

CHRISTMAS-EVE & EASTER-DAY.

CHRISTMAS-EVE.

Between Christmas-Eve and Easter-Morn lies the earth history of the Incarnate Son of God. Into the shadows of our world He came; and, after a brief night amid its darkness, rose again into the light of heaven. These titles then may well include the whole substance of Christianity. Christmas suggests the thought of heaven come down to earth; Easter, of earth raised up to heaven. "Christmas-Eve" leads naturally to the contemplation of the Christian Faith; "Easter-Day," to the contemplation of the Christian Life.

Each poem turns on an impressive natural phenomenon which suggests the blending of heaven and earth—the one, of the night, a lunar rainbow; the other, of the dawn, the aurora borealis.

The speaker (who is the same throughout the former poem) begins his Christmas-Eve experiences with the flock assembling in "Zion Chapel," a congregation of rude, unlettered people, worshipping with heart and soul indeed, but with little mind and less taste. It is not from choice that he is there. It is a stormy night of wind and rain, from which he has taken shelter in the "lath and plaster entry" of the little meeting house.

I.

* * * * *

FIVE minutes full, I waited first
 In the doorway, to escape the rain
 That drove in gusts down the common's centre,
 At the edge of which the chapel stands,
 Before I plucked up heart to enter.
 Heaven knows how many sorts of hands
 Reached past me, groping for the latch
 Of the inner door that hung on catch
 More obstinate the more they fumbled,
 Till, giving way at last with a scold

Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled
 One sheep more to the rest in fold,
 And left me irresolute, standing sentry
 In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry,
 Four feet long by two feet wide,
 Partitioned off from the vast inside—
 I blocked up half of it at least.
 No remedy; the rain kept driving.
 They eyed me much as some wild beast,
 That congregation, still arriving,
 Some of them by the main road, white
 A long way past me into the night,
 Skirting the common, then diverging;
 Not a few suddenly emerging
 From the common's self through the paling-gaps,
 —They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,
 Where the road stops short with its safeguard border
 Of lamps, as tired of such disorder;—
 But the most turned in yet more abruptly
 From a certain squalid knot of alleys,
 Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly,
 Which now the little chapel rallies
 And leads into day again,—its priestliness
 Lending itself to hide their beastliness
 So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),
 And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on
 Those neophytes too much in lack of it,
 That, where you cross the common as I did,
 And meet the party thus presided,
 "Mount Zion" with Love-lane at the back of it,
 They front you as little disconcerted

As, bound for the hills, her fate averted,
 And her wicked people made to mind him,
 Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

In the same light and humorous, half irreverent style, he proceeds to a somewhat detailed description of the people and their uncouth worship—not altogether a caricature, but evidently wanting in that sympathy with the good at the heart of it, the thought of which was afterwards so strongly borne in upon his soul. So, he "very soon had enough of it," and gladly "flung out of the little chapel" "into the fresh night air again."

IV.

There was a lull in the rain, a lull
 In the wind too; the moon was risen,
 And would have shone out pure and full,
 But for the ramparted cloud-prison,
 Block on block built up in the West,
 For what purpose the wind knows best,
 Who changes his mind continually.
 And the empty other half of the sky
 Seemed in its silence as if it knew
 What, any moment, might look through
 A chance gap in that fortress massy:—
 Through its fissures you got hints
 Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,
 Now, a dull lion-colour, now, brassy
 Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,
 Like furnace-smoke just ere the flames bellow,
 All a-simmer with intense strain
 To let her through,—then blank again,
 At the hope of her appearance failing.
 Just by the chapel, a break in the railing
 Shows a narrow path directly across;

