,  
In labouring up this ladder to the stars,  
The help that's given comes better from the  
rung

Above our own, as in a family  
"Five" brings up "Three." You on your  
vantage-ground,  
Raise your own learned level, raising this,  
You raise the layer next your own, and that  
The lower raises, till our Earth is Heaven.  
And so a woman in her house and home  
And little world she calls society,  
Who wonders every day why she was born,—  
What dearer day-dream could invite her on,  
Than in the place she is to move and act,  
Helping to raise the standard character,  
Living a life, and making women feel  
They must be excellent or not endured.

*Angelus.*

Such culture never shall defeat itself.  
Oh, had we realised the grand ideal,  
The self we might have been or yet may be,  
And it appeared betwixt the night and us,  
Shedding a gentle light where'er it moved,  
We should like him in Patmos bow the knee  
Before the angel of our dreams and worship

*Sister Sibyl (aside).*

My cousin here has that he would not change,  
So rich is he, with Shakspeare or the Lord,

[*crosses herself.*

Or her he loves,—his own identity ;  
Lose it or merge it would he not for worlds,  
Not though he lost the part to gain the whole.  
And yet the future in this life and next  
Awaiting, rich and deep, may be the bliss  
We should not choose or even care for now,  
Nay, all we deprecate ; just as a child  
Would now reject his coming happiness,  
And would despise and would abhor the joys  
Of manhood, which he cannot understand,  
And which are larger than his little heart,  
But which shall none the less be surely his.  
Whate'er my future in this life or next,  
I solemnly commit myself to Thee,  
Now and for ever. But to-day, methinks,  
There never shall be rest for any, till  
This isolating individual life,  
This scattered light, this stray and orphaned  
beam,

This personality, this man—this God  
Made bitterly conscious, shall divert its course,  
Shall wander back to That from whence it  
    came,  
Shall widen into Universal Being,  
And die into the Life of the Eternal.

## SCENE IX.

*Night. Donna and Angelus in a balcony.  
House brilliantly lighted. Someone singing within.*

*Trembles the air all live with love,  
Falters the star in light above ;  
So still the Night, we hear the Hours,  
The while we feel not see the flowers.*

*Over our head the willow streams,  
Sharing our sense and ah ! our dreams ;  
The tree must leaf, it asks not why,  
The heart must love, or both will die.*

*Though bare the hills, deep in the dene,  
Sheltered and still the woods are green ;  
Some days there are all fair and bright,  
Some lives there are all love, all light.*



*So may thy life be written fair,  
Not scored by Error, crossed by Care ;  
But glowing warm at Love's behest :  
Into each page some flower be prest.*

*Angelus.*

These wishes for unclouded happiness,  
Were they not wholly weak and imbecile  
Were almost wicked, like those silly cards  
They send you,—Christmas-motto, Birthday-  
wish,  
And Marriage-gratulation : “ May your life  
Be roses ; may it lie through lilies !” Peace !  
May it ?—it cannot ; vain the wish as fond.

*Donna.*

Perhaps we would not wish it for ourselves.

*Angelus.*

Why should I wish for any other what  
I would not for myself ? why for myself  
A pleasure or a pang on New Year's Morn  
With which I could dispense on New Year's  
Eve

Or in the *Dies Iræ*? Who of us  
 Were happy, only happy? Even I  
 In my worst days, I thought not at the end,  
 What pleasure have I had, but, what work  
 done?

“O Song, to whom I dedicate my days,  
 Spirit, thou knowest, even in the fires  
 I have not faltered, do not falter now;  
 And if I groan, 'tis not that I repent.”

*Donna.*

Ah, those “worst days” of yours, dear  
 Angelus,  
 Were not so bad as you would have us think;  
 Good men there are whose craze is they are  
 bad,  
 And millionaires whose plea is they are poor,  
 And women—one in ten—who Brutus-wise  
 Assume, for reasons, imbecility.

*Angelus.*

—Or rather ignorance to humour men,  
 As we with women air our gracelessness,

Each fondling love to life with the conceit  
Of female virtue, male sagacity . . .  
Yes, not to gloze we overstate our guilt,  
Since no one dare with hand pre-Raphaelite  
Detail what all the same he dared to do :  
The "how" and "why," if nor the "what," I  
    will,  
Never to turn the trashy page again.

When in my youth I gave myself to art  
And letters, for a while I went to church,  
As if the Sunday were the Lord's "at home,"  
And temples were His house and habitat,  
And prayer the only pass-word to Himself,  
And He portentously "religious," not  
As now I love to think Him, "secular,"  
I also working in the Master's lines,  
Artist Supreme, and Dramatist Divine,—  
Doing the same as God ; and when I, tired  
Of sitting in religious reverie  
—Nirvana—nothingness, came back to Art,  
The god presented by the pulpiteer,  
The god devoted to the devotee,

Appeared indifferent to my pursuit,  
If not irrelevant to life and love  
And everything that occupies a man ;  
So left, without the consecrating sense  
Of sympathy sublime, I, in my search  
Of matter for the novel or the play,  
I lived the thing I wrote ;—even the crime :  
Behold me then committed to a course,  
The future all foreclosed, or ere I saw  
The folly of it,—thus to take on trust,  
The church's idol, other people's god.  
The rest of my career who runs may read.

*Donna.*

Yes, yes, I know it all, we all do know ;—  
The feeling we are wicked is not good ;  
When we are ankle-deep in mud or vice,  
We do not pick our way or live with care ;  
But ever with the feeling we are bad  
Demoralised, we worsen, day by day.

