

**FIFINE AT
THE FAIR**

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Fifine at the Fair by Robert Browning

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ROBERT BROWNING

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THE FAIR**

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BY

ROBERT BROWNING.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 15, WATERLOO PLACE.

1872.

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DON ELVIRE.

Vous plaît-il, don Juan, nous éclaircir ces beaux mystères ?

DON JUAN.

Madame, à vous dire la vérité . . .

DON ELVIRE.

Ah ! que vous savez mal vous défendre pour un homme de cour, et qui doit être accoutumé à ces sortes de choses ! J'ai pitié de vous voir la confusion que vous avez. Que ne vous armez-vous le front d'une noble effronterie ? Que ne me jurez-vous que vous êtes toujours dans les mêmes sentimens pour moi, que vous m'aimez toujours avec une ardeur sans égale, et que rien n'est capable de vous détacher de moi que la mort ?—(Molière, *Don Juan*, Act 1^{er}, Scène 3^e.)

DONNA ELVIRA.

Don Juan, might you please to help me give a guess,
Hold up a candle, clear this fine mysteriousness?

DON JUAN.

Madam, if needs I must declare the truth,—in short . . .

DONNA ELVIRA.

Fie, for a man of mode, accustomed at the court!
To such a style of thing, how awkwardly my lord
Attempts defence! You move compassion, that's the word—
Dumb-founded and chap-fallen! Why don't you arm your brow
With noble impudence? Why don't you swear and vow
No sort of change is come to any sentiment
You ever had for me? Affection holds the bent,
You love me now as erst, with passion that makes pale
All ardour else: nor aught in nature can avail
To separate us two, save what, in stopping breath,
May peradventure stop devotion likewise—death!

PROLOGUE.

AMPHIBIAN.

I.

The fancy I had to-day,
Fancy which turned a fear !
I swam far out in the bay,
Since waves laughed warm and clear.

2.

I lay and looked at the sun,
The noon-sun looked at me :
Between us two, no one
Live creature, that I could see.

3.

Yes! There came floating by
Me, who lay floating too,
Such a strange butterfly!
Creature as dear as new:

4.

Because the membraned wings
So wonderful, so wide,
So sun-suffused, were things
Like soul and nought beside.

5.

A handbreadth over head!
All of the sea my own,
It owned the sky instead;
Both of us were alone.

6.

I never shall join its flight,
For, nought buoys flesh in air.
If it touch the sea—good night!
Death sure and swift waits there.

7.

Can the insect feel the better
For watching the uncouth play
Of limbs that slip the fetter,
Pretend as they were not clay ?

8.

Undoubtedly I rejoice
That the air comports so well
With a creature which had the choice
Of the land once. Who can tell ?

9.

What if a certain soul
Which early slipped its sheath,
And has for its home the whole
Of heaven, thus look beneath,

10.

Thus watch one who, in the world,
Both lives and likes life's way,
Nor wishes the wings unfurled
That sleep in the worm, they say ?