'T is ever dry walking there, on the moss—
 Besides, you go gently all the way uphill
 I stooped under and soon felt better;
 My head grew lighter, my limbs more supple,
 As I walked on, glad to have slipt the fetter.
 My mind was full of the scene I had left,
 That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,
 —How this outside was pure and different!
 The sermon, now—what a mingled weft
 Of good and ill! Were either less,
 Its fellow had coloured the whole distinctly;
 But alas for the excellent earnestness,
 And the truths, quite true if stated succinctly,
 But as surely false, in their quaint presentment,
 However to pastor and flock's contentment!
 Say rather, such truths looked false to your eyes,
 With his provings and parallels twisted and twined,
 Till how could you know them, grown double their size
 In the natural fog of the good man's mind,
 Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps,
 Haloed about with the common's damps?
 Truth remains true, the fault's in the prover;
 The zeal was good, and the aspiration;
 And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,
 Pharaoh received no demonstration,
 By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,
 Of the doctrine of the Trinity,—
 Although, as our preacher thus embellished it,
 Apparently his hearers relished it
 With so unfeigned a gust—who knows if
 They did not prefer our friend to Joseph?

* * * * *

V.

But wherefore be harsh on a single case?
 After how many modes, this Christmas-Eve,
 Does the selfsame weary thing take place?
 The same endeavour to make you believe,
 And with much the same effect, no more:
 Each method abundantly convincing,
 As I say, to those convinced before,
 But scarce to be swallowed without wincing
 By the not-as-yet-convinced. For me,
 I have my own church equally:
 And in this church my faith sprang first!
 (I said, as I reached the rising ground,
 And the wind began again, with a burst
 Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound
 From the heart beneath, as if, God speeding me,
 I entered his church-door, nature leading me)
 —In youth I looked to these very skies,
 And probing their immensities,
 I found God there, his visible power;
 Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
 Of the power, an equal evidence
 That his love, there too, was the nobler dower.

Then follows a long and rather abstruse passage, leading up to the following lofty and inspiring conclusion:—

So, gazing up, in my youth, at love
 As seen through power, ever above
 All modes which make it manifest,
 My soul brought all to a single test—
 That he, the Eternal First and Last,
 Who, in his power, had so surpassed

All man conceives of what is might,—
 Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,
 —Would prove as infinitely good;
 Would never, (my soul understood,)
 With power to work all love desires,
 Bestow e'en less than man requires;
 That he who endlessly was teaching,
 Above my spirit's utmost reaching,
 What love can do in the leaf or stone,
 (So that to master this alone,
 This done in the stone or leaf for me,
 I must go on learning endlessly)
 Would never need that I, in turn,
 Should point him out defect unheeded,
 And show that God had yet to learn
 What the meanest human creature needed,
 —Not life, to wit, for a few short years,
 Tracking his way through doubts and fears,
 While the stupid earth on which I stay
 Suffers no change, but passive adds
 Its myriad years to myriads,
 Though I, he gave it to, decay,
 Seeing death come and choose about me,
 And my dearest ones depart without me.
 No: love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,
 Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,
 The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,
 Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it.
 And I shall behold thee, face to face,
 O God, and in thy light retrace
 How in all I loved here, still wast thou!

Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now,
 I shall find as able to satiate
 The love, thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
 Thou art able to quicken and sublimate,
 With this sky of thine, that I now walk under,
 And glory in thee for, as I gaze
 Thus, thus! Oh, let men keep their ways
 Of seeking thee in a narrow shrine—
 Be this my way! And this is mine!

The lunar rainbow, so wonderfully described in the next stanza, is the occasion and point of departure of the poetic vision or ecstasy which occupies the remainder of the poem—

VI.

For lo, what think you? suddenly
 The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky
 Received at once the full fruition
 Of the moon's consummate apparition.
 The black cloud-barricade was riven,
 Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
 Deep in the West; while, bare and breathless,
 North and South and East lay ready
 For a glorious thing that, dauntless, deathless,
 Sprang across them and stood steady.
 'T was a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
 From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
 As the mother-moon's self, full in face.
 It rose, distinctly at the base
 With its seven proper colours chorded,
 Which still, in the rising, were compressed,
 Until at last they coalesced,

And supreme the spectral creature lorded
 In a triumph of whitest white,—
 Above which intervened the night.
 But above night too, like only the next,
 The second of a wondrous sequence,
 Reaching in rare and rarer frequency,
 Till the heaven of heavens were circumflexed,
 Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
 Fainter, flushier and flightier,—
 Rapture dying along its verge.
 Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
 Whose, from the straining topmost dark,
 On to the keystone of that arc?

