

ASCENSION DAY

Curious position of poet.

I FLUNG out of chapel¹* and church,
 Temple and hall and meeting-room,
 Venus' Bower and Osiris' Tomb,²
 And left the devil in the lurch,
 While God³ got lost in the crowd of gods,⁴ 5
 And soul went down⁵ in the turbid tide
 Of the metaphysical lotus-eyed,⁶
 And I was—anyhow, what's the odds ?

What is Truth? said jesting Pilate: but Crowley waits for an answer. †

The life to live ? The thought to think ? Shall I take refuge
 In a tower like once Childe Roland‡ found, blind, deaf, huge, 10
 Or in that forest of two hundred thousand
 Trees,⁸ fit alike to shelter man and mouse, and—
 Shall I say God? Be patient, your Reverence,⁹
 I warrant you'll journey a wiser man ever hence !
 Let's tap (like the negro who gets a good juice of it, 15
 Cares nought if that be, or be not, God's right use of it),¹⁰
 In all that forest of verses one tree¹¹
 Yclept "Red Cotton Nightcap Country":
 How a goldsmith, between the Ravishing Virgin
 And a leman too rotten to put a purge in, 20
 Day by day and hour by hour,
 In a Browningsque forest of thoughts having lost himself,
 Expecting a miracle, solemnly tossed himself
 Off from the top of tower.
 Moral: don't spoil such an excellent sport as an 25
 Ample estate with a church and a courtesan!

Alternative theories of Greek authors. Browning's summary.

"Truth, that's the gold"¹² But don't worry about it!
 I, you, or Simpkin¹³ can get on without it!
 If life's task be work and love's (the soft-lippèd) ease,
 Death be God's glory ? discuss with Euripides ! 30

* The numbered notes are given at p. 48

† Bacon, "Essay on Truth," line 1.

‡ "Childe Roland to the dark Tower came."—BROWNING.

- Or, cradle be hardship, and finally coffin, ease,
 Love being filth? let us ask Aristophanes !
 Or, heaven's sun bake us, while Earth's bugs and fleas kill us,
 Love the God's scourge ? I refer you to Aeschylus !
 (Nay ! that's a slip ! Say we "Earth's grim device, cool
 35 loss !—"
 Better the old Greek orthography !—Aischulos !¹⁴)
 Or, love be God's champagne's foam ; death in man's
 trough, hock lees,
 Pathos our port's beeswing ? what answers Sophocles ?
 Brief, with love's medicine let's draught, bolus, globule us !
 40 Wise and succinct bids, I think, Aristobulus.¹⁵
 Whether my Muse be Euterpe or Clio,
 Life, Death, and Love are all Batrachomyo¹⁶—
 Machia, what ? ho ! old extinct Alcibiades ?
 For me, do ut—God true, be mannikin liar !—des !
- 45 It's rather hard, isn't it, sir, to make sense of it ?
 Mine of so many pounds—pouch even pence of it ?¹⁷
 Try something easier,¹⁸ where the bard seems to me
 Seeking that light, which I find comes in dreams to me.
 Even as he takes to feasts to enlarge upon,
 50 So will I do too to launch my old barge upon
 Analyse, get hints from Newton¹⁹ or Faraday,²⁰
 Use every weapon—love, scorn, reason, parody !
 Just where he worships ? Ah me ! shall his soul,
 Far in some glory, take hurt from a mole
 55 Grubbing i' th' ground ? Shall his spirit not see,
 Lightning to lightning, the spirit in me ?
 Parody ? Shall not his spirit forgive
 Me, who shall love him as long as I live ?
 Love's at its height in pure love ? Nay, but after
 60 When the song's light dissolves gently in laughter !
 Then and then only the lovers may know
 Nothing can part them for ever. And so,
 Muse, hover o'er me ! Apollo, above her !
- I, of the Moderns, have let alone Greek.²¹
 65 Out of the way Intuition shall shove her.
 Spirit and Truth in my darkness I seek.
 Little by little they bubble and leak;
 Such as I have to the world I discover.
 Words—are they weak ones at best ? They shall speak !
- Apology of poet.
 Skeleton of poem. Valuable fact for use of lovers.
 Invocation.
- Imperfect scholastic attainments of author remedied by his great spiritual insight. His intention.

