

**PACCHIAROTTO, AND
HOW HE WORKED
IN DISTEMPER,
WITH OTHER POEMS**

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Pacchiarotto, and how he worked in distemper, with other poems by Robert Browning

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ROBERT BROWNING

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HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER:

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BY

ROBERT BROWNING.



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PROLOGUE.

1.

O the old wall here! How I could pass
Life in a long Midsummer day,
My feet confined to a plot of grass,
My eyes from a wall not once away!

2.

And lush and lithe do the creepers clothe
Yon wall I watch, with a wealth of green:
Its bald red bricks draped, nothing loath,
In lappets of tangle they laugh between.

3.

Now, what is it makes pulsate the robe?
Why tremble the sprays? What life o'erbrims
The body, — the house, no eye can probe, —
Divined as, beneath a robe, the limbs?

4.

And there again! But my heart may guess
Who tripped behind; and she sang perhaps:
So, the old wall throbb'd, and its life's excess
Died out and away in the leafy wraps!

5.

Wall upon wall are between us: life
And song should away from heart to heart!
I — prison-bird, with a ruddy strife
At breast, and a lip whence storm-notes start —

6.

Hold on, hope hard in the subtle thing
That's spirit: though cloistered fast, soar free;
Account as wood, brick, stone, this ring
Of the rueful neighbors, and — forth to thee!

OF PACCHIAROTTO, AND HOW HE
WORKED IN DISTEMPER.

1.

QUERY: was ever a quainter
Crotchet than this of the painter
Giacomo Pacchiarotto
Who took "Reform" for his motto?

2.

He, pupil of old Fungaio,
Is always confounded (heigho!)
With Pacchia, contemporaneous
No question, but how extraneous
In the grace of soul, the power
Of hand, — undoubted dower
Of Pacchia who decked (as *we* know,
My Kirkup!) San Bernardino,

Turning the small dark Oratory
 To Siena's Art-laboratory,
 As he made its straightness roomy
 And glorified its gloomy,
 With Bazzi and Beccafumi,
 (Another heigho for Bazzi:
 How people miscall him Razzi!)

3.

This Painter was of opinion
 Our earth should be his dominion
 Whose Art could correct to pattern
 What Nature had slurred — the slattern!
 And since, beneath the heavens,
 Things lay now at sixes and sevens,
 Or, as he said, *sopra-sotto* —
 Thought the painter Pacchiarotto
 Things wanted reforming, therefore,
 "Wanted it" — ay, but wherefore?
 When earth held one so ready
 As he to step forth, stand steady