He did see One emerging from the glory—

VIII.

All at once I looked up with terror.
 He was there,
 He himself with his human air,
 On the narrow pathway, just before.
 I saw the back of him, no more—
 He had left the chapel, then, as I.
 I forgot all about the sky.
 No face: only the sight
 Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
 With a hem that I could recognise.
 I felt terror, no surprise;
 My mind filled with the cataract,
 At one bound of the mighty fact.
 "I remember, he did say

Doubtless, that, to this world's end,
 Where two or three should meet and pray,
 He would be in the midst, their friend ;
 Certainly he was there with them !”
 And my pulses leaped for joy
 Of the golden thought without alloy,
 That I saw his very vesture's hem.
 Then rushed the blood black, cold and clear,
 With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear ;
 And I hastened, cried out while I pressed
 To the salvation of the vest,
 “ But not so, Lord ! It cannot be
 “ That thou, indeed, art leaving me—
 “ Me, that have despised thy friends !”

The confession of his sin in despising *His* friends in the little chapel is speedily followed by a gracious token of forgiveness :—

IX.

* * * * *

The whole face turned upon me full.
 And I spread myself beneath it,
 As when the bleacher spreads, to seethe it
 In the cleansing sun, his wool,—
 Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness
 Some defiled, discoloured web—
 So lay I, saturate with brightness.

His sin thus purged (how exquisitely wrought out the lovely simile of the sun-cleansed wool !), he is “ caught up in the whirl and drift of the vesture's amplitude,” and thus clinging to the garment's hem, is carried across land and sea—to a scene so complete a contrast to the one he has just left that he is confused, and some time elapses before he discovers that he is in front of St. Peter's at Rome :—

X.

And so we crossed the world and stopped.
 For where am I, in city or plain,
 Since I am 'ware of the world again ?
 And what is this that rises propped
 With pillars of prodigious girth ?
 Is it really on the earth,
 This miraculous Dome of God ?
 Has the angel's measuring-rod
 Which numbered cubits, gem from gem,
 'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,
 Meted it out,—and what he meted,
 Have the sons of men completed ?
 —Binding, ever as he bade,
 Columns in the colonnade
 With arms wide open to embrace
 The entry of the human race
 To the breast of . . . what is it, yon building,
 Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,
 With marble for brick, and stones of price
 For garniture of the edifice ?
 Now I see ; it is no dream ;
 It stands there and it does not seem :
 For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,
 And thus I have read of it in books
 Often in England, leagues away,
 And wondered how these fountains play,
 Growing up eternally
 Each to a musical water-tree,
 Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,

Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,
To the granite lavers underneath.

There follows a description of the worship in the great cathedral—not now, as before, unsympathetic and merely critical, but giving evidence of the liveliest appreciation of the feelings of the intelligent and devout ritualist, as in the following passage :—

Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows heaven, with its new day
Of endless life, when he who trod,
Very man and very God,
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
Dying the death whose signs remain
Up yonder on the accursed tree,—
Shall come again, no more to be
Of captivity the thrall,
But the one God, All in all,
King of kings, Lord of lords,
As his servant John received the words,
“I died, and live for evermore!”

Still he cannot enter into it. He is left outside the door. Distracted with conflicting emotions, his reason repelled by the superstition, his spirit attracted by the lofty devotion which he discovers at the heart of the too gorgeous ritual—he cannot make up his mind whether he should join them for the one reason, or shun them for the other—

XI.