THE SWORD OF SONG

<p>His achievement. Plan of poem. “Conspuez Dieu!”</p>	<p>Shields ? Be they paper, paint, lath ? They shall cover Well as they may, the big heart of a lover ! Swords ? Let the lightning of Truth strike the fortress Frowning of God ! I will sever one more tress Off the White Beard²² with his son’s blood besprinkled, Carve one more gash in the forehead²³ hate-wrinkled:— So, using little arms, earn one day better ones; Cutting the small chains,²⁴ learn soon to unfetter one’s Limbs from the large ones, walk forth and be free!— So much for Browning ! and so much for me !</p>	<p>70 75</p>
<p>Apology for manner of poem. A chance for Tibet.</p>	<p>Pray do not ask me where I stand ! “Who asks, doth err.”²⁵ At least demand No folly such as answer means ! “But if” (you²⁶ say) “your spirit weans Itself of milk-and-water pap, And one religion as another O’rleaps itself and falls on the other;²⁷ You’ll tell me why at least, mayhap, Our Christianity excites Especially such petty spites As these you strew throughout your verse.” The chance of birth! I choose to curse (Writing in English²⁸) just the yoke Of faith that tortures English folk. I cannot write²⁹ a poem yet To please the people in Tibet; But when I can, Christ shall not lack Peace, while their Buddha I attack.³⁰</p>	<p>80 85 90 95</p>
<p>Hopes. Iden- tity of poet. Attention drawn to my highly decora- tive cover.</p>	<p>Yet by-and-by I hope to weave A song of Anti-Christmas Eve And First- and Second- Beast-er Day. There’s one*³¹ who loves me dearly (vrai !) Who yet believes me sprung from Tophet, Either the Beast or the False Prophet; And by all sorts of monkey tricks Adds up my name to Six Six Six. Retire, good Gallup !³² In such strife her Superior skill makes <i>you</i> a cipher !</p>	<p>100 105</p>

	<p>Ho ! I adopt the number. Look At the quaint wrapper of this book !*</p>	
110	<p>I will deserve it if I can: It is the number of a Man.³³</p>	
	<p>So since in England Christ still stands With iron nails in bloody hands Not pierced, but grasping ! to hoist high Children on cross of agony, I find him real for English lives. Up with my pretty pair of fives !³⁴ I fight no ghosts.</p>	<p>Necessity of poem.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">“But why revile”</p> <p>(You urge me) “in that vicious style The very faith whose truths you seem (Elsewhere)³⁵ to hold, to hymn supreme In your own soul ?” Perhaps you know How mystic doctrines melt the snow Of any faith: redeem it to A fountain of reviving dew. So I with Christ: but few receive The Qabalistic Balm,³⁶ believe Nothing—and choose to know instead.</p>	<p>Mysticism v. literal interpre- tation. Former excused.</p>
120	<p>But, to that terror vague and dread, External worship; all my life— War to the knife ! War to the knife !</p>	
125		
130		
	<p>No ! on the other hand the Buddha Says: “I’m surprised at you ! How could a Person accept my law and still Use hatred, the sole means of ill, In Truth’s defence ? In praise of light ?” Well ! Well ! I guess Brer Buddha’s right ! I am no brutal Cain³⁷ to smash an Abel:</p>	<p>Buddha re- bukes poet. Detailed scheme of modified poem.</p>
135	<p>I hear that blasphemy’s unfashionable: So in the quietest way we’ll chat about it; No need to show teeth, claws of cat about it! With gentle words—fiat exordium; Exeat dolor, intret gaudium !</p>	
140		

1 It had a design of 666 and Crowley’s name in Hebrew (which, like most names, adds up to that figure) on the reverse.

ASCENSION DAY

Panel* in libel I bewail me!
(Funny how English seems to fail me!)
185 So, as a surgeon to a man, sir,
Let me excise your Christian cancer
Impersonally, without vanity,
Just in pure love of poor humanity !