*Angelus.*

And then we met, my Donna ; then did love

Surprise me, like the spring with bud and leaf  
From some dead-seeming stock announcing  
    life

In presence of decay. In thy dear eyes  
I was confronted by my early self,  
And saw at end of years what is not seen  
At end of days, the progress—the decline.  
Then with the problem of recovery vexed,  
I lighted on the heresy of “works,”  
Whose theatre shall be my daily life,  
My art, my calling, so I phrased it while  
I talked with Sibyl on the leads at night.  
Expect not from me the phenomenon  
Conversion, or attendance on the chairs  
Of that which postulates at every turn,  
Theology, breeding a fear and doubt  
Of all it calls upon us to assert ;  
I like not schools where men dissect their  
    Christ  
And pull their god to pieces like a flower,  
Deeming all those who do not come t’ assist  
At these their rites unholy, infidel :  
I rather listen to the scientist

—Inspired interpreter of holy writ,  
Why then the mountain burns with fire and  
    smoke,  
Till all I see and all I touch is God,  
And science seems the true theology.

Yet fear not, Donna, for thy loftier mood  
No marriage ; good thou art as in the dream  
That made the day delicious to me. I  
Was in the Minster on the Sabbath-day,  
The organ with its swelling sea of sound  
Searched to its last recess that hallowed fane  
And filled my sense of being without bounds.  
Then as the congregation sang the psalm,  
I gazed at them, and all of them I knew,  
And live and dead they sang their matin  
    song.

But they were railed from me by iron bars  
Impassible as those stern faces there  
With eyes that looked at me and saw me not.  
Then, as against the palisade I pressed,  
A hand stole through the bars seeking my  
    own,  
And nestling thus : no need to see to know

Whose hand it was ; for surely as thy face  
I know the feel of this belovéd hand.

*Donna.*

That dream of thine, dear Angelus, was true,  
There are no bars between my soul and thine ;  
And never, though I love the public prayer  
And anthem, will I deem that thou and I  
Are not at one so long as each shall call  
Good good, and evil evil.

*Angelus.*

More I ask,  
My Donna, when upon our marriage-eve,  
My soul is flooded with its tidal wave  
Of being ; I appeal to thee who art  
Less weighted on the side of sense than I,  
As far as in thee lies, see that we lose  
In dear delights no passion for the Highest  
Which is the secret of the strength of man.  
But chargéd each with other's consciousness  
Deepening and doubling individual life,  
Let us with stronger pinion make for Heaven,

Though it were but the future of mankind.  
 Only as we are loyal to the light  
 Within us, shall we love each other ; else,  
 Each by the other's side would wake at morn  
 Sad as Ulysses in Calypso's isle  
 Making the salt sea fuller for his tears.

*Donna.*

Thy ship shall never rot in port for me,  
 So help me God !

[*Kisses the book in her hand*

Do you remember this  
 —I love it so—this book ; 'twas in my hand  
 That evening—you remember—in the fields.

*Angelus.*

Ay, ay, I read a passage which methought  
 I must have met before, some sentiment  
 In Cicero or Emerson or both.  
 What if you draw for me Vergilian lot  
 And read the page the book may open at ;  
 And if the passage suits the time and place,



Good ; and if not, no matter ; aught I do  
Or read with thee is many times its worth,  
Just as the pebble that we tread upon  
Were many times its weight upon the sun :  
I tremble at the thought of so much wealth ;  
For if an evening is so rich a store,  
Ah, what a year of evenings, life with thee !

*Donna, reading.*

*When like the heir to an inheritance  
You yield and take possession each of each,  
And harvest one another, leave some ears  
For others gleaning after you ; stand off  
From that most sacred, reverend one, thy friend,  
Let every breath have leave to visit him,  
Be every sunbeam free to fall on him,  
Nor thou sequester to thy use and wont  
The sunlight of his eyes ; thou didst not make  
Thou canst not keep the glory that he is ;  
Not by one sunset more or less is he ;  
All Art and Nature had a hand in him,  
All men and women are concerned in him :—  
Think not of this and other dame or don*

*Who taught him ; from the little child, inspired  
Interrogator, to that poor old man  
Who breaks the stones along the King's high-  
way,  
And rests from labour for his midday meal,  
Thanking the Lord and Giver of all good,—  
All ever seen, and haply some unseen,  
Yea, all mankind, have educated him  
Thy friend, their foster-son, the children's child,  
Even his own. And thou thyself no less,  
Be thou at leisure for the universe,  
And if the shining ones should stand without,  
Make not too strict inquiry whence they come  
Or ere thou open ; for it is not man's  
To love exclusively, to limit God.*

*Guard the crown-jewels of thy friend's esteem  
As mother doth her babe, as priest the Host,  
And maiden her virginity. At night  
Pillow thy head upon the thought of him,  
And in the morn with thinking of thy friend  
Recover thine identity. And let  
No rudeness or suspicion vulgarise,*

*Or jealousy imperil, faith and love ;  
Friends are no more conceded littleness  
Than poets mediocrity ; and now  
Thou art happy and thy pulse is strong as two,  
Thou art expected to be great and good,  
And now or never must thou be sublime :  
For like the early Argonauts, or those  
Who sailed in expedition against Troy,  
Friends should be heroes, pairs invincible.  
Sinew and muscle and redundant strength  
And frank exulting love and happiness,  
Go ye together, a young Heracles,  
On some new labour for the good of men.*

*Thus have I said, or rather left unsaid,  
The thoughts that troop on me in companies,  
Celestial visitants from near and far ;  
I cannot utter what is in my soul ;  
My bark is grating the unspeakable.*

THE END.





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