* * * *

Though Rome's gross yoke
Drops off, no more to be endured,
Her teaching is not so obscured
By errors and perversities,
That no truth shines athwart the lies:
And he, whose eye detects a spark

Even where, to man's, the whole seems dark,
May well see flame where each beholder
Acknowledges the embers smoulder.
But I, a mere man, fear to quit
The clue God gave me as most fit
To guide my footsteps through life's maze,
Because himself discerns all ways
Open to reach him : I, a man
Able to mark where faith began
To swerve aside, till from its summit
Judgment drops her damning plummet,
Pronouncing such a fatal space
Departed from the founder's base :
He will not bid me enter too,
But rather sit, as now I do,
Awaiting his return outside.
—’T was thus my reason straight replied
And joyously I turned, and pressed
The garment's skirt upon my breast,
Until, afresh its light suffusing me,
My heart cried “What has been abusing me
That I should wait here lonely and coldly,
Instead of rising, entering boldly,
Baring truth's face, and letting drift
Her veils of lies as they choose to shift?
Do these men praise him? I will raise
My voice up to their point of praise!
I see the error; but above
The scope of error, see the love.—
Oh, love of those first Christian days!
—Fanned so soon into a blaze,

From the spark preserved by the trampled sect,
That the antique sovereign Intellect
Which then sat ruling in the world,
Like a change in dreams, was hurled
From the throne he reigned upon :
You looked up and he was gone.

The remainder of the stanza is taken up with a most eloquent, but somewhat difficult passage, illustrating the triumph of the new Love over the old Culture. In the following stanza he makes up his mind that he "will feast his love, then depart elsewhere, that his intellect may find its share"; so the next transition, by the same mode of rapture, is to a German University. What he sees there provokes again his latent humour :—

XIV.

Alone ! I am left alone once more —
(Save for the garment's extreme fold
Abandoned still to bless my hold)
Alone, beside the entrance-door
Of a sort of temple, — perhaps a college,
— Like nothing I ever saw before
At home in England, to my knowledge.
The tall old quaint irregular town !
It may be . . . though which, I can't affirm . . . any
Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany ;
And this flight of stairs where I sit down,
Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, Frankfort,
Or Göttingen, I have to thank for 't ?
It may be Göttingen, — most likely.
Through the open door I catch obliquely
Glimpses of a lecture-hall ;
And not a bad assembly neither,
Ranged decent and symmetrical

On benches, waiting what 's to see there ;
Which, holding still by the vesture's hem,
I also resolve to see with them,
Cautious this time how I suffer to slip
The chance of joining in fellowship
With any that call themselves his friends ;
As these folks do, I have a notion.
But hist—a buzzing and emotion !
All settle themselves, the while ascends
By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,
Step by step, deliberate
Because of his cranium's over-freight,
Three parts sublime to one grotesque,
If I have proved an accurate guesser,
The hawk-nosed, high-cheek-boned Professor.
I felt at once as if there ran
A shoot of love from my heart to the man—
That sallow virgin-minded studious
Martyr to mild enthusiasm,
As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious
That woke my sympathetic spasm,
(Beside some spitting that made me sorry)
And stood, surveying his auditory
With a wan pure look, well nigh celestial,—
Those blue eyes had survived so much !
While, under the foot they could not smutch,
Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.
Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,
Till the auditory's clearing of throats
Was done with, died into a silence ;
And, when each glance was upward sent,

Each bearded mouth composed intent,
 And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence
 He pushed back higher his spectacles,
 Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells,
 And giving his head of hair—a hake
 Of undressed tow, for colour and quantity—
 One rapid and impatient shake,
 (As our own young England adjusts a jaunty tie
 When about to impart, on mature digestion,
 Some thrilling view of the surplice-question)
 —The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse,
 Broke into his Christmas-Eve discourse.

The stanza which follows gives an account of the discourse, which is a learned discussion of "this Myth of Christ," "which, when reason had strained and abated it of foreign matter, left, for residuum, a man!—a right true man," but nothing more. He has no difficulty in determining his duty here ("this time He would not bid me enter.") The religious atmosphere in which Papist and Dissenter live may be far from pure, in the one case for one reason, and in the other for the opposite; but either of the two is immeasurably better than the vacuum left when the Critic has done his work of destruction. Then follows a long argument to show the unreasonableness of denying the divinity of Christ, only a part of which can be given here.

XVI.