Here's just the chance you'd have ! Behold
190 The warm sun tint with early gold
Yon spire : to-day's event provide
My text of wrath—Ascension-tide !
Oh ! 'tis a worthy day to wrest
Hate's diadem from Jesus' Crest !
195 Ascends he ? 'Tis the very test
By which we men may fairly judge,
From the rough roads we mortals trudge
Or God's paths paved with heliotrope,
The morals of the crucified.
200 (Both standpoints joined in one, I hope,
In metaphysic's stereoscope !)
But for the moment be denied
A metaphysical inspection—
Bring out the antiseptic soap !—
205 We'll judge the Christ by simple section,
And strictly on the moral side.

Ascension Day.
Moral aspect of
Christianity to
be discussed to
prejudice of the
metaphysical.

But first ; I must insist on taking
The ordinary substantial creed
Your clergy preach from desk and pulpit
210 Each Sunday ; all the Bible, shaking
Its boards with laughter as you read
Each Sunday. Ibsen⁴³ to a full pit
May play in the moon. If (lunars they)
They thought themselves to be the play,
215 It's little the applause he'd get.

Orthodoxy to be
our doxy.†
Gipsies barred.
Henrik Ibsen
and H. G.
Wells.

I met a Christian clergyman,‡
The nicest man I ever met.
We argued of the Cosmic plan.
I was Lord Roberts, he De Wet.⁴⁴

Parson and poet.
Fugitive nature
of dogma in
these latter days.
The Higher
Criticism.

* Scots legal term for defendant.

† A Romany word for woman.

‡ The Rev. J. Bowley. The conversation described actually occurred
in Mr. Gerald Kelly's studio in Paris.

He tells me when I cite the "Fall" 220
 "But those are legends after all."
 He has a hundred hills⁴⁵ to lie in,
 But finds no final ditch⁴⁶ to die in.
 "Samuel was man ; the Holy Spook
 Did not dictate the Pentateuch." 225
 With cunning feint he lures me on
 To loose my pompoms on Saint John ;
 And, that hill being shelled, doth swear
 His forces never had been there.
 I got disgusted, called a parley, 230
 (Here comes a white-flag treachery !)
 Asked : "Is there anything you value,
 Will hold to ?" He laughed, "Chase me, Charlie !"
 But seeing in his mind that I
 Would no be so converted, "Shall you," 235
 He added, "grope in utter dark ?
 The Book of Acts and that of Mark
 Are now considered genuine."
 I snatch a Testament, begin
 Reading at random the first page ;— 240
 He stops me with a gesture sage :
 "You must not think, because I say
 St. Mark is genuine, I would lay
 Such stress unjust upon its text,
 As base thereon opinion. Next ?" 245
 I gave it up. He escaped. Ah me !
 But do did Christianity.

Lord George
 Sanger* on the
 Unknowable.
 How the crea-
 tures talk.

As for a quiet talk on physics sane ac
 Lente, I hear the British Don
 Spout sentiments more bovine than a sane yak²⁵⁰ 250
 Ever would ruminare upon,
 Half Sabbatarian and half Khakimaniac,
 Built up from Paul and John,
 With not a little tincture of Leviticus
 Gabbled pro formâ, jaldi, † à la Psittacus 255
 To aid the appalling hotch-potch ; lyre and lute
 Replaced by liar and loot, the harp and flute

* Proprietor of a circus and menagerie.

† Hindustani : quickly.

Are dumb, the drum doth come and make us mute :
 The Englishman, half huckster and half brute,
 260 Raves through his silk hat of the Absolute.
 The British Don, half pedant and half hermit,
 Begins: "The Ding an sich*—as Germans term it—"
 We stop him short ; he readjusts his glasses,
 Turns to his folio—'twill eclipse all precedent,
 265 Reveal God's nature, every dent a blessed dent !
 The Donkey : written by an ass, for asses.

So, with permission, let us be
 Orthodox to our finger-ends;
 What the bulk hold, High Church or Friends,
 270 Or Hard-shall Baptists—and we'll see.

