

**MEN  
AND WOMEN**

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Men and Women by Robert Browning

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**ROBERT BROWNING**

**MEN  
AND WOMEN**



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*and*  
**Women**



*Robert  
Browning*

**H.M. Caldwell Co.**  
**New York and Boston.**

# Men and Women

## YOUTH AND ART

### I.

It once might have been, once only :  
We lodged in a street together,  
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,  
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

### II.

Your trade was with sticks and clay,  
You thumbed, thrust, patted, and  
polished,  
Then laughed, "They will see, some  
day,  
Smith made, and Gibson demol-  
ished."

✱ Men and Women

III.

My business was song, song, song :  
I chirped, cheeped, trilled, and twit-  
tered,  
“ Kate Brown’s on the boards ere long,  
And Grisi’s existence embittered ! ”

IV.

I earned no more by a warble  
Than you by a sketch in plaster :  
You wanted a piece of marble,  
I needed a music-master.

V.

We studied hard in our styles,  
Chipped each a crust like Hindoos,  
For air, looked out on the tiles,  
For fun, watched each other’s win-  
dows.

## Men and Women ✱

### VI.

You lounged, like a boy of the South,  
Cap and blouse — nay, a bit of  
beard too ;  
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth  
With fingers the clay adhered to.

### VII.

And I — soon managed to find  
Weak points in the flower-fence  
facing,  
Was forced to put up a blind  
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

### VIII.

No harm ! It was not my fault  
If you never turned your eye's tail up  
As I shook upon E *in alt.*,  
Or ran the chromatic scale up ;



\* Men and Women

IX.

For spring bade the sparrows pair,  
And the boys and girls gave guesses,  
And stalls in our street looked rare  
With bulrush and watercresses.

X.

Why did you not pinch a flower  
In a pellet of clay and fling it?  
Why did not I put a power  
Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

XI.

I did look, sharp as a lynx  
(And yet the memory rankles),  
When models arrived, some minx  
Tripped up stairs, she and her  
ankles.

Men and Women ✱

XII.

But I think I gave you as good !  
“ That foreign fellow, — who can  
know  
How she pays, in a playful mood,  
For his tuning her that piano ? ”

XIII.

Could you say so, and never say,  
“ Suppose we join hands and for-  
tunes,  
And I fetch her from over the way,  
Her, piano, and long tunes and short  
tunes ? ”

XIV.

No, no ; you would not be rash,  
Nor I rasher and something over :  
You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,  
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

\* Men and Women

XV.

But you meet the Prince at the Board,  
I'm queen myself at *bals-paré*,  
I've married a rich old lord,  
And you're dubbed knight and an  
R. A.

XVI.

Each life's unfulfilled, you see ;  
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy :  
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,  
Starved, feasted, despaired, — been  
happy.

XVII.

And nobody calls you a dunce,  
And people suppose me clever :  
This could but have happened once,  
And we missed it, lost it for ever.