* * * * *

This time he would not bid me enter
 The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.
 Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic
 When Papist struggles with Dissenter,
 Impregnating its pristine clarity,
 —One, by his daily fare's vulgarity,
 Its gust of broken meat and garlic;

—One, by his soul's too-much presuming
 To turn the frankincense's fuming
 And vapours of the candle starlike
 Into the cloud her wings she buoys on.
 Each, that thus sets the pure air seething,
 May poison it for healthy breathing—
 But the Critic leaves no air to poison;
 Pumps out with ruthless ingenuity
 Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity.
 Thus much of Christ, does he reject?
 And what retain? His intellect?
 What is it I must reverence duly?
 Poor intellect for worship, truly,
 Which tells me simply what was told
 (If mere morality, bereft
 Of the God in Christ, be all that's left)
 Elsewhere by voices manifold;
 With this advantage, that the stater
 Made nowise the important stumble
 Of adding, he, the sage and humble,
 Was also one with the Creator.
 You urge Christ's followers' simplicity:
 But how does shifting blame, evade it?
 Have wisdom's words no more felicity?
 The stumbling-block, his speech—who laid it?
 How comes it that for one found able
 To sift the truth of it from fable,
 Millions believe it to the letter?
 Christ's goodness, then—does that fare better?
 Strange goodness, which upon the score
 Of being goodness, the mere due

Of man to fellow-man, much more
 To God,—should take another view
 Of its possessor's privilege,
 And bid him rule his race! You pledge
 Your fealty to such rule? What, all—
 From heavenly John and Attic Paul,
 And that brave weather-battered Peter
 Whose stout faith only stood completer
 For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,
 As, more his hands hauled nets, they hardened,—
 All, down to you, the man of men,
 Professing here at Göttingen,
 Compose Christ's flock! They, you and I,
 Are sheep of a good man!

Reasonings that grow out of the main discussion are continued throughout stanzas 17—20, till once more he is caught up and carried back to his original starting point. The remainder of the poem can now be given without interruption, and will be readily understood. (The exquisite development of the simile of the cup and the water will be specially noted, as also the charitable wish so strikingly expressed on behalf of the poor Professor, that before the end comes he may know Christ as "the God of salvation.")

XXI.

And I caught
 At the flying robe, and unrepelled
 Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught
 With warmth and wonder and delight,
 God's mercy being infinite.
 For scarce had the words escaped my tongue,
 When, at a passionate bound, I sprung
 Out of the wandering world of rain,
 Into the little chapel again.

XXII.

How else was I found there, bolt upright.
 On my bench, as if I had never left it?
 —Never flung out on the common at night
 Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft it,
 Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,
 Or the laboratory of the Professor!
 For the Vision, that was true, I wist,
 True as that heaven and earth exist.
 There sat my friend, the yellow and tall,
 With his neck and its wen in the selfsame place;
 Yet my nearest neighbour's cheek showed gall.
 She had slid away a contemptuous space:
 And the old fat woman, late so placable,
 Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistakable,
 Of her milk of kindness turning rancid.
 In short, a spectator might have fancied
 That I had nodded, betrayed by slumber,
 Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,
 Through the heads of the sermon, nine in number,
 And woke up now at the tenth and lastly.
 But again, could such disgrace have happened?
 Each friend at my elbow had surely nudged it;
 And, as for the sermon, where did my nap end?
 Unless I heard it, could I have judged it?
 Could I report as I do at the close,
 First, the preacher speaks through his nose:
 Second, his gesture is too emphatic:
 Thirdly, to waive what's pedagogic,
 The subject-matter itself lacks logic:

Fourthly, the English is ungrammatic.
 Great news! the preacher is found no Pascal,
 Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call
 Of making square to a finite eye
 The circle of infinity,
 And find so all-but-just-succeeding!
 Great news! the sermon proves no reading
 Where bee-like in the flowers I may bury me,
 Like Taylor's the immortal Jeremy!
 And now that I know the very worst of him,
 What was it I thought to obtain at first of him?
 Ha! Is God mocked, as he asks?
 Shall I take on me to change his tasks,
 And dare, despatched to a river-head
 For a simple draught of the element,
 Neglect the thing for which he sent,
 And return with another thing instead?—
 Saying, "Because the water found
 "Welling up from underground,
 "Is mingled with the taints of earth,
 "While thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth,
 "And couldst, at wink or word, convulse
 "The world with the leap of a river-pulse,—
 "Therefore, I turned from the ooziings muddy,
 "And bring thee a chalice I found, instead:
 "See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy!
 "One would suppose that the marble bled.
 "What matters the water? A hope I have nursed:
 "The waterless cup will quench my thirst."
 —Better have knelt at the poorest stream
 That trickles in pain from the straitest rift!