Basis of poem
 to be that of
 the Compro-
 mise of 1870.

I will not now invite attack
 By proving white a shade of black,
 Or Christ (as some⁴⁷ have lately tried)
 An epileptic mania,
 275 Citing some case, "where a dose
 Of Bromide duly given in time
 Drags a distemper so morose
 At last to visions less sublime ;
 Soft breezes stir the lyre Aeolian,
 280 No more the equinoctial gales ;
 The patient reefs his mental sails ;
 His Panic din that shocked the Tmolian⁴⁸
 Admits a softer run of scales—
 Seems no more God, but mere Napoleon
 285 Or possibly the Prince of Wales" :—
 Concluding such a half-cured case
 With the remark "where Bromide fails !—
 But Bromide people did not know
 Those 1900 years ago."
 290 I think we may concede to Crowley an
 Impartial attitude.

Non-medical
 nature of poem.
 Crowley J.

And so
 I scorn the thousand subtle points
 Wherein a man might find a fulcrum
 295 (Ex utero Matris ad sepulcrum,

No mention
 will be made
 of the Figs
 and the Pigs

* *Vide infra* "Science and Buddhism", and the writings of Immanuel Kant and his successors.

	Et præter—such as Huxley tells) I'll pierce your rotten harness-joints, Dissolve your diabolic spells, With the quick truth and nothing else.	
Christian pre- misses ac- cepted. Severe mental strain involved in reading poem.	So not one word derogatory To your own version of the story ! I take your Christ, your God's creation, Just at their own sweet valuation, For by this culminating scene, Close of that wondrous life of woe Before and after death, we know How to esteme the Nazarene. Where's the wet towel ?	300 305
	Let us first	
The Ascension at last ! This is a common feat. Prana- yama.	Destroy the argument of fools, From Paul right downward to the Schools, That the Ascension's self rehearsed Christ's Godhead by its miracle. Grand !—but the power is mine as well ! In India levitation counts No tittle of the immense amounts Of powers demanded by the wise From Chela ere the Chela rise To knowledge. Fairy-tales ? Well, first, Sit down a week and hold your breath As masters teach ⁴⁹ —until you burst, Or nearly—in a week, one saith, A month, perchance a year for you, Hard practice, and yourself may fly— Yes ! I have done it ! you may too !	310 315 320 325
Difference be- tween David Douglas [<i>sic</i>] Home, Sri Swami Sabapati Vamadeva Bhaskara- nanda Sara- swati and the Christ. Latter com- pared to Madame Hum- bert.	Thus, in Ascension, you and I Stand as Christ's peers and therefore fit To judge him—“Stay, friend, wait a bit!” (You cry) “Your Indian Yogis fall Back to the planet after all, Never attain to heaven and stand (Stephen) or sit (Paul) ⁵⁰ at the hand Of the Most High !—And that alone That question of the Great White Throne, Is the sole point that we debate.” I answer, Here in India wait	330 335

<p>340</p>	<p>Samadhi-Dak,⁵¹ convenient To travel to Maha Meru,⁵² Or Gaurisankar's⁵³ keen white wedge Spearing the mighty dome of blue, Or Chogo's⁵⁴ mighty flying edge Shearing across the firmament,— But, first, to that exact event You Christians celebrate to-day.</p>	<p>Former compared to Kerubim; as it is written, Running and Returning.</p>
<p>345</p>	<p>We stand where the disciples stood And see the Master float away Into that cloudlet heavenly-hued Receiving him from mortal sight. Which of his sayings prove the true,</p>	
<p>350</p>	<p>Lightning-bescrawled athwart the blue ? I say not, Which in hearts aright Are treasured ? but, What after ages Engrave on history's iron pages ? This is the one word of "Our Lord" ;</p>	
<p>355</p>	<p>"I bring not peace ; I bring a sword." In this the history of the West⁵⁵ Bears him out well. How stands the test ? One-third a century's life of pain— He lives, he dies, he lives again,</p>	
<p>360</p>	<p>And rises to eternal rest Of bliss with Saints—an endless reign ! Leaving the world to centuries torn By every agony and scorn, And every wickedness and shame</p>	
<p>365</p>	<p>Taking their refuge in his Name. <i>No Yogi shot his Chandra</i>⁵⁶ <i>so.</i> Will Christ return ? What ho ? What ho ! What ? What ? "He meditates above Still with his Sire for mercy, love,—"</p>	<p>Shri Parananda applauds Yogi. Gerald jeers at Jesus.</p>
<p>370</p>	<p>And other trifles ! Far enough That Father's purpose from such stuff !</p>	
<p>375</p>	<p>You see, when I was young, they said : "Whate'er you ponder in your head, Or make the rest of Scripture mean, You can't evade John iii. 16."</p>	<p>John iii. 16.* Its importance. Its implied meaning.</p>

* "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Exactly! Grown my mental stature,
 I ponder much: but never yet
 Can I get over or forget
 That bitter text's accursed nature,
 The subtle devilish omission,⁵⁷ 380
 The cruel antithesis implied,
 The irony, the curse-fruition,
 The calm assumption of Hell's fevers
 As fit, as just, for unbelievers—
 These are the things that stick beside 385
 And hamper my quite serious wish
 To harbour kind thoughts of the "Fish."⁵⁸

My own vague
 optimism. Im-
 possibility of
 tracing cause
 back or effect
 forward to the
 ultimate.
 Ethics
 individual.

Here goes my arrow to the gold !
 I'll make no magpies ! Though I hold
 Your Christianity a lie, 390
 Abortion and iniquity,
 The most immoral and absurd
 —(A priest's invention, in a word)—
 Of all religions, I have hope
 In the good Dhamma's⁵⁹ wider scope, 395
 Nay, certainty ! that all at last,
 However came they in the past,
 Move, up or down—who knows, my friend ?—
 But yet with no uncertain trend
 Unto Nibbana in the end. 400
 I do not even dare despise
 Your doctrines, prayers, and ceremonies !
 Far from the word "you'll go to hell !"
 I dare not say "you do not well !"
 I must obey my mind's own laws 405
 Accept its limits, seek its cause :
 My meat may be your poison ! I
 Hope to convert you by-and-by ?
 Never ! I cannot trace the chain⁶⁰
 That brought us here, shall part again 410
 Our lives—perhance for aye ! I bring
 My hand down on this table-thing,⁶¹
 And that commotion widens thus
 And shakes the nerves of Sirius !
 To calculate one hour's result 415
 I find surpassing difficult ;

One year's effect, one moment's cause;
 What mind could estimate such laws ?
 Who then (much more !) may act aright
 420 Judged by and in ten centuries' sight?
 (Yet I believe, whate'er we do
 Is best for me and best for you
 And best for all : I line no brow
 With wrinkles, meditating how.)

425 Well, but another way remains.
 Shall we expound the cosmic plan
 By symbolising God and man
 And nature thus? As man contains
 Cells, nerves, grey matter in his brains,
 430 Each cell a life, self-centred, free
 Yet self-subordinate to the whole
 For its own sake—expand !—so we
 Molecules of a central soul,
 Time's sons, judged by Eternity.

435 Nature is gone—our joys, our pains,
 Our little lives—and God remains.
 Were this the truth—why ! worship then
 Were not so imbecile for men!
 But that's no Christian faith ! For where
 440 Enters the dogma of despair ?
 Despite his logic's silver flow
 I must count Caird⁶² a mystic ! No !
 You Christians shall not mask me so
 The plain words of your sacred books
 445 Behind friend Swedenborg his spooks !
 Says Huxley⁶³ in his works (q. v.)
 "The microcosmic lives change daily
 In state or body"—yet you gaily
 Arm a false Hegel cap-à-pie—
 450 Your self, his weapons—make him wear
 False favours of a ladye fayre
 (The scarlet woman !) bray and blare
 A false note on the trumpet, shout :
 "A champion ? Faith's defender ! Out !
 455 Sceptic and sinner ! See me ! Quail I ?"
 I cite the Little-go. You stare,
 And have no further use for Paley !