For the less or the more is all God's gift,
 Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.
 And here, is there water or not, to drink?
 I then, in ignorance and weakness,
 Taking God's help, have attained to think
 My heart does best to receive in meekness
 That mode of worship, as most to his mind,
 Where, earthly aids being cast behind,
 His All in All appears serene
 With the thinnest human veil between,
 Letting the mystic lamps, the seven,
 The many motions of his spirit,
 Pass, as they list, to earth from heaven.
 For the preacher's merit or demerit,
 It were to be wished the flaws were fewer
 In the earthen vessel, holding treasure,
 Which lies as safe in a golden ewer;
 But the main thing is, does it hold good measure?
 Heaven soon sets right all other matters!—
 Ask, else, these ruins of humanity,
 This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,
 This soul at struggle with insanity,
 Who thence take comfort, can I doubt?
 Which an empire gained, were a loss without.
 May it be mine! And let us hope
 That no worse blessing befall the Pope,
 Turn'd sick at last of to-day's buffoonery,
 Of posturings and petticoatings,
 Beside his Bourbon bully's gloatings
 In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery!
 Nor may the Professor forego its peace

At Göttingen presently, when, in the dusk
 Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase
 Prophesied of by that horrible husk—
 When thicker and thicker the darkness fills
 The world through his misty spectacles,
 And he gropes for something more substantial
 Than a fable, myth or personification,—
 May Christ do for him what no mere man shall,
 And stand confessed as the God of salvation!
 Meantime, in the still recurring fear
 Lest myself, at unawares, be found,
 While attacking the choice of my neighbours round,
 With none of my own made—I choose here!
 The giving out of the hymn reclaims me;
 I have done: and if any blames me,
 Thinking that merely to touch in brevity
 The topics I dwell on, were unlawful.—
 Or worse, that I trench, with undue levity,
 On the bounds of the holy and the awful,—
 I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,
 And refer myself to THEE, instead of him,
 Who head and heart alike discernest,
 Looking below light speech we utter,
 When frothy spume and frequent sputter
 Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest!
 May truth shine out, stand ever before us!
 I put up pencil and join chorus
 To Hepzibah tune, without further apology,
 The last five verses of the third section
 Of the seventeenth hymn of Whitfield's Collection,
 To conclude with the doxology.

EASTER-DAY.

As Christmas-Eve has suggested the subject of the Christian Faith, Easter-Day gives occasion to a discussion concerning the Christian Life—the life of those who are “risen with Christ.” The poem is in substance a conversation or discussion between two persons, one of whom (a thorough Christian) finds it very hard, while the other (who takes a much lower and more common-place view of spiritual things) thinks it quite easy, to be a Christian. It is not, however, in the form of a conversation. As usual in Browning's work, one speaks, stating his own views and quoting the other's, which are therefore distinguished from his own (except when he quotes, as he sometimes does, from himself) by quotation marks. The argument is too abstruse to be followed out in all its ramifications; but enough of it can be given to render quite intelligible the extracts from it which we find it possible to give. The opening sentence will give the theme:—

I.

How very hard it is to be
 A Christian! Hard for you and me,
 —Not the mere task of making real
 That duty up to its ideal,
 Effecting thus, complete and whole,
 A purpose of the human soul—
 For that is always hard to do;
 But hard, I mean, for me and you
 To realize it, more or less,
 With even the moderate success
 Which commonly repays our strife
 To carry out the aims of life.

After some preliminary discussion about faith in its relation to life, the easy-going friend takes this position:—