Caird's interpretation of Hegel. His identification of it with Christianity proved to be mystical. His interpretation false.

On just belief or unbelief ;
 And an involuntary act
 Make difference infinite in fact
 Between the right and left-hand thief ?
 500 Belief is not an act of will !”

I think, Sir, that I have you still,
 Even allowing (much indeed !)
 That any will at all is freed,
 And is not merely the result
 505 Of sex, environment, and cult,
 Habit and climate, health and mind,
 And twenty thousand other things !
 So many a metaphysic sings.
 (I wish they did indeed : I find
 510 Their prose the hardest of hard reading.)

Free will.
 Herbert
 Spencer.

“But if,” you cry, “the world’s designed
 As a mere mirage in the mind,
 Up jumps free will.” But all I’m pleading
 Is against pain and hell. Freewill
 515 Then can damn man ? No fearful mill,
 Grinding catastrophe, is speeding
 Outside—some whence, some whither ? And⁶⁷
 I think we easier understand
 Where Schelling (to the Buddha leading)
 520 Calls real not-self. In any case
 There is not, there can never be
 A soul, or sword or armour needing,
 Incapable in time or space
 Or to inflict or suffer. We
 525 I think are gradually weeding
 The soil of dualism. Pheugh !
 Drop to the common Christian’s view !

If there is free
 will how can
 there be pain or
 damnation ?
 not-Self being
 an illusion.
 Self or not-Self
 real? Chute
 d’Icare.

This is my point ; the world lies bleeding :—
 (Result of sin ?)—I do not care ;
 530 I will admit you anywhere !
 I take your premises themselves
 And, like the droll deceitful elves
 They are, they yet outwit your plan.
 I will prove Christ a wicked man.

I have pity :
 had Christ
 any ? The
 Sheep and the
 Goats.

	(Granting him Godhead) merciless To all the anguish and distress About him—save to him it clung And prayed. Give me omnipotence? I am no fool that I should fence That power, demanding every tongue To call me God—I would exert That power to heal creation's hurt ; Not to divide my devotees From those who scorned me to the close : A worm, a fire, a thirst for these ; A harp-resounding heaven for those !	535 540 545
Will Satan be saved ? Who pardons Judas?	And though you claim Salvation sure For all the heathen ⁶⁸ —there again New Christians give the lie to plain Scripture, those words which must endure ! (The Vedas say the same !) and though His mercy widens ever so, I never met a man (this shocks, What I now press, so heterodox, Anglican, Roman, Methodist, Peculiar Person—all the list !— I never met a man who called Himself a Christian, but appalled Shrank when I dared suggest the hope God's mercy could expand its scope, Extend, or bend, or spread, or straighten So far as to encompass Satan Or even poor Iscariot.	550 555 560
God's fore-knowledge of Satan's fall and eternal misery makes him responsible for it. If he and Judas are finally re-deemed we might perhaps look over the matter this once. Poet books his seat. Creator in	Yet God created (did he not ?) Both these. Omnisciently, we know ! Benevolently ? Even so ! Created from Himself distinct (Note that !—it is not meet for you To plead me Schelling and his crew) These souls, foreknowing how were linked The chains in either's Destiny. "You pose me the eternal Why ?" Not I ? Again, "Who asks doth err." But this one thing I say. Perhance There lies a purpose in advance.	565 570 575

<p>580</p>	<p>Tending to final bliss—to stir Some life to better life, this pain Is needful : that I grant again. Did they at last in glory live, Satan and Judas⁶⁹ might forgive The middle time of misery, Forgive the wrong creation first Or evolution's iron key Did them—provided they are passed</p>	<p>heaven suffers Hell's pangs, owing to re- proaches of bard.</p>
<p>585</p>	<p>Beyond all change and pain at last Out of this universe accurst. But otherwise ! I lift my voice, Deliberately take my choice Promethean, eager to rejoice,</p>	
<p>590</p>	<p>In the grim protest's joy to revel Betwixt Iscariot and the Devil, Throned in their midst ! No pain to feel, Tossed on some burning bed of steel, But theirs : my soul of love should swell</p>	
<p>595</p>	<p>And, on those piteous floors they trod, Feel, and make God feel, out of Hell, Across the gulf impassable, That He was damned and I was God !</p>	
<p>600</p>	<p>Ay! Let him rise and answer me That false creative Deity, Whence came his right to rack the Earth With pangs of death,⁷⁰ disease, and birth : No joy unmarred by pain and grief :</p>	<p>Ethical and eloquent de- nunciation of Christian Cos- mogony.</p>
<p>605</p>	<p>Insult on injury heaped high In that quack-doctor infamy The Panacea of—Belief ! Only the selfish soul of man Could ever have conceived a plan Man only of all life to embrace,</p>	
<p>610</p>	<p>One planet of all stars to place Alone before the Father's face ; Forgetful of creation's stain, Forgetful of creation's pain Not dumb !—forgetful of the pangs</p>	
<p>615</p>	<p>Whereby each life laments and hangs, (Now as I speak a lizard⁷¹ lies In wait for light-bewildered flies)</p>	

Each life bound over to the wheel⁷²
 Ay, and each being—we may guess
 Now that the very crystals feel !— 620
 For them no harp-reasounding court,
 No palm, no crown, but none the less
 A cross, be sure ! The worst man's thought
 In hell itself, bereft of bliss,
 Were less unmerciful than this ! 625
 No ! for material things, I hear,
 Will burn away, and cease to be—
 (Nibbanna ! Ah ! Thou shoreless Sea !)
 Man, man alone, is doomed to fear,
 To suffer the eternal woe, 630
 Or else, to meet man's subtle foe,
 God—and oh ! infamy of terror !
 Be like him—like him ! And for ever !
 At least I make not such an error :
 My soul must utterly dis sever 635
 Its very silliest thought, belief,
 From such a God as possible,
 Its vilest from his worship. Never !
 Avaunt, abominable chief
 Of Hate's grim legions ; let me well 640
 Gird up my loins and make endeavour,
 And seek a refuge from my grief,
 O never in Heaven—but in Hell!
 “Oh, very well !” I think you say,
 “Wait only till your dying day !
 See whether then you kiss the rod, 645
 And bow that proud soul down to God !”
 I perfectly admit the fact ;
 Quite likely that I so shall act !
 Here's why Creation jumps at prayer.
 You Christians quote me in a breath 650
 This, that, the other atheist's death,⁷³
 How they sought God ! Of course ! Impair
 By just a touch of fever, chill,
 My health—where flies my vivid will?
 My carcase with quinine is crammed; 655
 I wish South India were damned ;
 I wish I had my mother's nursing,
 Find precious little use in cursing,

Death-bed o f
 poet. Effec t
 of body on
 mind.

660 And slide to leaning on another,
 God, or the doctor, or my mother.
 But dare you quote my fevered word
 For better than my health averred ?
 The brainish fancies of a man
 Hovering on delerium's brink :

666 *Shall these be classed his utmost span ?*
 All that he can or ought to think ?
 No ! the strong man and self-reliant
 Is the true spiritual giant.

670 I blame no weaklings, but decline
 To take their maunderings for mine.

You see I do not base my thesis
 On your Book's being torn to pieces
 By knowledge : nor invoke the shade
 675 Of my own boyhood's agony.
 Soul, shudder not ! Advance the blade
 Of fearless fact and probe the scar !
 You know my first-class memory ?
 Well, in my life two years there are
 680 Twelve years back—not so very far !
 Two years whereof no memory stays.
 One ageless anguish filled my days
 So that no item, like a star
 Sole in the supreme night, above
 685 Stands up for hope, or joy, or love.
 Nay, not one ignis fatuus glides
 Sole in that marsh, one agony
 To make the rest look light. Abides
 The thick sepulchral changeless shape
 690 Shapeless, continuous misery
 Whereof no smoke-wreaths might escape
 To show me whither lay the end,
 Whence the beginning. All is black,
 Void of all cause, all aim ; unkenned,
 695 As if I had been dead indeed—
 All in Christ's name ! And I look back,
 And then and long time after lack
 Courage or strength to hurl the creed
 Down to the heaven it sprang from ! No !
 700 Not this inspires the indignant blow

Poem does not
 treat of Palæ-
 ontology : nor of
 poet's youth :
 nor of Christian
 infamies. Poet
 forced to mystic
 position.

At the whole fabric—nor the seas
 Filled with those innocent agonies
 Of Pagan Martyrs that once bled,
 Of Christian Martyrs damned and dead
 In inter-Christian bickerings 705
 Where hate exults and torture springs,
 A lion an anguished flesh and blood,
 A vulture on ill-omen wings,
 A cannibal⁷⁴ on human food.
 Nor do I cry the scoffer's cry 710
 That Christians live and look the lie
 Their faith has taught them : none of these
 Inspire my life, disturb my peace.
 I go beneath the outward faith
 Find it a devil or a wraith, 715
 Just as my mood or temper tends !

Mystical
 mean-ing o f
 "Ascen-sion
 Day." Futility
 of
 whole discus-
 sion, in view o f
 facts.

And thus to-day that "Christ ascends,"
 I take the symbol, leave the fact
 Decline to make the smallest pact
 With your creative Deity, 720
 And say : The Christhood-soul in me,
 Risen of late, is now quite clear
 Even of the smallest taint of Earth.
 Supplanting God, the Man has birth
 ("New Birth" you'll call the same, I fear,) 725
 Transcends the ordinary sphere
 And flies in the direction "x."
 (There lies the fourth dimension.) Vex
 My soul no more with mistranslations
 From Genesis to Revelations, 730
 But leave me with the Flaming Star,⁷⁵
 Jeheshua (See thou Zohar !)⁷⁶
 And thus our formidable Pigeon-⁷⁷
 Lamb-and-Old-Gentleman religion
 Fizzles in smoke, and I am found 735
 Attacking nothing. Here's the ground,
 Pistols, and coffee—three in one,
 (Alas, O Rabbi Schimeon !)
 But never a duellist—no Son,
 No Father, and (to please us most) 740
 Decency pleads—no Holy Ghost!
 All vanish at the touch of truth,
 A cobweb trio—like, in sooth,

- 745 That worthy Yankee millionaire,
And wealthy nephews, young and fair,
The pleasing Crawfords ! Lost ! Lost ! Lost !⁷⁸
“The Holy Spirit, friend ! beware !”
- 750 Ah ! ten days yet to Pentecost !
Come that, I promise you—but stay !
At present ’tis Ascension Day !
- 755 At least your faith should be content.
I quarrel not with this event.
The supernatural element ?
I deny nothing—at the term
It is just Nothing I affirm.
The fool (with whom is wisdom, deem
The Scriptures—rightly !) in his heart
Saith (silent, to himself, apart)
This secret : “אין אלהים”⁷⁹
- 760 See the good Psalm ! And thus, my friend !
My diatribes approach the end
And find us hardly quarelling.
And yet—you seem not satisfied ?
The literal mistranslated thing
- 765 Must not by sinners be denied.
Go to your Chapel then to pray !
(I promise Mr. Chesterton⁸⁰
Before the Muse and I have done
A grand ap-pre-ci-a-ti-on
- 770 Of Brixton on Ascension Day.)
He’s gone—his belly filled enough !
This Robert-Browning-manqué stuff !
’Twill serve—Mercurio’s scratch !—to show
Where God and I are disagreed.
- 775 There ! I have let my feelings go
This once. Again ? I deem not so.
Once for my fellow-creature’s need !
The rest of life, for self-control,⁸¹
For liberation of the soul !⁸²
- 780 This once, the truth ! In future, best
Dismissing Jesus with a jest.
Ah ! Christ ascends ?⁸³ Ascension day ?
Old wonders bear the bell⁸⁴ away ?
Santos-Dumont, though ! Who can say ?
- The reader may hope.
- Summary.
Reader dismissed to chapel.
- Future plans of poet. Jesus dismissed with a jest.
- The Jest.